

SAVE US, JOE LOUIS
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Story by Bert Sugar and Budd Schulberg

Eight Draft
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White title on black card.

SAVE US, JOE LOUIS

FADE IN

1 INT. NEW YORK POST NEWSROOM - DAY - 1936

1 *

JIMMY CANNON, sports columnist for the NEW YORK POST sits before his typewriter banding away. There is much activity behind in the busy newsroom. Periodically we shall CUT TO NEWSREEL FOOTAGE. *

VOICE OF JIMMY CANNON

*

NOBODY ASKED ME BUT where is this crazy world headed to? I know and you know sports is my beat, but far too many evil things are happening for me to turn away. NOBODY ASKED ME but shouldn't we be alarmed, even perhaps frightened by the rise of Fascism all over this little round ball that seems to be spinning out of control. Oh, you pundits, you doubting Thomas' say, "we have nothing to fear. That we live in the good ole U.S. of A., the bedrock, the cradle of Democracy. Well, I don't know about you but some other clowns have plans of their own. Have you been following Hitler in Nazi Germany? Franco in Spain, Emperor Hirohito in Japan or that funny looking guy Mussolini in Italy? NOBODY ASKED ME BUT Jimmy Cannon says, sooner or later America has to put these dictators down for the 10 count. Lay them out on the canvas face down, just like the Brown Bomber, Joe Louis. *

2 EXT. TRAFTON'S GYM - CHICAGO - DAY

2

TIGHT - BOTTLE OF WHISKEY. It's going down fast.

ANGLE - JACK JOHNSON, the aging Ex-Heavyweight Champion of the World empties the bottle. He wipes his mouth and stumbles up the steps to the gym.

3 INT. TRAFTON'S GYM - DAY

3

JOE LOUIS, 22 years old, the number one contender for the heavyweight crown is in the ring sparring with his trainer, former prizefighter JACK BLACKBURN. BLACKBURN, 50 years old lean and mean who sports an ugly knife scar on the right side of his face (like the letter J) instructs his young fighter.

Watching Joe and Jack are Louis' two Negro managers, JOHN ROXBOROUGH from Chicago and JULIAN BLACK from Detroit. Both men, silky and suave have made their money from the "numbers."

Jack Johnson, clad in black beret and a cane with a diamond handle, bogarts his way into the gym, yellin' and hollerin'.

JACK JOHNSON

Look at that. Y'all call him a boxer?
What is that? His stance is all wrong.
Look at his feet. Where is the balance?

All eyes go to Jack Johnson.

JACK JOHNSON (CONT'D)

He needs me. Y'all need me.

Roxborough and Black try to intercept him before he gets to the ring, but he gives them the bumrush.

BLACKBURN

(To Joe)

Chappie, don't pay that fool nigger no mind. Keep ya left up. Remember what I showed ya, combinations, get into a rhythm. An' when ya see an opening, throw the DOA.

JACK JOHNSON

Son, that German is a crafty one, but I can tutor you how to lick him.

ROXBOROUGH

Julian and I are very comfortable with Blackburn. He's the best there is in the business.

BLACK

We got our man. Joe's in fine hands, undefeated in his first 27 bouts, 22 coming by way of knockouts. Number one contender.

JACK JOHNSON

Blackburn is bush league. Always has been, always will be, a chump. Not a champ. I'm the first and only colored Heavyweight Champion of the world.

Jack Blackburn throws down his gloves.

BLACKBURN

That might be but I can still whip ya black ass, motherfucker.

JACK JOHNSON

You ain't got a Chinaman's chance.

BLACKBURN

How would you know? You ducked me... you ducked every good colored fighter... you ducked Sam Langford.

*
*
*

JACK JOHNSON

Cuz', I couldn't make any money fightin' a colored boy. Two niggers in a ring, white folks won't pay for that. They see that for free. I wasn't ducking you then and I ain't now.

BLACKBURN

You man enough to take my job? Let's go now. Climb ya chicken ass up here so I can make you hear da birdies sing.

*

Joe moves towards Blackburn and tries to calm him down.

JACK JOHNSON

Blackburn, I didn't come here to fight you. I came here to make Joe Louis the next heavyweight champion of the world. I know what it takes. Mr. Roxborough, Mr. Black if you put me in the kid's corner I will take him to the top. I guarantee it.

BLACKBURN

Roxie and Black, I swear before God and four more white people if you don't take that motherfucker outta here, I'll be goin' back to prison for manslaughter, a second time.

Roxborough and Black push Jack Johnson out of the gym. He still yells as he exits.

JACK JOHNSON

Blackburn, you don't got what it takes. Joe Louis, you will see that Schmeling gonna eat you alive.

Joe is concerned about Blackburn, who is visibly upset.

JOE

Chappie, you OK?

BLACKBURN

Fool nigger 'bout to make me start drinkin' agin'.

JOE

Chappie, but you promised.

BLACKBURN

Yes Chappie, I promised. But that's the last son of a bitch we need around here. He's everything you ain't. That crazy nigger is the reason there won't ever be another Negro heavyweight champion, running around, acting a damn fool with all those white women. Jack Johnson put the race back 400 years. Do you hear me son?

Joe nods.

JOE

Yes, Chappie.

BLACKBURN

Do us, do yourself a favor. Don't ever be like him.

JOE

Yes, Chappie

4 INT. TRAINER'S ROOM - SAME DAY

4

Joe sits on the rub down table as Blackburn unwraps tape from Joe's left hand, he eats an apple with right. Roxborough and Black look on.

ROXBOROUGH

Joe, this is your biggest fight comin' up and it's gonna be more press than you ever imagined.

JOE

Press don't bother me none.

BLACK

Good.

ROXBOROUGH

But you know how those peckerwood inkslingers are.

BLACK

We can't afford to let them get to you. They'll try to provoke you, to goad you. To intimidate you.

JOE

Don't matter me none.

ROXBOROUGH

Even when they write about you? Call you out of your natural name. Name you the AFRICAN AVENGER, ALABAMA TWISTER, HEAVY-FISTED HARLEMITE, CHOCOLATE CHOPPER?

JOE

Naw.

BLACK

MOCHA MAULER, BIBLE BELTER, ETHIOPIAN EXPLORER, DUSKY DOWNER, SHUFFLIN' SHADOW. Does it matter?

JOE

No suh'.

ROXBOROUGH

How 'bout THE TAN SKINNED TERROR, MAHOGANY MAIMER, COFFEE COLORED KAYO KING?

BLACK

THE MURDER MAN OF THE MAROON MITTS, K.K.K. - KRUEL KOLORED KLOUTER?

ROXBOROUGH

THE ZOOMING ZULU OR THE TAN TARZAN OF THUMP?

JOE

Mr. Roxborough and Mr. Black it don't mean a thing to me.

BLACKBURN

Chappie, what we trying to teach you is this, not all white folks will love you.

ROXBOROUGH

Shit, here it is 1936 and our women folk are still being raped, and men are being lynched.

BLACK

Sometimes even cut our dicks off.

BLACKBURN

To a lot of people, no matter how far or high you go, you will always be just a nigger. Joe, don't ever forget that as long as you live.

JOE

Yes, Chappie. I won't forever forget it. As long as I'm a Negro.

5 INT. 20TH CENTURY SPORTING CLUB - MIKE JACOB'S OFFICE - DAY 5

The WHITE PRESS is jam packed into Uncle Mike's office.

5A EXT. 20TH CENTURY SPORTING CLUB - NEW YORK - DAY 5A

The NEGRO PRESS is kept on the outside, looking in. Jimmy Cannon, indifferent walks right past them.

5B INT. 20TH CENTURY SPORTING CLUB - MIKE JACOB'S OFFICE - DAY 5B

Flanking Joe is MIKE JACOBS, Joe's boxing promoter extradonaire on his left and Roxborough and Black on his right.

MIKE JACOBS

Boys settle down, settle down. You sound like a bunch of wet hens.

The Press quiets.

Uncle Mike clicks his wooden false teeth which clinch an unlit cigar.

MIKE JACOBS (CONT'D)

Go 'head Roxie.

John Roxborough stands up and addresses the Press.

ROXBOROUGH

Gentlemen of the press thank you so much for coming out on such short order.

The Press begin to talk again.

JIMMY CANNON

Guys, willya shut up and let the man speak.

ROXBOROUGH

My co-manager Mr. Julian Black will hand out a sheet of paper to each and everyone of you.

Julian Black hands it out.

ROXBOROUGH (CONT'D)

With this press release we want you to know first hand, understand fully that Joe Louis is a nice clean kid. He's a wholesome good American.

MIKE JACOBS

Isn't that right Joe?

JOE

Yes, Mr. Jacobs.

ROXBOROUGH

These are the 7 commandments which Joe will live and abide by. Number one. Joe will never has his picture taken with a white woman. Two. He will never enter a nightclub alone. Three. Joe will never participate in any soft fights. Four. Nor will he participate in any fixed fights. Five. Joe will never gloat over a white fallen opponent nor speak negatively about him before or after a fight.

CLOSE - JOE

His face is DEAD PAN. He shows no emotion, no nothing. This expressionless face in the ring becomes his trademark.

VOICE OF ROXBOROUGH (CONT'D)

Six. Joe will maintain a deadpan expression in front of the cameras. And finally, Seven. Joe will live and fight clean. If and when Joe gets a shot at the belt, he will do it with dignity and class. He will make all Americans proud.

ANGLE - MIKE JACOBS' OFFICE

ROXBOROUGH (CONT'D)

We thank you for your time and patience.

MIKE JACOBS

Any questions?

JIMMY CANNON

Joe, the last Negro Heavyweight Champion was Jack Johnson. By what Roxborough says you won't be following in his footsteps.

The Press laughs. Joe looks to Roxborough who nods back at him, the OK to respond.

JOE

Mr. Cannon, I'm not too good with words. I wasn't around then when Mr. Jack Johnson was the champ. Every man got a right to his own mistakes. Ain't no man that ain't made none. He's who he is and I'm who I am, Joe Louis. I got to make my own footsteps.

JIMMY CANNON

Well spoken, Joe.

BILL CORUM

Any predictions on Schmeling? You're a 10 to one favorite. What round?

WRITER #1

A KO Joe? Experts say you send Max back to the Rhineland in four.

WRITER #2

Tell us something, Joe.

Joe holds up his two massive sledgehammers, his fists.

CLOSE - JOE

JOE

I let these do my talkin'.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Hold 'em up, Joe. Freeze.

He takes picture with Joe posing.

CLOSE - FLASHBULB

The FLASHBULB POPS A BLINDING WHITE FLASH

6 INT. NEW YORK STATE ATHLETIC COMMISSION - DAY

6

Joe and MAX SCHMELING stand side by side in boxer shorts and shoes. Max, 31 years old, with jet black hair and bushy eyebrows smiles at Joe. Standing at his side is his manager YUSSEL JACOBS. He sports a derby and chomps away on his cigar. Max's trainer, very much a card carrying member of the Nazi Party, MAX MACHON stands close behind. New York State Athletic Commissioner COL. PHELAN mans the scale. Yussel pushes his fighter towards the scale. Max gets on it. Roxborough and Black look closely.

COMMISSIONER COL. PHELAN

Max Schmeling weighs in at one hundred and ninety two pounds.

Max steps off. Joe steps on and Yussel is right behind him.

COMMISSIONER COL. PHELAN

Joe Louis weighs in also at one hundred ninety two pounds.

Max extends his hand. Joe shakes it. Photographers yell, scream out to the two fighters to hold that pose. Max speaks to Joe for the first time in his thick German Accent.

MAX
Good luck, Joe.

JOE
Max, same to you.

Before any more words can be spoken, Yussel ushers his fighter away. Blackburn steps next to Joe.

JOE (CONT'D)
That German sure is a pretty cool bird.

BLACKBURN
Chappie, it looks to me like you got a fight on your hands this time.

7 EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - LOUIS VS. SCHMELING - NEXT NIGHT 7

Title - LOUIS VS SCHMELING
YANKEE STADIUM
BRONX, NEW YORK
JUNE 19, 1936

8 INT. JOE'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT 8

Joe is shadow boxing under the watchful eye of Blackburn, Roxborough and Black. Mike Jacobs comes into the small room.

MIKE JACOBS
Tough luck, only 40,000 here. Weather messed us up. How do you feel, good Joe?

JOE
Feel real good Uncle Mike.

MIKE JACOBS
Blackburn, he feels good?

BLACKBURN
That's what the man said.

MIKE JACOBS
Good, Joe don't make it too quick, people want their money's worth.

JOE
I'll do my best, Uncle Mike.

MIKE JACOBS
Joe, Good luck. A great showing tonight and we'll be into the really big money.

JOE
Uncle Mike, how much will I be gettin'?

MIKE JACOBS

The next time you look in the mirror, Joe,
you're lookin' at a millionaire.

Joe is beaming at his "rich" self in a full length mirror.

BLACKBURN

All this thinkin' and talkin' 'bout money
right before a fight is death.

9 INT. MAX'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

9

Max is shadow boxing. DOC CASEY his cut man, Yussel Jacobs and
Max Machon watch intently.

MAX

Max, does anyone care back home in Germany
whether I win or lose?

MAX MACHON

Of course, the Fatherland cares.

MAX

Then why haven't I heard from The Fuhrer,
Goebbels or any other party officials?

YUSSEL JACOBS

Max, you know the reason. Hitler himself
disapproves of this fight. He said it's
beneath the dignity of a member of the
pure Aryan race to climb into the ring
with a black gorilla of an inferior race.

MAX MACHON

You can win. BE QUIET!

YUSSEL JACOBS

I will not! Hitler says you will lose,
that this animal is unbeatable, it will
disgrace the German volk.

MAX MACHON

Max, what does this Jew know about us
Germans?

MAX

This Jew is my manager.

YUSSEL JACOBS

Max, I say let's beat the hell out of this
unbeatable Joe Louis. We've worked long
and hard. You have a chance to make a liar
out of the Fuhrer. You can go home a
hero.

There is a knock on the door. AN OFFICIAL enters.

OFFICIAL

It's time.

Yussel puts Max's gray and black robe on him and they head out.

10 EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - LOUIS VS. SCHMELING - NIGHT 10

CHEERS, a spotlight follows Max and his seconds as he makes his way from the Yankee dugout to the ring.

11 EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - LOUIS VS. SCHMELING - RING - NIGHT 11

Max climbs into the ring and dances around it.

12 EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - LOUIS VS. SCHMELING - NIGHT 12

BIGGER CHEERS announce the entrance of Joe Louis. A spotlight also follows Joe and his Camp as they head to the ring.

13 EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - LOUIS VS. SCHMELING - RING - NIGHT 13

Joe climbs through the ropes with blue robe with red trimming.

ANGLE - MAX

Max turns to look at Joe.

ANGLE - JOE

Joe moves around the ring, oblivious to the German. His face is blank.

ANGLE - RING

Referee ARTHUR DONOVAN motions for both fighters to meet in the center of the ring.

REFEREE DONOVAN

I want a good, clean fight. Protect yourself at all times. Any questions? Now go back to your corners and come out fighting.

ANGLE - MAX'S CORNER

Machon puts in Max's mouthpiece.

MAX MACHON

Show him who's boss, for the Fatherland.

The two Max's smile at each other.

ANGLE - JOE'S CORNER

Blackburn gives his "manchild" final instructions.

BLACKBURN

Chappie, take ya time. Don't rush. And
for God's sake keep your left up high.

CLOSE - RINGSIDE

Jimmy Cannon sits in press row.

CLOSE - RINGSIDE

CLEM McCARTHY and EDWIN C. HILL do the RADIO BROADCAST.

CLOSE - RINGSIDE

ARNO HELLMIS does the RADIO BROADCAST back to Germany.

ARNO HELLMIS

Hello, my fellow Germans and Heil Hitler.
Here at ringside in New York I am
surrounded by Jews because they can afford
the best seats. But the regular white
crowd is rooting for Schmeling because
they want to see a white man conquer der
neger.

CLOSE - BELL

The bell is struck by the OFFICIAL TIMEKEEPER.

ANGLE - RING

A HUGH ROAR. Both fighters come out of their respective
corners. They are cautious, sizing each other up.

WHITE RINGSIDER

C'mon Max. Down below. Niggers don't
like it in the breadbasket.

Like a striking cobra, Joe throws a right to Max's left eye.
Max answers with his own right, but it's short of it's target.

CLOSE - BELL

Bell is struck. Round One is over.

ANGLE - SCHMELING'S CORNER

Max Machon is laughing.

MAX MACHON

Max, you are still alive.

MAX
He's a deadly puncher.

MAX MACHON
Yeah, so? And you can't?

ANGLE - JOE'S CORNER

JOE
Chappie, this German is a pushover. His
eye is almost shut.

BLACKBURN
Don't worry about knocking him out. Keep
jabbing with a high left and don't drop
that left for a hook for 3 or 4 rounds.

CUT TO:

14 EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - LOUIS VS. SCHMELING ROUND 4 - NIGHT 14

CARD - ROUND FOUR

ANGLE - RING

Joe begins with a left hook. Max counters with a right to his
jaw. Joe flicks a weak jab and Max answers with another right,
landing squarely in his mug. Joe, now on the defensive gets
hit with a barrage; right uppercut, left cross and a thundering
right on the chin again.

CLOSE - JOE

He falls straight back to the canvas.

ANGLE - YANKEE STADIUM

40,000 fight fans EXPLODE, jump onto their seats. As fast as
the knockdown, the crowd has now shifted to the 10-1 underdog,
Max Schmeling.

ANGLE - RING

Referee Donovan points Max to a neutral corner. The
inexperienced Joe, foolishly gets up at the count of three
instead of waiting at least until the count of eight. He's
shook up. The first time he has ever been knocked off his feet
as a professional.

CLOSE - BELL

The bell is struck.

ANGLE - JOE'S CORNER

BLACKBURN

Chappie, see what happened? You dropped ya left. He dropped ya on ya ass. Next round go for his body.

ANGLE - MAX'S CORNER

MAX MACHON

He's on rubber legs now. Patience Max. He can't stand up to your power much longer.

CUT TO:

15 EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - LOUIS VS. SCHMELING ROUND 6 - NIGHT 15

CARD - ROUND SIX

CLOSE - LILLIE BARROW

LILLIE BARROW, Joe's mother is hysterical. She's screaming at the top of her lungs.

LILLIE

They're killing my boy. They're killing my boy. They're killing him.

Joe's best friend FREDDIE GUINYARD has to forcibly remove her from the stadium.

CLOSE - MARVA LOUIS

MARVA LOUIS, Joe's beautiful wife has to cover her face. She can't watch the beating her husband is taking.

ANGLE - RING

Max pummels Joe. Louis answers with a low blow. He is warned by Donovan. Max fires a right to Joe's head after the bell. Blackburn and Roxborough protest the late blow as they help Joe sit on his stool in the corner.

ANGLE - MAX'S CORNER

MAX MACHON

Max, take it easy in the next round. Don't shoot your whole wad.

CLOSE - RINGSIDE

Edward C. Hill and Clem McCarthy ON THE AIR.

EDWARD C. HILL

There isn't a trace of that which so many people have been afraid of, racial feeling or Anti-Nazism, anything of that kind.

CLEM MCCARTHY

Ed, you hit it on the button. These fans of the sweet science here in Yankee Stadium are realizing we've got two great athletes. One may be darker than the other perhaps, but there's no question of anything else.

CUT TO:

16 EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - LOUIS VS. SCHMELING ROUND 12 - NIGHT 16

CARD - ROUND 12

ANGLE - RING

The crowd rhythmically chants "KILL HIM. KILL HIM. KILL HIM."

Max misfires on a left hook, then lands a right. Both fighters go into a clinch. Louis drops his shoulder and hooks Max below the belt. Joe has no control of his facilities. Max not wanting a victory on a disqualification hits him with 3 rights, followed by a right cross. Joe falls onto Max and Donovan pulls them apart.

Max forces Joe onto the ropes and whacks him on the chin with a right. Joe's arms fall and he's open for a clear, clean shot. This is what Max has been waiting for all those weeks in training, in preparation for this fight. Max isn't about to let this chance slip away. He puts everything on this one, THE BLITZKRIEG. It lands with the full force of a BOMB and spins Joe completely around. He falls onto the ropes, then down to his knees.

Donovan sends Max to a neutral corner.

CLOSE - JOE

Joe tries to prop himself up using the middle rung of the ropes. He is on his way up when he collapses, rolls over and lies face down, stretched out motionless on the canvas.

CLOSE - DONOVAN

The Referee picks up the count from the Official Timekeeper

REFEREE DONOVAN

3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10.

He waves his arms. It's over.

CLOSE - MAX

Max raises his hands and leaps into the air. ELATION.
CONQUEST. VICTORY.

ANGLE - RING

Max rushes over to help Blackburn and Roxborough with Joe. They both spurn Max and carry Joe to his corner. Max Machon, Yussel Jacobs and Doc Casey lift Max into the air. Cops surround the ring. It's BEDLAM.

CLOSE - MARVA LOUIS

Her face is buried in her hands as she sobs.

CLOSE - RINGSIDE

ARNO HELLMIS ON THE AIR. He's going berserk.

ARNO HELLMIS

Der Neger is kaput. It is proof again of
the superiority of the Master Race. Heil
Hitler! Heil Hitler!

*

The unbeatable BROWN BOMBER, JOE LOUIS has not only been defeated but knocked out in the twelfth round by the lightly regarded underdog MAX SCHMELING.

ANGLE - RING

The ring is packed with people. Yussel Jacobs berates the reporters at ringside.

YUSSEL JACOBS

So what did I tell you? Didn't I tell ya
that we'd beat him? Whadda ya got to say
now? We beat the invincible Joe Louis.
Didn't I tell ya?

JIMMY BRADDOCK, the present Heavyweight Champion congratulates Max.

BRADDOCK

Congratulations, Max. You've earned a
title shot. Me and you will make a great
fight.

*
*
*

Unnoticed on the opposite corner of the ring Blackburn, Roxborough and Black lead the fallen hero back to his dressing room.

CLOSE - JOE

Joe has towels draped over his head. Through a small opening we can see his still glazed over puffy eyes.

ANGLE - MAX

Cops try to clear a path through the cheering throng. The MOB reaches out and tries to touch him, they tear at his robe, at his hand wraps. They want to touch GREATNESS.

17 INT. JOE'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

17

Joe staggers to the rubdown table. Blackburn starts to work on him feverishly. Blackburn massages Joe, gives him smelling salts. WE HEAR CHAOS outside the locker room. He's still groggy, and talks as if he's in a trance. A towel still partly covers his face. *

JOE

Chappie, what happened?

Jack Blackburn has tears running down his face. He pats his "son" on his back.

BLACKBURN

Nothing tragic, Chappie. You got knocked out.

Joe starts crying also and Blackburn hugs him.

JOE

I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Chappie, I let you down, Roxie, Black, everybody. Chappie, I quit. I quit.

BLACKBURN

Go 'head and cry son. Don't you worry. We'll get him next time. Everything happens for the best.

Roxborough and Black come over and comfort Joe also.

ROXBOROUGH

You want to talk to the inkslingers.

BLACKBURN

Let me handle it.

JOE

Was I that bad?

BLACK

You did hit Max with a couple of low blows.

JOE

Can you please go over and apologize to Max for me, and tell him I was on queer street.

BLACK

Sure thing, Joe.

JOE

How do I look?

BLACKBURN

Not pretty Chappie. That German beat you up real good.

Joe stumbles off the rubdown table and goes to a full length mirror in the corner of the room.

CLOSE - MIRROR

Joe slowly takes the towel off his head and sees this distorted reflection in the mirror. It's not the millionaire he saw before the fight.

*
*

JOE

Oh my God. Don't let Marva in here. Tell Freddie to take her to the hotel. I don't want anybody to see me like this.

His forehead is swollen down to his eyelids, a huge lump on his left cheek from the numerous Schmeling rights. Joe's lips are swollen. It's not a pretty picture.

18 INT. OUTSIDE JOE'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

18

A MOB is outside trying to get in to see Joe.

ANGLE - DOOR

Blackburn comes out to talk to the Press. They all are on deadline.

BLACKBURN

Joe can't talk now. The doctors are looking at him.

A ROAR of disapproval.

BLACKBURN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry but that's the way it's gonna be.

19.

Blackburn pulls Cannon in with him and closes the door behind.
New York's Finest stands guard.

19 INT. JOE'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

19

Joe is on the phone with his mother. Jimmy Cannon watches Joe from afar.

JOE
Mama, I'm so sorry.

CUT TO:

20 INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

20

Lillie talks to her son.

LILLIE
Son, it's alright.

JOE (O.S.)
But I let my people down.

LILLIE
Stop talking that foolishness. There are just as many Negro doctors, lawyers and politicians as before you got beat.

JOE (O.S.)
...but folks depend on me.

LILLIE
And none of those poor folks suddenly got rich either. Son, you'll do better next time.

CUT TO:

21 INT. JOE'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

21

Guilt is all over his face.

JOE
Mama, thank you for not getting mad at me.

22 INT. MAX'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

22

By comparison, Max's dressing room is New Year's Eve.

Max who is beaming is interviewed by Arno Hellmis for the radio broadcast back to Germany.

ARNO HELLMIS
Max, congratulations.

MAX

Thank you Arno.

ARNO HELLMIS

How much this victory has accomplished for the German people should not be underestimated.

MAX

Hitler's inspirations more than anything else spurs us to achievement.

ARNO HELLMIS

Of course. Let me ask you about "der neger." One cannot believe anymore that his low blows in the late rounds were unintentional.

MAX

Arno, that's not the case at all. I have already received word from Joe. He apologized and I accepted. Joe Louis is a fine boxer.

ARNO HELLMIS

Let's bring in the genius in your corner Herr Max Machon.

MAX MACHON

Arno, wasn't Max magnificent? I just have this to say. Max Schmeling's victory symbolizes white honesty over black brutality and lack of discipline. Through the German Schmeling, the white race, Europe and white America alike defeated the black race.

CLOSE - MAX

He is ill at ease with the comments.

23 EXT. HARLEM STREETS - NIGHT

23

Max's limo races through the Harlem streets to mid-town Manhattan with a police escort. Angry Negro crowds throw rocks and bricks and spit upon Max's motorcade.

24 EXT. HARLEM STREETS / INT. MAX'S LIMO - NIGHT

24

Max's jubilant mood disappears as he first hand witnesses the hysteria, gloom and despair of a people. Max feels their deep wound.

MAX

The people are really hurt.

MAX MACHON

Enjoy your triumph. These are not people
you talk of, only animals.

25 EXT. THE PLAZA - NIGHT

25

Max's motorcade pulls up in front of the Plaza. His fans and
press await him.

ANGLE - CAR

Max gets out of the car and is cheered. He waves to everyone.

26 INT. PLAZA LOBBY - NIGHT

26

Max is applauded as he enters with Max Machon, Yussel Jacobs and
Doc Casey at his side. Reporters converge on them.

REPORTER

Do you think Joe Louis is overrated?

MAX

Louis, he is a very good fighter, and a
game one.

ANOTHER REPORTER

Max, please tell my readers what it was
that you saw?

MAX

I had studied films of Louis' and detected
a weakness. When he would throw a left,
he would drop that left before throwing a
second one. I saw he was open for my
right. So, I make a special trip just to
watch Louis fight and knock out Uzcudun
and look for that flaw. It was there. I
was jubilant. I knew I'd win after that.

SAME REPORTER

Blackburn should have known that,
especially since you're a counter-puncher.
Don't you think?

MAX

You are asking the wrong person.

The Reporters fire away more questions.

YUSSEL JACOBS

That's it fellas. Let us through. Max
has had a tiring night. He will be more
than happy to meet with you guys in the
afternoon after he tears into the hay.

27 EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - BLEACHER ENTRANCE - NIGHT

27

A lone black Cadillac pulls up to the bleacher entrance. Roxborough and Black come out and look around. No one is here. The coast is clear.

ANGLE - ENTRANCE

First we see Blackburn, he looks around and signals for Joe. Joe appears with his dark sunglasses and straw hat completely covering his face and quickly jumps into the backseat. Everyone else piles in and they pull off.

28 EXT. HARLEM STREETS - NIGHT

28

The unrest on the streets is escalating. Joe's Cadillac drives through it as WE SEE the POLICE respond.

29 INT. MAX'S PLAZA SUITE - NIGHT

29

A full scale party. Max is surrounded by women well-wishers, flowers and free flowing champagne.

ANGLE - SUITE

In a corner of the suite the two Jacobs, Mike and Yussel are huddled up, talking turkey.

ANGLE - SUITE

Max Machon pulls Max away from the ever so dangerous clutches of some beautiful starlets.

MAX

C'mon. I've been in training for months.

He pours the both of them another glass of the "bubbly" and holds up a pile of telegrams.

MAX MACHON

Look at this stack of telegrams. They all send congratulations. Marlene Dietrich, Douglas Fairbanks, Ernst Lubitsch, but listen to this.

He reads.

MAX MACHON (CONT'D)

To your wonderful victory my best congratulations. I know you fought for Germany; that it is a German victory. We are proud of you, Heil Hitler! Regards, Dr. Paul Joseph Goebbels, Minister of Propaganda and National Enlightenment.

*

He reads one more.

MAX MACHON (CONT'D)

Most cordial felicitations on your splendid victory. Your Fuhrer, Adolf Hitler.... I propose a toast.

Everyone raises their glasses.

MAX MACHON (CONT'D)

To Max Schmeling, a German Hero. And now onto Braddock and bringing the belt back to the Fatherland where it rightfully belongs.

Everyone toasts, then cheers.

CLOSE - MAX

He is on top of the world.

30 INT. HOTEL THERESA - NIGHT

30

In a darkened HOTEL SUITE the beaten and battered Joe Louis lies on his bed. He is surrounded by his brain-trust Blackburn, Roxborough and Black.

CLOSE - JOE

Joe's face and head is swollen to the size of a watermelon. He tries to speak through his puffy and cracked bleeding lips.

JOE

I know I let y'all down tonight, but it won't ever happen again. I want to go back to Detroit with Marva and recover from this whipping. Chappie, let's start all over from scratch. I'll go into the woodshed. I take full blame. I want another shot at Mr. Schmeling. And next time, I promise it will be a different story.

BLACKBURN

Yes, Sir.

ROXBOROUGH

Joe, you got someone who wants to see you.

Roxborough, Blackburn and Black leave the suite, moments later Marva walks in.

ANGLE - MARVA

She slowly walks with trepidation to Joe's bed.

ANGLE - BED

Joe turns his head so his wife can't see the full damage. Marva, with tears welling up in her eyes gently kisses her husband on the top of his swollen forehead.

MARVA

I love you, baby..

JOE

I guess sometimes it don't look like it, but I love you, too, honey. I'm gonna do better. I promise.

MARVA

Shhh!!! Let me take care of you.

31 INT. MAX'S PLAZA SUITE - NIGHT

31

Max is leading his German compatriots in an old Bavarian folk song. Yussel Jacobs grabs him.

YUSSEL JACOBS

You got a overseas call.

32 INT. MAX'S PLAZA SUITE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

32

Max picks up the phone.

MAX

Hello.

CUT TO:

33 INT. MAX'S BERLIN HOME - MORNING

33

ANNY ONDRA, Max's Movie Star wife is on the other line.

ANNY

Max, it's me. Can you hear me?

MAX (O.S.)

Yes, but you will have to speak up.

ANNY

I've been trying for the last two hours to get through.

MAX (O.S.)

And now we speak my darling.

ANNY

I listened on the radio. I'm so proud of you.

CUT TO:

34 INT. MAX'S PLAZA SUITE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

34

MAX

I got telegrams from Goebbels and Hitler.

CUT TO:

35 INT. MAX'S BERLIN HOME - MORNING

35

ANNY

Yes, I have already received a gigantic basket of flowers and fruit from Hitler. Max, when are you coming home?

MAX (O.S.)

Within a week.

ANNY

I wish it were tonight.

MAX

So do I. I kiss you everywhere.

CUT TO:

36 INT. MAX'S PLAZA SUITE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

36

MAX

I love you much more.

37 INT. HOTEL THERESA - NIGHT

37

As Joe sleeps Marva alternates cold and hot compresses on his face to hurry the swelling down in the still darkened hotel suite.

CLOSE - MARVA

It's very evident in the way she attends to Joe that she is deeply, madly in love with him.

38 EXT. FREDRICHSHAFEN AIRFIELD, GERMANY - MORNING

38

From HIGH ABOVE in the zeppelin HINDERBURG, the landing area is "black with people."

ANGLE - LANDING AREA

A Nazi uniformed band plays the National Anthem DAS DEUTSCHLANDLIED. Thousands of Germans cheer as Max waves out the window of The Hindenburg from above as it slowly lowers itself to dock. Men throw their hats into the air. Women wave white cotton handkerchiefs.

ANGLE - ANNY

Anny stands, eagerly waiting for her man. She is surrounded by DR. JOSEPH GOEBBELS, high ranking officers of the NAZI PARTY and the GESTAPO.

ANGLE - HINDENBURG

The landing ties are secure and Max is the first one to emerge. He is followed by Machon and Jacobs.

CLOSE - MAX

He holds both hands up triumphantly. The ROAR is deafening.

TRACKING SHOT

WE FOLLOW Anny as she first walks, jogs, then sprints into Max's arms.

CLOSE - MAX AND ANNY

They embrace. They Kiss. They are showered with flowers.

ANGLE - NAZI OFFICIALS

Max Machon gives the salute to Goebbels.

MAX MACHON

Sieg Heil!

GOEBBELS

Sieg Heil!

The CROWD chants too.

CROWD

Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!

Max Machon and Goebbels stare at Yussel Jacobs who is not participating, while Max and Anny are still lip-locked.

CLOSE - JACOBS

He gives a meek salute to them both.

YUSSEL JACOBS
Seig Heil! Seig Heil!

CLOSE - JACOBS HAND

From reverse WE SEE Jacobs free hand. He crosses his fingers behind his back.

CLOSE - MAX AND ANNY

ANNY
(whispering in his ear)
Heil, Max. Heil my darling Max.

39 EXT. BERLIN STREETS - DAY .

39

Max and Anny ride top down in a humongous PARADE. It seems like all of Berlin has come to see, to cheer, to pay homage to Max Schmeling. THE RETURN OF THE CONQUERING GERMAN HERO.

CLOSE - LIMO

Max and Goebbels give the salute. Anny rides in the back and she's not saluting at all. Goebbels turns around and looks at her.

CLOSE - ANNY

She looks right back at him defiantly. She still does not salute.

CLOSE - MAX

He has been watching this test of wills.

40 EXT. HOTEL BERLIN - DAY

40

ESTABLISHING SHOT

41 INT. HOTEL BERLIN - MAX'S SUITE - DAY

41

Max and Anny are curled up on the love seat in the living room of their suite. She is gently kissing his swollen eye. The phone rings.

MAX
Anny, let it ring.

ANNY
I'm expecting a call from my agent about a Hitchcock film.

Anny untangles herself from Max, gets up and answers the phone.

ANNY (CONT'D)

Hello.

She listens then hangs up the phone and looks at Max.

42 INT. HOTEL BERLIN LOBBY - DAY

42

Max storms up to the HEAD DESK CLERK HERR VEIDT. Yussel Jacobs tries to intervene.

YUSSEL JACOBS

Max, it's nothing. Just a little misunderstanding. Nuthin' to get ya balls in a uproar.

*
*

MAX

You better have a good explanation.

Veidt looks at Max in embarrassment.

VEIDT

Herr Schmeling, you reserved a suite for Herr Jacobs from New York. Well it's my displeasure to tell you we will not be able to accommodate him.

MAX

How is it possible that the hotel could overlook my reservation.

VEIDT

That isn't it, Herr Schmeling. Mr. Jacobs is, ...you know, don't you. We simply can't give Mr. Jacobs a room.

Max begins to violently shake.

YUSSEL JACOBS

Max, take it easy. Don't blow a gasket.

CLOSE - MAX

MAX

You mean to say you can't give him a room because he's a Jew?

ANGLE - LOBBY

Everyone is looking at Max and Veidt. Max is about TO BLOW UP THE SPOT.

CLOSER - MAX

MAX (CONT'D)

Let me tell you something. If Herr Jacobs isn't given a suite here, right now, then something's bad is going to happen. You don't know who Herr Jacobs is. When this incident shows up in the New York papers, then you've seen your last American guest. And you can be sure that my German guests and I will never set foot in here again.

CLOSE - VEIDT

VEIDT

Herr Schmeling, please understand the new situation. We have so many guests from the Wilhelmstrasse.

ANGLE - LOBBY

MAX

Is the suite available or not?

Veidt looks at Max then Jacobs and back to Max.

VEIDT

Please follow me to the reception desk.

ANGLE - RECEPTION DESK

Veidt pushes the registration form across the desk to Yussel Jacobs.

43 EXT. REICH CHANCELLORY - DAY

43

ADOLF HITLER, Goebbels, Max Machon, Max, Anny and Max's MOTHER - FRAU AMANDA SCHMELING wave to the cheering German masses from the BALCONY.

44 INT. REICH CHANCELLORY - DAY

44

Hitler leads everyone into the reception hall for lunch.

HITLER

It is our honor to have you bless us with your presence.

MAX

You do us honor, my Fuhrer.

Hitler takes the arm of Amanda Schmeling.

HITLER

You have, gracious lady, truly every reason to be proud. Every German does.

FRAU SCHMELING

Max has always been a good boy. Loyal and well-behaved.

ANGLE - TABLE

Hitler sits and pets his favorite dog, an Alsatian named BLONDI at the head of the long table with Max and Anny on his sides as lunch is being served.

HITLER

Did you know even before the fourth round that you would beat this black auxiliary?

MAX

I was confident, but I'm not a fortune teller.

HITLER

And now I regret that I didn't see the fight.

MAX

Now, you can. I have the film of the fight but it's stuck at customs. Mein Fuhrer, the Americans thought I would lose so quickly they gave me the German rights.

HITLER

I will send someone immediately to pick it up. I would very much like to watch the fight with you.

MAX

It would be my pleasure. I'm eager to see it also.

Hitler leans over to Max and speaks under his breath.

HITLER

You look quite banged up.

Max touches his swollen eye.

MAX

Louis can punch.

HITLER

Are you getting good medical attention?
I'll have my physician visit you.

MAX

Thank you very much.

Goebbels taps Max from behind.

GOEBBELS

I request your presence 8AM in my office.

45 INT. GOEBBELS OFFICE - NEXT MORNING

45

Max is looking at the Nazi flags, maps and a GIANT PORTRAIT OF HITLER.

CLOSE - HITLER PORTRAIT

ANGLE - OFFICE

Max looks at the framed photos of his wife MAGDA and six smiling children adorning his desk.

Goebbels walks into the room. He gives Max the salute.

GOEBBELS

Heil Hitler!

Max returns the salute.

MAX

Heil Hitler. I was just looking at the pictures of your lovely family.

GOEBBELS

I'm alarmed that you have refused to get rid of your Jew manager.

MAX

Mr. Jacobs has been my manager ever since I first went to America. He's never cheated me. Yussel Jacobs is my friend, with good intentions.

GOEBBELS

A Jew with good intentions? The Fuhrer himself disapproves of this association. In fact it is very embarrassing to The Reich.

MAX

I'm very sorry if that is the case.

GOEBBELS

Is this a Jewish plot to humiliate The Fuhrer in our crusade against mongrel people? The Fatherland is only for pure-blooded Germans.

MAX

Herr Goebbels, I leave politics to the politicians. New York is the capital of the fight game and boxing is Jacobs' business. He's one of the best, and makes me money. I am a boxer and I want to regain the Heavyweight Championship of the world. Does The Fatherland not want that?

CLOSE - GOEBBELS

He stares at Max.

GOEBBELS

You are dismissed.

ANGLE - OFFICE

Max salutes him.

MAX

Heil Hitler!

GOEBBELS

Heil Hitler!

46 INT. BERLIN FRIEDRICHSTRASSE TRAIN STATION - DAY

46

Max carries Yussel Jacobs' suitcase as he is about to board his train.

MAX

I'll see you back in the States.

YUSSEL JACOBS

Max, please think about what I've been saying.

MAX

I can't leave. Germany is my home. Anny's career is here. My family is here.

YUSSEL JACOBS

So, take your family with you.

MAX

Yussel, you worry too much. Don't be a doomsayer. We have seen the last of Wars, men have learned that lesson.

*
*

YUSSEL JACOBS

Max, I've lived to be an old man by instinct. When my butt itches somethin' ain't right.

(MORE)

YUSSEL JACOBS (CONT'D)

And ever since we got off that hotdog
balloon Hindenburg and stepped foot in
Germany, my butt has been itching night
and day.

MAX

So scratch it then, Yussel.

They both laugh. WE HEAR A WHISTLE. The train is about to
depart. Max gives his friend a hearty hug. Yussel Jacobs
climbs on board.

MAX (CONT'D)

Get me that Championship fight with
Braddock.

The train begins to pull out of the station.

YUSSEL JACOBS

Yussel Jacobs always does the job dat
needs to be done. I'm the furtest with
the mostest.

MAX

Take good care of yourself.

Yussel yells above the loud train.

YUSSEL JACOBS

How does this sound? Introducing The New
Heavyweight Champion of The World, Max
Schmeling.

The train disappears into a cloud of hot white steam.

DISSOLVE TO WHITE.

47 EXT. JOE'S HOME - DETROIT - DAY

47

Joe's home is in the bustling NEGRO section of Detroit,
Michigan, USA. PARADISE VALLEY.

48 INT. JOE'S HOME - DETROIT - DAY

48

Roxborough enters the living room with RUSSELL COWANS. Joe,
eating an apple, lays on a sofa listening to the radio. He is
still full of GLOOM and DOOM. Roxborough raises all the
venetian blinds, it goes from dark to light. He then turns off
the radio.

ROXBOROUGH

Joe, I brought you someone to meet. This
is Russell Cowans, a bright young man.

RUSSELL COWANS

How do you do?

Joe mumbles.

JOE

I was listinin' to the radio.

ROXBOROUGH

Joe, I know Mama Barrow raised you better. If you're gonna mope around and feel sorry for yourself you might as well be productive.

JOE

Roxie, what do you mean?

ROXBOROUGH

Russell, why don't you tell him.

RUSSELL COWANS

Mr. Roxborough thought it would be a good idea if I became your tutor.

JOE

A what?

RUSSELL COWANS

Your tutor. I write for The Detroit Chronicle.

ROXBOROUGH

Joe, I made a promise to your Mother when I signed you that you get some education.

JOE

Education!

RUSSELL COWANS

Yes, education. A high school equivalency program. Grammar, arithmetic, history, etiquette and most importantly, an understanding of your social role. What you mean to Negroes.

ROXBOROUGH

And the greater impact on American society.

Joe sits up straight.

RUSSELL COWANS

You have an obligation to fulfill this role. Our own people have such high expectations. Joe, don't be afraid of living up to them, of being a hero. We've been waiting a long time for someone to hitch our wagon to.

(MORE)

RUSSELL COWANS (CONT'D)

This Depression is hurting white folks so you know what it's doing to us.

ROXBOROUGH

When Mister Charley sneezes, we catch a cold.

JOE

Me and Marva...

Russell corrects Joe.

RUSSELL COWANS

... Marva and I.

JOE

Marva and I were talkin' 'bout 'dat last night.

ROXBOROUGH

Joe, I want you to read this.

He hands Joe an envelope. Joe takes out the letter and begins to slowly read out loud.

CLOSE - JOE

Joe reads slowly.

JOE

Dear Mr. Joe Louis, I don't know if you will get this letter or not, but I have always put my faith in the Lord.

CUT TO:

49 EXT. A PORCH SOMEWHERE IN ALABAMA - DAY

49

ZEPHORAH MCNAIR, the author of this letter - a middle age Negro woman moves back and forth in her rocking chair. Zephora looks INTO THE CAMERA, she looks at US as she continues the letter.

ZEPHORAH MCNAIR

Joe, (if I may call you that) I recently lost my son. My only child.

CUT TO:

50 INT. ALABAMA PENITENTARY - NIGHT

50

ENOCH MCNAIR, 18 years old, shackled at feet and hands is surrounded by PRISON GUARDS as they walk down a long, dark, dank corridor.

VOICE OF ZEPHORAH MCNAIR (CONT'D)
 Enoch was wrongfully accused of a crime he
 didn't commit. He was home eating supper
 I had just cooked for him, macaroni and
 cheese - Enoch's favorite.

51 INT. GAS CHAMBER - NIGHT

51

Enoch is strapped into a steel chair.

VOICE OF ZEPHORAH MCNAIR (CONT'D)
 The matter involved a young white woman...
 It was our word against hers. Joe, you
 are his hero.

ANGLE - GAS CHAMBER

Vents are closed shut. The door is bolted. It is AIR TIGHT.

CLOSE - CHUTE

A chute opens and GAS PELLETS roll onto the floor.

CLOSE - GAS PELLETS

The deadly gas rises.

VOICE OF ZEPHORAH MCNAIR (CONT'D)
 I don't think my Pastor would mind if I
 said you are our Moses, Joe..

ANGLE - GAS CHAMBER

The chamber fills with the poisonous fumes.

VOICE OF ZEPHORAH MCNAIR (CONT'D)
 The chosen one to lead our people out of
 the wilderness.

CUT TO:

52 INT. WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

52

A small waiting room in the prison is packed with gleeful WHITE
 CITIZENS. The prison guards stand in the rear.

ANGLE - WAITING ROOM

All eyes are fixed upon a SPEAKER that hangs from the ceiling.

CLOSE - SPEAKER

WE HEAR ENOCH MCNAIR'S LAST DYING WORDS

ENOCH MCNAIR (O.S.)
SAVE ME, JOE LOUIS.

CUT TO:

53 INT. GAS CHAMBER

53

CLOSE - MICROPHONE

A MICROPHONE is in front of him.

CLOSE - ENOCH MCNAIR

Enoch uses all the strength he has to get out these last breaths, these last words of his young life.

ENOCH MCNAIR
SAVE ME, JOE LOUIS.
SAVE ME, JOE LOUIS.

The Negro boy slumps over. Enoch McNair has begun his journey to the Upper Room.

CUT TO:

54 EXT. A PORCH SOMEWHERE IN ALABAMA - DAY

54

CLOSE - ZEPHORAH MCNAIR

ZEPHORAH MCNAIR
Joe please take care, you will always be in our prayers, hopes and our dreams.

CUT TO:

55 INT. JOE'S HOME - DETROIT - DAY

55

JOE
Sincerely, Zephora McNair.

The letter falls from Joe's hand. Russell, Roxborough and Joe, no one moves, no one talks. There is nothing to be said.

56 INT. BAR - NIGHT

56

Dingy. Blue collar and no collar. Almost deserted. A few losers at the bar. In a rear booth is Blackburn, who looks as if he's been there so long they should be charging him rent. An empty shot glass and beer bottle in front of him.

BLACKBURN
Goddammit, ya lazy black motherfucker,
where's my drink?

*

Joe enters as Blackburn pounds his empty glass on the bar.

BARTENDER

Hello, Joe. Meanest bad-ass drunk we ever had. Scares me 'cause I heard from the grapevine he did time for shootin' a couple of people in a bar.

JOE

Long time ago.

BARTENDER

Then you handle 'im.

JOE

Hello, Chappie. Let's go home.

BLACKBURN

Fuck it, I am home.

JOE

C'mon, Chappie, let's go to work.

BLACKBURN

Chasin' golf balls 'n pussy? An' thinkin' you know more 'n your corner--who do ya think you are, Joe?

JOE

I'm thinkin' I'm the next heavyweight champion of the world--if you'll take me back.

BLACKBURN

Champion of the world? You gonna fuckin' listen this time? Do like I say? Go whole hog? Full of piss and vinegar?

JOE

Chappie, I promise. You tell me t' jump off the Empire State, I'll jump.

BLACKBURN

We'll see.

The bartender brings the straight shot and beer chaser.

JOE

Only you gotta promise me somethin'. That you'll stop drinkin'. Stay off the sauce. No mo' changin' ya breath.

Blackburn stares at Joe and then at the drink calling him, then back to Joe. Finally he grabs it and downs it.

JOE

Chap...pie...

BLACKBURN

OK, OK, now I'm on the wagon. An' I'll stay on the damn thing 'til you get to be champ.

57 INT. JOE'S HOME - DETROIT - MORNING

57

Blackburn is breaking Joe's golf clubs in two to his horror.

BLACKBURN

Chappie, this ain't good for you. The timing's different. And the muscles you use in golf, they ain't the same ones you use hittin' a man. Besides being out in the sun don't so you no good either. Dries you out.

JOE

Yes, Chappie.

Joe reluctantly joins Blackburn in breaking his clubs.

58 INT. TRAFTON'S GYM - DAY

58

Blackburn is in the ring with Joe sparring.

BLACKBURN

All right, you black son of a bitch. You made it to here and old Chappie is gonna see you make it all the way. When I finish with you, you're gonna be a fuckin' fightin' machine.

59 EXT. ROAD - CRACK OF DAWN

59

TRACKING SHOT

Joe is up with the roosters doing roadwork. He picks up a rock, bowls it 30 feet ahead then sprints to catch it before it stops. Blackburn follows him in a car, driven by JOE's bodyguard CARL NELSON.

ANGLE - ROAD

They both walk on the return to camp.

BLACKBURN

Chappie, I know you're a young man. I, too was young once, but you got to leave those skirts alone. No poontang.

JOE

Marva?

BLACKBURN

I don't care who it is. You know the rules. Wife or no wife. No pussy. Save your legs. I want you a lean n' mean fighting machine. Knock motherfuckers D-O-A-.

JOE

Dead on dat ass!

60 INT. TRAFTON'S GYM - DAY

60

Blackburn and Joe are in the ring sparring.

BLACKBURN

OK, Chappie, jab me.

Joe jabs and Blackburn quickly crosses his right and almost knocks him down with a blow dead on the chin.

BLACKBURN (CONT'D)

See what you doin'? Everytime you jab, you still droppin' ya left.

Blackburn demonstrates.

BLACKBURN (CONT'D)

Joe, you wide open to the right-hand counter. That German knew this, and now so does everybody else in da world. I want you to double up on the jab, bob ya head a little, weave to ya right, and shoot the right hand before he can throw his. OK? Chappie, show me.

Joe, now the perfect student does as instructed. He lands a hard right flush on Blackburn's chin.

JOE

Chappie, you alright? I didn't mean to hurt ya.

BLACKBURN

I'm fine. That's better. You gonna do that a hundred times. Five hundred. I want you doing that in your sleep.

JOE

Yes, Chappie.

BLACKBURN

You saving your strength?

JOE

Yes, Chappie.

BLACKBURN

Good, keep that horse dick of yours in the barn, zipped up tight. Let's go to work.

They continue to spar.

61 EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - LOUIS VS. SHARKEY - NIGHT

61

ANGLE - RING

TITLE - LOUIS VS. SHARKEY
YANKEE STADIUM
BRONX, NEW YORK
AUGUST 18, 1936.

Sharkey hits the canvas. He is out cold. Joe stares, no expression on his face from the neutral corner.

CLOSE - RINGSIDE

BILL CORUM

If ya askin' me, it was fixed.

JIMMY CANNON

Nobody's askin' ya, pal.

CLOSE - RING

JOE

Is that what you meant, Chappie?

BLACKBURN

That's the general idea, Chappie.

62 INT. JOE'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

62 *

Joe is back on track. His confidence is slowly but surely being restored. Everyone basks in Joe's post-fight victory glow.

JOE

Uncle Mike, don't tell me I'm not ready for Schmeling now.

MIKE JACOBS

Joe, yes you are but we got a little problem. The New York State Commission has just ranked Schmeling the number one contender.

ROXBOROUGH

And the Garden has a contract for a Braddock-Schmeling title fight.

Joe is getting upset.

JOE

Schmeling wins and takes the belt back to Germany. Chappie, you were right. They never gonna let a colored boy get a shot at the title.

MIKE JACOBS

Joe, don't get discouraged. Your job is to train like hell. Uncle Mike's job is to find a way to break their fuckin' contract. I made a promise to you, Blackburn, Roxie and Black. You'll get ya shot. 4 coloreds and a heeb, who woulda thunk it?

CUT TO:

63 INT. OUTSIDE MIKE JACOBS' OFFICE - DAY

63

The door has stenciled on it 20TH CENTURY SPORTING CLUB INC.
MIKE JACOBS - PROMOTER

64 INT. 20TH CENTURY SPORTING CLUB - MIKE JACOBS' OFFICE - DAY

64

The TWO JACOBS - Mike and Yussel sit across a messy desk.

YUSSEL JACOBS

Joe is gonna have to get in line like everybody else. It's unfair for ya to ask me to buy a pig in a poke.

MIKE JACOBS

But the public is demanding a rematch.

YUSSEL JACOBS

I don't give two shieshs what they want. No matta how you slice it, it's still baloney. I do what's best for my fighters, and besides I promised Max.

MIKE JACOBS

\$300,000 guaranteed, just sign now. Don't be such a hard boiled egg, Yussel.

YUSSEL JACOBS

From where I sit, money or no money, the answer is still no. Max has nothing to gain except the gate. Even my Mudda knows Braddock is over-the-hill. We want him first. We want that belt. Max Schmeling will regain the heavyweight championship of the world.

65 INT. STILLMAN'S GYM - DAY

65

James Braddock, the holder of the belt is going through a very light work out. WE SEE the small cast on his right thumb. JOE GOULD, HIS MANAGER looks on. A VOICE YELLS OUT...

VOICE (O.S.)

Gould, telephone. Long distance.
Pois'nt' pois'n.

ANGLE - PHONE

Joe Gould picks up the phone that's attached to the wall.

JOE GOULD

Hello. What? Germany? Yes, I'll hold.

CUT TO:

66 INT. GOEBBELS OFFICE - NIGHT

66

Max is on the phone, Goebbels sits at his desk.

MAX

How are you Joe? Good. How's the family?
Good. Joe, why are you stalling on
finalizing the fight date? Everytime it's
some phony medical excuse, first
arthritis, now it's a broken thumb. We
have a contract with Madison Square
Garden. You can't sign with Louis. I want
the title bout with Braddock.

CUT TO:

67 INT. STILLMAN'S GYM - DAY

67

JOE GOULD

Max, Braddock and I love you. Why would
we lie? He's old and brittle. Don't git
ya balls in a uproar. Everything is on the
up and up. Max, you know I'm a square
shooter.

MAX (O.S.)

Good, I am speaking from the office of one
of the most important people in Germany -
in the world.

CUT TO:

68 INT. GOEBBELS OFFICE - NIGHT

68

MAX (CONT'D)

Reich Minister Goebbels wants to talk to you personally.

Max hands the phone to Goebbels. He speaks in broken but understandable English.

GOEBBELS

Mr. Gould, we are ready to make you a very interesting offer to bring your champion to Germany to fight Max.

JOE GOULD (O.S.)

Just a minute, Mr. Goebbels, has Max told you the kind of deal we want?

GOEBBELS

He has given me a general idea. But let me hear exactly what you want. The match will be very popular in Germany and I feel confident we can meet your terms.

CUT TO:

69 INT. STILLMAN'S GYM - DAY

69

JOE GOULD

All right. I've got three conditions. If you can agree to each and everyone I will bring Braddock to Germany.

GOEBBELS (O.S.)

Excellent, I'm encouraged that we can arrange everything to your satisfaction. Now your three conditions, please.

JOE GOULD

In the first place, I want five hundred thousand in real money - I mean American, USA greenbacks, deposited in my name in a New Jersey bank before we get on the boat.

GOEBBELS (O.S.)

I can promise that will be done. Go on, Mr. Gould.

JOE GOULD

Secondly, I want to bring over an American referee and one of the two judges must be an Englishman, we won't mind if the other is German.

CUT TO:

45.

70 INT. GOEBBELS OFFICE - NIGHT

70

GOEBBELS

One minute please.

He covers the phone and speaks into Max's ear. Max nods.
Goebbels gets back on the phone.

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)

Yes, we will agree to that also. And now,
please, the third and final point.

CUT TO:

71 INT. STILLMAN'S GYM - DAY

71

JOE GOULD

The third point is that you get Hitler to
let every single Jew out of your fuckin'
concentration camps.

THE PHONE GOES DEAD. Joe Gould looks at it, hangs up, and
smiles to himself.

CUT TO:

72 INT. GOEBBELS OFFICE - NIGHT

72

Max looks at Goebbels.

MAX

What happened? What did Gould say?

GOEBBELS

The Jew turned us down.

73 EXT. 20TH CENTURY SPORTING CLUB - NEW YORK - NIGHT

73

Roxborough leaves Mike Jacobs office. Two THUGS walk up behind
him carrying hardware.

THUG 1

Got a man wants to see you. Let's go for a
ride.

He is pushed into the back seat of a waiting black sedan.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The sedan pulls off.

74 EXT. STREET / INT. SEDAN - NIGHT

74

Roxborough sits blindfolded in the backseat between the two
thugs. Mums da word.

ROXBOROUGH (CONT'D)

Are you sure you got the right guy?

CLOSE - ROXBOROUGH

He is scared shitless, this might be the "ole one way ride."

75 EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

75

The sedan pulls into a dark alley.

ANGLE - SEDAN

Roxborough is led out and brought into a stage door at the end of the alley.

76 INT. OFFICE - COTTON CLUB - NIGHT

76

Roxborough is pushed into a chair and his blindfold is taken off. He is surprised to see Joe Gould standing directly over him. Joe is pulling a "Corleone".

JOE GOULD

Hi, Roxy, I was afraid you might not make it.

ROXBOROUGH

Joe, you're seen too many gangster movies. Where are we?

JOE GOULD

In Harlem. Can't you recognize the Cotton Club? Owney Madden's Joint. Y'know Owney Madden?

ROXBOROUGH

When we first got to town he tried to move in on us. "A nigger fighter with nigger managers will never make it," he said. Offered me 50g's under the table. I said thanks but no thanks. Same to you.

JOE GOULD

Roxy, just listen first. My fighter Braddock won't last 10 rounds. He hasn't fought in 18 months. He's sick, he's stale and he's fat. I betcha dollars to donuts ya boy will KO my boy. Do I haveta draw a picture for ya?

ROXBOROUGH

Does Braddock know about this?

JOE GOULD

He knows only what I tell him.

ROXBOROUGH

So how much do you want?

JOE GOULD

I'm a reasonable man Roxie. All we want is 50 percent of Louis. We'll let you keep the other half.

ROXBOROUGH

NOT 50 PERCENT, NOT 50 CENTS. NOT NOTHING.

The two thugs move towards Roxborough. That does not stop his outrage.

ROXBOROUGH (CONT'D)

WE DON'T NEED BRADDOCK. WHY SHOULD WE LET YOU IN ON THE GRAVY TRAIN? IF HE HAD 10 FIGHTS HE COULDN'T MAKE AS MUCH AS JOE CAN IN ONE. JOE IS THE MEAL TICKET, NOT BRADDOCK.

THUG 2

And you can't spend any of that moolah if you get lead poisoning. Catch my drift?

ROXBOROUGH

Braddock needs us. You need us. No deal! Not NOW, NOT EVER. I don't care if Owney Madden or you kill me.

Gould looks at Roxborough and laughs.

JOE GOULD

OK, Roxie, hold da phone.

ROXBOROUGH

I already hung up.

JOE GOULD

I admit I came on a little too strong. I'm sorry 25 percent... 20 percent.

ROXBOROUGH

No deal.

JOE GOULD

15? Roxie, you puttin' me in a tight spot.

ROXBOROUGH

I don't like to get squeezed either. Why don't you talk to Uncle Mike?

Roxborough summons up all the courage he can muster and stands up from his chair.

CLOSE - ROXBOROUGH

He turns around and slowly leaves the office fully expecting HOT LEAD into his back. He is left alone, not followed. He looks at his shaky hands.

77 INT. 20TH CENTURY SPORTING CLUB -MIKE JACOBS' OFFICE - NIGHT 77

Uncle Mike's 2 full time lackeys MUSHKY JACKSON and JERSEY JONES lead Joe Gould into the office.

MIKE JACOBS

Joe, let's go into my inner office.

78 INT. 20TH CENTURY SPORTING CLUB -MIKE JACOBS BATHROOM -NIGHT 78

Jacobs sits on the stool (top down) and Joe Gould sits on the bath tub.

MIKE JACOBS

I always conduct my serious business on the crapper. . . That tough guy stuff with Roxie ain't hay.

JOE GOULD

Get straight to the dessert.

MIKE JACOBS

I'm offering you 350,000 rutabagas for Braddock to fight my boy Joe in Chicago.

JOE GOULD

Why Chicago?

MIKE JACOBS

I got friends there. It's beyond the jurisdiction of the New York State Athletic Commission that sanctioned your fight with Schmeling.

JOE GOULD

The goose steppers are in for 500 thou. You gotta at least match that or we go to Berlin.

MIKE JACOBS

I gotta call my people in Chicago, but I think it's doable.

JOE GOULD

Lovey-dovey. Now what 'bout cutting me in on ya Schwarze.

MIKE JACOBS

Now, 50, 30 even 20 percent of Joe's purses is way out of line. But if you accept 10% and a half a million in cash up front we can do business. Joe, let's be reasonable.

JOE GOULD

How long?

MIKE JACOBS

The next 10 years of my cut, but this stays between us.

JOE GOULD

Uncle Mike, I like your way of doing business.

They stand up and shake hands.

JOE GOULD (CONT'D)

What 'bout Howie the tailor?

MIKE JACOBS

I'll throw in some suits for you and Braddock.

JOE GOULD

Uncle Mike, you're the real George.

79 INT. LILLIE BARROW'S HOUSE -DAY

79

Joe and his wife are over his Mother's modest but clean home for a Sunday dinner.

ANGLE - KITCHEN TABLE

Joe is devouring his Mother's fried chicken, macaroni and cheese, collards, yams, string beans and corn bread.

MARVA

Slow down honey. You're putting a hurtin' on that food.

JOE

Nobody in dis' world can cook like you Ma.

LILLIE

And nobody can eat like you either.

JOE

Ma, won't you change your mind and come to Chicago for the fight?

LILLIE

I'm comin' to Chicago but I'll be listening to it on the radio.

MARVA

Baby, it's hard seeing you get hit. I still have nightmares.

JOE

Ma, I want to be the Champ of The World so bad I can taste it.

LILLIE

If the Lord is willing and the creek don't rise.

JOE

Why do you always talk like that?

LILLIE

Cuz' the Lord can come and bring you to the Pearly Gates anytime.

She gets up from the kitchen table and gets the family Bible.

LILLIE (CONT'D)

Joe, I want you to have this.

She hands him the Bible.

LILLIE (CONT'D)

It's been in our family a long way back. Lawd, we ain't what we want to be, we ain't what we gonna be, but thank God we ain't what we was.

Joe hugs his Mother.

80 EXT. CHICAGO STOCKYARD -DAY

80

Joe and Blackburn are in the middle of a slaughterhouse. Jack holds out a milk quart bottle, Joe stares at the steaming red liquid.

BLACKBURN

A quart of hot beef blood. Drink it, goes down smooth.

Joe takes the quart of blood.

JOE

Chappie, This is the last drop of blood I will ever taste.

Joe turns up the quart of hot beef blood and empties it. Then wipes his mouth with the back of his hand.

BLACKBURN

That's my Chappie, a real killer.

81 INT. TRAFTON'S GYM -DAY

81

Freddie puts Duke Ellington's "Caravan" on the phonograph, and Joe skips rope to it.

ANGLE - RING

Joe is in the ring sparring.

ANGLE - BLEACHERS

Max, Max Machon and Yussel Jacobs watch intently as Joe spars.

CLOSE - MAX AND MACHON

They whisper back and forth in German.

ANGLE - RING

The bell rings, end of the round. Joe comes over to a corner, smiles and waves at Max. Schmeling waves back. The bell rings, the sparring continues.

ANGLE - MAX, MACHON AND JACOBS

As they watch Joe, Jimmy Cannon sits behind them.

JIMMY CANNON

Hello, fellas, Jimmy Cannon, New York Post. Max, I heard that Braddock is going to fight Louis instead of you.

MAX

I want the championship and I know I can get it, but they're gonna make me wait another year.

JIMMY CANNON

Mr. Machon, you got any opinions on this?

MAX MACHON

They do things very funny over here in America.

YUSSEL JACOBS

WE WUZ ROBBED.

ANGLE - RING

Joe has finished his work for the day and is on his way to the shower when he is briefly stopped by BILLY ROWE sportswriter for The Pittsburgh Courier (A Negro Weekly Newspaper).

BILLY ROWE

Joe, are you aware of the fact that
Colored reporters are being denied
credentials to the fight?

JOE

Let me see what I can do, Billy.

BILLY ROWE

That'll be the day.

82 EXT. COMISKEY PARK - LOUIS VS. BRADDOCK - NIGHT

82

Title - LOUIS VS. BRADDOCK
COMISKEY PARK
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
JUNE 22, 1937

45,000 pugilist fans are packed into Comisky Park. Almost half of those are Negroes who have claimed the cheap \$3.75 bleacher seats.

Braddock is cheered as he makes his way to the ring which sits in the green, green outfield grass.

CLOSE - BRADDOCK

The Champ wears a green robe with a gigantic white shamrock on the back.

WE HEAR a SONIC BOOM as Joe Louis, The Brown Bomber works his way to the ring also. Negroes are out in full force, dressed to the 9's in their Sunday best. This is their night even though they've been held down for so many hundreds of years. They and Joe Louis will not be denied, not tonight.

CLOSE - JOE

Joe wears a blue robe, trimmed with red. His purple trunks have the initials "JL" embroidered on them.

ANGLE - PRESS ROW

Joe acknowledges Billy Rowe and the other Negro sportswriters who are seated at Press Row. They are elated. Joe delivered on his promise. Another barrier has been hurdled.

BILLY ROWE

And it looks like today's the day.

ANGLE - RING

Joe enters the ring and moves past Braddock to his corner. Blackburn puts in his mouthpiece.

BLACKBURN

Chappie, this is the biggest chance a colored man ever had. I never thought I'd live to see the day again when one of us gets a shot at the heavyweight championship of the world. Now do exactly what I told you to do an' you'll go home champ tonight.

Joe nods his head. Blackburn kisses him tenderly on the forehead and then slaps him hard on the butt.

CLOSE - BELL

The bell is struck by the OFFICIAL TIMEKEEPER

ANGLE - RING

Both fighters come to the center of the ring and start at it right away. THE CROWD is in a FRENZY. Braddock hits Joe's body with a right. Joe misses with a left hook and is held off by Braddock who holds his head with his left. Joe breaks free of this clever tactic, and attacks with a right to the body, followed by a nasty left hook to the jaw. Braddock's head is rocked and he tries to cover up, blocks Joe's left and connects with a short right uppercut that knocks The Brown Bomber onto the seat of his pants.

CLOSE - MARVA

She hides her face in her hands.

ANGLE - CROWD

Everyone is on their feet. Yelling "Get up Joe" or "Finish him off."

ANGLE - RING

Joe gets up at the count of two by REFEREE TOMMY THOMAS. He's hurt but determined. Braddock comes in swinging wild. He smells blood and is trying to finish the job right here and now. Joe however ducks and weaves, blocks Braddock's punches. Joe then gets Braddock in a clinch, it's broken up by Thomas. Joe misses a left-right combination while Braddock lands a right to the body.

CLOSE - BELL

The bell is struck by the Official Timekeeper.

ANGLE - RING

Both fighters protect themselves to make sure the other heard the bell, Braddock stares at Joe and they both go to their corners. THE CROWD ROARS IN APPROVAL.

ANGLE - JOE'S CORNER

Roxie, Blackburn work on Joe. Jack is screaming.

BLACKBURN

Why didn't you take a eight count? You can't get up so fast that nobody in the bleachers didn't see you was down. And keep jabbing.

ANGLE - BRADDOCK CORNER

JOE GOULD

Ya had 'im. Ya shoulda finished 'im.

BRADDOCK

Ain't dat easy. He got up.

JOE GOULD

Put 'im down again' for good. Short right uppercut.

83 EXT. COMISKEY PARK - LOUIS VS. BRADDOCK - ROUND 4 - NIGHT 83

CUT TO CARD - ROUND FOUR

ANGLE - RING

Braddock has had it. He's old and tired. Joe is administering healthy doses of punishment at will.

ANGLE - CROWD

Negroes can hardly contain themselves. It's going to happen.

84 EXT. COMISKEY PARK - LOUIS VS. BRADDOCK - ROUND 8 - NIGHT 84

CUT TO - CARD ROUND EIGHT

ANGLE - BRADDOCK'S CORNER

James Braddock can barely sit on his stool. His face is ripped and bruised, a bloody mess.

JOE GOULD

James, I'm gonna throw in the towel.

BRADDOCK

If you do, I'll never speak to you again
as long as I live.

ANGLE - JOE'S CORNER

Joe is calm. Blackburn smears vaseline on his face.

JOE

Chappie, I've hit him with everything I
got and he still keeps coming.

BLACKBURN

The same thing you hit him with last
round, do it again. Braddock is ready for
the D.O.A.

CLOSE - BELL

The bell is struck by the Official Timekeeper.

ANGLE - RING

Braddock comes out holding his hands too high, a definite sign
that fatigue is present. He's done. He misses a weak right and
Joe fakes a left knocking his left glove away, an opening for a
haymaker - an overhand right.

CLOSE - BRADDOCK

The BLOW drives a tooth through his mouthpiece and into his lip,
blood sprays. Braddock bends over at the waist and falls over
sideways and hits the deck face down.

ANGLE - RING

AS PANDEMONIUM REIGNS, Thomas points Joe to the neutral corner,
Joe slowly turns his back and strolls to it. The faintest hint
of a smile breaks through his poker face.

CLOSE - JOE

JOES'S POV, A SEA OF JUBILANT BLACK FACES.

ANGLE - RING

Referee Thomas begins the count over the unconscious bleeding
Braddock.

REFEREE THOMAS

One-Two-Three

CLOSE - MARVA

She's crying, but this time tears of joy.

CLOSE - FREDDIE

He's screaming.

CLOSE - REFEREE THOMAS

REFEREE THOMAS (CONT'D)
Eight-Nine-Ten.

He waves his hands over the prostrate champion. It's over.

ANGLE - RING

Both corners rush into the ring. Gould and company to revive Braddock. Blackburn, Roxborough and Black to hug Joe.

Referee Thomas holds Joe's arm aloft to the lit sky. Chicago policeman surround the ring.

A microphone is lowered into the center of the ring and is grabbed by RING ANNOUNCER HARRY BALOGH.

HARRY BALOGH
At one minute and ten seconds of the eighth round winning by a knockout. THE NEW HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION OF THE WORLD -JOE LOUIS.

ANGLE - BLEACHERS

The NEGROES LET OUT SCREAMS, HOLLERS AND YELLS THAT HAVE RARELY HEARD BY HUMAN EARS.

85 INT. JOE'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

85

IT IS A MADHOUSE. Blackburn, Roxborough and Black surround Joe.

ROXBOROUGH
Champ, you did it, Champ.

JOE
I don't want nobody to call me champ until I beat that Schmeling.

BLACKBURN
I'm taking this right glove, I earned it.

Freddie brings Marva over to her "Champion." They embrace.

86 EXT. COMISKEY PARK - PRESS ROOM - NIGHT

86

ANGLE - PRESS ROOM

Joe stands next to DON DUNPHY who is interviewing him for RADIO.

DON DUNPHY

Congratulations Joe. How does it feel?

JOE

I feel good. My only regret is that I didn't have Max Schmeling in the ring tonight instead of the man I knocked out.

DON DUNPHY

Joe, you want to say anything else for our listening audience?

JOE

Yeah. Ma, we win!

87 INT. JOE'S HOUSE - CHICAGO - NIGHT

87

Lillie sits next to the radio.

LILLIE

Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus.

88 EXT. THE STREETS OF CHICAGO'S SOUTHSIDE - NIGHT

88

Bronzeville, the colored part of town is jammed. If you think of New Year's Eve in Times Square, Mardi Gras in New Orleans or Carnival in Brazil all rolled into one it might - MAYBE it equals the joyous expression of FREEDOM by the descendants of slaves. THE AMERICAN NEGRO.

89 EXT. JOE'S HOUSE - CHICAGO - NIGHT

89

It seems all of Chicago's Southside is awaiting the arrival of The Brown Bomber.

ANGLE - STREET

A new Buick, driven by bodyguard Carl Nelson with Freddie riding shotgun, pulls up in front of his house. The THRONG puts Joe and Marva on it's shoulders and lifts them to his house.

Joe is moved by this outpouring of LOVE from his people.

ANGLE PORCH

The THRONG delivers Joe into the arms of his dear Mother. They hug, then he brings Marva into the embrace also.

FADE TO BLACK

END OF ACT I

FADE IN:

ACT II

90 INT. NEW YORK POST NEWSROOM - DAY

90

Jimmy Cannon sits at his desk banging out tomorrow.
Periodically we shall CUT TO NEWSREEL FOOTAGE.

JIMMY CANNON

NOBODY ASKED ME BUT when Max Schmeling returns to America to challenge Joe Louis for the Heavyweight championship of the world the Wehrmacht is goose-stepping across the Austrian border. Neville Chamberlain is buying time with other people's lands and lives. There is a Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis. The concentration camps are filling up with victims of bureaucratic madmen tooling for war and drooling for conquest. Nobody on either side of the Atlantic views Louis-Schmeling II, THE FIGHT OF THE CENTURY, as anything less than the personification of Good versus Evil. If Schmeling wins, the shadow of the swastika will darken our land. If Louis triumphs, Negroes, Jews, Anti-Nazis, pacifists and everyone else who yearns for an order of decency without violence will feel recharged and reassured.

91 INT. REICH CHANCELLORY - DAY

91

Before a bundle of NEWSREEL CAMERAMEN, PHOTOGRAPHERS and REPORTERS Hitler shakes hands, wishes Max "Good Luck." Blondi barks at them. Goebbels stands off to the side running the whole show. This is part of his job as Minister of Propaganda and National Enlightenment.

CLOSE - HITLER AND MAX

Both have toothy smiles for the cameras.

92 EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE - DAY

92

ESTABLISHING SHOT

93 INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

93

Joe, Roxborough and Black are led into the Oval office. MRS. ELEANOR ROOSEVELT stands next to her wheelchair bound husband, FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT.

JOE

Nice to meet yor Mr. and Mrs. President.

They shake hands.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Thank you for coming.

FDR

Lean over Joe, so I can feel your muscles.

Joe does as told by thirty-second the President of The United States.

CLOSE - FDR AND JOE

FDR feels the mighty biceps of Joe.

FDR

Joe, we need these muscles for democracy.

94 EXT. NEW YORK HARBOR - DAY

94

The S.S. BREMEN with swastika flags flying high has docked into a New York pier. A gang of REPORTERS wait for Max to walk the plank.

ANGLE - PIER

Behind the press, the police with the help of barricades keep two rival factions from going at each other. On one side WE SEE the ANTI-NAZI PICKETERS. They carry signs "SCHMELING GO HOME," "VILE HITLER," "HIT HITLER," and "MAX, MASTER RACE?"

On the other side is the GERMAN-AMERICAN BUND. Waving American flags they wear brown shirts with swastika arm bands and chant "Heil Hitler" with salutes. The atmosphere is charged.

ANGLE - GANGWAY

Mike Jacobs greets the two Max's - Schmeling and Machon - at the bottom of the gangway. They are met by a chorus of cheers and boos.

MIKE JACOBS

Boys, Max only wants to talk about the fight.

The Press screams out questions.

REPORTER ABBOTT

Do you consider yourself a member of the super race?

REPORTER BONDS

Are you a Nazi?

REPORTER CHESSE

What did Hitler tell you?

Max is bewildered by this hostile reception. He looks to Mike Jacobs for help. Uncle Mike gives none, he is on his own.

JIMMY CANNON

What would happen to you in Germany, Max if you lost?

CLOSE - MAX

MAX

I am a fighter, not a politician. Sports is sports in Germany, nothing more. Hitler is very interested in boxing. He devoted a whole page to it in his book Mein Kampf. That does not mean however that he would put me in prison if I was beaten.

ANGLE - PIER

A scuffle breaks out, it's the beginning of a full scale riot. New York's finest are swinging billyclubs to beat back both sides back. Mike Jacobs pushes Max into a waiting car. With the help of a sizable police escort they make a great getaway.

95 EXT. MAX'S CAMP - SPECULATOR, NEW YORK - DAY

95

Under the watchful eyes of NEW YORK STATE TROOPERS ring the site, while protesters march. They carry signs "BOYCOTT NAZI SCHMELING".

96 INT. MAX'S CAMP - SPECULATOR, NEW YORK - DAY

96

While Max works on the heavy bag Yussel Jacobs is holding court with a group of writers.

YUSSEL JACOBS

These boycotts of the fight and Max are silly. Me thinks most of the trouble with the Jews over there is caused by the Jews in this country. Last time I was there everyone was happy in Germany, spending money like it was water. And I don't know nuthin' 'bout no war, that makes the Germans laugh.

JIMMY CANNON

Yussel, what about that wire picture where you were giving the Nazi salute?

YUSSEL JACOBS

Jimmy, ya gotta do it there or else.
Anyway I had my fingers crossed. I'm 560
percent Jewish.

The WRITERS laugh.

JIMMY CANNON

What about Joe Louis?

YUSSEL JACOBS

Y'mean Mike Jacobs' pet pickaninny?

This gets another laugh from everyone except Cannon.

YUSSEL JACOBS (CONT'D)

He's a dirty fighter. You seen dem low
blows in the first fight. I also think his
gloves are loaded.

97 EXT. JOE'S CAMP - POMPTON LAKES, NEW YORK - DAY

97

A big sign reads POMPTON LAKES, NEW YORK
TRAINING SITE OF JOE LOUIS
WORLD HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION

98 INT. JOE'S CAMP - POMPTON LAKES, NEW YORK - DAY

98

Joe is sparring in the ring.

ANGLE - CROWD

A group of German American Bundists sit down in front. They
heckle Joe with racial slurs. Every time one of the SPARRING
PARTNERS lands a punch on Joe they chant "SIEG HEIL?"

CLOSE - BLACKBURN

Looking at them he spits a stream of brown tobacco juice into a
spittoon.

CLOSE - BUND GOON

He stands up and barks.

BUND GOON

Look out Joe, here comes Schmeling with
the right.

ANGLE - CAMP

All of the Bundists roll with laughter. LEONARD REED one of
Joe's friends has to be held back by Freddie and Black from
going after them.

CLOSE - JOE

He is observing this all.

99 EXT. MAX'S HOTEL - SPECULATOR, N.Y - NIGHT

99

There is a party atmosphere as Max's fans and the German-American Bund frolic. They drunkenly sing DAS HORST WESSEL-LIED.

100 INT. MAX'S HOTEL -MAX MACHON'S ROOM -SPECULATOR, N.Y -NIGHT 100

Machon reads to Max from his personally autographed copy of Hitler's MEIN KOMPFF.

MACHON

"From time to time the illustrated papers show how a Negro has become a lawyer, a teacher, perhaps even a minister. It never dawns on the degenerate middle class American that this is truly a sin against all reason. That it is criminal madness to train a born half ape until one believes one has made a lawyer out of him." The Fuhrer wrote that 20 years ago. Let me show you something.

Machon goes into his closet and pulls out his black Nazi uniform.

MACHON (CONT'D)

I plan to wear this at our victory celebration.

Max grabs it and throws it across the room.

MAX

What you do at home is your business. But over here, it's mine. They're giving me enough trouble as it is.

Machon picks up his uniform and dusts it off.

MAX (CONT'D)

Both sides are trying to make it a war between the Fatherland and the States. It's just between 2 professional athletes. That's all. Nothing more. Nothing less.

MACHON

Max, you are so wrong. The superiority of the Master Race is at stake and the Jews know it. I know for fact, there is a conspiracy to make sure the beast wins.

(MORE)

MACHON (CONT'D)

That New York Jew Governor Lehman is pulling all the strings but our Ambassador Dieckhoff is coming up from Washington to warn him to stay out of it.

MAX

It's just a boxing match. Is everyone going cookoo?

101 INT. JOE'S CAMP - POMPTON LAKES, NEW YORK - DAY

101

This is the last training session before the big fight. Joe works out on the speed bag. Blackburn, Roxborough, Black and Jacobs observe closely.

BLACKBURN

Time.

Joe stops. He has worked up a nice sweat.

CLOSE - BLACKBURN AND JOE

Blackburn bites Joe on the shoulder tasting his perspiration.

BLACKBURN (CONT'D)

There he is. I did mine. He's as good as hands can make him. Now it's up to the rest of you.

102 EXT. HARLEM RIVER - DAWN

102

Joe walks along the Harlem River with Blackburn and Freddie. A car driven by Carl Nelson along with Roxborough and Black follows far behind.

ANGLE - JOE, BLACKBURN AND FREDDIE

They walk in silence. Finally Freddie speaks.

FREDDIE

How do you feel, Joe?

Joe looks at him.

JOE

I'm scared.

FREDDIE

Scared?

CLOSE - JOE

JOE

Yeah, I'm scared I might kill Schmeling tonight.

103 EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - DUSK

103

WE HEAR BOOS. Max's camp has pulled up. And the crowd lets him know how they feel. Banners, signs greet him with scorn. The Police quickly get Max inside.

The Joe Louis entourage arrives. Hundreds of police hold back the crowd, many wave American flags.

ANGLE - PLAYERS ENTRANCE

Joe is cheered. He is wearing a light suit without a tie, a polka-dot scarf, a white hat with a black band around it and dark sunglasses.

104 INT. MAX'S LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

104

Max is all alone in the world, he is tight as a drum. Machon enters.

MAX

Where's my man Yussel?

MACHON

The New York State Boxing Commission has banned him from your corner.

MAX

Why?

MACHON

He put one of his fighters, Two-Ton Tony Galento in the ring with a keg of beer.

MAX

What does that have to do with me?

MACHON

What did I tell you about the Jew conspiracy?

MAX

I need Yussel in my corner.

MACHON

Forget the little Jew. You need to be thinking about putting der neger down again.

MAX

Where's Doc Casey?

MACHON

They scared him away. The coward quit.

Max pulls out a batch of telegrams.

MACHON (CONT'D)

Max, the whole Fatherland is behind you. They've lifted the curfews on beer halls so they can stay open until dawn to hear the radio broadcast. The Fuhrer himself has invited Anny to listen to the fight with him. He cables "To the coming World's Champion, Max Schmeling. Wishing you every success, Adolf Hitler"

MAX

And why wasn't Anny allowed to travel with me to the States?

MACHON

Her passport was not in order. Complications, born in Poland--raised in Czechoslovakia...

Max knows that is BS.

MAX (CONT'D)

Max, start warming up. I got to get over and watch them wrap his hands before they sneak metal into his gloves.

105 INT. JOE'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

105

Max Machon watches closely as Blackburn tapes Joe's fist, first the left, then the right. Roxborough, Black and Freddie stare at Machon, they have their "game face" on.

CLOSE - JOE'S FIST

Blackburn puts the tape diagonally across the palms, straight across the knuckles.

ANGLE - DRESSING ROOM

Jimmy Cannon sticks his head in.

JIMMY CANNON

I'm betting a knockout in 6 rounds.

Joe looks directly at Cannon and holds up one finger.

CLOSE - JOE

JOE

It goes in one.

ANGLE - DRESSING ROOM

Joe hops off the rubdown table and commences to shadowbox. He is working up a sweat. Roxborough nervously chews his cigar, as Machon exits, Freddie salutes him.

FREDDIE

Heil Hitler.

JOE

Roxie, you're not fighting. What are you so nervous about? How many cigars you got tonight?

ROXBOROUGH

A pocketful. Y' know me, I chew one up every round.

JOE

You'll only need one.

Joe smiles at Roxborough and Blackburn puts a flannel robe then a blue silk robe over that on him.

BLACKBURN

Let's go to work.

106 EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - LOUIS VS. SCHMELING (2) - NIGHT

106

Title - Louis vs. Schmeling
Yankee Stadium
Bronx, New York
June 22, 1938

It's a muggy June night in the Bronx. A haze of cigarette and cigar smoke hovers above the ring. 70,000 fight fans of The Sweet Science and hundreds of millions around the world have their eyes and ears attuned to this coming battle of ideology, DEMOCRACY versus FASCISM.

TRACKING SHOT

Joe and his camp emerge from the Yankee dugout escorted by a bevy of New York's finest. As the CROWD catches sight of Joe, they come to their feet and cheer as one.

ANGLE - RING

Joe enters the ring, dances on his toes in his corner trying to keep up the sweat while waiting for Max.

107 INT. MAX'S LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

107

The loneliest man on the planet and 4,000 miles away from home, Max shadowboxes. An Official calls out.

OFFICIAL

It's time.

Machon helps Max put on his robe. They can hear thunderous roar of approval for The Brown Bomber.

108 EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - LOUIS VS. SCHMELING (2) - NIGHT

108

TRACKING SHOT

Max Machon and a new CUT MAN come out of the visitors dugout. Surrounded by a sea of blue uniforms. Max is lovingly greeted by an avalanche of BOOS and CATCALLS. As he nears the ring, banana peels, lit cigarette butts, paper cups, newspapers and spit are hurled his way by the hostile crowd. Machon takes a white towel off his shoulder and pulls it over Max's head to protect him from the projected missiles.

ANGLE - RING

Max climbs through the ring and the BOOS are even LOUDER. Referee Art Donovan motions both fighters and their seconds to the center of the ring for the final instructions.

REFEREE DONOVAN

OK, both corners listen up. New York State Boxing rules do not permit you to throw a towel into the ring. I will decide when this fight is over and nobody else. Touch gloves and may the best Jacobs win.

Joe looks at the unshaven Max, black hair greased back with his stone face. Schmeling's face is etched with fear. He is scared for his life. The combatants touch gloves and return to their corners awaiting to answer the bell.

NOTE: The following fight sequence shall take place in various locations around the world. Rather than intercut throughout, we will stay with each locale for the duration of the fight.

109 INT. OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

109

Eleanor Roosevelt and FDR listen to Clem McCarthy who is ringside broadcasting the fight. As Joe begins his onslaught, The President wheels himself closer to the radio. It's over. Joe has won. FDR lights his special victory cigar, exhales a big puff of smoke.

FDR

Hitler can put that in his pipe and smoke it.

Eleanor joins her husband in laughter.

110 INT. REICH CHANCELLORY - EARLY MORNING

110

In the study Hitler, Goebbels and Anny are listening to Arno Hellmis, who is ringside broadcasting the fight back to Germany. A big spread of breakfast food is on the table.

HITLER

My dear Anny, why don't you have something to eat!

ANNY

I find it very hard to eat when I'm under house arrest.

Hitler looks at Goebbels as he scratches Blondi's head.

HITLER

Reich Minister, is this true?

GOEBBELS

Mein Fuhrer, not at all. She's free to come and go as she pleases...in Germany.

ARNO HELLMIS (VO)

They are waiting for the bell. Der Neger paws the white canvas like a jungle animal. Our Max looks very confident. Heil Hitler.

As the fight begins Hitler and Goebbels are in a celebratory, festive mood. This soon changes.

CLOSE - ANNY

By her face, we can tell which way the fight is going. Anny is hysterical.

ANNY

They're killing him. They're killing him. They're killing my Max.

ANGLE - STUDY

Hitler and Goebbels can't believe their ears. It's a BLITZKRIEG! Adolf stands up from his chair.

HITLER

What is this? What trickery are we listening to? This is an American Jew conspiracy. Terminate this broadcast of lies - NOW.

Goebbels runs to the phone.

111 INT. BERLIN BEER HALL - EARLY MORNING

111

This Beer Hall is packed with German fight fans. They listen intently as their hero is being battered. They call out to Max to rally. ALL OF A SUDDEN, the broadcast is pulled and replaced by a recording of Beethoven's 5th Symphony. They want to know what the fuck is going on? What happened to the fight call of Arno Helmis? Beer steins get hurled, punches are thrown, we have a RIOT. A GERMAN DONNYBROOK.

112 EXT. COUNTRY STORE SNOW HILL, ALABAMA - NIGHT

112

The entire Negro population of Wilcox County is assembled in front of DOC'S STORE. Doc is the only Negro in the county who owns a radio. This highly valued piece of modern technology sits on a table that has been brought out onto the porch. Negroes tall and small, young and old, fat and skinny have assembled from near and far to hear Clem McCarthy deliver the sermon of Good versus Evil. This congregation is gathered at the Church of The Promised Land on the Mighty Might of the Right Hand.

CLOSE-DOC

DOC

Y'all got to be quiet or you go listen to it in your own homes.

VOICE

Doc, you know you got da onliest radio in da cotton pickin' county.

DOC

That's right so hush up, fight is about to start.

ANGLE - CONGREGATION

They are quiet. Even the babies are still. But when Joe starts to go to town, the congregation can no longer hold it in. It is time to CELEBRATE, let the Church say Amen. The Negro Race is not inferior. We are as good as or better than anybody else, given half the chance. The ROAR drowns out the voice of Clem McCarthy.

113 EXT. YANKEE STADIUM -LOUIS VS. SCHMELING (2) ROUND 1 -NIGHT 113

The air is supercharged with electricity awaiting the opening bell.

ANGLE - MAX'S CORNER

MACHON

You must win for the Aryan Race under orders from The Fuhrer.

CLOSE - BELL

The bell is struck by the Official Timekeeper.

CUT TO CARD - ROUND ONE

Joe wasting no time jumps in Max's ass from the gate. Schmeling is put on the defensive from the git-go with two left hooks to his head then a left to the jaw. The Brown Bomber is like a tightly wound spring uncoiled. Max counters with his only punches of the night, a weak right that Joe blocks and a left that falls short. Schmeling now against the ropes blocks a right uppercut, is grazed by a weak left, another left, then is hit with the D.O.A. an -overhand right.

CLOSE - MAX

He blacks out, staggers backwards, arms flailing trying to stop him from hitting the deck. Barely his right glove catches the top rung of the rope keeping him upright.

ANGLE - RING

Max turns sideways exposing his left side. Joe throws a roundhouse right that fires under Max's left arm and explodes on his back. Max SCREAMS, it's blood curdling. Three of his vertebrae have just been snapped. Max is battered with another left to the body, left to the noggin', overhand right to the dome, left hook followed by an overhand right to the face. Schmeling holds onto the ropes with both hands. His knees are buckled by a left hook and an overhand right. Max's chin gets caught on the rope, it keeps him up. Referee Donovan steps in and gives Max a standing count. Max, residing on queer street continues to press on after the count of two. Joe puts on the full court press with a flurry of left-right combinations that sends Max flying, he rolls over on his back. Referee Donovan runs Joe to a neutral corner, and Max staggers to his feet. Joe stalks across the ring and hits him with a left cross, then a right cross that sends Max to his knees. Referee Donovan wipes Schmeling's gloves off on his shirt, he moves out of the way and Joe hits him with a left jab, a right, left hook, and the right cross puts him down for good. For the full count.

ANGLE - RING

Referee Donovan counts over the helpless Schmeling.

REFEREE DONOVAN

One - Two - Three

CLOSE - MACHON

Max throws a white towel into the ring as a sign of surrender.

REFEREE DONOVAN (CONT'D)

Four - Five - Six

ANGLE - RING

Referee Donovan picks it up and throws it onto the ropes and continues to count. Machon jumps into the ring.

REFEREE DONOVAN (CONT'D)

What do you want? Get the hell out of the ring.

MACHON

I'm not letting my man get beaten to death. Don't you have eyes? Max has had enough.

Referee Donovan stops counting at eight, he waves his hands over the semi-conscious warrior. He lifts Max under the armpits and Machon helps him drag Schmeling to a stool in his corner.

ANGLE - YANKEE STADIUM

70,000 open throated fight fans are on their feet, standing in their chairs screaming, throwing anything they can grab into the air.

ANGLE - RING

Joe is being hugged by Blackburn, Roxborough, Black and Mike Jacobs.

CLOSE - ROPES

The white towel Machon threw into the ring hangs neatly folded over the middle rung.

ANGLE - RING

Referee Donovan holds onto Joe's right hand as the official time is given.

HARRY BALOGH

At 2 minutes and 4 seconds into the first round by a technical knockout the winner and still champion Joe Louis.

CLOSE - JOE'S GLOVE

Joe's right glove is raised to the heavens.

ANGLE - RINGSIDE

Clem McCarthy is still trying to describe to his radio listening audience what he just witnessed. Bedlam reigns in the ring above him.

CLEM MCCARTHY

Listen to this buddy, for it comes from a guy whose palms are still wet, whose throat is still dry and whose jaw is still agape from the utter shock of watching Joe Louis knock out Max Schmeling.

114 EXT. HARLEM STREETS - NIGHT

114

It's a carnival in Uptown tonight. Negroes have gone wild with happiness. People are yelling, banging pots and pans, screaming and dancing to bands who have left bars and nightclubs and taken it to the streets.

VOICE OF CLEM MCCARTHY (CONT'D)

The Brown Bomber was a big lean cooper spring, tightened and retightened through weeks of training until he was one pregnant package of coiled venom.

ANGLE - STREET

White and Black Americans are parading, doing the cakewalk behind a coffin draped with a Nazi flag. Some hold bedsheets which read "Joe KO's HITLER"

VOICE OF CLEM MCCARTHY (CONT'D)

It was indeed a shocking thing that knockout - short, swift, merciless and complete.

115 EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - NIGHT

115

An ambulance is backed up to the players entrance. Hundreds of cops surround this area which has been barricaded keeping away the still bloodthirsty horde.

ANGLE - AMBULANCE

The orderly opens the back hatch and Max is put into it on a stretcher. He is quickly followed by Machon and a DOCTOR. The Ambulance pulls away - red lights flashing and siren wailing.

116 EXT. HARLEM STREETS - NIGHT

116

The ambulance goes through the festive streets.

117 EXT. YANKEE STADIUM -NIGHT

117

A police escort awaits Joe. He emerges and the crowd goes crazy. Joe, Marva and Freddie get into his car driven by Carl Nelson. They are followed by Blackburn, Roxborough and Black in another vehicle.

118 EXT. HARLEM STREETS - NIGHT

118

The convoy is stuck in the middle of the celebration. Joe gets out of the car and climbs on top of it, sending black and white New Yorkers into a state of delirium.

CLOSE - JOE

HE IS ON TOP OF THE WORLD.

119 INT. POLYCLINIC HOSPITAL - NIGHT

119

Max is in bed, his doctor looks at his x-rays. The phones rings.

MAX

Hello?

CUT TO:

120 INT. GOEBBELS OFFICE - EARLY MORNING

120

Anny is on the phone. Goebbels stands close behind her, flat out eavesdropping.

ANNY

My dear love, are you all right? I've been calling hospitals all over New York.

MAX (O.S.)

I have three broken vertebrae.

ANNY

My God, what happened? We didn't hear the end of the fight here in Germany.

MAX (O.S.)

I got knocked out... in the first round.

ANNY

I don't care if you won or lost. I want you home safe.

MAX MACHON (O.S.)

The doctors say it may be awhile until I'm able to travel. I'll be fine, Anny, how are you?

ANNY

I can't talk freely now.

She turns around and stares at Gobbels.

CUT TO:

121 INT. POLYCLINIC HOSPITAL - NIGHT

121

MAX

Anny, I love you and I will hold you in my arms very soon.

ANNY (O.S.)

Max, and mine around you.

CUT TO:

122 INT. GOEBBELS OFFICE - EARLY MORNING

122

Anny hangs up the phone. Goebbels makes his move. He stands behind her and sniffs her perfume. She moves away in disgust.

ANNY

May I be driven home now?

GOEBBELS

Your wish is my command. Once your Max is back in The Fatherland I can assure you he will receive the best of care. He's still a German hero.

ANNY

I expect no less.

123 INT. POLYCLINIC HOSPITAL - DAY

123

Max now in great discomfort is being visited by the German Ambassador to the U.S. HERR DIECKHOFF.

DIECKHOFF

Herr Schmeling, do you not think that punch in the back was an illegal blow? It looked that way to me.

MAX

I had grabbed the ropes and turned to protect myself, that's when I was hurt.

DIECKHOFF

But, objectively speaking, in Europe that would be an illegal kidney punch.

MAX

Herr Ambassador Dieckhoff, according to American rules any punch above the belt is legal.

DIECKHOFF

Do you want to file a protest? You should really consider it, Herr Schmeling.

MAX

I don't need to consider it. A protest in sports isn't going to matter. Aside from that it would only make me look bad. I do hope to get a rematch with Louis.

DIECKHOFF

Well, as you wish. You were almost killed by that mongrel but Beethoven's 9th Symphony still lives on. Heil Hitler.

He salutes Max.

MAX

Heil Hitler.

Max tries to raise his arm in salute but it hurts too much.

124 INT. NEW YORK POST NEWS ROOM - DAY

124

Jimmy Cannon, once again at work.

VOICE OF JIMMY CANNON

NOBODY ASKED ME BUT Max Schmeling, the Aryan idol, the unconquerable...

CUT TO:

125 EXT. HAMBURG PIER - DAY

125

Max is brought down the gangway in a stretcher. Anny is the only one there to see him. No fanfare, no Hitler, no band, no Goebbels, no cheers, no flowers, no fruitbaskets, no hero's welcome, NO NUTHIN'.

VOICE OF JIMMY CANNON (CONT'D)

...one has been beaten, the bright shining symbol of race glory has been thumbed in the dirt. KAPUT.

ANGLE - MAX AND ANNY

She finally gets to see her man. Anny is shocked by the sight of him strapped down into a stretcher. He also wears a Thomas collar around his neck.

ANNY

Max, I'll nurse you back to health.

MAX

Anny, you are the medicine I need. I've missed you so much.

She bends down and kisses him gently.

126 INT. AMBULANCE - DAY

126

Anny rides in the back of the ambulance with Max.

VOICE OF JIMMY CANNON (CONT'D)

That noise you hear is Goebbels making for the storm cellar.

127 EXT. BERLIN STREETS

127

Giant banners of Max in a boxing stance are being taken down. Max Schmeling does not return to The Fatherland a hero, he returns a bum.

VOICE OF JIMMY CANNON (CONT'D)

White folks have joined colored boys in National Jubilation. This fight should make the Krauts think twice before getting in the ring with good ole Uncle Sam.

128 INT. SAVOY - NIGHT

128

The celebration still continues in Harlem. The Savoy is packed to the rafters as Harlemites swing and dance to the music of THE CAB CALLOWAY ORCHESTRA - "OL' JOE LOUIS."

CLOSE - JOE

Joe is feeling good. He's looking, smelling good also. He's checking out all the FOXES and vice versa.

ANGLE - SAVOY

LENA HORNE, the sultry songstress and Movie Star, fine as wine steps to Joe.

LENA HORNE

Joe, I've been calling you day and night.

JOE

Hey baby.

LENA HORNE

Don't hey baby, return my phone calls.

Joe stands back and checks her out.

JOE
You sho' looking good. All dat meat and
no potatoes.

As Joe moves closer to her, she moves back. She sees Marva
approaching from behind him.

JOE (CONT'D)
Hello, Marva.

MARVA
Move, Bitch.

129 EXT. ALABAMA BACK ROAD - HIGH NOON

129

Under the hot blazing 'Bama sun a chain gang of Negroes are
breaking rocks along side a road. Black sweating bodies sing
and swing those hammers in unison. It's a JOE LOUIS WORKSONG. 4
WHITE OVERSEERS on horses with shotguns keep a look out.

CHAIN GANG
Joe Louis hit him so hard he turn
roun' and roun'
He thought he was Alabama bound,
Ah, Ah
He made an effort to rise agin'
But Joe Louis right cut him on the chin
Ah, Ah
Weak on his knees and tried to rise
Went down crying to the crowds surprise
Ah, Ah
(REPEAT)

FADE TO BLACK

END OF ACT II

ACT III

FADE IN

TITLE - THE WAR YEARS

130 EXT. CHICAGO SOUTH SIDE - DAY

130

The young Joe Louis follows MARVA TROTTER down a busy block.
She notices him and walks faster.

CLOSE MARVA

She is the total package. Young, smart, stylishly dressed and
drop-dead fine.

ANGLE - STREET

Joe tries to keep up.

ANGLE - CORNER

Marva stops at the corner for a red light which enables Joe to catch up with her.

JOE
Pardon me, Mam.

MARVA
Yes. May I help you?

JOE
What's your name?

MARVA
Why do you want to know my name? And why have you been following me for the last two blocks?

JOE
My name is Joe Louis Barrow and one day soon I'm gonna be heavyweight champion of the world.

MARVA
I don't care who you are or where you come from or where your crazy fool self is going... To hell I might add.

JOE
I've been looking for you the last 2,000 years and now that I finally found you I don't want to lose you. We're getting married.

Marva's look says it all. This man is insane.

MARVA
Please don't follow me any further or I'll have to report you to the police.

Marva hot foots it.

CLOSE - JOE

Joseph Barrow Louis laughs as his future wife walks away. WE HEAR FAINTLY AS WE DISSOLVE TO.

GOEBBELS (O.S.)
Out with the Jews! Out with the Jews!

131 EXT. NUREMBERG - NIGHT

131

Thousands are gathered for a Nazi Party rally. Standing on a stage high above the throng is Goebbels. He is whipping them into a frenzy, ranting the doctrines of The Master Race.

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)

We lost the first World War because of the Jews. We lost the war when the Jews betrayed us. This time it will be different. There will be no Jews left to destroy The Fatherland. As our Fuhrer says, we will reign for a thousand years. Out with the Jews! Out with the Jews!

132 EXT. BERLIN - NIGHT

132

TITLE - KRISTALNACHT NOVEMBER 9, 1938

It has begun - KRISTALNACHT - Crystal Night- the night of The Broken Glass. Nazi brown shirts paint Stars of David and the word "Juden" on shops. Synagogues are being burned. Jewish owned shops are being destroyed. Jewish homes are ransacked. It is an orgy of hate and of violence.

VOICE OF GOEBBELS (CONT'D)

Out with the Jews! Out with the Jews!

ANGLE - BERLIN STREETS

Thousands upon thousands of arrested Jews with their possessions (as much as they can carry) are being escorted by the Wehrmacht out of Berlin. They have no idea of their final destination - CONCENTRATION CAMPS.

VOICE OF NAZI MASSES

Out with the Jews! Out with the Jews!

133 EXT. THE STREET OF THE SCHMELING'S HAMBURG HOME - NIGHT

133

Several young Jewish men are trying to make a run for it. They are being chased by a NAZI PATROL led by German Shepard dogs.

ANGLE

They are cornered, then gunned down in a hail of machine gun bullets. The Patrol moves out to deliver more death, more slaughter.

From out of the shadows emerges a Jewish Family. The LEWIN'S.

ANGLE - MAX'S DOOR

HERR LEWIN bangs on Max's door. No answer. He bangs again. No answer.

ANGLE - STREET

A black Mercedes-Benz is barreling down the street towards them.

ANGLE - MAX'S DOOR

Max abruptly opens the door. Anny stands behind him.

HERR LEWIN

Herr Schmeling, please let us in quickly.

Max looks at Herr Lewin, his wife and their two young sons. He make his decision.

MAX

Herr Lewin, come in.

ANGLE - STREET

The Lewin family enters just as the Benz speeds by. Max closes the door behind him and stands in front of it.

134 INT. SCHMELING'S HAMBURG HOME - NIGHT

134

Anny hurries the Lewin family down into the wine cellar.

135 EXT. SCHMELING'S HAMBURG HOME - NIGHT

135

ANGLE - BENZ

The Benz stops and backs up to the front of Max's house.

ANGLE - MAX'S HOUSE NIGHT

HERR LAUTERWASSER, a Gestapo official gets out of the Mercedes and approaches Max.

LAUTERWASSER

Heil Hitler.

He salutes.

MAX

Heil Hitler.

Max returns the salute.

LAUTERWASSER

Herr Schmeling, what brings you out of your home tonight?

MAX

Herr Lauterwasser, I've been watching the festivities.

LAUTERWASSER

I don't expect you would harbor any Jewish criminals, would you?

MAX

Not me. The only person I've got hidden in my home is Joe Louis. He's chained up in the dungeon.

They both laugh.

LAUTERWASSER

I do not know why I join you in laughter. I lost a week's salary on that fight.

MAX

Don't feel too bad, I lost a lot more than that.

LAUTERWASSER

You will beat "der Neger" the next time. We are the Super Race. Heil Hitler.

He salutes Max.

MAX

Heil Hitler.

He salutes and goes into his house.

136 INT. SCHMELING'S HAMBURG HOME - NIGHT

136

Max grabs Anny in a bear hug.

MAX

I've never been so scared in my life.

ANNY

When the Getsapo came back, I thought it was over.

MAX

The Lewin's?

ANNY

In the wine cellar.

MAX

If they stay here it's not safe for them or us.

ANNY

Then some way, some how we have to get them out of Germany, through the underground.

137 EXT. POLAND BORDER - NIGHT

137

Hitler has ordered the invasion of Poland. The overmatched POLISH ARMY puts up a valiant fight but none the less is smashed by the Mighty Wehrmacht. WORLD WAR II has begun.

138 INT. SCHMELING'S HAMBURG HOME - DAY

138

Anny studies the papers in her hands.

ANNY

You've been assigned to the paratroopers.

Max, not wanting to believe what he's read and what he hears tries to rationalize.

MAX

The Wehrmacht probably just wants me to give physical training to the young paratroopers.

ANNY

I smell a rat. That Goebbels, he's never forgiven you for not firing Herr Jacobs.

MAX

Anny, despite all that, I still don't believe they'd send into a combat a 34 year old paratrooper, well over the draft age, who has never fired a gun in his life. Usually prominent artists, actors and athletes are exempt. I'm Max Schmeling. The former heavyweight Champion of The World. The only man to defeat Joe Louis.

ANNY

Max, my dear I pray to God you are right.

139 OMITTED

139

140 EXT. LILLIE'S NEW HOME - DAY

140

Joe Louis is making hand over fist money and is spending it like it's water. Life is good. Joe hands his Mother the keys to a brand new house in the Negro section of Detroit, PARADISE VALLEY. Lillie can hardly contain herself. She engulfs her son with the hug of a life. The good son unwraps himself for her and turns to his younger sister VUNIES. Joe hands her an envelope.

JOE

Vunies, this is for schoolin' at Howard University. We need somebody to go to college from our family.

VUNIES

Thank you Joe. I promise I will do good
in school.

JOE

You better.

He playfully taps his sister on the chin with his right.

LILLIE

Gotta put some away for a rainy day, baby.

JOE

I don't see any rainy days, Mama. Bright
sunshine all the way.

141 EXT. SPRING HILL - DAY

141

Spring Hill is a 500 acre horse farm of rolling hills and trees
90 minutes outside of Detroit.

ANGLE - FARM

Joe and Marva in full riding attire come over the hill on two
beautiful thoroughbred horses.

CLOSE- JOE AND MARVA

MARVA

Joe, I love this. Can we afford it?

JOE

Never ask can we afford it?

MARVA

Can we afford it?

JOE

I bought it already. 500 acres, it's all
yours.

Marva inches her horse close enough to give her man a kiss.

MARVA

Joe, I just can't wait till you stop
fighting. We can start living like normal
people.

ANGLE - HILL

JOE and MARVA ride off into the hills.

142 INT. RADIO STATION - DAY

142

Jimmy Cannon is ON THE AIR and today he has Joe on as a guest.

JIMMY CANNON

Besides being a great fighter, Joe Louis is one of the best dressed men in America.

JOE

Thanks, Jimmy. I always try to be well-groomed and the last thing I do before I go into the ring is to see that MURRAY'S POMADE has my hair smooth and perfectly in place.

143 INT. LOUIS' CHICAGO HOME - NIGHT

143

Joe is going through closets and closets of Marva's clothes. He takes out several evening dresses he likes and places them gently on the bed so they don't wrinkle. He sports a custom tailored blue swagger style suit, two-toned shoes and bright red socks.

JOE

I laid out some things you should wear tonight. My baby gotta be looking the finest thing there.

MARVA (O.S.)

Thank you honey. I'll be out of the tub in a minute.

144 INT. LOUIS' CHICAGO HOME - BATHROOM - NIGHT

144

Joe sticks his head inside a huge, luxurious bathroom. Marva is taking a bubble-bath.

MARVA

My, my, you look good.

JOE

I'm sharp as a skeeter's peeter and that's sharp at both ends.

They laugh.

JOE (CONT'D)

I'm gonna make a quick run to git' a loaf of bread. I'll be back before you'll be dressed.

MARVA

Joe, please don't have me waiting long..

145 EXT. HAMBURG PIER - NIGHT

145

Thousands upon thousands of the Wehrmacht are boarding transport ships. Friends and families have assembled to see their loved ones go off to fight the war for The Fatherland.

WE CRANE DOWN from the masses to find Anny and Max in a CLOSE UP saying their good-byes.

MAX

What war could be in Greece?

ANNY

Max, stop kidding yourself. You're a regular soldier. You jump out of planes.

MAX

I'm not a soldier. I can't kill anyone.

ANNY

Sometimes you can be so blind to what is happening all around you.

She kisses her husband.

ANNY (CONT'D)

Please Max, come back alive, and in one piece.

Max goes up to the gangway along with the others.

146 INT. LOUIS' CHICAGO HOME -MORNING

146

Joe gingerly walks into the kitchen where Marva sits with her bathrobe on. She is seething, about to explode. Joe tries to give her a peck on the neck but at this time, at this moment she is not giving it up.

ANGLE - KITCHEN TABLE

Joe sits down. He slides an iridescent diamond necklace across the table to her. Marva glances at it. She's not impressed at all. Then Joe puts the loaf of bread on the table also. That did it. Marva goes off.

MARVA

Two weeks later you come back with that loaf of bread. No phone call, no letter, no telegram, no word, and no nothing. Joe you had me worried sick. You could have been lying in a gutter bleeding to death, or probably laying up in some bitch's bed. No one knew where you were. Or maybe nobody was telling me. That's another thing I'm getting sick and tired of, your cronies. They kept telling me not to call the police. I'm tired of them covering for you. Y'all in cahoots. And then you don't have anything to say.

JOE

Baby, do you like the diamond necklace?

Why in the name of heaven did he say that? Marva grabs the loaf of bread and starts banging him over the head with it. The bag breaks and slices of bread are going everywhere. Marva is hysterical.

MARVA

Why? Why? Why?

Joe doesn't answer. He gets up and walks out the kitchen.

147 INT. JV52 TRANSPORT PLANE - DAWN

147

Nazi paratroopers are crammed elbow to elbow into the dimly lit plane. They are on course for the Greek Island of Crete. This is the first parachute invasion of World War II.

CLOSE - MAX

He vomits.

CLOSE - GREEN LIGHT INDICATOR

It flashes.

ANGLE - PLANE

EXCITEMENT. The PLATOON LEADER orders prepare to jump. The hatch is opened.

ANGLE - HATCH

The dawn sky is already filled with parachutes. They are being greeted by anti-aircraft flak from the British ground. A plane gets a direct hit and plunges to the earth leaving behind a trail of black smoke. The paratroopers yell "Heil Hitler!" as they jump out of the plane.

CLOSE - MAX

MAX

Heil Hitler!

He jumps.

148 EXT. ATMOSPHERE - MORNING

148

Max's chute has opened. They float down like leaves right into the thick of it. Some are torn apart by machine gun fire, other have the bad luck of their chutes not opening and crashing to the ground, bodies broken like crystal.

149 EXT. VINEYARD - MORNING

149

Max lands awkwardly, smack, dab right into the middle of a vineyard. He has reinjured his back. Max struggles to unclasp his parachute. After several attempts he is successful. He sees his red striped supply container and crawls towards it.

ANGLE - MAX

Max comes under British fire and he quickly eats some dirt.

ANGLE - VINEYARD

He is pinned down. A NAZI PLATOON returns the fire and the English move back. 2 NAZI PARATROOPERS soldiers help Max stand up.

150 EXT. NAZI FIELD HOSPITAL - NIGHT

150

Max sits in the field hospital as the MEDIC gives him two canes. A SERGEANT VON KUMMER gives him orders.

VON KUMMER

Schmeling, you will take a wounded prisoner to Chania in the morning.

SCHMELING

With all due respect I can barely walk myself.

VON KUMMER

And do not speak to this prisoner.

151 INT. MAYO CLINIC - DR. JORGENSEN'S OFFICE - DAY

151

Joe, Roxborough and Black are in the office of DR. JORGENSEN.

DR. JORGENSEN

Mr. Louis, your wife has suffered a miscarriage. If I may be blunt your helter-skelter lifestyle is not conducive to a successful pregnancy. I recommend you give her more stability and companionship.

Joe feels like the heel he can sometimes be.

JOE

Can I see her now?

152 INT. MAYO CLINIC - WARD - DAY

152

Marva sits upright in the bed. Joe falls on his knees and they hug.

MARVA

Honey, I'm so sorry. I didn't even know I was pregnant.

JOE

It's not your fault. Baby, you're 23 and I'm 25. We're spring chickens, we've got plenty of time to have plenty of babies.

MARVA

I love you so much. Sometimes I wish I didn't but --.

JOE

Baby, it's gonna be alright, you wait an' see.

MARVA

Joe, when are you gonna be done?

JOE

Soon, baby, soon.

153 EXT. ROAD - MORNING

153

Max and LENNOX, the wounded British prisoner of war limp away from the field hospital.

ANGLE - ROAD

Now out of sight, the two hobblers join arms to give each other support.

CLOSE - MAX AND LENNOX

No words are exchanged by Lennox keeps looking at Max.

LENNOX

Laddie, you look awfully familiar. Yes, you're Max Schmeling. What are you doing in this bloody war?

He stops.

MAX

I've been asking myself the same question over and over again.

LENNOX

Me, I was out on patrol and got lost in this bloody country. My name is Lennox.

He puts out his hand. Max pumps his hand.

LENNOX (CONT'D)

I'm buggy about boxing. The boxer Tommy Farr is a friend of mine. We're both from Wales.

MAX

A small world keeps getting smaller.
Lennox, let's rest.

154 EXT. OLIVE GROVE - DAY

154

Max and Lennox sit in an overgrown olive grove. Max offers him a cigarette which he accepts. Lennox pulls out an orange which they share. This quiet moment is shattered by heavy artillery.

CLOSE - MAX AND LENNOX

They both hit the ground for cover as debris flies all around them. The shelling eventually stops.

LENNOX

That's it. We're pulling back.

MAX

The war is over for you.

LENNOX

Max, the war is over when you are home again with your loved ones.

155 EXT. ROAD - EARLY EVENING

155

Max and Lennox struggle along the road, holding each other up. They hear oncoming vehicles.

LENNOX

Max, we better let go.

They separate as a German convoy flies past them.

156 EXT. STOCKADE - NIGHT

156

Max delivers his prisoner to the stockade where he is taken into custody.

LENNOX

When I see Tommy Farr again, I'll tell him about our meeting.

MAX

Good luck, Lennox.

LENNOX

Same to you, Max.

157 EXT. POLO GROUNDS - LOUIS VS. CONN - NIGHT

157

Title - Louis vs. Conn
Polo Grounds
NY, NY
June 18, 1941

55, 000 fight fans have assembled to cheer the undersized Great White hope BILLY CONN upset Joe Louis for the Heavyweight Championship of the World.

158 EXT. POLO GROUNDS - LOUIS VS. CONN - ROUND 10 - NIGHT

158

CARD - ROUND 10

ANGLE - RING

Joe is dead tired. The smaller, quicker Conn although with cuts on one eye and the nose is bringing it. Joe backs him up towards the ropes and Conn's right leg buckles. He's helpless but Joe allows him to regain his footing. Conn ends the round by pounding away with left hooks. Joe is in a daze.

The crowd is delirious. Billy Conn is about to pull off one the greatest upsets of all time.

ANGLE - LOUIS CORNER

Joe is exhausted as he slumps onto his stool. His corner works feverishly trying to energize his leaden, battered body.

BLACKBURN

Chappie, you're behind. You're losing on points. You got to knock him out. When he throws that left hook, he's beggin' for the right. The right will take us home, Chappie!

ANGLE - CONN CORNER

Conn's trainer JOHNNY RAY works on him.

CONN

This is easy. I can take this son of a bitch out this round.

RAY

No, no, Billy. Stick and move. Stick and move. You're way ahead.

CONN

I can knock him out. Don't worry about it.

RAY
Stay away, kiddo. Just stick and move.
Stick and move.

CLOSE - BELL

The Official Timekeeper hits the bell.

159 EXT. POLO GROUNDS - LOUIS VS. CONN - ROUND 13 - NIGHT

159

CARD - ROUND THIRTEEN

ANGLE - RING

Everyone comes to their feet as the two game fighters circle each other in the middle of the ring. Conn throws a left right combination, Joe covers and clinches.

CLOSE - LOUIS AND CONN

CONN
You've got a fight tonight, Joseph.

JOE
I knows it.

ANGLE - RING

Referee EDDIE JOSEPH breaks it up.

Conn lands a right to the body, he's trying for the KO. Joe lands an overhand right that hurts Conn. He's hit again with a solid right uppercut that sends his hair flying. Conn connects with a left hook but Joe easily pushes him away. Billy's hands are low, Joe stalks him, throws a left jab then the D.O.A. - an overhand right. Conn, out on his feet leans into Joe, but Joe takes a step back, lands a vicious left hook and a right which spins him around. Joe ends it with a murderous assault, a left to the body, right uppercut left hooks and a right cross.

CLOSE - CONN

His body bent at the waist, he almost corkscrews into the canvas going down, legs twisting under him.

ANGLE - RING

Joe looks at Conn, then turns away to the neutral corner.

CLOSE - JOE

Joe in his usual KO pose - both arms draped on the top rung.

CLOSE - CONN

Conn is out.

CLOSE - REFEREE JOSEPH

He picks up the count from the Official Timekeeper.

REFEREE JOSEPH

Three - Four - Five...

ANGLE - RING

Referee Joseph counts over Conn.

REFEREE JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Six - Seven - Eight...

Conn struggles to get up on one knee.

REFEREE JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Nine - Ten.

He waves his arms over Conn as he gets wobbly-legged to his feet. It's over. Roxborough, Black and Blackburn rush into the ring and embrace Joe.

CLOSE - HARRY BALOGH

HARRY BALOGH

At 2 minutes and 58 seconds of the thirteenth round the winner by a knockout and STILL champion, Joe Louis.

THE CROWD ROARS

ANGLE - RING

Joe walks over to Conn to congratulate him. They hug.

CONN

Gee, what a tough break I got. I had yer ass beat, I could have won the title, been champ six months, then I'd let you win it back.

Joe deadpans.

JOE

How was you gonna keep the title for six months, when you couldn't keep it for twelve rounds?

CONN

Joe, what's the sense of being Irish if you can't be stupid now and then?

They both laugh and embrace again. Clem McCarthy, who has climbed into the ring grabs Joe and sticks the big radio microphone into his face.

CLEM MCCARTHY

We have witnessed one of the most amazing turn arounds in the annals of fistiana. Can you please tell our radio audience what you said about the game Billy Conn's tactics?

JOE

He can run but he can't hide.

CLEM MCCARTHY

Joe, do you have another gem for us?

JOE

Any dog can wag his tail.

160 EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

160

Leonard Reed and Freddie Guinyard watch Joe line up a putt on the 16th hole. Sportswriter Bill Corum walks up to Joe.

JOE

No interviews now.

LEONARD

You heard what the man said.

BILL CORUM

Joe, your wife just sued you for divorce.

JOE

No kiddin'.

BILL CORUM

Any comments?

Joe looks at him, picks up his ball and hauls ass. Leonard and Freddie are on his tail.

161 INT. LOUIS' BEDROOM - DAY

161

Husband and wife are into it.

JOE

Baby, I love you. I don't want a separation or divorce. I love you.

MARVA

The problem is when it comes to loving you, I've got too much company.

She holds up a letter.

MARVA (CONT'D)

That's what this letter states. You know the one Lena sent to you.

Joe drops his head. Busted once again.

MARVA (CONT'D)

If I had known her address I'd sent all your clothes there too.

JOE

Please don't leave me. Forget about the lawyers, forget about everybody else. You and me, let's try to work this out ourselves. We owe it to us, to give it one more shot.

MARVA

I don't know how much more you expect me to take?

Joe is mum.

MARVA (CONT'D)

Not much more, I hope. And when are you going to retire like you said you would?

JOE

After the next big pay day.

MARVA

Joe, it's always the next pay day.

162 INT. CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

162

This is the historic address of FDR to the Congress of the United States broadcast from the Capitol, Washington, D.C., December 8, 1941.

FDR

Mr. Vice President and Mr. Speaker and members of the Senate and House of Representatives.

CUT TO:

163 EXT. WORLD AT WAR FOOTAGE - DAY

163

Film clips of Frank Capra's series THE WORLD AT WAR. We see FOOTAGE of PEARL HARBOR DESTRUCTION, DEATH, DEFEAT.

VOICE OF FDR (CONT'D)

Yesterday, December 7, 1941, a date that will live in infamy, the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.

164 TIMES SQUARE, NEW YORK - DAY

164

Thousands of New Yorkers look at the news up on the electronic sign board.

VOICE OF FDR (CONT'D)

With confidence in our armed forces, with the unbounding determination of our people, we will gain the inevitable triumph so help us God.

165 INT. CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

165

Congress applauds.

FDR

I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December seventh, 1941, a state of War has existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire.

Congress stands as one - prolonged cheers and applause.

166 INT. LOUIS' HOME - DAY

166

Joe and Marva are glued to the radio. He holds a newspaper headline reads - JAPS ATTACK PEARL HARBOR.

ANGLE - PHONE

It rings and Joe picks it up.

CUT TO:

167 INT. 20TH CENTURY SPORTING CLUB -MIKE JACOBS'S OFFICE - DAY 167

Mike Jacobs is on the other line.

MIKE JACOBS

Joe, I got an idea. Let me run it by you.

JOE (O.S.)

Shoot.

MIKE JACOBS

Would you be willing to put your title on the line in a charity boxing event, with all of your winnings going to the Navy Relief Society?

JOE (O.S.)

Yes.

MIKE JACOBS

This organization will aide the families of sailors killed in Pearl Harbor.

CUT TO:

168 INT. LOUIS' HOME - DAY

168

JOE

I want to do this.

MIKE JACOBS (O.S.)

Joe, I want you to fully understand you won't be paid.

JOE

Uncle Mike, I'm mad. I'm furious at what those dirty yellow-belly Japs did to us. If a fighter had done that to me I would have smashed him. I'm strictly for fair deals and open fighting. Go 'head and arrange the match.

Joe hangs up the phone. Marva gives him a big hug and they kiss.

MARVA

Joe, I'm proud of you.

169 INT. NAZI FIELD HOSPITAL - CRETE - DAY

169

The fighting between the British and the Germans has intensified, hence many more casualties. WE HEAR the DEATH SCREAMS of the wounded, maimed and those who are facing the finality of THE GRIM REAPER.

ANGLE - HOSPITAL BED

In the midst of all this mayhem Max writes his wife a letter. This is his way of trying to maintain some semblance of sanity.

VOICE OF MAX

Dear Anny, I miss you more than you will ever know.

CLOSE - LETTER

He writes.

VOICE OF MAX (CONT'D)

I'm not a coward but war is not for me. I cannot kill a human being.

CUT TO:

170 INT. SCHMELING'S HAMBURG HOME - DAY

170

Anny reads Max's letter out loud.

ANNY

In hindsight, maybe Joe Louis did me a favor by breaking my back.

WE HEAR MAX LAUGH. Anny laughs with him.

CLOSE - ANNY

ANNY (CONT'D)

It looks like that might be my ticket out from all this madness.

CUT TO:

171 INT. NAZI FIELD HOSPITAL - CRETE - DAY

171

A soldier screams as his leg is being amputated.

VOICE OF MAX (CONT'D)

I hope to hold you in my arms again. Love, Max

Max drops the pen, letter and puts his hands over his ears trying to block out the DEATH SCREAMS.

172 INT. SCHMELING'S HAMBURG HOME - DAY

172

CLOSE - LETTER

Tear drops fall on the letter smearing the ink on the words "I hope to hold you forever in my arms, Love, Max"

173 INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

173

Joe is shadowboxing. Blackburn talks to him with his new ASSISTANT TRAINER MANNIE SEAMON at his side. Mannie is a white, round faced cheerful man.

BLACKBURN

Chappie, Mannie will replace me tonight.

Joe stops in his tracks.

JOE
No disrespect to Mannie but...

BLACKBURN
...I can't.

JOE
Chappie, you got to.

BLACKBURN
Ya ole' Chappie got arthritis, rheumatism
and I got a bum ticker to boot. Ya only
git three strikes.

JOE
I'm beggin' you.

BLACKBURN
I just don't feel strong enough to keep
goin' up and down those steps all night.

JOE
Chappie, let's go to work. I promise you
you'll only have to go up and down once.

174 INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN -LOUIS VS. BAER -ROUND 1- NIGHT 174

Title - Louis vs. Baer
Madison Square Garden
N.Y, N.Y
January 9, 1942

17,000 fans fill The Garden

CARD - ROUND ONE

ANGLE - JOE'S CORNER

Blackburn, looking sicker by the minute puts Joe's mouthpiece
in.

BLACKBURN
Chappie, you made a promise.

CLOSE - JOE

He winks at his beloved Chappie.

CLOSE -BELL

The Official Timekeeper hits it.

ANGLE - RING

BUDDY BAER, 6 feet 5 inches, two-fiddy lumbers across the ring. Joe uses Baer's head as a speed bag with a flurry of punches. Baer kisses the canvas once, twice, three times.

CLOSE - BAER

He tries to pull himself up by the ropes. It's not in time. The REFEREE counts him out.

ANGLE - RING

Joe runs over to Blackburn. They hug as the CROWD GOES WILD.

175 INT. LOUIS' HARLEM APARTMENT -DAY

175

Joe holds his induction papers.

JOE

Baby, I've been assigned to Company C.

MARVA

I betcha C stands for colored.

They both chuckle.

JOE

I'll miss you and Junior.

He places his hands on her pregnant stomach.

MARVA

Joe, we'll miss you too, but then again I've missed you in civilian life.

176 EXT. GOVERNOR'S ISLAND - NEW YORK - DAY

176

Joe is followed by a big crowd of REPORTERS as he steps off the Governors Island Ferry.

177 INT. ARMY BASE - GOVERNOR'S ISLAND - NEW YORK

177

Reporters, photographers record Joe taking his physical.

ANGLE - DESK

Joe's induction is being staged for the NEWSREEL CAMERAS. He sits before a soldier who is typing out his papers.

SOLDIER

What's your occupation?

Joe answers stiffly.

JOE
Fightin' and let us at dem' Japs.

178 INT. LOUIS' HARLEM APARTMENT - NIGHT

178

Joe and Marva walk into the living room sharp. He's in his Army privates uniform, she's in an elegant evening dress that trails behind her. Black and TRUMAN GIBSON stand up.

BLACK
Marva, you look like a million bucks.

MARVA
I don't know what a million bucks looks like but I will take that as a compliment.

BLACK
Marva, Joe, this is my friend Truman Gibson I was telling you about.

Truman shakes both of their hands.

TRUMAN
Pleasure to meet the both of you.

BLACK
Truman is one of the youngest and smartest Negro lawyers in the country.

JOE
Is that so?

BLACK
He's also working in the War Department.

MARVA
In what capacity?

TRUMAN
I'm the civilian aide to The Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson.

JOE
So, if I ever get in a jam I know who to call.

TRUMAN
Absolutely.

BLACK
Joe, you know they're probably going to ask you to make a speech tonight. Do you want Truman to help you write something for you?

JOE

Nah, they won't ask me.

179 INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - NIGHT

179

The traditional red white and blue bunting rings the capacity crowd of 17,000 patriots. This is a dinner event for the Navy Relief Fund. The dais is placed in the center of the boxing ring. Overhead is a HUGE AMERICAN FLAG.

ANGLE - RING

Former New York Mayor JAMES J. WALKER speaks through the ring announcer's microphone to a national radio audience.

JAMES J. WALKER

Joe, all the Negroes in the world are proud of you because you have given them a reason to be proud. You never forgot your own people. You are an American gentleman. When you fought Buddy Baer and gave your purse to the Navy Relief Society, you took your title and your future and bet it all on patriotism and love of country. Joe Louis, that night you laid a rose on the grave of Abraham Lincoln.

The crowd applauds as Joe nervously rises from the dais and approaches the radio microphone.

JOE

Thank you Mayor Walker, I don't know nuthin' 'bout a rose on Lincoln's grave. I have only done what any red-blooded American would do.

They applaud.

JOE (CONT'D)

We gon' do our part, and we will win, because WE ARE ON GOD'S SIDE. Thank you.

Madison Square Garden rises as one for a LOUD STANDING OVATION.

ANGLE - MARVA AND JIMMY CANNON

Both are standing and clapping on the dais.

JIMMY CANNON

He's a credit to his race. The Human race.

180 EXT. HARLEM BUILDING - DAY

180

Workers are furiously pasting up Army Posters of Joe Louis in combat uniform. He holds a bayonet - attached to an automatic rifle. It reads: PVT. LOUIS says "WE'RE GOING TO DO OUR PART... AND WE'LL WIN BECAUSE WE'RE ON GOD'S SIDE."

181 INT. FORT DIX ARMORY - DAY

181

Joe is sparring for his upcoming fight. The Armory is packed with make shift grand stands with the ordinary dogfaces. The Negro G.I.s are sectioned off, way on top.

ANGLE - RING

The bell rings and Joe is finished. He is cheered, but a JOE, JOE, JOE-JOE chant is heard from his brothers. WE FOLLOW Joe as he moves past the white G.I.s shaking hands all the way up to the rafters, to his brethren.

ANGLE - JOE

Joe is being swarmed by Negro soldiers. Everyone is trying just to touch him.

JOE

Steak dinners are on me tonight. Steak dinners are on me tonight. Plus I got free tickets for my fight at The Garden. We're all so proud of you. Let's show em' we can lick the Krauts, Japs and dem' Eye-talians too.

182 INT. LOUIS' HARLEM APARTMENT - DAY

182

Joe is on the phone.

JOE

I'm in shape.

CUT TO:

183 INT. PROVIDENT HOSPITAL - CHICAGO - DAY

183

Jack Blackburn speaks from a chair in his hospital room.

BLACKBURN

You got your weight down?

JOE (O.S.)

Yes, Chappie.

BLACKBURN

Just keep after him. You'll knock him out with the D.O.A.

Blackburn starts a laugh that quickly turns into a death rattle.

CUT TO:

184 INT. LOUIS' HARLEM APARTMENT - DAY

184

JOE

Chappie, you gotta get well. You promised me you would always be in my corner.

BLACKBURN (O.S.)

I promise, Chappie.

185 INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN -LOUIS VS. SIMON -ROUND 6- NIGHT 185

Title - Louis vs. Simon
Madison Square Garden
N.Y. N.Y.
March 27, 1942

CARD - ROUND 6

ANGLE - RING

Joe hammers the tough ABE SIMON with his deadly, lethal and tranquilizing right-left combo.

CLOSE - SIMON

He crashes to the canvas. IT IS LIGHTS OUT. THE CROWD CHEERS.

ANGLE - RING

Mutual Radio Announcer DON DUNPHY interviews Joe in the ring. His face still glistens with sweat.

DON DUNPHY

Ladies and Gentlemen, Joe has donated his entire purse from tonight's fight to the Army Relief Fund. Joe, you don't see a shipyard owner risking his entire business. If Uncle Sam wants a battleship, they don't ask him to donate it. Uncle Sam pays him a fat profit. They're getting rich on the War while you're risking a title that's worth millions. What do you say to that?

JOE

That's their problem. I'll do everything I can to help win the war. Ain't, I mean there isn't anything wrong with this country that Hitler can fix.

DON DUNPHY

We won't stop punching, just as Louis
does, till we win.

Joe sneaks in.

JOE

Keep punchin', Chappie.

186 INT. PROVIDENT HOSPITAL - CHICAGO - NIGHT

186

Jack Blackburn is laid up in his death bed listening to the post-fight interview. He looks at the radio.

BLACKBURN

I'm tryin', Chappie, I'm tryin'.

187 INT. PILGRIM BAPTIST CHURCH - CHICAGO - DAY

187

Joe, Marva, Roxborough, Black, Seamon, Jacobs, Guinyard, Reed and Nelson occupy the first pew. The church is jammed with thousands of others outside trying to get in. The body of Jack Blackburn lies in the open casket before the podium of REVEREND J.C. AUSTIN.

CLOSE - REVEREND J.C. AUSTIN.

He gives the eulogy

REV. J.C. AUSTIN

Think not that Jack Blackburn has left the ring. Think not that he has deserted the man who was the best work of his genius, his mind and his soul.

ANGLE - COFFIN

Joe and Marva lead the procession as they pay their last respects.

VOICE OF REV. J.C. AUSTIN (CONT'D)

He has not! He will be at the next fight....

188 EXT. PILGRIM BAPTIST CHURCH - CHICAGO - DAY

188

Joe, one of the several pallbearers carry the casket past the thousands of mourners assembled outside the church.

VOICE OF REV. J.C. AUSTIN (CONT'D)

... in the corner, leaning over his man's shoulder as usual and whispering in his ear.

189 EXT. LINCOLN CEMETERY - DAY

189

Joe, Marva, Roxie and Black throw handfuls of dirt onto Blackburn who has been lowered into his final resting place.

VOICE OF REV. J.C. AUSTIN (CONT'D)
He has not gone and left his beloved
Chappie to carry on alone.

190 EXT. LOUIS' CHICAGO HOME -DAY

190

Joe stands in front of his home and is being interviewed by NEWSREEL CAMERAMEN. Martha stands by his side. We hear the pain in his voice.

JOE
Chappie did more for me than anybody else.
I can't believe he's dead. This is the
worst shock I ever had in my life. All
that I am as a fighter, a champion I owes
to Jack Blackburn.

191 EXT. ROAD - EARLY MORNING

191

TRACKING SHOT

Joe and his beloved Chappie are doing their roadwork at the crack of dawn.

VOICE OF JOE (CONT'D)
He was a teacher, father, brother, nurse,
best pal to me. I'll be only half as good
as I was.

192 EXT. LOUIS' CHICAGO HOME - DAY

192

CLOSE - JOE

JOE (CONT'D)
Oh, they say I'll forget Chappie as time
goes on, but I knows different.

193 EXT. CAMP SIEBERT - ALABAMA - DAY

193

Joe Louis, SUGAR RAY ROBINSON (#1 Top ranked welterweight) GEORGE NICHOLSON (Joe's old sparring partner) and feather weight SANDY SANDDLER are met at the Army base gates by their guide PVT. LONG.

Pvt. Long shakes their hands and makes introductions. One of his men puts their duffle bags and equipment into a jeep.

PVT. LONG
My man here will take your stuff to your
quarters.

(MORE)

PVT. LONG (CONT'D)

First I wanted to give you a tour of the base, if that's alright with you.

JOE

Fine with us.

PVT. LONG

Good. Let me show you around.

Pvt. Long begins the walking tour of the base.

PVT. LONG (CONT'D)

As you already know, we are in the deep, deep south. Alabama, the heart of Dixie.

JOE

Sugar Ray, I was born pretty close to here.

SANDY

And you left too. Champ's smart. Got his black ass out of Dodge.

PVT. LONG

Things are bad here, so if there is anything you can do the colored soldiers would appreciate it much.

JOE

For instance?

PVT. LONG

Over there.

He points.

PVT. LONG (CONT'D)

That's where they keep the Jerry's. The German prisoners of war gets much better treatment than we do.

CUT TO:

194 INT. CAMP SIEBERT - ALABAMA - MESS HALL - DAY

194

German POW's are eating good.

VOICE OF PVT. LONG (CONT'D)

Them Nazis eat better than we do.

CUT TO:

195 INT. CAMP SIEBERT - ALABAMA - HOSPITAL - DAY

195

Injured German POW's being treated by Army doctors.

VOICE OF PVT. LONG (CONT'D)
Krauts get better care at the hospital too.

CUT TO:

196 EXT. CAMP SIEBERT - ALABAMA - DAY

196

VOICE OF PVT. LONG (CONT'D)
All this Jim Crow is really bearing down on our morale.

JOE
Soldier, what do you want us to do?

PVT. LONG
These 4-star Generals might listen to you.

GEORGE
We're just plain old boxers.

JOE
Pvt. Long, it can't be that bad. We're all fightin' for the same cause.

Pvt. Long gives Joe a funny look.

197 INT. CAMP SIEBERT - ALABAMA - NEGRO BUS DEPOT - NIGHT

197

Joe and Sugar Ray along with many other Negro soldiers are waiting for the bus to take them into town.

JOE
No way I'm stayin' on base on a Saturday night. When's this bus comin'?

SUGAR RAY
Champ, it's never comin'. We been waiting here for 45 minutes but 2 busses have already come by for the white boys. I'm callin' a cab. C'mon.

Joe follows Sugar Ray into the White Camp Bus Depot.

198 INT. CAMP SIEBERT - ALABAMA - WHITE BUS DEPOT - NIGHT

198

All heads turn and stare at the two dark soldiers.

JOE
Sugar, we ain't 'pose to be in here with all dem peckerwoods.

SUGAR RAY
Just, usin' the phone.

Sugar Ray is about to put a nickel into the phone when he is approached by a WHITE MP twirling a billy club in his hand.

WHITE MP

Say, soldier, get over in the other bus station now!

SUGAR RAY

I'm making a phone call.

WHITE MP

Soldier, your color belongs in the other bus station.

JOE

What's our color got to do with it?

Joe puts his hand on Sugar's arm.

JOE LOUIS (CONT'D)

Easy, Sugar.

SUGAR RAY

We're wearing the same uniform. We ain't moving until I finish makin' my call.

WHITE MP

Down here, you do as your told.

He pokes Sugar in the ribs with his club.

SUGAR RAY

Don't touch me with that stick.

WHITE MP

I'll do more than touch you.

He draws his billy club back to STRIKE. Joe jumps on his back and several other MP's rush into the bus depot to break up the scuffle. Some white soldiers yell "HEY, THAT'S JOE LOUIS."

199 EXT. CAMP SIEBERT - ALABAMA - WHITE BUS DEPOT - NIGHT

199

Joe and Sugar Ray are led out in handcuffs.

WHITE MP

Back in my hometown in Mississippi, we know what to do with nigras like you.

200 INT. CAMP SIEBERT - ALABAMA - STOCKADE - MORNING

200

Joe and Sugar are locked up behind bars.

CLOSE - JOE AND SUGAR RAY

They are not happy about it either.

SUGAR RAY

What did you tell that Pvt. Long?

JOE

Yeah, Sugar I was dead wrong and I'm gonna do something about it.

ANGLE - CELL

WHITE MP#2 opens cell

WHITE MP #2

Colonel Jones wants to see you both.

201 INT. CAMP SIEBERT - ALABAMA - COLONEL JONES OFFICE - MORNING 201

Joe and Sugar Ray are escorted into his office.

COLONEL JONES

Gentlemen, at ease.

JOE

We don't appreciate having to spend the night in the pokie.

COLONEL JONES

Pvt. Robinson, Pvt. Louis. I apologize for the misunderstanding. You know you have friends high up. You're both free to go. We would all appreciate it if we kept this miscommunication quiet.

SUGAR RAY

And if we weren't Joe Louis or Sugar Ray Robinson we would be 2 niggers about to be court marshalled, or worse lynched.

202 INT. CAMP SIEBERT - ALABAMA - NEGRO MESS HALL - DAY 202

Joe, the beaming new "Dad" is passing out cigars at his table to Sugar Ray, Sandy, George and Pvt. Long. They all congratulate him.

JOE

I'm a Daddy. I named her Jacqueline, after Jack Blackburn.

A PVT. FORD sits down with his tray of food opposite Joe.

JOE

Hello Soldier, have a cigar.

Joe offers a cigar.

PVT. FORD

No thanks, Joe, or maybe should I call you Tom. Uncle Tom.

JOE

Where're you comin' from?

PVT. FORD

You and Sugar, doing all these exhibitions for the Army and the brothers are stuck up in nigger heaven.

SUGAR RAY

What?

PVT. FORD

We can't sit with the crackers down front. And all of youse go along with it?

Pvt. Ford picks up his tray and leaves the table. Everyone looks away from the embarrassed Louis.

203 INT. CAMP SIEBERT - ALABAMA - COLONEL JONES OFFICE -DAY 203

Joe is all over the Colonel. Behind him is the Joe Louis "We're on God's side" poster tacked up on the wall.

JOE

Colonel Jones, we're supposed to be fightin' this war together. You think it's right for the white G.I.s to be sittin' down front and my people stuck way up in the bleachers. We're all in the same army, same uniforms. White busses n' colored busses, that's for Hitler.

COLONEL JONES

We're in Alabama, this isn't the North.

JOE

We're in the United States of America. If I don't refuse to box, the Negro press will be all over me and you.

COLONEL JONES

It's their way of life, not mine.

JOE

I'm calling my man in Washington.

204 EXT. CAMP SIEBERT - ALABAMA - NEGRO BARRACKS - NIGHT 204

Hundreds of Negro G.I.s are celebrating. It's a BROUHAHA.

205 INT. CAMP SIEBERT - ALABAMA - NEGRO BARRACKS - NIGHT

205

Sugar Ray, George, Sandy, Pvt. Long and Ford race down the aisle of empty bunk beds to the end of the barracks.

ANGLE - JOE'S BUNK-BED

Sugar Ray rouses Joe from sleep.

JOE

Can't a man hit the hay around here?

SUGAR RAY

This is no time to be sleepin'.

JOE

What happened? The war over?

PVT. LONG

No, but it's just as good news.

PVT. FORD

We just got word all military bases are to be desegregated.

SANDY

Colored and white boys can sit together at our exhibitions.

GEORGE

All Army busses too, no mo' Jim Crow.

JOE

Is that why I hear all that commotion?

SUGAR RAY

Colored G.I.'s now feel we have a fightin' chance. Get our licks in at Hitler and Tojo before the war's over.

PVT. FORD

Joe, I want to apologize for what I said earlier.

JOE

What makes you think I did anything?

PVT. FORD

Co-inky-dinky? No soap. Thank you, Joe.

JOE

You can thank me by letting me get my 40 winks and tell those fools to hold all dat' rootin' tootin' down. I needs my beauty rest.

They leave Joe to sleep.

CLOSE -JOE

He turns over, but with a big smile on his face. The rootin' tootin', hootin' and hollerin' gets LOUDER.

206 INT. MOVIE STUDIO - BERLIN -DAY

206

Max in his soldier's uniform, duffle bag on his back walks onto his wife's set. She is shooting a scene for a film.

CLOSE - MAX

He shakes hands and puts one finger in front of his mouth, wishing to surprise her.

ANGLE - SET

Anny is in bed sleeping for this scene and is to be awakened by her HUSBAND. THE DIRECTOR lets Max stand in for him. The Director calls ACTION. Max walks in, sits down on the bed and kisses his sleeping wife. SHE JUMPS UP.

ANNY

MAX, I KNOW THAT KISS ANYWHERE. YOU RAT.
WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME WHEN YOU WERE
COMING HOME?

They hug. And the entire cast and crew applauds.

CLOSE MAX AND ANNY

In a tight embrace. They whisper.

MAX

I made it back alive. Got my honorable
discharge.

ANNY

Thank God. Our village is full of
windows.

MAX

Hitler should've stopped at the Rhineland.
We'll never beat the Russians and the
Americans.

ANNY

Our job is to survive, Max. No matter
what.

207 EXT. MONTAGE - JOE LOUIS NAMED THE WAR - DAY

207

This MONTAGE will be about WORLD WAR II. It started Sept. 3, 1939 and ended Sept. 2, 1945. A war that left 55 million dead. 20 million Russians dead. 10 million Chinese dead. 6,850,000 Germans dead. 6,123,000 Poles dead. 2 million Japanese dead. 810,000 French dead. 400,000 Italians dead. 388,000 English dead. 500,000 Americans dead. There is no NEW ORDER. It has past. The Thousand Year Reich has been smashed to SMITHEREENS in less than a decade.

Carl Byoir wrote an epic poem "Joe Louis Named The War" which was published in Collier's magazine. We will use this poem to be narrated by OSSIE DAVIS as VOICE OVER for the FOOTAGE - ours and ACTUAL NEWSREEL FOOTAGE.

CUT TO:

208 EXT. MONTAGE -JOE LOUIS NAMED THE WAR -SICILY INVASION- DAY 208

GENERAL PATTON leads the US 3rd Army invasion of Sicily, Italy.

VOICE OF OSSIE DAVIS

Joe, you have named the war.
I don't think you knew that you were
naming the war,
But you named it.
You named it when you said,
"We are going to win because we are on
God's side."

CUT TO:

209 EXT. MONTAGE-JOE LOUIS NAMED THE WAR-GERMAN POW'S CAMPS-DAY 209 *

Max Schmeling visits ALLIED POW's in German camps for Red Cross.

VOICE OF OSSIE DAVIS (CONT'D)

You were right, Joe.
And you have named the war.
This is God's war.

CUT TO:

210 EXT. MONTAGE - JOE LOUIS NAMED THE WAR -GREAT BRITAIN- DAY 210

Joe Louis and his boxing troupe land in Great Britain to entertain G.I.'s.

VOICE OF OSSIE DAVIS (CONT'D)

Maybe you read in the newspapers that the
President asked the reporters to name the
war.

(MORE)

114.

VOICE OF OSSIE DAVIS (CONT'D)
Our President is a very great man, Joe but
he does not know very much about whom to
ask to name wars.

CUT TO:

211 EXT. MONTAGE-JOE LOUIS NAMED THE WAR-3RD ARMY ON THE MOVE-DAY 211 *

General Patton's US 3rd Army on the move. The Germans are on
the run.

VOICE OF OSSIE DAVIS (CONT'D)
Reporters, Joe, are men who think with
their heads. No one could name this war
out of his head. It had to be named out
of their heart and out of the soul.

CUT TO:

212 EXT. MONTAGE - JOE LOUIS NAMED THE WAR - D-DAY - DAY

212

D-DAY. INVASION OF NORMANDY.

VOICE OF OSSIE DAVIS (CONT'D)
Maybe you are the first human being in
five thousand years
Who was not conceited in naming a war.
For all the wars that men have fought in
the past.

CUT TO:

213 EXT. MONTAGE -JOE LOUIS NAMED THE WAR -PARIS LIBERATION-DAY 213

PARIS, FRANCE IS LIBERATED.

VOICE OF OSSIE DAVIS (CONT'D)
Men on both sides said, "God is on our
side." I think you are the only man in
all history who ever said "We are on God's
side."

CUT TO:

214 EXT. MONTAGE-JOE LOUIS NAMED THE WAR-BATTLE OF THE BULGE-DAY 214 *

BATTLE OF THE BULGE.

VOICE OF OSSIE DAVIS (CONT'D)
Of course I know, Joe
that you were not thinking about naming a
war. You just put into words something
that you felt way down inside you.

(MORE)

115.

VOICE OF OSSIE DAVIS (CONT'D)

So maybe, it was your great grandfather
who named the war.

CUT TO:

215 EXT. MONTAGE - JOE LOUIS NAMED THE WAR -PIAZALE LORETO- DAY 215

MUSSOLINI and his mistress CLARETTA PETACCI at the Piazzale Loreto in Milan, hanging upside down, stone cold dead from a light pole at an Esso station. It seems all of Milan has turned out to kick, scream and curse at IL DUCE and his whore.

VOICE OF OSSIE DAVIS (CONT'D)

I imagine he was born a free man, Joe
And then someone brought him to America
And made a slave out of him
And maybe through the long nights he
dreamed of being free again.

CUT TO:

216 EXT. MONTAGE -JOE LOUIS NAMED THE WAR-TRUMAN WHITE HOUSE-DAY 216 *

FDR DIES, IS SUCCEDED BY HARRY TRUMAN.

VOICE OF OSSIE DAVIS (CONT'D)

Because he knew the bitterness
And the agony of slavery
He knew the value of freedom
And wanted it again
And maybe he was there, Joe.

CUT TO:

217 EXT. MONTAGE -JOE LOUIS NAMED THE WAR -GOEBBELS BUNKER- DAY 217

BUNKER IN REICH CHANCELLERY IN BERLIN. The six children of Goebbels and his wife Magda lie dead at their feet. Goebbels hands his wife a cyanide pill, she swallows it. He then orders his valet to burn all the bodies. He takes his pill. Goebbels and Magda lie dead upon their children's bodies.

VOICE OF OSSIE DAVIS (CONT'D)

When Abraham Lincoln wrote the
Emancipation Proclamation
And said that this really was a free
country
And made it come true.

CUT TO:

218 EXT. MONTAGE - JOE LOUIS NAMED THE WAR-DACHAU LIBERATION-DAY 218 *

US 7TH ARMY LIBERATES DACHAU

VOICE OF OSSIE DAVIS (CONT'D)

That white men and black men were all
 free, that here, it didn't make any
 difference
 About a man's race or creed or color
 That this was really a country where all
 men were free.

CUT TO:

219 EXT. MONTAGE -JOE LOUIS NAMED THE WAR -HITLER'S BUNKER- DAY 219

HITLER'S BUNKER REICH CHANCELLERY

50 feet below the streets of Berlin which are under siege by a
 rain of bombs and artillery Hitler dreams of victory. He gives
 his wife EVA BRAUN a cyanide pill. She dies. He then tells his
 valet, MAJOR HEINZ LINGE to burn their bodies so that they don't
 go on display in Moscow, like Mussolini's. He takes his pill,
 puts a German luger into his mouth and blows his brains out.
 Hitler falls next to his already dead dog Blondi.

VOICE OF OSSIE DAVIS (CONT'D)

And so, maybe, you just felt what he felt.
 And so you named the war
 This is God's war.

CUT TO:

220 EXT. MONTAGE -JOE LOUIS NAMED THE WAR -HAMBURG STREETS- DAY 220

In the rain, limping slightly and looking very drawn, in
 nondescript civilian clothes, hand-in-hand with Anny, Max
 wanders in bewilderment through the devastated bombed out
 streets, with a few other forlorn survivors in the background as
 Allied tanks roll by.

VOICE OF OSSIE DAVIS (CONT'D)

This is not the first time that someone
 like Hitler thought he was bigger than God
 Or that someone like Hirohito thought he
 was God.

CUT TO:

221 EXT. MONTAGE - JOE LOUIS NAMED THE WAR - V-E DAY - DAY 221

V-E DAY VICTORY OVER EUROPE. TIMES SQUARE - NY. JUBILATION

VOICE OF OSSIE DAVIS (CONT'D)

The whole history of mankind has been a
 struggle against men like this.
 And that's why we can be sure that we are
 on God's side

(MORE)

117.

VOICE OF OSSIE DAVIS (CONT'D)
Because in the long run the people who are
on God's side have always won.

CUT TO:

222 EXT. MONTAGE -JOE LOUIS NAMED THE WAR-ATOMIC BOMB-HIROSHIMA- 222 *
DAY

ATOMIC BOMB DROPPED ON HIROSHIMA, JAPAN. 150,000 KILLED.

VOICE OF OSSIE DAVIS (CONT'D)
The rights of free men were not won at
once.
God has been fighting these wars
As long as there have been men to set
free.

CUT TO:

223 EXT. MONTAGE - JOE LOUIS NAMED THE WAR-ATOMIC BOMB-NAGASAKI- 223 *
DAY

ATOMIC BOMB DROPPED ON NAGASAKI, JAPAN. 70,000 KILLED.

VOICE OF OSSIE DAVIS (CONT'D)
Everyone knows that here in America
We had to fight to be free
And we had to fight to stay free
And we are fighting now to stay free
What too many of us forgot, Joe was just
what you reminded us of.

CUT TO:

224 EXT. MONTAGE - JOE LOUIS NAMED THE WAR - V-J DAY -USS 224 *
MISSOURI - DAY

V-J DAY VICTORY OVER JAPAN. The Japanese high command signs an
agreement of unconditional surrender in Tokyo Bay aboard the USS
Missouri.

VOICE OF OSSIE DAVIS (CONT'D)
That freedom is part of God's plan for us.
So, if we want to be free men, now

CUT TO:

225 EXT. MONTAGE - JOE LOUIS NAMED THE WAR -SUGIYAMA SUICIDE-DAY 225 *

GENERAL HAJIME SUGIYAMA- JAPANESE COMMANDER OT THE FIRST
IMPERIAL ARMY COMMITS HARI KARI.

VOICE OF OSSIE DAVIS (CONT'D)

Let us all pray for faith,
And wisdom and strength.

CUT TO:

226 EXT. MONTAGE - JOE LOUIS NAMED THE WAR-CAMP SHANKS, NEW YORK 226 *
- DAY

Joe is discharged before a military review. He is given the
LEGION of MERIT MEDAL by MAJOR GENERAL KELLS. He speaks of
Joe's exceptional meritorious conduct: 46 months of service,
traveled over 70,000 miles and entertained 5,000,000 service
men.

VOICE OF OSSIE DAVIS (CONT'D)

To fight through to glorious victory.
On God's side
In God's war

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT III

FADE IN:

ACT IV

227 INT. CIROS - LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

227

Joe watches Lena Horne sing "GOOD FOR NUTHIN' JOE."

CLOSE - JOE

The flame still burns for "THE HORN." WE notice that his face
is much fuller, he has filled out during the war.

228 INT. CIROS - LOS ANGELES - LENA'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

228

Joe knocks and enters Lena's dressing room. She's in the
process of getting out of her wardrobe.

JOE

I know you weren't singin' 'bout me.

He helps her out of her dress.

JOE (CONT'D)

Must be some other Joe you sneakin' round
wit'.

LENA

Ain't no other Joe. I'm singin' 'bout ya
sorry jive nigger ass.

JOE

Lena, baby, why it gotta be all like dat'?

LENA

Joe, you promised you would marry me as soon as you got divorced. And you is divorced.

JOE

Baby I still need some more time. How would it look if I married you before the ink is dry on the divorce papers?

LENA

I don't care how it would look. Why should we care?

JOE

I need time. I can't do that to Marva, I can't do that to my baby girl Jackie. I would feel like a dog.

LENA

That don't stop you from screwin' dem white Hollywood bitches like Lana Turner and Sonja Henjie.

Joe's face goes blank.

LENA (CONT'D)

Didn't think I knew that? Didn't think I would find out huh? So don't give me that bullshit about you feelin' like a dog. You a low down dirty hound black motherfuckin' dog.

JOE

Whoa, Baby, why ya call me out of my name? ... I thought we'd have a little fun tonight, and then in the morning pick you up for the USO golf tournament?

LENA

I can't go with you Joe. I got another gig.

JOE

You made a date with me.

LENA

And I done broke it.

Joe takes off a gold ID bracelet and drops it on her dresser. (It reads Joe on the outside and Lena on the inside).

JOE

Here, you can have this back too!

Lena picks it up and hits Joe flush in the face with it, drawing blood.. He wipes his head with his hand and sees the crimson. Joe hits Lena with a left hook that knocks her back onto the floor. The Brown Bomber then jumps on top of Lena and commences to choking the shit out of her. Lena's screams bring in an older COUSIN EDWINA. She attempts to pull him off of her.

COUSIN EDWINA

Joe, if you don't stop. I'm callin' the police, and I'll call the papers.

CLOSE - JOE

Joe comes to his senses and lets go of Lena.

ANGLE - DRESSING ROOM

While Cousin Edwina attends to her, Joe exits shaking visibly.

229 INT. LOUIS' CHICAGO HOME - DAY

229

Joe, band aid on forehead, is at his former home. He holds his infant daughter Jackie.

JOE

For her sake. Please give me another chance. Let's get remarried. I want us to be together. You, Jackie and me.

MARVA

Joe.

JOE

I'm through with Lena. I should've kept up my left.

MARVA

It's not just Lena. It's all the other Lena's. You promised me early on Joe that you would quit boxing. Your daughter and I are still waiting.

JOE

If I quit will you marry me.. again?

Marva hesitates. She looks at her ex holding their daughter. She still loves him.

MARVA

Only a damn fool would stay married to you Joe.

JOE

C'mon, baby...

MARVA

I guess I'm a damn fool.

JOE

One mo' fight. Just as soon as I can get out of this IRS mess.

MARVA

What IRS mess?

JOE

I don't know.

MARVA

What do you mean you don't know? How did this happen?

JOE

Baby, I don't know. I have to find out.

Marva takes the child out of his arms.

230 INT. MARSHALL MILES OFFICE - CHICAGO - DAY

230

MARSHALL MILES, Joe's new manager heads up a meeting with The Brown Bomber and his accountant TED JONES.

JOE

Marshall, Ted, I don't like money, but it quiets my nerves.

MARSHALL

Joe, we're here for you, even though it took me a week to track you down..

TED JONES

Joe, you owe \$81,000 in taxes.

JOE

OK. Pay the tax man.

TED JONES

You have to know how to work big finance, know the ropes.

JOE

What should I do?

TED JONES

Don't pay them now. Let it build up some more and then we can make a deal and settle for less.

JOE

That don't sound right to me.

Joe looks to Marshall, he nods in approval.

JOE

OK. You're the tax expert.

MARSHALL

While we're on the subject of big finance, the other day I went over to Uncle Mike's office to get the 100,000 bucks for the Tami Mauriello fight we agreed to stash...and you know what, Joe?

Joe says nothing.

MARSHALL

Uncle Mike is down in Miami, recovering from his stroke so Strauss pulls a bunch of canceled checks and money orders made out to you. Joe, my two questions are these. Number one - what did you spend it on? Number two - why in hell did you spend everything except 500 dollars?

JOE

Marshall, I invested \$43,000 in the Rhum Boogie Cafe in Chicago with my main man Leonard Reed. I don't know where the rest went. Y'know, friends, golf. Women, they like nice things. I needed some new vines, put on some weight in the Army, and there's all my buddies on my softball team, needed eatin' money and a new bus.

MARSHALL

But why did you leave the five yards?

JOE

I didn't want to spend it all. Save a little for a rainy day.

Joe laughs. Marshall does not.

MARSHALL

Joe, that's hell of a way to run a railroad. You asked me to take this job when Roxie and Black ran into trouble with the law. You have to help me to help you. Your financial situation is in a bad way.

JOE

You wanna help me? Good. Do your job as my manager and get me a quick pay day.

MARSHALL

What about that old man Jersey Joe Walcott? We're scrapin' the bottom of the barrel. He'll be a pushover.

231 INT. BERLIN GYM - DAY

231

Anny and Max walk over to Max Machon who is working with a young up-and-coming heavyweight on his footwork.

MACHON

Take a break.

The fighter pays his respects to Max then leaves. Machon greets Anny and Max.

MACHON

Let's go in the back. You gotta be careful nowadays. The Allies have informants everywhere.

232 INT. BERLIN GYM - MACHON'S OFFICE - DAY

232

They stand around a desk.

ANNY

Max didn't want to come to you but I begged him.

MAX

I need your help.

MACHON

You're too old Max.

MAX

I can do this.

MACHON

These youngsters will mop the canvas with you.

MAX

My experience in the ring can make up for what age has taken from me.

MACHON

We all have lost something from the war, besides I'm a former Nazi.

MAX

Germany, the world must move on.

ANNY

Are you aware the British had Max locked up for 3 months and fined 10,000 marks for not having a building permit?

MACHON

I am.

MAX

We need this money. We need this money to eat.

ANNY

What are we suppose to live on?

MACHON

Not on boxing!

ANNY

Then we'll do it on our own.

MACHON

Max, how old are you?

MAX

Soon, I'll be 42.

MACHON

42, that's old for a fighter.

MAX

Yes it is.

Machon smiles.

233 EXT. WALDSTADION - SCHMELING VS. VOLLMER - DAY

233

Title - Schmeling vs. Vollmer
Waldstadion.
Frankfurt, Germany
September 28, 1947

40,000 fight fans stand and cheer in the outdoor arena (many of them American GI's) as Max batters the younger but game WERNER VOLLIMER around the ring.

ANGLE - RING

Vollmer, right eye swollen, nose bleeding walks right into Max's Sunday punch, his right hand. Vollmer goes down like a 50 pound bag of Idaho potatoes. The REFEREE doesn't even finish the count. Vollmer is not waking up anytime soon.

Anny rushes into the ring and hugs Max along with Machon.

ANGLE - CROWD

The thunderous cheers by Germans and American GI's alike turn into them singing HAPPY BIRTHDAY. It's Max's 42nd birthday.

CLOSE - MAX

For a fleeting moment, that feeling is back. He's back on top of the world.

234 EXT. GOLF CLUBHOUSE - DAY

234

Joe hugs John Roxborough in front of the clubhouse.

JOE

Roxie, it's so great so see you.

ROXBOROUGH

You too.

JOE

I'd never thought you'd get out of the big house.

ROXBOROUGH

Joe, at times I thought the same thing.

235 EXT. GOLF COURSE - THE GREENS - DAY

235

Joe and Roxborough walk the greens to the next hole.

JOE

So Marva and I are having another child.

ROXBOROUGH

Congratulations.

JOE

Roxie, this time I feel it's gonna be a boy.

ROXBOROUGH

If I may ask, how's it going with Marva and you?

JOE

She's been great, puttin' up with my bullshit. I talked her out of divorcing me a second time.

ROXBOROUGH

Hope you learned your lesson. Tell me the straight skinny with Black?

JOE

That Black skunk, his name is mud. Why was I giving him 25% of my earnings? For what? I canned him.

ROXBOROUGH

What did he do?

JOE

I tried to drop the lug on that cheap bastard for \$25,000.

ROXBOROUGH

Did he have it?

JOE

In spades. Black has more money than you can shake a stick at. I needed only \$25,000 and that would have been Marva's total divorce settlement. Now I have to end up giving her 25% of all my future earnings. Black cost me a ton of dough.

ROXBOROUGH

I'm sorry to hear that.

JOE

He sold me down the river. Sooner or later you find out who your friends are.

ROXBOROUGH

Joe, let me tell you something. First your legs go. Then you lose your reflexes, and then you lose your friends. Champ, you are old, washed up and you need to hang the gloves up.

It pains Roxborough to tell Joe this.

CLOSE - JOE

236 INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - LOUIS VS. WALCOTT - NIGHT

236

Title - Louis vs. Walcott
Madison Square Garden
N.Y. N.Y.
December 5, 1947

The Garden CROWD is on their feet cheering, but alas not for The Brown Bomber but for JERSEY JOE WALCOTT. He's older than Louis.

ANGLE -RING

Jersey Joe Walcott bounces around the ring triumphantly with arms raised playing to the CROWD. Our eyes are startled at the overweight body of Joe Louis as he tries to leave the ring.

CLOSE - JOE AND SEAMON

JOE
I'm leavin'. I stunk it up.

Seamon holds him back around the waist.

JOE (CONT'D)
Mannie, let me go.

SEAMON
Joe, if you leave the ring it will be an automatic disqualification.

CLOSE - MICROPHONE

WE FOLLOW the microphone down from the rafters of The Garden where it lands into the hands of Ring Announcer Harry Balogh.

ANGLE - RING

HARRY BALOGH
Judge Frank Forbes scores it, 8 rounds
Louis, 6 Walcott and 1 even.

THE CROWD BOOS!

CLOSE - WALCOTT

He's not happy either.

VOICE OF HARRY BALOGH (CONT'D)
Referee Ruby Goldstein scores it, 7 rounds
Walcott, 6 rounds Louis and 2 even.

THE CROWD CHEERS. Walcott's face gets tense.

CLOSE -JOE

He and everyone else awaits this decision. The suspense builds.

VOICE OF HARRY BALOGH (CONT'D)
Judge Marty Monroe scored it nine rounds
to six... Louis.

THE CROWD GOES CRAZY WITH BOOS. Everything is being thrown into the ring. Joe slumps over to a dejected Jersey Joe Walcott and hugs him.

VOICE OF HARRY BALOGH (CONT'D)

The winner by split decision and STILL the heavyweight champion of the world, Joe Louis.

CLOSE - JOE AND WALCOTT

JOE

I'm sorry, Joe.

The Garden's BOOS rain down on Louis like a tropical storm. He is ashamed of his performance. He knows he lost this fight. He knows he has lost his skills.

ANGLE - CROWD

As Joe leaves the ring to jeers, his head is down.

FAN #1

Fixed. It was fixed.

FAN #2

You're over the hill Joe. Quit while you're ahead.

FAN #3

Joe, you're a bum. You stink. Jersey Joe won this fight. The judges are blind. How much did ya pay them?

237 INT. LOUIS' CHICAGO HOME - DAY

237

A portly Joe sporting a new beard holds his one month old son, JOE LOUIS BARROW JR. (PUNCHY). Jackie plays on the floor at his feet.

JOE

Baby, pack ya bags, kids too. We're going to Europe. I'm doing some exhibitions over there to make some money.

MARVA

Joe, I don't know how to tell you any simpler than you pack your bags. This time I mean it. Joe, in the beginning I felt like Cinderella. All we did was travel, travel and travel.

JOE

We can still travel.

MARVA

It used to be exciting when I was younger. But not now, not with our children.

JOE

We can take Jackie and Punchy with us.

MARVA

Joe, please try to listen what I'm saying. I can't do this anymore. I'm getting a divorce.

Joe is despondent.

MARVA

Every birthday Jackie has had you have been out of town. I had to buy her the birthday presents, ship them to where ever you were and have Roxie ship them back so Jackie would think you sent them.

JOE

Baby, you forget all the times I would come home from trips with presents for Jackie and you.

MARVA

Yeah, and once again your timing is off. It's not all your fault. Fame is the most difficult thing that can happen to a relationship. Joe, I think a man can handle it more easily than a woman.

JOE

You handled it.

MARVA

I'm done handling it. Joe, you don't know how many times crowds knocked my hat off, elbowed me, pushed me, ran me over to get your autograph like I wasn't even there.

JOE

I'm sorry.

MARVA

Don't be. Not that it matters anymore but when are you going to retire? You promised.

JOE

I know, baby, but those boos. First time I ever heard 'em, hurt more 'n the punches, right down into my soul. I gotta lace em' up again. I can't go out like this, like a bum, besides I'm in the fightin' business.

MARVA

Well, the fightin' business stinks to high heaven.

JOE

It wasn't stinkin' when you were in your diamonds, pearls and furs.

MARVA

None of that ever mattered to me. I wanted you.

CLOSE - JOE

He knows in his heart all of his soon-to-be "ex's" words ring true.

JOE

We both married too young, anyway.

238 INT. IRS CHICAGO BRANCH OFFICE - DAY

238

Joe, Truman and Marshall sit in the office of IRS Branch Manager COLLINS

COLLINS

I'll tell you gentlemen up front I don't have good news.

Nobody says anything

COLLINS (CONT'D)

It took us a lot of work to untangle your past returns from 1945-1949 but we accomplished it. Joe Louis you owe the Internal Revenue Service one million dollars in back taxes.

Joe is dumbfounded

JOE

Jesus H. Christ! One million dollars?

TRUMAN

Can we hear the specifics?

MARSHALL

How can this be?

COLLINS

The donations Mr. Louis made to the Navy and Army Relief Funds are taxable.

TRUMAN

Every dime went to the wives and family members of men killed in service.

COLLINS

The checks were made out to Joe Louis. He was required required to declare them as private income and then take a deduction as a charitable contribution.

JOE

That ain't right.

COLLINS

\$250,000 in deductions have been disallowed. Monies borrowed from Mike Jacobs.

TRUMAN

But that's money he spent on fellow servicemen throughout the war - a charitable expense.

COLLINS

Not according to our homework. The 25% managerial shares of gross income given to Marva Louis after each fight, no taxes were paid on that either.

JOE

What's wrong with that? That was my divorce settlement!

COLLINS

Mr. Louis, who drew up the divorce settlement?

JOE

Sol Strauss.

COLLINS

And who is that?

JOE

Mike Jacobs' first cousin.

COLLINS

Well, he cost you a bundle. The contract states, "In lieu of alimony".

JOE

That's right, so --.

COLLINS

No, that's not right Mr. Louis. It should have read, "In lieu of alimony and support." Then the sum you paid Mrs. Louis would have been her tax liability, not yours.

JOE

Just because of two little words?

COLLINS

Mr. Louis, in a legal document, every word counts.

Joe is sinking further and further into his chair

MARSHALL

Mr. Collins, there is no further need to go into the details here.

COLLINS

You will get the full audit.

MARSHALL

We would like that.

COLLINS

Because of the sizeable amount, including penalties and interest we have no other choice than to apply a lien on Joe Louis Barrow. Any revenue to be received from his properties will be frozen.

JOE

Like our horse farm in Spring Hill? Marva was hopin' to retire there. It'll break her heart.

COLLINS

And he may not sell anything unless the entire proceeds go to paying off his back taxes.

Everyone is stunned

JOE

How am I gonna live? Where am I gonna get money like dat?

TRUMAN

Can't the government accept a compromise on the back taxes? Joe can't possibly pay the full amount, he was merely following the advice of his accountants.

COLLINS

I have no authority in that regard. I'm
sorry Mr. Louis. The judgement stands.

239 INT. JOE'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

239

Joe sits on the rub down table looking at Mannie. His face says
"I don't want this fight".

JOE

Mannie, I needed more time. They rushed
me into it.

SEAMON

So they could use the ballpark steada the
Garden. Make more money.

JOE

I'm sick of that word.

SEAMON

Want me to call it off? Say ya hurt?

JOE

I gotta fight. The government wants their
money. Mannie, I need a couple of minutes
alone.

MANNIE

Sure thing. I'll be outside if you need
me.

Mannie leaves and Joe gets off the table and gets down on his
knees to pray.

CLOSE - JOE

JOE

Lawd, I don't want to make a ton of money.
Just let me make a dollar more than I
need. Amen

240 INT. CHARLES DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

240

EZZARD CHARLES the reigning heavyweight champion of the world
shadow boxes under the observance of his manager RAY ARCEL.

EZZARD

Ray, I don't want to fight. Not this one.

ARCEL

This is the fight game. You're in the
hurtin' business.

EZZARD

Joe was my boyhood idol.

ARCEL

You signed the contract. You want the world to consider you the legitimate heavyweight champ? You put Joe down if you want to keep ya crown.

EZZARD

But I can't. I won't.

ARCEL

You have to. Joe is 36 years old, he hasn't fought in 27 months. The King always has to die. That's the way it is. That's the way it always will be.

EZZARD

I won't be happy about it.

241 EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - LOUIS VS. CHARLES -ROUND 14- NIGHT 241

Title - Louis vs. Charles
Yankee Stadium
Bronx, New York
September 7, 1950

CARD - ROUND 14

ANGLE - RING

It is not a pretty sight. Joe is bleeding from cuts above both eyes, nose and his upper lip. Charles lands a big right to Joe's jaw then a combination of heavy head and body shots.

CLOSE - JOE

He's unable to cheat Father Time, his timing is way off. Fistic senility has become entrenched.

ANGLE - RING

Charles comes in and Joe hits him dead on the jaw.

CLOSE - BELL

The Official Timekeeper hits the bell. The round is over.

ANGLE - JOE'S CORNER

Mannie tries to stop the bleeding, but where does he start? Joe is oozing blood.

JOE
I ain't got it. I don't have it any more.

MANNIE
Stay away. Stay away.

Sugar sticks his head into the corner.

SUGAR RAY
Champ, you gotta go out like a champ. On
your feet Champ. On your feet. On your
feet.

CLOSE - BELL

The Official Timekeeper hits it.

242 EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - LOUIS VS. CHARLES -ROUND 15- NIGHT 242

ANGLE - JOE'S CORNER

Mannie and Marshall have to lift the exhausted Joe off his stool so he begin the 15th and final round, "once more into the breach."

ANGLE - RING

Charles peppers Joe's face with jabs and the blood starts flowing again. Joe is backed into the ropes, helpless, defenseless but in deference for his childhood idol Charles holds back, he leaves him with his dignity.

CLOSE - BELL

The Official Timekeeper hits it. This fight is over. An ERA is over.

243 INT. JOE'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT 243

Joe sits on the rubdown table holding ice bags to his bloody and swollen face. If one looks closely you can tell he has been crying also. The PRESS stands quietly, respectfully before him.

CLOSE - JOE

JOE
That's show business. I enjoyed the
fight, and I want to thank you all. I done
the best I can. I'll never fight again.

ANGLE - LOCKER ROOM

The PRESS leaves. Jimmy Cannon whispers something into his ear.

JOE
Thanks Jimmy.

244 EXT. JOE'S DRESSING ROOM - SHOWER - NIGHT

244

Joe comes out of the shower. One eye is completely swollen shut now and he has to squint to see out of the other. Sugar Ray helps him put on his clothes, his shoes. Sugar is basically assisting an old blind man.

245 INT. YANKEE STADIUM TUNNEL - NIGHT

245

Joe leans on Sugar Ray as they walk away into a dark tunnel leading out of Yankee Stadium.

SUGAR RAY
It's gonna be alright Champ. Ya man Sugar
is right here.

246 EXT. HOLLENSTEDT GAME RESERVE - DAWN

246

A FOX is being chased by HUNTING DOGS. Max with rifle in hands tries to keep up.

CLOSE - Max running

CUT TO:

247 EXT. ROAD -DAWN

247

Max in sweat-suit is doing his early morning roadwork. Machon drives a car alongside him.

MACHON
Keep up the pace.
Let's go old man.

CUT TO:

248 EXT. HOLLENSTEDT GAME RESERVE - DAWN

248

The HUNT continues. WE SEE QUICK FLASHES of the FOX, HUNTING DOGS and a huffing and puffing Schmeling, trying to keep up with the pursuit.

CUT TO:

249 EXT. BERLINER WALDBUHNE - SCHELMING VS. VOGT - DAY

249

Title - Schelming vs. Vogt
Berliner Waldbuhne
Berlin, Germany
October 31, 1948

The CROWD cheers in the outdoor arena as RICHARD VOGT batters an ancient Max 43 years old from pillar to post. YOUTH MUST BE SERVED.

CLOSE - ANNY

Anny at ringside, can't watch. She buries her face in her hands.

CUT TO:

250 EXT. HOLLENSTEDT GAME RESERVE - DAWN

250

The fox caught. He has climbed onto a tree just out of the reach of the snapping jaws of the barking like crazy hunting dogs.

251 INT. BERLINER WALDBUENE - SCHELMING VS. VOGT -ROUND 10- DAY 251

ANGLE - RING

Max is caught against the corner. He can't fight his way out as he gets hit by a wave of punches. The crimson begins to flow.

CLOSE - MACHON

MACHON

Get out of the corner.

Get out of the corner.

ANGLE - RING

The REFEREE holds up the right hand of Vogt. He has easily won a 10 round decision. THE CROWD CHEERS. Max congratulates him the is met by Anny who has climbed into the ring.

MAX

I quit.

He hugs her. Max looks at Machon.

MAX (CONT'D)

Machon, I quit.

MACHON

You went on out on your feet, standing.

If you gotta go this is the way to do it.

CUT TO:

252 EXT. HOLLENSTEDT GAME RESERVE - DAWN

252

CLOSE - FOX

He's trapped.

CLOSE - FOX IN SIGHT HAIRS

CLOSE - MAX

He aims rifle.

MAX (O.S.)

I quit.

He pulls trigger. BAM. The hunting dogs stop barking. The hunt is over.

253 INT. GYM - NIGHT

253

John tries to reason with the overweight Joe, who is skipping rope.

ROXBOROUGH

Joe, I don't like this. I thought you quit.

JOE

Ain't no quit in Joe. I'm coming out of retirement.

ROXBOROUGH

This young Italian kid is a brawler. Has 32 KO's in 37 undefeated fights.

JOE

Roxie, I owe Uncle Sam a million bucks, \$100,000 just in interest every year. Tell me how can I turn \$300,000 down? Tell me?

ROXBOROUGH

I just wish it wasn't against this kid Rocky Marciano. In your best days he would have given you less trouble than 2-Ton Tony Galento did.

JOE

This old dog has a trick or two.

ROXBOROUGH

I'm begging you in the name of CHAPPIE, don't fight Marciano, fight somebody else.

JOE

Somebody else doesn't get the gate that guarantees me \$300,000

ROXBOROUGH

I'm seriously worried for your health.

JOE

What else is new? John Roxborough you're the original "Nervous Nellie".

This gets a small chuckle from the both of them.

JOE LOUIS (CONT'D)

Roxie, it's my son's birthday, I got the shorts, can you loan me some scratch?

ROXBOROUGH

Champ, whatever you need.

254 EXT. CHICAGO STREETS - DAY

254

Joe loaded down with birthday gifts for his 4 year old son "Punchy" walks with him in tow.

CLOSE - PUNCHY

Punchy's face is beaming, His famous father is spending time with him.

TRACKING SHOT

PUNCHY

Thank you for the birthday presents Daddy.

JOE

You're welcome Punchy.

PUNCHY

Daddy, guess what?

JOE

What?

PUNCHY

Guess what is my favorite birthday gift?

JOE

Tell me.

PUNCHY

Daddy, guess.

JOE

The Hopalong Cassidy cowboy hat?

PUNCHY

No, Having you spend my fourth birthday with me.

JOE

That's so sweet. Punchy, that's what
Daddies are for.

PUNCHY

Daddy?

JOE

Yes, Punchy.

PUNCHY

Why are you fighting again?

JOE

I have to.

PUNCHY

Why?

JOE

Because of the money.

PUNCHY

Is this your last fight?

JOE

Yes, son this is my last fight.

255 EXT. LOUIS' CHICAGO HOME - NIGHT

255

Joe is stopped by a group of admirers waiting for him in front of Marva's home, they all want an autograph, calling out, "sign this, sign that, can you sign this for my son?, etc." Joe obliges them all and he momentarily forgets his pushed aside son.

ANGLE PUNCHY

WE DOLLY SLOW INTO A CLOSE UP ON PUNCHY where even at his young age he has come to the realization that he will always have to share his father with the whole world, always to be pushed into the background.

CLOSER PUNCHY

He talks.

PUNCHY

But it's my birthday. Daddy, you're
suppose to be with me.

256 INT. LOUIS' CHICAGO HOME - DAY

256

Punchy opening all his gifts

JACKIE

Daddy, that's no fair. Punchy is getting everything.

MARVA

Jackie, it's your brother's birthday.

JOE

I got something for you too, Princess.

Joe hands his daughter a wrapped box. She gives him a hug.

JACKIE

Thank you Daddy.

JOE

Baby, I miss you and the kids. I need y'all.

MARVA

They miss you too.

Jackie has unwrapped her gift. It's a Negro doll.

JACKIE

Thank you Daddy. This is what I wanted.

JOE

Baby, after this Marciano fight I'm done fightin'.

MARVA

Kids, take your toys and go into the playroom and let Daddy and Mommy talk.

JACKIE

No fightin'.

PUNCHY

No arguments.

JOE

We Promise.

MARVA

Now go!

They do as told.

MARVA

You know that trust fund we set up for the kids? For their college education?

JOE

I didn't touch it.

MARVA

Joe. I'm not accusing you. I just want you to know your friends at the IRS grabbed it.

Joe is in disbelief.

JOE

How can they do that? That's our babies' college money.

MARVA

The US government can do whatever they want.

JOE

Baby, I'm so sorry. I'll make that money back. What about us? Let's give it another shot.

MARVA

Joe, I'm dating. I didn't want you to hear it in the streets.

Joe is doubly crushed.

257 INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN-LOUIS VS. MARCIANO ROUND 1 -NIGHT 257 *

Title - Louis vs. Marciano
Madison Square Garden
NY. NY.
October 26, 1951

A sold out Garden and a nationwide televised audience are witnessing the changing of the guard. One of the saddest nights in sports history.

CARD - ROUND ONE

ANGLE - RING

ROCKY MARCIANO comes out of his corner taking the fight to Joe at the outset. He fires his devastating rights at will against his much older and slower opponent. Joe is still somewhat successful at blocking or dodging the blows and his jabs keep Rocky off balance.

258 INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN-LOUIS VS. MARCIANO ROUND 4 -NIGHT 258 *

CARD - ROUND FOUR

Rocky goes into a crouch to not allow Joe to get a big clean shot at him. However Joe's left jab scores points. Both fighters faces are taking a beating.

CLOSE - JOE

Joe's mug is swollen and red

CLOSE - ROCKY

Rocky has a bad cut above the eye and he is bleeding from the nose.

ANGLE- RING

Joe hits Rocky with a right to the jaw; he's momentarily staggered but presses on.

ANGLE - JOE'S CORNER

Mannie and Marshall work frantically to reenergize Joe. It's as if somebody pulled a switch. Joe is lifeless. 37 years old is a dinosaur in the fight game -- that and poor conditioning have betrayed the Brown Bomber. His legs are gone, finished.

CLOSE - BELL

The Official Timekeeper hits it.

ANGLE - RING

Mannie and Marshall have to push Joe off his stool so he can answer the bell.

259 INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN-LOUIS VS. MARCIANO ROUND 8 -NIGHT 259 *

CARD - ROUND EIGHT

ANGLE - RING

The Rock is coming on like a Mack Truck. He's relentless. Joe is driven against the ropes from a fusillade of punches by the young challenger.

CLOSE - ROCKY

He hits Joe with two whooping left hooks.

CLOSE - JOE

Joe goes down like he was shot.

ANGLE - RING

Referee Ruby Goldstein counts over the fallen Joe who gets up at the count of eight.

Rocky literally smelling blood- his own and Joe's hits him with a pile driver left followed by a looping right hand that's come all the way up from Sicily via Brockton, Mass. This missile hits Joe on the neck and sends the now very ancient looking man, our bloodied "Lear" through the ropes.

ANGLE - APRON

Joe is on the apron of the ring. One of his legs hangs on the lower rung. We see the bald spot on Joe's head, now cradled in Sugar's arms while Referee Ruby Goldstein gives the count.

SUGAR RAY

Joe, Joe you'll be all right. Champ you'll be OK.

Referee Ruby Goldstein stops the count at four and waves his arms. It's over. This couldn't have been the Great Joe Louis. That guy in the ring is an imposter, Joe's old Uncle. It has to be.

CUT TO:

260 INT. LOUIS' CHICAGO HOME -NIGHT

260

Marva is crying as she watches her love being helped off the canvas on the television console.

CUT TO:

261 INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - LOUIS VS. MARCIANO - NIGHT

261

ANGLE - RING

Rocky comes over to see how Joe is doing. This is a sad moment. Hardly a dry eye in the joint. No one, no one is rejoicing except AL WEILL, Rocky's trainer, who is bouncing around the ring.

AL WEILL

Did ya see dat? Didya see dat? My boy Rocky knocked out the great Joe Louis.

John Roxborough gets in his face.

ROXBOROUGH

Your boy Rocky didn't knock out the great Joe Louis. He beat Joe Louis' shadow.

262 INT. JOE'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

262

It is not unlike a morgue. Before a room of reporters including Jimmy Cannon, Joe is plopped down on the rubdown table. Mannie attends to him. Next to him Sugar Ray Robinson is crying like a baby.

JOE

Sugar, what's the use of crying? The better man won. That's all. Marciano is a good puncher and he's hard to hit. I'm not too disappointed. I only hope everybody feels the same way I do about it. I'm not looking for sympathy from anybody. I guess everything happens for the best. That's show business.

ANGLE - DRESSING ROOM

Rocky Marciano comes into the dressing room and heads straight to Joe. The Rock is weeping.

ROCKY

Joe, I'm sorry.

JOE

Nothin' to be sorry 'bout. I've been on the other end a couple of times. Ye're on your way.

They hug, Rocky turns and leaves.

CLOSE - JOE

JOE

I enjoyed the fight and I thank you all. I done the best I can. I'll never fight again.

CLOSE - JIMMY CANNON

CLOSE - SUGAR RAY ROBINSON

CLOSE JOHN ROXBOROUGH

They are happy Joe has made this step.

263 INT. TRUMAN GIBSON'S OFFICE - CHICAGO - DAY

263

Truman, Marshall, Freddie, Joe and Wrestling Promoter RAY TABANI sit around a conference table.

TRUMAN

Joe, this is Ray Tabani and he has an offer for you.

JOE

If it's money, I'm all ears.

TABANI

Joe, I've been a fan of yours since way back and I feel like a lot of your fans.

(MORE)

TABANI (CONT'D)

Just cause you retired from the ring
shouldn't mean you retired from the ring.

JOE

Mr. Tabani you lost me.

TABANI

Champ, I'm a wrestling promoter. I'm
putting a hard offer of 100,000 clams on
the table for you to go on tour as a
professional wrestler.

FREDDIE

Joe's not a wrestler.

MARSHALL

We decline.

JOE

Hold on now. How much again?

TABANI

100,000 bananas guaranteed.

FREDDIE

Joe has never thrown a fight in his life..
Wrestling is fixed.

TABANI

It's not fixed. . . . it's rehearsed.

MARSHALL

Fixed.

TABANI

Choreographed.

FREDDIE

Fixed.

TABANI

Staged. It's not fixed... rehearsed.

JOE

Truman, you might as well put your 2 cents
in.

TRUMAN

It's phonus bolonus, fake. I advise
against it but it's your decision.

FREDDIE

This would be like watching the President
of the United States washing dishes.

JOE

The IRS man wants their money and I gotta get it. It beats stealin'.

264 EXT. TRUMAN GIBSON'S OFFICE - CHICAGO - DAY

264

As Joe and Freddie leave Truman's office he is approached by IRS AGENT DOBBS. He quickly hands Joe an envelope. Joe looks at him, tears it open and reads. He hands it to Freddie. Freddie reads it, balls it up, throws it onto the sidewalk and starts to go after DOBBS.

ANGLE - STREET

Joe stops him.

JOE

Freddie, he's not the Man, just the messenger boy.

FREDDIE

I should still kick his narrow, white, flat ass on GP.

IRS Agent Dobbs walks away.

CLOSE - JOE AND FREDDIE

FREDDIE

Those IRS cocksuckers just took the \$650 dollars your Ma left you in her will.

265 INT. ULIN ARENA - LOUIS VS. COWBOY ROCKY LEE - NIGHT

265

Title - Louis vs. Cowboy Rocky Lee
Uline Arena
Washington, DC
March 16, 1956

4,100 wrestling fans in attendance to witness the staged spectacle of the former heavyweight champion of the world in a different ring. NEWSREEL CAMERAS are also on hand documenting this sad affair.

ANGLE - JOE'S POV

China, in the front row is an exotic, beautiful, stunning looking half Chinese, half-Black woman with long, long black hair making goo-goo eyes with him. CHINA wants Joe in no uncertain terms.

CLOSE JOE

Joe is returning the favor, always ready to "come hither" to a beautiful woman.

ANGLE - RING

Good guy Joe Louis, with his belly hanging over his trunks is getting knocked around the ring from fake blows by the villain white wrestler, 320 pound COWBOY ROCKY LEE. THE CROWD BOOS.

He plays to the crowd. THEY BOO HIM LOUDER.

ANGLE - RING

He grabs Joe in a headlock and fakes gouging his eyes out. REFEREE JERSEY JOE WALCOTT (he's in the barrel also), breaks it up. Joe now free, gets revved up and sends the ex-Cowboy reeling across the mat with a series of forearms to the head. THE CROWD IS GOING CRAZY.

CLOSE - JOE

He winds up for the DOA

CLOSE - COWBOY ROCKY LEE

He begs Joe to stop

COWBOY ROCKY LEE

Champ, please anything but the DOA. Champ, no, not that. I beg you. Anything but that.

ANGLE - RING

Joe hits em' with DOA and he collapses onto the mat. The good guy falls upon the bad guy and pins him. Referee Jersey Joe Walcott counts him out.

REFEREE WALCOTT

One- Two-Three!

Joe jumps off Lee and runs around the ring to hype the crowd.

CLOSE JOE AND WALCOTT

Jersey Joe holds up Joe's triumphant right arm.

RING ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

The winner and still champion Joe Louis

Joe winks at China.

CLOSE - CHINA

She winks back at Joe.

266 INT. HOTEL ROOM - WASHINGTON, D.C. - NIGHT

266

China, in a black bra and panties knocks on the bathroom door.

CHINA

Joe, c'mon out baby. It's alright I understand.

A depressed Joe emerges from the bathroom in his boxer trunks. She holds his face in her hands. On the radio we hear a moody arrangement of Ellington's Caravan.

CHINA (CONT'D)

What's wrong Champ?

JOE

Y'know damn well what's wrong.

She leads him to the bed where they sit.

CHINA

It happens to men all the time.

JOE

Not me. Not Joe Louis, the ex-heavyweight Champion of the World.

CHINA

Joe, you're retired now.

JOE

You saying Joe Louis is old.

CHINA

I'm not saying anything like that, but to grow old is natural.

JOE

There you did it again, called me old.

CHINA

Old is sexy to me. China just might have something to give you a little energy down there where you need it, chase the blues away.

JOE

What's that?

China pulls a cellophane package out of her pocketbook.

CHINA

China's happy dust. Restore you to the natural man I know you can be.

JOE

Never needed anything before but a beautiful woman.

She puts the coke in front of him. Joe sniffs it, then begins to shadow box.

JOE

Chappie, I gotta warm up.

CHINA

Joe it will make you relax, feel good. I know you got a lot of trouble on your mind.

Joe's punches are knifing through the hot Texas air.

JOE

Haven't felt this good since the night I took Braddock for the championship.

Joe's body is glistening with sweat, as he accelerates the shadow boxing.

CHINA

C'mon Joe, give it to me like the Champ you are.

Joe picks China up, throws her onto the bed and jumps on top of her.

267 INT. ARENA SOMEWHERE IN EAST BUMFUCK, TEXAS - NIGHT

267

This is THE TRAVELING CIRCUS CARNIVAL FREAK SHOW that never ends- Once again the CROWD is going BANANAS.

ANGLE- RING

Cowboy Rocky Lee is getting a beating as scripted and the hayseeds are loving it. They begin to throw objects at him in the ring and he throws them back. Tired of always being the bad guy, the heavy, our Cowboy diverts from the rehearsed script. Instead of seizing Joe in a headlock, he picks Joe up and body slams him for real. Then he jumps on Joe's chest with both cowboy boots. Referee Jersey Joe Walcott rushes in and disqualifies Cowboy Rocky Lee. The CROWD boos him while Joe writhes in pain on the mat.

268 INT. LOCAL DOCTOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

268

DR. LANE, the local practitioner examines the injured Joe as Ray Tabani looks on.

TABANI

So Doc, what's the headlines?

DR. LANE

Not good.

JOE

There goes that good dollar.

DR. LANE

Your Cowboy friend broke two of Joe's ribs which have caused a cardiac contusion.

TABANI

Doc, talk to me in shirtsleeve English.

DR. LANE

The muscles around his heart are bruised.

TABANI

That herkimer jerkimer Cowboy Rocky Lee is done. He's finished. I'mma gonna hang him out to dry like nobody's business.

JOE

He didn't mean it on purpose.

TABANI

The hell he didn't. He's done this shit before. The crowd turns against him, he won't go into the tank. Nobody likes being the bad guy anymore.

JOE

Doc, can I wrestle again?

DR. LANE

Joe, you're an old 42. I suggest you rest for an extended period plus I doubt any state athletic commission will grant you a license to wrestle now.

TABANI

Doc, take a powder.

Dr. Lane leaves the two alone.

JOE

Just my luck. Now I'm really in a pickle.

TABANI

Joe, since I like you so much I'mma gonna do you a favor. You referee the remaining matches on the tour. You can spice it up by fake-punching da no good bums who get out of hand. Don't worry, they'll be under strick orders not to fight back. They'll drop. The fans 'll eat it up.

JOE

Sounds good, not fixed -- just rehearsed.

TABANI

And because I'm such a swell and stand up guy I'll give you half of what you was getting to wrestle, plus pay it under the table so the IRS can't get their greedy meat hooks on it.

JOE

Mr. Tabani I thank you for your generous offer but I can't.

TABANI

Judas Priest. Why not?

JOE

That's stealin' from the US government.

TABANI

Kerflooeey. Why go on the hook for Uncle Sam? Why go back to the salt mines? Look how they've treated you, like dirt.

JOE

Can you help me put my shirt on please?

Tabani helps him.

TABANI

No wonder you owe 'em a million.

JOE

A million, two hundred, forty three thousand, ninety seven dollars and fifty two cents, to be exact.

269 INT. HOTEL ROOM - SOMEWHERE IN EAST BUMFUCK, TEXAS - NIGHT 269

Joe is lying face down on the small bed of this rinky-dinky hotel. His feet hang off the edge of the bed.

JOE

China, I'm in a bad way. You got anymore of your dust. I got no means to support myself.

CHINA

It's gonna be alright baby.

JOE

Everytime I take a breath, my broken ribs are killing me.

CHINA

Baby, I got just what you need.

ANGLE - BATHROOM

China comes into the tiny bathroom and prepares the works. She lights a match under a spoon cooking the heroin. WE SEE the hypodermic needle drawing up the contents.

JOE (O.S.)

China, what are you doing in there?

ANGLE - HOTEL ROOM

China comes out with the syringe behind her back and sits on the bed next to him.

CHINA

Close your eyes. This may sting a little bit.

JOE

What are you gonna do?

CHINA

Champ, you should trust China.

She pulls down his boxer trunks and starts to kiss his butt. Just when the feeling is really getting good SHE JABS THE NEEDLE INTO HIS BUTTOCKS.

CLOSE - JOE

Joe jumps up off the bed like a jack in the box. As he is about to speak the heroin gets into his blood stream and he starts to nod like a junkie.

ANGLE - ROOM

China goes through his pants pockets and wallet. Relieving Joe of the little money he has.

CHINA

You can always let your hair down with China. You'll have no worries with me. IRS, weight, age, China makes 'em all fly away.

270 EXT. MT. JUDAH CEMETERY CYPRESS HILL-QUEENS, NY - DAY

270

A yellow cab pulls up in front of the gate. Out comes a much older, heavier Max. He is met by the caretaker SAM, a small bent over man wearing a yarmulke.

SAM

You are the fighter? Yes?

MAX

Max Schmeling.

SAM

So you come from Germany?

MAX

Yes, to see the grave of my manager Yussel Jacobs.

SAM

Follow me Max.

TRACKING SHOT

Sam leads Max through a labyrinth of headstones, and mavsoleums, rows upon rows of The Star of David.

ANGLE - CEMETERY

Sam stops in front of a simple grave only marked by a flat stone plaque and bends down.

SAM

Yussel, here is a friend of yours. It's Max Schmeling. He didn't forget you. He came from Germany and wants to visit you.

Sam rises and speaks to Max.

SAM (CONT'D)

Friends always die too soon, no matter how old they live to be.

Sam walks away and leaves Max with his friend, his manager Yussel Jacobs.

271 EXT. HALLWAY, JOE'S HARLEM APARTMENT - DAY

271

Max rings the buzzer.

272 INT. JOE'S HARLEM APARTMENT - DAY

272

Joe get up from the table where he is playing checkers with Freddie.

JOE
Freddie, no funny business.

FREDDIE
I betcha that's Leonard Reed coming to borrow some more money which you or I don't got.

ANGLE - DOOR

Joe opens the door and sees Max Schmeling standing there, looking right at him. He is flabbergasted, is this Max's ghost?

MAX
Joe, it's me. Max Schmeling.

Joe grabs Max in a great big bear hug.

JOE
I know who you are. Great to see ya.
C'mon in. Freddie, look who showed up.
Max Schmeling.

Freddie, now coat in hand, greets him.

FREDDIE
Good to seeya again.

MAX
I remember you.

JOE
You got a better memory than me. Guess I took too many punches.

FREDDIE
I'll let you guys get reacquainted.

MAX
You take care.

FREDDIE
You too Max. Joe, I'll be at the spot.

CLOSE - SOFA

Joe and Max sit on a sofa, going over old times.

MAX
Joe, I just want you to know...

JOE

... forget all that stuff. For a long time people tried the same thing with me. I gotta admit there were times when I believed what they wrote. But today I know better.

MAX

Joe, you don't know how good that makes me feel.

JOE

What brings you to the States?

MAX

I just came back from Yussel Jacobs' grave.

JOE

I read it a while back in the papers. Everyone is leaving me. My mother passed recently. I miss her so much. Uncle Mike Jacobs is gone too.

MAX

Joe, I lost my mother too. It's a special relationship between a Mother and Son.

JOE

Y'know what I'm talking about. Max, before us two old fighters start cryin' tell me something good.

MAX

I'm interviewing for a top spot at Coca-Cola in Germany. The President of the company.

Joe can't believe Max's luck.

JOE

Max, that's great. How did that happen?

CUT TO:

273 EXT. COCA-COLA BUILDING - NEW YORK - DAY

273

Max walks into the Coca-Cola Building.

VOICE OF MAX SCHMELING

Joe, you remember Jim Farley? The one time New York Boxing Commissioner? Before that he was the Post Master General Under FDR, also ran his Presidential campaign.

VOICE OF JOE LOUIS

Yeah, I remember him.

274 INT. COKE BUILDING - NEW YORK - DAY

274

Max walks into the reception area.

VOICE OF MAX SCHMELING (CONT'D)

Well, now he's the President of Coca-Cola International. He heard I was in America looking for work and asked to see me.

Farley's secretary walks over to Max.

SECRETARY

Mr. Farley can see you now.

Max follows her into his office.

275 INT. HALLWAY COKE BUILDING - NEW YORK -FARLEY'S OFFICE- DAY 275

Max sits in front of Farley's huge desk. Before Farley can say hello, Schmeling is all over him.

MAX

I don't know why exactly you want to see me but I have a pretty good idea. I had no choice. I was never a Nazi. The same way your boss FDR met with Joe, Hitler did the same with me.

FARLEY

Max, take it easy.

MAX

I'm not in a position to take it easy. How would you like being branded a Nazi war criminal? I can't make a living. I turn here, I turn there. I'm blocked every step. My wife Anne, who was one of the biggest German movie actresses can't get any roles. It's like we have big swastikas tattooed on both of our foreheads. Anny Ondra - NAZI! Max Schmeling - NAZI!

FARLEY

Max, this isn't the Nueremberg trials. I know you have never been a Nazi. Please forgive me, I haven't offered you anything to drink. Would you care for some water, coffee, tea or Coca-Cola?

MAX

No, thank you.

FARLEY

I asked to see you because I need you.

MAX

Need, how?

FARLEY

Like several other American businesses, the Coca-Cola Corporation is entering the postwar German market. We need a German, someone with stature like yourself to run it for me. I've already checked it out with the State Department and you have been approved.

MAX

Your State Department must also know that Anny and I lost everything in the war. Everything.

FARLEY

I've been informed. So Max, what do you say?

MAX

Can I have that Coca-Cola you offered me before.

CUT TO:

276 INT. JOE'S HARLEM APARTMENT - DAY

276

MAX

And you Joe?

JOE

I'm getting by. A little of this, a little of that.

MAX

Please don't hesitate to call me if there is anything I can do. No matter how big or small.

JOE

I'm alright Max. I'll get by. Tell Anny I said hello.

277 INT. JOE'S HARLEM APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

277

Joe sits at his kitchen with a stack of mail staring at him. He shuffles through the bundle and a letter addressed in pencil catches his eye. Joe rips open the envelope and 10 shiny new dimes fly out onto the kitchen floor.

159.

Joe unfolds, the letter and reads and reads it. WE HEAR the VOICE of an 11 year old Negro boy - LINCOLN MILLS.

CLOSE - JOE

VOICE OF LINCOLN

Dear Mr. Joe Louis, Ex-heavyweight Champion. Hi, how are you?

CUT TO:

278 EXT. BROOKLYN STOOP - DAY

278

Lincoln LOOKS right at US. He reads his letter.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

My name is Lincoln Mills and I'm 11 years old and 3 quarters. Please accept this money. I know this ain't much but I don't get an allowance and it's all I got saved up.

CUT TO:

279 INT. JOE'S HARLEM APARTMENT - NIGHT

279

Joe reads out loud.

JOE (CONT'D)

Use it to help pay off your taxes. I read about it in the paper. Daddy says I'm a very good reader.

CUT TO:

280 EXT. BROOKLYN STOOP -DAY

280

CLOSE - LINCOLN

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

He also says God don't like ugly and those tax people shouldn't be messin' with you. I hope to be a great heavyweight Champion like you one day myself when I get bigger and start to grow.

CUT TO:

281 INT. JOE'S HARLEM APARTMENT -NIGHT

281

CLOSE - JOE

Tears are willing up in his eyes.

JOE (CONT'D)

Keep punchin', love Lincoln Mills.

ANGLE - KITCHEN

Joe puts the letter on the table and breaks down.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

282 EXT. TOMMY'S PLAYROOM - LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

282

On a block lined with palm trees is this LA nightspot, owned by one of Joe's good friends - TOMMY TUCKER. The marquee reads TOMMY'S PLAYROOM proudly PRESENTS LOUIS and REED featuring Former Heavyweight Champ Joe Louis in SONG and DANCE.

283 INT. TOMMY'S PLAYROOM - LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

283

The joint is packed with good-looking Negro men and women, dressed to the nines. TOMMY TUCKER in tux stands on the small stage, the BAND is to the left.

TOMMY TUCKER

Ladies and gentlemen may I introduce the former heavyweight Champion of the World, the greatest of All -Time - JOE LOUIS and his sensational sidekick Leonard Reed.

Joe and Leonard come out, looking dapper in a tuxes to a rousing applause. They take a bow as the band plays the Gillete Friday Fight Night Theme.

REED

How do you feel Joe?

JOE

Leonard I feel fine.

REED

How do you like show business?

JOE

A lot, especially when it's payday.

REED

You're not worried about money are you?

JOE

You know why I got into show business?

REED

Why Joe?

JOE

Because of the money.

REED

Haven't you heard money isn't everything.

JOE

What money ain't, the Income Tax people don't want.

That gets a big laugh from the knowing audience.

REED

So what are you going to do about it?

JOE

I'm gonna make my comeback.

REED

Don't do it Joe Louis. Don't do it.
Don't do it. Let me make my comeback.

JOE

Where have you been?

REED

You gotta be kidding! You never heard of me? The paperweight champ? The horizontal kid?

JOE

No, but let's suppose me and you have a fight.

REED

I can't be that deceitful.

JOE

Nah, supposin' you pick ya lucky corner.

REED

Where are we fightin'?

JOE

Madison Square Garden in New York City.

REED

Any corner in San Francisco.

JOE

C'mon Leonard. Let's do it.

The band hits a sexy stripper like number as LULA, a coffee colored vixen (she is all breasts and buttocks) brings out the boxing gloves. She helps put them on. Joe ducks a wild swing from Leonard and Joe counters. Leonard is sprawled on the stage. Lula straddles over him, breasts in his face.

LULA
So get him Leonard.

REED
You don't have to point. I know where he is.

He gets up and Joe knocks him back down. Joe counts over him accompanied by the band.

JOE
1-2-3

REED
You can count to 40, I ain't getting up.

JOE
4-5-6. Get up.

LEONARD
You didn't get up when Marciano knocked you down.

BIG LAUGHS - MUCH APPLAUSE - Leonard springs up and all 3 take a bow.

REED
Thank you Lula. Let's hear it for Lula.
She takes another bow and shimmies off stage.

JOE
What would you do without me?

REED
I'd go work with Sugar Ray Robinson.

JOE
What do you mean by that?

REED
Sugar Ray and I wouldn't be fightin' like this. We could dance.

JOE
You don't think I can dance.

REED
If you gonna dance like you made your comeback it's gonna be horrible.

JOE
I wrote a song. Wanna hear my song?

REED

Yeah, let's get Lula to sing it.

JOE

Forget Lula.

REED

Wish I could.

JOE

I'm gonna sing.

Joe starts the band. The band plays the INTRO - 16 BAR BLUES.

JOE

Baby, Baby, Baby
Baby, Baby, Baby
Baby, Baby, Baby

REED

Champ, there must be some more words.

JOE LOUIS

There is.

REED

Sing the rest of the words.

JOE

I love you Baby, Baby
I love you Baby, Baby
I love you Baby, Baby

REED

Champ, there's got to be more words than I
love you, Baby, Baby.

JOE

Bye, Bye, I love you Baby, Baby.
Bye, Bye, I love you Baby, Baby.
Bye, Bye, I love you Baby, Baby.

Leonard drags Joe offstage to LOUD applause.

284 INT. TOMMY'S PLAYROOM - LOS ANGELES -NIGHT

284

ANGLE - TABLE

TOMMY TUCKER - owner of this joint brings Joe over to a table down front and center where sits MARTHA MALONE. She's not drop dead glamorous like Joe's first wife but cute and good people.

TOMMY

Joe, this is my good friend Martha Malone
I was telling you 'bout.

JOE
May I join you?

MARTHA
It's a free country.

Tommy gives Joe a look and he escapes. Joe sits down.

JOE
Can I buy you a drink?

MARTHA
I buy my own drinks. But let me buy you one.

JOE
That's OK but I don't drink.

MARTHA
Not even your Joe Louis Punch?

JOE
I never drank that stuff, only pop I drink is Coca-Cola.

MARTHA
What about Joe Louis Milk?

JOE
Now, that I drink. How did you like the act?

MARTHA
Do you want the truth? Or the usual bullshit?

JOE
Please Martha, the truth.

MARTHA
Joe as a song and dance man, you were a tremendous boxer.

JOE
I know I stink but I need every dime I can get.

MARTHA
Man gotta eat, but I do feel sorry for you up there. I don't like to feel sorry for Joe Louis, got too much respect.

JOE
I like you, say what's on your mind.

MARTHA

Should I be another way?

JOE

Oh no. I like a woman who is independent.
Married two of em'. I'm gonna start
calling you Sergeant.

MARTHA

I like that.

JOE

You don't happen to be a tax lawyer, are
you?

MARTHA

No, a civil lawyer.

JOE

You play your cards right I might have a
job for you. Want to take it?

MARTHA

Depends on the case.

JOE

Depends huh? Sergeant, I really like you.

MARTHA

I like you too, that's why I had our
friend Tommy introduce us.

Joe is intrigued.

JOE

I've been set up.

They both share a laugh.

285 EXT. COCA-COLA HEADQUARTERS - HAMBURG - DAY

285

Max and Anny watch along with the hundred other employees as a
giant neon Coca-Cola sign is being hoisted to the top of the
building.

CLOSE - MAX AND ANNY

They lead the applause. American business has come to post-war
Germany and Max Schmeling is a top executive of Coca-Cola-
Germany. ONLY IN AMERICA.

286 EXT. ROAD - SUBURBS OF HAMBURG - DAY

286

Max is driving Anny.

INT. CAR- DAY

ANNY

Max, where are you taking me?

MAX

It's a surprise.

ANNY

Max, you know how I hate surprises.

287 EXT. VILLA -DAY

287

They pull up in front of a beautiful old villa.

ANGLE -CAR

Max gets out and opens the door for Anny.

ANNY

What is this?

MAX

It is ours.

ANNY

You're playing a trick.

MAX

Anny, this is no trick. It's one of the few old villas that survived the Allied bombs. That alone makes it special. We're all survivors.

ANNY

It's beautiful, but how can we afford such a house? I alone cannot drink that much Coca-Cola. Have the Americans made such an about face?

MAX

Don't worry about the price. I got it cheap. This is the home where you and I can grow old together.

They have reached the door.

MAX (CONT'D)

Allow me.

He picks her up and they enter the house.

288 EXT. HAMBURG PORT -DAY

288

Max and Anny greet Joe and Martha as they come off the Ocean Liner on their Honeymoon cruise. It's hugs and kisses all around.

289 INT. HAMBURG RESTAURANT -NIGHT

289

Max, Anny, Joe and Martha are having a great time.

MAX

I propose a toast.

They all raise their glasses.

MAX

To the newlyweds, our dear friends, Martha and Joe Louis. May you live long together in health and in love.

They clink their glasses and drink.

ANNY

Martha, why don't you come with me to the ladies room?

MARTHA

I'm right behind you.

The ladies leave.

MAX

You made me a weather man.

JOE

How is that Max?

MAX

I can always tell when the rain is coming. I still can feel that left hook.

JOE

Your right wasn't bad either.

Max takes an envelope out from inside his jacket and slides it across the table to Joe.

MAX

To help with your taxes. Joe, America is a great country but this I cannot understand.

Joe slides the envelope back across the table.

JOE

Thanks Max, I'll be alright. I don't need handouts.

MAX MACHON

It's not a hand out. Think of it as a wedding gift then.

Max slides the envelope back just as the ladies return from the powder room.

CLOSE -JOE'S HAND

He picks up the envelope and puts it in his inside jacket pocket.

MARTHA

You boys miss us?

MAX

Every painful second.

MARTHA

Anny is taking me shopping tomorrow.

MAX

Joe, you might need some more.

Joe and Max bust out laughing.

ANNY/MARTHA

What's so funny?

290 INT. IRS BUILDING - HALLWAY - WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY 290

Joe and Martha walk down a long hallway, turning heads also.

291 INT. IRS BUILDING-DANA LATHAM'S OFFICE-WASHINGTON D.C.- DAY 291

Joe and Martha sit before DANA LATHAM. He is the Commissioner of the INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE.

LATHAM

Mr. and Mrs. Joe Louis, what can I do for the both of you?

The lawyer presents her case.

MARTHA

Commissioner Latham, Joe and I would like to thank you for seeing us in person.

JOE

And not one of your grabby messenger boys.

MARTHA

This is what we have waited for all along. To sit down face to face with the head man in charge, not some underlings who have no say so.

LATHAM

Well, here we are.

MARTHA

I'm sure you are aware of the fact that Joe Louis Barrow was literally the poster boy for World War II.

LATHAM

I'm aware of that.

MARTHA

Here sits before you an American patriot. Joe donated two of his purses to the Navy and Army Funds. Joe Louis loves America and everything it stands for. The public knows this. Representative Alfred D. Sieminsky, the New Jersey Democrat introduced a bill to ask the United States government to excuse Joe's back taxes owed. He stated that Joe had done tremendous deeds for this country. Whenever he was asked to step forward Joe was ready, willing and able. Commissioner Latham that public sentiment is there. Leave Joe Louis alone.

LATHAM

As you are quite aware that legislation was tabled.

MARTHA

That's not the point. It was a beautiful gesture. The point of the matter is this, Joe is a great man of character, of dignity. Why do you allow your agency, the Internal Revenue Service to hound him like a petty criminal?

Joe is feeling it also. He has caught the spirit.

JOE

I may be a lot of things, but I'm no petty criminal and ain't, I mean not a thief. Never ever stolen a red cent or a wooden nickel in my whole life. And I sure wouldn't take anything from the government I wasn't entitled to. I love my country.

Martha is amazed at Joe.

CUT TO:

292 INT. STUDIO - "HIGH FINANCE" TV GAME SHOW - NIGHT 292

CLIP OF JOE AND ROSE MORGAN LOUIS ON TV GAME SHOW HIGH FINANCE
HOSTED BY DENNIS JAMES.

VOICE OF JOE

My second wife Rose Morgan and I won
\$60,000 on this game show High Finance.
Y'know with that host Dennis James.

CUT TO:

293 INT. STUDIO - "HIGH FINANCE" TV GAME SHOW -BACKSTAGE- NIGHT 293

IRS AGENTS confront Joe and Rose

VOICE OF JOE (CONT'D)

You had your IRS guys backstage demanding
to take our check. You wanted the whole
\$60,000, half of that was Rose's. That
wasn't right.

IRS GOON

Please hand over the check please.

ROSE

Oh no, you must be out of your minds.
Half is mine. I'll give you Joe's half
after I deposit this check.

CUT TO:

294 INT. IRS BUILDING -LATHAM'S OFFICE-WASHINGTON D.C.- DAY 294

MARTHA

Commissioner Latham, I know you mean well
but where is your heart? Joe's mother who
recently passed, a loving, a strong woman.
Lillie Barrow raised 8 kids to be good,
law-abiding citizens. How in the name of
God could you attach the \$650 she left Joe
in her will? How could you attach the
trust fund for Jacqueline and Joe Jr., his
two young kids? A trust fund set up
specifically for their college education?
What did we fight the War for? What kind
of country is this? Where is your
compassion? Do you know the meaning of
the word?

JOE

Thank you for your time sir.

LATHAM

You both are welcome. And I will do everything humanly possible... within the law of the land. But there are no sacred cows here.

Joe leads Martha out of the office.

295 MONTAGE - LAS VEGAS - THE STRIP - NIGHT 295

The bright lights, the neon of Las Vegas, Nevada, city of glitter and excitement.

296 EXT. LOUIS' LAS VEGAS HOME - DAY 296

A modest home in Las Vegas, Nevada. They have moved from Los Angeles.

297 INT. LOUIS' LAS VEGAS HOME - DAY 297

Martha and Joe are watching television in the living room.

CLOSE -TELEVISION

The B-Movie - "THE JOE LOUIS STORY" is beginning.

ANGLE - LIVING ROOM

MARTHA

I can't watch this again. I'll be in the kitchen.

JOE

Nuthin' else is on.

Martha goes into the kitchen. Joe takes out a pack of cigarettes, lights one up and smokes.

CLOSE -TELEVISION

298 EXT. "JOE LOUIS STORY" FILM CLIP MARCIANO FIGHT - DAY 298

We see the scene where Joe Louis is pounded out the ring by Rocky Marciano..

299 INT. LOUIS' LAS VEGAS HOME - DAY 299

CLOSE - JOE

He watches his Bio-Pic.

VOICE OF JOE

As the years go by, I often reflect on things that influenced me. Sometimes, I look and think "How come me?"

CUT TO:

300 EXT. ALABAMA COTTON FIELDS - DAY

300

It's HIGH NOON under the hot-as-blazes Alabama sun. The 2- year old JOE LOUIS BARROW follows behind his older siblings who are picking cotton.

VOICE OF JOE (CONT'D)

I was the seventh child of the Barrow family. You know old people always say that's something lucky about seven.

CLOSE -JOE

The infant looks at us and starts to cry.

VOICE OF JOE (CONT'D)

I was a healthy boy, weighed eleven pounds at birth.

ANGLE -COTTON FIELDS

The mother picks up her crying child, Lillie, (looking younger than we've seen her so far) kisses Joe.

VOICE OF JOE (CONT'D)

My Momma was Lillie Barrow, a big woman. She always told me to have pride in myself. She said a good name is better than money.

TRACKING SHOT

WE LEAD Lillie as she holds her now soothed son in her arms. LILLIE LOOKS AND TALKS TO US.

LILLIE

When Joe went to school, the teacher made him say his words over and over and by and by he got stubborn. It got to be his habit not to talk much, even out of school.

She gives her son another smooch.

VOICE OF JOE (CONT'D)

I hope they're still making women like my Momma. God, I love her.

CUT TO:

301 INT. "JOE LOUIS STORY" FILM CLIP -JOE PLAYS THE VIOLIN- DAY 301

Joe picking up the violin.

VOICE OF LILLIE

I wanted Joe to play the violin. The reason? He had big hands. The weekly lessons was 50 cents and I had to scrape to get that together.

CUT TO:

302 INT. "JOE LOUIS STORY" FILM CLIP - MCKINNEY SPARRING - DAY 302

Joe is in the ring with THURSTON MCKINNEY.

VOICE OF JOE

One day, my best friend Thurston McKinney who was a golden gloves champion asked me to spar with him. Well, he beat me all over the ring, hit me with a right to the jaw that almost dropped me. I got mad. I let go my right, caught him on the chin. Thurston's eyes got glassy and his knees buckled.

Thurston shakes his head and grins.

THURSTON

Man, throw that violin away.

303 EXT. MONTAGE - VIETNAM WAR - DAY

303

It is the spring of 1968 and as the U.S. escalates the war, the bombing in Vietnam, the Anti-War movement grows in proportion back home.

304 INT. LOUIS' LAS VEGAS HOME - DAY

304

WE WILL RECREATE THIS ACTUAL FOOTAGE

Joe, a decorated war hero is being interviewed about his views on the war and MUHAMMED ALI, a War dissenter.

JOE

I feel about Cassius how I feel about any American who won't fight for his country. I think it's very bad. This is a guy who made a lot of money in this country.

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

A guy who have I think respect of a lot of people and I think he should fight for his country.

VEGAS REPORTER

Did you face the same problem in World War II?

JOE

No, not quite. I was only waiting for'em to send for me and when they sent for me I went. I didn't, it wasn't the same problem. Just that I was champion at the time and World War II started and my time came up I had to go.

VEGAS REPORTER

You think he ought to do the same thing?

JOE

Well, I think any American ought to do the same thing when he have to or not.

VEGAS REPORTER

Do you think they should have taken away Clay's title?

JOE

Well, I think they should. Any man who won't fight for his country, I don't think he should have the honor of being champion.

305 EXT. IONA CAMPUS - DAY

305

Ali is speaking to students at Iona College. THIS IS ACTUAL DOCUMENTARY FOOTAGE.

ALI

Whenever black people have trouble, or whenever black athletes want to do something for self, they always run to Joe Louis. And Joe Louis always talk like the boss want him to talk. Joe Louis, among black people who understand, Joe Louis makin' himself look real ignorant, when he attacks me for standing for my people and he looks ignorant when he attacked these young educated Olympic boys who are standing up for freedom of their people. Joe Louis is makin' himself a Uncle Tom for white people. Negroes don't follow and idolize this part of Joe Louis.

(MORE)

ALI (CONT'D)

If Joe Louis don't like what I'm doin', if Joe Louis don't like what the Olympic boys doing, he should discuss it behind closed doors. You don't argue with one another to the same common enemy who's givin' the both of us hell. That Joe Louis era is over. This Uncle Tom, old Negro shufflin' days are over.

306 INT. LOUIS' LAS VEGAS HOME DAY

306

Joe and Martha are in the kitchen eating, watching Ali on the television. The Champ gets up from the table, turns the television off and sits back down.

CLOSE-JOE

The Champ is deeply hurt. Ali has wounded him, he has struck a nerve, a cord way down inside.

ANGLE-TABLE

MARTHA

Joe, don't study him. He's just a fool running off at the mouth talkin' nonsense.

JOE

Martha, that might be, but people listen to what he has to say. Especially the young kids.

MARTHA

Joe, don't let it bother you.

JOE

Why did Clay call me an Uncle Tom? I love my people, I ain't no Tom. I've done a lot for my people.

MARTHA

Why don't you speak to him on the phone? Tell Clay how you feel.

JOE

And say what? Kiss my black ass?

MARTHA

Tell him how wrong he is. That just like him you are a hero to generations of people, Black and White.

JOE

Some folks shout, some holler, some march and some don't. They do their way. I do it mine. I got nothing to be 'shamed of.

MARTHA

Call Clay.

JOE

For what? I'm against Black Muslims and I'm against Cassius Clay being a Black Muslim. I'll never go along with the idea all white people are devils. I've always believed that every man is my brother. I was born a Baptist and I'll die a Baptist. The way I see it, the Black Muslims want to do just what we have been fighting against for 100 years. They want to separate the races and that's a step back at a time we are going for integration.... Why he change the name his Daddy and Mama give him?

Martha gets up from the kitchen table and gives her husband a kiss.

MARTHA

It's almost time for me to take you to work. Joe, why don't you put on a different shirt and slacks. Change into some clean clothes.

JOE

Oh, this is alright, nuthin' wrong with it.

Joe gets up and we can see his shirt is stained and his pants are wrinkled.

307 INT. CAESAR'S PALACE - DUSK

307

ASHE RESNICK the Director of Sporting Events at Caesar's Palace (Resnick was widely known as being a Mob-connected gambler and bookmaker), leads Joe, cigarette and drink in hand, through the Casino.

RESNICK

How ya doin' Joe?

JOE

Ash, it ain't nice for the heavyweight champ to walk around busted.

RESNICK

You've already gone through your allotment today.

Ashe takes a handful from off a table, gives them to Joe and smiles.

RESNICK

Joe, sometimes you gotta do your job, meet and greet, press the flesh, take pictures, sign autographs, talk to press. Now put some of those chips away in your pocket.

JOE

Ash, I held the heavyweight championship of the world for twelve years, don't you think I can hold \$5000. Overnight.

Joe puts all of his chips down on the craps table.

RESNICK

Joe, please don't do this. Not all of it.

A VOLUPTUOUS RED HEAD WOMAN holds her dice in front of Joe, which he gently blows on them. She rolls snake eyes.

JOE

CRAPS.

RESNICK

Joe, didya haveta bet everything?

Joe laughs.

JOE

There's more where that came from.

RESNICK

Champ, you are too much. You are so lucky that I love you so.

JOE

You got my suite ready?

308 INT. CAESAR'S PALACE - SUITE - NIGHT

308

Joe is on his knees before a glassed-topped table. Beckoning him to come hither is a giant white mount of cocaine.

JOE

C'mon, baby. Come get some of this good stuff here.

From the bedroom comes the redhead woman who crapped out. She's in a slinky negligee. She joins Joe on her knees and they begin to snort the cocaine.

VOICE OF JOE (CONT'D)

Cocaine was no stranger to me now. I took it whenever I could buy it. I bought it from whoever sold it to me.

(MORE)

VOICE OF JOE (CONT'D)

It made me feel like myself just after the Carnera fight, just like just after I won the second Schmeling fight.

Joe and the redhead are starting to go at it.

VOICE OF JOE (CONT'D)

I kept telling myself that nothing could be wrong with feeling that good.

309 EXT. LOUIS' LAS VEGAS HOME - DAWN

309

Joe pulls up in front of his home and storms into it.

310 INT. LOUIS' LAS VEGAS HOME - DUSK

310

Joe, cigarette in mouth, once a clotheshorse, a neat freak now looks completely disheveled. Martha stares in disbelief at him smoking.

MARTHA

Since when did you start smoking?

JOE

Quit nagging.

MARTHA

Ashe Resnick called.

JOE

What did that gangster want?

Martha follows Joe into the bedroom.

MARTHA

He said you kicked a man twice at the casino.

311 INT. LOUIS' LAS VEGAS HOME - BEDROOM - DUSK

311

MARTHA

Why did you do that Joe?

JOE

He sneezed, he was trying to give the Mafia a signal about me.

MARTHA

If you think that way, you'll have to kill everybody with a cold.

JOE

I know 'bout the Mafia. They been trying to muscle in on me since the beginning but I never took a dive, fixed any fights.

MARTHA

I know you didn't Joe. I got wonderful news. The IRS has finally agreed to get off our backs after all the years.

Joe is staring up at the ceiling.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Joe, aren't you going to say something?

Joe continues to stare.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

At least I could get a thank you. I've worked like a dog, fought tooth and nail so they would stop hounding us like common criminals.

Joe comes out of the clouds.

JOE

I stopped up the cracks. The poison gas was coming in.

MARTHA

What poison gas?

JOE

I got the mayonnaise out of the icebox and smeared it over the cracks. They can't get the gas through now. Can you go in the kitchen and get me some liquor?

Martha looks up and now can see the mayonnaise. Joe holds up the empty jar of Heilmann's mayonnaise. She hugs him. He is like a little child in her arms.

MARTHA

My dear Joe. I'm so sorry.

312 EXT. BAPTIST CHURCH - LAS VEGAS - MORNING

312

TRACKING SHOT

Martha leaves church with the grown Jacqueline and Joe Jr. (PUNCHY) on either side.

MARTHA

Your father is not in his right mind and he believes he's not sick. Mental illness can be hereditary, that's what Dr. MacDonald told me. Your grandfather died in a mental institution.

PUNCHY

Nobody ever told us.

JACKIE

Martha, how are you holding up?

MARTHA

Somebody gave Joe a gun. He sleeps with it under his pillow. Jackie, Punchy, I'm at the end of my rope. My law practice is shot to hell. I can't do anymore.

Martha breaks down and her two stepchildren console her.

313 INT. LOUIS' LAS VEGAS HOME - DAY

313

Martha enters with Jackie and Punchy.

MARTHA

Joe!

314 INT. LOUIS' LAS VEGAS HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

314

Martha knocks on the bedroom door.

MARTHA

Joe dear, Jackie and Punchy flew here to see you. Your daughter and son love you very much.

Martha slowly opens the bedroom door, and they enter.

ANGLE BEDROOM

Joe has crawled underneath a tent he has made out of the bed, dresser and a big gold-leaf mirror. He plays with a lamp he has taken apart, then takes a swig out of a bottle of Chivas Regal. Several cigarettes burn at once in an ashtray.

JOE

Sergeant, your Mafia friends bugged the house. I found it. Nobody makes a monkey out of me.

Jackie bursts out of the room crying. THIS IS A PITIFUL, PATHETIC SIGHT.

315 INT. CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - DAY

315

ATTORNEY ECKHARDT sits at his desk across from Martha, Jackie and Punchy.

ATTORNEY ECKHARDT

You all understand completely what you are about to do?

MARTHA

We do.

He looks up from the form.

ATTORNEY ECKHARDT

Who's going to sign this?

MARTHA

We all are.

ATTORNEY ECKHARDT

One signature will do.

PUNCHY

I'll sign.

JACKIE

But why should you have all the responsibility?

PUNCHY

My shoulders are broad if they want to blame me. Dad's in need of help. And I'm going to sign.

Punchy takes the pen from Eckhardt and signs the documents committing his father for observation at a Mental Health Institution.

316 INT. LOUIS' LAS VEGAS HOME - NIGHT

316

The COURT OFFICER and 2 uniformed DEPUTY SHERIFFS with guns in belt holsters surround Joe in the kitchen. Martha stands in the corner crying.

JOE

Why are you doing this to me? I'm Joe Louis, the heavyweight champion of the world.

COURT OFFICER

Mr. Louis, please come with us peacefully.

JOE

I know Nixon. I want to tell the President of the United States of America what you are doing.

Joe grabs the kitchen phone and dials the operator.

JOE (CONT'D)

Operator, gimme the White House please.

Joe covers the mouthpiece and turns towards his abductors.

JOE (CONT'D)

You'll see. I been a guest of Nixon, LBJ, Kennedy, Eisenhower, Harry Truman and FDR at the White House. I don't know who you think you messin' wit. Hello? This is Joe Louis and I would like to speak to President Nixon, and I'm in kinda of a rush...Leave a message. He's not available? No message, that's OK.

Joe hangs up the phone dejectedly and sits down at the kitchen table.

CLOSE - JOE

JOE

Sergeant, you gonna let these white boys take me away?

MARTHA

Joe, I'm so so sorry. I'm sorry Joe.

He's resigned to his fate.

317 INT. MENTAL HEALTH WARD - DAY

317

Son visits father.

JOE

Son, how could you sell your old man down the river? Punchy, what did I do to deserve this?

PUNCHY

Daddy, I did this because I love you. Martha, Jackie, Rose, Mommy we all love you.

JOE

That's a funny way to show it, by locking your Pop up in the bug house? Your own flesh and blood.

PUNCHY

Daddy, you don't know what it's like being the son of Joe Louis. I'm your namesake. I walk around with it. You were never around to show me how to do that. I'd get jealous when we'd be having dinner in a restaurant and you'd spend more time talking with strangers and signing autographs than with me. Your own flesh and blood.

(MORE)

PUNCHY (CONT'D)

Later, people would always come up to me and say, "You just don't know what a difference your Dad made in my life." You were always gracious, you made everyone feel like an old friend, but I wanted you to be, not famous, not Joe Louis, just Daddy.

JOE

I have always loved your sister, Mother and you.

PUNCHY

I know Daddy. I didn't know back then but I know now.

Punchy hugs and kisses his father.

PUNCHY (CONT'D)

Daddy, we'll get you out of here as soon as you get well. I promise, we won't let you stay in here.

JOE

If I could do it all over again, I would have never named you Joe Louis, Jr. It was a curse.

PUNCHY

No curse Daddy, it's an honor.

The Son leaves his Father.

CLOSE - JOE

Joe stares at the other MENTAL PATIENTS.

JOE'S POV

MENTAL PATIENTS

CLOSER - JOE

He is looking at SOMEONE.

JOE'S POV

A PATIENT rings a BELL.

CUT TO:

318 INT. INTENSIVE CARE UNIT - NIGHT

318

CLOSE - BELL

Bell is struck by Official Timekeeper.

ANGLE - WARD

Joe, hearing the BELL, gets up and starts to SHADOWBOX in and around the other patients at HALF-SPEED. He is having a FLASHBACK

CUT TO:

319 INT. JOE LOUIS PRESS CONFERENCE - DAY

319

JIMMY CANNON

Joe, do you know that Mussolini's brother is the Italian Boxing Commissioner and will be coming over for the fight?

JOE

No suh', Mr. Cannon.

JIMMY CANNON

Joe, is it true that you are fighting for your people who are being bombed and killed in Ethiopia by this fascist dictator, Il Duce?

CLOSE - JOE

The youthful 20 year old pre-heavyweight Champion answers.

JOE

I don't know much about all this politics and I never heard the word Fascist before. This Mussolini cat sounds like a big bully and I ain't got much use for bullies.

CUT TO:

320 EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - NIGHT

320

ANGLE - RING

Joe is battering the Goliath 6 feet 6 inches 280 pound PRIMO CARNERA around the ring like a ping pong ball.

CUT TO:

321 EXT. WOODS - DAY

321

Joe is chopping down a tree. Chappie stands to his side instructing his star pupil.

BLACKBURN

Use your fists like this axe.

CLOSE - TREE

The axe whacks into the tree.

BLACKBURN (CONT'D) (O.S.)
Chop Carnera down. No whittlin'. Swing dat
axe.

CUT TO:

322 EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - NIGHT

322

ANGLE - RING

Joe is delivering a combination that sends the staggering,
bloody AMBLING ALP Carnera to the mat.

VOICE OF BLACKBURN (CONT'D)
Swing dat axe! Swing dat axe!

CLOSE - CARNERA

Primo falls like a REDWOOD TREE, chopped down by the axe-like
fists of the number 1 contender for the HEAVYWEIGHT CROWN.

CLOSE - JOE

He stands in his familiar pose in the neutral corner, both arms
resting on the top rope, waiting patiently as Referee Donovan
gives Primo Carnera the 10 COUNT.

323 INT. INTENSIVE CARE UNIT - NIGHT

323

Joe lies in an hospital bed, hooked up to all kinds of machines.
Martha sits next to Joe, wife #3.

MARTHA
Joe, as a result of heart...

324 INT. INTENSIVE CARE UNIT - NIGHT

324

CLOSE - JOE

He looks at Rose, wife #2.

ANGLE - HOSPITAL ROOM

Rose has now replaced Martha. She sits next to Joe.

ROSE (CONT'D)
...irregularities and severe blood...

325 INT. INTENSIVE CARE UNIT - NIGHT

325

CLOSE - JOE

He looks at Marva, wife #1.

ANGLE - HOSPITAL ROOM

Marva has now replaced Rose. She sits next to Joe.

MARVA (CONT'D)

...you have suffered a stroke.

Joe smiles at his 1st true love. Marva smiles back.

326 INT. HARLEM APARTMENT - EVENING

326

The REVEREND WALTER TROTTER (Marva's brother) stands before Joe and Marva. John Roxborough is his Best Man and Marva's sister, JOHNNY TROTTER is the Maid of Honor.

VOICE OF JOE

When Marva came out, my blood started throbbing. She looked like something you'd seen in a fairy tale...

CLOSE - JOE AND MARVA

They exchange vows.

VOICE OF JOE (CONT'D)

...with a white-silk velvet gown, a long train in the back trimmed with ermine, and a bunch of little white flowers in her hand.

ANGLE - APARTMENT

REVEREND TROTTER

You may now kiss the bride.

They kiss.

JOE

Baby, it will be a quick fight. I promise.

Joe rushes off to Yankee Stadium.

CUT TO:

327 EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - LOUIS VS. BAER - NIGHT

327

ANGLE - RING

MAX BAER is taking the ten-count on one knee, while holding on the middle strand of rope for dear like shaking cobwebs out of his head. His corner yells at him to get up.

VOICE OF JOE

I wanted to start being a married man as soon as possible.

MAX BAER

If people want to see my execution they gotta spend more than 25 bucks.

328 EXT. LOUIS' LAS VEGAS HOME - DUSK

328

A yellow cab deposits the old but steady Max Schmeling in front of Joe's house. He walks slowly up to the door and rings the bell.

329 INT. LOUIS' LAS VEGAS HOME - LIVING ROOM - DUSK

329

Joe sits in a wheelchair, (this is the oldest and sickest we've seen him so far) across from his dear old friend, Max. It's no secret who has aged gracefully, the evidence is clearly before our eyes.

MAX

Joe, I want you to know in your heart that I never said any of those bad things that Goebbels put into my mouth about the supremacy of the white race. I just thought of us as two professional athletes doing our best. I never ever believed in a Master Race. A lot of Germans say they didn't know about the concentration camps. In all honesty, we knew. We all knew.

WE HEAR Joe's slurred speech as a result of his stroke.

JOE

I believe you Max, but I admit I was pretty steamed up about how dem' Nazis' looked on Negroes as sub-human.

Max gets up and places an envelope in Joe's hands.

MAX

Joe, I owe you. If you hadn't knocked me out and sent me to the hospital, I never would have had all this.

JOE

All what?

MAX

If I had knocked you out, Hitler and Goebbels would have welcomed me home as a big Nazi hero and I would've stayed that way all through the war. But when you knocked me out so quick, KAPUT. They put me in the paratroopers and dropped me in the enemy fire to get rid of me. I got a lucky break with Coca-Cola. It changed my life. So I have to thank you, Joe Louis.

JOE

You have to make me a promise.

MAX

Anything, Joe.

JOE

As soon as I get back to my fightin' weight I want us to go back in the ring.

Max laughs.

MAX

Nobody wants to see us two "alte kackers".

JOE

"Alte" what?

MAX

That's what Yussel would have called us. It's yiddish for old farts like us.

JOE

Now, that's where you're wrong. Don King told me himself, the world wants to see our long-awaited rubber match. It will be the biggest fight ever.

MAX

The fight of the century.

JOE

That's what I'm talkin' 'bout! You won the first. I won the second. Let's settle this, once and for all.

MAX

OK, Joe. I promise. As soon as you get down to your fightin' weight, two-hundred pounds was it?

JOE

One hundred ninety eight pounds and a half. I sure was beautiful back in dem' ole days.

MAX

Yes, you were. In my humble opinion, the greatest heavyweight ever to lace 'em up.

JOE

You weren't bad yourself.

They both have a hearty laugh.

MAX

Joe, can I ask you something?

JOE

Fire away.

MAX

I don't know how this may sound...

JOE

Will you stop foolin' round and just say what is on your mind.

MAX

Joe, do you ever get bitter? About how everything turned out. At one point in our shared histories I was right behind Hitler as the most hated man on the planet. And you, the most loved. Through the years everything has flipped flopped, up is down, down is up. It's not fair. Joe, you have to be mad sometimes. Mad at the hand life has dealt you.

Joe looks at his friend long and hard.

JOE

Max, I've never been mad or bitter with the way things worked out. I just rolled with the punches.

MAX

Are you not human?

JOE

Chappie, I'm human alright. My mother always taught me "never try to put a question mark where God has a period."

Max looks at Joe, that said it all.

330 INT. LOUIS' LAS VEGAS HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

330

Joe in bathrobe sits in wheelchair watching television with Martha. Keeping care of Joe has put alot of wear and tear on her face.

MARTHA

Joe, I'm going to the kitchen to get your medicine. I'll be right back.

Joe mumbles something. Martha leaves.

CLOSE - JOE

He watches THE JOE LOUIS STORY.

VOICE OF JOE

Applause is like a kind of love and when 70,000 people are applauding you that's a lot of love. There's nothing like the referee holding up your right arm after a fight and the ring announcer saying...

VOICE OF RING ANNOUNCER HARRY BALOGH

...and STILL the World's Heavyweight Champion Joe Louis.

WE HEAR THE ROAR OF 70,000.

.CUT TO:

331 INT. "JOE LOUIS STORY" FILM CLIP - FINAL SCENE FROM -DAY

331

VOICE OF JOE

I had 71 fights as a professional, 51 KO's, 68 wins, 3 defeats. I successfully defended my title 25 times. I was the world heavyweight champion for twelve straight years. I earned 5 million. Owed the government 1 million, paid the piper and left him a flat tip. I guess that's show business.

332 INT. LOUIS' LAS VEGAS HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

332

CLOSE - JOE

He watches the end of his Bio-Pic and smiles.

VOICE OF JOE (CONT'D)

I'm ready whenever the Man upstairs wants to take me. I've lived my life and I've done what I need to do.

332A CLOSE - ALI - THIS IS ACTUAL DOCUMENTARY FOOTAGE

332A *

ALI

Everybody loved Joe. From black folk to redneck crackers. They're all crying. Howard Hughes dies with all his billions, not a tear. Joe Louis dies, everybody cries.

EPILOGUE

333 EXT. ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY - DAWN

333

It is the crack of dawn, the beginning of a new day and WE SEE the grave site of Joe Louis buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

CLOSE - GRAVE

An old, knurled hand places a single red rose on it.

CLOSE - MAX

The much older Max Schmeling has come to his dear friends resting place. He looks down to his hands.

CLOSE - MAX'S HANDS

Max balls his old, knurled, crooked fingers into 2 fists.

LONG SHOT - CEMETERY

Max stands amongst rows and rows of white crosses marking the graves of a nation's war heroes.

FADE IN TITLE

JOE LOUIS BARROW DIED ON APRIL 12, 1981 AT THE AGE OF SIXTY-SIX.

MAX SCHMELING STILL LIVES ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF HAMBURG, GERMANY, IN SECLUSION SINCE THE DEATH OF HIS BELOVED ANNY IN 1987.

FADE TO BLACK:

ROLL CREDITS