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Gladiator

By Lyle Kessler

Who said you could shoot?
I don't want your whiteness
shoving through my hoops!
Punk-ass, keep walking!
Look at them boots he's wearing, man.
He's a stupid-ass. Shit.
And fuck you too, Lincoln.
Talk about a punk.
Let's get the game started back up.
- He started it.
- You started it.
I'm gonna slick your sister.
All right, what's going on here?
He started it.
- He's cute.
- We got a new kid.
You in my seat, boy.
You in my seat now.
Is this seat taken?
- Guess what?
- I'm in your seat?
How did you know that?
- Did I say something?
- Yeah, you said something.
Get out of my seat, snowface.
I don't think that I can do that.
You don't think you can do that?
I've grown real attached to this seat.
In fact, I think we're
gonna be going steady.
That's funny.
You're a comedian?
Leroy, take off that hat and sit down.
Sit down or leave my class.
I'll catch you on the greasy side.
Billy, would you please
distribute these?
Now.
Before you ladies get pregnant...
...and you gentlemen
murder one another...
...you'll learn the joy of reading.
This way, you have something to do
in your ninth month...

...or in your jail cell.
The short fiction of Mark Twain.
Can anyone tell me what novels
Mark Twain wrote?
- Belinda?
- Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn.
Yes. The Adventures of...
American classics.
And who knows Mark Twain's real name?
- Dawn.
- Samuel Clemens.
Very good.
Yes, Leroy.
Why did he use another name?
Why do you think?
He wanted by the law.
No, it's a pseudonym. A made-up name.
I got a pseudonym too.
Spits.
That's a nickname. It has a meaning.
And I hesitate to think
how you got it.
A pseudonym usually has no meaning...
...but this is an exception.
Can anyone tell me what
"Mark Twain" means?
I thought not.
It's an expression used by
riverboat captains on the Mississippi.
It's to tell how deep the river was.
Go, yo scholar.
Settle down.
And who are you?
It's on your desk, ma'am.
"Transfer. Tommy Riley. "
Well, Mr. Riley...
...welcome to paradise.
Hey, hombre.
- Got an extra smoke?
- Yeah, sure.
Appreciate that, I do.
Listen, how about one
for after school?
Want one for your girlfriend?

I never refuse. Never refuse.
How about your mom and dad?
You okay. I'll pay you back tomorrow.
Amigo, you carry a weapon?
Well, he don't look like much.
He not much.
He's just a funny boy.
- Oh, yeah?
- Yeah.
You funny, boy?
Come on.
Make me laugh.
I don't want any trouble.
That's too bad, funny boy.
See, trouble be my middle name.
Trouble be his pseudonym.
Well, well, well.
Abraham Lincoln!
Thought you was thrown out of school.
This is public property.
I got business to conduct.
See how my Storm Troopers are faring.
How are your Avenging Angels?
Close to God, my brother.
Awful close to the wrath of God.
I owe you, Lincoln.
I owe you what you did to Jerome.
Anytime, nigga. Anyplace.
Well, then.
Hello, time.
Hello, place.
Jerome used a razor too. All you
Storm Troopers hide behind a razor?
Step in the ring with me. Fight
like a man.
You gonna bleed either way, partner!
You gonna miss!
Break it up!
Don't you drop me! You better
not drop me! I'm gonna kill somebody!
I'll kill somebody!
I feel for you, boy!
Yeah, well, I'll be
at your mama's house!

Come on.

Hey, kid. Your name Riley?

Your pops is John Riley?

What about it?

We're friends of Big John's.

- Yeah, bowling buddies.

- Can we come in?

Right.

We were supposed to rendezvous
with Big John over in Bridgeport.

Yesterday. But guess what?

Somebody flew the coop.

Sharkey got discombobulated.

We had to cop the forwarding
address off the postman.

Nice.

It's last week's, due yesterday.

And this week's installment.

Due today.

You be sure and show pops my message.

I'll show him.

- Hi.

- Hey.

What are you doing here?

Could I get a cup of coffee?

Don't bullshit me about Murphy's Law.

If I run into Murphy,

I'll kick him in the balls.

Detached retina.

What am I, an eye doctor?

He's ducking the fight.

That's what he's doing.

I'll come right over.

I'll see it for myself. Right.

Let's go.

Assholes.

I don't know why someone would live
somewheres else, then move here.

Neither do I, but it does happen.

No food?

I'm a little short.

I'll just take the coffee.

You're not interested in a job,
are you?

Yeah, I could use one.
Well, it's not much.
It's the dishwasher.
He didn't show up.
I'm not proud.
I'll ask my mom.
That's free. Next dish will cost you
a buck and a half.
- Glasses, 75. Cups are a dollar.
- Yes, ma'am.
You can empty the garbage now.
Take a five-minute break.
Went outside.
Goddamn, man! Ain't he cute?
He's beautiful, man.
Throw a couple of earrings
on his ear...
...bits of rouge on the cheeks...
...he'll have the white boys
chasing after him.
- I got no quarrel with you.
- I'm sure you don't.
You lose your dress?
Come on. Let's have it.
My brother's 5 years old.
He doesn't fall for this jack!
Come on. Taste the real.
- What the fuck is going on?
- He hurt my boys.
You're fighting.
What if you get hurt?
- No way he's gonna hurt me.
- Mr. Horn has got money bet on you.
He finds out you're street fighting,
you're off the circuit.
Look. Shortcut fighting, Mr. Jack.
You see, that's what I do, boy.
I fight.
This ain't over, punk!
Hey!
How come I haven't seen you
around here before?
Nobody's asking you to win!
Just get into the goddamn

ring with him!
You run out on this, keep on running.
Horn's gonna be chomping on your ass.
Same to you, dick-breath.
Fuck you too!
Excuse me. Let me ask you something.
Can I join you?
It's a free country.
Would that were true, kid.
Would that were true.
The name is Jack. Pappy Jack.
And I can be the best goddamn pappy
you ever had.
I already got one.
Yeah. You threw
a hell of a punch out there.
Tell me. You fight? Box?
Golden Gloves. Over in Bridgeport.
Did you win?
Yeah. It was like five, six bouts.
You want something else?
Apple pie?
- Oh, no. Maybe later.
- How about you?
A little privacy, please.
Thank you. Thank you very much.
We have these amateur bouts
every Friday night.
Some smokers, nothing special...
...but there's a lot
of bucks involved.
You fight a few rounds,
I'll make it worth your while.
How much?
Oh, now we're talking.
Now we're doing business.
Seven hundred and fifty bucks.
You'd pay me \$750
to fight tomorrow night?
What is there, a fucking echo in here?
Who do I fight?
A guy named Black Death.
But don't worry.
He's not a fatal disease in any way.

You got the antidote.
There's a lot of tough kids
around here.
You have the right...
...complexion.
Lost my white kid.
My back's on the wall.
- No, thanks.
- No, thanks?
How many dishes do you
have to wash for 750 bucks?
- About 30,528.
- Thirty thousand five...
So what are you, an idiot?
I need 1250 bucks.
You negotiating with me?
That's what I need
to clear up a few debts.
I don't wanna hear any stories.
Do you wanna fight or don't you?
Don't get a hard-on! Are we
negotiating or aren't we?
I like you.
I like the way you handle yourself.
We're gonna do it your way.
Twelve hundred and fifty bucks.
Dad?
Tommy.
Tommy.
- Wake up. I got some great news.
- Hey, Dad.
You know that job I've been
telling you about?
I got it.
- Starting today I'm on the payroll.
- That's great.
Yeah, that's great.
Bad part is, I gotta be in Elgin at 10,
and then go on the road for a month.
A month?
Selling medical supplies.
I learn the territory, then they bring
me to work full-time in Chicago.
We can get out of this slum

and get our lives back together.
But the deal is, you're
gonna be alone for a month.
You think you can handle that?
- You sure?
- Yeah.
How's the new school?
It's okay.
What's wrong, Tommy?
These guys showed up.
One of them had a gun.
- Did they threaten you?
- No.
Come here, son. Sit down.
Listen, Tommy. You know...
I know I wasn't any help to you
when your mother died.
I was drinking a lot, I lost the job,
and I was dumb enough to think...
...I could win big money
playing cards and...
...pay the hospital bills.
And I'm sorry to bring you
into all this.
But you know...
...if we hadn't wound up in this dump,
maybe I would've never woken up.
I'm awake now.
I'm not drinking,
and I'm not gambling, and...
...I'm not feeling sorry for myself.
And I got this job.
These guys will get paid.
They're gonna get their money.
Sharkey? John Riley.
If you ever bother my kid again,
I'll kill you.
Yeah, I don't care. I mean it!
You will get your
goddamn cash, Sharkey.
I'll see you soon.
You take care.
Where are you going?
I'm supposed to fight.

Tommy Riley.

Why don't you come with me?

Let's go, kid.

Hey, kid.

- I thought you were a no-show.

- I'm on time.

Sure you're on time.

It's not you, it's me.

I think everybody's a no-show
until they show.

This is your corner man.

Your all-around man.

- How you doing?

- Hi. Try these.

What are these, 6-ounce gloves?

- Are these even legal?

- Legal?

I gotta tell you, kid.

It ain't "mairzy doats
and dozy doats" out there.

It's war.

You fight Black Death like
the Marquis of Queensbury, and...

...you'll be carried out
in a body bag.

But, hey. Good luck!

What's your name?

They call me Noah.

Only I ain't got no damn ark.

And I ain't even got a rowboat.

All I got is a broken nose
and a bunch of recollections.

- You got recollections, boy?

- Yeah. Some.

You young yet. They accumulate.

Believe me.

You grow up South Side?

No. Bridgeport.

Bridgeport?

You're moving in the wrong direction.

It's just temporary.

I got another boy to look to.

I'll be back to get you.

You on the circuit now?

No. Just tonight.

- Mind if I join you?

- Not at all.

Say, don't you know nothing?

Circulate that blood, man.

Gotta tap dance before

you tap dance...

...if you know what I mean.

- I'm just trying to get my bearings.

- Move with me man.

You go in cold,

you gonna come out cold too.

Name's Essadro.

Romano Essadro.

Tommy Riley.

You Irish?

Yeah, so?

Ain't no accusation. It's

just a whatchamacallit...

...ethnicity.

Like me. I'm Cuban, but I ain't

never seen the island paradise.

Who you fighting, anyways?

Some guy named Black Death.

You been fighting somewheres else?

Not a lot.

Listen. You stay clear of his

right hand, you hear?

Come here. Come on.

Put your left hand up.

Circle right. Good.

Circle right. Circle right.

Good. That's it.

- What time is it?

- It's time to get paid!

Hammer-time, brother!

Shit, man, I could've had you.

Hit your fucking head off!

Okay, Bridgeport.

You're up.

Good luck, man.

Ladies and gentlemen,

our fourth bout of the evening!

We have a newcomer to the arena.

Tommy Riley.
A Golden Gloves champion
from Bridgeport.
He's 27 and 0, with 21 knockouts.
He'll be fighting out
of the Red corner tonight.
Come on, folks.
Let's hear it for him.
Let's give him a big welcome.
Tommy Riley!
And his opponent...
...fighting out of the Blue corner,
the doctor of destruction...
...Black Death!
What do you know about this guy?
If he hurts you with his left,
go down.
Beautiful.
Fighters.
I want a nice clean fight now.
You know the rules.
No low blows and
you break when I say.
Now touch gloves
and come out fighting.
That's the elbow!
Get up, kid. Come on, get up.
All right. Keep fighting.
All right!
Who's the brawler?
He's got a punch. That's all I know.
Ain't you getting tired, punk?
Can't you hit me once?
Stick him, kid. Come on.
One!
Two!
Three!
Four!
Oh, no.
That's it. That's it, he's finished.
One!
Two!
Three!
Four!

Five!
Six!
Seven!
Eight!
All right! Hit him!
Kill the guy!
All right!
Get him.
All right, kid!
Where did you find this kid?
On the street. He just walked in.
Leo, give me a Crunch.
I might lose my investment.
You're doing all right, kid.
You're doing all right!
What the hell are you doing?
You're looking like a bum!
Now. He's telegraphing his punches.
He gets set with the right...
...he drops the left,
and you stick him.
Repeat it back to me.
He drops the left. I stick him.
Okay, kid! Go out and get it!
Stay with him, okay? Hang in there.
Now!
Jesus Christ!
Look at this kid.
Oh, my God!
You are a natural, kid.
You got firepower. Real firepower!
The winner is Tommy Riley!
He's mine! He's mine!
You got the balls of a lion, kid.
You got him!
He's mine! Mine!
- What do you think?
- He's gonna be just fine.
How you feeling, kid?
This feels good, doesn't it? Good.
So where's my money?
Don't worry.
You're gonna get your money.
Mr. Horn wants to pay you personally.

Who's Mr. Horn?

- He is the power and the glory...

- Yeah, he's the power.

Right now.

He's the reason that you got
into the ring.

No, he's not.

Goddamn it. I gotta go.

Come by the gym, get your money,
and we talk.

You're fucking beautiful. Beautiful!

Talk about what?

Great! Oh, you earned it.

Keep working.

Mr. Riley.

What door did you walk into?

- Maybe he bumped into his pseudonym.

- That's enough.

Hey.

- Hey, how are you doing, Romano?

- Feeling no pain.

I win too.

- Lincoln.

- Hey, what's up?

Meet my friend Tommy Riley.

The great white hope?

Not me, man.

No?

What was that Friday night, a ghost?

Let me tell you something.

Some ghost, looked just like you...

...wasted Black Death.

That's Lincoln.

You looking for something, chief?

Pappy Jack.

In his office.

All right from Horn.

This one's from me.

Say hello to Mike.

Hey, kid. Be right there.

Just knock his timing.

With the elbow, right? And...

End of story. All right?

You're gonna give him something to

shoot at.
He comes in, to the body, hook it.
Just for a second.
I find the way you fight
terribly exciting.
Oh, I'm just trying
to get out of there alive.
Aren't we all, my dear.
Hey, kid!
You like M&M Peanuts?
Jesus Christ, don't muscle it!
That's Mr. Horn. Listen up.
You might learn.
You think it's all about strength, but
it's not. You think it's all speed.
Strategy! Look, you gotta find
your opponent's weakness...
...and then you exploit it.
Now listen to me. Youth is a tool.
All right?
It's a good tool,
but it's only one of the tools.
There's also knowledge. There's...
There's focus. Strategy.
You think you can whup my ass?
- What do you think?
- I'm tired of thinking, motherfu...
Oh, shit.
He's playing possum.
Mr. Horn and Mr. Good Chocolate,
best fucking finishers I ever saw.
All right. See?
Strategy.
You got more of a show
than you bargained for.
- You still got it.
- Yeah.
I feel better already.
You got some on your lip there.
Very sexy.
Give him a rest.
Put him against Lincoln.
Got too much weight.
Put him in with Lincoln...

...and bet the farm against him.
He ain't got it upstairs.
Tommy Riley!
Hello.
You the boy I've been waiting for?
No.
Take good care of this boy.
Give him whatever he wants.
What do you want, Tommy?
I just want the money that you owe me.
Go ahead.
Of course that.
- On top of that, what?
- That's all I want.
How refreshing. Everyone else I meet
has their hand out.
You know, Tommy.
I should be upset with you.
Why?
You cost me my investment.
What's that mean?
Means Black Death is
damaged goods, kid.
So now I'm invested in you.
How would you like
to fight for me, Tommy?
I appreciate the offer, Mr. Horn,
but I'm not interested.
Come on, kid.
If it's a matter of money...
No, it's not the money.
I don't wanna end up
without a brain.
Don't be stupid, kid. Mr. Horn is
giving you a terrific shot here.
Tommy.
I respect your decision.
Been a pleasure meeting you.
Likewise. I guess.
Good luck to you.
Get him.
Hey, Tommy.
Hey, Romano.
I got you something.

I was buying some new duds.
I thought, " Hey, my amigo
needs a little style. "
You like it or what?
Yeah. I'm...
This is my first hat.
You look sharp, man.
How about me?
Real sharp, Romano.
Yeah. You got to be a...
You got to be a real
perverse individual...
...pass up this kind of money.
It's got a bad smell.
Hey, maybe it don't give off
the best odor...
...but it smells better
than any other chances.
Once I save some...
...I'm gonna do
what I promised my old man.
I'm gonna go ship his body
back to Romano, Cuba.
That's where he was born,
and how come I got my name.
Then you'll quit, right?
You crazy, man?
I'm gonna get a real apartment.
A stereo, TV, VCR.
Gonna buy a waterbed.
I like you, Romano.
You take care of yourself.
Just because you quit...
Hey, Sharkey. Pappy Jack.
You still with me when I make my move?
Listen, you son of a bitch.
There's a couple of your collectors
down here.
All right.
Yeah...
Soda?
I didn't think you'd be at work
last night.
Why not?

Why would a person wash dishes
when they can make money boxing?
I'm not boxing anymore.
That was a one-shot deal.
I can't figure you out.
Neither can I.
Hey, Tommy.
How are you doing, kid?
I'm doing.
Mr. Horn wants to see you.
Well, I'm busy right now.
Sweetheart, I know half a dozen ways
to make a guy get into an automobile.
Bye, Tommy.
Just telling you one thing, kid.
I found you.
I brought you in.
Don't you forget that.
Come on in, kid. Give him a call.
Tell him I'm not happy.
Keep an eye on it for me.
Let me know what he says.
Those pictures.
Gladiators, Tommy.
They fought with their bare hands.
Fifty, a hundred rounds.
Next day they go back to work.
They were tough.
Tough in body, tough in mind.
And they understood about strategy.
When you're weak, you act strong.
And when you're strong...
...pretend to be weak.
Care for some champagne?
No, I don't drink.
Why did you wanna see me?
I was hoping you had a chance
to think things over.
Come aboard, Tommy.
Three grand a fight.
- That is very generous. But I'm not...
- Kid, money is talking.
Well, maybe it's not talking to me.
Tommy.

Sit down, Tommy.
Come on. Sit down. Relax.
Why don't we be straight
with each other?
I can't afford to let you go.
I'm my own man, Mr. Horn.
Nobody is his own man.
Not from the day we're born.
Everybody owes.
Somebody. Something.
Who do you owe?
Me? Who do I owe?
God.
Don't we all. Amen.
But some of us...
...some of us owe...
Jack, show him.
Here you go. Read them and weep.
Look at the signatures.
Those are markers.
Your father's markers.
Your father has managed
to accumulate gambling debts...
...somewhere in the neighborhood
of \$15,000.
That's an expensive neighborhood
to be in.
There's evil people in this world,
Tommy.
Nasty people, like Sharkey.
Your old man gives him a song about
waiting a few weeks, then giving 50/.
Sharkey's gonna give him concrete
boots and throw him in the river.
So I did your old man a favor.
I did you a favor.
I bought the debts.
Those debts are mine now.
Do you understand?
And what's mine is yours.
Okay.
Okay.
Come on.
Hey!

- Well, look who's next.
- Leave him alone!
Sure, after we carve our initials
in his butt. Get him!
Run, hotshot!
Come on. Move. Move!
Rats.
Don't worry though.
Ain't the human kind.
- Damn it!
- Don't worry. We'll find them.
What's worse? Getting skinned by
Shortcut or owing some white boy?
You don't owe me.
How come you do it?
Save my ass.
I don't know.
See somebody in trouble, you know...
I've been in trouble
since the day I was born.
No white boy come to my rescue.
Maybe there were no white boys around.
Say that again.
Poverty is a black disease.
Not just.
No?
I hear you wanna be a college boy.
You think I'm going to college?
You could.
I got one chance.
One chance for my baby,
and that's this, right here. These.
What do you mean, your baby?
That's my lady.
Laura Lee.
She just turned 16.
That's Cecilia.
They're beautiful. Both of them.
I call her Baby Black Beauty.
That's her nickname.
Not many fighters like Lincoln
can give this much weight.
One! Two!
Three! Four!

Five! Six!
He can't do that!
Who's to stop him?
One!
Two!
Three!
Four!
Gonna ruin him.
Seven!
Eight!
Nine!
The harder they fall, eh?
How much do you think we made?
A bundle.
So tell me about Horn.
Oh, Lord.
Mr. Horn was supposed to be the light
heavyweight champion of the world.
God gave him one bad foot.
They operate.
Don't work.
Try it again.
Same thing.
By the time he's ready to fight again,
he's lost too many years.
But he's smart.
He sees more money upstairs and
a lot less danger to boot.
Anybody ever beat him?
Before his foot go, he lost one fight.
I remember.
Comeback, rematch.
He punished that man.
Retired him for life.
No.
He ain't got no weaknesses.
It's not what Horn says.
What do you mean, son?
Well, he says that everybody's
got a weakness.
Well...
I'm looking, son.
I am looking.
All right, all right. I'm coming.

- I was just...

- Come on in.

Where you been, Tommy?

People are asking.

You're not at school or Millie's.

Yeah, I know.

Well...

Miss Higgins asked me

to give you this.

You're really applying

to junior college?

Also...

...your paper on Mark Twain.

Miss Higgins read it in class.

She says you're full of promise.

Yeah, that's me. Full of promise.

It's nothing to make fun of.

Well, I don't have time for school
right now.

I gotta fight.

You told me you weren't fighting.

That was a lie because

I gotta fight four more times.

Nobody has to fight.

- No?

- No.

Be honest. You want the money.

But it's illegal, Tommy.

I know.

But if I don't fight,

Horn will kill him.

How do you know your dad

won't keep gambling?

I can see it. It's in his eyes.

He's kind of like he was

before my mom died.

- When did she...?

- About a year ago.

The big "C."

I'm sorry.

It's when I started boxing.

Punch the feelings out, I guess.

This is my house.

Good deal.

I have to go.
Dawn!
Mom's waiting at the diner.
I'm sorry, Dad.
I didn't realize the time.
Bye.
See you at school.
Flick it.
I'm gonna get you, Snow White!
Tomorrow night I'm gonna
get you, spic.
Just for being his friend.
Don't be talking that Spanish shit...
What was that?
Told him to go fuck a goat.
Good.
I owed you that.
See you later, amigo.
You're terrific, man.
You got some hammer, huh?
Thanks, Romano.
Here I go.
They're calling, kid. You're up.
Come watch me, hombre.
I'm gonna dance until he's dizzy.
Come at me, son.
Fighter's stance.
You see? You're fighting head-on.
Eye to eye.
That is not the way.
Like this.
To an angle. Back, right.
Fighting is not hitting.
Any fool can hit.
Fighting is making
the other fellow miss.
He miss.
He think. He worry.
It's a mind game, huh?
I knew a fellow once.
He won a fight with one arm.
One arm!
His spirit told him to win.
His mind showed him how.

And his body delivered!
I'm gonna kill that motherfucker.
Damn it!
You're beautiful.
Stick and move. Stick and move.
- He called me a spic.
- So what? You are.
Give it to me. Give it to me!
Come on.
Fix my hair.
What's the matter with you?
Concentrate on this fight.
Hey, great fight, man.
- Great fight!
- Dude, right on.
Break! Break!
Stop the fight!
Come on. Get him out of there.
It don't pay to be your friend.
Get off me!
I'll kill his ass!
You're next! You're next!
Fuck! Fucker.
- Where's Romano?
- I don't know names, just bodies.
They carried him out of the ring.
He was unconscious.
I sent him to the hospital.
What hospital?
Horn makes the arrangements.
If you'll excuse me,
I'd like to complete this exam.
Hey, kid.
Hey, Dad. How you doing?
Charlie Mannman says that
I can sell ice to Eskimos.
In a blizzard, that's what he says.
That's great, Dad.
So you got the old touch back, huh?
Everything's rolling right along.
How about you?
How's things in school?
It's good.
Nothing's wrong? Those goons ever

show up and bother you again?
No, they never came back.
No, no, I'm fine.
Really.
So when are you coming home?
I'm not gonna be back
for another couple of weeks.
I put a check in the mail for you.
Yeah, I got it. Thanks.
Okay, good. Well...
You take care then, okay?
All right, you take care too.
Bye-bye.
All right, bye.
Mr. Riley.
Would you mind joining
the rest of the class?
Papers on my desk.
Can you stay a moment, Mr. Riley?
You haven't been to school
for a few days.
Can you tell me what's going on?
I'm sorry. I can't.
That's too bad.
You have a gift
for language, Mr. Riley.
But talent is a common thing.
People waste it every day.
They abuse it.
They take it for granted.
Success comes not from what
God has given you...
...but what you do with it.
It's really up to you.
Thanks.
Are you okay?
Romano's in the hospital.
- Is he bad?
- I think so.
I'll see you at the diner, okay?
My mom hired a new dishwasher.
I'll see you tomorrow?
Romano Essadro.
Is he a patient there?

E- S-S-A-D-R-O.

All right. Thank you.

If I was you...

...I'd start looking at the County
Hospital for the Poor and Indigent.

Hey, Romano, it's Tommy Riley.

No use in knocking that door.

Doc say he in a gang war.

Bastards leave him brain-dead.

Romano, wake up.

Buddy, wake up.

Wake up!

I've given your instructions.

I want a nice clean fight.

Now shake hands.

How's Romano? Is he dead yet?

I mean, he dead, ain't he?

Listen! Listen to me!

You're angry.

That's what's gonna

get you beat!

Anger is your enemy!

It's like I told you.

It's a mind game!

Outthink him!

And then get in there

and out-fight him, okay?

That's all right. I ain't gonna wait.

Give it to me now.

How's your new girlfriend, huh?

How's Dawn?

I'll have to get me

a little bit of that.

That's it! Hit him, hit him!

All right!

Come on! Drop him!

- Finish him!

- Put his lights out!

I think we may have our boy.

Come on! Hit him, hit him!

Finish him, finish him!

What, are you working

on a merit badge?

Hey, my man.

You're something else.
Hey, hotshot.
This is the white boy I told you
saved my black ass.
Appreciate that, because
I love his ass.
And that's my Black Beauty.
Say hi.
You want a lift?
You want to hold her?
Shit, Linc! You gotta teach that
child to hate white folks, man.
This is a pretty sweet car, Lincoln.
Horn's renting it.
What he calls one of my perks.
On account of
I'm his "Numero Uno Negro. "
Horn's a real scumbag.
What, you just now realize that?
Tell you, the whole world's
crammed full of them, my brother.
Thanks.
Oh, my God. I'm sorry.
I'm really sorry.
Don't worry about it.
See, that's holy water.
You're baptized now!
All right. Thanks for the ride.
I knew you were fighting
Shortcut tonight.
Jack Dempsey, Rocky Marciano...
...Barney Ross. You know what I mean?
No.
Come on, kid. Billy Conn?
Carmen Basilio?
"Slapsy Maxie" Rosenbloom?
Micks, wops, kikes!
The guys you'd fight
in the old days.
Tough white guys.
Just like you.
They had a need, just like you.
What do white kids need today,
a haircut?

Money for their own car so they
don't have to borrow daddy's keys?
Let's go, Lincoln.
Think about it.
That's enough.
You all right? You all right?
I'm okay. I'm okay.
Just look at my finger.
He wasn't hit that hard.
He was last week.
When he got kicked in the head
by that heavyweight.
Same thing happened to my friend
Choo-Choo Charlie.
What?
Didn't lay off like he was supposed to.
End up paralyzed.
What's the matter with him?
It could be nothing.
It could be a bleed.
- Bleed?
- Blood vessel in his head.
It's not serious, though,
if he rests.
I'm recommending a 60-day layoff.
How you doing?
No drama, hotshot.
Sixty days.
It comes with the territory.
What's Enrico doing
in the ring with Tiny Tim?
What do you think he's doing?
He's trying to knock him on his ass.
I'm supposed to fight Enrico.
You were, but...
...we found a last-minute replacement.
Going for the jackpot.
Mr. Horn's offering 20 G's
to the winner.
No time for charity, kid.
Go for it.
I knew this was coming, Ghost.
No hard feelings, huh?
When I make your face

look like Burger King.
I thought you were gonna
take some time off.
Horn persuaded me otherwise.
See, I win this, he's taking me pro.
Madison Square Garden.
I won't do it.
I ain't gonna fight you!
What do you want me to do?
I got no choice, Ghost.
This is my ticket. Right here.
Don't mess with that.
If you're my friend,
don't fuck with my life.
Lincoln's got a bleed.
He could die if he's hit hard.
Know how many times I've heard
that nonsense about bleeds?
How many times I've personally
seen it disproved?
Your doctor said Lincoln
needs 60 days rest.
That sawbones? We fired him.
If it was up to the medical profession,
there wouldn't be any boxing.
- I'm not fighting Lincoln.
- Yes, you are.
You're gonna fight him and beat him.
I'm gonna make a lot of money.
Because Lincoln's a big
favorite out there.
And after you've beaten Lincoln...
...we'll have a chat about your future.
- You understand?
- Fuck you.
What, are these guys gonna kill me?
I certainly hope not.
You see, Tommy...
...you're the boy
I've been looking for.
Don't you know what you can be?
I'm talking welterweight champ.
I'm talking 2 million bucks in your
pocket when you fight for the title.

Broads love you, people love you.
Everywhere you go people say, " How are
you, champ? We love you, champ!"
You could have a high rise
on the moon, kid.
I'm trying to concentrate.
Be careful, huh?
All right!
When Lincoln loses, there's gonna be
a riot in here, so get him out fast.
Leo, let's go.
What have we here?
How are you, beautiful?
Come on. Let's go see the action.
Ladies and gentlemen!
The fight you've been waiting for.
The main event of the evening!
Fighting out of the Blue corner...
...Abraham Lincoln Haines.
Mr. Horn, Charlene, this
is Tommy Riley's fiance.
- We're not engaged.
- Just shacking up? Sorry.
Here's your boy now.
Come on, sit down.
Sit, sit. Here, next to me.
His opponent in the Red corner,
the Bridgeport Bomber.
Undefeated in five appearances
in this arena, Tommy Riley!
All right, post the odds.
- 2200, Blue.
- I got 2200 on Blue. Done.
- Give me 300 on the Red.
- Done.
You know why people get
so excited at fights?
It's the presence of death.
Come on.
Stick him, Lincoln! Stick him!
Break!
What the hell is this?
One! Two!
Fight me, Ghost!

Fight me, or I'm gonna hurt you bad!

Six! Seven!

Box!

Break. Damn it. Break!

- Are you gonna fight me?

- Break!

Let me go! Get the...

Break!

Box!

If you don't fight, Horn won't pay!

Fuck!

I could fight you both!

Leo?

Leo! Come here.

- Kid?

- Get out of here!

Mr. Horn would like you
to see who he's sitting with.

I think you'd better look.

Do we feel like fighting now?

You gonna beat me on my body?

Beat the body, the head
goes down with it.

Yeah, but you ain't good enough.

Hit him. Hit him in the head!

Use the left! Sock him!

Get out of there! Get out of there!

Break! Now!

Get up! Get up, you punk!

One! Two!

Three!

If I lose, Horn's gonna
hurt my girlfriend.

But I'm still not gonna
hit you in the head.

You're gonna have to kill me!

One! Two!

Are you gonna kill me?

Horn wants us to kill
each other. For what?

So he can get rich?

Fight!

One! Two!

Three! Four!

Five! Six!
Put them up!
Come get your money.
Go on and do it.
If you're gonna do it, do it now!
Lincoln, take him down!
Take him down, now!
Damn you.
Damn you to hell.
Who do you think you are?
Where do you think you're going?
Get over there and kick his ass!
You don't say no to me, boy!
No.
I'm not fighting for you no more.
Come on, let's help him.
Ladies and gentlemen...
...the management wishes to apologize
for the fiasco.
- That's not a fight!
- I want my money back!
Your wagers and your admission fee
will be refunded. Thank you.
- That's all right.
- I want you!
What?
I wanna fight you.
Right here, right now.
What's in it for me?
What have you got that
I could possibly want?
Me.
I get it.
You fight me, you win,
and you're free.
Is that it, huh?
You and your old man?
Okay. But if I win...
...when I win, you fucking
little punk...
...you belong to me.
Do you understand?
You're mine.
Deal.

Ladies and gentlemen!
Introducing the former number-one-
ranked light heavyweight contender:
Jimmy Horn!
Cut them off!
Those are our seats!
- I want a nice clean fight.
- You stay out of this.
This is between him and me.
Ain't that right, Tommy?
Protect yourself at all times, kid.
Look at that face. Look at that face.
You're gonna need that, aren't you?
Come on. Take a shot. Here it is,
right there. Go ahead. Go ahead.
The top of the head.
The hardest part of the body.
What are you gonna do now?
What are you gonna do now?
Here he comes.
Miss. Big miss! I'm over here.
What's under here?
He hurt his hand!
That's why they invented gloves!
Stay away, kid! Move!
Say good night, kid.
Where you going now?
You better try something.
- That ain't good enough.
- Break!
Break!
Come on. Go to sleep,
go to sleep. That's it.
One!
Two!
Three!
Four!
Five!
Come on, kid.
Six!
Seven!
You can make it.
Eight!
Nine!

One!

Two!

Three!

- Stay down, kid.

- Four!

- Stay down!

- Five!

Six!

What's the matter?

Can't you finish me?

Top of the head!

Hardest part of the body!

I thought you were a great finisher?

Can't beat a kid with one arm?

Anger is the enemy.

Get him, Ghost!

One! Two! Three!

Four! Five!

Six! Seven! Eight!

Nine! Ten! You're out!

You did it! You did it!

And you didn't break your hand.

"Make them think you're weak
when you're strong"!

My man!