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THE DEAD ZONE

"THE COMBINATION"

Production #2018

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THE DEAD ZONE

"THE COMBINATION"

TEASER

FADE IN:

- 1 EXT. BANGOR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - ESTABLISHING - DAY 1
- 2 INT. AIRPORT ARRIVALS/BAGGAGE AREA - DAY 2

A SIGN reads "TRAVEL SMART. FLY THROUGH BANGOR." Tilting down to find a few LIMO DRIVERS all holding up cardboard signs for their respective clients. One says "LEWIS," and we REVEAL JOHNNY holding it, trying to keep a poker face as he sees BRUCE approaching, a small duffel slung over his shoulder.

JOHNNY

Mister Lewis? Mister Lewis?

Bruce sees him, does a double-take.

BRUCE

What the...? John?

JOHNNY

Your limo awaits, sir.

BRUCE

Right, my "limo." More like a
busted-ass Jeep.

(smiles)

But I'll take it.

They hug warmly, then move toward a LUGGAGE CONVEYOR to wait for Bruce's suitcase.

- 2A EXT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY 2A

As Johnny and Bruce exit the terminal, Johnny's attention's drawn to a MAN signing some autographs as a newspaper PHOTOGRAPHER snaps pictures and TWO REPORTERS take notes.

JOHNNY

Who's that?

BRUCE

Danny Avila, boxer who's fighting
Darryl Tibbs up here on Friday.

JOHNNY

Tibbs? Isn't he the...?

(CONTINUED)

2A CONTINUED:

2A

BRUCE
(nods)
...middleweight champ.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

2A CONTINUED: (2)

2A

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Yeah, it's a regular Rocky story.
This fight is his big shot.

Avila sees Bruce and waves. Bruce waves back and Avila starts toward them.

JOHNNY

You know him?

BRUCE

I helped Danny rehab his knee a while back. Nice guy.

ANGLE ON DANNY AVILA

He's a trim middle-weight in his late 30s. He's trailed by his three-months-pregnant wife HELENA, 30, as well as the photographer and reporters.

AVILA

Hey, man, long time, no see.

BRUCE

In my business, that's a good thing.

(they bump fists)

AVILA

Honey, you remember Bruce Lewis...

HELENA

(smiling)

Of course.

AVILA

Hey man, guess what, I'm going to be a dad...

*
*
*

BRUCE

Congratulations!

(then to Helena)

I thought you had a glow about you. Danny, Helena, this is my friend, Johnny Smith.

*
*
*
*

Johnny hangs back slightly, and has picked up one of Bruce's bags, avoiding a handshake.

JOHNNY

Nice to meet you.

One of the reporters notices Johnny and Avila together, and whispers to his photographer who lifts the camera --

(CONTINUED)

2A CONTINUED: (3)

2A

REPORTER

Hey Johnny, how 'bout a picture
with the contender?

Johnny tries to back out, but the Reporter is already nudging Avila next to him, squeezing Bruce and Helena aside.

(CONTINUED)

2A CONTINUED: (4)

2A

JOHNNY

...Look, I uh...

REPORTER

C'mon, a coupla local heroes...
just take a sec...

Avila shrugs, it's okay with him, and Johnny shoots Bruce a look, but he's trapped; it'd be rude not to oblige. Avila steps beside him and Johnny smiles gamely as the photographer snaps a couple of shots. Then:

AVILA

Hey wait, get one like this.

He playfully pretends to punch Johnny in the jaw. Only on the light contact, we RAMP TO JOHNNY'S JAW and...

3 INT. LEWISTON ARENA - RING (VISION) 3

A GLOVED FIST CONNECTS WITH AVILA'S JAW. WHAM!

Then WIDER, dozens of cameras flashing now as DARRYL TIBBS, a powerfully built black fighter, bulls a bloodied Avila across the ring with punishing body blows, the thudding impacts all but overwhelmed by the roar of a crowd brought to its feet by the sense that a knock-out is imminent. Avila defends but A FINAL COMBINATION catches him flat-footed: a series of blows ending with a haymaker that sends him falling, suddenly in SLOW-MO, out of frame -- REVEALING JOHNNY standing in the ring, watching.

4 CLOSE ANGLE ON AVILA - STILL IN SLOW-MO 4

as he hits the canvas, bounces slightly then lies there, his muscles slack, eyes staring open dully, lifelessly.

5 BACK TO SCENE 5

Johnny's still in his post-vision fog as Avila moves off with his wife, calling back to Bruce.

AVILA

Gotta run. Come see the fight.

BRUCE

You bet. Take care of that knee.

Johnny eyes Avila as he walks off, press trailing, along with a few more autograph seekers. Then quietly to Bruce:

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

5

JOHNNY

He's gonna get killed.

BRUCE

He's a long shot, but I wouldn't
go that far.

JOHNNY

Well, I just did. He's going to
die in that fight.

And as Bruce turns to look at him...

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

6	OMITTED	6
AND		AND
7		7
7A	EXT. SMITH HOUSE - DAY - ESTABLISHING	7A
7B	INT. JOHNNY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY	7B

STARTING CLOSE ON A BANGOR DAILY NEWS in Bruce's hands. The front page has a photo of Johnny and Avila with the teasing head: "Johnny Sees Bright Future for Local Boxer."

BRUCE
(reading)
"Johnny Sees Bright Future for
Local Boxer."
(then)
"Bright Future"? Man, how can
they just make up stuff like that?

They're headed for the front door, Johnny gathering his car keys, anxious to get going.

JOHNNY
I don't want this to turn into
another media circus. We've gotta
handle this quietly, give Avila a
chance to hear us out in private.
It could help that he knows you.

BRUCE
Yeah, I know him all right.
(off Johnny's look)
I know he's been fighting a long
time and this is his first title
shot. It's a big deal for him,
John. He's not gonna like hearing
what we've got to say.

JOHNNY
He doesn't have to like it, just
believe it.

And they're out the door...

8	INT. BOXING GYM - DAY - STARTING CLOSE ON A BOXER'S FISTS	8
---	---	---

buzzing a speed bag, the sound melding with HIP HOP music from a boom box.

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED:

8

Then more quick CLOSE-UPS: a boxer's feet lightly skipping rope; another boxer's gloves pounding a heavy bag; then glimpses of Avila's determined eyes, visible through his headgear as he trades blows with a heavier black SPARRING PARTNER (CARL), all the sounds adding up to a timeless rhythmic symphony.

Cutting away to a battered TIMEX with a broken band. It's being used as a stopwatch by Avila's trainer, VIC MURPHY, a wizened Irish ex-pug in his 70s.

9 WIDER - WITH JOHNNY AND BRUCE

9

as they enter, take in the rough-hewn gym. SEVERAL YOUNG FIGHTERS, Latinos mostly, train in the open area in front, where HEAVY BAGS dangle, one of them firing punches at the target mitts held up by a beefy black assistant trainer. Bruce sees Avila sparring in the RING in back, nods to Johnny and they start toward him. Vic sees them coming, reacts with annoyance.

VIC

Time.

(moving to intercept)

Sorry, guys, no press allowed the week of the fight.

BRUCE

We're not press, we're friends of Danny's.

VIC

Yeah, you're all friends of Danny's. Now I'm asking you nice --

AVILA (O.S.)

Yo, Vic, it's okay. I know 'em.

He's leaning on the ropes... indicates Bruce.

AVILA

That's Bruce Lewis, did the P.T. on my knee. And the dude with the cane there is Johnny Smith, man who predicted my very "bright future."

VIC

Right, the "psychic."

And if Avila sounds like he's already taken the rosy prediction to heart, Vic sounds like it irritates and worries him.

(CONTINUED)

9

CONTINUED:

9

But he lets Johnny and Bruce follow him back to the ring.

VIC

Okay, take ten minutes. But then
I want you to work his body like
I been telling you.

As the fighters climb down, Avila grabbing a towel and
Carl heading for a water cooler...

AVILA

Tibbs wants to bang, I'll bang.

VIC

Sure, you can punch, but you go
for the head against a headhunter,
guess whose ass winds up in the
pot? Remember what I told you
from the beginning, chop the...

AVILA

(overlapping, breezy)
"Chop the trunk and the branches
will fall." Yeah, I remember,
Vic. I remember everything you
tell me. But right now I wanna
hear from Johnny here.

He turns to Johnny, throws some playful mock punches.

AVILA

Just tell me when he's going down,
man. I'll do the rest.

Johnny glances around at the other fighters, all of whom
seem to have one ear cocked as they continue training.

JOHNNY

Can we talk in private?

AVILA

Yeah, sure. Step into my office.

He leads them around to the back of the ring. Vic follows,
still eyeing Johnny uneasily.

9A

ANGLE

9A

JOHNNY

Look, Danny... that newspaper
headline, it was... misleading.

(CONTINUED)

9A CONTINUED:

9A

AVILA
Misleading how?

BRUCE
In the sense that he didn't
actually see your "bright future."

AVILA
You mean you didn't see the fight?

JOHNNY
No, I did, actually, but... um...
(beat)
Danny, to be honest, I didn't see
you winning. In fact, I saw you
getting hurt, badly hurt.

AVILA
Whoa. Hurt? Hurt how?

VIC
We don't need to hear this crap.

AVILA
No. I want to understand him.

JOHNNY
(beat)
I saw Darryl Tibbs hitting you...
I saw you fall... and then I saw
you lying in the ring.
(beat)
You were dead, Danny.

And there it is. Avila stares at him like he can't quite process it; instead he just disbelievingly repeats...

AVILA
Dead?

BRUCE
(quickly)
But just because he saw it doesn't
mean it has to happen. There's
still time to --

But Vic cuts him off, glaring at Johnny.

VIC
Okay, who sent you?

JOHNNY
Nobody sent me, sir.

(CONTINUED)

9A CONTINUED: (2)

9A

VIC

It's Tibbs' people, right? That friggin' Jimmy D. This is all some kind of set up!

BRUCE

Sir, John's just trying --

VIC

Trying to mess with my fighter's head. Well, you got another thing coming, you sick bastard!

And he jabs Johnny with his index finger, sparking --

10 INT. ARENA - RING - NIGHT (VISION)

10

Vic kneeling by Avila. He breaks a smelling salt... no effect... then desperately shakes Avila's shoulders...

AVILA

Danny?! Danny?!

Pulling back to find Johnny watching from ringside, behind a seated row of sportswriters and JUDGES. The chaotic scene FREEZES. Looking for clues as to when or how this will happen, Johnny focuses on the nearest judge's --

SCORECARD

It's for the twelfth and final round (and so far it's going to Tibbs, should we notice). As Johnny reacts...

11 RESUME

11

VIC

I want you outta here now!

JOHNNY

(to Avila)

Twelfth round. That's when it happens. It's just one fight. Is it worth your life?

But Avila just gives Bruce a disgusted, betrayed look, then walks away as the other fighters gather around menacingly. Vic's voice is now ice cold with fury.

VIC

I said now.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED: 11

Johnny and Bruce, realizing it's hopeless, start moving toward the door. As they exit, Johnny and Avila exchange a final look.

12 INT. JOHNNY'S JEEP - MOMENTS LATER 12

As the doors slam shut and both men just sit for a moment.

BRUCE

Well, I guess that could've gone better.

JOHNNY

(beat, thinking)

I'm not giving up yet. There must be somebody who can stop this fight.

And as Bruce considers this too...

13 CLOSE ON AN OFFICE DOOR 13

bearing the title: "Maine Athletic Commission," and below it: "Fred Jenkins, Executive Director."

JENKINS VOICE

Gene Purdy, Arthur Markoff, Harrison Fischer... very impressive references.

14 INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY 14

JENKINS, a somewhat stolid man in his 50s, holds a sheaf of phone messages as DOC KOWALSKI, 60s, the ring physician seen earlier in Johnny's vision, eyes Johnny and Bruce.

JENKINS

Not that it matters. This commission isn't about to overlook a concern about a fighter, no matter what the source.

JOHNNY

This isn't just a "concern," sir.

JENKINS

Yes, I understand it may seem very real to you. But you should understand, there are limits to what we can do based on... this sort of information. Doc?

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED:

14

KOWALKSI

(shrugs)

Avila may be an underdog, but you can't claim it's a total mismatch... He's passed all his medical exams...

BRUCE

(frustrated)

We just told you a man's going to die. There's got to be something you can do.

And as Jenkins and Kowalski share a look, the door bursts open and boxing promoter JIMMY D, 40 -- a man whose flamboyance masks a ruthless obsession with the bottom line -- enters trailed by a young assistant, ANDREW.

JIMMY D

Well, well, looks like my sources were correct. Closed door meetings, secret cabals... Snap a picture, Andrew, tell my lawyers we have *proof* of conspiracy.

And as Andrew whips out a tiny digital camera and takes a picture of the flabbergasted foursome...

JENKINS

Conspiracy? I assure you, Mister D'Angelo --

JIMMY D

The name is Jimmy D! What's my name, Andrew?

ANDREW

Jimmy D.

JIMMY D

Thank you. And please don't have the temerity to deny the evidence of my own eyes.

As those eyes now fix on Johnny...

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED: (2)

14

JIMMY D

Mister Smith, I presume. Is it not true that you are carrying on a malicious campaign to undermine the legitimacy of a rigorously planned and vetted business enterprise, to wit this fight, first by claiming a spurious knowledge of the outcome...

JOHNNY

If you mean that newspaper headline...

JIMMY D

...and now, I hear, by raising medical concerns about my fighter. Which are ridiculous on their face because not only is Darryl Tibbs in top physical condition, but --

JENKINS

Actually... Jimmy... Mister Smith's concerns relate to Mister Avila.

JIMMY D

(surprised)
They do?

KOWALKSI

Not to put too fine a point on it, but he's convinced your man's going to knock him dead, literally.

A moment of silence follows as Jimmy D, normally the undisputed master of his domain, absorbs this. Then...

JIMMY D

He's saying Darryl's going to *kill* the sorry son-of-a-bitch?

KOWALKSI

(nods)
Now of course this is highly unusual, but I suppose we can require additional medical tests... maybe even an MRI...

JOHNNY

That's not going to change anything.

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED: (3)

14

JENKINS

I'm afraid it's the best we can do. We can't just stop a fight based on a psychic's "vision."

JIMMY D

That doesn't mean we can just ignore this kind of information.

And now the others react as Jimmy D does an about-face and drops his act, his concern seeming very genuine.

JIMMY D

Mister Smith, I apologize. I'm a businessman and I thought you were playing some kind of angle here, trying to hurt Darryl somehow. But if you're sincere...

JOHNNY

Sir, if we don't stop this fight, a man's going to die. And that will be a tragedy for Darryl Tibbs as well as for Danny Avila.

JIMMY D

Then I guess we'll have to make sure that doesn't happen. Which means, if you'll excuse us for a few minutes, these gentlemen and I will have to seriously reconsider our options.

As Jenkins and Kowalski react, Johnny and Bruce exchange guardedly relieved looks on their way out...

15 OMITTED

15

15A INT. ATHLETIC COMMISSION - RECEPTION AREA - LATER

15A

Bruce flips through a BOXING MAGAZINE while Johnny taps the crown of his cane, waiting.

BRUCE

Think they'll really stop the fight?

JOHNNY

Sounded like it. Maybe we'll get lucky.

Andrew appears from the inner sanctum.

(CONTINUED)

15A CONTINUED:

15A

ANDREW

Mister D has called a press conference for nine a.m. tomorrow morning and he'd like you to attend, Mister Smith. You are available, aren't you?

JOHNNY

Absolutely. They're calling off the fight?

ANDREW

That's why he's calling the press conference. Nine a.m. Please don't be late.

Andrew disappears back inside, leaving Johnny and Bruce alone again. Off their relief...

15B EXT. ATHLETIC COMMISSION BUILDING - DAY (STOCK)

15B

Several TV NEWS TRUCKS parked in front, their antennae up. We hear Jimmy D prelapped...

JIMMY D (V.O.)

As you all know, Ali-Liston II was the last big fight to be held in Lewiston, so I was proud to bring boxing back to Maine.

16 INT. PRESS ROOM - DAY

16

Andrew leads Johnny and Bruce through a mob of press into the back of the large room, where the press conference is already underway, Jimmy D holding forth, seated between Avila and a glowering Tibbs, who in turn are flanked by their trainers, all facing a mob of press.

JIMMY D

But now, information has come to light which threatens this historic bout.

A knot is forming in Johnny's gut.

JIMMY D

The source of this "information," is here with us now.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED:

16

JIMMY D (CONT'D)

(pointing to Johnny)

That's right, Mister Smith, I see you lurking there in the shadows, like some prophet of doom and gloom afraid to face the light. But I'm sorry to disappoint you and say that your dire prediction will not dissuade this brave man.

REPORTERS

Prediction? What's he saying?

And as Johnny realizes he's been set-up, the photographers and TV cameramen are already swinging their lenses around.

JIMMY D

That's right, Maine's very own Johnny Smith has made a psychic prediction that Danny Avila will not only lose the bout on Friday, but will lose his life. Does that prospect frighten you, Mister Avila?

AVILA

I got a prophecy of my own...
(raises his fists)
...and I'm gonna make it come true with these.

JIMMY D

And how about you, Mister Tibbs?

TIBBS

I'm gonna put him down, and I'm gonna put him down hard. He ain't dead, he's gonna wish he was.

JIMMY D

Whoop! There you go, folks, call it a grudge match, or call it a death match, but whatever you call it, don't miss Friday night's fight, 'cause you're gonna wanna see how this one ends.

Meanwhile reporters are mobbing a stunned Johnny. "Is it true, Johnny?", "What'd you see?" etc. Bruce pulls Johnny away, elbowing his way through the mob of press.

BRUCE

C'mon, let's get you outta here.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED: (2)

16

BRUCE (CONT'D)
(then to press)
Move -- let the man pass -- back
off...

And as Bruce leads him out, Johnny looks back and exchanges
a glare with Jimmy D, who beams at the highly marketable
chaos he's unleashed, as we --

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

17 INT. SET OF ESPN'S "TUESDAY NIGHT FIGHTS" SHOW 17

Anchored by boxing announcers BRIAN KENNY and MAX KELLERMAN.

KENNY

And in other news, the return of big-time boxing to Lewiston, Maine, taking a strange twist...

KELLERMAN

...a very strange twist...

KENNY

...with a psychic's "prediction" that challenger Danny Avila will die in the course of his 12-round match-up with middleweight champ Darryl "The Terminator" Tibbs.

KELLERMAN

Tell me, is this boxing or professional wrestling?

KENNY

Well, one thing I can tell you: interest in this fight is skyrocketing, along with ticket sales, no doubt making promoter Jimmy D very happy.

KELLERMAN

But not everyone up in Maine, apparently.

He cues a clip as we CUT TO:

18 INT. PURDY'S OFFICE - DAY 18

GENE PURDY (ID'd in a super) responding curtly into reporters' tape recorders.

PURDY

If Johnny Smith says a man will die then a man will die. What disgusts and saddens me is that his gift of prophecy is being used to publicize this event rather than cancel it.

19 INT. JOHNNY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY 19

Where Johnny is busily multi-tasking, watching Purdy on TV while scrolling through a web page on his Powerbook that's headlined "TIBBS RELEASED FROM JAIL AFTER ASSAULT."

PURDY (ON TV)

Have we become as debased as the Romans when they threw Christians to the lions?

JOHNNY

You tell 'em, Gene.

The doorbell rings. Sighing, Johnny clicks off the TV, rises.

19A OMITTED 19A

20 INT. SMITH HOUSE - FOYER - DAY 20

Johnny opens the door to reveal Avila, looking distracted and suspicious, as though unsure exactly why he's here.

JOHNNY

Danny... I didn't expect to see you here.

AVILA

Yeah. I didn't expect to be here either.

(looking around)

Nice crib. Guess being a psychic must pay pretty good.

JOHNNY

Actually, my last paying job was as a teacher. This was my parents' house... it still is, I suppose... it's held in a trust.

And Johnny's admitting this partly out of awkwardness, but also because he can feel Avila's suspicion and doesn't want to give him any grounds to distrust him.

AVILA

Must still cost you some bucks keeping it up though, huh?

JOHNNY

I don't sell my services, Danny, if that's what you're getting at.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

20

CONTINUED:

20

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

I'm not working an angle for Jimmy D or anyone else.

AVILA

Then why are you trying to screw this up for me? You got any idea what this fight could mean? For me? For my family?

JOHNNY

You mean money?

AVILA

Screw the money. This is a title fight. A championship fight. I worked for this! You understand that?

JOHNNY

I'm not trying to hurt your career, I'm trying to save your life.

AVILA

This is my life, and you're gonna stop messing with it!

And Johnny eyes him, realizing Avila's deeper concern.

JOHNNY

Why? Because you're starting to believe me?

And now he's really hit a nerve, Avila's anger ratcheting.

AVILA

You hear what I just said?!

JOHNNY

Were you hoping I'd admit it was just a lie, a scam, a curse I can take back?

AVILA

I'm telling you to shut up!

JOHNNY

Because I can't take it back...

And now with a shout of rage and frustration, Avila grabs Johnny and throws him up against the stairwell.

21 SUDDENLY - (IN A VISION) 21

THE BANISTER SUPPORTS BECOME ROPES, AND NOW JOHNNY'S BEING HELD AGAINST THE RING APRON IN...

INT. ARENA - NIGHT (VISION - CONTINUOUS)

On the other side of the ropes, Doc Kowalski and Vic Murphy are trying to revive the dead future Avila as Tibbs prances around the ring, arms raised, and the crowd roars.

JOHNNY

...just like I can't stop what I'm seeing... what I'm seeing right now...

AVILA

*(pulling back a fist)
Shut up! Just shut the hell up!*

JOHNNY

You're lying on the canvas. Vic's trying to revive you but he can't, because you're already dead.

22 IN THE STAIRWELL 22

Avila can't resist glancing through the banister supports, imagining the grim scene that Johnny's describing. Then, even angrier, he turns back, ready to throw that punch...

23 INT. ARENA 23

More people entering the ring now... PARAMEDICS administering CPR... but it's clearly hopeless...

JOHNNY

*You want to change the future?
You want to live? Then quit.
Walk away.*

And somehow these words defuse Avila's anger, leaving disgust instead. He releases Johnny and the VISION ENDS.

24 RESUME REALITY 24

AVILA

*I ain't walkin' away from nothin'.
I never ran from a fight in my
life, and I'm not starting now.
(backing away)
I'm warning you.
(MORE)*

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED: 24

AVILA (CONT'D)
Stay away from me, and stay out
of this fight.

He exits. Off Johnny, his sense of hopelessness growing...

25 OMITTED 25
THRU THRU
27 27

27A EXT. CITY PARK - DAY 27A

Bruce and Johnny approach a bench in some T.B.D. scenic
locale.

BRUCE
You sure this is the spot?

JOHNNY
We're early.

BRUCE
Next question: Why are we here?

JOHNNY
Because it occurred to me -- while
Danny Avila was pinning my head against
my stairwell -- that maybe we're going
about this the wrong way. If we can't
stop the fight, maybe we can arrange
a different ending.

Bruce senses where he's going.

BRUCE
You're thinking of trying to use
your abilities to help him win?

JOHNNY
I'd settle for helping him
survive. But I can't help him if
I can't get near him.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

27A CONTINUED:

27A

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

(beat)

He won't talk to me anymore and his trainer's already thrown us out of his gym. Which is why we need somebody who can talk to him, somebody he trusts.

And he turns as we see Helena Avila walking toward them, carrying a store-bought lunch, wearing a wary expression.

28 EXT. CITY PARK - LATER

28

Tracking in front of Johnny, Bruce and Helena as they walk along, Johnny finishing up his story, Helena pensive, fingering A SMALL CRUCIFIX PENDANT.

JOHNNY

I know it must be hard to believe... hard for anyone to believe...

HELENA

No, it's not.

(eyeing Johnny)

I think things happen to people for a reason. Things like your accident. Like your meeting Danny.

(beat, forthright)

To me you are an angel, Mister Smith, sent to protect my husband.

JOHNNY

I think he'd probably disagree with you.

HELENA

You have to understand boxers. They think if they admit their fear, they're finished. But I know my husband, and he is afraid.

BRUCE

Anyone would be afraid of dying.

HELENA

Maybe it's that, or maybe it's something that scares him just as much. Failure... the end of his hopes and dreams... I don't know. What I do know is he'll never quit.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

28 CONTINUED:

28

HELENA (CONT'D)

No matter how scared he is.

JOHNNY

Then help us use what I saw to
change the future. Your husband's
future... your child's future.

HELENA

How?

29 INT. AVILA'S GYM - DAY

29

POV ANGLE as we come through the door and boxers part to
make way for us, giving us both curious and hostile looks.

We approach the back, where Avila's hitting Tyrell's target
mitts, Vic's supervising. As all three men turn to us...

REVEAL HELENA LEADING JOHNNY AND BRUCE

HELENA

Danny... I know --

But he cuts her off angrily.

AVILA

What the hell you doing bringing
them in here?

HELENA

Be quiet and listen. They want
to help.

VIC

Yeah. Help him into a coffin.

HELENA

(strong)

That's not true.

(to Avila, re: Johnny)

I want you to listen to what he
has to say.

(he's about to object)

Please, Danny. If not for
yourself, then for me.

Avila shakes his head... eyes Johnny skeptically.

AVILA

I already told you, I ain't
quitting.

(CONTINUED)

29

CONTINUED:

29

JOHNNY

I'm not asking you to.

AVILA

Then why are you here?

JOHNNY

Like your wife said, to help you.

AVILA

Help me how?

JOHNNY

By using my abilities... to guide you... in any way I can.

AVILA

Yeah. Right.

(to Helena)

Okay, I listened. Now get him out.

But now Bruce quickly steps forward.

BRUCE

You watched Tibbs' fight tapes, didn't you?

Avila shrugs. Vic eyes Bruce guardedly.

VIC

Sure, we always watch tapes to see what a guy does.

BRUCE

You mean to see what he did. In the past. Well what if Johnny could show you "fight tapes" from the future so you can see what Tibbs is gonna do, in that ring, Friday night?

Avila's grudgingly impressed; he hadn't considered the ramifications of Johnny's putative powers. He eyes him.

AVILA

Okay, say I'm just assuming you're not entirely full of it, you can really do that?

And Johnny glances at Bruce, who may just have oversold his abilities, but he hides his uncertainty and nods.

(CONTINUED)

29 CONTINUED: (2)

29

JOHNNY

Possibly. You need every edge
you can get and I can be that
edge.

BRUCE

Trust him, Danny. I've seen him
do amazing things.

And Avila's not quite ready to trust him, but then his
skepticism is also competing with his fear, and his hope.
He glances at Vic, who's similarly conflicted, protective
of his fighter but also superstitious. He shrugs.

VIC

We got three days left. This is
all about your head now. It's
your fight kid.

A beat, then Avila takes a couple of steps closer to
Johnny, looks him in the eye.

AVILA

You know there's no second place
here. You're on my team, you
fight to win, just like me. You
down with that?

A beat, then Johnny nods. Avila holds out his taped hand,
but as Johnny takes it, we RAMP TO HIS FACE.

30 INT. ARENA RING - EXTREME ON AVILA'S GLASSY EYES (VISION) 30

*As we pull up, revealing Avila lying dead on the canvas,
Vic and the Doctor beside him. And now Johnny's there
too, wearing an Avila team jacket, no longer an observer
but part of this grim scene.*

*Then we continue pulling up until their figures become
tiny and insignificant, framed in the slowly rotating
square of the ring. THE VISION ENDS.*

31 RESUME ON JOHNNY

31

still holding Avila's hand and forcing a smile, never
feeling more like the Grim Reaper come to visit as he says:

(CONTINUED)

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

32 INT. ARENA - RING - NIGHT (VISION) 32

Once again it's the twelfth round and the crowd ROARS as Tibbs bulls Avila across the ring with a series of punishing body blows, then slams that first left hook into his already battered face, the force of the blow closing Avila's eyes (which will be significant later) and sending droplets of sweat and blood -- the latter from a cut over Avila's right eye -- flying. Only now --

THE ENTIRE SCENE FREEZES

And we WIDEN to show Johnny walking into frame (sans cane) as he studies the fighters. He moves closer, observes Avila's cut, and the droplets of sweat and blood NOW SUSPENDED IN MID-AIR. Then he turns to Tibbs, runs a hand along the man's hooking punching arm.

JOHNNY

A left hook. That's how it starts.

SMASH TO:

33 TIGHT ON JOHNNY'S LEFT HAND GRIPPING AVILA'S RIGHT WRIST 33

as they face each other, and as we tilt up we see that Avila looks a little unnerved. They're standing in --

INT. AVILA'S GYM - PRACTICE RING - DAY

Vic and Tyrell observing from outside the ropes, Bruce beside them. In the b.g., some of the other fighters have stopped training to watch the odd scene as well. Vic's expression is decidedly skeptical.

VIC

That's how what starts?

34 INT. ARENA - RING (VISION) 34

Johnny's still eyeing the two frozen fighters.

JOHNNY

That last combination... in the twelfth round. It's always the same.

35 INT. GYM - CONTINUOUS 35

Vic and Tyrell exchange looks. Vic decides to go along with this for now and challenges Johnny.

VIC
Okay, a left hook. Then what?

36 INT. ARENA RING (VISION) 36

The CROWD ROAR RESUMING as Tibbs throws a second punch -- a straight right that rotates his body into a southpaw stance -- and once again the ACTION FREEZES at the moment of impact. Johnny steps alongside Tibbs' frozen figure, starts to repeat the punch.

JOHNNY
A right... a straight right, I'd guess you'd call it...

37 INT. GYM - CONTINUOUS 37

As Johnny now rotates his body, pulling Avila toward him with his left hand, while his right fist stops just short of his jaw.

JOHNNY
Only he rotates his body as he throws it... like this.

And Avila finds himself staring into Johnny's eyes, eyes that clearly aren't even seeing him, and he's spooked.

VIC (O.S.)
A "Fitzsimmons Shift."

And Avila and the others turn to Vic, who's now eyeing Johnny with surprise, this last move provoking a memory, which in turn prompts the boxing historian in him.

VIC
Bob "Ruby Robert" Fitzsimmons, first triple world champ. He'd use his right to switch to a southpaw stance, then throw a big left hook to the solar plexus. Devastating.

He's engaged now, or at least curious.

VIC
All right, what's he throw next?

And again Johnny turns to the fight only he can see as...

38 INT. ARENA - THE FIGHT RESUMES

38

But just for a moment as Tibbs again freezes as he indeed connects with a big left hook to Avila's body.

JOHNNY

Yeah, it's a left to the body...

And now the fight resumes, in a sort of STOP-MOTION, Johnny narrating as each punch lands, briefly freezing the action...

JOHNNY

*Then another right, an uppercut...
Then a left hook to the head...*

Once again the final haymaker sends Avila crashing to the canvas like a felled tree. Camera follows him, then pulls back and up to a CLOSE-UP of Johnny looking down.

JOHNNY

That last left hook blind-sides
you on the temple.

As camera now PANS TO:

39 INT. PRACTICE RING - AVILA'S UNSETTLED FACE

39

As he also looks down, seeing only empty canvas but now imagining the rest. He winces as he feels --

JOHNNY'S HAND

now gripping his wrist so hard it's shaking. Unnerved, Avila jerks his wrist away, and Johnny reacts as he comes out of the vision.

VIC is now considering it all thoughtfully.

VIC

Assuming this ain't just a circus
act, it's the shift that sets it
all up. I ain't seen a guy use
it for years...

(beat)

...but I know Tibbs' trainer, and
he's the kinda guy who might just
dust it off, see if they catch us
napping.

He eyes Johnny, reappraising him, then:

(CONTINUED)

39

CONTINUED:

39

VIC

Mister Smith, you can step out of
the ring...

Then he turns to Avila's sparring partner, Carl.

VIC

Carl, get your ass in there, we've
got work to do.

40

INT. GYM - LATER - CLOSE ON VIC'S BATTERED TIMEX

40

The second hand sweeping past the 12, then revealing Vic,
glancing down at it as he watches Avila and Carl sparring
in the ring. Avila isn't throwing any punches, just
blocking as Carl whales on him, Vic egging him on.

VIC

That's it, beat on him like you
just found him screwin' your wife.

(to Avila)

Remember, kid, this happens, it's
gonna be after twelve long rounds
with the toughest middleweight
out there.

(glances at his watch
again, then)

Now!

And Carl throws the COMBO, tagging Avila with a left and
a straight right, shifting his stance, then throwing the
left to the solar plexus that follows the shift. Avila
drops his gloves in response to the body blow, leaving
himself open for the right uppercut and left hook to the
head, knocking him back on the ropes. As Avila shakes it
off and dances away, we find --

BRUCE AND JOHNNY

watching from ringside as Vic now offers some reassurance
and advice.

VIC

That's okay, that's okay.
Remember: When you see the shift
you drop your right -- the right
elbow -- and block that body shot
'cause that's the killer. Then
you've got to get you gloves back
up before that uppercut or you'll
be wide open for the left hook.
Got it?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

40 CONTINUED: 40

VIC (CONT'D)
(Avila nods)
Then do it.

41 TIME CUT - NEW ANGLE 41

Avila and Carl sparring again, Avila getting tired.

VIC
Now!

Once again, Carl nails him with the right. But this time after the "shift," Avila drops his elbow, neatly blocking the left hook to the body, then jabs with his other hand to get clear. He smiles through his mouthpiece at Vic.

AVILA
Piece of cake, Vic.

Johnny and Bruce exchange encouraged looks, but Vic's not satisfied.

VIC
Sure, when you know it's coming.
(to Carl)
This time, you pick the moment.

Carl nods, and the two men resume sparring. As Johnny and Bruce continue to watch, Carl throws the combo again, and once again Avila blocks it, lowering his elbow to block the body blow, then getting his glove back up in time to deflect the left hook to the head.

AVILA
Like I said, I can handle it.

VIC
You're still late getting that glove back up after dropping the elbow. When Tibbs throws this combo at you, it's going to be like trying to catch a bullet with your teeth -- any doubt, the slightest hesitation and your dead.

Avila exchanges a determined look with Johnny, then...

41A INT. AVILA'S GYM - AVILA'S LEFT THUDS INTO A HEAVY BAG (FORMERLY SCENE 48) 41A

Pulling back to show Vic stopping him to again demonstrate

(CONTINUED)

41A CONTINUED: 41A

the elbow drop, then the follow-up defensive jab, Johnny and Bruce watching, as we begin a --

41B TRAINING MONTAGE (FORMERLY SCENE 49) 41B

Series of shots of Avila being run through exercises designed to break down the combination into its component parts, then defend against those parts.

A CLOSE ANGLE highlights AVILA'S FEET, as he's taught to shift his weight back in response to the Fitzsimmons shift.

Vic demonstrates how to anticipate the move, drawing a line of sight from Danny's eyes to his own hips as he rotates them to deliver the right.

Another angle shows Avila dropping his right elbow, absorbing the follow-up left with increasing success.

A flurry of left hooks to the head, Avila doing a better job blocking them with each successive punch.

Johnny and Bruce both participate as well, Bruce assisting by holding a heavy bag, and Johnny again demonstrating some of the punches he saw in his vision: a hook followed by an upper cut, etc. The sequence culminates in --

THE PRACTICE RING

as Avila now consistently defends against Carl's attack, Johnny and Bruce standing with Vic watching, all of them encouraged.

VIC

That's it kid. Thought and action become one thing. No hesitation, that's the key.

BRUCE

I'd say he's got it licked.

JOHNNY

Sure hope you're right.

But he sounds more hopeful than convinced...

41C INT. AVILA'S GYM - LATER (FORMERLY SCENE 50) 41C

The rest of the boxers are long gone. Johnny and Bruce watch Vic gesturing to Avila as he reviews some moves. Avila nods dutifully, wiping his face with a towel.

(CONTINUED)

41C CONTINUED:

41C

As they approach, they catch the end of a Vic pep talk.

VIC

Okay, weigh-in's tomorrow, so go home, rest up and think happy thoughts about killing the bastard.
(turns to Johnny)
You satisfied?

Johnny smiles, then nods to Avila.

JOHNNY

You looked good, man.

AVILA

I feel good... I'm ready...

Avila picks up on Johnny's concern.

AVILA

What's the matter, you don't believe me? Go ahead, see for yourself...

Avila raises a fist up to Johnny, who hesitates to touch it. Bruce and Vic watch, all of them afraid of what Johnny might see.

VIC

You're ready kid. You said so yourself. Leave it at that.

AVILA

I'm not afraid. Not anymore.

Avila reaches out, his fist gently connecting with Johnny's chin, triggering...

42 *SUDDENLY A BIG RED BOXING GLOVE, WIELDED BY DARRYL TIBBS, IS HEADED RIGHT FOR HIS FACE* 42

INT. ARENA RING - NIGHT - POV SEQUENCE

as Tibbs rains more blows on us -- we're caught in the headlights of this combination as we INTERCUT WITH --

43 INT. GYM - CONTINUOUS - ON JOHNNY

43

as he reacts to the punches.

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED: 43

ANGLE - BRUCE STANDING WITH AVILA

as they both see Johnny jerking like a spastic rag doll fighting with the Invisible Man. Other fighters notice too, and the sight is at once weird and almost comic; a couple point and smile. But Bruce knows this is anything but funny, and rushes toward Johnny, just as --

44 INT. ARENA RING - POV ANGLE AND SLOW-MO 44

Tibbs cuts loose with that final haymaker, his right hand rocketing toward us, the red glove filling the frame --

44A FLASH - AVILA'S DEAD EYES STARING UP (FORMERLY SCENE 51) 44A

Johnny's fatal vision now reduced to imagistic shorthand.

45 INT. GYM - JOHNNY 45

reels as if hit by a truck, then starts to fall -- and is caught by Bruce barely in time. As Bruce helps steady him, Johnny opens his dazed eyes and mutters...

JOHNNY

I'm sorry... nothing's changed.

Avila explodes as Vic pulls him away.

AVILA

You're wrong! You hear me? Wrong!

Johnny and Bruce watch helplessly as Avila storms off.

46 OMITTED 46

47 INT. ANOTHER GYM - PRACTICE RING - DAY (FORMERLY SC.38) 47

As DARRYL TIBBS' GLOVED FISTS smash into a sparring partner's headgear and exposed face. Tibbs continues the savage assault until the man falls, one arm tangled in the ropes. It's an intimidating performance, especially since it's just a rehearsal for the bout to come.

TIBBS

Get up, bitch! Get your ass up!

The other fighter weakly waves him off. Tibbs fumes, calls out to his TRAINER as the groggy man is helped down.

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED:

47

TIBBS

Yo, Frank, get me someone in here
who can hit.

The Trainer gestures to another fighter, who approaches with a touch of trepidation. (NOTE: This gym is a spiffier redress of Avila's, the staff more neatly garbed and better equipped. Tibbs' trainer uses a DIGITAL STOPWATCH as opposed to Vic's strapless Timex.)

ANGLE REVEALING JIMMY D

reading glasses perched on his nose, reviewing contracts while finishing a call on his cell phone.

JIMMY D

Don't worry, my friend. Your
assistance is appreciated and
will be amply rewarded.

TIBBS (O.S.)

Yo, Jimmy.

He's leaning over the ropes, gesturing Jimmy over. Jimmy tosses his cell to Andrew as he backs toward him.

JIMMY D

Tell ESPN Darryl'll do a one-on-
one for Sports Center.

He approaches Tibbs, flashing a broad grin.

JIMMY D

Just got a call from one of my
"contacts" in the Avila camp.
Seems our friend Mister Smith is
sleeping with the enemy. They
must really be running scared if
they think a psychic's gonna help
'em.

TIBBS

Yeah, well I wanna talk to you
about that guy.

(looks around, then
quietly)

What if he's right and I really
kill this chump?

JIMMY D

Feeling guilty already?

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED: (2)

47

TIBBS
I *mean*, can I be prosecuted?
'Cause I won't do no more jail
time.

And Jimmy D smiles a bit indulgently at his charge, and we sense that of the two, he's the scarier predator.

JIMMY D
I checked with the lawyers and
there's no problem. So you just
put it out of your mind and do
what comes naturally.

TIBBS
(smiling)
All right then...

Tibbs nods, reassured, then pounds his gloves together and eyes his new opponent, who's adjusting his headgear.

TIBBS
Well what you waiting for, chump?
Come and get your ass whupped.

And as Tibbs wades in and fires a jab, we CUT TO:

48 OMITTED
THRU
52

48
THRU
52

52A INT. JOHNNY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

52A

Johnny pokes at a container of chinese food, taking out his frustration on the leftovers.

BRUCE
I know what you're thinking man,
but you did everything you could.

JOHNNY
And it still didn't make a damn
bit of difference.

BRUCE
He beat that combination every
time in practice. You gave him a
fighting chance...

(CONTINUED)

52A CONTINUED:

52A

JOHNNY

...but I'm still seeing him die.
What if the problem isn't how he
blocks the jab or counters the
"Fitzsimmons shift"?

BRUCE

Then what is it?

JOHNNY

(a beat, then realizing)
It's me.

BRUCE

That's crazy John.

JOHNNY

No it isn't. I've made a self-
fulfilling prophecy. You heard
his trainer. One bit of doubt,
one bit of hesitation and he's
dead. And who planted that doubt
in his head? Me. Danny Avila
believes in me... in my
prediction... more than he believes
in himself...

(an idea forming)

...So if this is a self-fulfilling
prophecy -- maybe it's the prophecy
that needs to change.

BRUCE

Change how?

(then, understanding)

You mean lie to him about what
you're seeing? Make him believe
he's going to win?

And it's apparent this doesn't sit too well with him, but
Johnny doesn't see another choice.

JOHNNY

Maybe believing in a lie is better
than knowing the truth.

BRUCE

That's a scary thought, John.

Off Johnny, considering this... and his lack of options...

53 OMITTED
THRU
54A

53
THRU
54A

55 INT. LEWISTON ARENA - DAY - CLOSE ON A WEIGHT SCALE

55

As a pencil pushes a counterweight a fraction of an inch
until it balances, and we hear:

55 CONTINUED:

55

DR. KOWALKSI (O.S.)
Daniel Avila, 156 pounds.

WIDENING TO REVEAL

Johnny and Bruce standing at the edge of a crowd of press gathered in front of the ring and empty arena seats. Tibbs is here too, naturally, along with officials including Kowalksi and Jenkins; Vic, Jimmy D and Tibbs' trainer; plus cops and security personnel.

JIMMY D catches Johnny's eye and smiles. Johnny smiles back, then turns to watch...

TIBBS takes off his robe, then deliberately bumps Avila as he steps off the scale.

TIBBS
Watch where you're going, bitch.
(when Avila glares)
Yeah, you bad. Better get measured
for your box, 'cause I'm gonna
put you in it.

Avila tenses. Vic puts a hand on his shoulder.

VIC
Save it for the ring.

But Tibbs, intent on provoking him, overhears this and turns it into even more incendiary fodder.

TIBBS
I'm gonna save it for your wife,
'cause I know she's gonna need
consoling.

And that does it. Avila goes after him and a MELEE ensues as both men are barely held away from each other.

JOHNNY has been watching this and now, with a glance at Bruce, he charges into the middle of the fracas and puts his hands on both fighters as he tries to keep them apart.

BRUCE
(genuine worry)
John!

But he can't get to him through the crowd, though his shout alerts the photographers, who begin snapping away.

- 56 ON JOHNNY - SLOW-MOTION, STROBED BY THE PHOTOGRAPHERS' 56
FLASHES AS HE EXPERIENCES VISIONARY FLASHES OF HIS OWN --
- 57 *INTERCUTTING: DISORIENTING FRAGMENTS OF THE COMBINATION,* 57
AS SEEN FROM BOTH FIGHTERS' PERSPECTIVES
- 58 RESUME 58

And then the fighters are pulled apart and Johnny collapses, though this time it's a very deliberate swoon. Bruce moves to help him up as reporters crowd around shouting questions.

REPORTERS

What'd you see, Johnny? Is Avila still going to die?

JOHNNY

(weak)

He's going down... he's going down...

REPORTERS

Who, Johnny? Avila?

JOHNNY

(weak but clear now)

No... Tibbs. Darryl Tibbs.

And as the reporters scribble notes, we see Jimmy D reacting -- is this real or what? He tries to regain control of the situation...

JIMMY D

Don't listen to him! This man is a fraud!

But he's drowned out by the flurry of questions shouted at Johnny.

And then we see Johnny's true target audience: Danny Avila. He looks stunned, reacting to this surprising turn, not sure at first what to make of it, but we can see it already working on him as we:

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

59 OMITTED 59
AND AND
60 60

61 INT. LEWISTON ARENA - NIGHT 61

A PAIR OF PARAMEDICS roll a medical gurney down an aisle, accompanied by TWO DOCTORS in white coats, carrying medical bags. PULLING BACK to find a TV CAMERA panning to follow them as they go by as we hear:

JOE TESSITORE (V.O.)
Two teams of paramedics, plus
Boston's top cardiologist and
neurosurgeon...

REVEALING Jimmy D being interviewed by ESPN2 COMMENTATORS JOE TESSITORE and TEDDY ATLAS while ANOTHER TV CAMERA films them. The ring can be seen behind them, along with a boisterous crowd filling the arena.

TESSITORE (CONT'D)
...isn't that going a little
overboard, Jimmy?

ATLAS
Especially with this Johnny Smith
guy saying now Avila's gonna knock
Tibbs out.

JIMMY D
Well, I admit the gentleman's
prognostications have proven a
tad capricious, but I'm not about
to risk the health of either of
these two brave gladiators.

TESSITORE
Any "prognostications" of your
own, Jimmy?

JIMMY D
Only that I think we're in for
one hell of a scrap. And now if
you'll excuse me, I'm gonna wish
my fighter good luck.

And as he moves off with a wave...

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED:

61

ATLAS

There's one guy who's never at a
loss for words...

TESSITORE

...or a good publicity stunt.
Still, you gotta wonder if underdog
contender Danny Avila isn't getting
a "psychic boost" from Johnny
Smith's latest "prophecy."

These last words taking us to --

62 OMITTED

62

AND

AND

63

63

64 INT. AVILA'S DRESSING ROOM

64

Where a JUDGE finishes signing one of Avila's hand wraps
while Vic smears VASELINE on Avila's scarred brows. Vic,
Johnny, Bruce and Helena look on, Johnny glancing at the
assistant trainer, who's somberly assembling his BAG OF
CUT MEDICATION.

VIC

Remember to keep your right up,
or you'll end up as ugly as me.

HELENA

(lightly)

You mean as handsome, don't you?

Avila throws a fast combo as the Judge exits.

AVILA

Man, I can't wait to get it on.

(to Johnny)

So'd you see how it's gonna happen?

Johnny smiles, encouraged by Avila's upbeat attitude.

JOHNNY

I just saw him going down, but
remember, you've still got to put
him there.

Avila begins shadowboxing, throwing hooks and combos.

AVILA

I hear ya. No problem.

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED:

64

HELENA

My sister's waiting.
(kisses Avila's cheek)
Good luck, baby.

AVILA

Don't worry. I ain't the one's
gonna need it.

Helena passes Johnny, her face beaming gratitude.

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED: (2) 64

She mouths "Thank you" and SQUEEZES HIS ARM...

65 *SLOW MOTION FLASH - RINGSIDE - CLOSE ON HELENA RISING FROM HER SEAT, HANDS GOING TO HER HORRIFIED FACE* 65

66 RESUME ON JOHNNY 66

Rattled but maintaining his composure as Helena exits, only Bruce noticing his unease.

AVILA

Hey Vic, we got jackets for these guys, right?

VIC

On the table.

Avila grabs two TEAM JACKETS with his name emblazoned on them and hands them to Bruce and Johnny.

AVILA

You're in my corner, you gotta look sharp.

BRUCE

Thanks.

But as Johnny accepts his, we RAMP TO HIS FACE AGAIN.

67 *SLOW-MOTION FLASH - AND NOW JOHNNY IS SEEING HIMSELF, WEARING THE TEAM JACKET AND FACING THE O.S. RING, AS HE REACTS TO SOMETHING AWFUL, HIS EYES CLOSING* 67

68 RESUME 68

Johnny now hanging onto that smile for dear life as he sets the jacket down, and this time Avila's eyes narrow. A beat, then he speaks with deliberate casualness.

AVILA

Hey, how about everyone give me a minute with my medicine man here?

Vic eyes Johnny suspiciously, but nods.

VIC

Keep warmin' up.

Avila nods and smiles obligingly as Vic and the others file out, Bruce glancing back worriedly at Johnny.

(CONTINUED)

68

CONTINUED:

68

But when the door closes, Avila's expression changes.

AVILA

It's all a crock, ain't it?

JOHNNY

What do you mean?

AVILA

You didn't see me taking him down.
You still think I'm gonna die in
that ring.

JOHNNY

Danny, I told you what I saw.

AVILA

Yeah? Well, tell me again. 'Cause
I want to know what you see right
now.

And he holds out his taped hands. And now realizing he has no choice, Johnny reaches out and grips them. And as he does, camera spins around them and they become Avila and Tibbs locked in combat as Johnny experiences --

69

A RAPID SERIES OF FLASHES - THE COMBINATION REDUX

69

Tibbs hitting Avila with the combination punches; Avila falling, hitting the canvas. -- Then Avila dead, eyes open.

70

RESUME

70

As Johnny releases Avila's hands and now puts on his best poker face.

JOHNNY

It's just like I said. You hit
him, he goes down.

(then, off his dubious
look, more forcefully)

My visions have changed, Danny.
And that's because the future's
changed. I see you're going to
do this. I see it's going to
happen. Believe me.

Avila eyes him, wanting to believe him but still unsure.

(CONTINUED)

70

CONTINUED:

70

Finally, he nods. And then the door opens and Vic and other team members (not Bruce) come back in.

VIC

Five minutes. Time to get your gloves on.

Johnny starts to go, but Avila calls after him.

AVILA

Hey, don't forget the jacket.

And when Johnny turns, there's a hint of both a challenge and a plea in Avila's voice, as Vic helps him on with his gloves.

AVILA

Like I said, you're in my corner, you gotta look sharp.

Johnny reaches to pick up the jacket again, as though half afraid of getting another vision, but nothing happens. He gives Avila a last encouraging smile, then exits.

71

INT. ARENA - BACKSTAGE CORRIDOR - NIGHT

71

Bruce and Johnny walk along carrying their jackets.

JOHNNY

I lied to him. I touched him, then lied right to his face.

BRUCE

I thought that was the game plan.

JOHNNY

Only it isn't working. Nothing's changed yet. He must not believe me.

(CONTINUED)

71 CONTINUED:

71

BRUCE

Maybe he'll believe it when you do.

JOHNNY

Believe what, Bruce? I made it up, remember? It's a lie.

BRUCE

It's not a lie, it's a hope. And my Dad used to say, what makes a hope reality is faith.

As Johnny meanwhile is distracted by...

71A A SILHOUETTED FIGURE (FUTURE MAN)

71A

standing at the end of the hall, one hand in his pocket, backlit by the light of the Arena beyond (which needn't be seen). Johnny has an unsettling flash of recognition.

BRUCE (O.S.)

John...

71B JOHNNY

71B

looks back at Bruce, and when he glances back down the hall, THE FIGURE IS GONE. He shakes off the seeming vision.

BRUCE

You've done everything you can, so why not just have some faith? In yourself, in Danny Avila, even in your visions. They didn't lead you here just to watch a man die.

71C NEW ANGLE

71C

As they reach the end of the corridor, which opens to the crowded arena and the empty ring, glowing like a blank page under the lights. Johnny eyes it as though he can already see the future that will be written there.

JOHNNY

For Danny's sake, I hope you're right.

And as he eyes the ring, a BELL sounds, taking us to --

72

INT. ARENA - RING - MID-FIGHT - VARIOUS ANGLES

72

Avila charging in, scoring body shots with his left hook, but getting repeatedly stung by Tibbs' jab. His face is swollen, and he's working much harder than Tibbs, who dances to keep Avila in range of that punishing jab.

(CONTINUED)

- 72 CONTINUED: 72
- TESSITORE
- An impressive performance by Avila so far, but after five rounds, Tibbs' jab is taking its toll.
- ATLAS
- He's still landing that left hook to the body, but he's getting hammered each time he rushes in. And if you look at the CompuBox numbers, Tibbs is outpunching him two to one.
- 73 REVEALING JOHNNY 73
- watching near Bruce, Vic and Tyrell in Avila's corner. He winces as Avila absorbs a left-right combo, then ties Tibbs up. Turning away, Johnny sees:
- 74 HELENA 74
- also looking pained. She's sitting with a slightly older woman, her SISTER. Contrasting her anxiety with:
- 75 JIMMY D 75
- who smiles broadly as he watches the fight and Andrew lights his cigar. Then:
- 76 THE CROWD 76
- excited and vocal, and perhaps there's no more blood lust than usual but that's not how it seems to Johnny. He turns back to the ring just in time to see --
- 77 AVILA GETTING KNOCKED DOWN BY A TIBBS LEFT HOOK 77
- He's up quickly, takes the standing eight, a CUT bleeding over his right eye. During which we hear:
- TESSITORE
- And a big left from Tibbs knocks Avila down! He bounces back up, taking the standing eight, but that was no slip and what's more it looks like Tibbs has opened a nasty cut over his right eye.
- The BELL rings.

- 78 AVILA'S CORNER - ON THE CUT MAN (ASSISTANT MANAGER) 78
working hard to stop the bleeding, and it's not pretty in close-up. Vic is sponging down Avila's heaving chest, shouting M.O.S. instructions to "Keep up the right" which we barely hear over the crowd noise and because we're watching from Johnny's perspective, seeing him now as he hands the Cut Man some medications, his face grim.
- 79 BEGIN MONTAGE - THE FIGHT CONTINUES 79
NOTE: And working with our technical consultant, and perhaps professional announcers, we'll flesh out a bit more of the fight and add snatches of appropriate voice over (**SEE ADDENDUM A for additional dialogue for Tessitore and Atlas**), but the shots we'll see will include: *
*
A.) Avila hanging in there but increasingly rocked by Tibbs big punches.
- 80 B.) A RING GIRL HOTTIE 80
struts with a CARD for Round Six.
- 81 C.) AVILA 81
on the ropes, wincing as Tibbs pounds his body, then re-opens the cut with a savage hook.
- 82 D.) ALL INTERCUTTING WITH JOHNNY 82
watching, our focus on his reactions to Avila's increasingly desperate battle, as another round passes, another ring girl holds a card for Round Eight; then more fighting and Avila is knocked down again, getting more slowly this time, as we continue to PUSH CLOSER on Johnny, until another BELL sounds.
- 83 AVILA'S CORNER - CLOSE ANGLE 83
as Bruce throws up the stool and Avila sits heavily, his face a mess, taking in heaving breaths.
- 84 THE COMMENTATORS TALK EXCITEDLY INTO THEIR MICS 84
ATLAS
One round to go and frankly it's amazing Avila's still standing with all the punishment he's been taking.

(CONTINUED)

84 CONTINUED:

84

TESSITORE

Terrible punishment from Tibbs'
powerful jab and right hand, and
at this point you've gotta wonder
if Avila's trainer, Vic Murphy,
isn't tempted to throw in the
towel and maybe save his fighter
even worse punishment...

And as he says this last line, we're already looking at...

85 JOHNNY

85

who sees ANOTHER RING GIRL about to climb into the ring
with the card for Round 12, and he turns to Bruce --

JOHNNY

Twelfth round.

And at this point Bruce doesn't know what to say anymore;
he's as worried as Johnny as he hands a water bottle up
to...

86 VIC

86

He's also watching the ring girl, now strutting with the
card, and then turns to Avila, who winces as Tyrell again
tries to close the cut, the eye under it red and swollen.

VIC

How you feeling?

AVILA

(breathing heavily)
All right. I'm all right. Just
need that second wind.

VIC

(to Tyrell)
How's that cut look?

Tyrell just shakes his head. Vic eyes Johnny, who's again
helping Tyrell, his face a mask, then makes a tough
decision.

VIC

I'm callin' in the doc.

AVILA

What? No!

(CONTINUED)

86 CONTINUED:

86

VIC
That cut's bad. You could be
risking the eye.

But Avila can tell that isn't Vic's real concern. The trainer's remembering Johnny's original prediction, his superstitious nature abetting his concern for Danny.

AVILA
No way. No way you're taking me
out.

VIC
You fought a great fight, kid,
but it's still just one fight.

AVILA
No!

And now Avila looks to Johnny, his pained eyes asking a question. And as we push in on Johnny's troubled face, and on Avila's, our shots isolate them, in SLOW MOTION and perhaps shallow focus as well, so that for an extended moment they seem like the only two people in this arena.

87 *MEMORY FLASHES OF AVILA*

87

From Johnny's encounters with him throughout the show:

POSING WITH JOHNNY AT THE AIRPORT

88 *WAVING JOHNNY INTO HIS GYM...*

88

89 *CONFRONTING HIM ANGRILY AT JOHNNY'S HOUSE...*

89

90 *TRAINING AT HIS GYM*

90

getting knocked down, and getting up for more...

91 *HOLDING OUT HIS FISTS,*

91

challenging Johnny to touch him in the dressing room: a portrait of a man at once vulnerable and resolute.

92 CLOSER ON JOHNNY... THEN -- 92

93 ANOTHER FLASH 93

This time of Johnny's devastating earlier vision of Avila dead on the canvas, eyes staring up vacantly...

94 RESUME - CLOSE ON JOHNNY, A BALANCE BEING WEIGHED 94

And finally he just gives in to his gut -- his empathy for this man, his hope or belief or faith or whatever you want to call it -- and he just nods slightly. And...

AVILA

receives this small gesture like an infusion of pure manna, Gatoraid for the soul, and now he finds that second wind, turning back to Vic...

AVILA

Give me the mouth piece. Give it to me!

Vic does. The BELL rings and Avila charges into the ring.

95 ROUND TWELVE - VARIOUS ANGLES 95

Avila and Tibbs go toe-to-toe, Tibbs at first surprised by Avila's new tenacity, then turning on his own juice.

TESSITORE

And Avila is just a different man this round... really giving it everything... and --

ATLAS

Now Tibbs is connecting with a series of shots to the body... driving Avila across the ring...

And indeed Tibbs is now bulling Avila across the ring with punishing body blows, the preamble to the COMBO.

JOHNNY TENSES AS HE RECOGNIZES THE MOMENT

95 CONTINUED: 95
THE CROWD SENSES IT TOO, RISING TO ITS FEET, ROARING AS...

96 TIBBS 96
lands the opening left hook of the combo and TIME SLOWS

97 ANGLE - JOHNNY'S HANDS GRIP THE EDGE OF THE CANVAS 97
APRON...

98 AVILA - SLOW-MOTION 98
As he absorbs the first blow of the combo.

TIBBS' FEET AND HIPS - STILL SLOW-MO
starting to slowly come around with his right hand.

AVILA ADJUSTS - SLOW-MO
his weight shifting back, so that when Tibbs' second blow --
the right that initiates the "Fitzsimmons Shift" --
connects, it's off by a fraction of an inch, and Avila
rolls with it, shedding some of its force.

AVILA DROPS HIS RIGHT ELBOW - SLOW-MO
Deflecting the body blow.

THE UPPERCUT - SLOW-MO
Lands on his chin, raising his head, setting him up for
the final blow...

AVILA RAISES HIS RIGHT - SLOW-MO
His glove rises toward the incoming left hook, but the
instant before contact...

98A THE COMBINATION REPEATS 98A
IN REAL TIME, and it all happens so quickly that it looks
very much like the sequence we've seen repeatedly in
Johnny's visions. And so when it ends the same way, with
Avila going down hard, we can understand why --

99 JOHNNY REACTS 99

as if this is indeed the tragedy he's foreseen, while...

100 HELENA 100

rises from her seat, hands flying to her mouth just as
Johnny saw in his flash in the dressing room. And now....

101 A HUSH 101
falls over the entire arena, as the crowd, which has been morbidly teasing themselves with the prospect of psychic-predicted death, is now faced with the seeming reality.

102 THE REFEREE 102
begins counting over Avila's still form as we intercut with:

103 BRUCE 103

104 VIC 104

105 HELENA 105

106 JIMMY D 106
and finally...

107 JOHNNY 107
who CLOSES HIS EYES, again in a repeat of his other dressing room flash. And indeed it looks as though just what he was afraid his visions were showing him has indeed come to pass. Only now --

A ROAR FROM THE CROWD
opens his eyes and he reacts as he sees --

108 AVILA 108
rolling onto his side, then climbing to his feet just in time to beat the count. The Ref holds his gloves, asks him a question we can't hear, and Avila nods that he's okay.

109 HELENA 109
is already crying with relief, the crowd CHEERING WILDLY as --

110 AVILA 110

now takes the fight to Tibbs, finding a still deeper reserve as he rains lefts and rights that have Tibbs sagging on the ropes when the final BELL sounds. And now Tibbs slumps down, tangled in the ropes. It's too late to be ruled a knockdown or a knockout, but as the ref pulls Avila away the crowd goes nuts. (NOTE: And this final fight action may be accompanied by shards of relevant voiceover commentary -- again see ADDENDUM A) *

Avila drops to his knees, spent, and his corner empties into the ring, other people crowding in too, all except for...

111 JOHNNY 111

who hangs back, weary with relief. He sees Jimmy D looking at him, wondering perhaps if somehow Johnny's engineered this. And Johnny just smiles at him.

112 INT. ARENA - LATER 112

Empty now, except for A CLEANING CREW sweeping up the refuse.

BRUCE AND JOHNNY

Their team coats exchanged for their own, stand near one of the aisle exits.

BRUCE

So what do you think was the turning point?

JOHNNY

Well, it could've been at the weigh-in, or even before the fight, in the dressing room. The flashes I had there, they seem to correspond with what ended up happening.

(beat)

Then again...

BRUCE

What?

JOHNNY

"Change one detail and all of life changes," right?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

112 CONTINUED:

112

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Do you think sometimes that one detail can just be you, and what you're willing to believe, have faith in?

BRUCE

Maybe... if that belief touches someone else.

And he nods down to the ring, where a solitary figure is stepping through the ropes, a small gym bag in one hand.

JOHNNY

I'll meet you outside, okay.

Bruce nods and we stay on him for a beat as he watches Johnny head toward the ring. And then he smiles ruefully, heads through the exit.

113 INT. ARENA - RING

113

Danny Avila, his cuts stitched and taped, stands in the empty ring.

JOHNNY (O.S.)

Heard there was a hell of a fight here tonight.

He's standing on the apron just outside the ropes.

AVILA

I lost, 'case you didn't notice. 'Course, I also didn't die... or knock the guy out.

JOHNNY

No? Looked to me like he was saved by the bell.

And Avila smiles; he's still not sure if Johnny was bullshitting him about his visions, but he also knows what Johnny's support and faith did for him.

AVILA

Yeah, you can argue that. But I still don't think this is going to help your career as a psychic.

JOHNNY

(lightly)
Now that would be a tragedy, wouldn't it?

(CONTINUED)

113 CONTINUED:

113

He holds up the rope for Avila. We watch from the ring as they head back up the aisle, and perhaps we again hear the ROAR of the crowd, from fights past or fights still to come.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

THE END