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LET'S GET READY TO RUMBLE

by

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FADE IN:

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

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

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

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

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

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

DAVE(V.O.)

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

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

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

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

INT. BACK ROOM - INSIDE THE RING

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

INT. BACK ROOM - CROWD

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

EXT. LAS VEGAS - CAESAR'S PALACE BOXING VENUE

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

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

DAVE(V.O.)

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

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

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

EXT. LAS VEGAS - CAESAR'S PALACE BOXING RING

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

CARMEN

How you feeling?

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

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

CARMEN

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

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

CARMEN
 Toward him and to the right.

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

TIMEKEEPER(V.O.)
 Seconds out!

INT. NYC - CHINATOWN BACK ROOM - RING

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

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

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

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

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

TOMMY
 Any odds?

The kid nods his head spastically.

KID
 3 to 1 against ya.

Tommy hands the kid the bills.

TOMMY
 200 for me. 20 for yourself.

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

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

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

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

INT. CHINATOWN BACK ROOM

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

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

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

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

Carl SCREAMS and grabs at his elbow.

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

MATCH CUT TO:

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

EXT. LAS VEGAS - CAESAR'S PALACE BOXING VENUE

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

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

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

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

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

CARMEN

God, that was sweet.

BRUCE

I think I hurt my right hand.

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

CARMEN

Doc, I think Bruce mighta broke his hand!

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

DOC

No doubt on this man's head.

CARMEN

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

INT. DRESSING ROOM IN CHINATOWN BACK ROOM - AFTER FIGHT

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

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

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

TOMMY

Yeah?

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

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

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

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

TOMMY

Get paid?

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

Tommy tosses the empty water bottle.

TOMMY

What did the ice cost you?

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

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

TOMMY

Yeah?

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

PROMOTOR

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

Tommy stoically nods a thank you.

The Promotor looks at the bucket of ice water.

PROMOTOR

Hands be okay for next week?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ROCCO
Well, Doc?

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

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

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

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

Rocco, displeased, scowls at Carmen blaming him.

CUT TO:

INT. NYC - OFFICE OF LE ROI - AFTERNOON

The office is extravagant, almost to the point of being gaudy. Deep, dark red, plush carpet. A huge oak desk. Statues of naked women. A broken baseball bat, taped together, is on a stand like a samurai sword. 2 baseballs are on either side.

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

SECRETARY(V.O.)

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

Le Roi pushes the intercom button with his cane.

LE ROI

Tell him I'll get back to him.

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

CUT TO:

EXT. ATLANTIC CITY - SKYLINE - DUSK

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

EXT. ATLANTIC CITY - PAL

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

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

INT. ATLANTIC CITY - PAL

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

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

INT./EXT ATLANTIC CITY - PAL

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

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

CRAIG

Who's the asshole?

MIKE

Bruce Johnson's manager.

INT. ATLANTIC CITY - PAL

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

INT. A.C. PAL - STAIRS

Rocco climbs the stairs.

INT. A.C. PAL - TOP FLOOR

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

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

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

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

Bill walks into the office and opens the file drawer.

CARMEN(MUMBLING)

Black bastard!

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

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

CARMEN

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

Bill SLAMS the file drawer closed.

BILL

You don't need that piece of crap.

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

INT. A.C. PAL - MAIN GYM

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

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

Carmen shakes his head as Bruce finishes another combination.

CARMEN

(frustrated)

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

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

BRUCE

What do you mean, commit?

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

CARMEN

After you throw the jab,

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

CARMEN

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

Bruce drives his right shoulder toward the bag.

BRUCE

The more you get out of it.

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

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

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

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

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

CARMEN

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

Carmen demonstrates and JOLTS the bag. Rocco stands back.

CARMEN

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

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

CARMEN

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

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

BRUCE

Hey Roc, what's up?

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

ROCCO
Christ, it must be 90 degrees in
here.

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

ROCCO
How's the hand?

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

Rocco smiles briefly at Bruce then looks to Carmen.

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

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

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

Bruce looks attentively at Carmen. Carmen scowls at Bruce.

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

Bruce smiles and throw the combination perfectly.

CARMEN
Again! Show me it wasn't luck.

Rocco wipes his brow.

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

Rocco turns and heads toward the stairway.

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

CARMEN
Keep working, Bruce.

Carmen catches up with Rocco as he reaches the stairs.

INT. A.C. PAL - ROCCO AND CARMEN

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

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

ROCCO
I thought Galendez was your idea.

Carmen looks at him quickly, thinking he heard wrong.

ROCCO
Well, anyway, it's an easy win,

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

ROCCO
...and an easy 10K.

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

CUT TO:

INT. CHINATOWN - FIGHT VENUE - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

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

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

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

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

TOMMY
Mind if I wrap my hands?

The promotor points at the taped hand.

PROMOTOR
That thing awright?

Tommy opens and closes his hand, flexing it.

TOMMY
It'll get the job done.

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

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

Tommy looks strangely at the promotor.

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

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

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

TOMMY
Send them up to Broadway.

The promotor smiles as he shoves a glove on Tommy.

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

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

The promotor scowls and fakes hurt feelings, protesting,

PROMOTOR
Hey, I'm legit!

The promotor laces the glove as Tommy smiles condescendingly.

TOMMY
Right, these things are legal.

The promotor quickly shakes his head no.

PROMOTOR
I said legit, not legal.

Tommy shrugs as though he could care less.

TOMMY
A fight's a fight.

The promotor finishes lacing the gloves and opens the door.

PROMOTOR
Well, old timer, time to kick ass.

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

MATCH CUT:

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

INT. CHINATOWN BACK ROOM - RING

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

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

ED
Hey, bones!

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

ED
I'm talking to you, bones!

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