

THE FIGHTER

by
Paul Tamasy & Eric Johnson

Based on a true story.

Revisions by
Lewis Colick

Current Revisions by
Paul Attanasio

Mandeville Films
David Hoberman/Todd Lieberman

March 2, 2007

FADE IN:

EXT. NIGHT. STREET --- LOWELL

A once-famous mill town at the confluence of the Merrimack and Concord rivers, a century past its glory. A PATROL CAR cruises a mean-looking street...Supered below:

LOWELL, MASSACHUSETTS. 1994

DISPATCHER (V.O.)

...The suspect is male Caucasian
medium height light build. Armed
with a sawed-off shotgun...

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. WARD HOUSE -- NIGHT

ALICE WARD, a salty New England broad, 50s, with a cigar in her mouth, pulls a casserole out of the oven...

ALICE

...I don't see why you don't marry
her.

...Bring it to a card table with a checkered tablecloth, at which sits MICKEY WARD, late 20s, good-looking and broad-shouldered.

MICKEY

It's Lowell, Ma.

ALICE

Not that I'm telling you to marry
her.

MICKEY

Everybody knows Charlene's my girl.
Everybody knows me here.

ALICE

So if you lived in Boston you'd
marry her?

MICKEY

Why would I get married in Boston?
Nobody knows me in Boston.

ALICE

I'd get married again.

MICKEY
Three's a charm.

A loud KNOCK at the door. A look between them. Alice dries her hands on her apron and goes to answer it.

ANGLE ON -- THE DOOR

As Alice opens it...O'KEEFE, 40s, a no-nonsense POLICE SERGEANT...TOMMY, 20s, a beat cop who went to school with Mickey, behind him.

O'KEEFE
Where's Dickie?

ALICE
Something happened to Dickie?

CLOSE ON -- MICKEY

Eavesdropping at the kitchen table...He joins his mother...

TOMMY
Is your brother here?

MICKEY
He's in the guest wing here at the Southfork Ranch.

TOMMY
If you're hiding him, Mickey --

MICKEY
Hiding him? I don't even remember the last time I saw him.

O'KEEFE
Some guy got off the 495 looking for a phone got robbed by a white guy down Marion Street.

ALICE
That's not my Dickie.

TOMMY
How many white guys are down Marion Street with the Cambodians?

MICKEY
How many guys are down there with the hookers looking for a phone?

TOMMY
You're an embarrassment -- all of
you.

ALICE
Who are you to look down your nose
at my Dickie?

O'Keefe fixes Mickey with a look.

O'KEEFE
He has a shotgun.
(beat)
It's a good day for all of us if he
doesn't get himself killed.

Off Mickey,

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHT. THE ACRE

A once-tough Irish neighborhood now lined with CRACK HOUSES,
the windows boarded up...BOO BOO, 40s, a potbellied CRACK
ADDICT, heads inside as Mickey rolls up in his Camaro.

MICKEY
Where's my brother?

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. MICKEY'S CAMARO

Mickey rides with Boo Boo, scanning the streets...

BOO BOO
...We'll find him. He's always in
the same five fucking places.

MICKEY
We gotta find him before the cops
find him.

BOO BOO
He loves that pipe.

MICKEY
Degenerate. He loves that pipe more
than his mother.

BOO BOO
He's a disgrace.

MICKY
What?

BOO BOO
Well, you said it.

MICKY
That's not what I said.

BOO BOO
Okay, I said it.

MICKY
And what are you?

BOO BOO
What did I do?

MICKY
What did you ever do?

BOO BOO
All right.

MICKY
Don't you fucking compare yourself
to my brother.

BOO BOO
All right. I'm sorry.

MICKY
My brother fought Sugar Ray Leonard
on HBO. Do you even get HBO?

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHT. CRACKHOUSE --- LOWELL

Mickey pulls up to a CRACK HOUSE...Mickey approaches the
BOUNCER, a Cambodian in his 20s. The Bouncer nods him
in....The sound of approaching SIRENS...

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. CRACKHOUSE --- LOWELL

Mickey moves past CRACKHEADS firing up...Climbs bare plywood stairs, the carpet pulled up and salvaged...

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. CRACK HOUSE --- BATHROOM

Mickey enters the bathroom...A stinking shithole, smeared with feces and vomit...He hears WHIMPERING from behind the shower curtain, drawn tight around the bathtub...

MICKEY

Dickie? It's me. Don't shoot.

Mickey pulls the curtain back...SHOCKED by what he sees...

DICKIE EKLUND, early 30s, withered and hollowed-out by a crack addiction, gaps in his smile, but his eyes still sparkle and his tongue still sings with Irish garrulity.

DICKIE

I fucked up this time.

MICKEY

You got a shotgun?

DICKIE

I ditched it. It's a Civil War gun, like a musket. I don't even think it works.

(rueful)

Probably be worth a lot of money one day.

(helplessly)

He's a married guy from Newton down there with the hookers. I didn't think he'd report it.

MICKEY

Armed robbery and kidnapping, that's nice, Dickie.

DICKIE

Not so nice.

They exchange a look.

MICKEY

Well, if you done it, you gotta
face up to it. Right?

(off Dickie's look)

Maybe in the joint you can get some
help.

A look between them. Mickey puts his hand out and pulls
Dickie up out of the tub...

INT. CONTINUOUS. STAIRWELL

Mickey and Dickie reach the landing...Mickey heads down
first...Sees COPS downstairs with their GUNS DRAWN...

MICKEY

It's okay. He don't have a gun.

CLOSE ON -- DICKIE

As he moves to follow his brother down the stairs...

DICKIE'S POV

O'Keefe, Tommy and other COPS look up, fix their FLASHLIGHTS
on him...Fists tightening around nightsticks...

BACK ON -- MICKEY

As he senses something...Turns..

MICKEY (CONT'D)

Dickie, no!

BACK ON -- DICKIE

As he dashes across the landing and into the bedroom...Runs
full steam into the window...JUMPS...Crashes through the
flimsy frame and the shattering glass --

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. HINES AUDITORIUM -- BOSTON

DICKIE EKLUND, 20s, in peak condition, not a mark on his
face, as he boxes in front of a rowdy, working-class, mostly
Irish crowd...Supered below:

HINES AUDITORIUM. BOSTON. 1978

Eklund outclasses his OPPONENT...Ringwise beyond his years, more a boxer than a puncher, silky moves and skillful defense...Make 'em miss, make 'em pay...

RADIO ANNOUNCER

...The Pride of Lowell, Dick Eklund, one of the most promising young fighters in the welterweight division...What will be next for him?...

BAM-BAM-BAM! A dazzling combination by Dickie, then he dances and ducks as the Opponent swings back, misses wildly...Then the bell RINGS...

ANGLE ON -- DICKIE'S CORNER

Mickey jumps up onto the canvas and puts out a stool for Dickie...SKEETS, 60s, an ancient Lowellian gym rat, rubs ointment on Dickie's cheekbones...REVEAL that O'KEEFE, the cop we saw at the outset, is Dickie's TRAINER...

O'KEEFE

...Quit dancing. Don't take a chance with this guy. Put him away.

Dickie looks over at the ringside seats...Catches the eye of his wife, DEBBIE EKLUND, 21, a Playmate-class blonde with a Farrah Fawcett hairdo...He winks at her and she smiles...

Then Alice returns to her seat beside her, looking like the cat who ate the canary. Debbie turns to her.

DEBBIE

Where'd you go?

ALICE

I had to make a phone call.

DEBBIE

Who you gotta call in the middle of the fight?

Alice pats Debbie's hand, patronizing her.

ALICE

You just keep Dickie happy, baby, and I'll handle the rest.

The bell RINGS for ROUND SIX...Dickie comes straight at his Opponent...Lefts and rights...A hard overhand right and the Opponent slams into the canvas...The LOWELL FANS jump to their feet, CHEERING, as Dickie moves to a neutral corner...The Referee counts to TEN as the Opponent staggers, falls back to the canvas -- a KNOCKOUT -- Mickey ROARS in triumph...Dickie grins, holds up his fists in victory,

CUT TO:

INT. LATER. HINES AUDITORIUM

The fight is over. Dickie waits in his corner. The MICROPHONE descends from the ceiling on its cord and the RING ANNOUNCER speaks into it...

RING ANNOUNCER

The winner by a knockout, in the sixth round...Ring Magazine's New England Fighter of the Year, The Pride of Lowell...Dick Eklund!

CHEERS as Dickie holds his fists aloft, dances around the ring, triumphant...A GROUP HUG with his corner men...Then a loving look between him and Debbie...A KISS...Alice grabs the microphone from the Ring Announcer...

ALICE

I've got some news -- I just got off the phone -- Dickie doesn't even know this yet. Right here at the Veterans on July 28th and live on HBO my Dickie is going to fight against...

(beat)

...and going to win against...

(cheers)

...Sugar Ray Leonard!

(wild cheers)

And after that we're going for the title and bring the belt home to Lowell!

Dickie and Mickey exchange a smile. Debbie kisses him. Dickie holds up his fists and the crowd ROARS...Could this get any better?

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. BEDROOM --- EKLUND HOUSE --- LOWELL

Dickie sleeps soundly, Debbie's arms draped around him...Then the door opens and a shaft of light pans across his face...Dickie buries his head in the pillows...

MICKEY

Dickie, c'mon. Wake up.

DICKIE

Get the fuck out, you hard-on.

DEBBIE

Who is it?

DICKIE

It's Mickey.

DEBBIE

You gave him a key?

DICKIE

He's my brother. My house is his house.

DEBBIE

Mickey get the fuck out.

DICKIE

That's what I said.

DEBBIE

Both of you get the fuck out.

MICKEY

It's three o'clock. C'mon.

DICKIE

Get in bed with me like the queer that you are.

MICKEY

We gotta do roadwork.

DICKIE

You gotta do roadwork. I got nothing to prove.

MICKEY

Sugar Ray Leonard and you got nothing to prove?

DICKIE

Prove I can sleep later than he
can.

Mickey grabs a pitcher of ice water next to the bed. POURS it
on Dickie...Dickie ERUPTS out of the bed and chases him...

CUT TO:

EXT. DAWN. LOWELL

Bare-ass naked, Dickie runs after Mickey in the street...Till
he finally gives up...A WINDOW opens on the second-floor of a
row house...

OLDER WOMAN

Put some clothes on!

Dickie grabs his crotch...

DICKIE

You gotta go to a museum to see
this!

OLDER WOMAN

I'm calling your mother.

The Older Woman closes the window...Off Dickie, laughing,

CUT TO:

EXT. DAWN. LOWELL

Now dressed in his sweats, Dickie runs with Mickey on a
street near the river.

MICKEY

...Dickie, what do they know? You
can't read the papers.

DICKIE

I don't read the papers.

MICKEY

Good.

DICKIE

How is that good if I still get
told it?

MICKEY

We all agreed -- nobody tell
Dickie.

DICKIE

Exactly.

MICKEY

Exactly.

A beat.

DICKIE

Since when does nobody include you?

MICKEY

It's bullshit. You're gonna beat
Leonard, win the title, make a
million dollars and move to
Marblehead.

DICKIE

(beat)
Marblehead?

A MAN scratches himself as he awakens on a second-floor sleep
porch. Recognizes Dickie and shouts to him.

LOWELL MAN #1

Hey, Dickie! We love you!

DICKIE

Don't love me too much. I'm moving
to Marblehead.

LOWELL MAN #1

Marblehead?

DICKIE

You coming to the fight?

LOWELL MAN #1

Sugar my fucking balls. You're
gonna open his hole like the Sumner
Tunnel!

As they jog around a corner...

MICKEY

Who cares what some asshole writes
in the Globe?

(MORE)

MICKEY (CONT'D)

All that matters is what you think.
Do you think you can beat him?

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. RAMALHO'S GYM

CLOSE ON DICKIE as he watches VIDEOTAPE of Sugar Ray Leonard in the back room of the gym, fighting in the Olympic semifinals against Poland's KAZIMIERZ SZCZERBA...

O'KEEFE

He's fast, you gotta give him that.

DICKIE

Yeah, he's fast.

SKEETS

Dickie's faster.

NOTABLE

Skeets knows his boxing, huh?

SKEETS

(gestures to TV)

And I'll tell you another thing. If Lowell was a country, it would be Dickie in the Olympics and not this fucking Polack.

DICKIE

I gotta tell you guys, I'm scared.

Worried looks. Then someone gets the joke and LAUGHS. Then everyone erupts in laughter...Dickie joins in the laughter.

HANGER-ON

Dickie! What a pisser!

The NOTABLE squeezes Dickie's shoulder.

NOTABLE

We're all betting the Irish, Dickie.

On the TV, Leonard throws an uppercut that rocks Szczerba...Fists flying and Szczerba covering up...

CLOSE ON -- DICKIE

Scared.

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. RAMALHO'S GYM

Dickie boxes with his SPARRING PARTNER. A different Dickie -- no dancing, no fooling around -- he feints then hooks the sparring partner hard three times in the ribs, comes upstairs with a right uppercut...

SPARRING PARTNER
What the fuck are you doing?

DICKIE
You're getting paid.

They resume. Again Dickie comes after him. A furious combination and the Sparring Partner falls hard to the canvas, out COLD...Dickie turns to the gym.

DICKIE (CONT'D)
Okay, who's next? Who's next?
(beat)
Don't none of you read the Globe?

Looks all around. Nobody volunteers. Off Dickie,

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. THE HIGHLAND TAP

A loud Irish bar in the heart of the Acre. A BAR BAND plays "Dream On", by local band Aerosmith, before a packed room.

ANGLE ON -- DICKIE

Entertaining a circle of HANGER-ONS, everyone drunk and happy.

SINGER #1
Ladies and gentlemen, we've got
Dick Eklund in the bar tonight, the
future welterweight champion of the
world!
(cheers)
Who is going to kick the living
shit out of Sugar Ray Leonard next
week...
(louder cheers)
...and put Lowell on the map!

EXPLOSIVE CHEERS from the crowd...Among the crowd, we pick out a smiling Alice, with a beer and a cigar, and Debbie, beaming at Dickie...

LOWELL MAN #4
Kick his ass, Dickie!

LOWELL MAN #5
Make Lowell proud!

SINGER #1
Dickie, get your ass up here and
sing for us!

Loud, drunken cheers and requests for "Dream On" as Dickie goes up to the microphone. He stands there a long beat. The room gradually gets quiet. Then uncomfortable...Then:

DICKIE
Oh Danny boy, the pipes, the pipes
are calling...From glen to glen,
and down the mountain side...

GROANS from the crowd...

CLOSE ON --- MICKEY

Beer in hand, as he smiles, SHOUTS...

MICKEY
Somebody get that drunk off the
stage and tuck him in bed!

ANGLE ON --- THE BAND

As Dickie persists through boos and catcalls, they shrug and launch into a bluesy accompaniment...

DICKIE
...The summer's gone and all the
flowers are dying...'Tis you, 'tis
you must go and I must bide...

Drawn irresistibly, PATRONS begin to join in...

DICKIE (CONT'D)
(with some others)
...But come ye back when summer's
in the meadow...Or when the
valley's hushed...

And then EVERYONE is singing...Debbie smiles as she sways to the music...Alice BELTS it out lustily...

ALL

(unison)

...and white with snow... 'Tis I'll
 be here in sunshine or in
 shadow... Oh Danny boy, oh Danny
 boy, I love you so.

Mickey WAR-WHOOPS and the tavern ERUPTS in cheers and
 whoops... The band launches into another loud heavy-metal
 anthem... Dickie returns to the bar, flushed and happy...

CUT TO:

INT. LATER. THE HIGHLAND TAP

Beer in hand, his arm around Debbie, Dickie regales a circle
 of HANGERS-ON with a story...

DICKIE

...So I'm in the locker room after,
 my right hand's swollen like a
 bastard, I can barely get it out of
 the glove from beating on José's
 head all night. He comes in, and he
 gives me a big hug -- José. I
 thought that was a sporting
 gesture. And he says, 'Dickie,
amigo, long time no see!' And I
 said, 'José, we just went six
 rounds. I knocked you out.' And he
 looks for a minute and he says,
 'That was you?'

LAUGHTER from everyone...

ANGLE ON -- MICKEY

Watching from nearby, enjoying Dickie being Dickie... Then
 from behind, a girl's HAND goes over his eyes...

CHARLENE

You recognize my voice?

MICKEY

Give me a hint.

CHARLENE

Eighth grade history. Miss
 Cochrane.

(beat)

I sat two rows behind you on the
 window.

MICKEY
Charlene Crowley.

She takes her hand away and Mickey turns to see CHARLENE CROWLEY, 20s, pretty and spirited.

CHARLENE
You were paying attention!

MICKEY
Not to Miss Cochrane.

CHARLENE
Hey, I need a ride home. You mind?

MICKEY
I don't got a car.
(off her look)
I can borrow my brother's car.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. DICKIE'S CAR

Mickey drives Charlene in his brother's tweaked muscle car, a '69 CHEVELLE SS.

MICKEY
...Dickie beats Sugar Ray Leonard
they'll all come kiss his ass. And
he can do it, too. You should see
him. Dickie's gonna be on the
Wheaties box one day and all that
shit. It's crazy, you know? It's
just starting.

CHARLENE
You must be pretty good yourself if
you won the Gold Gloves.

MICKEY
You don't want to talk about
fighting, do you?

CHARLENE
I like fighting.

MICKEY
Watch out. I come straight at you.

CHARLENE
Then you're gonna get hit.

MICKEY

So are you.

CHARLENE

Take two to give one?

MICKEY

I can take it. Can you?

CHARLENE

I'll outlast you.

MICKEY

There's no fucking way I'm gonna quit.

CHARLENE

Is that how your brother fights?

MICKEY

Dickie's special. Dickie's got a gift.

CHARLENE

Everyone's got something special.

MICKEY

Why? What's so special about you?

Charlene laughs.

CHARLENE

I think I'm gonna keep you guessing about that.

Mickey laughs.

MICKEY

You got a special talent?

CHARLENE

Oh, yeah.

MICKEY

Would I be interested?

CHARLENE

You'd be very interested.

MICKEY

Make me buy you dinner first?

CHARLENE
I have to see if you're worthy.

MICKEY
Because I'm dying to find out.

She laughs. Gestures...

CHARLENE
Drop me off here. If my mother sees
me get out of a car like this
she'll beat me black and blue.

Mickey pulls over.

MICKEY
No kiss goodnight?

CHARLENE
Maybe when you've got a job and
your own car.

MICKEY
And I thought I was tough.

As she moves to exit, she turns back to him.

CHARLENE
Just on the outside.

She kisses his cheek. Exits. Off Mickey, as he watches her,

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHT. THE HIGHLAND TAP

Mickey pulls up into the parking lot...Sees Dickie with some
FRIENDS, a case of beer on the tailgate of a pickup
truck...Climbs out of the car...Then he sees BOO BOO, 20s,
paunchy, with a droopy mustache, pass something to Dickie...

INSERT -- A COKE SPOON

As Dickie scoops COKE out of a vial, lifts it to his nose and
SNORTS it...Then Mickey approaches.

DICKIE
Just in time for my second wind.
Where were you?

MICKY

I told you -- I had to drop that girl off.

Dickie offers the vial to Mickey.

DICKIE

You want a taste?

MICKY

Take it easy. We're back in the gym tomorrow.

DICKIE

You think I'd jeopardize this fight? I'm just blowing off steam.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. EKLUND HOUSE -- LOWELL

Dickie tiptoes up the stairs...From inside the master bedroom, he hears...

DEBBIE (O.C.)

Dickie, is that you?

He enters as Debbie sits up, turns on the lamp by her bedside. Looks at the clock.

DICKIE

I ran into Boo Boo and those guys.

DEBBIE

Want to see my HBO dress? I want to make sure you like it.

DICKIE

Debbie, what do I know about dresses?

DEBBIE

You know what you like.

Debbie moves to the closet...Pulls off her T-SHIRT...Takes out a DRESS on a hanger...Turns and Dickie is right there. He caresses her...

DICKIE

You know what I like.

He kisses her. She kisses him back...

DEBBIE

Oh yes I do.

DICKIE

Oh yes you do.

She caresses and fondles him, rubs against him...

DEBBIE

It's all for you, Dickie -- all of
it -- every dirty fucking thing you
ever dreamed of -- you bad, bad boy

(she stops)

But first you gotta beat his ass.

She turns, pulls the dress over her head.

DICKIE

Oh, no.

DEBBIE

Oh, yes.

DICKIE

You don't really think sex kills
your legs for fighting, do you?
Nobody believes that anymore.

DEBBIE

Nice try.

DICKIE

Since the eighth grade I'd be in a
wheelchair if that was true.

She turns to him.

DEBBIE

How do I look?

DICKIE

You're beautiful.

(bitterly)

A lot of good it's doing me.

She moves to him. Kisses him tenderly but chastely.

DEBBIE

After the fight.

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. RAMALHO'S GYM

Dickie is back to training. O'Keefe in the ring with him, wearing the pads, calling out combinations...Mickey watches with Tommy, the cop we saw earlier.

TOMMY

How do you learn that?

SKEETS

You don't. He was born with it.
Million dollar hands -- and a two
cent brain.

MICKEY

What about me, Skeets?

SKEETS

Same mother, different fathers.

MICKEY

Which comes from Ma -- the hands or
the brains?

SKEETS

Don't get me in trouble.

Dickie throws another dazzling combination...O'Keefe signals to Mickey.

O'KEEFE

Mickey, get up here.

(nods to Dickie)

He's dropping his left. Make him
pay for it. Leonard will.

The brothers start to spar...

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY. LOWELL

Dickie drives his Chevelle through Lowell, the window down, waving to people as he passes by...Mickey beside him.

DICKIE

...So who's this girl you dropped
off last night?

MICKEY

She asked me to drop her off.

DICKIE
You like her?

MICKEY
I known her since the eighth grade.
Dickie looks at him.

DICKIE
Don't bullshit me! You like her!

MICKEY
Shut the fuck up.

DICKIE
You found a good-looking Lowell
girl I didn't ride already. She
must've been in a convent.
(beat)
You gonna see her again?

MICKEY
She says I gotta get a job first.

DICKIE
What is she, a gold-digger?

MICKEY
She wants to know I'm serious, you
know. Not some flake.

DICKIE
Don't kid yourself. The green makes
the world go 'round.

MICKEY
I'm not asking for your help.

DICKIE
I wasn't going to.

MICKEY
I can get my own job.

A beat.

DICKIE
How are you going to get a job in a
week? You want to take her to the
fight, don't you?

A look between them.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY. CONSTRUCTION SITE

RAINEY, one of Dickie's drinking buddies and clearly in awe of Dickie, looks Mickey over.

RAINEY
What about paving?

MICKEY
Paving?

RAINEY
Paving. Asphalt. Drive the roller.
Three hundred a week. Sound good?

MICKEY
Sure.

RAINEY
How's the fight look?

DICKIE
Looks good, Rainey.

RAINEY
Nothing but a dumb fucking nigger,
right?

CHEERS and "Go get 'im, Dickie!" from men on the construction site. Off Dickie,

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY. CONSTRUCTION SITE

Dickie and Mickey walk to the Chevelle...

MICKEY
...Three hundred, that's real
money, huh?

DICKIE
You got a man's job, drive a man's
car.

Dickie throws Mickey the KEYS. Mickey grins, gets behind the wheel...

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY. LOWELL STREET

Mickey drives, Dickie beside him.

MICKEY

...You know Rainey a long time?

DICKIE

Jackoff.

MICKEY

I thought he was a friend of yours.

DICKIE

If Leonard's a dumb fucking nigger
how come he's getting forty grand
and I'm getting four? In my next
life color me in and make me
stupid.

(noticing)

Hey, Ma!

REVERSE ANGLE

Alice shops on Main Street. Turns and sees Dickie hanging out of the window waving to her.

ALICE

Are you boys getting in trouble?

DICKIE

Trouble? Mickey got a job!

(beat)

C'mon, get in!

Excited, Alice runs toward the car. Tosses her cigar in the gutter and climbs inside...

CUT TO:

INT. LATER. CHEVELLE

Mickey drives while Dickie searches for a station on the radio. Alice rides in the back.

ALICE
...What the hell do you know about
driving a steamroller?

Mickey hesitates. Dickie answers for him.

DICKIE
Nothing. What do you know about
being a fight manager?

Dickie and Mickie share a smile.

ALICE
I must be doing something right.

DICKIE
She's very sensitive this morning.

ALICE
You beat Sugar Ray -- all the
sharks'll be out. You're going to
be glad you have your mother.

ANOTHER MUSCLE CAR -- A RED '67 GTO

...Pulls up on the right. GEORGIE CLEMENTS, 20s, a meatball,
leans out his window, GUNS his engine to get Dickie's
attention.

GEORGIE
Family outing?

DICKIE
You're leaking oil all over our
fine streets, Georgie.

GEORGIE
(looking it over)
Nice little car, the Chevelle, for
the money. They never really worked
out the suspension, though.
(heavy sigh)
And that sloppy linkage...
(beat)
Anyway, I was going to mosey over
to the Bleachery. How about you?

Dickie gives Georgie a stare. Turns to Mickey.

DICKIE
Bury this prick.

ALICE

Oh, no...Not with me in the car...

Mickey and Dickie exchange a look...The light turns GREEN and the two cars ROAR off the line, smoking rubber...They roar down the streets of the old mill town...

ALICE (CONT'D)

Goddamn it! We're all gonna die!

The speedometer reads 100 M.P.H....The GTO pulls ahead...

DICKIE

Don't let him beat you! Downshift.

(Mickey hesitates)

Downshift!

Mickey downshifts and the Chevelle EXPLODES forward, pinning them back against their seats...Mickey struggling to control it...The speedometer shows 130...Alice crosses herself...

A CREST as the road rises to meet the railroad tracks...The GTO slows...

DICKIE (CONT'D)

Hang on!

The Chevelle hits the crest and goes AIRBORNE...Flies fifty feet and lands hard, sparks flying...But Mickey wrestles the wheel and keeps it straight...

The light at the corner of the Bleachery...The Chevelle reaches it well ahead of the GTO...Dickie bellows in TRIUMPH...Mickey and Dickie ROAR...Laughter and high-fives...

CUT TO:

THE HBO SPORTS LOGO FILLS THE SCREEN

Over a packed arena, announcer DON DUNPHY'S voice...

DUNPHY

...Live from the Hines Veterans' Auditorium in Boston, HBO Presents a ten-round welterweight bout between undefeated Olympic gold medalist Sugar Ray Leonard and the Pride of Lowell, Massachusetts, Dick Eklund...

WIDER

Reveal that the TV plays to a packed house at the Highland Tap...Many here who we've seen or met...

CUT TO:

INT. SAME TIME. LOCKER ROOM

Dickie goes through his pre-fight preparations...O'Keefe wraps his hands while Mickey rubs his shoulders...Mickey stands in a corner. Alice paces with an unlit cigar.

O'KEEFE

...You know him better than he knows you because he's on TV so much. He's never seen you before.

ALICE

You're gonna surprise everyone, Dickie. This is your shot.

MICKEY

Ma, get out. You're making him nervous.

ALICE

Don't I gotta earn my third?

DICKIE

As long as I get it back.

ALICE

You get it back every day -- that and more -- believe me.

DICKIE

Ma, I gotta put my cup in.

ALICE

On my life? You're gonna beat Sugar Ray.

Alice kisses him on the head, exits. A beat of quiet as Skeets winds the handwraps...

MICKEY

Or don't come home.

Dickie and Mickey laugh.

O'KEEFE

Your mother's a pisser.

Then a KNOCK at the door. It's Skeets.

SKEETS
They're ready for you.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. ARENA

SUGAR RAY LEONARD, just a kid but with the eyes of a warrior, stares into Dickie's eyes, forehead to forehead, as they listen to the REFEREE give the instructions...

REFEREE
...You go below the belt, I'm going to call you for it, no warning...

DICKIE
You going below the belt on me?

SUGAR RAY
I'm not sure I'd find anything to speak of down there, by my standards.

DICKIE
It only looks small because my balls are so fucking big.

REFEREE
...Come out fighting and may the best man win.

Dickie and Sugar Ray touch gloves.

CUT TO:

INT. LATER. ARENA

Dickie and Leonard box.

DUNPHY
...Eklund has over two hundred fights under his belt. Never been knocked down. Clearly a well-schooled young fighter and Leonard just may have his work cut out for him tonight.

Leonard landing some tough punches...But Dickie dances away and LAUGHS...

DUNPHY (CONT'D)

...Eklund has a habit of smiling
when he gets hit. And it's really
not funny.

ANGLE ON -- MICKEY

In the corner...

MICKEY

Stay away from him, Dickie!

But Dickie can't...Leonard cutting off the ring...Some more
tough body punches...Again, Dickie smiles.

DUNPHY

There's that smile by Eklund again.

MERCHANT

If he gets knocked out he'll go
into hysteria.

DUNPHY

Leonard is getting \$35,000 for this
fight. Eklund is getting \$4,500,
which is \$3,800 more than he's ever
gotten before.

MERCHANT

Maybe that's why he's smiling.

The bell sounds...Dickie returns to his corner...

MICKEY

You're dropping your left hand.

DICKIE

The fuck I am.

MICKEY

The fuck you're not.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. ARENA

Supered below: ROUND SIX. Leonard hits Dickie hard with
another left to the ribs...Dickie drops his elbows and
Leonard comes upstairs with a hard left hook to the head...

Dickie is rocked backwards and Leonard comes after him, unleashing a flurry of blows with dazzling speed and murderous ferocity...

WHAM! Dickie hits the canvas...

MERCHANT

After two hundred fights Eklund is down for the first time in his career.

Dickie gets up...And he's SMILING..The Referee gives delivers the standing eight count...

And they're back into it...Leonard storms him with a flurry of punches and Dickie ties him up in a clinch...Then Dickie KISSES Leonard on the forehead...!

MERCHANT (CONT'D)

Did you see that? Dick Eklund just kissed Leonard on the head!

The Referee pulls them apart...Dickie looks at Leonard and laughs. And Leonard laughs, too...They resume the fight...Finally the bell rings and Dickie returns to the corner. Turns to Mickey.

DICKIE

You won't believe what the problem is. I'm dropping my left hand.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. ARENA

The fighters head toward each other. Supered below: ROUND EIGHT...Dickie confuses Leonard by going SOUTHPAW...But Sugar Ray rallies...Forces Dickie back on the ropes...

DUNPHY

Holy moley, he's pounding him!

Dickie is clearly tired...Leonard clearly isn't...Dickie takes some serious punishment...

ANGLE ON -- ALICE

Worried, she makes her way to the corner...Shouts to Mickey.

ALICE

He's hurt! Call it off!

O'KEEFE
Alice, will you please?

ALICE
I don't want to blow his career on
one fight. Call it off.

O'KEEFE
Are you a mother or a manager?

ALICE
I'm a mother first.
(beat)
Mickey, make him listen.

MICKEY
Dickie's okay, Ma.

BACK ON -- DICKIE

As the Referee finishes the count and he turns to face
Leonard, who unleashes another flurry of punches...

MERCHANT
You have to give Eklund credit,
he's still in this fight.

They furiously trade blows...Then Leonard WHACKS Dickie and
he stumbles, bent over, clutching his stomach...Leonard
knocks him to the canvas with a right hand.

DUNPHY
And Eklund is down for the second
time in the fight!

BACK ON -- ALICE

Tears in her eyes...Another punishing assault on Dickie...

ALICE
Mickey, stop it!

Mickey struggles, not knowing what to do...The Referee
finishes his eight count and the punishment resumes...

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. ARENA

The bell rings and the two fighters head toward each
other...Supered below: ROUND TEN...

Leonard comes out hacking...Dickie can barely defend himself...

LARRY MERCHANT

It's okay with me if they stop it,
and I think they should. There's no
way Dick Eklund can win this fight.

And suddenly Dickie RALLIES...Throwing hard rights and lefts
with his characteristic abandon...Suddenly Sugar Ray Leonard
LANDS hard on the canvas and Dickie WALKS RIGHT OVER HIM...

DON DUNPHY

Leonard is down! Was that a
knockdown?

Alice CHEERS and WHISTLES, the Lowell contingent on their
feet around her...

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. HIGHLAND TAP

The crowd is on its feet...Tommy turns to TIP, 40s, the
Bartender.

TOMMY

That was a knockdown. He hit him
with a right hand.

TIP

I didn't see it.

TOMMY

It's always the punch you don't
see. Remember Ali and Liston?

DON DUNPHY (O.C.)

The judges are ruling that he
slipped.

BOOS in the room...Tommy looks at the TV, furious...

TOMMY

Oh come on. Show the replay! How
can he say he slipped?

Then the bell rings, ending the fight....

LARRY MERCHANT (O.C.)
It seems like everyone from Lowell
is pouring into the ring right now.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. ARENA

The two fighters stand beside the Ref, who holds their arms
by the wrist, as the RING ANNOUNCER receives the verdict from
the JUDGES...

RING ANNOUNCER
...The winner by unanimous
decision...And still undefeated...
Sugar Ray Leonard!

Dickie and Leonard embrace...

LEONARD
You gave me a good fight.

DICKIE
You were the better man.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. HIGHLAND TAP

Larry Merchant interviews Sugar Ray Leonard on the TV.

LEONARD
...Dick Eklund is a very, very good
defensive fighter, hard to hit...

Then Tip reaches up and turns it off...Returns to polishing
his beer glasses...A funereal quiet in the bar...

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. LOCKER ROOM

Dickie sits on the table...Deep cuts over both eyes are
stitched shut...His bruises have ripened to a vivid dark plum
color...Mickey brings him a bag of ice for his hand...

DICKIE
How's Ma?

MICKEY
She's worried about you.

DICKIE
Where's your girl?

MICKEY
Charlene? She's outside.

DICKIE
You got a lot of confidence leaving
a girl that good-looking all alone
out there.

MICKEY
You looked good tonight.

DICKIE
He never hurt me. He's good. But he
never hurt me.
(beat)
Not then. Now everything hurts.
Even my cock hurts.

MICKEY
Maybe Skeets'll rub some Tiger Balm
on it.

DICKIE
I thought Skeets knew boxing.
(beat)
I guess I let him down, huh?

MICKEY
You didn't let anyone down, Dickie.

DICKIE
I just wish Ma didn't tell everyone
I was gonna win.

A look between them.

MICKEY
We'll wait for you. Maybe go get
some beers.
(beat)
Good fight, Dickie.

Mickey exits. HOLD ON Dickie, in his loneliness and defeat,

FADE TO BLACK.

WHITE TITLES:

1990

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. GARAGE --- LOWELL

Dickie's cherished Chevelle is up on blocks in the garage of BILLY, the REPO MAN. Dickie has a small paunch, his arms have lost their tautness, and there's something else, in the slump of his shoulders and the too-quick smile -- however carefully hidden, there is DEFEAT.

DICKIE

...C'mon, Billy. You know I'm good for it. Eight hundred bucks?

BILLY

Cash is king, Dickie.

DICKIE

Eight hundred is nothing to me.

BILLY

Then how come you don't have it?

DICKIE

Because I bought a new clutch for my fucking car that you repossessed.

BILLY

You got a fight coming up?

DICKIE

There's always another fight.

BILLY

When was your last one?

A look between them. Billy turns to exit. Dickie follows him.

DICKIE

I'll collect a debt. I'll repo a car for you. Anything.

BILLY

You will?

DICKIE
Anything. Sure I will.

BILLY
'Cause I ain't gonna give you the
easy ones.

DICKIE
I'll get my brother to help me.

BILLY
I'll think about it.

Dickie looks at his Chevelle.

DICKIE
You take the wheels off a car like
that, that's like cruelty to cars.

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. RAMALHO'S GYM

O'Keefe wraps Mickey's hands.

MICKEY
...You ain't seen him?

O'KEEFE
Not since Monday when he was in
here with us.

MICKEY
Debbie called me last night looking
for him.

O'KEEFE
What did you tell her?

MICKEY
I told her he had to drive down to
Billerica, my aunt was sick.

O'KEEFE
So he's got you lying for him now?

MICKEY
It's not a lie if I don't know
where he is.

O'KEEFE
You don't know?

MICKEY
I wish I did.

O'KEEFE
You don't but you do.

Mickey takes a beat. Looks down at his hands as O'Keefe wraps them...

MICKEY
He's got the prettiest girl in
Lowell -- a beautiful little boy --
(beat)
I don't know what else he's looking
for.

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. CRACK HOUSE -- LOWELL

Dickie lights up a CRACK PIPE improvised out of a soda
bottle. Boo Boo, two CAMBODIANS, and a BIMBO in his retinue.

DICKIE
...The Pride of Lowell -- that's
what they used to call me. Fuckin-
ay.

CAMBODIAN #1
Fuckin-ay.

DICKIE
I fought Sugar Ray Leonard.
(beat)
But he was the better man.

BOO BOO
You knocked him down.

DICKIE
I didn't knock him down. He
slipped.

BOO BOO
I was there.

DICKIE
I wasn't?

BOO BOO
 Give me that fucking pipe.
 (Dickie refuses)
 It's my turn, Dickie.

Boo Boo moves to grab it and Dickie swipes it away.

DICKIE
 Fuck you.

In an irritable rage and scratching at imaginary bugs, Boo Boo growls and storms out.

CAMBODIAN #1
 Sugar Ray Leonard?

DICKIE
 He knocked me down twice.

CAMBODIAN #1
 Knocked out?

DICKIE
 Knocked down. I was never knocked out.

CAMBODIAN #1
 Fuckin--ay.

DICKIE
 The second time I got up and kissed him. That was my style. Never let 'em know you're hurt.

CAMBODIAN #1
 You're full of shit, Dickie.

A beat.

DICKIE
 But it makes a good story, don't it?

CAMBODIAN #1
 Fuckin--ay.

Dickie gets up.

DICKIE
 Okay, my fellow Hibernians. Enough for me.

Dickie hands the pipe over. Reaches the door...

DICKIE (CONT'D)
 Okay, maybe one more.

He returns and plops down on the couch. Laughter all around...

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. RAMALHO'S GYM

Mickey works hard on the heavy bag...Punishing the bag and punishing himself...

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. ARENA -- LOWELL

Mickey fights in close against an OPPONENT who has the better of him. A deep CUT under Mickey's eye...

RADIO ANNOUNCER
 ...This kid Mickey Ward leads with his face and with those high cheekbones of his he cuts easily...His corner's going to have to watch out for that...

ANGLE ON -- DICKIE

In Mickey's corner...He cups his hand and shouts...

DICKIE
 Get inside get inside!

Mickey throws a left hook to the head and the opponent blocks it. Hits Mickey with a combination. They clinch and the referee breaks it up. Mickey comes back. This time he feints the left hook to the head and when the opponent lifts his right to guard it he hits him with a left hook to the ribs...You can hear the

CRRRRRRRRRRRRACKKKKKKK!

Of a rib breaking...The opponent doubles over in horrible pain and coughs -- rich, red oxygenated blood splashes on the canvas...Mickey comes in instantly for the kill, slams him with an overhand right and a ferocious combination to the head...The Opponent slams into the canvas...

DICKIE (CONT'D)
Now that's fighting!

CUT TO:

INT. LATER. ARENA -- LOWELL

The RING ANNOUNCER stands beside Mickey.

RING ANNOUNCER
...The winner by a knockout in the
fourth round...The Pride of
Lowell... 'Irish' Mickey Ward!

The Lowell fans go crazy...Dickie jumps in the ring and
embraces Mickey...Lifts Mickey's fist in VICTORY...Off
Mickey, smiling,

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. MICKEY'S CAR

Mickey and Dickie are parked on a street. Mickey's face is
bandaged. A big CADILLAC parked in the driveway of the house.

MICKEY
...How much longer are we gonna
wait?

DICKIE
I just gotta talk to this guy.

MICKEY
Why don't you ring the bell?

DICKIE
He's on the night shift at the
hospital. He'll be out any minute.

MICKEY
I just got done fighting. I want to
get a beer and go to bed.

Dickie watches as the front door opens...

DICKIE
Okay, here he comes. Back me up.

MICKEY
Back you up for what?

Dickie exits the car...

EXT. CONTINUOUS. DRIVEWAY

Jingling his KEYS, an ENORMOUS MAN moves around the rear of his Cadillac, unlocks it...Dickie SNEAKS up the driveway -- BLINDSIDES him -- the KEYS fall on the driveway...

ENORMOUS MAN

Help!

Dickie retrieves the keys as the front door opens...It's the WIFE of the Enormous Man...

ENORMOUS WIFE

Honey?

From the car, Mickey watches a PIT BULL scream out of the house..It charges Dickie and RIPS at his leg as he scrambles behind the wheel...Dickie SLAMS the car door on the raging animal..The Enormous Man staggers to his feet, finds a SNOW SHOVEL leaning against his garage...Dickie STARTS THE CAR as he slams the car door on the dog -- throws it in REVERSE -- careens down the driveway as the Enormous Man SWINGS the shovel and the windshield spiderwebs...

Mickey throws his car in gear and peels out after the Cadillac...Watches in the rear-view MIRROR as the Enormous Man and the pit bull give chase...Off Mickey,

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. MICKEY'S KITCHEN

Mickey gets two BEERS out of the fridge, brings them to the kitchen table...Dickie sits in his underwear and pours PEROXIDE into the jagged DOG BITE on his thigh...

DICKIE

...I spent eight hundred on the new clutch so I came up short for the monthly. Boo Boo was late six payments and they let him slide. But it's like I got a target on my back because of who I am.

...Then Dickie takes NEEDLE and THREAD and SEWS the jagged cut closed...

MICKEY

Debbie keeps calling me and says
she don't know where you are.

DICKIE

Debbie's mad at me all the time.

MICKEY

What's she mad about?

DICKIE

I don't take her out enough.

MICKEY

So take her out.

DICKIE

She's too good-looking. I take her
out to a bar and every guy there
wants to bang her and then I gotta
fight 'em.

MICKEY

And that's it?

DICKIE

I go out for a pizza and she thinks
I'm screwing around on her.

MICKEY

How much base are you smoking?

A look between them. Dickie returns to his sewing.

DICKIE

How many of these heart-to-hearts
did you and Debbie have behind my
back?

MICKEY

You're fucking up.

DICKIE

'Dickie this', 'Dickie that'. I'm
the same fucking guy but now
everyone has a problem with me.
Nobody had a problem with me when
it was going good.

Dickie snaps off the end of the thread. Pulls on his pants
and exits. Off Mickey,

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY. ROAD --- NEAR LOWELL

The construction crew paves a road. Beside his STEAM ROLLER, Mickey is interviewed for "EYEWITNESS NEWS" by a REPORTER with big blonde hair...A few GAWKERS nearby.

REPORTER

I'm here with 'Irish' Mickey Ward, who by night is a welterweight boxer well-known in the local arenas but by day has a very different job. What are you doing out here?

She holds the microphone in front of him.

MICKEY

Paving, you know. Earning a living like anyone else.

REPORTER

Shouldn't you be training?

MICKEY

My boss takes care of me. Like if I gotta go train he keeps up the insurance. Stuff like that.

REPORTER

So by night you flatten your opponents and by day you flatten hot asphalt?

She laughs at her own joke. Mickey chuckles gamely.

MICKEY

Bring the belt home to Lowell one day, that's my dream...

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. DICKIE'S HOUSE --- KITCHEN

"EYEWITNESS NEWS" plays unwatched on a TV as Dickie, BAREFOOT, rummages through the house, looking for his shoes. Debbie watches, holding their three-year-old SON.

DICKIE

C'mon, baby, where are they? I'm going to be late.

DEBBIE

I know where you're going. And you ain't going.

DICKIE

My brother's fighting tonight.

DEBBIE

Why can't you be straight with me?

DICKIE

Are we going to fight in front of our child? Aren't we better than that?

DEBBIE

Like you can be a father when you feel like it.

She puts their son down. Exits inside...Dickie gets down on his haunches, looks his son in the eye.

DICKIE

You know where Mommie hid my shoes?

CUT TO:

INT. CONTINUOUS. DICKIE'S HOUSE --- BEDROOM

Dickie ransacks the closet, throwing clothes on the floor...A hanger with the "HBO DRESS" strewn on the floor...

DEBBIE

...Leave my stuff alone.

DICKIE

You leave me no choice.

DEBBIE

You changed, Dickie.

DICKIE

You changed. You're the one who changed. You used to be fun to be around. I'm just being me, baby.

DEBBIE

Why can't you tell me you don't love me anymore?

DICKIE

My brother's fighting tonight and
you take it like I'm leaving you.
Don't you see how crazy that is?

DEBBIE

Are you bringing some other girl?

Yes.

DICKIE

I'm working the corner. It's all
the way down in Boston --

DEBBIE

My mother said she saw you with
some bimbo in the Stop 'n' Shop.
You bringing her to the fight?

DICKIE

What do we do if our son gets sick
and we're both down in Boston?
C'mon, baby, you can see it's not a
good idea.

DEBBIE

The worst thing that ever happened
to you was that Leonard fight. A
fucking fight you lost years ago.
Grow up.

Debbie exits...He pursues her down the stairs...

DICKIE

What are you bringing that up for?

DEBBIE

Loser. You're a loser.

DICKIE

I went plenty of rounds with you,
baby, and you never knocked me
down.

DEBBIE

I hope your brother wins. I hope he
keeps winning. Everyone'll forget
you. You'll be nothing more than
Mickey Ward's brother.

She enters the powder room and locks the door.

DICKIE

I'd rather be Mickey Ward's brother
than Dick Eklund's ex!

Dickie bangs on the door, frustrated. Turns as his Son
approaches...

JUNIOR

They were in the oven.

He holds up the SHOES. Off Dickie,

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHT. HINES AUDITORIUM -- BOSTON

On the marquee, "DAVID RIVELLO VS. 'IRISH' MICKEY WARD...As
FIGHT FANS file inside...

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. LOCKER ROOM

Mickey gets his hands taped by O'Keefe. Skeets rubs his
shoulders. Alice is there with him.

ALICE

...You beat this kid we'll go to
Atlantic City for the next one. Big
names, big money.

MICKEY

You know where Dickie is?

SKEETS

He was right there in the hotel
with us.

O'Keefe looks at Mickey. Says nothing.

ALICE

Dickie's always into something and
nothing ever happens. Don't worry
about Dickie.

Mickey thinks a beat.

MICKEY

Hey, Skeets, go the front and look
for him. Maybe he forgot his
credentials or something.

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHT. ROXBURY

Dickie wanders the streets, the only white face in a black
neighborhood...Finally finds what he's looking for -- CRACK
ADDICTS lined up at a STOREFRONT DEALER...He joins the
line...When he reaches the front, he pays, gets his two VIALS
of CRACK...

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. CRACK HOUSE -- ROXBURY

Dickie loads the rock into his improvised crack pipe...A
black ADDICT passes him a BIC LIGHTER...

DICKIE

...My right hand's swollen like a
bastard, I can barely get it out of
the glove from beating on José's
head all night. He comes in, and he
gives me a big hug -- José! I
thought that was a sporting
gesture...

(the lighter flares)
Whoa! Richard Pryor time!

Then Dickie INHALES...Ten seconds go by...Then the RUSH hits
him...His pupils dilate, his eyes go wide, and he grins
broadly...Off Dickie, EUPHORIC...

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. HINES AUDITORIUM

Mickey fights DAVID RIVELLO...A kid with fast hands, he
peppers Mickey...

ANNOUNCER (O.C.)

...Two evenly matched fighters,
Rivello with the better record at
14 and 1, Ward at 20 and 3...A good
uppercut by Rivello...

The JUDGES watch this and make note on their cards...

O'KEEFE

Don't fight his fight -- fight your fight!

Bleeding heavily, one eye swollen nearly shut, Mickey turns to face Rivello...Rivello closing in for the kill...But instead of covering up, Mickey ATTACKS...Coming straight ahead, pummeling Rivello...

ANNOUNCER (O.C.)

...Ward isn't quitting -- he's still in this fight!...Rivello better watch out for that dangerous left hook...

Mickey traps Rivello in the corner...A devastating LEFT HOOK to the head rocks Rivello...Followed by an equally devastating LEFT UPPERCUT...Rivello's head snaps back and he falls to the canvas...

ANNOUNCER (O.C.) (CONT'D)

...There's the left hook and Rivello is down!...What a comeback by Mickey Ward!...

CUT TO:

INT. LATER. HINES AUDITORIUM

The REFEREE holds both fighters by the wrist as the RING ANNOUNCER reads from the JUDGES' CARDS...Mickey is badly beaten up, his eye closed and the gash under it bleeding...

RING ANNOUNCER

...The winner in ten rounds by a split decision, the Pride of Lowell, 'Irish' Mickey Ward!

As Mickey looks to his corner, the victory is bittersweet. O'Keefe, Alice, Skeets and Charlene are there. And no Dickie.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY. CONSTRUCTION SITE

Mickey jumps down from his steamroller...His face is still badly swollen and bruised and the deep cut under his eye has big, black Frankenstein stitches...He goes to the TIME CLOCK and punches out...Turns and sees Dickie there.

MICKEY
Where've you been?

DICKIE
What can I say? I'm sorry.

MICKEY
That's it?

DICKIE
You know I wanted to be there for
you. I went out for five minutes,
and...

MICKEY
Five minutes turned into five days?

Dickie realizes for the first time...LAUGHS...

DICKIE
Yeah. I guess it did!
(beat)
If it was three days you'd still be
mad at me, right?

MICKEY
(not over it)
Sure I'm over it.

DICKIE
It was a stupid thing I did -- I
know it. I never missed a fight of
yours in my life.

MICKEY
You gotta straighten yourself out,
Dickie.

DICKIE
It's never too late, right? Turn
over a new leaf. Even maybe make it
right with Debbie.

MICKEY
You know me, I don't hold a grudge.

Dickie takes Mickey's chin. Turns his face to inspect the
cut...

DICKIE
You better get something on that
cut.

(MORE)

DICKIE (CONT'D)

(beat)

Like maybe seven or eight beers.

Mickey laughs.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. THE HIGHLAND TAP

Dickie and Mickey sit at the bar, seven or eight beers into the evening...

DICKIE

...You remember that time you were fourteen and those three kids jumped you? You come home, I took one look at you, I said, Give me their names.

MICKEY

Paulie O'Neal.

DICKIE

He was one of them, sure.

MICKEY

He's dead now.

DICKIE

He's dead or the other one's dead?

MICKEY

I think maybe they're both dead.

DICKIE

I went to all their houses. I knocked on the door. 'Did you hit my brother?' 'Yes.' Wham! I knocked him out. Went to the next house. All three of them. Knocked them all out.

MICKEY

You were looking out for me.

DICKIE

Fuckin'-ay I was looking out for you. And I still am.

Dickie drains his beer, signals for another. Off Mickey,

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHT. DICKIE'S HOUSE

Carrying a case of beer, Dickie walks onto the front porch with Mickey. Tries the lock.

DICKIE
Shit, the door's locked.

MICKEY
You wanna ring the bell?

DICKIE
I wake up the kid she'll have my nuts.

MICKEY
You can crash at my place if you want.

Dickie backs up off the porch...Looks up...The WINDOW in the upstairs bedroom is partly open...

DICKIE
You're smaller than me. You think you can get in that window?

Dickie gives Mickey a boost...Drunk, he totters beneath Mickey's weight...Mickey grabs onto the roof and lifts himself up...Climbs along the roof to the window...Struggles to SQUEEZE his way through the narrow opening...

INT. CONTINUOUS. DICKIE'S BEDROOM

...Mickey comes through the window, onto the floor and out from under the curtains...He stands, glances over to the bed to make sure he didn't wake Debbie...And he sees...

PANNING -- MICKEY'S POV

The bed is stripped...Dresser DRAWERS open and empty...The CLOSET DOOR open and half empty...

BACK ON -- MICKEY

As he realizes...Moves to the bed...There's a NOTE there addressed to Dickie -- obviously a goodbye note...

EXT. CONTINUOUS. DICKIE'S HOUSE

Dickie waits downstairs. Calls in a whisper...

DICKIE
 Hey, Mickey! You okay?
 (beat)
 What's going on?

Then the front door opens and Mickey emerges. A look between them.

MICKEY
 She left this for you.

He hands Dickie the note. Dickie opens it, reads.

DICKIE
 Hit the road on me. I thought she
 was better than that.
 (beat)
 She'll come crawling back.

MICKEY
 I'm sorry, Dickie.

DICKIE
That fucking bitch?
 (beat)
 That fucking bitch!

Dickie tears the note in half and stomps off the porch. Off Mickey,

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. STOP & SHOP

Dickie enters and strides to the sporting goods aisle...Finds a boxed set of GOLF CLUBS...Lifts it under his arm and walks back down the aisle...Walks AROUND the checkout aisles with the same blithe confidence, as if he's doing nothing wrong...And exits the store.

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. BOO BOO'S CAR

Smoking a cigarette, Boo Boo waits as Dickie climbs into the car with the clubs. He tosses his butt and they drive away.

BOO BOO
 How much?

Dickie checks the ticket on the box.

DICKIE
Two--twenty-nine.

Then Boo Boo looks in the rear-view mirror...A POLICE CAR directly behind them...Then the CHERRYTOP lights up...

BOO BOO
Shit.

They pull over...

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. POLICE STATION

Dickie lines up for a MUG SHOT...FLASH!

POLICE PHOTOGRAPHER
Turn sideways.

Dickie turns sideways. FLASH!

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. POLICE STATION

Mickey waits with Alice. O'Keefe comes out. Pulls up a chair and sits close to them so he can talk softly.

O'KEEFE
Here's the situation. They'd love to make an example out of Dickie because of who he is. If -- if -- I can talk them out of that, they'll want to know that he ain't gonna be right back here next week, or next month, maybe for something worse.

ALICE
When he's in the gym he stays out of trouble. And when he's not...

O'Keefe looks at her.

O'KEEFE
Can you get him a fight?

Looks all around. Off Mickey,

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. WARD HOUSE -- LOWELL

Alice has set up her office on the dining room table. She talks on the phone while she smokes a cigar.

ALICE
...Okay...Okay, I got it...Thanks
for your time.

She hangs up. Turns to Mickey.

MICKEY
What?

ALICE
His last fight was a year ago and
he didn't make it off the stool for
round two. Nobody wants him.

She moves to the sink with her coffee cup...Mickey follows
her...

MICKEY
And that's it?

ALICE
That's it.

MICKEY
What aren't you telling me?

ALICE
Nothing.

MICKEY
Ma, you're a terrible liar.

ALICE
Every dog has his day in the sun.
And then that day is done.

MICKEY
Ma?

ALICE
You're a couple of fights away from
a title shot, Mickey. I'm not gonna
let you do it.

MICKEY
Do what?

Alice takes a beat.

ALICE

They need a tuneup bout for Oscar Peña before the Vargas fight.

(off Mickey's look)

Peña's nearly a light-heavyweight. He has twenty pounds on you. You'll get yourself hurt.

Mickey takes a beat.

MICKY

If I fight Peña they'll give Dickie a shot?

A look between them. Off Mickey,

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. ARENA

Exhausted, with deep cuts under both eyes, Mickey clinches with OSCAR PEÑA, who looks to be about TWICE HIS SIZE. Peña lands heavy, thudding blows into Mickey's kidneys in the clinch...The Ref breaks them up...Mickey covers up and Peña swings a sledgehammer right hand -- sweat and blood spray from the impact...Mickey clinches again and Peña bangs away at his kidneys...The Ref breaks them up, Peña rushes Mickey with a big overhand right and Mickey SLAMS down to the canvas...

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. HOSPITAL

Mickey lies in a hospital bed, hooked up to monitors, his face plum-dark with bruises, his lip swollen to triple its size...The skin on his cheeks is stripped as if you ran a plane over them, and the deep cuts are cross-hatched with Frankenstein stitches...His hands are knotted with bruises and discolored deep blue...Charlene at his bedside.

CHARLENE

...Well, you did it. You got Dickie his fight.

MICKY

How come you don't like him?

CHARLENE

I never said I don't like him.

She hands him a water bottle. His face is so swollen he can barely sip through a straw...

MICKEY

Sometimes all you need is a thing
to get you back on track.

CHARLENE

Either that or keep him chained in
the basement.

MICKEY

I know who he is -- good and bad --
this isn't him. It's that pipe.

CHARLENE

Yeah, but it's his pipe and him
sticking it in his mouth.

MICKEY

Dickie's Dickie.

CHARLENE

Sometimes -- if you love someone? --
it means you gotta let them go.

MICKEY

You got a pillow at home that says
that?

CHARLENE

I guess I should be glad I have
such a loyal guy. Gives me free
rein to go crazy.

Mickey takes a beat.

MICKEY

I really think this fight'll be the
thing to turn his life around.

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHT. BOSTON GARDEN

On the marquee, DICK EKLUND VS. ALAN CLARK...Mickey waits
with Alice, O'Keefe and Skeets. Alice looks at her watch.

ALICE
We're gonna get sued.

A TAXI pulls up. Dickie climbs out, grinning broadly...He's clearly high.

DICKIE
Ladies and gentlemen, The Comeback Kid.

Looks all around.

O'KEEFE
You on something, Dickie?

DICKIE
What are you, on duty? A little pick-me-up. Dutch courage.
(off their looks)
Well, I had to make it sporting.

ALICE
He can't fight like this.

DICKIE
What do you think, brother? You think I can fight?

SKEETS
Clark's gonna cut you to ribbons.

Mickey looks at Dickie.

MICKEY
I fought Peña for this?

Dickie pinches his cheek.

DICKIE
Relax. Clark ain't nothing but a can of tomatoes. I got him measured.

Dickie puts his arm around Mickey and leads him inside.
O'Keefe and Alice exchange a look. Off Alice,

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. BOSTON GARDEN

Supered below: ROUND FOUR. The bell rings and the two fighters move toward the center of the ring...ALAN CLARK is a big man with a reach advantage on Dickie...

A JAB snaps Dickie's head back...Then another...Dickie is flushed and sweating unnaturally...Clark feints with the jab then lands a crushing hook to Dickie's liver...Dickie doubles over in pain...In the CORNER, Mickey shouts to Dickie...

MICKEY

Cover up! Dickie, cover up!

Smelling blood, Clark starts throwing punches with abandon...Dickie grabs Clark in a clinch...

DICKIE'S POV

...We enter Dickie's drug-addled, paranoid brain...The Referee breaks it up and Dickie turns to him.

DICKIE

Why's this fucking guy hitting me?

I didn't do nothing to him.

(to Clark)

Live and let live, brother. Peace on earth.

(muttering)

It's a fucking violent world, man.

Dickie turns his back to Clark and heads toward his corner. Puzzled, Clark watches Dickie...Then rushes toward him and hits him with an overhand right in the back of the head...

Dickie staggers toward the ropes...Turns with SAVAGERY in his eyes and RETALIATES...A cascade of punches that stuns Clark...Dickie won't let up, MURDER in his eyes...

Clark staggers back and gets trapped in the corner...Dickie ATTACKS him...Out of control... Clark is DEFENSELESS but the ropes hold him up...Dickie batters him mercilessly...The Ref comes to break up the fight and Dickie slugs him in the face...

Clark's people surge into the ring...Mickey runs into the ring and pulls Dickie off of Clark...The crowd BOOS...Clark sags to the canvas, limp and twitching, in a coma...Cups of beer and other debris sail into the ring...

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. CITY HOSPITAL --- BOSTON

Mickey and Dickie stand at the reception desk.

DICKIE

Can you give me a room number for
Allan Clark? I'd like to go visit
him.

The NURSE checks the computer...

NURSE

Mister Clark is in intensive care.
He can't receive visitors.

DICKIE

No, but ---

(beat)

When do you think we can see him?

NURSE

His condition is critical. He's in
a coma.

Off Dickie,

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. HOSPITAL -- BOSTON

Dickie sits on a plastic chair in the waiting room, anxiously
rubbing his hands. Mickey paces.

DICKIE

...I don't know what got into me.

MICKEY

You couldn't see he was trapped on
the ropes?

DICKIE

I just snapped.

MICKEY

Ten rounds with Peña and I was
pissing blood for a week just so
you could get this fight. So you
could go mental and nearly kill
this guy. Maybe even did kill him.

DICKIE

I need help, Mickey.

MICKEY

You need an ass-kicking, is what you need.

DICKIE

I know I fucked up.

MICKEY

You got a lot of people who care about you -- you turned your back on all of us.

DICKIE

Things are gonna change.

MICKEY

Things have to change.

DICKIE

You really think he might die?
(half to himself)
I don't know what I would do. I just hope God looks out for me for once -- lets him be okay.

Dickie looks at his hands. The anger has burned out for Mickey...He takes Dickie in -- sees how pathetic and forlorn he is...

MICKEY

If you need help, we'll get you help. Whatever it takes.

A look between them. Dickie takes a beat.

DICKIE

I didn't eat since this morning. You got five bucks so I can get a sandwich?

MICKEY

Sure.

Mickey reaches for his wallet...

DICKIE

You can't spot me a hundred, can you?

They exchange a look...

CLOSE ON -- MICKEY

As he realizes that his brother is a hopeless ADDICT and all his promises to change are lies...He empties his wallet.

MICKEY

This's all I got.

DICKIE

Thanks, bro.

Dickie grabs for it. Mickey holds it back.

MICKEY

I don't want to see you again.

CLOSE ON -- DICKIE

Completely lost and desperate...He sees Mickey means it. But he doesn't argue. He'll make that deal. He takes the money.

DICKIE

Thanks for everything, Mickey.

Dickie pockets the money. Exits at a fast clip -- hurrying toward that next high...Off Mickey, devastated,

FADE TO BLACK.

WHITE TITLES:

1994

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. EXECUTIVE OFFICES -- BOSTON

Raised brass letters on the lobby wall read, "MAIN EVENT INC". Mickey, uncomfortable in an itchy, ill-fitting blue blazer, waits anxiously. Till the Budweiser-girl RECEPTIONIST approaches him.

RECEPTIONIST

They're ready for you, Mister Ward.

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. OFFICE

Spectacular views from the top of the Prudential Building and expensive leather furniture. BOB OBAGI, 40s, a shrewd and successful FIGHT PROMOTER, meets with Mickey and ARNOLD COPPA, a shifty-eyed MANAGER and TRAINER.

MICKEY

...Up till now I've been trained by Donnie O'Keefe -- he helps me out part-time --

OBAGI

Part-time?

MICKEY

He's a cop up in Lowell.

OBAGI

I thought your brother Dickie trained you.

MICKEY

He used to. Dickie's not into fighting no more.

OBAGI

Remember that fight with Ray Leonard?

COPPA

Who?

OBAGI

Dick Eklund. It was on HBO. It was one of Leonard's first fights on the way up.

COPPA

Now I remember. The kid who kept smiling.

OBAGI

Ray Leonard, that's how you manage a career. And he kept every penny. He's richer than I am.

COPPA

Who handles you, Mickey?

MICKEY

My mother.

A look between Obagi and Coppa. Obagi gets up from behind his desk, paces slowly...

OBAGI

Family, friends...We want to think these people have our best interests at heart -- not their own, selfish interests -- but blood doesn't repeal human nature.

MICKEY

That sounds like God talking. I guess you start to feel that way up here looking down on people.

OBAGI

Isn't that why you're here?

MICKEY

This has nothing to do with me and my family.

OBAGI

Something's keeping you back. You were on your way to a title shot and then you had that fight with Peña...

(beat)

Why the hell would you fight Peña? He outweighed you by twenty pounds.

A beat.

MICKEY

It's not like I'm doing nothing behind their back. I thought I'd hear what you had to say, is all.

Obagi stops him.

OBAGI

You're making this too complicated. There's really only one question you have to ask yourself.

(beat)

Do you want to be a champion?

They exchange a look. Off Mickey,

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. ALICE'S HOUSE

Alice and Mickey sit down over Sunday dinner, a ritual. Preoccupied, Mickey pushes his food around his plate.

ALICE
You want more meat?

MICKEY
I'm fine, Ma.

ALICE
You're not eating much.

MICKEY
I ate a big lunch.

Alice gets up. Clears the plates...

ALICE
I'm a better cook than you boys
ever gave me credit for.

Mickey takes a beat. Then plunges in.

MICKEY
I've been wondering, Ma, if I
shouldn't try things a different
way.

Alice stops a beat. Then busies herself with the dishes...

ALICE
You could always get Charlene to
cook Sunday dinner for you.

MICKEY
I mean fighting.

ALICE
You only got one way of fighting.
Same as that steamroller you drive.
Forward and reverse.

MICKEY
You gonna make this hard for me?

ALICE
Blame me for the way things are
going?

(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)

Look at how life turned out for
Dickie and he never said nothing
but that he had the best mother in
the world.

MICKEY

That's how I feel, too.

ALICE

And the best manager.

(beat)

You already talked to someone?

MICKEY

Yeah.

ALICE

You already signed?

MICKEY

You know, you don't see Dickie for
who he is and what he is. He's a
fucking loser, Ma.

ALICE

Bullshit. That fucking Charlene is
putting ideas in your head -- buy a
big house in the Highlands -- go
ahead.

(beat)

You'll wind up back here.

She exits. Off Mickey,

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY. LOWELL -- OUTSIDE CRACK HOUSE

A CAMERAMAN and a SOUND MAN unload film equipment out of a
parked VAN. Load a film canister into the camera, load
batteries, prepare to shoot...

A DOCUMENTARY MAKER talks on the sidewalk with BRENDA, one of
Dickie's toothless crack buddies, and a prostitute...

DOCUMENTARY MAKER

...This is for the America
Undercover series on HBO. You know
HBO?

BRENDA

Sure I know HBO.

DOCUMENTARY MAKER

We want to show what crack really is, what it does to people, what it does to families...

BRENDA

It's the Devil.

DOCUMENTARY MAKER

That's great! Save it till we're rolling!

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. CRACK HOUSE

The CAMERAMAN and SOUND MAN lead Boo Boo through the crack house...The DOCUMENTARY MAKER stands out of camera range.

INTERCUT between images as they are seen through the documentary camera and images of the documentary being made...

Inside the living room, we find Dickie...Four years of a crack addiction have left him WITHERED and TOOTHLESS, dodgy-eyed and jumpy...He lifts the end of the couch and he and Brenda find the CRACK PIPES, improvised from soda bottles capped with tin foil...Boo Boo passes out the ROCKS and they all load up...Dickie lights up the pipe...Inhales...

BOO BOO

Ask Dickie what he used to do before.

DOCUMENTARY MAKER

What did you do, Dickie, before you got addicted to crack?

BOO BOO

He was a boxer. Professional fighter.

DOCUMENTARY MAKER

Who'd you fight, Dickie? Anyone I'd know?

DICKIE

Sugar Ray Leonard.

DOCUMENTARY MAKER

Was it on TV?

DICKIE

Yeah.

DOCUMENTARY MAKER

What network?

DICKIE

(gestures with the pipe)

Yours truly.

DOCUMENTARY MAKER

On HBO?

DICKIE

Yeah. HBO.

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. GYM

A clean, modern boxing gym with Stairmasters and elliptical trainers... Mickey SPARS as Coppa supervises him...

COPPA

He steps out like that again you
make him pay for it!

Obagi enters.

OBAGI

Hey, Irish, I got a fight for you.

The fighters separate and Mickey comes to the ropes, spits
out his mouthguard.

MICKEY

Great! Who?

OBAGI

'Cool' Vince Phillips. For the
title!

Off Mickey, as he breaks into a grin,

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. FLOP HOUSE -- LOWELL

Brenda walks up the stairs, SEYMOUR, the JOHN, a nebbish,
40s, following behind. They enter the bedroom.

Brenda lights a candle. Seymour sits on the bed, takes off his shoes and pulls off his pants.

SEYMOUR

I never did anything like this before.

He gets up, folds his pants neatly, his back turned to the door... Suddenly Dickie, brandishing a Civil War-era sawed-off SHOTGUN, bursts through the door, Boo Boo behind him. They grab Seymour, slam him against the wall.

BOO BOO

Feet back and spread 'em!

Panicked, Seymour spread-eagles against the wall. As if he's a cop, Boo Boo pats him down.

SEYMOUR

Oh my God -- am I under arrest?

Boo Boo finds Seymour's wallet.

DICKIE

That depends on you.

(beat)

How much does he got?

BOO BOO

Two hundred.

DICKIE

You want this to go away and you can drive on home back to Boston?

SEYMOUR

(whimpering)

Yes, please! I'm so sorry!

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. CRACK HOUSE -- LOWELL

A wooden door with the DOOR KNOB missing... Dickie takes out the two hundred he just robbed, counts out FORTY DOLLARS and sticks it through the hole...

DICKIE

Five for forty, okay? Come on. I've been buying all day.

(beat)

You want to trade for a camcorder?

The VIALS come through the hole and Dickie collects them...

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. THE ROXY -- BOSTON

Mickey fights 'COOL' VINCE PHILLIPS, a good, dedicated fighter, and clearly the more skillful boxer...Make 'em miss, make 'em pay...Supered below:

MICKEY WARD VS. 'COOL' VINCE PHILLIPS, THE ROXY

Mickey throws the combination that Dickie taught him...But Phillips slips it and counters...The LACES of the glove rip across Mickey's brow...A deep cut over his eye...In his corner, Coppa watches dispassionately...

They clinch. The Referee breaks it up and the fight resumes...Phillips closes in...Zeroes in on the deep CUT under Mickey's eye...AIMS for it...A devastating punch RIPS the cut WIDE OPEN...BLOOD splatters on Phillips white trunks...

CUT TO:

INT. LATER. BOSTON GARDEN

A FEMALE RING PHYSICIAN climbs up into the ring...Takes out a PENLIGHT and opens the cut with a latex-gloved hand...When she does, you can see MUSCLE and BONE exposed...

The Physician turns to the Referee, shakes her head and signals, with two palms facing the ground, that the fight is over..."Cool" Vince Phillips bounds triumphantly into the ring, fists high...Off Mickey, as the CUT MAN tries to stop the bleeding,

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. MICKEY'S APARTMENT

Charlene gets ICE from the refrigerator...Puts it in a plastic bag and hands it to Mickey...

CHARLENE

You have to put this on your eye.
Get that swelling down.

MICKEY

I never been knocked out before.

CHARLENE

He didn't knock you out.

MICKEY

Technical knockout. That's what goes down in the books.

CHARLENE

The doctor said another half-inch and you couldn't use the eye. They had to stop it.

A look between them.

MICKEY

I can't sleep. I'm too wound up.

CHARLENE

Why don't you go inside and watch some TV?

INT. CONTINUOUS. MICKEY'S APARTMENT -- LIVING ROOM

Mickey turns on the TV...Moves to sit in his chair...Notices something...He moves to the side table...

INSERT -- A PHOTOGRAPH

Mickey, 8 years old, barechested with boxing gloves on, and Dickie, smiling, his hands on his shoulders...Charlene comes to him. Puts her hands on his shoulders.

MICKEY

That's my first fight. I was eight.

A beat as he looks at the picture. Then Charlene embraces him from behind.

CHARLENE

Dickie's going to come back or he's not.

MICKEY

And I can't do nothing for him?

CHARLENE

The best thing that could happen to him would be to break a window or something and get sent away.

MICKEY

I'll send him that for a birthday card. 'Best wishes and I hope you get sent to Walpole.'

CHARLENE

I love this town and I'd never leave it. But Lowell is like poison for Dickie.

Mickey turns to her. They exchange a look. Then Mickey turns back to the photo. Off Mickey,

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. ALICE'S HOME

The HBO documentary crew films Alice in her kitchen.

DOCUMENTARY MAKER (O.C.)

What do you think the biggest danger is that's waiting out there for Dickie?

ALICE

The biggest danger? I don't think there's any danger out there, really, for Dickie. Dickie is Dickie and I gotta tell you he can do anything he wants to do. Really. Your mind controls your whole body. Really.

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. THE HIGHLAND TAP

A REPLAY of Mickey's fight with 'Cool' Vince Phillips plays on ESPN. A LOUDMOUTH discourses to Tip behind the bar.

LOUDMOUTH

...If there's one thing I know it's boxing -- I boxed in the Army -- I could write a book about boxing --

BARTENDER

I can't hear the TV.

LOUDMOUTH

Let me tell you -- they don't put
you on TV because you know
something -- they put you on TV
because you know some one. That's
how the world works, my friend.

ANGLE ON -- DICKIE

At the other end of the bar, nursing a beer with Boo Boo.

DICKIE

Can you believe this fucking guy?

BACK ON -- THE LOUDMOUTH

As he continues...

LOUDMOUTH

You take one look at Mickey Ward.
He's got no right hand. He's got no
defense. He can't move. He boxes
like a heavyweight. All he's got is
that left hand.

DICKIE

(loudly)

Will somebody shut this guy the
fuck up?

TIP

(nods to Dickie)

That's Mickey's brother.

LOUDMOUTH

(shouts to Dickie)

You got my condolences.

(beat)

He bleeds, he's easy to hit, and he
doesn't go down. That's Mickey
Ward. That's who he is. A guy they
can put in there to make other guys
look good on their way up.

Dickie turns to Boo Boo.

DICKIE

That's it.

BOO BOO

Don't start a fight, Dickie.

Dickie moves down the bar. Approaches the Loudmouth.

DICKIE

You know so much about boxing?

Dickie slaps a TWENTY DOLLAR BILL on the bar.

DICKIE (CONT'D)

Twenty bucks says you can't hit me.

LOUDMOUTH

What is that, a joke?

DICKIE

You boxed in the Army. You know all about boxing. Try to hit me. Hit me once.

The Loudmouth scoffs. Takes out a twenty. Slaps it on the bar. They square off on the small DANCE FLOOR...The Loudmouth JABS and Dickie dodges it...Then he throws a big overhand right and Dickie ducks under it, ends up behind the Loudmouth and taps him on the shoulder...Cheers and laughter from Tip, Boo Boo, and the few lunch patrons as Dickie slips every punch...The Loudmouth tiring...

DICKIE (CONT'D)

Mickey's got no defense, huh? This is the defense I taught him. Go ahead and fucking hit me.

(beat)

C'mon, you piece of shit. Hit me in the face. I'm a bleeder, too, just like my brother. Cut me up. I won't even move my feet.

Dickie plants his feet. The Loudmouth swings on him...And swings...And swings...And even with Dickie's feet planted, each punch misses -- some by inches, some by feet -- as Dickie ducks and bobs...

Finally the Loudmouth winds up and SWINGS...Dickie ducks, and as the Loudmouth passes Dickie BOOTS him in the ass...The Loudmouth careens into the kitchen just as a WAITRESS comes out with a tray...Food SPILLS on the Loudmouth as he sprawls into the kitchen...APPLAUSE from the barflies...

Tip SMILES behind the bar...Passes the forty dollars to Dickie, who turns, winks at Boo Boo...

TIP

You still got it, Dickie.

DICKIE

You know what's better? I got forty dollars.

(winks at Boo Boo)

Get out the pipes, my friend.

Dickie and Boo Boo exit. Off Tip, not smiling,

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. WARD HOUSE --- NIGHT

Alice pulls a casserole out of the oven...

ALICE

...I don't see why you don't marry her.

...Bring it to a card table with a checkered tablecloth, where Mickey sits.

MICKEY

It's Lowell, Ma.

ALICE

Not that I'm telling you to marry her.

MICKEY

Everybody knows Charlene's my girl.
Everybody knows me here.

ALICE

So if you lived in Boston you'd marry her?

MICKEY

Why would I get married in Boston?
Nobody knows me in Boston.

ALICE

I'd get married again.

MICKEY

Three's a charm.

A loud KNOCK at the door. A look between them. Alice dries her hands on her apron and goes to answer it.

ANGLE ON --- THE DOOR

As Alice opens it...O'Keefe and Tommy at the door.

O'KEEFE
Where's Dickie? Is he here?

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHT. LOWELL -- ALLEY

Dickie hides behind a dumpster, his breath coming fast, panicky...SIRENS as POLICE CARS rush along the street nearby...As the sirens recede, Dickie RUNS...Dumps the shotgun in a trash can...

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHT. LOWELL -- CRACK HOUSE

Dickie runs up onto the porch past the BOUNCER...

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. CRACK HOUSE -- LOWELL

Dickie cowers in the tub, shivering with fear, the shower curtains pulled tight...Like a little boy hiding...

MICKEY
Dickie? It's me. Don't shoot.

The curtains open and Dickie looks at his brother, who he hasn't seen in years...Sees the shock and disgust in his eyes...

DICKIE
I fucked up this time.

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHT. LOWELL -- ALLEY

COPS search the alley...Find the SAWED-OFF SHOTGUN in the trash can...

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. STAIRWELL

Mickey and Dickie reach the landing...Mickey heads down first...Sees COPS downstairs with their GUNS DRAWN...

MICKEY

It's okay. He don't have a gun.

CLOSE ON -- DICKIE

As he moves to follow his brother down the stairs...

DICKIE'S POV

O'Keefe, Tommy and other COPS look up, fix their FLASHLIGHTS on him...Fists tightening around nightsticks...

BACK ON -- MICKEY

As he senses something...Turns..

MICKEY (CONT'D)

Dickie, no!

BACK ON -- DICKIE

As he dashes across the landing and into the bedroom...Runs full steam into the window...JUMPS...Crashes through the flimsy frame and the shattering glass --

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHT. CRACKHOUSE -- LOWELL

Dickie explodes from the house in a cloud of shattering glass...Falls two stories...Lands in the backyard -- breaks his ankle -- falls hard to the turf...

DICKIE

Oh, fuck!

The cops come swarming out of the house, chase Dickie across the backyard...He climbs half-way up the fence and the cops drag him back down...Smack him with nightsticks and handcuff him...

Mickey runs out of the house and sees Tommy and other cops half-dragging Dickie toward the street...

TOMMY

Walk!

DICKIE

Fuck you Tommy -- my ankle's broken...

Tommy JABS Dickie hard in the gut with the butt of his nightstick...

TOMMY

Watch your fucking language.

MICKEY

C'mon, you got him now. Leave him alone.

TOMMY

Stay out of this, Mickey.

Then Dickie SPITS on Tommy...Tommy SWINGS on him with the nightstick...Mickey rushes in and PUNCHES Tommy...Then it's a melee...The cops rush in and subdue Mickey...

MICKEY

You can't treat my brother like that.

COP #1

You think you're better than everyone else?

MICKEY

Leave him the fuck alone.

A look between Mickey and Dickie as Dickie is hauled into a patrol car and the door closes...The cops drag Mickey to a second car...

TOMMY

Put his hand on the hood.

MICKEY

What the fuck is this?

TOMMY

Respect the badge. You raise your hands to me?

As Mickey struggles, the cops grab his arm and wrist and hold his hand on the hood...Tommy comes up high with the nightstick and

SMASH!

Breaks Mickey's hand...Mickey screams in agony. Off Dickie, watching from the patrol car as his brother sinks to the ground, holding his limp hand,

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. THE HIGHLAND TAP

Mickey, his hand in a cast, sits at a table with Alice. The lunchtime crowd is sparse.

ALICE

...Ten thousand bail, that's a thousand we gotta come up with for the bondsman.

MICKEY

Plus forty.

ALICE

Forty for what?

MICKEY

So he can buy some smoke on the jailhouse steps.

ALICE

You want him to rot in county? If you'd go visit him once, you'd know what it's like.

MICKEY

Carjacking, kidnaping, armed robbery with a shotgun...

ALICE

Let's not dwell on the bad times.

MICKEY

Dickie's Dickie?

ALICE

He's still your brother.

MICKEY

I got a callus to it, you know?

A beat while they don't say anything.

ALICE

Remember the Sugar Ray Leonard fight? Remember what I said to Larry Merchant?

He's only heard it a hundred times.

MICKEY

Remind me, Ma.

ALICE

You remember? Larry Merchant said,
'How long have you been managing
your son?' And I said, 'I've been
managing Dickie his whole life!'

MICKEY

That was a great night.

ALICE

They never saw anything like your
mother.

MICKEY

I believe it, Ma.

ALICE

Nothing like that ever happened
around here. People still talk
about it. You can say what you want
about Dickie -- nobody's perfect --
but he did that.

Tip, the bartender, delivers hamburgers to both of them.

MICKEY

Ma's reminiscing.

TIP

The Leonard fight?

ALICE

You know what we should do? We
should show it again.

(beat)

That's how we'll make the bail
money for Dickie --- take out the
VA hall, rent a big screen TV, and
charge twenty-five bucks a head.

MICKEY

What are you doing, Ma? Who's going
to come see an old fight?

ALICE

Everyone! To relive the excitement
of that night?

TIP

He's a lying, thieving crackhead
piece of shit.

(beat)

You gonna have popcorn?

Smiles all around. Off Mickey,

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. LOWELL V.A. HALL

Among the crowd, we pick out several familiar faces -- O'Keefe, Skeets, Georgie Clements, Rainey, Billy, and Tip, as well as Mickey, Charlene, and even Debbie with Dickie, Jr. A big screen PROJECTION TV at the front plays a tape of the HBO fight...Alice is overdressed -- reliving her glory...

SKEETS

...Ed McMahon grew up on my block --
the Ed McMahon -- right here in
 Lowell. Dickie had that kind of
 potential. But then he blew it.

ON THE SCREEN

An early round between Dickie and Sugar Ray. Dickie in prime form...He lands a combination and the crowd CHEERS...

LARRY MERCHANT (O.C.)

This is a good round for Eklund.
 This is a very well-schooled young
 fighter and Sugar Ray Leonard just
 may have his hands full tonight.

PANNING -- THE CROWD

Transported back to a magical time when Dickie was young and strong, and they were, too...They're so thoroughly caught up in the fight, it's as if it were happening right now...

BILLY

Two hundred bucks on Dickie!

Everyone laughs and cheers.

CLOSE ON -- MICKEY

Watching as, on the TV, the camera picks out young Mickey Ward in his brother's corner, shouting encouragement...

DON DUNPHY (O.C.)

That's Mickey Ward, Eklund's half-
 brother, in the corner...

LARRY MERCHANT (O.C.)

It is a real family affair, this
 Eklund operation...

BACK ON --- THE TV

As the fight starts to go south for Dickie...The sixth round
knockdown...Dickie pops up, smiling oddly...

LARRY MERCHANT (O.S.) (CONT'D)

...In real life this is what
happens to the Rockys of the
world...

LOWELL MAN #1

I can't believe anyone ever thought
this guy could beat Sugar Ray
Leonard.

RAINEY

Shut the fuck up.

LOWELL MAN #1

What the fuck is that? That's like
Hitler.

RAINEY

You're calling me Hitler?

ALICE

Shut him up.

LOWELL MAN #1

Like when people as a group lose
their fucking minds.

LOWELL MAN #2

Mass hysteria.

LOWELL MAN #1

Belief in miracles. That's exactly
what this is. Look at them. They
know how it ends and they still
believe.

ALICE

Shut the fuck up.

LOWELL MAN #1

Sit on my face.

Rainey swings on him...A SCUFFLE...Mickey and others rush in
to break it up...

ALICE
Throw him out of here!
(beat)
Just make sure he paid first.

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. COURT ROOM

In the gallery, Alice, Mickey, Debbie, and Dickie Jr. The JUDGE, irritated, turns to Dickie's LAWYER.

JUDGE
I would like you make a call to the Lowell Police forthwith to make a supreme effort to get Mister Eklund before this court.

LAWYER
My client is on his way. He'll be here within twenty minutes.

Suddenly Dickie runs inside. He's clearly high on crack -- all irritable tics and itchiness...

DICKIE
I'm sorry, your honor. It was so important to tell my little boy that Daddy's going to prison.

JUDGE
Your little boy is here, Mister Eklund.

Sheepish, Dickie grins. Waves to Dickie Jr. The COURT CLERK approaches the microphone to read the sentence.

COURT CLERK
Breaking and entering with intent to commit a felony, masked armed robbery, kidnaping, possession of a firearm without a license...Mister Eklund, it is ordered by the court that you be punished by confinement to the state's prison for a term not exceeding fifteen years nor less than ten years.

In the gallery, Alice starts to cry. The Bailiffs lead Dickie away. He turns and exchanges a look with Mickey. Off Mickey,

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. PRISON

In his orange prison jumpsuit, Dickie is led by a PRISON GUARD up the corridor to his cell...

PRISON GUARD

...You seem like a good guy so I'll give you my advice for what it's worth. The fellas in here who do the best are the ones who accept the situation right away and get started making a life here. This is your home, these are your friends, and you don't have a fucking thing to say about it.

As they reach the cell, the Guard signals to a CLOSED-CIRCUIT CAMERA, the door automatically opens and Dickie enters his cell. Takes in the confines of it, the narrow steel bed with the thin mattress, the toilet, the sink. Sits on the bed and holds his head in his hands. Off Dickie,

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. BOXING ARENA --- ATLANTIC CITY

Mickey fights Ricky Meyers...Meyers outclassing him...As always, Mickey's face is badly cut...

ANNOUNCER (O.C.)

...Ward seems to be tentative with his right hand.

COLOR MAN (O.S.)

He's broken that hand twice and he's afraid to use it. And Meyers knows it.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Maybe he's broken it again. I don't see any way for Ward to win this fight...

WHAM! Mickey takes a hard right hand in the face...

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. LOCKER ROOM

His face swollen, cut and bruised, his mood low, Mickey watches as Coppa scissors off his gloves and hand wraps...As the wraps come off, REVEAL that Mickey's right hand is badly swollen...Coppa turns to Obagi...

COPPA

He broke it again.

OBAGI

There's a doctor who can operate on you. They take a piece of bone from your hip and fuse it with the bones in your hand.

MICKEY

And then what?

OBAGI

It heals stronger than regular bone. It'll be stronger than your left.

MICKEY

I mean I don't know what's in this for me anymore.

OBAGI

Nobody doesn't lose a fight.

MICKEY

This makes four straight.

OBAGI

Mickey, you're the gatekeeper. A guy has to get past you to move up in the division.

COPPA

Like St. Peter.

MICKEY

St. Peter?

Looks all around. Off Mickey,

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. ARENA --- TUNNEL

Mickey comes out of the locker room, wearing his old varsity jacket, and finds Charlene waiting there. He shows her the CAST on his hand.

CHARLENE
You broke it again?

MICKEY
Like my mother says, three's a charm.

She takes his other hand and they walk together down the tunnel.

CHARLENE
You put up a good fight.

MICKEY
I take a punch, I don't go down.
Match me up with a guy on the way
up and you'll get a good show. Then
he moves up to a title shot.

CHARLENE
That's not who you are.

Mickey stops. Leans against the wall.

MICKEY
I got a job, you know? Go back to
paving. Make a living like anyone
else.

CHARLENE
I'm with you, Mickey, you know
that. Whatever you decide.

Mickey takes a beat.

MICKEY
I don't want to be a stepping
stone.

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. PRISON

Dickie mops the floor in the bathroom. An INMATE enters, pees in the urinal. Dickie watches for the guards.

Then approaches the INMATE and hands him TWENTY DOLLARS. The Inmate gives him a handful of QUAALUDES. With a furtive look, Dickie pockets them.

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. PRISON

Dickie walks in the yard. An INMATE approaches him. Gestures inside.

INMATE #1

You're not gonna believe it. You're on TV.

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. PRISON --- REC ROOM

A handful of INMATES watches a small TV in the room...Dickie enters.

INMATE #2

Hey, Dickie, you're on HBO!

Dickie sits down and watches the "American Undercover" documentary...Sees himself smoking the crack pipe...Melodramatic ROCK AND ROLL plays on the soundtrack...

ON THE TV

Dickie talks directly to the camera.

DOCUMENTARY MAKER (O.C.)

Who'd you fight, Dickie? Anyone I'd know?

DICKIE

Sugar Ray Leonard.

DOCUMENTARY MAKER (O.C.)

Did you really?

DICKIE

Yup.

DOCUMENTARY MAKER (O.C.)

Was it on TV?

DICKIE

Yeah.

DOCUMENTARY MAKER (O.C.)
What network?

DICKIE
(gestures with the pipe)
Yours truly.

DOCUMENTARY MAKER (O.C.)
On HBO?

DICKIE
Yeah. HBO.

INMATE #2
How was that shit you smoking,
Dickie? Was it good?

LAUGHTER from the inmates...

PUSHING IN ON --- DICKIE

As he watches this...Realizing what a mess he's made of his
life and experiencing the grief of lost time...

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. BOXING GYM -- PRISON

Dickie enters an empty gym. Some old EQUIPMENT that has been
donated and a RING in the middle...Dickie runs his hand over
the heavy bag...Whacks the speed bag...A fellow PRISONER,
20s, African-American, enters in his sweats...Sees Dickie...

PRISONER
You a fighter?

DICKIE
Was.

PRISONER
You any good?

DICKIE
I won over two hundred fights.
Nobody ever knocked me down except
Sugar Ray Leonard.

PRISONER
You fought Sugar Ray Leonard?

DICKIE

Went ten rounds with him.

(beat)

You need a trainer?

PRISONER

We had a guy in here once who only wanted to train white boys so they deliver a better beating to black boys.

DICKIE

I'll train anybody.

(beat)

I could find a champion in here ---
I don't care what color he is --
why not?

PRISONER

Okay. Let's go.

Dickie grabs the pads and climbs into the ring...

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. DICKIE'S CELL

Dickie lies on his bed, thinking. Then the LIGHTS go off in the cell block...He gets up. Goes to his toilet. Takes the QUAALUDES out of his pocket...Looks at them in his hand. And FLUSHES them.

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. PRISON --- MEETING ROOM

Dickie sits with Alice at a plastic table. A PRISON GUARD stands watch nearby.

ALICE

...They're just going to go to the Justice of the Peace. I wanted a church wedding but you know your brother. He didn't get the pizzazz in the family.

DICKIE

How come he never comes and sees me?

ALICE

You gotta ask him. I don't want to get in the middle.

DICKIE

How am I gonna ask him if he doesn't visit me?

ALICE

That's between you and him.

DICKIE

He got a fight coming up?

ALICE

He's done fighting.

DICKIE

What do you mean, he's done fighting?

ALICE

He hung up the gloves.

DICKIE

That's it?

ALICE

Finished.

DICKIE

Just because he lost a fight?

ALICE

He lost four fights.

DICKIE

So what's he doing?

ALICE

Paving. He makes a good living -- he's in the union...

(beat)

His heart wasn't in fighting no more. I think he only ever did it because of you. He looked up to you.

DICKIE

He made a mistake there.

ALICE

Don't talk like that.

PRISON GUARD

Time.

The Guard approaches. Alice and Dickie stand.

DICKIE

Well, tell Mickey congratulations
from me.

ALICE

Take care of yourself, Dickie. See
you next week.

Alice gives him a hug and a kiss. As she exits, off Dickie,

FADE TO BLACK.

WHITE TITLES:

1999

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. ALICE'S HOME

The lights are off...As the door opens you can identify
Dickie's SILHOUETTE in the light from the front porch.

DICKIE

Ma?

Dickie fumbles for the light switch and turns it ON...

REVERSE ANGLE

A CROWD in the room, including Alice, Debbie, O'Keefe, the
Local Notable, Skeets, Rainey, Georgie Clements, and others.
A BANNER reads, WELCOME HOME, DICKIE!

ALL

(unison)

Surprise!

Dickie is healthy, with twenty pounds of muscle added, and a
new set of teeth. Off Dickie, surprised, as he grins,

CUT TO:

INT. LATER. ALICE'S HOUSE

BEER flows from a KEG...The party in full swing...Dickie crouches to Junior's level, calls out COMBINATIONS...Junior throws them into his outstretched palms...

DICKIE

Is he a chip off the old block or what?

DEBBIE

C'mon, kid, let's get some beer into you.

(to Dickie)

It's good for him his Daddy's on the outside.

Debbie leads Junior away as Alice approaches Dickie.

ALICE

I still know how to throw a party.

DICKIE

So where's Mickey?

ALICE

Mickey's happy for you, Dickie, he really is.

DICKIE

If he's happy for me why ain't he here?

ALICE

I'm friends with your father but I don't see him every day.

(shrugs)

Keep some distance.

DICKIE

I paid my debt to society. That means the whole fucking society. Six million people in the state of Massachusetts plus dogs and cats but not him?

ALICE

Maybe he's right, Dickie. Why start a war?

She greets another guest. Off Dickie,

CUT TO:

EXT. DAWN. LOWELL -- NEAR THE RIVER

As the sun rises over the river, Mickey runs hard on a cinder path. Then the sound of FOOTSTEPS behind him, intruding upon his refuge...Gaining on him...Then nearly alongside him...

DICKIE

This town went to shit.

MICKEY

It was shit.

DICKIE

The shit went to shit.

MICKEY

You run every morning or you just come looking for me?

DICKIE

How far you going?

MICKEY

I was gonna do six. That too far for you?

DICKIE

Think you could do eight?

MICKEY

I can do ten. I can do ten standing on my head.

CUT TO:

EXT. DUSK. LOWELL -- NEAR THE RIVER

The brothers run as night falls.

DICKIE

...You getting tired yet?

MICKEY

(yes)

No.

DICKIE

Seems like you kept in shape.

MICKEY

Why wouldn't I?

DICKIE

Lot of fighters don't. Once they don't gotta make weight no more.

MICKEY

Seems like you're in pretty good shape yourself.

DICKIE

I started a boxing gym in there. Thought I'd get lucky and find a champion.

MICKEY

Didn't work out?

DICKIE

Why the hell aren't you fighting?

MICKEY

I don't miss it.

DICKIE

What a waste.

MICKEY

What do you know?

DICKIE

If there's one thing I'm an expert in it's a waste of life.

MICKEY

I got tired of it.

DICKIE

You got tired of losing.

MICKEY

Maybe I did.

DICKIE

So don't quit fighting. Quit losing.

Angry, Mickey bites his tongue. They jog a beat.

MICKEY

I'm feeling strong. Want to do eleven?

DICKIE

Let's do twelve.

MICKEY

Shit, Dickie, I hope you don't hurt yourself.

Mickey runs hard. Dickie runs to keep up...

CUT TO:

INT. MORNING. MICKEY'S APARTMENT

Mickey fills a lobster pot with ICE CUBES and water...Brings it to the kitchen table...Immerses his sore ankle into it...Charlene brings eggs and bacon for the two of them.

MICKEY

...I ran into Dickie.

CHARLENE

You went and saw him?

MICKEY

He found me.

CHARLENE

And?

MICKEY

He got in great shape in the joint.
And all new teeth.

CHARLENE

Sounds like he had a makeover.

MICKEY

And his gall bladder.

CHARLENE

I should stick up the Seven-Eleven
and take care of my fat ass.

MICKEY

He thinks I should go back to fighting.

CHARLENE

What's in it for him?

MICKEY

Something. Dickie's always got his
Bowmar working overtime adding up
what's best for Dickie.

(beat)

Got me thinking, though.

CHARLENE

Go back to fighting?

MICKEY

Beats paving.

CHARLENE

It's a lot harder.

MICKEY

Nobody around here thinks that.
They love you but they hate you --
they got to go to their nine to
five job and you don't -- even
though it's harder.

(beat)

Look how they turned on Dickie.

CHARLENE

Dickie turned on some people, too.

A beat.

MICKEY

You should see the shape he's in.
Twelve miles and he barely broke a
sweat.

She takes his plate. Moves to the stove. Gets more eggs and
bacon for Mickey...

CHARLENE

I'm glad they fixed Dickie's smile.
But there's a whole lot of smiles
he's gotta fix around here before I
want to see him again.

Off Mickey,

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. RAMALHO'S GYM

Mickey hits the SPEED BAG in a three-beat rhythm...Buh-buh-BUH, buh-buh-BUH, buh-buh-BUH...Dickie appears and hits the speed bag beside him...Shifts from a three-beat rhythm to a single-beat rhythm, banging the bag with opposite hands each time it rebounds....BUH-BUH-BUH-BUH-BUH-BUH-BUH...

Then Mickey starts throwing hooks to a two-beat rhythm...BUH-buh BUH-buh BUH-buh...Then Dickie mixes up hooks and jabs, odd and even rhythms...

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. RAMALHO'S GYM

Mickey jumps rope...A simple exercise to stay in shape...Then he hears someone behind him, jumping in a faster rhythm...It's Dickie, who moves alongside him...

Mickey jumps faster...The rope whistles through the air as it passes under him twice with each jump...Dickie matches him...

Then Dickie does crosses...Mickey matches him...

Then Mickey does behind-the-back crosses...Dickie matches him...

Then Dickie does front-kicks...Mickey matches him...

Then Mickey reaches his arm under one leg and holds it in the air while he jumps with the other leg...Dickie matches him...

Then Dickie does the CAN-CAN while he jumps rope...Then Mickey also does the can-can...

Skeets watches them.

SKEETS

They're like two cheeks of the same ass.

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. RAMALHO'S GYM

The brothers do SITUPS beside each other on incline boards.

MICKEY

Okay, I'm done.

DICKIE

Ten more.

Mickey groans. He and Dickie do ten more situps. Mickey moves to climb off the board and Dickie is still doing situps...

MICKEY

You want to tell me what you're doing?

DICKIE

Ten more.

MICKEY

What did I do?

DICKIE

Another ten more.

MICKEY

You don't think you're going to train me, do you?

DICKIE

You going back to fighting?

MICKEY

Even if I did.

DICKIE

But you're not.

MICKEY

I didn't say that.

DICKIE

You are?

MICKEY

I didn't say that.

DICKIE

Then why do you have to say it?

MICKEY

Just so we're clear.

DICKIE

Like I need you? I got a kid coming out of the joint in six months who's gonna be the middleweight champion.

(MORE)

DICKIE (CONT'D)

(beat)
Ten more.

MICKEY

I'm done.

Dickie continues with his situps...

DICKIE

At least now I know.

MICKEY

Know what?

DICKIE

Why you never made it. All these years I thought it was me who let you down. But now I know you just don't have the heart.

MICKEY

Because of ten fucking situps?

DICKIE

Deep down I think you'd rather lose and blame me for losing than let me help you win.

Mickey flares.

MICKEY

You didn't let me down?

Dickie climbs off the board...

DICKIE

It's a fucking excuse. One fucking excuse after another.

...Mickey shoves him.

MICKEY

What's your fucking excuse?

DICKIE

I made my peace.

MICKEY

With who?

DICKIE

My higher power.

MICKEY
Fuck your higher power.

DICKIE
Leave my higher power the fuck out
of your misery.

MICKEY
Forgive and forget --- it's not so
easy with flesh and blood ---

DICKIE
I tried to help you.

Dickie turns to exit. Mickey grabs him by the shoulder and
Dickie SWINGS on him, hard. But Mickey counters with an
overhand right and drops him to the cement floor.

MICKEY
I don't have the heart?
(beat)
You broke my fucking heart.

Mickey exits. Dickie struggles, gets up to one knee. Watches
as Mickey exits. And smiles.

DICKIE
(after him)
At least you used your right hand!

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. BOXING RING

TOP SHOT of the ring...An INDIAN CASINO in New Hampshire --- a
decent arena, but not the main event...Supered below:

WARD VS. CORBIN

Corbin and Mickey fight hard...A deep CUT yawns under
Mickey's eye, pulsing blood down his face...At ringside, JIM
LAMPLEY and ROY JONES JR. announce the fight for ESPN.

LAMPLEY
...This comeback could be over
before it started.

ROY JONES JR.
If that cut gets any worse they'll
have to stop the fight.

LAMPLEY

I'd like to see it stopped right now.

The bell rings. Skeets pulls out the stool and Mickey sits. A RING DOCTOR enters the ring and looks at the cut. Says nothing but shakes his head and exits. Skeets presses on the cut with a rectangular metal tool called an "enswell"...

MICKEY

How's it look?

SKEETS

You gotta knock him out. Or you're back to paving.

...Skeets swipes VASELINE on the cut and the BELL rings... Mickey engages...Throws three left hooks to Corbin's head...

LAMPLEY

Another left to the head from Ward but none of them finding its target...

...Then Mickey FEINTS a fourth left hook to the head...Corbin's hands come up to defend...Leaving a fist-sized piece of his ribs open...Mickey smashes a LEFT HOOK into Corbin's liver...Corbin HOWLS and falls to the canvas...

LAMPLEY (CONT'D)

I think Mickey Ward heard me say they'd have to stop this fight and he went out and stopped it!

The Referee counts Corbin out and Mickey JUMPS, hands aloft in triumph...BLOOD streaming down his face...

RING ANNOUNCER

The winner by a knockout...The Pride of Lowell...'Irish' Mickey Ward!

CLOSE ON --- DICKIE

Up in the cheap seats, watching and thinking...

CUT TO:

MONTAGE

Mickey fights his way up the ladder...Each fight follows a pattern...

Mickey coming straight at his opponent and weathering punches, his face cut and bruised...Mickey surviving into the late rounds and then landing a devastating left hook to the head or body that reverses the tide...From fight to fight, the circumstances grow nicer, the crowds get bigger, the billing gets bigger -- Mickey MOVING UP...

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. ALICE'S HOUSE -- KITCHEN

Mickey finishes his dinner. Charlene clears the plates and brings them to the sink. Alice brings a CAKE from the fridge.

ALICE

I made the chocolate cake you used to like. Took me four hours.

She sets the CAKE on the table...Starts to slice it...

MICKEY

Ma, what's going on?

ALICE

Nothing's going on.

MICKEY

The cake I used to like Grandma used to make. You never baked a cake in your life.

Alice smiles -- the cat who ate the canary...

ALICE

Are you sitting down?

MICKEY

You can see I'm sitting down.

ALICE

(coyly)

I've never been to England before.

MICKEY

How long is this gonna go on?

ALICE

I got a call yesterday from some people in Jolly Old who happen to be fight promoters, and they want Mickey Ward to fight Shea Neary at the Olympia Grand Hall in March for the title!

MICKEY

Ma, wait a minute. Are you sure?

ALICE

I told you I was talking to them.

MICKEY

Yeah, but I didn't think it'd happen this quick.

ALICE

They're giving you a shot, Mickey!

CHARLENE

Mickey, that's great! That's what you've been working for!

(off his look)

What's the matter? What's wrong?

MICKEY

Nothing's wrong! It's great!

ALICE

Who's looking out for you, huh, Mickey? Who's the best?

MICKEY

You are, Ma!

ALICE

My son is going to bring the belt home to Lowell!

Alice and Charlene high-five. Off Mickey, trying to think it's great,

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. DICKIE'S ROOM

Mickey enters a tidy but rundown ROOMING HOUSE... Climbs the creaky stairs and finds the NUMBER he's looking for. Knocks. Dickie opens the door.

MICKEY

Did I wake you up?

DICKIE

I was reading.

MICKEY

You were reading?

DICKIE

A bad habit I learned in prison.

MICKEY

I gotta talk to you about something.

Dickie gestures and Mickey enters.

DICKIE

There's some beers in the honor bar if you want something.

MICKEY

I'm okay.

DICKIE

You want a glass of water?

Mickey looks around at the spare furnishings...Dickie's few belongings are neatly kept...Dickie moves to find two drinking glasses...

MICKEY

Ma got me a title shot with Shea Neary.

Dickie breaks into a grin.

DICKIE

The Shamrock Express! You know that's what they call him, you know.

MICKEY

Fight him in England in three months.

DICKIE

His home turf.

MICKEY

Yeah.

DICKIE

For the title?

MICKEY

For the title.

DICKIE

Good for Ma!

MICKEY

I'm not ready, Dickie.

DICKIE

So you get ready.

MICKEY

You've seen the guys I've been fighting. They're booking this because it's an easy fight for Neary. And Ma doesn't see it.

DICKIE

This is your shot. Nobody says it'll ever come around again. You gotta take it.

A look between them. Then Dickie washes the drinking glasses at the corner sink...

MICKEY

If you want to come around and help out, it's okay. I could use some help.

DICKIE

Why don't you get yourself a real trainer?

Dickie takes a beat.

MICKEY

You know me better than anyone.

DICKIE

If I train you, you gotta listen to me. You gotta trust me.

MICKEY

You gonna help me or not?

Dickie turns to him. A look between them. Then Dickie grins.

DICKIE

Well, I've only been begging you since I got out of the joint.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE

Mickey and Dickie spar...Mickey jumps rope...Mickey and Dickie sprint together up a nearly vertical hill...Mickey hits the speed bag...

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. RAMALHO'S GYM

Dickie, Mickey, Skeets, and assorted HANGERS-ON watch a tape of SHEA NEARY, 30, the "Shamrock Express," a pug-nosed Liverpudlian with a devastating punch...One KNOCKOUT after another...

SKEETS
...Twenty wins, seventeen
knockouts.

MICKY
He can hit.

DICKIE
Yeah he can hit. He's never been up
against an Irishman who's as tough
as he is.
(to Skeets)
I want to get his fights on tape.
All of them.

SKEETS
Vegas has it four-to-one Neary.

Off Mickey,

CUT TO:

MONTAGE

Mickey does situps as Dickie thumps his midsection with a medicine ball...Mickey and Dickie run in the dawn hours...Mickey pounds the heavy bag...Mickey ICES HIS RIGHT HAND as Dickie watches, thinks...

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. RAMALHO'S GYM

A BOX addressed to "DICKIE WARD", with the return address, "WALPOLE STATE PRISON"...Dickie takes out a BOTTLE of EPINEPHRINE SOLUTION...AVITENE FLOUR...SURGICEL and GELFOAM...

SKEETS
What's that?

DICKIE
Some friends at the prison pharmacy
are rooting for Mickey.

SKEETS
Is it legal?

DICKIE
Well, I wouldn't snort it.

Skeets looks at a bottle of THROMBIN...

SKEETS
Stops bleeding?

DICKIE
Mickey has two guys against him --
Neary and the fucking ring doctor.
(beat)
I got enough here to clot the
Concord River.

Dickie packs the bottles in a black DOCTOR BAG. Off Skeets,

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. V.A. HALL -- LOWELL

Mickey holds a PRESS CONFERENCE for local media.

REPORTER #1
...The Mayor says he's going to
give you the key to the city if you
beat Shea Neary.

MICKEY
I think I'd rather have the key to
Cronin's for when we run out of
beer at three in the morning.

REPORTER #2
Neary has seventeen knockouts in
twenty fights and has never been
defeated. Does that worry you?

MICKEY
My mother says I'm too stupid to
worry.

(laughter)
(MORE)

MICKEY (CONT'D)

I just do my thing. I never lost a fight because the other guy worked harder.

REPORTER #3

Your brother had an opportunity like this years ago against Sugar Ray Leonard and he blew it.

MICKEY

He went ten rounds with one of the greatest fighters of all time.

REPORTER #4

That's Lowell for you. They think losing is winning.

REPORTER #3

He's a convict and a crack addict.

MICKEY

Recovering addict. Next question.

REPORTER #4

This is the biggest fight of your life. Shouldn't you have a pro in your corner?

A look between the brothers. Then REPORTER #5 stands up.

REPORTER #5

I'm from the Lowell Sun and this isn't a question, it's a comment, which is that Dick Eklund's our people and he's the best we've got, and all of you high-hat low-life scumbags can fuckin'-ay shut the fuck up and go back to Boston!

Laughter and applause. Off Mickey and Dickie,

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. AIRPLANE

Dickie and Mickey sit next to each other. Dickie reclines his seat, turns and tries to find a comfortable position.

MICKEY

You going to sleep?

DICKIE
Having sworn off chemical
stimulation I can't stay up like I
used to.

MICKEY
I can't relax.

DICKIE
I figured out the fight.

MICKEY
You did?

DICKIE
It's so obvious.

MICKEY
Are you going to tell me?

A sexy FLIGHT ATTENDANT approaches.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
Are you going to sleep, Mister
Eklund?

DICKIE
There's not much room to snuggle in
these coach seats, if that's what
you're hinting at.

She smiles at him.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
Would you like a blanket?

DICKIE
Though we will be flying home first
class. After my brother here wins
the title.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
Are you a fighter?

DICKIE
Mickey Ward. He's fighting Shea
Neary on the eleventh for the light
welterweight championship of the
world.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
I'll make sure to read all about it
now.

She moves on. They watch her exit.

MICKEY
That wake you up?

DICKIE
That'd wake the dead.

MICKEY
So what did you figure out?

Dickie rolls back over and puts his head on the pillow...

DICKIE
Your right.

MICKEY
My right?

DICKIE
You come out and you hit him with
nothing but your right.

MICKEY
But my left is my punch.

DICKIE
Exactly. Confuse the shit out of
him. All right hands.

MICKEY
I'm not doing it.

DICKIE
Shut the fuck up, Mickey, and go
where I point you.

MICKEY
And what if I break it again?

DICKIE
You jack off with your left, don't
you?

Dickie falls asleep...Off Mickey,

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY. OLYMPIA GRAND HALL --- KENSINGTON --- ESTABLISHING

A famed 19th century exhibition hall with a Victorian facade,
rich in history...On the marquee,

CHAMPIONSHIP FIGHT TONIGHT: WARD VS. NEARY

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. OLYMPIA GRAND HALL

The hall is empty...The sound of a VACUUM as a PORTER cleans the mezzanine...A TECH fusses with a MICROPHONE...In his overcoat, Mickey wanders at ringside...Touches the ring apron and imagines himself center ring...

DICKIE

They sold out. Twelve thousand seats and they ain't cheap.

MICKEY

Neary's their guy.

DICKIE

Nobody likes a loser. Trust me. And that's what he's about to be.

SKEETS

The English invented boxing. Bare-knuckles. Gouging. Fish-hooking. They ruled the world and then they all became fags.

MICKEY

That's why they call you The Professor.

Dickie squeezes Mickey's shoulder. Grins at him.

DICKIE

It's your night, Mickey.

MICKEY

It's my night.

Mickey looks up into the empty seats, imagining them full,

MATCH DISSOLVE
TO:

INT. NIGHT. OLYMPIA GRAND HALL

The hall is full. The glamour and the electric anticipation of a title fight...British and American CELEBRITIES...In the booth, JIM LAMPLEY, GEORGE FOREMAN and LARRY MERCHANT broadcast the fight for -- who else? -- HBO.

LAMPLEY

...Mickey Ward says he's never fought anyone more Irish than he is. These two almost look like they could be brothers.

MERCHANT

Ward has his own brother in his corner, Dick Eklund, who used to be a pretty good fighter himself till he succumbed to drug addiction.

LAMPLEY

At age 34 and making a comeback after years in retirement, Mickey Ward, the Pride of Lowell, is definitely the underdog here tonight...

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. OLYMPIA GRAND HALL -- DRESSING ROOM

Plaster peels in a cramped dressing room. Dickie wraps Mickey's hands. Something tender about this pre-fight ritual between the men. As they talk, Skeets packs the BOTTLES from the prison pharmacy into a black DOCTOR'S BAG...

DICKIE

You know who I saw coming out of Neary's locker room? Mick Jagger.

MICKEY

No shit.

DICKIE

R-E-S-P-E-C-T.

MICKEY

That's not the Rolling Stones.
That's Aretha Franklin.

DICKIE

Yeah, but the Stones covered it.

MICKEY

No they didn't.

DICKIE

I don't care if they did or didn't.
This fucker doesn't respect you.

(MORE)

DICKIE (CONT'D)

I peeked inside there and saw what he has. And look at the shithole that we got.

(off Mickey's look)

Neary's getting all the money tonight. Anything we ever got, we had to fight for.

(beat)

He can keep his money. You're going home with his belt.

A look between the brothers. Off Mickey,

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. ARENA

The British RING ANNOUNCER makes the introductions...

RING ANNOUNCER

To my right, in the white trunks, with a record of 34 wins and nine losses, the Pride of Lowell, Massachusetts, 'Irish' Mickey Ward!

Mickey holds up his fists to some applause, more BOOS and JEERS...In his corner, Dickie and Skeets get ready...

RING ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

And in this corner, undefeated in twenty fights, seventeen by knockout, from Liverpool, England, the WBU light welterweight champion of the world, the Shamrock Express, Shea Neary!

SHEA NEARY, 30, a broad-shouldered BRUTE who seems bigger than a welterweight, and even more dangerous than he did on the tapes, raises his fist to an EXPLOSION of CHEERS...In his corner, a squadron of grim-faced PROFESSIONALS...

MERCHANT

The fans are letting Ward know, in no uncertain terms, that he's on Shea Neary's turf tonight. And they're letting the judges know.

LAMPLEY

Mickey Ward has been around long enough to know that if he's going to take the title, he's going to have to do the impossible and knock Neary out.

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. HIGHLAND TAP

The bar is packed...In the crowd, we pick out many familiar faces -- O'Keefe, Rainey, Georgie Clements...Charlene is on the PHONE, a finger in her other ear so she can hear...

ALICE

I wish I could see it.

O'KEEFE

HBO ain't gonna broadcast a fight in the middle of the afternoon.

Charlene turns to Alice.

CHARLENE

It's about to start.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. ARENA -- RING

Mickey and Neary stand forehead to forehead...The REF stands with them and talks in a thick COCKNEY ACCENT.

REFEREE

Shake hands, go to your corners,
come out when you hear the bell,
don't piss about! Shake hands!

The fighters finally separate, but they don't shake hands. In the corner, Dickie and Mickey exchange a look. Then the bell RINGS and the fighters engage...Mickey feints with his left and bounces a RIGHT off Neary's skull...Neary looks surprised to see it...Again Mickey feints with the left and hits Neary with the right, body and head...

Neary comes back at Mickey with an onslaught of punches...Mickey takes his punishment but doesn't retreat...Toe-to-toe with Neary...The crowd ROARS its approval...

LAMPLEY

Neary is pounding Ward and Ward's giving it right back!

FOREMAN

Mickey Ward fights like a heavyweight. Big strong heavyweight.

LAMPLEY

This crowd is in for a treat tonight.

The fighters square off...Again Mickey feints with the left and hits Neary with the right...Neary looks disoriented... Then the bell rings and Mickey returns to his corner...

MICKY

He can really hit.

Dickie takes VASELINE out of the doctor's bag...Smooths it across Mickey's cheekbones...

DICKIE

Stick to the plan.

MICKY

It's your plan and my fucking face he's hitting.

DICKIE

Trust me. All right hands.

CUT TO:

INT. LATER. BOXING ARENA

Supered below: ROUND THREE. Neary pounds Mickey...Mickey covers up as the heavy, thudding blows ROCK him...

LAMPLEY

...Ward is absorbing an amazing amount of punishment.

MERCHANT

Most of Neary's fights have ended right here in the third round.

...Then suddenly Mickey starts giving as good as he gets...The two fighters stand toe to toe, head to head, trading savage body punches and uppercuts...

FOREMAN

Don't count Mickey Ward out. This is a tough fighter who's never been knocked out, just had one fight called because of a bad cut...

...Neary takes aim, loads up and SMASHES Mickey hard with an overhand right...Mickey's head snaps back and sweat and blood spray into the air...But as Neary closes in for the kill...

...Mickey HITS BACK with a thunderous right hand in Neary's face...The two slug away, one devastating punch answered by another...The crowd on its feet...Till the bell RINGS...

LAMPLEY

This is boxing the way it's meant to be!

Mickey retreats to his corner...A CUT under one eye...Dickie takes out the doctor bag...Dips the SWABS in the bottles and runs it into the cut...The bleeding stops...

MICKEY

His hands are coming down. I'm going with the left.

DICKIE

Do you wanna win this fight?

MICKEY

With one fucking hand?

DICKIE

Trust me.

MICKEY

Trust you?

Mickey turns to Skeets. Dickie takes Mickey by the face and turns his gaze, looks him in the eye.

DICKIE

I know boxing. I know how to beat this guy. You wanna bring the belt home to Lowell?

MICKEY

Then how come you never did?

DICKIE

Because I'm not as good as you are. I never was.

A look between them. The bell rings...

CUT TO:

INT. LATER. BOXING RING

Supered below: ROUND SIX. Hard BLOWS hailing down on Mickey's head and drilling into his body...

MERCHANT

...This is where you see Neary is the superior boxer. He has dissected all of Ward's weaknesses.

FOREMAN

Ward is famous for his left hand and we've hardly seen it tonight.

MERCHANT

It could be he hurt it.

FOREMAN

The hurting's only going one way right now.

WHAM! a right hook from Neary connects with Mickey's face...A yawning CUT opens up under his left eye...BLOOD spurts from the wound...

WHAM! a left hook does the same to Mickey's right eye...BLOOD streaming down his face and stippling his white trunks...

MERCHANT

All Ward can hope for now is to get out of this fight without permanent damage.

Another DEVASTATING hook opens the cut still more...As the bell rings, Mickey just stands there...Unconscious on his feet...Dickie climbs through the ropes and leads him back to the corner...Cracks an AMMONIA CAPSULE and holds it under his nose to revive him...

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. HIGHLAND TAP

Charlene listens on the phone...The room quiet...

CHARLENE

He lost the sixth.

O'Keefe turns to Tip, who's keeping notes.

O'KEEFE
How far behind is he?

TIP
So far he only took one round.

ALICE
You know my Mickey. He ain't a quitter.

A funereal quiet prevails in the bar...

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. BOXING RING

In the corner, Dickie works on the deep, deep cuts...Swabbing the medicine into the wounds, but they still bleed...

DICKIE
...You've got him right where you want him.

MICKEY
I can't do it, Dickie.

SKEETS
You gotta face facts, Dickie.

DICKIE
You reach for that towel, Skeets, I'll break your fucking arm.
(to Mickey)
Neary can't go more than six rounds -- I watched all his fights -- he's dead on his feet.

MICKEY
I trust you, Dickie, but --

DICKIE
Why do you think we did all that running? Why do you think I kept pushing you? He's got nothing left and you've still got half a tank. It's your fight, Mickey.

MICKEY
Can I go to the left now?

DICKIE

Get his hands up and then bury it
in his liver. Like you got Corbin.

MICKEY

You saw that, huh?

The BELL rings...

DICKIE

Get his hands up and kill him.

CUT TO:

INT. LATER. BOXING RING

Mickey and Neary approach each other. Supered below: ROUND EIGHT. Neary comes straight at Mickey...But Mickey takes it and returns blow for blow...A CHEER goes up from the crowd...

LAMPLEY

I don't believe it, but I think
half these fans are now cheering
for Ward!

Neary slugs at Mickey, trying to put him away...But what Dickie said is true -- Neary's tank is empty -- nothing behind his punches...Mickey answers with a hard LEFT HOOK to the head...

FOREMAN

That left hook rocked him.

Mickey closes in on Neary...Neary breathing hard...Mickey sees the FEAR in his eyes...WHACKS him with another left hook to the head and then follows inside with a left uppercut...

LAMPLEY

A good uppercut by Ward.

Neary's HANDS come up...Protecting himself against the hook...Mickey FEINTS the hook to the head and plants it in Neary's LIVER...Neary GRIMACES in terrible pain...

MERCHANT

There's that left hook to the body
by Ward and Neary's in trouble.

Neary suddenly connects with a right to Mickey's temple, sending him reeling...

LAMPLEY

And Ward is shaken by a right cross from Neary!

Mickey backpedals into the ropes, Neary in pursuit...He bangs Mickey's body...An uppercut to the jaw...

MERCHANT

Neary can smell blood! Ward's in trouble!

The fans on their feet, going crazy...The hometown hero is surging back...Mickey is in trouble, and he knows it...Blood streams from the deep cuts under his eyes...

DICKIE

Bust him, Mickey! Bust him!

Mickey pushes Neary off, finds him center ring and lands a devastating left uppercut that looks to take Neary's very head off...Neary staggers and falls flat on his back...

LAMPLEY

What an uppercut by Ward and Neary is down for the first time in his career!

Neary crawls to his knees...His eyes GLASSY as the Referee approaches him, counting...Neary staggers to his feet...Mickey looks to Dickie in his corner...

DICKIE

Right here, right now, Mickey! It's yours if you want it!

Neary staggers toward Mickey, covering up...Mickey goes in for the kill...WHAM! a huge left hook and WHAM! a giant uppercut inside...Neary falls hard to the canvas, out cold...

LAMPLEY

Neary is down for the second time!
That's it! It's all over! 'Irish'
Mickey Ward with a big eighth round
knockout!

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. THE HIGHLAND TAP

Charlene listens on the phone...Breaks into a broad grin and holds her fist aloft...

CHARLENE

Mickey knocked him out in the eighth!

A CHEER goes up and chants of "Mickey! Mickey! Mickey!"... Charlene and Alice hug and jump up and down...

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. BOXING RING

Mickey throws his fists in the air and leaps around joyously...Dickie runs into the ring and they embrace...Mickey exhausted...Dickie all but holding him up...The Ring Announcer speaks in the microphone...

RING ANNOUNCER

The winner and now WBU Light Welterweight Champion of the World, the Pride of Lowell, Massachusetts, 'Irish' Mickey Ward!

The Irish have a new hero...They ROAR for Mickey...Then the CHAMPIONSHIP BELT goes to Mickey...Dickie and Skeets lift him onto their shoulders...Mickey smiles broadly through the cuts and bruises, Dickie beams as he looks up at him...

FREEZE FRAME.

ROLL CRAWL

In 2002, Mickey Ward fought the first of three fights with Arturo "Thunder" Gatti. The Ward-Gatti trilogy included what is considered by many boxing historians the greatest single round of fighting of all time, and brought Mickey his first seven-figure paydays.

He still lives in Lowell and he still drives a steamroller, though he did buy a used Corvette.

Dickie also lives in Lowell, just a few blocks from his brother and his mother. Like all addicts, he battles his illness every day. He is ten years sober.

FADE OUT.

THE END