

HIT MEN

"Pilot"

by

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"PILOT"

TEASER

INT. FRANK'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

A MAN and WOMAN in bed. Naked. Pillows and blankets kicked to the floor. Signs of passion. But now, after, he's staring at the words *JACK FOREVER* tattooed on her ass.

MAN

You gotta talk to Jack.

This is FRANK CERRONE, late 30s, still middle weight trim. Bled his way through the division for a decade. A trainer now, Frank runs the gym at the center of our story.

*
*
*

WOMAN

I'm gonna. After his fight.

*
*

FRANK

(stroking the tattoo)

You said that last time --

WOMAN

-- he got killed last time.

FRANK

So if he gets killed this time --

She turns over. ATHENA STRAVAPOULOUS, mid 20s, graceful, athletic body, fabulously crooked and frequently broken nose. She's a boxer, unafraid to mix it up in or out of the ring.

ATHENA

-- Jack needs my support.

FRANK

Is that what this is --

ATHENA

Hey, you're his trainer.

FRANK

I'd be honest with him.

ATHENA

You told him not to have sex with me because he's in training!

FRANK

...so?

ATHENA

I'm in training!

FRANK

(playfully)

...now you tell me.

*
*

He kisses her gently. Responding --

ATHENA

I'm gonna talk to him.

*

FRANK

-- if he wins.

ATHENA

With you in his corner, how can he lose?

*

INT. IRVINE MARRIOTT - BALLROOM - NIGHT

TIGHT ON JACK QUINN's swollen face. A jab snaps his head back. A cut opens. Blood spurts out in SLOW MOTION onto Frank, working the corner, staining his HIT MEN BOXING CLUB T-shirt. SNAP TO SPEED as Frank SCREAMS:

*
*
*
*

FRANK

STICK AND MOVE! You're posing for a picture, dammit. MOVE!!

*

IN THE FIGHT -- literally -- our HANDHELD POV getting pounded on by a wickedly fast local favorite in RED SHORTS. GILL KILLS written on his WHITE WAISTBAND. Two, maybe three shots -- enough for us to feel woozy -- and the BELL RINGS.

*

MOUSE, a stub of a man also wearing a HIT MEN BOXING CLUB shirt, slips a STOOL through the ropes. Quinn sits, green shorts with IRISH CREAM on the WAISTBAND, his *ATHENA FOREVER* chest tattoo heaving up and down as he gulps air. Mouse works the bucket as Frank sponges off Quinn's face, creating a river of blood. Off the cut:

FRANK (CONT'D)

-- Christ, it's deep --

*

QUINN

...I'm okay --

MOUSE
-- he can't see a thing --

*

QUINN
(through one open eye)
C'mon Frankie. Fix me up.

*

*

Frank looks past Quinn into the crowd, 300 half-drunk partisans at a mid-week Battle of the Ballroom, finds Athena in the front row. Mouse sees a look pass between them --

MOUSE
-- Frankie, it's over.

FRANK
I need ten seconds --

MOUSE
-- Frank, he's done.

FRANK
DO IT, MOUSE.

Mouse is Frank's older brother. But fighting left him punchy and Frank in charge. So Mouse dumps the bucket in the ring -- right in front of the approaching REFEREE. Buys Frank time to JAM a Q-Tip of adrenaline into the cut to stop the bleeding. The ref slips past Mouse as Frank presses an IRON onto Quinn's brow.

REFEREE
-- lemme see --

Quinn looks like a grenade exploded in his face, but thanks to Frank he looks like he lived to tell about it.

QUINN
-- I'm ready -- c'mon -- lemme go --

REFEREE
-- awright --
(to Frank)
-- hell if you're not a magician.

The ref clears. Smearing on Vaseline:

FRANK
Keep eating his left like it's a pussy and I will stop it.

Frank climbs out, avoids Mouse's look. BELL RINGS. Quinn lumbers forward. WHAP. Takes a left. WHAPWHAP.

It's all but over when Quinn gets HEADBUTT. Jolted into gear, Quinn lands a flurry of hooks, then a jaw-altering uppercut.

*
*
*

The ref counts Gill out. Boos and beer rain down as Quinn's hand is raised in victory. Frank puts a protective arm around his exhausted fighter.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Let's get out of here.

-- they climb out. Quinn sags onto the ring steps.

QUINN
-- my head --

FRANK
Doc'll check you out in the locker room --

QUINN
-- like a sledgehammer.

*

Quinn stands uneasily. Takes two steps and collapses.

FRANK
Quinn... Jack... JACK!
(no reply; to Mouse)
GET THE RING DOCTOR NOW!!!

*

INT. IRVINE MARRIOTT - GARAGE - NIGHT

CRAZY FAST: EMTs yank a stretcher from the back of an ambulance and haul ass --

INT. IRVINE MARRIOTT - BALLROOM - NIGHT

JUMP CUTS: Ring doctor gives way to the EMTs. Quinn put on a stretcher. Athena pushes through the crowd to be by his side. Quinn wheeled out. Crowd cat-calling to the last --

INT. IRVINE MARRIOTT - GARAGE - NIGHT

Frank and Mouse sprint with the stretcher toward the ambulance as Athena reassures the unconscious Quinn --

ATHENA
It'll be okay. I'm right here.

EMTs put Quinn in the ambulance. Athena climbs aboard.

FRANK
-- what happened --

*

EMT
-- step away --

FRANK
-- what's wrong with him?

EMT
What do you think? He's a boxer.

FRANK
He won the fight.

EMT
He look like a winner to you?

The EMT hops in, SLAMS the doors shut. Last thing Frank sees
is Athena holding Quinn's hand. OFF which --

*

CUT TO BLACK:

*

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

EXT. LOS ANGELES - DAY

*

...to ESTABLISH.

ALVAREZ (V.O.)

-- Boise? Where the hell is Boise?

EXT. LOS ANGELES - STREET - DAY

*

A CITY BUS clears frame to REVEAL: DUANE SIMMONS, 30, black heavyweight in an ARMY T-shirt, jogging alongside BOBBY ALVAREZ, 26, promising welterweight in a RUBBER SUIT.

*

DUANE

Man, get yourself a map. It's the capitol of Iowa.

ALVAREZ

Guy in Iowa offered you a thousand a round?

DUANE

White boys there fly in the "negroes" to beat on. Bodine did it.

*

*

ALVAREZ

Bodine got a thousand a round? Talk about affirmative action.

*

DUANE

He was paid to lose.

ALVAREZ

They want you to throw the fight?

DUANE

Using an alias so it won't go against my record. Bodine called himself Velvet Thunder.

*

ALVAREZ

You got Cooper coming up. Win that you're ranked.

DUANE

I'm not doing it. Just saying it's messed up. Feel me?

ALVAREZ

-- man this suit's so tight I can't feel jack.

*

DUANE
-- you slept in that? *

ALVAREZ
Sweat off two pounds dreaming about
the frosting on Dupars' coconut *
cake. Got that lemon filling that *
melts in your mouth. *

DUANE
You dream of eating it or doing it? *

ALVAREZ
After the fight that cake is mine.

He flashes a quick smile, sprints ahead.

DUANE
-- like you can get away from me on
those hubcaps.

Duane catches up. They race, stride for stride, into...

EXT. LOS ANGELES - STRIP MALL - PARKING LOT - DAY *

...past a laundromat, dry cleaners and HO KOW'S Chinese *
restaurant... through an underpass with HIT MEN BOXING CLUB *
written in graffiti above it... to the rear of the mall where *
the sounds of the street are replaced by the rhythmic *
pounding of SPEED BAGS. Side by side, they attack a narrow *
STAIRCASE. Duane is six inches taller, his long legs *
allowing him a slight lead as he bursts into: *

INT. HIT MEN BOXING CLUB - DAY

Walls covered in fight POSTERS and publicity STILLS. A *
forest of HEAVY BAGS and SPEED BAGS. Dirty MIRROR in front *
of a platform for shadowboxing and jumping rope. Rusty free *
weights. And in the center of it all, an elevated RING.

Duane and Alvarez catch their breath near the FRONT DESK --
where lifers like Mouse and BODINE -- 30s, a sweet bear of a
man -- hang out, answer phones, dispense tape and, mostly,
argue. 305, a hustler who goes by his juvy hall i.d. number,
waves a CD in front of Bodine. *

305 *
Got Fifty's latest. Genuine *
bootleg. *

Bodine ignores him. Ribs a MASHER hammering a heavybag *
nearby. *

BODINE
Gotta breathe, dog. It's not like
you underwater.

305
You more of a Nelly man. That's
cool.

Undeterred, 305 pulls another CD from his gym BAG.

305 (CONT'D)
For my man -- 30 percent off.

BODINE
Go hustle your old lady.
(back to the Masher)
It's not like you underwater. You
box like you in an episode of Sea
Hunt. Dog, I could take you down.
(off the Masher's glare)
-- didn't say I'd take you today.
Lucky for you I got me an injury.

ALVAREZ
Don't mess with Velvet Thunder.

Bodine grabs a water BOTTLE... giving Duane a squirt --

BODINE
Dog, I gave those Boise boys their
money's worth -- Boise girls, too.
White women up their loved me.
Finally met a brother who could
take a lickin' and keep on tickin'.

DUANE
-- any word on Quinn?

BODINE
Mouse is on with Frankie now.

JESUS ALVAREZ comes up. 40, chiseled, tattoos everywhere,
puffing on a beloved Cubano. Alvarez's dad/manager. Thick
accent. Sees Alvarez get a much-needed squirt from Bodine --

JESUS
Spit it out.
(as Alvarez does)
You're late.

ALVAREZ
We're getting an update on Quinn
from Frank.

JESUS
 (disapproving)
 Frank's at the hospital?

DUANE
 Mouse has him on the phone.

JESUS
 (goes to Mouse)
 Tell your brother my son's ready
 for the training I pay him for.
 (to Alvarez)
 Nene -- steam room. **Now.**

As Alvarez dutifully follows his dad --

DUANE
 -- boy **you are** whipped.

ART GOMEZ enters. Matchmaker in his mid-30's, slacks, open-collared shirt, maybe a chain or two. Passing Duane --

GOMEZ
 Duane, I saw Gloria at the Kow.
 Said she wants you to come down.

Duane quickly moves to the door. Off which --

BODINE
 Talk about whipped. I seen whipped
cream got more spine than you.
 (sees Mouse hang up)
 How my boy Q?

MOUSE
 -- still out.

INT. HO KOW'S - DAY

Duane hurries **past a wall filled with PHOTOS of Asian**
fighters to GLORIA, breast-feeding **their** BABY. Concerned --

DUANE
 What's going on? Why didn't you
 come up?

GLORIA
I told you not to quit the mill.

DUANE
 What are you talking about?
 (she hands him an **EVICTION**
NOTICE; off which --)
 (MORE)

DUANE (CONT'D)

Norton said he'd let us ride until
after the fight. *

GLORIA

You got that in writing? 'Cause if
you don-- *

DUANE

-- what I'm making off the Cooper
fight'll cover this --

GLORIA

The fight's in a month. Read the
notice, Duane. We're out tonight.

DUANE

-- says here he sent this out two
weeks ago. *

GLORIA

I got three kids to look after. *

I'm busy. I found it in the
kitchen today. You tell me when it
got there.

DUANE

I'll get the money. *

GLORIA

Three thousand dollars. By
tonight? How you gonna do that,
rob a bank? *

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYMNASIUM - DAY

Inner city public school. The PRINCIPAL addressing her black
and Hispanic kids from the STAGE.

PRINCIPAL

We hear too much about the selfish
athlete. Today, we're honoring an
athlete who can't stop giving.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - BATHROOM - DAY

KEN BARNES, middleweight champion of the world, giving it to
an English teacher over the sink.

PRINCIPAL (V.O.)

A man who has planted seeds all
over this community.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYMNASIUM - DAY

The Principal glances back, looking for Barnes --

PRINCIPAL
-- a great fighter --

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - BATHROOM - DAY

Quick finish. Zip. *

PRINCIPAL (V.O.)
-- and an even better man.

BARNES
Nice meeting you. *

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYMNASIUM - DAY

Unsure where Barnes is, but unable to vamp:

PRINCIPAL
It's my pleasure to name our new
gym in honor of our former student
and current middleweight champion
of the world, Ken Barnes.

And out walks Barnes, tailored to perfection in a canary
yellow Attolini suit. Hugs the principal, takes the lectern.

BARNES
Thank you. Thank you very much. I
just wanna say, you know, that I've
accomplished a lot... but having
this gym named after me... if I'd
known it would only cost a million
I would've done it years ago!
(waits on laughter, then:)
People say you shouldn't tell kids
sports is a way out. That you
should stay in school, become a
lawyer. Well, I dropped out in
ninth grade and now I employ ten
lawyers. So there you go. *

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - DAY

Kids follow Barnes, call out "hey, champ..." "...yo Anvil..." *
He signs a last autograph, gets in a black Bentley to find: *

INT. BENTLEY - DAY

*

... WILL HAGEN waiting for him. Hagen, 40s, is putting his law degree to use in way he never imagined at Harvard.

HAGEN

-- enjoyed your speech --

BARNES

-- the hell you doing here, man?

HAGEN

Mr. Wut-ev-ah asked me to bring you this gift.

Hagen slides over a DUFFEL BAG. Barnes opens it. It's filled with CASH. Neat stacks of \$100 BILLS.

BARNES

How many times I gotta tell you I'm under contract to Feltz.

*

*

HAGEN

Mr. Wut-ev-ah understands your position. He simply wants to show his appreciation. You don't want the money -- give it to the principal.

(knowing smile)

Maybe get a bathroom named after you.

*

*

(as if he cares)

Look, Kenny, Wut-ev-ah controls the division. Eight out of the top ten. He's where you wanna be.

*

*

*

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - DAY

TRACK FRANK, holding two coffees, to Athena... looking through a window into Quinn's room. He's still out.

FRANK

-- cream, no sugar.

ATHENA

The doctor was here. The CT shows he's bleeding into his head.

*

FRANK

It had to be the headbutt, right?

ATHENA

-- doesn't matter.

But it does to Frank. He feels responsible.

FRANK

Power punch numbers were low. Gill hurt him, sure, but not this bad.

ATHENA

I know I said I'd talk to him after the fight... but I can't now... you understand that, right?

*

*

FRANK

Yeah, sure.

(beat, cold)

I'm gonna go. You hear anything else, let me know.

*

*

He starts down the hall. She follows.

ATHENA

What, you're angry?

FRANK

It's fine, Athena. I get it. It's what you want.

(under his breath)

Least he's not still in training.

ATHENA

What's that supposed to mean?

FRANK

-- nothing, forget it --

Frank steps on a crowded elevator. Athena holds the door open. In front of everyone:

ATHENA

No, I wanna know what that means --

FRANK

I said forget it.

ATHENA

-- go on -- say it --

FRANK

-- Athena --

ATHENA

-- TELL ME I HAVE YOUR PERMISSION
TO **HAVE SEX WITH** MY BOYFRIEND.

*

A long, embarrassing beat. No one knows what to say or do. Then DR. GRANT comes up to Athena. Total pro.

DR. GRANT
Excuse me, but he's waking up.

The elevator BUZZES from being held open too long. Athena lets go, closing the door on Frank. OFF which... PRELAP:

MOUSE (V.O.)
Quinn okay?

INT. HIT MEN BOXING CLUB - FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

Frank enters, Mouse close behind.

FRANK
He's up. Jury's out on the rest.

The office is filled with memorabilia. Articles. Awards. Big POSTER of Alvarez winning a silver medal in Athens.

MOUSE
How you doing?

Frank points to a string tied around Mouse's finger. *

FRANK
Go on. I know you wanna remind me
it was my fault. *

MOUSE
-- I didn't say nothing -- *

FRANK
-- that I should've stopped the
fight -- that maybe I let what's
going on with Athena get in the way
of that.

MOUSE
(off the string, 75% sure)
-- that's not what this is about.

FRANK
-- then what is it -- what do you
want to tell me?

Beat. Mouse tries, but can't remember -- our first glimpse at his short-term memory problems. Frank softens at once.

FRANK (CONT'D)
 ...aahhh, Mouse... is it work,
 personal, **what**...? I'm not pissed
 at you, you know that, righ--

*
 *

MOUSE
 (remembering)
 -- Jesus set a fight for Alvarez.

FRANK
 -- there you go -- look at you --

MOUSE
He set it yesterday and, hang on...
 there's something else... you're
 gonna hate who he set it with.

*
 *

ON Mouse, proud of himself... PRELAP:

FRANK (V.O.)
IKE JONES!?

INT. HIT MEN BOXING CLUB - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Frank confronts Jesus.

FRANK
 On two days' notice?!

JESUS
 -- you were in **Riverside** when
 Rudler called --
 -- it's a chance for him to
 step up.
 -- Bobby can take him --
 -- are you saying you don't
 believe in him, is that it?

FRANK
 -- you don't need me around
 to tell you this is a loser --
 -- step up?! Jones is a
 pitbull with way too much
 experience. Plus which he's
 a southpaw.

*
 *
 *

The STEAM ROOM door opens. Alvarez comes out, soaking.

FRANK (CONT'D)
 What are you -- 157?

ALVAREZ
 (stripping off his sweats)
 I'll make the weight.

FRANK
 And be so weak from trying Jones
 could beat you one handed.

JESUS

Jones is one handed. Popped his
shoulder in the gym.

FRANK

Says who? Rudler? He'd say
anything so you'd take the fight.

*
*

Alvarez steps on the SCALE in his jock. Jesus pushes a
WEIGHT into the 150 slot. Too light. He slides the SMALL
WEIGHT up the bar: ...2 ...3 ...4. The scale balances.

JESUS

Seven pounds over.

Jesus offers MILK OF MAGNESIA. Alvarez swigs it. Nasty.

JESUS (CONT'D)

Weigh-in's in thirty six hours.
Gotta **crap** your way to 147.

*

FRANK

Don't do this.

JESUS

(in Spanish)

Drink the **damn** laxative.

*

ALVAREZ

Dad says I fight, I fight.

*

OFF Alvarez, chugging the entire bottle:

INT. HIT MEN **BOXING CLUB** - DAY

*

Mouse slips a BOXING GLOVE over the taped hand of a white guy
named... well, we'll get to his name in a minute. Mouse eyes
the TATTOO of a man's face **the FIGHTER** has on his chest.

*
*
*

MOUSE

Who's that --

FIGHTER

Jeremy Wariner. Won a gold medal
in Athens in the 200.

MOUSE

You in love with him or something?

FIGHTER

He was the first white American to
win a sprint in 42 years. Dude
gave the white man his balls back.

MOUSE

Good looking fella. You two make a nice couple.

Fighter calls out to a black fighter **waiting** across the ring: *

FIGHTER

Lets **do it**, Africa. *

OFF the BELL, WHIP PAN to Duane. TRACK HIM through a maze of heavy bags toward the ring where Art Gomez watches the fight. *

DUANE

You know how you're always talking about do I need an advance? Well now I do. Not my full guarantee. Maybe 10 percent.

GOMEZ

-- your guarantee?

DUANE

For the Cooper fight.

GOMEZ

(beat, awkward) *

The Cooper fight's off. *

DUANE

WHAT?! Since when -- *

GOMEZ

You need to talk to Wut-ev-ah.

-- no --

-- Duane, listen --

-- He's not ducking you.

-- Cooper's not out. **You are.**

DUANE

-- Cooper pulled out, didn't he? *

-- I quit my job to train full time. That's why I'm short. He can't duck me now. *

-- then why's he pulling out? *

Gomez likes Duane. Can't look him in the eye for -- *

GOMEZ

Wut-ev-ah wants you to step aside. *

DUANE

For who? *

Slowly, embarrassingly, Gomez looks toward **the ring**, where Fighter **is** outclassing Africa. *

DUANE (CONT'D)

Kinicky.

GOMEZ

That's not his name anymore. He legally changed it to Steve Nash.

DUANE

-- the basketball player?

GOMEZ

White MVP. Something about giving white dudes their balls back.

The BELL RINGS. Fighter/Nash returns to his corner, does an Ali shuffle, brags to anyone who will listen:

NASH

Cracker with fast-twitch fibers. Let's see the brothers deal with that.

*

INT. PECHANGA RESORT & CASINO - BALLROOM - DAY

*

Workers set up a ring under the watchful eye of KEITH RUDLER, sleazy even by boxing standards. Frank enters with --

*

*

FRANK

Ring looks a little narrow.

RUDLER

Jones is a banger. Can't have him chasing after your kid all night.

*

FRANK

I don't think Ike needs any help.

RUDLER

Your boy's undefeated.

FRANK

Against journeymen.

*

RUDLER

Our opponent dropped out. I called around. Jesus said his kid was ready to step up.

FRANK

He took the fight because someone told him Jones was hurt.

RUDLER

Like I **care** why he took it. He
took it.

*

Said loudly, for the benefit of two BEEFY GUYS working
security. Smug laughter. Frank stays calm, leans in close.

FRANK

This is a beautiful kid. He works
hard. Things break his way, in a
year he's looking at a promotional
contract. **Three-fight guarantee**
plus a shot at the title. He takes
the short-end money now and loses,
all that goes away.

*

*

RUDLER

Listen to me -- are you listening --
cause I'm only saying this once: I
DON'T CARE.

FRANK

Is Jones hurt or not?

*

RUDLER

Get him outta here.

Beefy Guys step toward Frank, **who calmly** pulls out a PISTOL -- *

RUDLER (CONT'D)

*

-- Frankie, JESUS!

FRANK

*

Listen to me -- are you listening -
'cause I'm only saying this once:
Is Jones hurt or not?

RUDLER

What are you gonna do, shoot all of
us?

*

*

FRANK

No, Rudler -- only you.

As Frank **points the gun at Rudler and cocks it:** *

CUT TO BLACK:

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. HIT MEN BOXING CLUB - STEAM ROOM - DAY

*

WHITENESS. Can't SEE a thing. HEAR steam HISS and the slapslapslap of a jump rope. A door opens and the steam clears to REVEAL Alvarez. Jumps rope in sweats. Drenched.

Jesus appears, following the fiery end of his Cubano through the mist. Sizes up his son coldly. Then, their mantra:

JESUS
Who stays down?

ALVAREZ
Losers stay down.

JESUS
Who gets up?

ALVAREZ
(beat, deferential:)
Frank says Jones isn't hurt.

FRANK
Who gets up?

ALVAREZ
-- he asked around --

JESUS
-- he went behind my back --

ALVAREZ
(stops skipping rope)
I just want to know what to expect.

JESUS
In ten years have I ever asked for anything? Fighting Jones is me asking.

*

ALVAREZ
For what?

JESUS
I went in for a check-up last month... they found this... spot... on the chest x-ray.

*

*

ALVAREZ
-- a spot. What's that mean?

*

Jesus drags on his cigar. In a plume of smoke:

JESUS

They need to do some chemo maybe...
without insurance that's a tough
nut... first bill was twelve grand.
(beat, embarrassed)
Rudler offered fifteen for the
fight.

*
*

ALVAREZ

-- you have cancer, Papi...? what
did the doctor say? You're gonna
make it, right?

*
*

JESUS

You can take him, Nene. I wouldn't
have set the fight if I didn't
believe in you.

*
*
*

Jesus brings up his Cubano for a puff. Alvarez reaches out
and gently takes it -- grounds it out.

ALVAREZ

-- we're both in training now.

Alvarez starts jumping rope again. Faster than before.
Impossibly fast. Seeing his son's determination --

JESUS

Who stays down?

ALVAREZ

Losers stay down.

JESUS

Who gets up?

ALVAREZ

Winners get up.

Jesus eyes the THERMOSTAT: 113. Turns it up to 120. Alvarez
disappears in a cloud of steam. Slapslapslap.

INT. HOSPITAL - QUINN'S ROOM - DAY

Dr. Grant reports to Athena and Quinn, his face bruised and
swollen, his body hooked up to MONITORS and IV drips.

DR. GRANT

Good news. The bleeding's stopped.
And your motor cortex wasn't
damaged. You got lucky.

QUINN
 -- that's great, doc... 'cause, see,
 I'm a fighter...

DR. GRANT
 The affected area will remain
 vulnerable to rupture. If you get
 hit that way again you could die. *

QUINN
 ...so I won't get hit that way.

DR. GRANT
 Jack, you can't fight again.

ATHENA
 -- what -- until he recovers? *

QUINN
 -- which would be okay, you know,
 'cause I heal real quick.

DR. GRANT
 You can't fight again ever. I'm
 sorry.

QUINN
 ...but fighting's what I do.

DR. GRANT
 I don't know what to tell you. *

INT. WUT-EV-AH PROMOTIONS - DAY

Hip Hop producer/boxing impresario WUT-EV-AH stands at his desk in front of three framed PLATINUM RECORDS. Early 30s, baggy PHAT FARM sweats, LA DODGERS cap cocked to the side -- and a stack of \$100 BILLS in his hand.

WUT-EV-AH
 What is this? *

ON HIS DESK: The duffel BAG offered to Barnes. Hagen sits opposite, explaining:

HAGEN
 Barnes is sticking with Feltz.

WUT-EV-AH
 Find his mamma. Send this to her.

HAGEN
 Two hundred thousand in cash?

WUT-EV-AH

Barnes is set to make twelve million his next fight. Gotta give to get. Didn't they teach you nothing at Harvard?

Wut-ev-ah hands Hagen the BRIEFCASE as Duane bursts through the doors, Wut-ev-ah's BODYGUARD in tow.

DUANE

I won't step aside.

HAGEN

You want me to handle this?

WUT-EV-AH

Duane, how you doing?

DUANE (CONT'D)

I have a contract.

WUT-EV-AH

Yeah, and if you sit down, I'll explain how I'm gonna respect that.

(Duane remains standing)

I dig you, Duane. You served your country, capped some terrorists hand to hand. Record like that deserves some serious props. Thing is, you ain't never gonna be a star. Nash on the other hand --

*
*
*
*

DUANE

-- we had a deal.

WUT-EV-AH

For twenty thousand. Step aside you get ten plus I'll guarantee you the winner of Cooper-Nash at fifty.

DUANE

His name's Kinicky.

*

WUT-EV-AH

Not on pay-per-view it's not.

*

DUANE

-- where he's a great white hope.

*

WUT-EV-AH

More white means more green. Why you think they're still making movies about James Braddock seventy years after he was champ? Don't see Opie helming no biopic about Ezzard Charles, do you?

*

(MORE)

WUT-EV-AH (CONT'D)

(beat)

I'm taking Nash to ink a ten million dollar cable deal tomorrow. The man is a star and stars generate money for everyone.

(beat, the catch:)

If you're a team player.

DUANE

Meaning I step aside.

HAGEN

-- and help Nash train for Cooper.

DUANE

You want me to step aside and spar with him?!

HAGEN

Fight's in two weeks. You've been studying Cooper three months -- you know his strengths and weaknesses.

DUANE

-- nonono, no way --

WUT-EV-AH

(friendly, matter of fact)

Then we go to court. Mr. Hagen and I interpret our contract one way, you interpret it another and after depositions and discovery and six-figure legal bills we'll go to trial in a year. Meanwhile, the contract's binding and you can't fight the kid down the block.

(his most sincere)

I don't want that to happen, Duane. Do you?

Off Duane, screwed... PRELAP:

NASH (V.O.)

Thanks for stepping back.

INT. HIT MEN BOXING CLUB - RING - DAY

Nash climbs in past Duane, who's getting laced up by Bodine.

NASH

...letting the stars shine.

DUANE

I got dibs on you after Cooper.

*

*

NASH
Gotta pad my record against
somebody.

Alvarez, **drenched, works a nearby** SPEEDBAG. **Overhearing** -- *

ALVAREZ
Kick his ass, hombre.

BODINE
You a warrior, dog. Decorated
Major Sergeant. This is beneath
you.

Jesus comes for Alvarez. Barely stopping for:

JESUS
Let's go, Nene -- time for lunch.

DUANE
-- lemme guess -- couple water
pills and a swig of Mylanta?

ALVAREZ
-- **crapped** my way to 153. Gotta
piss out the rest. Do what you
gotta do for family. *

DUANE
(eyes on Nash)
Amen, brother. *

Bodine puts in Duane's mouthpiece as the BELL RINGS. Nash circles left. Long and graceful, he holds his hands low and effortlessly flicks his jab. A classic, beautiful boxer.

Duane constantly moves forward on thick legs. He has an awkward, peekaboo style, routinely taking two punches for every one he lands. A classic, bruising puncher.

DUANE (CONT'D)
-- Cooper's got a quick uppercut.

Nash flicks a jab. Playful. *

DUANE (CONT'D) *
Gotta stay away, sit on his hook. *

Flicks another jab --

NASH
-- you say something?

DUANE

-- you want the help or not --

NASH

-- I'm good either way --

Duane ducks a jab, muscles Nash into a corner --

DUANE

-- I'm doing this for you --

*

NASH

I was told you were doing it to pay
your rent.

*

Nash spins free. Duane stalks forward, wants to end him.
But he needs the money. So:

DUANE

-- Cooper swings from the heels...
when he comes wide be ready.

*

Duane slows up, telegraphs a looping hook. Nash delivers a
straight right full force, drops Duane to one knee.

NASH

Know what you are -- you're a
statistic. Black guy can't take
care of his family.

BODINE

Shut your mouth, dog. I wasn't
injured I'd get in there and shut
it myself --

NASH

Not my fault he's gonna be homeless
he doesn't let me beat him silly.
Kids in the street 'cause Daddy
can't provide.

*

SLAM: Duane -- up off the canvas -- tackles Nash from behind,
flies with him through the ropes, savagely pounds him until:

*

BODINE

-- c'mon, dog -- come on --

-- as the two are separated:

NASH

-- **the hell** is with you, man?

*

Duane takes a final lunge at Nash. Bodine restrains with:

BODINE

-- it's done, dog. It's over.

Duane falls back, spent. Nash is a mess, his nose broken.
Gomez comes to Duane, holds out a CHECK.

GOMEZ

Here's your step-aside money.

-- and he RIPS UP THE CHECK. OFF which:

INT. HOSPITAL - QUINN'S ROOM - DAY

Barnes hands a BROCHURE to Quinn, still hooked up to MONITORS
in bed. Athena looks over his shoulder.

BARNES

Check this out -- guaranteed to
make you smile.

ATHENA

A car brochure? *

BARNES

Deal was you win I get you a ride.
You going to your next fight in
style, Irish. *

QUINN *

There's not gonna be a next fight. *

BARNES *

Bentley Coupe. Pick out a color
and it's yours. *

QUINN *

If I fight again I could die. *

BARNES *

(off the BROCHURE) *

Says the flat screen is optional. *

Ain't nothing optional. *

QUINN *

You're talking about a car. I'm
talking about my life. *

BARNES *

Baby, you're done when you say
you're done. 'Course you wanna
kick back, watch your girl here mix
it up, I get that. It's all about
the ladies in the ring now anyway.

(MORE) *

BARNES (CONT'D)

You see the spread Playboy did last month on girl fighters --

QUINN

ARE YOU LISTENING? WHEN I GET OUT OF HERE I'LL BE LUCKY TO GET A JOB FLIPPING BURGERS!

*
*
*

BARNES

Spread was sweetalicious. I'll bring a copy for you next time. Now quit your whining and pick out a color.

*

INT. HIT MEN BOXING CLUB - DAY

Jesus massages a cramp in Bobby's leg. Alvarez SHOUTS in pain as Frank arrives. Knows at once --

*
*

FRANK

Drank too many laxatives, Bobby. Crapped out all your potassium.

*
*

JESUS

-- which is why I just gave him potassium pills -- it's under control.

*

FRANK

This isn't how I work, Jesus.

*

Past Frank, Jesus sees a MAN enter the gym. Distracted --

*

JESUS

Rudler told me how you "work." Almost cancelled the fight because of that stunt you pulled.

(off the MAN)

-- Dr. Martinez. From Cedars.

(minimizing, to Frank)

-- he loves the fights. Always coming for tickets.

(shouts out)

BODINE --

(to Alvarez)

-- he'll work you over 'til I get back.

*

FRANK

I mean it, Jesus. Put Bobby in against Jones... I'm not gonna work that fight.

JESUS

Then I guess you're out. *

Jesus moves off, instructing Bodine on his way toward the MAN. Frank notices a PEANUT on the table by Alvarez.

FRANK

Lunch?

ALVAREZ

-- and dinner.

FRANK

You don't have to do this.

Alvarez looks at his dad and doctor, then eats the peanut.

ALVAREZ

I'm sorry, Frankie.

BODINE

(arrives as instructed)

Nothing to be sorry about, dog.

I'm here to work my magic.

He digs into Alvarez's leg. Off the PAIN that causes, WHIP PAN to JESUS and the MAN (MARTINEZ), 30s, short and wiry. *

JESUS

What are you doing here? *

MARTINEZ

I'm afraid I have bad news. *

JESUS

Over here -- *

Jesus leads him toward Frank's office, passing the front desk where 305 works his hustle on MACCA, another lifer in sweats and a blue knit CAP. *

MACCA

-- a case of CDs? *

305

T.I.'s latest and greatest. Won't be out for six months. *

305 nods toward SUN PAK, a shadowboxing Korean flyweight. *

305 (CONT'D) *

Tighten me up with Sunshine and they're yours this week. *

(MORE) *

305 (CONT'D)

(shouts to Sun)
Yo queiro "be your manager?" You
necessito a manager.

MACCA

Why are you speaking Spanish to
him? He's Korean.

305

Yeah, but who speaks that? I want
him to know I got no beef with
foreigners.

(oh by the way:)

FYI -- I'm expecting a call from a
guy named Gene.

MACCA

What do I look like, your
secretary?

305

Someone boosted my cell. Plus
which, a case is 24 CDs. You
should clear four hundred easy.

MACCA

Wut-ev-ah know you're bootlegging
him?

305

Just tell me when Gene calls.
(moves to Sun)
Yo, Sun. Dos words: Mucho dinero.

INT. HIT MEN BOXING CLUB - FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

Frank leads Martinez in, shuts the door behind.

MARTINEZ

You should know right off I'm not
optimistic. Nineteen-five is a
large number. Throw in next week's
vig and you're looking at twenty
one g's.

-- vig?! G's?! Waiwaiwait. Who is this guy?

JESUS

I'm good for it. Two days. That's
all I need. Got a sure thing.

MARTINEZ

Is that what you want me to tell El Fat? I didn't collect 'cause you said you had a sure thing?

JESUS

I'm telling you -- I can't lose.

MARTINEZ

Nine tonight. The shop. You can tell El Fat that yourself.

Martinez, the bookie's leg-breaker, starts to go -- points to the POSTER of Alvarez winning his SILVER MEDAL.

MARTINEZ (CONT'D)

Must be real proud of your kid.

EXT. HIT MEN BOXING CLUB - PARKING LOT - DAY

*

TRACK Nash down the stairs, ICE PACK on his cheek. CASEY DINGES, 30s, black, suit and tie, is waiting for him.

DINGES

-- excuse me --

NASH

-- not now --

*

DINGES

I know who you are.

*

NASH

Congratulations. So do I.

DINGES

Yeah, but no one else does.

Nash stops. The Man holds out a MANILA FOLDER. Nash takes the FOLDER, somehow knowing a secret he had buried is about to bubble to the surface. He opens the FOLDER. Oh shit.

*

NASH

What do you want?

OFF Nash, suddenly vulnerable --

CUT TO BLACK:

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. DUANE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Duane SPRINTS up the stairs of a run-down three-flat. HEARS:

GLORIA (V.O.)

I told you -- I talked to my
 husband this morning. He's gonna
 pay you.

...flies onto a landing where Gloria, the baby, and his two
 girls, SHAWNELLE (6) and ROSIE (4) are blocked from re-
 entering their apartment by NORTON, who cowers behind a
 POLICEMAN the second he sees Duane. *

GLORIA (CONT'D)

-- tell him you got the money --

DUANE

-- Mr. Norton, I'm sorry, but we
 only saw the notice to--

NORTON

-- you're three months behind --
 you need a notice for that?

DUANE

-- no -- it's just --
 (can't look at Gloria)
 -- I need a little more time.

GLORIA

-- what?!

DUANE

I need a week. Two at the most.

NORTON

(to the cop)

See what I put up with? I got a
 condo in Cabo and I'm doing this?
 For what? *

POLICEMAN

Sir, Mr. Norton has a legally
 binding eviction notice.

DUANE

(quietly pleading)
 I just need some time to find a
 place for the kids. *

NORTON

I run a business. Not a day care center.

POLICEMAN

I'm afraid you have to leave the premises.

GLORIA

Leave? For where? Where are we supposed to go?

*

EXT. BARNES MANSION -- NIGHT

Over the top huge. And whatever you're thinking: Double it.

BARNES (V.O.)

NO BENTLEY!?

INT. BARNES MANSION - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Gargantuan room. Barely furnished. Barnes paces around SPENCER FELTZ, a small-time promoter whose only name client is Barnes. A BLONDE sits on a couch painting her NAILS.

FELTZ

You're not giving a two-hundred and thirty five thousand dollar gift!

*

*

BARNES

It's for my buddy... he's in the hospital. Baby, I spent that much on my gardener last year.

*

*

FELTZ

No, you spent that much on each of your gardeners last year. You're spending too much money.

*

*

BARNES

That's not what Wut-ev-ah says.

FELTZ

That snake been calling you?

BARNES

Just saying, some people think I can buy a lousy car.

FELTZ

Did you ask Wut-ev-ah his opinion
on your spending a hundred and
eleven thousand dollars on someone
named Penelope Peaks --

BARNES

Pop quiz, baby: Who holds the
hardest record to break in sports?

FELTZ

Kenny, I'm trying to get you to
focus here.

BARNES

My man Wilt the Stilt.

FELTZ

-- great, good, Chamberlain scoring
a hundred in a game it is. Now --

BARNES

Him banging 20,000 women. That's
one a day for 60 years.

(point being:)

I pay Penelope to keep me on pace
to break the record on my 50th
birthday.

FELTZ

You spent a hundred and eleven
thousand on prostitutes?!

BARNES

I got standards, Feltz. Vanessa
here's two grand a day.

VANESSA holds up her NAILS. Very proud:

VANESSA

It's called Fancy Delancy!

FELTZ

Ken, please, listen to me. You
gotta start thinking about your
future. I mean, Jesus, your career
could end tomorrow. Look at Quinn.

BARNES

Ain't never gonna be in Quinn's
position. You wanna know why --
'cause I got a plan.

FELTZ

A plan?

BARNES

Researched it and everything.
Wanna know what it is?

FELTZ

Sure. Can't wait.

BARNES

Interracial porn. You heard of
Clark Gable? Well, baby, you're
looking at Dark Gable.

*

INT. HOSPITAL - QUINN'S ROOM - NIGHT

*

Quinn lies in bed, looks out the window. Athena sits in a
chair next to him, reading Sports Illustrated.

QUINN

You should go.

ATHENA

-- I'm fine --

QUINN

-- get to the gym, workout --
(beat, she keeps reading)
I'm serious. You got a fight
coming up --

ATHENA

-- maybe. We'll see.

QUINN

-- maybe?

ATHENA

I wanna see how you're doing first.

She takes his hand, offers a supportive smile just as Frank
comes in. Three legs of a love triangle. Always awkward.

FRANK

-- hey, kid.
(off the hand-holding)
...Athena --

*

QUINN

She's not gonna fight 'cause of me.

ATHENA

-- I didn't say that --

QUINN

-- gonna be my nursemaid instead --

FRANK

I just talked to Dickerson. Your fight's been put on pay per view.

ATHENA

Pay per view. A fight of mine?

FRANK

Co-feature. Six figure guarantee.

Athena's stunned. This is a dream come true for any boxer -- and one we see Quinn realize will never come true for him.

QUINN

Honey, that's great.

ATHENA

Can they can push it back?

*

QUINN

What are you talking about? Frank, tell her there's no money in baby sitting a cripple.

ATHENA

Don't talk about yourself like that.

FRANK

You should go ahead with the fight.

QUINN (CONT'D)

Listen to him, Athena. He only wants what's good for you.

It's all too awkward for Athena, who stands to go.

ATHENA

I'm gonna get some coffee.

QUINN

-- hey, you're in training.

FRANK

It's okay. I allow her the occasional sin.

A quick look passes between the lovers, then she's gone.

QUINN

She wouldn't be getting this chance
you hadn't taught her so much. In
case she doesn't say nothing about
that, you know -- thanks.

ON Frank, feeling like shit --

INT. UNITED METHODIST CHURCH - BASEMENT - NIGHT

A SHELTER DIRECTOR escorts Duane, Gloria and the kids past
rows of COTS filled with homeless WOMEN and CHILDREN. *
*

SHELTER DIRECTOR

This is all we have available.

Two cots for the family of five. Wearily --

DUANE

It's fine. We're only gonna be
here one night.

SHELTER DIRECTOR

This area is for women and children
only.

DUANE

Nonono -- we need to be together.

SHELTER DIRECTOR

Men sleep upstairs. Otherwise,
you'll have to leave.

A final indignity, made worse when his 6-year old slips her
hand into his and says --

SHAWNELLE

-- it's okay, Daddy. We'll be all
right. *

Duane kneels down, gives both his girls a deeply emotional
hug. Stands to face Gloria. Who gives him nothing.

SHELTER DIRECTOR

Sir, why don't you follow me?

DUANE

I'm gonna take care of this. *

OFF Duane, separated from his family:

EXT. EAST L.A. AUTO BODY SHOP - NIGHT

An open garage ringed with razor wire. EL FAT, an obese Latino sucking on a Fanta grape soda, sits in a folding chair. Martinez beside him. Jesus stands.

JESUS

Thank you for seeing me.

EL FAT

Get the man a Fanta.

Martinez grabs a SODA from a cooler, gives it to Jesus.

EL FAT (CONT'D)

Now, Jesus, here's my problem --

JESUS

-- I know, I'm behind --

EL FAT

That's not my problem. My problem is other people knowing you're behind. Word gets out I didn't collect, I look soft. And I'm not in a soft business. That's my problem.

JESUS

I'll be square in two days.
Hundred percent.

EL FAT

I hear your boy's fighting in two days.

JESUS

Against Ike Jones.

EL FAT

-- and betting the fight's how you plan to get my money.

JESUS

I brought collateral.

Jesus pulls out a HANDKERCHIEF, unwraps Bobby's SILVER MEDAL.

JESUS (CONT'D)

It's worth the nineteen I owe.
I want to let it ride. All of it.

EL FAT
What are you talking about? Your
kid's the opponent --

JESUS
Five to one against.

EL FAT
So why bet it all? With those
odds, you put four thousand on him.
He wins our slate's clean.

JESUS
...that's true...

EL FAT
-- unless you're betting on Jones.
(Jesus confirms with an
awkward look)
That's cold, man. Betting against
your son.
(drapes medal on his neck)
I love that.

Off Jesus, betting on his son to lose:

CUT TO BLACK:

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. PECHANGA RESORT & CASINO - LOCKER ROOM - DAY *

CLOSE ON ALVAREZ as he takes a PENNY out of his mouth, tries to SPIT in a CUP. Nothing comes out.

ALVAREZ

-- I'm dry.

JESUS

-- weigh-in's in an hour. You're 149, still two over.

ALVAREZ

Don't worry, Papi. We're getting the money you need for those tests.

Alvarez stands like an old man, hobbles into a STALL, closes the door. ON Jesus, listening to his son VOMIT --

INT. HIT MEN BOXING CLUB - THE RING - DAY

Frank works mitts with Athena, who lands clean, crisp combinations. STAY ON them even as we HEAR Bodine and Macca shouting advice from ringside. *

BODINE

You dogs gotta train in Vegas. Comped in the Presidential Suite --

MACCA

No way. Big Bear's the ticket.

BODINE *

BIG BEAR?! She ain't training for no four-rounder in Pacoima.

MACCA *

Cabin in the mountains. Just the two of you.

BODINE

He's her trainer, dog, not her boyfriend.

Frank's heard enough. He lowers the MITTS, says simply:

FRANK

We're not going anywhere. Quinn's in the hospital, remember? She needs to stay close.

He slips through the ropes, leaves Athena alone in the ring.
Macca watches him go, spots a nervous, urgent 305. *

305
-- the call. Did I get it? *

MACCA
-- what call? *

305
The call from Gene. The one I told
you I was waiting on. *

MACCA
No, you didn't a call. *

305
How do you know? You're not at the
desk. Maybe you wanna ask around. *

MACCA
Step away, Romeo. When the
boyfriend calls, I'll let you know.
Maybe. *

FIND RUDLER, moving through the gym. When Frank spots him: *

FRANK
What are you doing here? *

RUDLER
I'm looking for Jesus.

FRANK
He's not here, so how about getting
out of my gym?

RUDLER
I know you're upset about the
fight, but it's not me you got a
beef with. Jesus is the one sold
out your fighter.

Frank's been half-listening, his eyes flicking to the ring,
where Macca works Athena. Now Rudler has his attention:

FRANK
Sold out how?

RUDLER
-- for cheap, too --

FRANK
You paid him to take the fight,
didn't you?

RUDLER
 Twenty-five hundred. That's why
 I'm here -- to pay up. *

Rudler holds out an envelope. Frank takes it.

FRANK
 I'll make sure he gets it.

RUDLER
 I got curious and asked around. *
 Wanna know why Jesus took the fight *
 on short notice? *

INT. HIT MEN BOXING CLUB - FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

Frank is at his desk on the phone.

FRANK
 ...yeah, I'd like to be connected
 to Dr. Martinez...
 (beat)
 -- really, you're sure...?
 (beat)
 ...nono, that's fine. Thank you.
 (hangs up, calls out)
 HEY, MOUSE --

INT. HIT MEN BOXING CLUB - FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

Ten minutes later. Frank ties a STRING onto Mouse's finger.

FRANK
 You gonna remember what you need to
 ask? You want me to write it down?

MOUSE
 -- what you're asking for, even I'm
 not gonna forget.

FRANK
 -- you got my number in case --

MOUSE
 I got it, Frankie, no problem. I
 just hope you're wrong about this.

FRANK
 You and me both.

INT. PECHANGA RESORT & CASINO - BALLROOM - DAY

The weigh-in. Three COMMISSIONERS sit at a TABLE checking in fighters for tonight's card. Managers, friends and family mill about. A DIGITAL SCALE is in the center of the room. A COMMISSIONER stands next to it, calls out:

COMMISSIONER
Bobby Alvarez.

Jesus parts the crowd for his son, who walks slowly, trying not to show any weakness. He strips down, gets on the SCALE.

TIGHT ON the DIGITAL READOUT: ...144 ...145 ...146. It slows then spikes to 148 ...149. Alvarez' eyes flick to Jesus -- maybe he didn't make it -- then the numbers get lower until the number 147 FLASHES and the scale BEEPS.

COMMISSIONER (CONT'D)
Alvarez: 147.

Alvarez steps off. Jesus offers PEDIALYTE.

JESUS
Nothing to it.

COMMISSIONER
Ike Jones.

IKE JONES bounces onto the scale. Alvarez tries not to seem intimidated. Which is hard. The guy is a human muscle.

COMMISSIONER (CONT'D)
Jones: 146 and a half.

Jones spots Alvarez, runs a finger across his throat --

EXT. WUT-EV-AH PROMOTIONS - DAY

A Bodyguard holds the door for Wut-ev-ah, now wearing a black velvet suit and bowler. Duane approaches timidly.

DUANE
I want another chance.

WUT-EV-AH
Should'a thought of that before.
Because of you, the Cooper fight's
been pushed a month.

DUANE
That'll give me more time to work
with him, teach Nash what I know...

WUT-EV-AH
 Push back gives Nash time to study
 on his own. Doesn't need you now.

A DRIVER opens the limo DOOR. Duane sees Nash inside. *

WUT-EV-AH (CONT'D) *
 Be right with you, my brother. *

NASH
 (holds glass of CHAMPAGNE)
 Take your time. I'm good.

WUT-EV-AH
 (back to Duane)
 What else you got? Because we got
 a cable deal to sign.

Last thing Duane wants is to beg in front of Nash. But:

DUANE
 I need the money. Please. I'll do
anything. *

INT. HOSPITAL - QUINN'S ROOM - DAY

A SET OF CAR KEYS snatched in mid-air by Barnes.

BARNES
 I'm telling you, it's not from me.

Quinn tossed them from a chair across the room.

QUINN
 -- that's not what the guy said.

BARNES
 -- guy -- what guy?

QUINN
 -- a guy. The one who said he was
 delivering the Bentley you ordered.

BARNES
 I'm saying Feltz cut me off, baby. *

QUINN
 Maybe this guy didn't get the memo.
 'Cause the car's here and it's
 costing me twenty a day to park in
 the garage. So thanks for nothing.

BARNES

Your old lady's got that covered.
 What they selling her fight for?

*
 *

QUINN

Thirty nine fifty.

BARNES

Baby, you gotta lock her up -- make
 that nut community property.

*
 *

QUINN

How about we stick to the car --
 which I can't accept.

BARNES

Then trade it in. Gotta be
 something special you want.

*

INT. PECHANGA RESORT & CASINO - RESTAURANT - DAY

CLOSE ON A MOUND OF FOOD: Steak. Rice. Vegetables. TILT UP
 to include Alvarez, chowing down.

FRANK

Where's your dad?

*

ALVAREZ

-- playing the slots, hoping to get
 lucky, you know him.

*
 *

Frank pushes Rudler's ENVELOPE across the table.

*

FRANK

For when he gets back.

ALVAREZ

-- what's this?

FRANK

Money he took to sell you out.

Alvarez looks inside, fans the CASH.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Your dad's in over his head with a
 local bookie --

*

ALVAREZ

-- you don't know what you're
 talking about --

FRANK

Mouse knows the guy. I had him
check it out. Jesus put you in so
he could bet the fight--

*

ALVAREZ

He put me in 'cause he's sick. He
didn't want me saying nothing, but
if it looks off to you that's why.
He took the fight because he's
dying and needs money for
treatment.

*

FRANK

-- that's not true, Bobby --

ALVAREZ

You saw the doctor yourself -- guy
who came to the gym. Dr. Martinez.

FRANK

The one he said worked at Cedars --

ALVAREZ

-- that's right --

FRANK

-- there is no doctor at Cedars
name of Martinez.

(beat)

Call the hospital yourself you
don't believe me.

(beat)

First he tells you to take the
fight because Jones is hurt. When
that didn't hold, he says it's
because he's sick --

*

*

ALVAREZ

-- why are you doing this?

FRANK

-- only health risk Jesus runs is
what'll happen to him he doesn't
pay off what he owes.

ALVAREZ

-- is it because he fired you?

FRANK

-- he fired me so he can control
the fight, make sure you lose.

ALVAREZ
 You said yourself he's betting the
 fight. *

FRANK
 -- yeah. Against you. *

ALVAREZ
 -- you got proof of that --

FRANK
 -- Rudler told me.

ALVAREZ
 All of a sudden you and Rudler are
 pals?

FRANK
 -- you'll see it in the fight --
 he'll do something --

ALVAREZ
 -- no, he won't --

FRANK
 -- say something maybe and you'll
 know --

He grabs Frank with his left, cocks his right.

ALVAREZ
My father believes in me.

FRANK
 -- no, he doesn't --

Alvarez lands a straight right -- WHAM -- then, BLACKNESS:

INT. WUT-EV-AH'S LIMOUSINE - DAY

Wut-ev-ah sits alongside Nash. Long beat, then:

WUT-EV-AH
 So who's this guy Dinges?
 (off Nash's surprise)
 Called me to say he knew something
 about you I might wanna hear. *

NASH
 -- it's nothing. Forget it.

WUT-EV-AH

If you got a problem, it's my job
to make it go away.

*
*

NASH

I can handle it.

*

WUT-EV-AH

I'm sure you can.
(a clear demand)
I still wanna know.

NASH

Dinges knows that I did time in
foster care.

*

WUT-EV-AH

Half the fighters I know did time.

NASH

Most kids there were **only** two or
three. People gonna adopt, they
want little kids. I was nine. So
that was one strike right there.

*
*
*

(beat)

Had another strike too, bigger one
than my age. But that one the
administrator took care of on his
own -- on the form he filled out
giving people information about me,
you know, for them to decide
whether to take me or not... on the
form there's a box you gotta check
off saying your race and the
director, he checked me off as
white.

WUT-EV-AH

What are you saying?

NASH

He didn't ask me... just figured it
was easier to unload me if he said
I was white --

WUT-EV-AH

-- **what** are you telling me?

*

NASH

That I've been passing... as
white... when the truth is, I'm
black.

(beat)

*

NASH (CONT'D)

Dinges gave me until tomorrow.
Said if I didn't cut him in on our
deal he'd go public.

*
*

WUT-EV-AH

You have a meeting scheduled?

NASH

Ten o'clock tomorrow night.
Parking lot at the gym.

*

(beat)

Should I go?

*

*

WUT-EV-AH

*

(pours some Champagne)

You should relax. This is supposed
to be a celebration. It's not
everyday you sign a contract for
ten million.

Holds up his glass. CLINKS it with Nash's. OFF which:

INT. LOS ANGELES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

Duane approaches a TICKET AGENT.

DUANE

I have a reservation. Duane
Simmons.

TICKET AGENT

And where are you traveling today,
Mr. Simmons?

DUANE

Boise.

OFF Duane, do anything for his family:

CUT TO BLACK:

END ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. PECHANGA RESORT & CASINO - DRESSING AREA - NIGHT

TIGHT ON a HAND being WRAPPED. WIDEN onto Jesus, applying the TAPE to Alvarez -- searching his father's face for clues about his true intensions. Silent beat before:

ALVAREZ

How you feeling, Papi? You feeling good?

JESUS

I'm alright. Hold still.

Jesus applies a last piece of TAPE. Alvarez SMACKS his hands together as Rudler sticks his head in.

RUDLER

-- you're up.

A TRAINER drags in the previous fight's losing FIGHTER, bloodied and spent. As Alvarez eyes him nervously:

INT. PECHANGA RESORT & CASINO - BALLROOM - DAY

Good crowd. Television COMMENTATORS. Definite electricity in the house. Buzz increases when the RING ANNOUNCER says -- *

RING ANNOUNCER

-- another notable on hand tonight is Compton's own middleweight champion of the world Kenny "The Anvil" Barnes!

Barnes slips into the ring -- magenta suit, championship BELT -- soaks up the applause until he spots **Wut-ev-ah** sitting in the front row next to a WOMAN, 50s, black, nicely dressed. *

WUT-EV-AH

(off the WOMAN)

Your mamma says you never bring her to the fights.

The WOMAN (ROCHELLE BARNES), waves.

ROCHELLE BARNES

-- hi, baby.

(to anyone in earshot)

That's my boy up there. Looking good, champ!

BARNES
 (surprised to see her)
 -- hey, Mamma --

WUT-EV-AH
 She's a great lady. Only wants
 what's best for her boy.

BARNES
 You don't miss nothing, do you?

WUT-EV-AH
 Best never do, yo. Which reminds
 me -- Quinn like his Bentley?

ROCHELLE BARNES
 (off Wut-ev-ah)
 He's so sweet. Took me to the
 Palm.

WUT-EV-AH
 How about I send my limo to pick
 you up tomorrow, bring you to the
 office where we can talk.

Barnes looks at his mom, a pig in shit. What the hell --

BARNES
 Okay, baby, we'll talk. Just be
 sure the limo's stocked.

WUT-EV-AH
 Absolutely. Blondes or brunettes?

INT. HOSPITAL - QUINN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Athena hurries in. Quinn's showered, dressed and sitting in
 a chair. Slightly nervous.

ATHENA
 The nurse says they're discharging
 you in the morning.

*

QUINN
 They got a couple more tests, but
 yeah -- I'm going home.

ATHENA
 That's so great! We can put all
 this behind us and move forward --

QUINN

I was thinking maybe I could work with Frank, you know, be a trainer. You think he'd be open to that?

ATHENA

-- working with you -- sure -- I think so... yeah...

QUINN

What I'm saying is, I want you to know I got a plan. That you can depend on that.

*

ATHENA

-- okay --

QUINN

-- not that you're gonna depend on anyone, but if you needed to, ever, I'm just saying...

He pulls out a BLUE VELVET BOX, holds it up to her.

*

ATHENA

-- what is that?

QUINN

I'd get down on one knee, but they got my peeing into a tube. I know, just what you wanna be told at a time like this --

ATHENA

-- a time like what?

He opens the box. Inside is a HUGE diamond RING.

QUINN

Athena, will you marry me?

ATHENA

...Jack...

QUINN

Is that a yes?

ATHENA

...yes... yes I'll marry you.

*

She hugs Quinn, burying her confusion in his shoulder.

QUINN

Not that you asked, but that's what
a Bentley looks like in diamonds.

*
*

INT. PECHANGA RESORT & CASINO - BALLROOM - NIGHT

*

Alvarez and Jones stand center ring, getting final instructions from the PECHANGA REFEREE. Side by side it's shocking how soft Alvarez appears.

PECHANGA REFEREE

-- I want a clean fight, gloves up,
no hitting in the clinches. Any
questions?

(none)

Touch gloves and come out fighting.

The customary TAP. Alvarez retreats to his corner. Bodine slips in his mouthpiece. Jesus offers a last word:

*

JESUS

Judges we drew are locals. No way
we get a decision from them. You
gotta go inside.

ALVAREZ

Frankie said I should use my reach.

JESUS

Inside, Nene.

Alvarez nods, crosses himself. The bell RINGS. He turns and Jones is on him at once, muscling him against the ropes. Lands three shots before Alvarez spins free into the middle of the ring.

*

Jones storms forward. Alvarez whips out a beautiful jab, then another -- snapsnapsnap -- keeps Jones at bay.

JESUS (CONT'D)

-- come in on him.

Alvarez works his jab -- clearly his comfort zone --

JESUS (CONT'D)

UNDERNEATH. To the body.

Another jab, then, as instructed, Alvarez works inside and is met with a bruising hook. OFF the THUMP:

INT. HIT MEN BOXING CLUB - FRANK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Frank's alone in the dark, drinking BEER and watching Alvarez get hammered. *

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

A solitary figure JOGS through a rainy night. JUMP CLOSE: It's Athena, her face etched in concern. She gets to an intersection -- no cars, the light is green -- but she slows, clearly deciding which way to go -- on her run, in her life -- then opts for the side street. OFF her new direction:

INT. BOISE ARENA - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Duane stands in front of a cracked mirror. Banished to a place that doesn't even have a locker room. Staring at himself as the LOCAL PROMOTER comes in. His alias: *

LOCAL PROMOTER
You Sergeant Major? *

DUANE
That's right.

LOCAL PROMOTER
Four rounds, thousand a round -- if you remember it's not your night. *

DUANE
I'll remember.

LOCAL PROMOTER
Let's go.

INT. BOISE ARENA - NIGHT

Indoor rodeo arena. The ring set up in the center of a sand pit. Duane follows the promoter down the sandy aisle. The white crowd jeers as he descends to a deeper ring in hell: *

INT. PECHANGA RESORT & CASINO - BALLROOM - NIGHT

Alvarez exchanges power shots with Jones in the center of the ring. It's close combat and the crowd loves it. But it's a style that favors Jones, who is clearly the crowd favorite.

BODINE
(pleading to Jesus) *
He needs to jab. Keep him off.
Hear me, dog -- your boy needs to *
run.

INT. HIT MEN BOXING CLUB - FRANK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Athena appears in the doorway. Soaking wet.

ATHENA

Jack asked me to marry him.

FRANK

(long sip of beer, then:)
What did you say?

ATHENA

I said yes.

FRANK

Congratulations.

His eyes drift to the Alvarez fight on TV.

ATHENA

Bobby?

He nods. Athena walks around the desk so she can see. They're close now, and although Bobby is taking a beating on TV, it's all they think about.

FRANK

Can I kiss the bride?

ATHENA

I wish you would.

He pulls her into a kiss. OFF their rekindled affair:

INT. BOISE ARENA - RING - NIGHT

Duane stands against the ropes, arms low, taking blow after blow from a WHITE FIGHTER. As if he's punishing himself, which, of course, he is. ON a brutal THUMP, SMASH CUT TO:

INT. PECHANGA RESORT & CASINO - BALLROOM - NIGHT

Alvarez getting THUMPED. Welts under both eyes. He spins free, gains space. Bodine can't help himself:

BODINE

Stay wide, dog. Stay wide.

But Alvarez, the good son, dives back in, takes a hard WHACK, and goes down. He springs up, gets a standing eight.

PECHANGA REFEREE

...one ...two ...three..

The TIMEKEEPER SLAPS the canvas. ON this ten second warning: *

RING CARD GIRL (V.O.)
I gotta go --

INT. PECHANGA RESORT & CASINO - BATHROOM - NIGHT

The RING CARD GIRL pushes away from Barnes, ties on her bikini top. He hands her CARD number 8.

BARNES
I hope it goes ten, baby.

INT. PECHANGA RESORT & CASINO - BALLROOM - NIGHT

The RING CARD WIPES frame to REVEAL Alvarez in his corner. *
Bodine works the bucket. Jesus IRONING his welts.

JESUS
-- he's dropping his left. Come in
under the ja--

ALVAREZ
-- I've been coming in. Doesn't
work.

JESUS
-- come in under his jab. Lead
with your right, not your chin.

The BELL rings. Alvarez, fighting mainly on instinct now,
stays wide, landing his jab.

JESUS (CONT'D)
-- under the jab. Slide under it.

But Alvarez stays wide. Snaps his left.

JESUS (CONT'D)
-- right lead, dammit. Right. *

Alvarez circles for an opening. Leads with his right. It
lands -- but so does a brutal counter from Jones. Stunned,
Alvarez does little to deflect Jones' renewed assault, capped
by an uppercut that snaps Alvarez' head back and buckles his
knees, folding him onto the canvas.

PECHANGA REFEREE *
... two ... three ...four...

Bodine screams GET UP. Not Jesus. He screams two words *
Bobby never thought he'd him say:

JESUS
STAY DOWN! STAY DOWN!

The words THUMP Alvarez harder than Jones ever could, taking him back to:

INT. HIT MEN BOXING CLUB - STEAM ROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

Jesus watches Alvarez jump rope impossibly fast.

JESUS
 Who stays down?

ALVAREZ
 Losers stay down.

JESUS
 Who gets up?

ALVAREZ
 Winners get up.

Jesus eyes the THERMOSTAT: 113. Turns it up to 120. Alvarez disappears into a cloud of steam, bringing us back to:

INT. PECHANGA RESORT & CASINO - BALLROOM - NIGHT

-- where the ref continues the count --

PECHANGA REFEREE
 ... seven ...eight...

He's up at nine. The ref shakes his gloves --

ALVAREZ
 -- I'm good -- I can go --

-- the ref waves the fighters together. Alvarez plays defense, circling away from Jones as he regains his senses. The bell RINGS and he turns to his corner, eyes set on Jesus.

JESUS
 You're done, Nene. I'm calling the fight.

Jesus raises his hand toward the referee. Alvarez grabs it, pulls it down. Eye to eye:

ALVAREZ
 I know, Papi. I know everything.
 (beat)
I believed in you.

With that he kisses his father, a loving excommunication. *
Then sits on the STOOL. As Bodine sponges him off --

INT. HIT MEN BOXING CLUB - FRANK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Frank and Athena make love in the glow of the TV lights, the sound of the fight washing over them. When the BELL RINGS:

INT. PECHANGA RESORT & CASINO - BALLROOM - NIGHT

Alvarez gets off the stool with renewed purpose. Circles, *
jabs, spins out of corners, works Jones to his advantage. *
The crowd loves it, their allegiance shifting to the *
underdog.

INT. BOISE ARENA - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Duane watches as the local promoter counts out his money.

LOCAL PROMOTER *
Next time how about making it look
like you're trying?

DUANE *
Ain't gonna be a next time.

EXT. HIT MEN BOXING CLUB - PARKING LOT - NIGHT *

Dinges sucks on a cigarette. A MAN emerges from the SHADOWS. *

MAN *
You Casey Dinges? *

DINGES *
Yeah. Who the hell are you? *

INT. PECHANGA RESORT & CASINO - BALLROOM - NIGHT

QUICK CUTS: Alvarez snaps Jones' head back with a flurry of jabs... the RING CARD GIRL parades CARD number 9... Alvarez gets sponged off in his corner, but says nothing to Jesus...

The fighters exchange blows... a cut opens over Jones' eye... *
Alvarez uses his speed and reach to work outside and in... *
Jones, weak and confused, barely makes it back to his corner. *

EXT. HOLLYWOOD - APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Frank pulls his car to a stop to let Athena out. We're MOS -- outside the car looking in -- but we can see the sadness in their kiss goodbye. Like maybe it's for the last time.

INT. PECHANGA RESORT & CASINO - BALLROOM - NIGHT

The RING CARD GIRL parades CARD number 10... Jesus smears Vaseline on Alvarez, who glares at him when the bell RINGS. *

A classic final round: Toe-to-toe exchange. Alvarez getting the edge, Jones storming back. Until, at the FINAL BELL, the crowd going nuts, they each raise their arms in triumph. *

Then comes the wait: The ring fills... Alvarez returns to his corner...

JESUS

The judges won't give it to you.

ALVAREZ

Don't bet on it.

...a few, final, excruciating beats... then:

RING ANNOUNCER

Ladies and gentleman, we have a split decision. Judge Will Staeger scores it 96-94 Jones. Judge Ron Semiao scores it 98-92 Alvarez. Referee Mark Shapiro scores it 96-94 for the winner by decision... Bobby Alvarez!

The crowd SCREAMS approvingly as Alvarez leaps into Bodine's arms --

BODINE

You did it! You the dog, dog.

Bodine parades Alvarez toward Wut-ev-ah, standing in the center of the increasingly crowded ring.

BODINE (CONT'D)

Better sign this boy up. He's gonna be champ soon.

WUT-EV-AH

I'll set it up with Jesus.

Alvarez looks through the crowd, spots his father across the ring. They exchange a final look --

ALVAREZ

No. Set it up with me. *

...then Jesus disappears into the crowd.

INT. UNITED METHODIST CHURCH - BASEMENT - NIGHT

TRACK WITH Duane, through the shelter, tight on his bruised face. Gloria and the kids are asleep on the COTS. He kneels beside Gloria, strokes her hair. When she stirs --

GLORIA

...Duane...
 (off his face)
 ...are you okay...

DUANE

Wake the kids. We're going home.

OFF Duane, a soldier whose mission is accomplished:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Alvarez walks alone. The thrill of victory long since replaced by the pain of his father's betrayal. A CAR pulls up alongside. Frank gets out.

FRANK

You did good.

*
*

ALVAREZ

My dad didn't think so.

FRANK

Bodine said you gave him your winnings.

ALVAREZ

I tried. He wouldn't take it.

Beat.

FRANK

Where are you going?

*

ALVAREZ

I was thinking about getting some coconut cake.

*
*

FRANK

Want some company?

*

ALVAREZ

...yeah, I do...

*
*

Alvarez climbs in. A new beginning. As they drive off:

INT. HIT MEN BOXING CLUB - NIGHT

Almost deserted, except for Mouse at the desk and Nash,
working the SPEED BAG. 305 comes out of the locker room:

305
Where's Macca?

MOUSE
Probably getting beefed at by his
old lady.

305
He was supposed to tell me when a
guy named Gene called --

Mouse looks at a string on his finger.

MOUSE
By the way a guy named Gene called.

305
When -- what'd he say?

MOUSE
Something about getting it on at
midnight. Which between you and
me? Is way more than I wanna know.

305 isn't listening -- he's digging into his gym BAG. Pulls
out a PISTOL, shoves it into his pants as two DETECTIVES --
GLASS and RICHARDS -- enter with a blunt urgency. 305 bumps
one in his rush to exit, but the detectives focus on Mouse:

DETECTIVE GLASS
Steve Nash here?

MOUSE
Yeah, that's him there. Why?

No reply. They simply cross to Nash.

DETECTIVE GLASS
Mr. Nash?

NASH
What's it to you --

DETECTIVE GLASS
I'm Detective Glass. This is
Detective Richards. We want to ask
you some questions about Casey
Dinges.

NASH
What about him?

DETECTIVE RICHARDS
We understand you met with him
recently. We want to know why.

NASH
Why not ask him?

DETECTIVE RICHARDS
He's not real talkative just now,
him being dead and all.

DETECTIVE GLASS
He was murdered earlier tonight.
We thought you might know something
about that.

OFF Nash, realizing how Wut-ev-ah handles situations:

CUT TO BLACK:

THE END