

That Must Be the Entrance to Heaven

or,

The Dawn Behind the Black Hole

A Boxing Match in Twelve Rounds

by

Franky D. Gonzalez

Contact:

Evan Morse

*The Gersh Agency
41 Madison Ave, 29th Floor
New York, NY 10010*

emorse@gersh.com

Franky D. Gonzalez

*1640 Crown Point Drive
Frisco, TX 75036*

phattheddproductions@gmail.com

© Franky D. Gonzalez

No part of this play may be changed, reproduced, or performed without written permission from the author.

Some Boxing Quotes

“Blood is good. Blood is emotion. Blood is a story, a drama. Blood is what we want to see in terms of passion. What we want is a bloody good fight tonight.” —Larry Merchant

“Once, I was at a party, ... This was at a time when it seemed like I had everything. I was young. I was undefeated. I had money. I'd just moved into my own home. People at the party were laughing and having fun. And I missed my mother. I felt so lonely. I remember asking myself, 'Why isn't my mother here? Why are all these people around me? I don't want these people around me.' I looked out the window and started crying.” —Oscar de la Hoya

“Boxing is the most human of sports. It's the only sport in which you lose a little bit every time you win. It's the sport in which you can earn the hearts of all the fans in the arena even when you lose.” —Jim Lampley

"Once that bell rings you're on your own. It's just you and the other guy." — Joe Louis

"The hero and the coward both feel the same thing, but the hero uses his fear, projects it onto his opponent, while the coward runs. It's the same thing, fear, but it's what you do with it that matters."

—Cus D'Amato

"To see a man beaten not by a better opponent but by himself is a tragedy." —Cus D'Amato

“Only in America.” —Don King

Character List

Edgar – 28, Latino, Central American. All-rounder. Can brawl. Can box. While not outstanding at either, he has an undeniable heart and stamina that sees him through. He is an undocumented boxer who lost his mother getting on a train bound for the U.S. He is fighting for a title to earn a visa and avoid deportation. He has an astounding nine wins in one year against tough opposition. A feat that has earned him a high ranking despite his inexperience. Can be played by an indigenous or fair-skinned Latino.

Juan – 36, Puerto Rican. A journeyman with too many losses and not enough wins. Brilliant boxing mind. Would be a coach for champions if it weren't for his dream of winning the title. He is not athletically gifted but has a granite chin and has never been knocked down or knocked out. He is fighting to fulfill a promise to his wife and child to lift them out of their extreme poverty. Can be played by a white passing or Afro-Latino boxer.

Manuel – 23, Mexican, come-forward all-action style. Younger brother to a legendary champion. He has a massive chip on his shoulder because his accomplishments are compared to his brother. He fights to overcome his brother's shadow and prove he's the greater fighter. Can be played by an indigenous or fair-skinned Latino. This actor also plays Armando's Coach.

Armando – 40, Afro-Cubano, can do it all and has done it all. A defensive wizard who cannot be touched when his knees allow. Olympic gold, world amateur champion, and a professional resume unlike most boxers. His only two losses were in world title fights. He defected from Cuba to pursue becoming a world champion. At his age, this is his last run. This actor also plays Manuel's Coach and the Robed Boxer.

The roles of Interviewer, Announcer, Referee, Armando's Father, and Promoter are all played by the same actor. These characters are all offstage voices.

Round 1

The void. A low rumble, barely perceptible fills the air. After a few moments, a black hole opens. Streaks of light fall into the black hole. Swirling around the black hole, are all forms of matter. Planets, stars, comets, slowly stretching and falling into the black hole. The rumble grows louder as we see the silhouettes of four men shadowboxing furiously. Somehow, in punching the air, they seem to be landing blows on something. The black hole rumbles again, it sounds almost like pained groaning.

JUAN

I'm an idiot with a dream holding onto hope.

MANUEL

But I never realized there's no air to breathe.

ARMANDO

Because the weight of a dream suffocates the soul.

EDGAR

But if I got sent back, then my mother died for nothing.

Beat.

I don't know any other home.

And I can't leave.

Whatever it takes

I'll win that title and earn my visa.

MANUEL

Watch me reach the sky.

ARMANDO

I'm just an imbecile who tried to calm a restless soul.

EDGAR

Home's not a home when "home" becomes a graveyard.

JUAN

At least nobody's ever knocked me out.

Beat.

I'm so ashamed of what I see

When I look at myself

Every single fucking day in the mirror.

So, no. I'm not fighting for a title.

That illusion's gone.

I keep fighting for that one small chance

To give you a better life

Even at the cost of mine.

ARMANDO

Most dreams go nowhere.

EDGAR

You either die or survive, man.
I chose not to die.

JUAN

Maybe some people got no right to dream.

MANUEL

I don't want the lights to go out.

Beat

And you were taking us there.
Even if it meant carrying
All of us on your back
While you climbed to heaven.
You'd say it everyday at the gym.
"We don't stop until we reach the sky.
We don't stop until we dance among the clouds."
But now I'm gettin' out from under your shadow.
And reach my own sky.

EDGAR

But I gotta try.

JUAN

I got a plan.

MANUEL

I don't want the lights to stay off.

ARMANDO

So what do you do when you realize
That despite everything,
Leaving homeland and family behind,
That even that, even all your efforts
All your strength
All of you
All your actions
Are still not enough
To lift the weight of your Dream
From your soul?

What do I do?

JUAN

I'm an idiot with a dream holding onto hope.

MANUEL

But I never realized there's no air to breathe.

ARMANDO

Because the weight of a dream suffocates the soul.

EDGAR

That must be the entrance to heaven...

The black hole dissipates, and lights rise on a boxing ring. Suspended above the ring, out of reach, a boxing world title. Four boxers sit at each corner of the ring. They are Edgar, Juan, Manuel, and Armando. A bell rings. Armando and Juan exit the ring while Edgar and Manuel come to the center of the ring and raise their fists.

Round 2

The black hole rips wide open and with a roar warps the universe around Edgar and Manuel. Edgar struggles against the force of the black hole to get to his corner again while Manuel makes his way easily to his corner. As they sit on their stools the black hole suddenly disappears. Light on Edgar.

INTERVIEWER

Before we begin, I want to emphasize and make clear.
Any misrepresentation of a material fact
May lead to adverse consequences
In the processing of your application.

EDGAR

I understand.

INTERVIEWER

Name?

The light rises up on Manuel, who looks bored.

MANUEL

Manuel Bernal.

EDGAR

Edgar Bolaños.

INTERVIEWER

Country of origin?

EDGAR

Mexico.

INTERVIEWER

You don't look Mexican.

EDGAR

I didn't know Mexicans had a look.

INTERVIEWER

Moving on.
What part of Mexico
Do you come from?

EDGAR

Does it matter?

INTERVIEWER

What part?

EDGAR

Chiapas.

INTERVIEWER

Where in Mexico is that?

EDGAR

South.

INTERVIEWER

Where South?

EDGAR

South.

INTERVIEWER

Could you point out Chiapas on a map?

EDGAR

Got a bad education.

You know, rampant poverty

And all that shit

You guys associate with people

From south of the border.

INTERVIEWER

Do you know anything about your heritage?

Anything about your homeland?

EDGAR

Look, man.

This country is my home.

I got no ties to Chiapas anymore.

INTERVIEWER

Even a faint memory of "Chiapas."

EDGAR

Just one.

INTERVIEWER

Would you care to tell us?

EDGAR

It won't help nothing.

INTERVIEWER

With respect, Edgar.

I'll be the judge

Of what does and doesn't help.

Edgar hesitates before—

EDGAR

I remember the train.

Silence. The Interviewer clears their throat.

INTERVIEWER

Do you have any contact

Or correspondence with family?

EDGAR

I told you I got no ties to—

INTERVIEWER

But you remember your mother.

EDGAR

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER

Where is she?

EDGAR

Six feet beneath in Chiapas.

INTERVIEWER

My apologies.

EDGAR

Home's not a home

When home becomes a graveyard.

Chiapas is a graveyard to me.

So, I left.

INTERVIEWER

Your father?

EDGAR

Dead.

INTERVIEWER

No sisters? Aunts? Uncles?

A brother?

MANUEL

My brother?

The lights shift to Manuel.

INTERVIEWER

With respect to your idea of heritage.

Do you consider your brother Josue Bernal a part of that?

Given his contributions to the sport of boxing?

MANUEL

Yeah sure.

I guess that's accurate.

INTERVIEWER

How does it feel

To be carrying on that legacy?

MANUEL

Fuck do you mean?

Carrying on what legacy?

INTERVIEWER

Well, you're following in your brother's footsteps.

You have to admit comparisons are natural in this case.

Your brother was a five-weight world champion.

Do you feel there's a greater pressure on you

As a fighter? As a man? To live up to your brother?

MANUEL

We just gonna talk about my dead brother all day?

INTERVIEWER

What does your family think of you

Taking on your brother's vocation?

MANUEL

I don't give a fuck what my family thinks.

EDGAR

Let's skip this whole thing.

My family's all dead.

INTERVIEWER

So then, help me understand something.

EDGAR

What's up?

INTERVIEWER

You're 28.

EDGAR

I am.

INTERVIEWER

Your application says you were an adult

When you came into this country.

EDGAR

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER

You have no accent.

EDGAR (badly accented)

Iz uh, iz dis betta?

INTERVIEWER

You should consider comedy.

What I'm getting at is that at 18

In Chiapas, Mexico your native language

Should be Spanish

Maybe even Tzeltal or Tzotzil.

EDGAR

Right.

INTERVIEWER

I've known people here for 30 years
They still have an accent.
Even a faint one.
But you...

EDGAR

What? Not convincing enough?

INTERVIEWER

What doesn't make sense to me
Is why you would claim to have immigrated
As an adult but not as a child.
You could enroll in programs if you came as a child.
It would make things easier for you.
What are you hiding?

EDGAR

I came as an adult.
I worked hard on getting rid of my accent.
I succeeded in that.
I'm trying for the extraordinary visa
Is it that hard to believe that I may fit the bill
For being someone that's extraordinary?

Cold silence.

INTERVIEWER

I do hope you still bear in mind
The consequences for lying
During this interview
And on your application.

EDGAR

Oh, jes. Lo siento. Lo siento.
I no Meh-he-can-oh enough for joo.

INTERVIEWER

That's not what I'm implying.

EDGAR

Sure. Gotcha.

INTERVIEWER

Let's move on.
Under employment it says...

EDGAR

Boxing.

INTERVIEWER

Do you enjoy it?

EDGAR

I don't know the person
That would ever enjoy
Getting hit in the guts and face.

MANUEL

I love it.

INTERVIEWER

But, why boxing?

MANUEL

What do you mean, why boxing?

INTERVIEWER

You clearly seem to dislike
The constant comparisons
To your older brother

MANUEL

There's nothing to compare.

INTERVIEWER

What're your goals?

MANUEL

The title.

INTERVIEWER

Your brother was a five-weight champion.
You want to be a champion.
Doesn't that invite comparison?

MANUEL

So does every brown guy
Who wants the fucking belt
Gonna get compared to my brother?

INTERVIEWER

He's your brother.

MANUEL

He's dead.

INTERVIEWER

So you've chosen his profession?

MANUEL

As opposed to?

INTERVIEWER

MMA?

Kickboxing?

MANUEL

Is this entire interview
Gonna only be about my brother?

EDGAR

I'm good at boxing.
That's it.

INTERVIEWER

But you don't take pleasure in it?

EDGAR

Is that a problem?

INTERVIEWER

Not in particular, no.

However...

Your amateur record is...well...

It's not extraordinary.

MANUEL

Compared to who?

EDGAR

I'm unbeaten as a pro.

INTERVIEWER

You've had nine fights.

EDGAR

In less than a year.

INTERVIEWER

There's a credible argument
To be made that in your last fight
You were able to win
Because of a lucky punch.
And not necessarily skill.

MANUEL

So, what you're saying is I lack skill?

EDGAR

You ever win nine fights
In less than a year?

INTERVIEWER

Never fought in my life.

EDGAR

You ever taken a punch to the face?

MANUEL

Wanna see how I punch, motherfucker?

INTERVIEWER

What are you implying?

MANUEL

Nothing, man...

INTERVIEWER

I hope you understand
That there are consequences
For wasting our time.
There are people who need—

EDGAR

Manuel Bernal.

INTERVIEWER

I'm sorry?

EDGAR

That's my next opponent.

INTERVIEWER

Manuel is being called a future champion.

MANUEL

I'm only saying you're gonna see
When I fight Edgar Bolaños.
I'm taking him out.

EDGAR

And I'm gonna win.

INTERVIEWER

He doesn't have a belt.

MANUEL

He's a stepping stone.

EDGAR

Final eliminator.
Whoever wins is the mandatory
To fight for a belt.

INTERVIEWER

I see.

EDGAR

It's in the bag.

MANUEL

I got this shit on lock.

INTERVIEWER

Final question and I think we'll be done here.

MANUEL

Go for it.

EDGAR

Okay.

INTERVIEWER

You don't have to answer
 If you don't want to.
 But even one memory.
 Could you tell me a memory
 Of that special person that's now gone.

MANUEL

Fuck my brother's memory.

MANUEL steps out of the ring.

EDGAR

My momma liked to talk
 About sci-fi stuff and theories
 That really didn't make sense.
 But they made good stories, right?

So this one time...
 This one time she woke me up
 Middle of the night.
 She rushed me out of the house
 And I saw this meteor shower.
 When I asked what the meteor shower was
 She told me...the shooting stars were the souls
 Of the dead making their journey to Heaven.
 When I asked her where Heaven was
 She'd tell me she didn't know for sure.
 But she had a theory.
 What if black holes were actually portals
 And the newly departed
 Were trying to get to those portals
 Crazy shit like that, right?
 She'd get mad into her theories...
 But it was like I was watching
 People making their journey to Heaven.
 I never forgot that night.

Juan enters the ring and watches Edgar speak.

EDGAR (cont.)

She'd say that maybe
 When we became shooting stars
 And made that journey through space
 All our life choices and things we done
 End up like, determining
 What kind of shooting star we became.
 If you left this world with lots of baggage
 If you did wrong and hurt people
 Or got unfinished business,
 Your shooting star would be too heavy to make it
 To the black hole portal to Heaven.
 Just like a car that can't move if it's weighed down.
 And once your fuel runs out, you'd just sit there
 In the endless nothingness of space.
 That must be Hell she said.
 The nothing void of space.
 But if you did good with the world
 You'd be light enough to make the journey.
 To go to the portal that'll take you to Heaven.
 I always thought that was crazy, ya know?
 So, imagine my fucking surprise
 To find out that there's certain black holes
 That could erase your past
 And give you infinite futures to choose from.

JUAN

What do you mean?

EDGAR

Reissner-Nordström-de Sitter Black Holes, right?

JUAN

Like the store?

EDGAR

The what?

JUAN

Nordstrom.
 You know, the store?

EDGAR

Nah, that's just the name.

JUAN

Because if you're telling me
I can choose my future at Nordstrom—

EDGAR

—That's not what I'm saying—

JUAN

I'd be like, Eddie,
You been in the sauna too long, 'mano.

EDGAR

Yo, seriously.

JUAN

Alright. Finish up, man.

EDGAR

So there's these black holes out there.
They're different than other black holes.
I don't know how or why, but they are.
They're called Reissner-Nordström-de Sitter Black Holes.

JUAN

Nordstrom is like a black hole
Especially on my wallet
And the time my ol' lady forces me to spend there.

EDGAR

Inside these black holes
Time will start to slow down
Because of the strong gravitational field.
Suddenly all the light and matter
That ever went in
That will ever go in
You see it all at once.
You're supposed to be destroyed by this.
After all, you're literally getting hit
With everything that will ever go into a black hole
At the same time, all at once forever and never.
But for reasons I can't understand
Getting hit with everything at once
Makes time stop slowing down
And keep it slow at the same time.
Like I said, I don't understand it.

EDGAR (cont.)

But under certain conditions
 You can pass through this place
 Into the Cauchy horizon
 Where you don't live in a deterministic world.

JUAN

What's that mean?

EDGAR

It means like, all your past
 Doesn't affect the present.

JUAN

Okay.

EDGAR

Everything that came before gets obliterated in this place
 And you may even avoid falling into the black hole.
 You'll just live in an unknown universe
 Where you can choose your future
 From an infinite number of possible futures
 And your past...your skin, your birthplace.
 Where you live. What language you speak
 Won't affect the future you want in life.
 That's gotta be heaven.
 And it's like...
 My mother might be right ya know?
 Black holes and shit.
 That must be the entrance to heaven.

Where only souls light enough to pass can go
 Where it doesn't matter who you were
 As much as who you'll become.

Silence. Beat.

JUAN

You been taking some shit, Eddie?

EDGAR

Man, fuck you.

JUAN

Because you don't need
To be getting caught
On no drug test shit
Right before your fight.

EDGAR

I'm not taking nothing.

JUAN

Then you need to stay outta the saunas.
Because that shit's crazy, hermano.

EDGAR

Yo, it's not crazy.

JUAN

Whatever, man.
You ready to get on the scale?

EDGAR

Yeah.

JUAN

You don't wanna try to piss
One more time?

EDGAR

I'm good.
My piss came out orange.
What's that mean?

JUAN

Severe dehydration.

EDGAR

Is that bad?

JUAN

For your health?
Terrible.
For making weight?
Perfect.

EDGAR

Okay...

Pause.

JUAN

Are you okay?

EDGAR

Yeah.

JUAN

Manuel is a different sunuvabitch.
I'm not saying the other guys you fought
Were tomato cans or nothing
But this is the brother of a legend.
He's got all the makings—

EDGAR

But he ain't the legend, is he?

JUAN

No. He's not.

EDGAR

Then it's alright.

JUAN

Are you sure you can keep going?

EDGAR

Why wouldn't I be able
To keep going?

JUAN

This is fight number ten.
In less than a year.
You might be running on fumes.

EDGAR

I am on fumes.
But if the tank were full...
I wouldn't be able to make weight.

JUAN

Fair enough.

Step on the scale.

And tell me more

About this black hole shit.

The lights dim.

ROUND 3

We're filled with the sounds of a raucous audience chanting and cheering. A voice booms out.

ANNOUNCER

And now getting us started tonight
 Twelve rounds of boxing.
 A final eliminator
 Combined between the two:
 38 victories. 36 knockouts. No losses.
 To the audience in attendance.
 And to boxing fans all over the world.
 Are you ready?

The audience cheers as Edgar enters with Juan behind him.

Fighting out of the blue corner.
 After an astonishing campaign
 Nine fights, nine knockouts in one year.
 A meteoric rise to the top of the ranks
 A Cinderella story for the ages
 He seeks the world title
 To earn his stay in his adopted country
 The United States of America
 The Undocumented, The Undefeated, The Underdog
 Edgar "The Extraordinary EB-1" Bolaños!!!

The crowd cheers, but it feels subdued. EDGAR shadowboxes and pumps his fist into the air. More strained cheers while Edgar takes the world in around him, fear masked behind a determined face. JUAN slaps EDGAR on the back. The lights dim.

ANNOUNCER

And now...fighting out of the red corner.
 The heir to the throne.
 Undefeated in 29 fights
 With an astounding 27 knockouts.
 A 93.1% knockout percentage
 The highest in division history.
 Now another fighter stands
 In front of his goal
 To overtake his older brother's legacy
 The fighting pride of East Los Angeles.
 El Juicio Final. The Final Judgement. El
 Demonio. Manuel Bernaaaaaaaal!!!

MANUEL *enters the ring and begins bouncing on the balls of his feet, dancing, showing supreme confidence.* EDGAR *watches MANUEL'S dancing, unnerved.* *The audience roars with approval, chanting Manuel's name.* JUAN *slaps EDGAR on the back again.*

JUAN

He's fucking with you.
Don't pay attention.
Keep moving.
Warmup.
Move. Move.

EDGAR continues to shadowbox trying to pump himself up.

ANNOUNCER

And now, would the boxers
Please step to the middle of the ring
To receive final instructions.

Edgar and Manuel step to the center of the ring for final instructions.

REFEREE

Alright gentlemen.
Good clean fight.
You got my instructions
In the locker room.
Below here is too low for both of you.

MANUEL leans in and touches foreheads with EDGAR.

MANUEL

You learn your Spanish?

EDGAR

Fuck you.

MANUEL

Three rounds.
All you get.

REFEREE

Alright, alright.
Separate.
Save it for Round 1. Protect
yourself at all times.
God bless. Good luck.
Touch gloves.
C'mon. Touch 'em.

They touch gloves and go to their corners. A bell rings. EDGAR and MANUEL make their way to the center of the ring and don't waste time. They begin launching bombs. Manuel attempts to takeout Edgar with headshots while Edgar attacks at the body.

JUAN *(from outside the ring)*

Dictate the pace.
Do not stop throwing.
Not to the ropes.
Keep him in the middle.

MANUEL and Edgar are shoulder to shoulder pushing back and forth while trying to unload shots at close range. Manuel connects a hook to Edgar's temple. Edgar grabs onto Manuel and they crash into the ropes, almost wrestling. EDGAR pulls back to load a shot when Manuel hooks right on Edgar's ribs. Edgar winces and his knees buckle. EDGAR throws a wild, sloppy shot that misses Manuel by a mile. Manuel counters with an uppercut to the body. EDGAR falls to his knees gasping. EDGAR appears to be kneeling before MANUEL. The audience loses it.

REFEREE

Down!

MANUEL

Round one to remind you.

JUAN

Get up, Eddie!

The lights shift. The sounds of cameras clicking. EDGAR stands and faces MANUEL on opposite sides looking out to the audience like a press junket.

MANUEL

Fucking cut that sob story shit, bro.
Nobody gives a fuck.

EDGAR

Fuck you, man.

MANUEL

Aw, don't worry papa.
You'll get fucked.
I promise you that.
Believe that.

INTERVIEWER

Manuel, you've been quite vocal
About your desire to fight Edgar.
Could you speak more to that?

MANUEL

I don't like him.
I don't like what he does.
I see him I wanna tear his head off.

INTERVIEWER

What about Edgar causes these emotions?

MANUEL

What, are you fucking kidding me?
The disrespect, the fucking nerve of this guy.
Thinking that boxing's his easy way into staying in this country.
Fuck you, man.

INTERVIEWER

Would you say you have an anti-immigrant bias?

MANUEL

Fuck outta here with that PC bullshit.

INTERVIEWER

That's not answering the question.

MANUEL

And fuck you right the fuck back.

INTERVIEWER

Edgar, this match means much more to you
Than just a title and becoming champion.

EDGAR

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER

For a long time
You've been calling yourself
The Extraordinary EB-1
That's the name of the visa
That you're applying for.
Could you talk a little about that?

EDGAR

Yeah. It's the extraordinary visa.
I'm an extraordinary boxer.
I'm the Extraordinary EB-1.

MANUEL *snorts and shakes his head.*

INTERVIEWER

To qualify for that visa outright
You need to win a distinction
That acknowledges you
As one of the best in your field.
In boxing there is no higher distinction
Than a world title.

EDGAR

That's right.

INTERVIEWER

How've you survived thus far?

EDGAR

You either survive or die, man.
I chose not to die.
My coach Juan found me one day.
I became a boxer. That's it.
I don't remember when I was a kid.
That was too long ago
Not worth remembering.

INTERVIEWER

Could you talk a little
On your coach Juan David Gonzalez.
He's still an active boxer.
Campaigning in your weight class.

EDGAR

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER

Any plans on facing him?

EDGAR

Face my own coach?

MANUEL

What he means is
Juan ain't shit
And isn't worth the effort.

EDGAR

Keep talking shit, man.
I'm not facing Juan
Because he already has a fight scheduled
Against Armando Perez.

MANUEL

And because you need that 100% KO record
To even get title consideration.

INTERVIEWER

Changing the subject.
Edgar, you've made it quite clear
That boxing brings you no pleasure.

EDGAR

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER

And this match
It's just another means
For survival.

EDGAR

That's all it's about.

INTERVIEWER

So, you wouldn't be boxing
If it weren't for your immigration status?

EDGAR

That's right.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think that sits well with fans?
Using this sport as a way to stay in America?

EDGAR

If they don't like it, change the laws
So I can stay.

INTERVIEWER

Do you have any comments
On the current administration
And the handling of the immigration—

EDGAR

I don't got thoughts about that.
I'm told what I gotta do to stay
And I do it.
It doesn't matter if it's a donkey
Or if it's an elephant giving the orders.
We do what we gotta do to survive.
I do what I gotta do, and what I gotta do is
Not talk about no political shit.
Just beat that chump there.
You heard me?

INTERVIEWER

Manuel.
Hearing that...
What are your thoughts?

MANUEL

What thoughts?

INTERVIEWER

About Edgar?

MANUEL

About the spic motherfucker
I'm gonna deport?

EDGAR

You need to win
Before you talk about deporting me.

MANUEL

You think we need to get in the ring
For me to send your ass back?

EDGAR

You ain't shit.

MANUEL

You're soft, fool.

EDGAR

We'll see.

MANUEL

Three rounds.
That's all I give you.
Round 1 to remind you
Where the fuck you belong.
Round 2 so you give up
And start learning the Spanish you forgot.
Round 3 to knock you the fuck back
To your ratshit country.

EDGAR

You ain't your brother.
You can't deliver on that shit.

MANUEL

You're gonna see.

EDGAR

You think when you lose
They gonna have to place your ass
On suicide watch?
You know, so you don't do
What your big brother did?

Deadly silence.

MANUEL

I'm gonna fuck you up.
I'll fucking ruin you
Without even stepping into the ring
I'll fuck you right the fuck up.

EDGAR

That mind game shit
Don't work on me, *ese*.

MANUEL

Mind games, homes?
You think the shit I say
Are fucking mind games?
Nah, homie.
Mind games is thinking
That hard work and beating has-beens
Is gonna let you stay here.
Mind games is thinking this country wants you.
Mind games is thinking
You're extraordinary.

EDGAR

Fuck you.

MANUEL

You want fucking with your head?
Here's fucking with your head.
You need this fight to get your visa.
Maybe I should take another fight.

EDGAR

The fuck you saying?

MANUEL

I told you. I fucking told you.
We don't need to fight
For me to send you the fuck back.

EDGAR

Fuck you, man.
You wouldn't do that.

MANUEL

Now who's gonna be on suicide watch?
 That's the difference between you and me.
 You need me.
 You get charity from me.
 And if I wanna take that shit from you,
 I. Fucking. Can.
 But nah, we're fighting.
 And you're gonna get my charity.
 I'mma teach you your Spanish
 Send you right the fuck back where you belong
 And teach you to keep my fucking brother's name
 Out of your illegal ass lips.
 Three. Fucking. Rounds.
 You hear me?

Silence. Manuel is daring Edgar to say something. Edgar obliges.

EDGAR

I already told you.
 You ain't your brother
 To be making promises like that.

Manuel rushes at Edgar. The lights shift and we are back in the fight. Manuel and Edgar trade shot after shot in the middle of the ring. Manuel forces Edgar back into the ropes and he begins unloading a volley of uppercuts and hooks onto Edgar who covers up trying to protect himself.

MANUEL (each number a punch thrown)

Uno. Dos. Tres.
 Cuatro Cinco. Seis.
 ¡Ahí!
 ¡Estás aprendiendo!
 You learning your Spanish numbers yet?

The bell rings. Manuel backs off. Edgar sneers at Manuel.

EDGAR

That's all?
 You ain't shit.

MANUEL

Round 2, you'll see.

They walk to their corners. Juan gets into the ring and stands in front of Edgar who is panting.

JUAN

Breathe, Eddie.

Edgar takes a deep breath.

You can't be getting into a fire fight.

The jab, Edgar.

You gotta keep him back with the jab.

EDGAR

I gotta knock him out.

JUAN

You're not gonna do that.

EDGAR

I can do it.

JUAN

Eddie...

We had a plan.

EDGAR

I gotta prove—

JUAN

A win is a win.

You don't gotta prove nothing.

You got one job: win.

Juan steps out of the ring. Edgar and Manuel stand up from their stools. A bell rings. They meet at the center of the ring and resume throwing hooks and uppercuts. They come forward despite the blows and push against each other, trying to use their weight to throw the other off-balance. Manuel launches two uppercuts into Edgar's abdomen, Edgar counters with a hook to Manuel's head. Both are wobbled but do not stop coming forward and throwing wild shots at each other.

MANUEL

Mi nombre, asshole.

¿Cuál es mi nombre?

Edgar tries coming forward and loads a wide hook. Manuel counters with a jab to Edgar's face. Edgar is momentarily stunned while Manuel pushes into Edgar and unloads hooks into his side. Edgar retreats back trying to get away from the blows until

he reaches the ropes. He bends down slightly trying to shield his abdomen and holds his guard wide protecting his face. Manuel splits Edgar's guard with a one-two combination of jabs.

JUAN

To the side!

Move to the side Eddie!

Edgar is seemingly out on his feet, unable to hear anything. His gloves fall exposing his head. Manuel starts throwing wildly. The audience roars in approval.

MANUEL

Mi nombre, cabron!

¿Cuál es mi nombre?

Manuel takes a step back to throw a big hook.

MANUEL (cont)

Round 2 to remind you

Where you belong.

Eddie pulls back against the ropes and launches a left hook into Manuel's exposed jaw. Manuel collapses to the ground. The crowd is ecstatic.

REFEREE

Down!

EDGAR

Like I said.

You ain't your brother

To be making promises

You can't keep.

Manuel gets up, enraged. He raises his arms to show he still has his wits about him.

REFEREE

Five.

Six.

Seven.

Eight.

Can you continue?

MANUEL

Yes.

REFEREE

Alright, box!

Manuel rushes to Edgar and begins unloading hooks and uppercuts into Edgar who has covered up, trying to survive. Manuel's output slows down, having expended too much energy. Edgar launches a hook to Manuel's side then throws a jab that snaps Manuel's head back. Now it's Manuel backing up into the ropes while Edgar stalks.

JUAN

Let those fists go, 'mano!
Take him out!

Edgar begins unloading everything he's got, but Manuel covers and dodges well. As Edgar slows down Manuel throws his own short hook to Edgar's chin. Edgar wobbles and tries to raise his guard. Manuel rallies and begins throwing jabs and uppercuts at Edgar. Edgar looks truly out of it. Just as it looks like Manuel is about to overwhelm Edgar, the bell rings.

MANUEL

One more round.
Then see if I can't keep promises.

Edgar and Manuel make their way back to their corners. Edgar collapses into his stool.

EDGAR

I got him...

JUAN

You did good, papa.
You won the round.

EDGAR

He said he's taking me out
Next round.

JUAN

He's going to
If you don't stick to the plan.
Eddie, you can't win toe to toe
Against a Mexican.
You gotta outbox him.

EDGAR

I can win.
I can do this.

JUAN

The jab, Edgar.
You have a longer reach.

EDGAR

I can knock him out.

JUAN

You blew your best chance
When he was against the ropes.
He's not gonna fall for that rope shit again.
You've tied up the fight.
Win on points.
Keep him back.

Juan gets out of the ring. Edgar and Manuel stand up. The bell rings. They go straight for the middle. Edgar and Manuel start throwing wildly. The crowd is loving this. Edgar throws a volley of jabs to Manuel that forces him back. Manuel throws a haymaker that connects on Edgar's solar plexus. Edgar gasps and takes a knee.

REFEREE

Down!

Manuel raises his arms in celebration.

MANUEL

Round three
And back to the ratshit country, homie.

REFEREE

Five.
Six.
Seven.
Eight.
Nine.

Edgar rises.

EDGAR

Fuck. You.

REFEREE

Can you box?

Edgar raises his fists to show he's still "there."

REFEREE

Alright, box!

Edgar comes forward and throws a hook, while Manuel throws an uppercut. Both punches make contact, but Manuel seems to be in better shape. Manuel throws a straight at Edgar's face. Edgar eats the punch and attempts to push forward to deliver his own straight at Manuel, but Manuel dodges. Blood pours from Edgar's nose. Edgar keeps coming forward throwing wildly but missing, while Manuel connects.

MANUEL

It's fucking over, Edgar.

EDGAR

I'm not going back.

Edgar stalks Manuel down. Manuel boxes off the backfoot keeping Edgar back with a jab. Edgar steps back.

EDGAR

Can't face me?

MANUEL

You're not gonna win.

EDGAR

Then take me out.

Manuel delivers a three punch combination to Edgar's head. Blood is now everywhere.

MANUEL

Go down!

EDGAR

I'm gonna win...

I'm gonna win...

Edgar comes forward and throws an uppercut that misses. Manuel counters with a hook to the ribs. Edgar grits his teeth and keeps going forward. The audience cheers for Edgar's courage.

MANUEL

Fucking stop!

Manuel delivers a left hook to Edgar's jaw. Edgar stumbles back but rights himself back up and comes forward.

EDGAR

You're not sending me back...

Manuel, with desperation unloads a barrage of straights and hooks on Edgar forcing Edgar to the ropes. Edgar guards and attempts to throw sloppy uppercuts into Manuel which do no damage.

MANUEL

Fucking go down!

Edgar throws his own haymaker at Manuel who steps back. Edgar comes forward with his own barrage of straights and hooks that begin to connect on Manuel, but just as Edgar is getting the best of Manuel, the bell rings. Edgar raises his arms in celebration and laughs..

EDGAR

What happened to Round Three?

What I tell you, ah?

You can't keep your promises.

Can't fill your brother's shoes

Edgar walks to his stool. Manuel watches Edgar a moment, absolute rage in his eyes before going back to his stool. Manuel's Coach steps into the ring, while Juan tends to Edgar who stares at Manuel.

MANUEL'S COACH

Alright.

You're doing good.

You won that round.

MANUEL

Why won't he stay down?

MANUEL'S COACH

He's fighting for something.

MANUEL

So what do I do?

MANUEL'S COACH

You either go to a decision

Or you do what needs to be done.

MANUEL

Fuck you saying?

MANUEL'S COACH

Show the world you're better than your brother.

The light shifts to Edgar and Juan.

JUAN

We can't keep doing this.

EDGAR

I can win.

JUAN

I'm giving you one more round.

You don't show me something

I'm throwing in the towel.

EDGAR

You throw in that towel

I'll crash myself headfirst

Into the fucking lockers.

I don't surrender.

JUAN

It's not worth risking your life.

EDGAR

I'm not going back.

JUAN

Papa, what the fuck you doing this for?

You can cross back later.

EDGAR

If I leave, I leave this country in a coffin.

Or I leave this ring a winner

Beat.

JUAN

One more round.

Make it the round of your life.

Juan and Manuel's Coach step out of the ring. Edgar and Manuel stand up. Edgar and Manuel meet in the middle of the ring and they actually embrace.

MANUEL

Round Four.
Feel good?
Keeping that dream alive
For just a little longer?

EDGAR

You're gonna lose.

MANUEL

Don't blink.

They separate. They assume their stances and the round begins. MANUEL immediately advances while EDGAR tries to hit MANUEL with a jab. MANUEL walks right through it and lands a hook right into EDGAR'S side. EDGAR crashes into the ropes.

MANUEL

Come on.
Come here.

MANUEL advances, EDGAR tries to get away. MANUEL cuts the ring off and corners EDGAR who tries to load up a hook but MANUEL unloads on EDGAR'S abdomen.

MANUEL

You're here because
I let you stay here.

EDGAR falls.

REFEREE

Down!

MANUEL goes to a corner to wait while Edgar rises..

MANUEL

It felt good, right?
Thinking you could win.
It was a beautiful dream.
You thought you were special.
Now you see.
You ain't shit.

Edgar rises.

REFEREE

Can you go on?

EDGAR *nods.*

EDGAR

I'm good.

REFEREE

Show me something

Or I'm calling it.

You understand?

EDGAR

I understand.

REFEREE

Box!

Edgar raises his hands one more time panting.

MANUEL

There you go.

To the end.

I like that.

EDGAR

To the end. Goddamn right.

They meet in the middle and begin trading blows. MANUEL takes a blow to the face and Edgar to the body from MANUEL's counter. They back off. EDGAR's arms fall to his sides. They stare at each other. EDGAR smiles.

EDGAR

I can't lift up my arms.

They laugh.

MANUEL

Buncha fights in a year

Will do that to you.

EDGAR

Fuck me, right?

EDGAR laughs again, hollow.

MANUEL

That's some shit.
Time to wake up.
Dream's over.
Sorry EB-1.
Give up.

EDGAR

No...

EDGAR forces his hands up. Manuel stares at Edgar amazed.

MANUEL

Pos...
If that's what you want...

MANUEL advances toward EDGAR and loads up a hook. Blackout. A single spotlight in the middle of the ring. Manuel steps into the light. From a corner a Boxer in a robe that obscures his face enters. Manuel stares at the boxer.

MANUEL

There are days where you don't matter anymore.
Nobody talks about you
Or the things you did.
Nothing.
I keep you alive.
When I do something
They bring you back.
It's because of me, you're still around.

I hate you because of that.
They won't let you stay dead.
They won't let me forget you.
They bring you right up against me
Just when I think I can stop thinking about you
For just one fucking day.

You remember the shit you'd say
When we were kids?

MANUEL (cont.)

You'd stay up late
Talking about what we were gonna do
When we finally made it.
You'd say to me
Whatever it took
It didn't matter what
You were gonna reach the sky
And you were taking us there.
Even if it meant carrying
All of us on your back
While you climbed to heaven.
You'd say it every day at the gym.

“We don't stop until we reach the sky.
We don't stop until we dance among the clouds.”

Silence.

You told me you'd go through everything
If it meant we didn't have to.
You were gonna be there.
We were gonna get outta this shit.
You swore to everyone.
We believed in you.
I believed in you.

And I watched you.

You made your debut at light middleweight.
And you climbed all the way up.
Getting belt after belt.
A champion in five weight classes.

You became Pound for Pound Number One.

But the man who wants the sky
Ain't satisfied with belts
And being ranked number one.

You wanted the heavyweight title.

Your opponent was six inches taller
Had a longer reach.
Fierce KO record.
One of those Ukranians

MANUEL (cont.)

Who keep going forward
And don't know how to quit.

But my brother wasn't afraid.
To you, hermano... that big motherfucker
Was standing in the way
Of reaching your destiny.

...

If you ever watch great fighters
Something always happens
When they step in the ring.
Their eyes go... weird...
And all they see in front of them
Is their opponent.
Like tunnel vision.
Like the lights go out in there.

You'd would get like that.
You'd go somewhere else.
When we were younger
Those lights would go out
Until the bullies were gone.

And you were somewhere else
Landing hit after hit on the Ukrainian.
The Ukrainian wouldn't go down.
He kept coming and coming
Like this immigrant in front of me now.
And you kept throwing punches

Until you won a belt
And he lost his life.

The lights never turned back on.
And all you could see
Was the Ukrainian in the dark.

You fell apart...

And when I told you
I wanted to box
You begged me to stay out of the ring.

MANUEL (cont.)

But you couldn't convince me.
Because, I wanted to reach the sky too.

I'll never forget
Your last words to me.

“I know I said ‘Until we reach the sky.’
But I never realized
There's no air to breathe
When you reach the heavens.
Please don't box.
Don't be like me.
I can't breathe anymore, Manuel
There's no air.”
I never saw you again.

You swore you'd carry me
That you'd be there for me.
Instead, I'm carrying your corpse
Unable to escape you wherever I go.

But I think I finally got my chance
With this immigrant
Who won't stop fighting.
Maybe I can handle a body
On my conscience.
I have what it takes.
And I can finally get rid of you.

The Robed Boxer goes to Manuel and they face-off. Manuel blinks first.

I needed you, Josue...

The Robed Boxer extends a gloved fist to Manuel's forehead and passes it over like a parent does for a child needing comfort. Manuel embraces his brother. A beat.

But I've seen how this story ends.
My brother already went through all this
So I'd never have to.

I choose the lights.
I want the lights to stay on.

Suddenly the ring transforms into the sky. The Robed Boxer disappears. Manuel looks around.

MANUEL (cont.)

But I thought there wasn't any air
 When you reach the sky...
 How am I breathing?
 How come I'm not falling?
 How is this all...?
 Wait...is this...?

Clouds roll in toward Manuel who stares at their approach. Manuel's head snaps to the side as if taking a huge hit to the jaw. But he doesn't look in pain. He looks at peace. Unburdened. Weightless. He rolls with the motion of the punch and flows away into the clouds, almost disappearing into the heavens. The lights snap back to the fight. Manuel is on his back, knocked out. The audience goes wild. Edgar looks around, almost dazed. Juan rushes into the ring and embraces Edgar who raises a fist in victory. Manuel gets himself off the ground and goes to Edgar and Juan. Juan steps back as Manuel embraces Edgar.

MANUEL (cont.)

It's fucked up
 What immigration's doing to you.

EDGAR

Thanks, man.

MANUEL

You'd better fucking get that belt, Edgar B.
 Show them you belong here.
 You hear me?

Edgar nods. Manuel goes back to his corner where his Coach waits.

MANUEL'S COACH

You okay?

MANUEL

I'm dancing on the clouds.

Manuel exits followed by his Coach. The audience cheers for Edgar who looks around him.

Blackout.

ROUND 4

The lights rise. Armando enters the ring. Over his left eye is a horrific gash. We hear a dial tone and a dialing out of a number. One ring and then an answer.

ARMANDO'S FATHER (phone voice)

Digame.

Tense pause.

ARMANDO

Hola papi.

A click. Dial tone. Armando's father has hung up. A bell rings. Armando assumes a fighting stance. He boxes with an unseen force. He moves with the grace of a dancer. He bobs, ducks, weaves effortlessly. He throws crisp, accurate punches of all kinds, hooks, uppercuts, jabs. He shows his speed, his power, and his ring generalship with each move. Every third step, he winces in pain as if getting punched on the cut above his eye, but he keeps going, never losing composure.

REFEREE

Time!

Get the doctor.

Armando, to the corner.

Armando goes to the corner.

ARMANDO

I can continue.

Please, I can keep fight—

I can still see.

Don't stop the fight.

I'm winning—

The bell rings. An audience begins booing the stoppage.

ARMANDO

I can still fight.

This cut is nothing!

The audience cheers and chants Armando's name. The chant soon grows so loud it becomes the howl of the black hole which opens up onstage. A dial tone. A number is dialed. Two rings. An answer.

ARMANDO'S FATHER (phone voice)

Digame.

ARMANDO

Hi papi.

A tense silence.

ARMANDO'S FATHER (phone voice)

I'll get your mother.

ARMANDO

You don't got nothing to say to me?

ARMANDO'S FATHER (phone voice)

I heard you lost your last fight.

ARMANDO

That's all...eso es todo?

ARMANDO'S FATHER (phone voice)

What else you want me to say?

A tense pause. Click. Dial tone. A bell rings. Armando takes a fighting stance and begins moving gracefully again, boxing beautifully, throwing crisp shots, and moving in different directions until one of his legs spasms. He falls over.

REFEREE

Down!

Armando struggles to try to get back up but cannot. He punches the mat in frustration.

REEREE

Six.

Seven.

Eight.

Nine.

Armando somehow beats the count and stands up but appears to be on shaky legs.

REFEREE

Can you continue?

ARMANDO

Yes.

REFEREE

Alright, box!

Armando tries to take a step and falls over. A bell rings. Armando stays on the ground. The crowd boos, now jeering Armando. Armando gets back on his feet wheezing. A dial tone. A number is dialed out. Three rings then an answer.

ARMANDO'S FATHER (phone voice)

Digame.

ARMANDO

Papi...

A click. Dial tone. The black hole warps into a massive mountain with an unseen peak. Armando looks up at the mountain. He assumes his fighting stance.

ARMANDO'S COACH (offstage)

You need help.

Armando's Coach enters. The mountain disappears. Armando turns to face the Coach.

ARMANDO

I'm sorry?

ARMANDO'S COACH

Your coach dropped you.
People are saying you're washed up.
Your career's on the ropes.

ARMANDO

And who are you?

ARMANDO'S COACH

A fan of Armando Perez.
A kindred spirit, who, like you
Has something to prove.

ARMANDO

And what do you have to prove?

ARMANDO'S COACH

Let me be your coach.
I'll get you the world title.

ARMANDO

You're just a kid.
You can't possibly help me.

ARMANDO'S COACH

Who else is offering to help?

...

You should be a champion.
You're the only boxer
That Josue Bernal refused to face again.
He vacated the title and moved up in weight
Rather than give you a rematch.
His only blessing was luck.
You're better than luck, you're a genius.

ARMANDO

Flattery doesn't mean anything to me.

ARMANDO'S COACH

Then a promise.
I can get you there.
I will get you a title.
Let me coach you
And I'll get you back in the mix.

Armando regards the young Coach warily. He assumes a fighting stance while the Coach steps out of the ring. A bell rings. A crowd roars with enthusiasm. Armando fights but seems to be wrestling against a very strong force. He's thrown down to the canvas.

REFEREE

Slip.

Armando forces himself back up painfully. He's gasping for breath.

REFEREE

Box!

*Armando covers up defending himself from a barrage of blows. The bell rings.
Armando walks to his corner breathing out of his mouth. Armando collapses onto
a stool set by his Coach.*

ARMANDO'S COACH

So, what the fuck is this, papa?
You giving up now?

ARMANDO (wheezing)

He's good.
He's really fucking good.

ARMANDO'S COACH

Deep breath.
Deep...in and out...okay...
Listen to me.
You're behind on the scorecards.
If you don't get the knockout
It's over.
Do you understand me?
It's over unless you get the K.O.

ARMANDO

He keeps clinching.
I can't get my punches off.

ARMANDO'S COACH

Throw everything away.
Do not stop punching.
Do not let him come near you.
That big motherfucker is using his weight
To tire you out.
Use the jab to keep him back
When he reaches for the clinch
You got half a second to get his chin
Or his abdomen.

ARMANDO

Coach...

ARMANDO'S COACH

It's a matter of timing.
Time him, papa.
This is your life now.
You did not leave the island
Just to fail here.

ARMANDO'S COACH (cont.)

We did not get this far
 To get this far.
 Dig deep.
 Make a miracle.
 Reach your summit.
 Prove everyone wrong.

A bell rings. Armando rises. Determination on his face. He begins boxing, throwing shot after shot. Something grabs him and shakes him violently.

ARMANDO'S COACH (cont.)

Do not let him clinch.
 Fight your way out.

Armando forces an uppercut through separating him from his opponent. He steps back exhausted, but hands still up. Armando tries to keep back the unseen force with a jab but he gets cornered.

ARMANDO'S COACH (cont.)

Throw it all away, papa!
 Ahora!

Armando delivers a barrage of hooks and uppercuts. The crowd erupts in a roar while Armando's Coach cheers. Armando leans back against the corner and raises an arm in triumph. Armando's Coach rushes into the ring and embraces Armando.

ARMANDO'S COACH (cont.)

Eso cabron!
 Eso!!!

Armando winces in pain. His coach immediately notices.

ARMANDO'S COACH (cont.)

Where is it?

ARMANDO

My knee...

ARMANDO'S COACH

Put your arm around my shoulder.
 Put your weight on me.
 Act natural.

Armando's Coach wraps an arm around Armando's shoulder and Armando does the same. They play off like nothing is wrong and raise fists in celebration. The crowd noise dies. The mountain reappears. They look up at the snowy summit, still out of sight.

ARMANDO

We're almost there...

ARMANDO'S COACH

I told you.

We're gonna reach that summit.

No matter what it takes.

I'll get you to the fucking top...

The snowstorm howls around them.

Round 5

Juan and Edgar in training gear. Edgar swarms Juan and attacks him with several jabs and hooks at once. Juan endures the barrage of blows before coming forward. He swipes at Edgar who backs away in time. A bell rings. They lower their guards.

JUAN

Good round.

EDGAR

Is this even helping?

JUAN

What?

EDGAR

The sparring.

JUAN

It's keeping you in shape, right?

EDGAR

But what about YOU?

JUAN

You don't gotta worry about me.

EDGAR

Juan, you're facing—

JUAN

I know who I'm facing.

EDGAR

So then what are we doing?

Shouldn't we be planning?

JUAN

Armando is a double gold medalist
 A three-time world amateur champion
 His two losses in the pro ranks
 Happened during title fights
 And he was stopped by referees
 For injuries he was fighting through.
 But both times Armando was stopped
 He was ahead on the scorecards.

EDGAR

What's your fucking point?

JUAN

He's a human specimen.

EDGAR

So, what? There's no use planning?

JUAN

No, there isn't.

EDGAR

Why you taking this fight?

JUAN

I need money to feed my kid
Pay my rent, keep my wife happy.
Why the fuck else
Would I be taking punches to my face for?

EDGAR

Why's he want this fight with you?

JUAN

If I had to guess.
He just had a year long layoff
From his last injury.
He needs to get the ring rust off.
I've never been knocked out
So he'll be able to get rounds in
Before he faces you for the title.

EDGAR

No way possible you could win?

JUAN

If I won that means we face each other.

EDGAR

...

Juan laughs.

JUAN

It won't happen.
Literally impossible.
Armando Perez is the best boxer in the world
Without a belt around his waist.
This fight means I collect some cash
And you collect info on him and where he's at
In terms of his abilities.

EDGAR

Anything's possible.

JUAN

Maybe in your black holes.

EDGAR

If shit's so hopeless in your mind, why fight?

JUAN

I'm not hopeless.
It's science, hermano.
He's got more to work with.

EDGAR

So you've given up
Before the first bell.

JUAN

Being realistic isn't the same
As being hopeless, Eddie.

EDGAR

Do you think I can beat Armando Perez?

JUAN

...

EDGAR

Say something.

JUAN

If I didn't believe you could take him
 Then I wouldn't have taken this fight.
 You got the talent to beat him.
 Now it's about seeing him up close.
 So we can figure out how you win.

EDGAR

...

JUAN

How about this?
 I dunno if on the other side
 Of a black hole there's heaven,
 But I know this,
 From this planet's beginning
 Until the last day
 The sun always rises
 And puts an end to even the darkest night.
 My life's been a dark fucking night
 And I'm holding out for dawn.
 That's why nobody knocks me out
 Or knocks me down.
 Because when that dawn comes,
 And it will fucking come,
 I will see it on my terms
 And I will welcome my tomorrow
 With open arms.
 It's not hopeless in my mind.
 But experience tells me the truth.
 It's not possible for me.
 But I know you can do it.

EDGAR

What's that dawn look like for you, then?

JUAN

My wife and kid taken care of.

EDGAR

How you gonna do that
 If you got no hope in yourself
 Winning a belt?

Silence.

ROUND 6

Juan and Armando sit at a press conference. Juan stares at Armando with thinly disguised disdain. Armando looks comfortable and unfazed.

INTERVIEWER (*offstage voice*)

Thank you both for appearing.

ARMANDO

You're welcome.

JUAN

...

INTERVIEWER

Let's begin with you, Armando.

You are already the mandatory

For the title fight.

Why take this stay-busy fight

When you can challenge for the title now?

ARMANDO

Shaking off ring rust.

Simple as that.

It's been over a year.

I need to get used to the ring,

The lights, and the crowds again.

INTERVIEWER

Is there a reason you chose

Juan David Gonzalez as your opponent?

ARMANDO

He is a respected veteran

Who will provide me valuable rounds

And a stiff enough challenge

Before my title fight.

Juan snorts.

ARMANDO

It's true.

INTERVIEWER

Do you have a response, Juan?

JUAN

Bro, I got seven losses.
Fuck outta here
With that stiff challenge shit.

INTERVIEWER

Why do you think Armando
Selected you as an opponent?

JUAN

He knows damn well
I'm Edgar's coach.
All this shit is, is a message.

INTERVIEWER

The message being?

JUAN

He wants to show Edgar
What's in store.

INTERVIEWER

Your response, Armando?

ARMANDO

If that's what Juan wants to believe
He is welcome to believe it.
If it was him or anyone else
My job is to win and entertain.

JUAN

Who you entertaining
When you're running around the ring
For twelve rounds barely throwing a punch?

ARMANDO

Do you have a problem with my style?

JUAN

It's not me that's got a problem.
I'm just saying you can't knock out
A motherfucker in a coma.

ARMANDO

That's your opinion.

JUAN

Then prove it ain't facts, old man.

ARMANDO

We'll see.

INTERVIEWER

Juan does bring up an interesting point.
Your age does beg many questions—

ARMANDO

I know that my age begs questions.
But I can't give up on my dream.
They say third time's the charm.
I will finally conquer this summit
And reach the top of the boxing world.

INTERVIEWER

What does this dream mean to you?

ARMANDO

What do you mean?
It means everything to me.
I defected from Cuba to chase world honors.
My father won't talk to me.
I'll probably never see my family again.
I gave up everything for this dream.

JUAN

Such a fucking shame
That you're never
Ever
Gonna see that dream come true.

ARMANDO

You're trying to make me angry.
That's fine, it'll be settled in the ring.

JUAN

You're forty and your body's falling apart.
Third time's the charm?
It's too late now.
That train's left the station, mi pana.
No fucking way you're getting a title.

ARMANDO

We'll see if my age plays a factor
In this upcoming fight.

JUAN

You're old and you can't punch for shit.

ARMANDO

You're not known for trash talk.
What's inspiring this?

JUAN

I'm only observing, viejo.
You're hype.
All talk, no delivery.

ARMANDO

My record says otherwise.

JUAN

Your record says
When you had to step up to the plate
You choked twice and lost.

ARMANDO

Be very careful, Juan David.

JUAN

Your rep is from the amateurs.
But this is the pro-ranks Cubanito.
And in the pros, you're garbage.

ARMANDO

Okay...

JUAN

How's it feel?
You left your family and homeland behind
Only to fail every single fucking time?

Armando rushes Juan. They get into a wrestling match. Cameras click and people gasp.

INTERVIEWER

Gentlemen, gentlemen please calm down!

They do not. Edgar and Armando's Coach rush in and separate the two.

EDGAR

The fuck are you doing?

JUAN

You ain't shit, old man.

ARMANDO

I'll kill you!

JUAN

You couldn't even punch me right.

ARMANDO'S COACH

What you doing?
Tranquilo, ya.
Calm down.

ARMANDO

You're gonna see.
You hear me?
Dead.
Fucking. Dead.

ARMANDO'S COACH

He don't mean that!
Armando, vamos.

Armando's Coach starts dragging Armando out when—

JUAN

Dead like your career
Or like your boring ass fights?

EDGAR

Juan, the fuck, man?

Armando breaks free and tries to rush Juan again but his Coach catches him.

ARMANDO

Let me go, Coach.

ARMANDO'S COACH

No.

Let's go.

Now.

Armando and his Coach leave.

EDGAR

Juan...

What was that for?

JUAN

Now we know we can get to him.

We're living in his head rent free.

EDGAR

But what if he actually tries to kill you?

JUAN

Then that's a bonus for me.

EDGAR

...?

Blackout.

ROUND 7

A crib in the middle of the ring. Juan steps into the ring and approaches the crib.

JUAN

Hey. You awake?

Juan approaches the crib and smiles.

Ayyyy, look at you.
 What you still doing up?
 You gotta sleep, chiquitín.
 That's how you get strong.
 And you gotta be strong.

Why's that?
 Because this life ain't easy.
 It's always there
 Trying to fuck you up.

Ah fuck, I said curse words, my bad.
 Shit—I mean—okay.

I'm not...good at this.

Your mom, uh, your mom thinks
 We don't know each other too well.
 She always...she wants what's best.
 I know that, but, like.
 I'm not good with words, right?
 What do I say to you?
 I mean, do you even understand me?
 Or are these just some noises to you?
 You know my name, right?
 And I know your name.

Now what?

Oh.

You know what your papi does for money?
 I'm a boxer.
 That means I fight people.
 You wanna see?

He shadowboxes. After a while he stops, feeling lost.

JUAN (cont.)

Why you so quiet with me?
C'mon chiquitín.
Talk to me.
Please.

Long silence.

I'm sorry.
That what you wanna hear?
I'm sorry, okay?
Perdóname.

Your mom's right.
I don't...I don't know you.
And you don't know me.

I'm asking you to talk to me.
But you shouldn't talk to no strangers.
Even if that stranger's your dad.

Fuck.

I know you been hearing me and mami
We uh...we been fighting.
Not like the way where I hit her
Like I do the guys in ring.
We been fighting with our words.
And if you want the truth.
I prefer the fights with punches
Than I do the fights con palabras.

Your mom always wins those.
You gonna get used to that
If you ever get a wife.

But I don't like word fights, ya know?
I don't like 'em because words...
Words hurt worse than any punch, mijo.

Especially when those words are truth.
And when your mami is spitting truth
I start saying things that aren't truth.

JUAN (cont.)

And I try to hurt her with my words.
Then we both end up hurt
Then I'm...

When I met your mother, right?
Oh my God.
Beautiful, intelligent.
She was...no...she *is*
Special.
And your papi was the luckiest man...

But you see.
Your papi...he ain't a good man.
It's true.

I won your mami's heart
Under what they call
False pretenses.

That's a fancy word for
I lied to her.

I didn't mean to.
Don't get it twisted.
But someone as special
Someone as beautiful
Someone that's the whole world
Like your mami is.
She deserves a man
Who can give her what she deserves.

So that's what I told her.
I told her I'd get us outta this shit.
I told her I was gonna bring her belts
And cash, and houses and...

And I wanted to keep that promise.
I swear to God.
Strike me down, kill me now.
I wanted to give her all that.
But like...

JUAN (cont.)

I kept losing.
And losing.
And losing.
And losing.
And losing.
And losing.
And losing.
Until my promises
Turned into lies.

But your mami...
She kept encouraging me.
She'd say, I'd win next time.
She kept believing the promises
That I knew I'd never deliver.
But she believed.
She had to have faith
That she made the right choice
Picking me to be her husband.

And then you were born.
And her encouraging turned into
Questions about the bills
And about whether I needed
Maybe to rethink what I was doing.
It turned into complaining about roaches
And the rent, and the hours she worked.
Until questions turned into word fights.

Please understand me, man.
I ain't saying this is on you.
Weak men who can't face the truth,
Those are the ones who blame
Little babies for their failures.
And I ain't weak like that
To put the fact that I can't accomplish shit
On my little boy.

No.

But what they're gonna tell you?
Where if you work hard
And if you give it your all
That you'll live your dreams?

JUAN (cont.)

That shit's not true.
 That's for television
 And people who take advantage
 Of your hopes with the lie that you'll make it.
 If you keep working hard

...

But what's life without dreams, hijo?
 What's the point if you don't try
 To beat the odds and get good in the world?
 Why can't I hope for a better tomorrow?
 Because I tried, papito.
 I tried to make those words true.
 I wanted to be world champ since I was five.

And maybe I should do something else in life.
 Maybe I should quit and get a "real job"
 And stop pretending I'll ever win a belt.
 But I...I can't let go, man.
 I can't leave behind the dream
 That kept me going all these years.
 I don't know how to do anything else.

And if I'm being real...
 I love it.
 I fucking love this shit too much to let it go.

...

I always hoped that I'd be more than a Spic
 Who ruined a woman's life
 With his stupid, impossible hope...

Unfortunately...

I ain't shit.
 I never been shit.
 Maybe some people got no right to dream.

And I can accept that for myself.
 I did my best and my best...
 My best will never be good enough.
 But that's not what your mami..
 That's not what you signed up for.

I know that mom's breaking her back
 Keeping this shit together
 And I ain't kept up my end.

I promised her world titles and living good.
 I promised I'd get us the fuck outta here.
 I promised you both a sunrise.
 And I been breaking those promises.

But I'm gonna fix that.

Beat. A hollow laugh from JUAN.

JUAN (cont.)

In and outta the ring.
The hardest fucking punchers
Can't knock out your old man.
I only been knocked out twice.

When I laid my eyes on your mom.
And when I held you for the first time.
That kinda shit deserves a reward, right?
After all, you both did what no other man can.

JUAN wipes his eyes.

So that's it.
That's your father.
A loser who ain't worth shit.

But I got a plan, little man.
You may never have a dad
Who'll be called a champion.
But I'm getting you
And your mami
What you both deserve.
You'll both get the dawn.
I'mma deliver on that.
No matter what it takes.

You wanna know how?

I'mma tell you a secret.
For your ears only.

JUAN looks into the crib.

Intermission.

Round 8

The boxing ring. Fight night. A cheering crowd all around. Lights flashing everywhere. The atmosphere is electric. Juan stands with Edgar, warming up by shadowboxing. Eventually Juan stops and looks seriously at Edgar.

JUAN

You watch closely
 You understand me?
 Armando's your next opponent.
 Study his habits,
 Watch what he does
 When he loads his shots.

EDGAR

I gotcha, bro.

JUAN

We're almost there.

EDGAR

Thirty-six minutes.

JUAN

Then one more match after.

Music begins to play. Las Cuarenta by Rolando LaSerie. The crowd cheers as Armando enters in a boxing robe bearing the Cuban flag's colors. Right behind him, his Coach with a white towel draped over his shoulders. They enter the ring. The Coach removes Armando's robe.

ARMANDO'S COACH

You good?

ARMANDO

Yes.

ARMANDO'S COACH

Suave, you understand me?
 Take your time
 This one got a hard head.

ARMANDO

I know.

A bell rings. The audience cheers.

ANNOUNCER (offstage voice)

And now.
 For your amusement
 For your viewing pleasure.
 Twelve rounds of boxing.
 For the right to battle
 For the world title
 Two men at the end of their ropes.
 Putting their lives on the line
 For the chance of a lifetime.
 To the audience in attendance.
 And to boxing fans all over the world.
 Are you ready?

The audience roars its approval.

Fighting out of the blue corner
 Wearing Puerto Rican flag trunks
 In 35 fights he has 28 victories and seven losses.
 Ten by way of knockout.
 Despite his losses,
 He has never been knocked down or knocked out.
 His improbable bid for the world title
 Brings him here today.
 Ladies and gentleman
 “El Chacal”
 Juan David Gooooooooonzalez!

Juan raises his fist to a smattering of cheers and boos.

And fighting out of the red corner
 Wearing Cuban flag trunks
 This amateur standout
 Holds two Olympic gold medals
 Three world amateur championships
 An absolutely astounding 230 to 8 record
 In the amateur ranks with each loss avenged.
 His professional record, an outstanding one.
 In 65 fights he has lost only twice
 Both in competitive world title bouts.
 Celebrating his fortieth birthday last week,
 Defying age and refusing to let anything stop him
 Armando “El Sueño” Perez!!!

The crowd goes nuts for Armando who bows, kisses his glove, and raises his fist.

ANNOUNCER (cont.)

Fighters and coaches
Please step to the center
To receive final instructions.

Armando and his Coach step to the middle as do Juan and Edgar. Armando and Juan stare at each other in their final face-off.

JUAN

‘ta bien, viejo?

Armando smiles.

ARMANDO

I’m going to knock you out.

JUAN

You gotta kill me first, ‘mano.

ARMANDO

Si es lo que quiere.

JUAN

I hope you do.

REFEREE (offstage voice)

Alright gentlemen.

You received my instructions

I want a good clean fight.

Protect yourself at all times.

God Bless.

Touch gloves

Come on touch ‘em.

They touch gloves and go back to their corners. Edgar and the Coach get out of the ring. Juan and Armando raise their fists. The bell rings to start the round. Armando, with surprising quickness, is on Juan just as he's taking his first steps out of his corner. Armando begins unloading a barrage of hard power shots while Juan covers up. The crowd cheers. Juan clinches Armando and tries to force it into a wrestling match. Armando begins unloading hooks into Juan's ribs. Juan lets go, and Armando steps back. Juan is already bloodied.

ARMANDO

You do have a hard head.

JUAN

I already fucking told you.
You're gonna have to kill me.

ARMANDO

I have a better idea.

Juan tries to close the distance, but Armando begins peppering Juan with jabs from a distance. Juan cannot get close to Armando to land a shot. A bell rings. They go back to their respective corners. Edgar gets in the ring and wipes the blood from Juan's face.

EDGAR

Juan he's playing with you.

JUAN

Keep watching him for mistakes, Eddie.
Learn his habits.

EDGAR

He's not showing any habits or mistakes.

JUAN

Then I pressure him
Until he does.

EDGAR

But he's not pressured.

JUAN

We got eleven rounds.
Let me do my job and you do yours.

A whistle. Edgar and Armando's Coach get out of the ring. Juan and Armando stand up and go forward. Juan goes, shoulder first for a sort of tackle to force Armando to the

ropes. As Armando gets to the ropes, Juan lets out a flurry of punches that doesn't do any damage because of how sloppily the punches were thrown. Armando sides steps and catches Juan on the temple. Juan tries a wide hook that Armando sidesteps again. Armando then rushes forward shoulder first and lets out a much cleaner and punishing version of what Juan tried to do. The crowd is loving the one-sided beatdown.

The bell rings again, ending the round. Juan collapses into his stool.

EDGAR

Juan...it's not happening.

JUAN

Ten more rounds.

EDGAR

He's gonna kill you.

JUAN

Then I'm a lucky man.

EDGAR

Stop talking like that.

JUAN

Keep watching him.

ARMANDO'S COACH

I told you to take it slow.

ARMANDO

I am taking it slow.

ARMANDO'S COACH

You're being risky.

ARMANDO

He's no threat.

ARMANDO'S COACH

Armando...

ARMANDO

Mira, watch this.

The whistle blows. Edgar and Coach get out of the ring. The bell rings again. Juan stands up as does Armando who now no longer even has a guard up. His hands stay by

his side as Armando dodges and everything Juan tries to throw. Armando moves with the grace and elegance of a dancer. It's almost otherworldly.

The lights dim on the boxers. Juan in the shadows continues getting beaten and the bell rings five times signaling new rounds while Edgar speaks.

EDGAR

Juan, he's killing you out there.
 Please stop fighting, man.
 It's not worth it
 Why you still fighting?
 How do you compete
 With sheer talent like Armando's?
 You made it to seven rounds,
 You can stop now.
 He's gonna kill you...

Armando pivots to throw a hook to Juan's head. A look of surprise crosses Armando's face and the punch doesn't get thrown. Armando trembles. Juan capitalizes and tries to throw a headshot, that Armando dodges with his head movement. But he's no longer sidestepping or moving with his legs.

Armando takes a step back and raises his fists in a Mayweather-esque style. As Juan trying to shoulder roll Juan's punches away. Armando bends a little too much on his back leg and suddenly, his knees give out. Armando crumples to the floor.

REFEREE

Slip!

ARMANDO'S COACH

Fuck!
 Armando!

Armando masters his panic and puts on his best poker face. He stands up, but in a labored way.

REFEREE

Box!

ARMANDO'S COACH

Get on the bike!!
 Now!

Armando retreats from an advancing Juan who is still missing and held back by Armando's long jab. Juan is able to corner Armando who tries to pivot. His knees spasms and Armando loses balance. He falls forward on Juan and holds on for dear life.

Juan eventually breaks away and steps back from Armando, who is gasping trying to steady himself.

EDGAR

Oh my God...
His knees are gone.
Juan his fucking knees
They're fucking gone!
Go! Go! Go!

Juan rushes forward and begins throwing as many punches as possible. Armando tries to parry to the side but his knees won't allow. He stumbles back and falls on his ass. The audience gasps and cheers.

REFEREE

Down!!

Armando painfully stands up. The audience cheers chanting Armando's name. The Referee gives a standing eight count to Armando who still has his wits about him. He nods to the Referee and holds up his arms to show he's alright.

REFEREE

Can you continue?

ARMANDO

Yes.

REFEREE

Alright, box.

Juan wastes no time and rushes straight at Armando. Armando tries to keep Juan back with a stiff jab, but Juan walks right through and starts infighting unloading into Armando's sides and abdomen. Armando tries to retreat back into the ropes and cover up.

Armando's knees buckle. Before he can fall, Armando grabs hold of Juan and puts all his weight on Juan's body. They wrestle. Juan frees himself from Armando who leans back against the ropes. Armando tries to take a step forward to load a hook, but on his front foot touching the canvas to take the step, Armando's knee spasms. Juan throws a jab that very lightly hits Armando, but even that light hit is enough. Armando falls back to the canvas. The audience roars.

REFEREE

Down!!

Juan goes to a corner and waits. Armando gets up on his hands and knees and punches the canvas in frustration. With all his strength, Armando wills himself up off the canvas and raises his hands to show he's okay while the Referee finishes the eight-count.

REFEREE

You need to show me something.

ARMANDO

I slipped. My bad.

REFEREE

Can you continue?

ARMANDO

Yes.

REFEREE

Alright...box!

Juan goes and tries to unload a flurry of punches on Armando. Armando returns fire with an uppercut. But again, Armando's knees give out. Armando falls over and the uppercut grazes Juan, doing no damage. Juan goes to a corner.

JUAN

Stay down!!

REFEREE

Slip, it's a slip!

Armando forces himself up once again and raises his fists, refusing to capitulate. Juan looks to the Referee incredulously.

JUAN

What the fuck, ref?

REFEREE

Box!

Juan doesn't move.

JUAN

He's fucking done!

What the fuck are you doing

Letting the fight go on?

REFEREE

Box!

ARMANDO

Fuck you!

Let's go!

Come on!

Armando defiantly motions to Juan to come over and fight. Armando looks stiff, like it's taking all his concentration for his legs not to give out again, but his pride as a warrior, refuses to allow his legs to give up by themselves. The audience boos Juan demanding he continue the fight. Juan hesitates for another moment before making the decision. He heads right to Armando to deliver the finishing blow. Just as Juan reaches Armando, the bell rings, ending the round.

Juan and Armando make their way to their corners. Edgar sets out Juan's stool while Armando's coach sets out Armando's stool. Armando collapses into the stool.

ARMANDO'S COACH

Where's it hurting?

ARMANDO

Don't worry about that.

The Coach taps Armando's knee. Armando winces.

ARMANDO (cont.)

Fuck!

ARMANDO'S COACH

Both your knees?

ARMANDO

Yes.

ARMANDO'S COACH

Armando...

ARMANDO

I'm okay.

ARMANDO'S COACH

Don't lie to me.

ARMANDO

I'm fine, coach!

ARMANDO'S COACH

It's over.

ARMANDO

No it's not.

No, it's fucking not

ARMANDO'S COACH

I can't let you go another round.

ARMANDO

I just need the right punch.

ARMANDO'S COACH

Your knees, papa.

They're gone.

Your punches got no power

Without your knees.

ARMANDO

One shot. That's all I need.

ARMANDO'S COACH

Not without working knees

You fucking know that.

ARMANDO

I'm not surrendering.

ARMANDO'S COACH

You didn't surrender.

You never surrendered.

Blame it all on me.

I surrendered.

I'm the coward.

You're a champion.

You're my champion.

But you can't go on, champion.

I'm sorry.

ARMANDO

Not on the stool.

Please, not on the stool.

ARMANDO'S COACH

Ya. No mas, Armando.
You got nothing to prove.

ARMANDO

You can't take this from me.
You can't.

ARMANDO'S COACH

My decision is final, papa.
It's over.

ARMANDO

One. More. Round.

Armando forces himself painfully off the stool and assumes his stance. The crowd roars in approval. Juan stands. Before Armando can step to the center of the ring his Coach hurls his white towel in the middle of the ring. The world stops.

ARMANDO

I have come to learn a deep truth.
Every human being.
Whether the mightiest emperor
Or the lowest of nobodies
Is born with a tremendous weight
Pressing down on their souls.

We call that weight our Dreams.

And this life
The whole of our existence
Is spent trying to force that weight
That chimera, that Dream, from our souls.
We struggle to fulfill the terms necessary to
Living our Dreams
We go to school.
We train ourselves.
We start a business.
We go on a journey.
We leave our homeland...

Because the weight of a Dream
Suffocates the soul.
And unless you work toward
Fulfilling your Dreams...
You will never be satisfied in this life.

You will always feel like you're drowning.

And that is life, isn't it?
 Life is the great struggle to finally
 At last finally,
 Breathe without restriction.
 It is a struggle to free yourself
 Of that mighty weight
 We've come to know as Dreams.

So what do you do?
 When you realize
 That despite everything
 All your efforts
 All your strength
 All your...
 All of you
 Is still not enough
 To reach that summit...
 To lift the weight of your Dream
 From your soul?

What do I do?

Silence.

You know in your head that most dreams...
 Most dreams go nowhere.
 The problem, however,
 Is that you think you're an exception
 To the rules of life.
 You never think that it's your dreams
 That are going nowhere.

Silence.

My father was furious
 That I betrayed the Revolution.
 He hasn't spoken to me
 Since I defected.

But I hear him every day.
 Especially each time I lost.
 Especially now...

"What was it for in the end?"

You gave them your dignity
 And you were left with two broken knees.
 That's how the fucking pigs
 Get their propaganda.
 Lure an imbecile like you
 With promises of belts and glory.
 But the moment you leave your home
 They fuck you."

Maybe he's right.
 I'm just an imbecile
 Who tried to calm a restless soul
 Burdened by the weight of a Dream
 And got lured into humiliation
 And lost everything to the fucking pigs.

Silence.

At the hotel room after the fight
 I called my mother back home
 To tell her
 That her son was not good enough
 That I made the wrong choice
 That my father was right.

But she didn't answer.

Instead...

A low, tired sounding voice plays out in the air.

ARMANDO'S FATHER

Dígame

Pause. Armando stands there, mouth agape, unable to speak.

ARMANDO'S FATHER

Quien es?

Armando is suddenly a terrified child.

ARMANDO

Soy yo...papi.

ARMANDO'S FATHER

Armando?

ARMANDO

Si.

ARMANDO'S FATHER

Okay...I'll get your mami.

ARMANDO

I lost my fight.

ARMANDO'S FATHER

...

Okay.

ARMANDO (struggling)

Don't you have anything else to say?

ARMANDO'S FATHER

For losing?

Stunned silence. The line goes dead. Armando stands alone. A snowstorm begins to form around him. His coach enters.

ARMANDO'S COACH

Armando...

ARMANDO

...

ARMANDO'S COACH

I'm sorry.

I...I know I promised...

ARMANDO

...

ARMANDO'S COACH

I thought I made the best decision.

Your knees...

What's the point of winning

If you can't walk anymore?

ARMANDO

...

ARMANDO'S COACH

I'm sorry.
I did what I had to do.

ARMANDO

...
Okay.

ARMANDO'S COACH

Don't you have anything else to say?
Papá, please.

The storm howls and forms a gulf between them. Armando is stricken by his coaches' pleas to say something else. Armando realizes another deep truth.

ARMANDO

Ah...I see now...
Well, then...

With all his strength, Armando starts making his way to his Coach. He struggles against the snowstorm toward his Coach. He wills himself forward with all his might despite the pain in his knees and the blizzard's rage. He reaches his Coach.

ARMANDO (cont.)

Even if I didn't like it
You did what you thought was best.

ARMANDO'S COACH

But the title...

ARMANDO

We got really close didn't we?

ARMANDO'S COACH

I broke my promise.

ARMANDO

And these knees broke their promise.
Es lo que es.

Silence. Armando pulls his Coach into an embrace.

ARMANDO (cont.)

I'm proud of you, mijo.

Armando's legs give out. He sags. His Coach keeps Armando steady, refusing to let his fighter go down. The howl of the blizzard dies.

ARMANDO (cont.)

Then something strange happened.

Something I never felt before.

I could suddenly breathe

As if my head finally made it above water

After a long struggle beneath the waves.

As if I reached the summit.

The storm clouds part. What remains are the two of them at the summit of a mighty mountain. All about them, the majesty of the heavens. Armando looks around, in awe. He suddenly realizes the deepest truth of all.

ARMANDO (cont.)

Oh...

So, this is what it feels like...

Armando leans on his Coach for support. They regard the sky at the summit's peak as a gentle snow flurry passes over them. They disappear into the white.

Round 9

The ring. Juan sits on his stool. Edgar enters carrying gear for sparring.

JUAN

You ever have someone
Fall outta love with you?

EDGAR

Why you asking that?

JUAN

I'm wondering.
Have you?

EDGAR

I mean, yeah.
Breakups and shit.

JUAN

No. I mean...
Fall out of love with you.

EDGAR

.....

JUAN

It starts with a look.
A look that you wouldn't notice
Unless you were paying attention.
It's a look that's everything
And nothing all at once.
That look of hurt, confusion
Bitterness, anger, all in one look.
And to someone that doesn't notice
That look could fly right under radars.

Beat.

EDGAR

Why you telling me this?

JUAN

Then she starts forgetting things, ya know?
 Small things like kisses at breakfast.
 And if you bring it up
 She'll say she was running late
 Or some bullshit excuse like that.
 She won't say, "I love you"
 Before you get off the phone.
 You might not notice
 Especially after years of marriage.
 But I notice those things.
 Do you know why I notice things
 While others don't?

EDGAR

Tell me.

JUAN

Other motherfuckers...
 They don't see themselves.
 They make it their job to look away
 From the truths of their life.
 But me, I don't got that problem.
 Do you know what I see?

EDGAR

Yourself.

JUAN

Fuck you.

EDGAR

My bad, my bad.
 I didn't mean it like that.
 What do you see?

JUAN

A failure.

Silence.

I said I'd give her the world.
 I told her I'd get us out.
 I swore the first time I held my son
 That he would never starve like I did.
 But I...I couldn't keep that promise.

Silence.

JUAN (cont.)

I'm so ashamed
Of what I see
When I look at myself
Every single fucking day.
And that look she gives me.
Is the same look I give myself
When I see myself in the mirror.
That's how I notice.

Beat.

Do you know why I want to die in the ring?

EDGAR

Warrior's honor
Or some shit?

JUAN

No.

EDGAR

Then I don't know.

JUAN

It's because I believe
That if my wife and son
Can't have a champion
For a father and husband.
Then at the very least
They should get a champion's purse.

EDGAR

What are you saying?

JUAN

I took out a life insurance policy.

EDGAR

Jesus...

JUAN

Simple enough plan, right?
 Eventually someone's gotta hit hard enough
 To take me out.
 But God gave me a hard head
 And I'm still here.

Silence.

It was always my dream
 To win the world title.
 Get my wife and kid out of the barrio
 And be the best husband and father I could be.
 I let that dream go, I really did.
 And I tried to provide for them
 The only way I knew how.
 But now...
 Now that dream's come back to life.
 The title's right in front of me.
 I got a way to get them out
 And stick around for my kid.

Beat.

I know you don't like to talk about it.
 But you need to give me something, Eddie.
 You need to tell me why
 I gotta deny my wife and son
 Their chance at a better life
 With me by their side
 So that you can stay in this country.
 You gotta tell me why
 I need to keep letting my wife
 Look at me with those eyes
 I give myself every day.
 Because I love you, hermano.
 All my heart, I do.
 I don't want you getting deported
 But you can always cross back over.
 I ain't getting this chance again.

EDGAR

No, I can't just cross back.

JUAN

Why not?

EDGAR

Reasons.

JUAN

The fuck kinda answer is that?

EDGAR

My answer.

JUAN

Alright. How about this?

Why you telling immigration

That you came here when you were 18?

You came as a child.

EDGAR

I got in trouble as a kid.

I don't want them looking

Too deep in my past, okay?

JUAN

You can tell me that

But you can't tell me why

You can't get deported?

EDGAR

I ain't gotta tell you shit.

JUAN

No. You don't.

But I want to know.

I need to know

Why my kid won't get to have a father

So you can stay here.

Silence. In the distance a train is heard.

EDGAR

I ain't been living for me.

I been living because I owe a debt

I can't repay.

JUAN

That's not saying anything.

EDGAR

You know my mother died on the train.

Beat.

JUAN

I know that.

EDGAR

You know why she died?

JUAN

...

EDGAR

I didn't listen to her directions
And she had to save me when I slipped.

...

She fell off making sure I stayed on.
She's dead 'cause of me.
Because I wouldn't listen.

JUAN

Eddie...

EDGAR

I'm gonna be real with you, bro.
I been wanting to die for a minute.
I been wanting outta this motherfucker
From the moment I saw
My mother fall off the train
Trying to make sure that I wouldn't.

Beat.

I don't get the choice
To walk outta this fucked up world
That says I gotta beat another man
To the point of unconsciousness
Just to prove that I belong here.

Beat.

And I know I could cross back.
I could probably do it a few times.
But if I get sent back...
Then my mother died for nothing.
And I can't let nobody
Make her sacrifice meaningless.
Not some government
Not some policy
Not some motherfuckers
Not you.

EDGAR (cont.)

She gave up everything
 So I can be here.
 And I'll be god-fucking-dammed
 If I let anyone disrespect the life
 She gave up
 Just so I could live mine.
 You talk about me
 Needing to give you a reason.
 Homie I ain't gotta give you shit
 Because the only way I'm leaving that ring
 Without the world title on my waist
 Is in a body bag.

A long silence.

JUAN

I honor your reason.
 It's your mother.
 It's her memory.
 You gotta protect the sacrifices she made.
 I understand that.
 Pero, 'mano.
 With all my love to her and to you.
 She's dead and my family's living.
 The only way you leave with the title
 Is with my corpse
 Being carried out of that ring.
 I got no problem dying
 And I got no problem killing
 Anyone, even the man I call my brother
 If that man is standing in the way
 Of my boy getting fed
 And my wife getting the life she deserves.

Silence. Edgar nods.

EDGAR

I get that
 I'll...I'll find another gym.

JUAN

What you mean, man?

EDGAR

We're gonna fight.

JUAN

We are.

EDGAR

So...I gotta do my training
Somewhere else, right?

JUAN

No. You stay here.

EDGAR

You gonna find another gym?

JUAN

No.

EDGAR

Then what?

JUAN

One of us is dying in that ring.
If these are my last days
Or if these are yours
I ain't gonna waste them
By being away from my little brother.
We got this far together.
We seeing it through together.

EDGAR

Yeah...

JUAN

Get your gear on.
We'll start with some sparring.

Silence. They can't move. Finally, they embrace. It is goodbye. It is good luck.

Round 10

Fight night.

ANNOUNCER

We are proud to present now,
The main event of the evening.
Twelve rounds of boxing.
For the world title.
To the audience in attendance.
And to boxing fans all over the world.
Are you ready?

Cheers.

Coming into the ring first
After an astonishing campaign
Ten fights in one year.
Ten knockouts
A meteoric rise to the top of the ranks
A Cinderella story for the ages
The Number 3 ranked boxer
Seeking the title
To earn his stay in his adopted country
The United States of America
The Undocumented, The Undefeated,
Edgar “The Extraordinary EB-1” Bolañoos!!!

*Wild applause as a bombastic rap song in the vein of Big Punisher’s My World plays,
Edgar appears and does his ring walk, shadowboxing along the way. As he enters the
ring he holds up his fist to cheers.*

ANNOUNCER

And now making his entrance.
The most unlikely rise to the top.
In his first ever fight for the title.
Is it fluke or is it reality?
Can he defy the odds one more time
And realize his dream?
With an astonishing record of 29 wins and 7 losses,
Clawing his way to the top of the division

ANNOUNCER (cont.)

With heart and guts alone,
 This challenger
 Has never been KO'd or knocked down.
 The Number 2 ranked boxer
 Seeking the title
 After a career of setbacks
 El Chacal, Juan David Gonzaaaalez!!!!

More wild applause as something in the vein of El Rey del Timbal by Tito Puente blares out. Juan enters crossing himself. As he enters the ring, he takes a bow for the audience before meeting Edgar in the center of the ring.

Edgar and Juan stare at each other in their final face-off.

EDGAR

You ready, coach?

JUAN

Talking before a fight
 Is a sign of fear.
 So, what you really saying, mi pana?

REFEREE

Alright, alright gentlemen.
 Good. Clean. Fight.
 Nothing below the belt.
 Defend yourselves at all times.
 Obey my instructions at all times.
 Touch gloves.
 C'mon, touch 'em.

They touch gloves.

Alright. God bless.

Both men walk back to their specific corner. They assume their stance, ready to start the match. The bell rings and they begin infighting furiously. Pushing against each other shoulder to shoulder as they land blows to each other's abdomens. Juan hits Edgar really hard in the stomach and Edgar staggers back into his corner. Juan pursues. Juan unloads uppercuts and hooks into Edgar while Edgar tries to cover up. Juan slows down after a while and Edgar rushes forward throwing a wild haymaker that pushes Juan back. They begin infighting furiously in the middle of the ring. They push against each other shoulder to shoulder as they land blows to each other's abdomens.

Edgar winces in pain. Edgar's knees buckle under Juan's constant pressure and unrelenting punches. Edgar retreats to the ropes trying to keep Juan back with jabs, but Juan walks through them and keeps up his stalking.

JUAN

Go down!

Fucking go down!

EDGAR

Fuck you!

Edgar pushes back against the ropes and launches a counter hook right to Juan's jaw. Juan is momentarily stunned and tries to step back, badly wobbled. Edgar tries to force his way past Juan emptying out everything in a flurry of punches.

Juan masters his disorientation and pushes against Edgar. They start unloading uppercuts on each other's abdomens.

The crowd goes wild at the violence.

The bell rings. Edgar and Juan go back to their corners and sit alone wheezing.

JUAN

You ready to give up

Mr. Eddie B?

EDGAR

Death before dishonor, hermano.

A bell rings. They stand up and advance on each other. They meet in the middle of the ring. Edgar begins launching headshots with hooks and jabs while Juan attacks the abdomen with uppercuts and hooks.

Edgar takes a step back to load an overhead right while Juan steps forward and delivers a sickening uppercut right into Edgar's solar plexus. Edgar gasps and stumbles back into the ropes. Juan immediately rushes to Edgar and unloads hooks into Edgar's side, and uppercuts into his gut. Edgar tries to cover up but is unable to withstand Juan's barrage of hooks and uppercuts. Edgar take a knee.

REFEREE

Down!

Juan goes to a corner. Edgar grits his teeth unable to catch his breath.

REFEREE (cont.)

Five.

Six.

Seven.

Eight.

Edgar forces himself up.

EDGAR (breathless)

Not that easy...

REFFEREE

Can you continue?

EDGAR

Yes.

REFREREE

Okay...box!

Edgar starts moving toward Juan.

EDGAR

Knock the wind outta me, eh Coach?

JUAN

Give up, 'mano.

EDGAR

Not without my belt...

And my fucking...visa...

JUAN

You're gonna lose.

EDGAR

Only way I leave...

This country...

Is in a coffin...

You're not...

You're not disrespecting my mother...

Edgar throws a jab at Juan who dodges easily. Juan's eyes narrow and "turn off." Juan starts attacking Edgar's abdomen again with an uppercut to the stomach and a hook to the side. Edgar tries to fire back but reflexively folds over and tries to cover up. Juan

does not stop. Juan breaks through Edgar's guard with a big left uppercut into his stomach. Edgar falls to his knees, his mouthguard falling out.

REFEREE

Down!

Edgar forces himself up, still gulping for air.

REFEREE

Six!

Seven!

Eight!

Can you continue?

EDGAR

Yeh...yes....

REFEREE

Alright.

Time out!

Go to your corner Edgar.

Get a new mouthguard.

Edgar wheezing, painfully tries to get back to his corner. Halfway to his corner Edgar brings his right hand up to his chest for a moment before collapsing to the ground.

The arena falls silent and the lights shift. Juan rushes over to Edgar and turns him around

JUAN

No, no, no, no.

EDGAR

Coach?

JUAN

Catch your breath.

Please...

EDGAR

I feel heavy.

JUAN

It's okay.

It's okay.

Just breathe...

EDGAR

No it's not okay.
I'm too heavy...

JUAN

What are you talking about?

EDGAR

I'm too heavy to make the trip
To get to the black hole...
My heart's heavy...
I'm so fucking heavy...
I pulled my mom down
'Cause I'm so heavy...

A train horn in the distance. Edgar's eyes go blank. Slowly, slowly, Juan turns Edgar back around. He stands and walks backward back into his corner, horrified. The lights return to the fight and the audience erupts in cheering. A bell rings. Juan steps to the center of the ring, still staring at Edgar as the title is lowered from above. Juan takes the world title and looks at it, then back at Edgar.

Blackout for a brief moment. Lights rise up on Juan still in the middle of the ring.

PROMOTER (offstage voice)

It's really a shame.
Edgar was a...special talent.

JUAN

Yessir.

PROMOTER

But hey.
You're a champion now.
Against all the odds.
Real Rocky story.

JUAN

Edgar wasn't a bad guy.

PROMOTER

No, no, of course not.
Just, well, to be honest
Nobody was really betting on you.
Your fight against Armando—

JUAN

It was a fluke.
S'what people think, right?

PROMOTER

Yes.
But, after your title fight?
Oh my God.
Stunning, stunning.
Both of you showed so much heart
Courage like nobody's business.
I mean, really.

JUAN

Thanks...

PROMOTER

So what's it feel like?

JUAN

What?

PROMOTER

Being a champion.
Lifelong dream fulfilled.
Made it to the top.
Dawn finally breaking
You know?
What's it like?

Silence.

JUAN

I dunno...
I guess it hasn't sunk in, yet.

PROMOTER

Of course.

JUAN

So, what's next for me?

PROMOTER

Your next fight?

JUAN

Yeah.

PROMOTER

Bit premature to plan for don't you think?

JUAN

After the taxes, fees, cost of the belt—
 Did you know they charged me for the belt?—
 Then like my bills...
 I just need money, man.
 They didn't pay a lot for me and Eddie's fight.
 But now that I'm champion, you know,
 Life can change, right?
 Time to get those big purses
 Give my family the life they deserve.
 Like I always promised.
 I wanna keep my promise sooner rather than later.
 So...what's next?

PROMOTER

Well...technically Edgar
 Was the number 3 ranked boxer
 But his unfortunate passing
 Left that spot vacant.
 The Number 4 spot belongs to Armando
 But the word is he'll soon be retiring.
 Plus, nobody wants to see that fight again.

JUAN

So, I face Number 5.

PROMOTER

Right.

JUAN

Okay.

PROMOTER

Okay.

JUAN

So...

A pained silence.

JUAN (cont.)

Yo, stop fucking with me.
What's the purse gonna look like?

PROMOTER

Well, it's going to be...
A modest purse.

JUAN

What's modest mean?

PROMOTER

Five.

JUAN

Five million?
Bro, that's fine,
I can work with that.

PROMOTER

Figures.

JUAN

What?

PROMOTER

Five figures.

Silence.

JUAN

You're joking.
Come on, stop playing.

PROMOTER

Pursuant to the rules
Of your title's sanctioning body
A champion facing any challenger
Ranked 3rd and below is entitled
To a minimum purse bid of 50,000.

JUAN

Yo, but that's minimums.
You can negotiate for higher.

PROMOTER

Well, the ranked number five's reps
Have already called for the purse bid.
They don't want to negotiate.

JUAN

So, bid high.

PROMOTER

If we did submit a bid...
It would only be a little north of fifty-kay.

JUAN

Hold up.

PROMOTER

Of which you will be entitled to 75%
Of the entire purse.

JUAN

Wait...

PROMOTER

Of course, 3% is due to the sanctioning organization.
Then there's the minimum payout for the referee
The judges, the official representative at ringside,
Taxes both state and federal—of course.
Ten percent to your coach.
And of course your promoter's twenty percent.

JUAN

But I'm a world champion.

PROMOTER

And what the fuck does that mean?

JUAN

What...?

PROMOTER

What the fuck does that mean?

JUAN

I deserve more than 50,000.

PROMOTER

Do you?

JUAN

My friend is dead

He didn't die just for this...

For this bullshit amount to be offered to me.

PROMOTER

Oh, of course.

My apologies.

How could I not consider

The dead wetback surcharge

That we have to add to the purse bid?

JUAN

The fuck you say about Edgar?

PROMOTER

Oh fuck off.

Don't try to defend the honor

Of some kid you killed.

JUAN

The purse can't be that low.

PROMOTER

Do you know why it *will* be that low?

It's because you're guaran-fucking-teed to lose.

Why the fuck would I throw away money on a sure loser

Who only has his title because of a fluke with one opponent

And because he beat up a guy whose body was so torn up

After fighting ten times in a year

That it was practically a gimme?

Why put up big money for a guy with seven fucking losses

On his record?

What, you think you're slick?

You thought you were gonna get this belt

Get one big payday outta me and walk away?

You thought you were gonna fuck me over like that?

Fuck that.

PROMOTER (cont.)

Might as well give away the belt
 Put it on some undercard of a bigger fight
 Make some quick cash and be done with you.

JUAN

My family...My wife...My kid...

PROMOTER

Tell you what.
 Win the next fight.
 Prove you're a real champion
 And not some fluke ass fighter
 Who got where he was because of luck.

Silence.

PROMOTER (cont.)

You know why you're quiet?
 Because your know I'm right.
 You're gonna lose your next fight.
 You knew you were gonna lose it
 And thought you'd pull this slick shit
 Cashing out and going into the sunset.

JUAN

I'm not looking for sunset...

PROMOTER

I don't give a goddamn.
 You didn't understand the most important thing.
 That belt is only worth what people are willing to pay.
 I know I can make a low bid
 Because I know that nobody will pay higher than me
 For that trinket you won.
 It don't change shit.
 It don't change the fact that you're still the same
 Fucking loser who can't win a fight unless the other guy is injured.
 But you know what, for you, I'll bid 65,000.
 For your wife, your kid, and the corpse of your buddy.
 How's that?

Juan stands there frozen. The black hole tears open and roars. The title is taken from Juan and hung aloft once again. The lights shift. Edgar enters the ring and assumes a fighting stance. Juan does the same. Time has turned back. They're back in the fight.

Round 11

Rewind. The bell rings. Edgar and Juan go back to their corners and sit alone wheezing.

JUAN

You ready to give up
Mr. Eddie B?

EDGAR

Death before dishonor, hermano.

A bell rings. They stand up and advance on each other. They meet in the middle of the ring. Edgar begins launching headshots with hooks and jabs while Juan attacks the abdomen with uppercuts and hooks.

Edgar takes a step back and Juan steps forward loading an uppercut. Edgar delivers an almighty overhead right into Juan's face. We hear a sickening crack. Juan stumbles back into the ropes. Edgar rushes forward and starts a headshot barrage of straights and hooks into Juan's jaw and face, but Juan refuses to fall. Juan tries to throw back, but to no avail. He's out on his feet. Edgar delivers a devastating uppercut into Juan's chin. Juan finally falls, his body convulsing. The audience roars and cheers.

REFEREE

Down!

Edgar goes to a corner. As the Referee counts Juan out, Juan somehow gets up to his hands and knees.

REFEREE

Six!
Seven!
Eight!

Juan gets up gasping for breath. He raises his fists.

JUAN

You gonna have to...
You gonna...

REFEREE

Can you continue?

JUAN

Yes...

REFEREE

Alright...box!

Juan almost mechanically advances toward Edgar who does not move.

JUAN

Well now you've fucked me...
Where you learn to punch like that?

EDGAR

Please...

JUAN

I already told you.
I ain't leaving this ring alive
Unless it's with that title.

REFEREE

I said box!

The audience cheers. Edgar resolves himself and raises his fists. Juan smiles.

JUAN

Thank you.

Edgar meets Juan in the middle of the ring and begins unloading on Juan's head until a hard right hook connects sending Juan down for good. The audience noise dies.

REFEREE

Down!

The lights fade to a spotlight on Juan. He gasps for breath and still tries to get back up, but he cannot.

JUAN

The sunrise...
Why can't I see the dawn?
Why...?

Juan's eyes close. Edgar falls to his knees. We perhaps hear the cry of a child and the shriek of a woman that immediately transitions to a crowd going wild as the lights return to normal.

A bell rings. The title is lowered to Edgar who takes it in his hands.

The audience howls louder and louder until we drop into silence and another spotlight.

INTERVIEWER

So, Mr. Champion.
We're about ready
To render our final decision
Regarding your application.

EDGAR (numbly)

Okay...

INTERVIEWER

Just one final point of clarification.
Precisely at what age
Did you come into this country?

Silence. Edgar's eyes close, already knowing he's been caught.

EDGAR

Eighteen...

INTERVIEWER

Really?

EDGAR

...

INTERVIEWER

Last chance to tell the truth.

EDGAR

Does it matter?

INTERVIEWER

It can't hurt.

EDGAR

I was like seven or eight.

INTERVIEWER

I knew your English was too good.

EDGAR

...

INTERVIEWER

Are you even from Mexico?

EDGAR

No.

INTERVIEWER

Then where?

EDGAR

I honestly don't know.

INTERVIEWER

Are you lying?

EDGAR

No. I'm telling the truth.

INTERVIEWER

I believe you.

I also believe

You told us you came here at eighteen

Because you didn't want us digging

Into your past crimes when you were younger.

That sound right?

EDGAR

Yes.

INTERVIEWER

Did you think we wouldn't check

To see if you were lying to us?

EDGAR

I haven't done anything wrong

Since I was the age of—

INTERVIEWER

We all have our youthful transgressions.

We make mistakes.

It's entirely understandable.

You were afraid it would disqualify you.

EDGAR

Yeah...

INTERVIEWER

And while these are not unsubstantial crimes
 We could probably consider the extenuating circumstances.
 And look the other way.
 After all, you were a minor
 Who quite clearly was trying to survive
 Perhaps without the knowledge that what you were doing
 Could ever be considered criminal activity.

EDGAR

I'm glad you can see that perspective.

INTERVIEWER

We are not heartless.
 We understand the nuance of situations.

EDGAR

Thank you. I appreciate—

INTERVIEWER

However.

EDGAR

....?

INTERVIEWER

The choices you make as an adult.
 Knowing that it is a crime to lie
 On these visa applications,
 Well now, *that* can adversely affect
 What decision we come to.
 It shows us that you're not unwilling
 To commit crimes to get what you want.
 And, unfortunately the crime of your deceit
 Is grounds to disqualify your application.

EDGAR

But...
 I did everything you asked.
 I got the world title.
 I paid all the fees.
 My coach Juan he—

INTERVIEWER

Oh, don't get us wrong.
 That was a beautiful bout.
 Fight of the year candidate, for sure.
 Your coach fought valiantly as did you.
 Unfortunately, however...
 Fighting valiantly doesn't change reality.
 I'm sorry but, you shouldn't have lied.

Edgar stares, stunned.

EDGAR

I...

INTERVIEWER

Nevertheless.
 Congratulations on winning the world title.
 You truly earned it.

Edgar stands there frozen. The black hole tears open and roars. The title is taken from Edgar and hung aloft once again. The lights shift. Juan enters the ring and assumes a fighting stance. Edgar does the same. They're back in the fight.

The bell rings. Edgar and Juan go back to their corners and sit alone wheezing.

JUAN

You ready to give up
 Mr. Eddie B?

EDGAR

Death before dishonor, hermano.

A bell rings. They stand up and advance on each other. They meet in the middle of the ring.

The black hole roars again. Time stops.

JUAN

It's hopeless.

EDGAR

Yeah.

JUAN

We were never gonna...

EDGAR

We didn't have a chance in hell.

JUAN

Fuck.

EDGAR

Yeah...fuck, right?

They start laughing. Nervously at first, until it becomes genuine. This should go on until it is uncomfortable.

JUAN

The fuck do we do now?

EDGAR

I don't fucking know, man.

JUAN

Me neither.

EDGAR

First time you never had a plan.

JUAN

'Mano, you thought I had a plan?

EDGAR

Wait, wait, wait—

JUAN

I didn't know what fuck I was doing
This whole time, Eddie.
All the coaching plans
The training, I was making it up
Based on lessons I took back in the day.

EDGAR

Fuck me.

Juan, what the fuck?

JUAN

Yo, but I bullshit
With the best of them, right?

EDGAR

Bro, I didn't know how put on boxing gloves
Until like a year and a half ago.

JUAN

You're shitting me.

EDGAR

Nah man, I'm serious.

JUAN

You fucking fraud.

EDGAR

Coach, I ain't got no papers.
I been a fraud ever since I was a kid.

JUAN

Whatever, man. I ain't even an actual coach.

They laugh some more.

JUAN

This shit's so stupid.

EDGAR

Right, though?

JUAN

Yo, but we made it far, didn't we?

EDGAR

Shit shoulda never happened, man.

JUAN

I fucking beat a goddamn legend.

EDGAR

I beat a guy everyone said was gonna
Take over the whole fucking sport.

JUAN

This bullshit.

EDGAR

We fucking frauded our way to the top.

JUAN

Yes we fucking did...

They grow silent. No longer laughing.

EDGAR

We gotta see it through
Don't we?

JUAN

Yeah, we do.

EDGAR

Even if it's hopeless.

JUAN

Especially because it's hopeless.

EDGAR

To the end
Chasing dawns that'll never come.

JUAN

Falling into black holes
That grant no wishes.

EDGAR

Why's it gotta be this way?

JUAN

What did you expect?

EDGAR

Yeah, you're right.

JUAN

For your mom.

EDGAR

For your wife and kid.

JUAN

Chasing after the horizon
Trying to get to dawn
Before the night overtakes you.
Or die trying.

EDGAR

Becoming a shooting star
Bound for a black hole
That might take you to heaven
Or leave you alone in empty space.

JUAN

Death before dishonor.

EDGAR

Death before dishonor.

Silence. They resume their fighting stances in the middle of the ring. The black hole roars and the audience noises return. Edgar and Juan crash into each other shoulder to shoulder throwing punch after punch. The audience cheers. Juan loads a right uppercut while Edgar loads a right haymaker.

Blackout.

Round 12

Post-fight. Separate locker rooms. Juan sits on a bench nodding off. Edgar makes his way to a stall and begins peeing. Juan opens his eyes and tries to maintain focus.

JUAN

There was this lullaby, right?
I would sing it to my kid
When he got cranky.
It always put him to sleep.
Doesn't matter what was going on.

But see, like, it had to be me to sing it.
If his mom sang it
Little kiddo would cry worse.
My ol' lady called it my superpower.

The lullaby went like this...

A confused pause.

Huh...well fuck.
I can't remember it.

Juan laughs.

Jesus Christ, I can't remember it.
What else you think I can't remember?
What's today?
A day that ends in the letter "Y."
What's my name?
Some name.
What's my wife's name?
My son's? What's his name?

He tries to remember. Juan shuts his eyes tight. It hurts to think.

I can't remember.
My bad family.
I can't remember your names.

Juan yawns.

Fucking tired, man.

Edgar comes out of the stall.

EDGAR

Yo, Juan what's red piss mean?
I know that orange piss
Means I ain't drinking enough
But red piss is like blood, right?
Juan? You here, bro?

Oh.

Shit, that's...that's right.

*Edgar thinks about this for a moment. He takes a painful step toward the locker.
Something seizes and Edgar takes a knee, as if the wind's been knocked out of him.*

Juan, my piss is red
And my inside hurts.
Ah fuck man...
You punch like a motherfucker.
Juan! You hear me? Juan!
I said you punch like a motherfucker.

Edgar stands and bends over holding his stomach. He goes back to the stall to vomit.

JUAN

Fucking knocked me down, Eddie.
Where'd you learn to punch like that?
How'd you get so good at boxing, ah?

Juan groans. He's dizzy.

Eddie, can I tell you something?
And you promise you won't laugh?
I can't remember anything.

The lights begin to dim. Edgar comes out of his stall wheezing.

EDGAR

As your soul approaches that final destination...
Inside the Reissner-Nordström-de Sitter Black Hole.
Time will start to slow down
Because of the strong gravitational field.
Suddenly all the light and matter
That ever went in
That will ever go in

EDGAR (cont.)

You get to see everything.
 You're supposed to be destroyed by this.
 After all, you're literally getting hit
 With everything that will ever go into a black hole
 At the same time, all at once forever and never.
 But for reasons I can't understand
 Getting hit with everything at once
 Makes time stop slowing down
 And keeps it slow at the same time.
 Like I said, I don't understand it.

But under certain conditions
 You can pass through this place
 Into the Cauchy horizon
 Where you don't live in a deterministic world.
 Everything that came before gets obliterated in this place
 And you may even avoid falling into the black hole.
 You'll just live in an unknown universe
 Where you can choose your future
 From an infinite number of possible futures
 And your past...your skin, your birthplace.
 Where you live. What language you speak
 Won't affect the future you want in life.
 That's gotta be heaven.
 It's gotta be...

Where only souls light enough to pass can go
 Where it doesn't matter who you were
 As much as who you'll become.

I don't think I'm gonna make it there.
 My soul's too heavy.
 Too heavy to make that journey.

A low rumble.

Oh fuck...
 Oh shit...
 Juan, what's red throw up mean?
 What's it mean, man?
 What's it fucking...?
 Jesus Christ, oh God...

Edgar collapses on the ground in pain.

Beat.

JUAN

I think I'd be sad if I won our fight Eddie.
 Just like I'd be sad if I lost.
 I don't think I can handle it either way.
 Wait a minute.
 Wait a fucking minute.

Who won?

Juan closes his eyes to rest. Beat. The sound of a train. Edgar awakens and slowly stands up. He lifts an arm up as if holding onto a hand for dear life.

EDGAR (*childlike in perfect Spanish*)

¿Por qué estás llorando?
 No llores mami.
 Por favor no llores.

No te preocupes mami.
 Es mi culpa.
 Lo siento.
 Está bien.
 Déjame caer
 Te quiero mucho, mami.

Edgar smiles and pulls his arm down, letting go of his unseen mother's hand and falling off the train. He collapses to the floor, eyes glassy.

Juan's eyes open. He laughs. Mirthless. Otherworldly.

JUAN

But I got a plan, little man.
 You may never have a dad
 Who'll be called a champion.
 But I'm getting you
 And your mami
 What you both deserve.
 You'll both get the dawn.
 I'mma deliver on that.
 No matter what it takes.

You wanna know how?

I'mma tell you a secret.

JUAN (cont.)

For your ears only.

See your papi.

He got a thing called insurance.

And what insurance does

Is it makes sure that you and mami

Will get a good life from here on out.

All your papi's gotta do is...

All he's gotta..

Wait.

I remember the lullaby!

The life drains out of Juan's eyes.

Lights fade except for two spotlights on the limp, dead bodies of Juan and Edgar.

The spotlights go out.

A moment.

A moment.

Every moment.

Eternity.

The sound of a cosmic explosion fills the stage. A beam of light flashes. Then another. Then a million. A black hole opens. The sound of suction. Planets and stars swirl. Time and space collapse while massive objects collide and merge and break down. The light of trillions of years flash all at once. A train passes. A child cries. Boxing bells ring out. A crowd cheers. The Referee begins a count. The world title appears above, just out of reach. Edgar and Juan rise, face each other, and begin throwing bombs at one another. All around, stars and planets crash into each other and merge. Light expands and contracts. Time itself collapses. The past disappears. The universe shakes as each connected punch obliterates the two boxers. Edgar lands a hook that Juan counters with an uppercut. As their blows connect, they fade away. However, the sound of boxing gloves hitting against something solid persists. Another roar from the black hole, but this time it is a howl of pain, as both men force themselves back into existence and push forward toward the title against the will of the universe. They touch the belt. The belt crashes to the ground and bursts into dust as all of light and matter compress down to a single point leaving only Edgar and Juan staring at each other in an unknown universe. Silence. A star rises like the sun at dusk, filling the stage. A slow, steady tremendous

breathing expands and retracts the star, like the ebb and flow of the tide. But each ebb leads to a flow that advances toward Edgar and Juan.

EDGAR

Is that...?

JUAN

I think that's the dawn
Behind the black hole.

EDGAR

But...I don't understand...

JUAN

Me neither...

The star overtakes them with one large exhale. The boxers bathe in the magnificent glow knowing instinctively the truth: The fight is over. At last. At long last. The promise has finally been fulfilled. With an ebb pulling them in, the star translates the two boxers into a universe of light.

End of Play.

References:

Fight between Edgar and Manuel:

- Arturo Gatti vs. Mickey Ward I
- Roman Chocolatito Gonzalez vs. Juan-Francisco Estrada II

Fight between Juan and Armando:

- Guillermo Rigondeaux vs. Nonito Donaire
- Floyd Mayweather vs. Marcos Maidana II
- Miguel Cotto vs. Sergio Martinez
- David Haye vs. Tony Bellew (both fights)
- Vitali Klitschko vs. Odlanier Solis

Fight Between Edgar and Juan:

- Diego Corrales vs Jose Luis Castillo I
- Marvelous Marvin Hagler vs. Thomas Hearns
- Wladimir Klitschko vs. Anthony Joshua

On the reality of head trauma causing the death of a boxer/serious injury:

- Maxim Dadashev vs. Subriel Matías
- Chris Eubank Sr. vs. Michael Watson
- Chris Eubank Jr. vs. Nick Blackwell
- Mike Perez vs. Magomed Abdusalamov

Sudden Heart Attack in a Fight:

- Boris Stanchov vs. Ardit Murja

On Purse Bid Minimums:

- Please review the International Boxing Federation (IBF) Purse Bid Minimum Policy for Championship Fights.

Styles as I envision these boxers:

- Manuel: Julio Cesar Chavez Sr., Juan Manuel Marquez, Juan Francisco Estrada
- Armando: Guillermo Rigondeaux, Floyd Mayweather, Pernell Whitaker, Prince Naseem Hamed
- Juan: Gennadiy Golovkin, Gabe Rosado, Vitali Klitschko, Arturo Gatti
- Edgar: Diego Corrales, Felix Trinidad, Nonito Donaire, Roman Chocolatito Gonzalez