

THE NEUTRAL CORNER

Written by

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EXT. HIGHWAY - MORNING

A 1980s sedan upside down in a roadside ditch. Battered and smoking. As we float toward the wreckage...

MALE VOICE (V.O.)
(archival, scratchy)
...to the athletes assembled before
you, to those here in the arena, to
those viewing around the world, I
declare open the games of this 23rd
Olympiad of the modern era.

A bang from inside the car. Another. *Another*. The door kicks open.

CUT TO:

BLACK. Then the muffled roar of a crowd pounding above us.

INT. ARENA TUNNEL - NIGHT

We're floating behind a satin-robed BOXER, hood up as he marches through the arena's concrete underbelly, trainers and crew following in formation. Owing the road.

This is fight night.

Suddenly they all step aside, making room for A SINGLE MAN passing through. Dress pants, blue collared shirt, black bow tie. A silent monarch, greying hair around cauliflower ears, the leather veneer earned over a thousand blows.

This is RAY TENNYSON (50s). He is the referee of this fight.

Others pressing the walls as he marches through - custodians, ring girls, execs. Never slowing.

Down the hall a few MEN IN SUITS wait near a dressing room. Ray pauses a moment before entering, shaking hands with one.

RAY
Governor.

Ray disappears inside. The Governor must wait here.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Catered and staffed. A classic movie poster on the wall: Astaire and Rogers in "*Shall We Dance?*"

The CORNER MEN, the INSPECTORS, the PRESS, all falling silent as Ray enters. A FIGHTER on a table getting his fists wrapped, looking up.

Ray approaches, gets eye level.

RAY

How are we doing Mr. Dwyer?

FIGHTER

Good Mr. Ray.

RAY

Okay. When the bell rings I want you to stop punching and return to your corner. I don't want any extra curricular activity. I'm too old for that crap. Got it? Let's hear it.

FIGHTER

Yes Mr. Ray.

RAY

(to the room)

For the chief seconds, I don't care who wins tonight. I care about the sanctity of the fight. I have to know your guy is okay at all times, and it's not my job to assume it, he's got to prove it to me. He gets knocked down, he's going to stand, he's going to walk over, he's going to show me his gloves. If he can do those three things, we fight. Everyone understand?

(then, in Spanish, German, Russian)

Entiendes? Verstehst du? Znayesh?

Nods all around.

RAY (CONT'D)

No standing eight count, no three knockdown rule, you cannot be saved by the bell at any time except the final round. Will you comply with my wishes?

The fighter obeys. Ray is one of two men who control his destiny tonight.

RAY (CONT'D)

Good. Let's check that mouth piece.

INT. ARENA - NIGHT

Emerging from the tunnel we find ourselves on the floor of the MGM GRAND GARDEN. Lights and cables snaking under the logos of brands and flags of nations. Cut Men carting spit buckets past Nevada State Troopers. Tuxedo'd Commentators shouting over *sixteen-thousand spectators*, the sound of this billion-dollar industry roaring up to the rafters.

And from above...

ANNOUNCER (OVER PA)
 ...welcome you to the MGM GRAND
 here in Las Vegas for Showtime
 Championship Boxing presented to
 you by Top Rank along with...

IN THE RING

Overflowing with the entourages of each fighter.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
 The WBA, the president is Gilberto
 Mendoza, along with the Nevada
 State Athletic Commission, the
 chairmen is Tom Hoover...

HOOVER (50) talking ringside, serious. An overseer in a suit.

Ray stands apart against the ropes, eyes closed, not letting the hype of the intros affect him. His hands folded and zen, now wearing rubber nitrile gloves. Blood is coming.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
 ..Our three judges scoring this
 bout, from Nevada Mark Boone, also
 from Nevada Carol Geffen, and from
 New Jersey Kenny Yaeger.

For these three Ray opens his eyes, a curt bow to his fellow arbiters around the apron.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
 And now introducing our third man
 in the ring, the referee in charge
 of this bout, Ray Tennyson.

No attention to himself, only stepping forward as the ring begins to clear.

IN THE STANDS

TWO MEN in the nosebleeds, still amongst the screaming crowd. Young, tattoos crawling up thick necks. One in a skull cap, the other not watching the boxers, but studying *Ray himself*.

THE RING

Ray meets the fighters in the center, stepping between them.

RAY

Gentlemen, you both received instructions in the dressing room for what's expected. Low lines are going to be here, and here...

Ray indicates points on their belts.

RAY (CONT'D)

This will be a professionally fought bout, because you're both professionals. I know it, you know it, and that's how I expect it. I say break, you break. I say fight, you fight. I want caution at all times, protect yourself at all times. Are we ready to box?

Hearing Ray but eyes locked. They're ready.

RAY (CONT'D)

Tap it up then, let's go to work.

Gloves smash and they recede to their corners. Ray remains in the center, arms outstretched, the law between lions, holding them at bay.

The crowd is pulsing. The volume is rising. Ray's eyes hone in on a small gavel hovering above a ringside bell.

It strikes.

A blur as they clash. Blood sprays across his dress shirt.

INT. CASINO BAR - NIGHT

More saloon than Caesar's. A dive with a few threadbare card tables scattered around. This isn't Vegas. This is RENO.

A dusty TV bolted above the bar silently plays highlights from the fight. A CLIP on repeat of Ray taking an inadvertent hit during a clinch. He reels but recovers, spits, instantly diving back in. The crowd LEAPING.

Ray sits alone at the bar. He's changed his shirt, a drink and a newspaper laid out before him. A post-fight tradition.

BARTENDER (O.S.)
Replay is gonna start in a few.

A bartender stepping in to swap out his drink.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)
Want me to turn it on for you?

RAY
What for?

Ray looks up from his paper. Stares back through a newly forming black eye.

RAY (CONT'D)
Think I wasn't paying attention the first time?

The bartender grins, refills his drink and steps away.

Ray reaches for the glass, pauses. Looking down he scratches at a dried fleck of blood left on his wrist.

INT. RAY'S HOME - NIGHT

Desert chic mixed with military clean. Watercolors and cactus. A woman's touch here.

INT. RAY'S HOME, BATHROOM - NIGHT

Ray showers. As the water rolls off his back we see a line of *scar tissue* running down the base of his neck. Surgical.

INT. RAY'S HOME, BEDROOM - NIGHT

The television left on, boxing after-shows bleeding into late night infomercials. Ray turns off the television. A congested voice drifts over from the bed.

CONNIE (O.S.)
Did you win?

RAY
Oh yeah. You should see the other guys. How's the head?

CONNIE (O.S.)
 ..Don't talk so loud...
 (her answer, then)
 We're out of kleenex.

RAY
 I'm sorry. I'll pick more up
 tomorrow.

She turns, hearing him groan into bed. CONNIE is in her 40s, a little Texas in her voice, an old A&M Law sweatshirt on. She gives him a sleepy kiss before rolling back over.

As she drifts back to sleep...

CONNIE
 Oh yeah, someone called looking for
 you tonight.

RAY
 Yeah?

CONNIE
 Yeah... guess they don't have Pay
 Per View. Didn't leave a name.

RAY
 Probably someone from work. I'll
 get it in the morning.

CONNIE
 When do you go in?

RAY
 Early.

CONNIE
 Okay. Well I ironed your shirts.
 (a beat)
 And I cleaned your gun.

INT. RENO DISTRICT COURTROOM - DAY

Waiting to begin. Glimpses of the chosen decor on the walls:

The Nevada State seal, a print of Raphael's *Judgement of Solomon*, and above the bench: A framed pair of antique boxing gloves, circa 1900. An inscription beneath: *T.R. Esquire*.

Booted men and women grouped in side conversations around the gallery, all falling silent as a bailiff, ODELL, calls out.

ODELL

All rise. Let the record reflect
the court is now in session.

They do so as RAY emerges from chambers, black robe flowing, a pair of reading glasses tucked with a few files under his arm. He steps up into his chair, perching above it all.

RAY

Good morning.

The gallery murmurs back as Ray pulls a docket forward.

RAY (CONT'D)

We have the matter of the State of
Nevada versus Knotts, case number
05 CF 381. Will the parties...

(looks up, sees something)

Will the parties state their
appearance for the record please.

Attorneys at each table rise.

ABNEY

Good morning, Judge. The State of
Nevada appears by Washoe County
District Attorney Mark Abney.

MELISSA

And good morning, William Knotts
appears in person. He's represented
by Jerome Buting, immediately to my
left, and I am Melissa Mathis.

A beat.

RAY

Would both counsels approach the
bench please.

The attorneys exchange looks as they approach. The Court Reporter removes her hands from her keyboard as Ray leans in to the attorneys. Silence, eyeing them both. Then:

RAY (CONT'D)

(to Melissa)

You changed your hair.

MELISSA

I did your honor.

RAY

Coming to my party?

MELISSA

I'll be there.

Ray turns to Abney now.

RAY

Mr. Abney are you aware miss Mathis was my law clerk for a number of years prior to joining the public defender's office?

ABNEY

I was not your honor.

RAY

Now that you are, do you feel I can still provide a fair, unbiased, and impartial manner in this case?

Staring him down through his black eye, intimidating.

ABNEY

W-well, I --

RAY

Relax Mr. Abney. You can both return to your seats.

They do so, Abney a little thrown as Ray nods to the Court Reporter, hands at the ready as he addresses the court.

RAY (CONT'D)

With respect to this matter, I know and have a prior professional relationship with the defense's counsel. With the integrity that the people of this beautiful city have entrusted and believe this seat has - it's appropriate for me to recuse myself from this case at this time. We will notify the district administrator's office, and there will be another judge assigned for prompt rescheduling of the preliminary hearing.

Ray taps the gavel.

INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - EVENING

Classic. Lamplit. Ray's robe and gun harness now hanging on the rack. Degrees and photos on the wall. He's been in here for years.

Ray works at his desk, hidden somewhere under a mound of paperwork. His current clerk, LYLE, appears in the doorway.

LYLE

1118.1 motion hearing in the morning. Want me to pull the trial transcript?

RAY

What for. Think I wasn't paying attention the first time?

Lyle makes a face. The usual answer.

LYLE

Headed home soon?

RAY

Speaking engagement. You can get out of here. Go see your lady. Have a good night.

LYLE

You too sir.

But Lyle hovers in the doorway, watching Ray continue to work.

LYLE (CONT'D)

How are you ever going to retire?

Ray looks up at this. He sits back, thinks on it.

RAY

Well... I suppose, one day, I just won't show up.

INT. RENO BOXING GYM - NIGHT

Sweat and bricks. Pillars of punching bags along the walls. The lights turned low over everything but the sparring ring in the center.

RAY (O.S.)

I'd like to think you're all here tonight seeking the sage wisdom of some veterans of the sport...

Faces listening from metal folding chairs set out around the ring. Amateurs and apprentices taking notes. A VIDEO CAMERA taping in the back. All watching Ray pacing inside the ropes.

RAY (CONT'D)

...and *not just* because it's required by the Nevada State Athletic Commission to get your official's license.

Soft laughs from the seats. We recognize CAROL, the judge from the opening fight, sitting ringside with other speakers.

RAY (CONT'D)

Either way, tonight I'm going to tell you what this is. And I'm going to show you, courtesy of our two fighters on loan here: who's rabbit punching, who's raking laces, who's got a glove or knee on the mat. What's going to cost the point.

He motions to two TEENAGE FEMALE BOXERS on standby in the back. Then:

RAY (CONT'D)

But first I want to talk about what it means to be the third man in the ring. The other judges, they won't see everything, they'll be looking to you, everyone will be looking to you. There is no instant replay, there are no second opinions. So you go in, you make your calls alone, and those calls stand. It's why I don't rewatch fights, I don't reread old transcripts. Your calls, you can't take them back. People will praise you, more will blame you. This profession has lost a lot of guys, good guys, who couldn't let go of the calls they've made. The curse of the second guess. *Maybe that hit was low, maybe I should have called the fight. I should have seen, I should have known...* well that's bullshit. Our robes, this patch --

He taps at a patch on his breast, a pair of boxing gloves outlined by the state of Nevada.

RAY (CONT'D)

Doesn't make us anything other than human. You won't always be right, but that's not your job.

(MORE)

RAY (CONT'D)

In the moment, you make sure you've got a decent head and a good heart, and you make the decision that moment allows. That's your job.

Meeting eyes in the audience. Letting this sink in.

RAY (CONT'D)

Okay, let's see one.

INT. RENO BOXING GYM - LATER

Streetlight spilling in as two men enter the gym. One we recognize, the athletic commissioner from the MGM fight, HOOVER. A man in a polo following beside him. KURT REDFORD.

The sounds of a fight brewing deeper inside. Wandering closer...

The two female boxers now fighting in the ring, red and blue shorts. Ray floating around them, barking shots. Hoover and Redford stand back by the video camera, watching Ray work.

IN THE RING

The boxers lock up, start trading point blank shots. Ray dodging in and out, gauging.

RAY

Back of the head, watch it watch it... Okay break. Back it off.

Ray pries them apart. Circling again he looks out into the audience, sees the two men in back of the room. Hoover nods.

Suddenly Red EXPLODES with a cross. Blue REELS back, knees buckling. She gets her balance, gloves coming back up -

But Ray is already between them, sending Red to her corner as he fans out his hands at Blue, starts counting...

RAY (CONT'D)

1, 2, 3...

BLUE

(straightening)
I'm up I'm up, what are-

RAY

Knee touched the mat. That's a knock down kid. One point. 5, 6...

BLUE
What!? No it didn't!

Unconvinced looks from trainees around the ring. They didn't see it either. Even Red looks doubtful. Ray could give a shit, ignoring them all.

RAY
Right knee. Check the tape if you want. 8...

Hoover snorts, ribs his partner. This is the guy they came to see.

In the ring Ray flags the point, sees Carole hesitant, pen stalled over her scorecard.

CAROLE
...Ray I was two feet away, I don't think-

Ray straightens up, eyes the clock, calls out:

RAY
That's round.
(to a trainee)
Terry why don't you jump up, take the next few.

Ray climbs down, throws a towel over his shoulder. He catches a look from Carole as he passes, gives her a reassuring nod.

RAY (CONT'D)
Check the tape.

With that he waves the two men over toward the gym office.

As they disappear inside a few trainees huddle around the video camera, its viewfinder screen folded out:

The end of the last round pulled up. They replay it, forwarding frame by frame, the knee lowering, lowering...

Touches. Just a single frame, but undeniable. Trainees' faces going slack, gazing toward the office door, now closed.

TRAINEE
How the hell did he see that?

INT. RENO BOXING GYM, OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Ray draws the blinds, digs a water out of a cooler.

HOOVER
How's the eye doing?

RAY
Eh, modeling career is on hold.

They shake.

HOOVER
Heard you're thinking of starting
one of these places yourself.

RAY
Thinking about it.

Careful to say more. Hoover then motions toward his guest.

HOOVER
Ray this is Kurt Redford. He's down
from Colorado Springs.

KURT
Good to meet you Ray.

Offering his hand. A subtle pause before Ray takes it,
picking up on something.

RAY
Same.

HOOVER
Why don't we all take a seat.

All finding a seat, shoving equipment aside.

KURT
I got your name from Doug Hackett.
He sends his best.

RAY
Doug's a good man. How's he doing?

KURT
Still thinks his doctors are trying
to kill him. Single handedly
keeping the steak industry alive.

RAY
The same then.

Chuckles fall into silence. Then:

HOOVER
So Ray, how retired are you?

RAY

Well... I promised Connie end of the year. Told the bar association the same. Suppose I should give you my two weeks at some point.

HOOVER

...why don't you hold off on that.

Another silence. Kurt sits forward.

KURT

Ray I'm on the committee to elect the officials for next year's Olympic Games. Names we can count on, who know their sports, clean records, incorruptible reputations. I'd like to nominate you as one of the candidates.

RAY

You want me to ref for the games?

Kurt and Hoover exchange a quick look.

KURT

We don't want you to just ref for the games. We want you to open them.

(a beat)

One athlete, one coach, one official, each chosen to be the icon of their field. At the opening ceremonies you'll walk the track. You'll take the podium, and you would take the Olympic oath on behalf of every judge and referee in every sport in the entire world that night.

(a smile)

And *then*, I want you to ref the games.

Ray, stunned silent.

KURT (CONT'D)

Now officially there are other candidates. And there's a bit of a vetting process. Background check, proficiency test, interview, we'll give you some matches at the Olympic Trials as sort of a dry run. But get through those, there's a fair shot... podium's yours.

Ray sits, still frozen.

KURT (CONT'D)
That is, if you're interested.

RAY
I'm interested.

EXT. RENO NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS - NIGHT

Ray runs, pounding ahead, a nightly habit. He starts up a hill...

AT THE TOP

Alone here, a vista of the city. He slows, not winded, just overwhelmed. A mist in his eyes, the situation hitting him.

He screams. Years of pent-up yearning flowing out of him.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Applause. We're in the middle of a RETIREMENT PARTY, beers and seafood, boxing and courthouse colleagues all turned to the center as Connie shoves a reluctant Ray forward.

He clears his throat, shrugs.

RAY
Well this was supposed to be a retirement party. I know we may be kicking the can a little now on that one but, well we'd already put down a deposit on the shrimp.

(laughter)

Thank you all for being here. Seeing some of these faces just reminds me of how long I've actually been doing this. When I first started out... paid nothing, worked two jobs, just for the pleasure of getting punched in the head. When we graduated law school Connie said *Well, at least you don't need to work two jobs anymore...* thank God that didn't last.

(looking out now)

It's truly been the greatest night shift I've ever had.

His glass goes up. A hundred more raise with him.

LATER

Ray weaving through the crowd, nods and backslaps. Tom Hoover and his bailiff Odell watching him from afar.

HOOVER

You know how many guys manage to stay certified in both pro and international boxing? Guy is a glutton for punishment and paperwork.

ODELL

Shit I don't even like to file my taxes on time.

Across the room Ray stops to chat with a couple, a towering man in a muscle-strained blazer. They exchange a few words, a grin. As Ray moves on we see the man is EVANDER HOLYFIELD.

AT THE BAR

Ray slides up, flags down the bartender.

RAY

Yeah gin sling and a Stella.

The bartender nods, sets off. Ray waits alone, rubs his eyes. A slab of tacky wrapping paper appears, sliding down to him.

Ray looks over. Finds GRAHAM YATES grinning back at him. 60s, warm, flat cap and tobacco rind of a veteran sports writer.

GRAHAM

Figured you had enough gold watches.

RAY

Well, you know I'll always take cash...

They lean over a moment, embrace.

RAY (CONT'D)

Wasn't sure you'd be in town. Thought your editors might have you off covering cock fights in Indonesia or something...

GRAHAM

Well you only fake-retire once.

Ray smiles, turns the gift over in his hands.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

You don't have to open it now-

Ray tears into it. It's a framed FIGHT POSTER from Korea. A black and white still of two fighters mid strike - a younger RAY focused between them.

RAY

Goddamn... look at that hair.

GRAHAM

First WBC international fight. Believe we both popped our cherries on that one. Pretty sure I saw you puke in Kwon Soon's spit bucket before the match.

RAY

Horse shit. Never happened...

A running joke. Ray drifts off, disappearing into the poster.

RAY (CONT'D)

Did feel like a pretty big house that night though...

GRAHAM

And look at you now. House doesn't get much bigger. Really, congratulations Ray. You following the Olympic Trials at all?

RAY

No, they're bringing me out next week. Anyone interesting?

GRAHAM

Eh... there is this one kid, former AABA champ. 26 and 2.

The bartender drops off Ray's drinks.

RAY

AABA, WBC, IBF... alphabet mafia. Where's that league out of, Albany?

GRAHAM

Penitentiary league.

Graham studies Ray as he goes for his drink. Nothing.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

Name's Cameron Mills. Ring any bells?

RAY
Nope. Why, should it?

GRAHAM
Possibly. Apparently you're the one who convicted him in the first place.

Ray pauses briefly.

RAY
Yeah and when was that?

GRAHAM
His case? About eight years back.

RAY
Graham, you know how many cases I've seen in eight years?

GRAHAM
(relenting)
Yeah I figured...

RAY
His record. He even eligible?

GRAHAM
Mayweather. Liston. Tyson. If we DQ'd every felon from boxing we'd be out of a job. Olympics run no different. And anyway, apparently the kid's been doing pretty good on the amateur circuit. Got out year before last, paroled on some technicality. I pulled the transcript hoping to make some sense of it but, hell it's all a bit over my head. Maybe I could send it over. There are a few parts-

RAY
I didn't convict him.

GRAHAM
How's that?

RAY
I'll save you the read. Criminal trial, I can tell you without looking I didn't convict anybody. Jury did.

Graham nods, accepting.

GRAHAM

So no recollection whatsoever huh?

Staring at each other. Sees what this was.

RAY

Thanks for the gift Graham. Hey,
enjoy the shrimp. Paid enough for
it.

With that Ray grabs his drinks and heads off. Graham watches him disappear into the crowd, embarrassed... but wondering.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

The silhouettes of several HORSES, huddled together for the night. Barely visible in the glow of a far off porch light.

EXT. RAY'S HOME, BACK PORCH - CONTINUOUS

We see Ray's house backs up to a sprawling pasture, the Sierra Mountain range looming hazily in the distance.

Ray sits in a rocking chair, tie undone, staring off. Connie appears in sweats in the doorway behind him.

CONNIE

Coming to bed?

Ray smiles, nods. Connie gives him a kiss, slips back inside. Alone now Ray goes back to the horses. He's wide awake.

EXT. RENO STREETS - MOMENTS LATER

Ray pounds forward, steps echoing off the silent buildings around him. His eyes bored ahead...

PRELAP:

COURT OFFICER (V.O.)

...next. Case number 239488FC

INT. RENO COURTROOM - DAY (**THE PAST**)

Ray's courtroom. State seal and gloves on the wall. The attorney we met earlier, Melissa, now younger and sitting at the clerk's desk, handing papers to Ray on the bench, not yet gone grey.

The Prosecutor and Public Defender remain in their seats, working through the assembly line as a kid in an orange jumpsuit walks off, another taking his seat.

The same face we saw studying Ray in the stands of the opening fight. CAMERON MILLS, now 17 and leaner, what looks to be glass cuts healing on his face.

RAY

Okay, we've got the State of Nevada vs Cameron Miles. Mr. Miles this is an arraignment, this is not your court date. This should be relatively brief. You've been charged with-

Cameron utters something under his breath.

RAY (CONT'D)

What's that?

His public defender leans over to hear, rises.

PUBLIC DEFENDER

He'd just like to make the court aware his name is pronounced *Mills*, your honor.

RAY

(adjusting his glasses)

My apologies. Mr. Mills you've been charged by Washoe County with a three part indictment filed on March 10 of this year against yourself and Mr. Samuel Brooks, now deceased, which includes the following:

(off his records)

Two counts of permitting drug abuse, a violation of revised code 292513B. One count of trafficking harmful intoxicants, each of those felonies of the 5th degree. And an added count of gross vehicular homicide, PAC code 750.317, a felony punishable by life or any term of years.

He quiets, reading on silently. He lowers the records.

RAY (CONT'D)

So, counts one and two, the 292 violations. How do we plead?

PUBLIC DEFENDER
We plead guilty your honor.

RAY
Okay, and count three?

PUBLIC DEFENDER
Guilty your honor.

RAY
And the added count four,
vehicular homicide.

A pause here, conferring.

PUBLIC DEFENDER
We're standing mute on count three.

RAY
...standing mute.

PUBLIC DEFENDER
That's correct. We are in active
conversations with the DA toward a
possible plea your honor.

RAY
(direct to Cameron)
You understand if you deny any
element of the final offense I
won't be able to accept the plea.

PUBLIC DEFENDER
Understood your honor.

But Ray's eyes remain on Cameron, making sure he's been
heard. Cameron stares right back.

RAY
...very well. Until then, pursuant
to rule 3.170C a plea of not guilty
shall be entered on the defendant's
behalf on the last count of the
indictment.

A court reporter typing rapidly, keeping up as he speaks.

RAY (CONT'D)
That brings us to bond. What are we
doing?

PUBLIC DEFENDER

Your honor considering the defendant's age we would ask that he be released to his guardians on his own recognizance.

RAY

State, any problems with that?

PROSECUTOR

We'd also move for the suspension of his license, including alcohol and drug prohibitions with health recovery services and subject to random substance abuse monitoring.

PUBLIC DEFENDER

No issues your honor.

RAY

Mr. Mills, any questions?

That stare again. This kid may not be all there. Ray moves on, reaches for the gavel-

RAY (CONT'D)

Okay, bond is-

CAMERON

What are those?

Ray halts, hearing him for the first time. Ray sees he's staring at the framed gloves on the wall.

RAY

Boxing gloves. Belonged to a famous law student.

CAMERON

Who? You?

RAY

...Teddy Roosevelt.

Cameron glares, mumbles something again.

RAY (CONT'D)

What's that?

PUBLIC DEFENDER

Your honor we're ready to close-

CAMERON

(rising above)

Said don't need no gloves bitch.

Echoing across the court. Ray smirks. Then, calmly...

RAY

Bond's denied, defendant is to be remanded to custody.

(off defender's look)

You heard him. Sounds like he can take care of himself. Mr. Mills pending your plea agreement we'll set a pretrial hearing for June 15, trial hearing set for the following-

Wood scraping the floor. Ray looks up to see Cameron leaping over the table, bailiffs and corrections officers suddenly on alert as he starts for the bench.

A wild look before he's tackled to the floor, four struggling to restrain one, cuffs and keys rattling.

Cameron is brought to a stand, now feet from the bench...

Ray hasn't flinched. Just stares him down as we hear a *click* beneath the desk. He quietly sets his now unchambered gun on the podium.

RAY (CONT'D)

Son, this is Nevada.

Letting that sit. Ray reaches for his gavel...

RAY (CONT'D)

We'll see you at trial Mr. Mills.

Bangs it down.

INT. PLANE - DAY (**THE PRESENT**)

Ray stares out the window. Beneath: the snow and stone of the Colorado Rockies silently flowing past.

His Seat Neighbor stirs behind him, craning his neck. Ray leans back, realizes he's blocking the view.

RAY

Sorry.

NEIGHBOR

No you're okay.

They look out together.

NEIGHBOR (CONT'D)
Visiting or coming home?

RAY
Visiting.
(and then)
Used to be home though.

NEIGHBOR
First time for me, gorgeous huh?

Ray only smiles, says nothing, goes back to the window. Then -

NEIGHBOR (CONT'D)
Hey you see that?

He nods down below. On the ground: a dot of orange light burning in the distance.

NEIGHBOR (CONT'D)
What, maybe some kind of forest
fire?

Ray squints, slowly starts to grin.

RAY
No.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. OLYMPIC TRAINING CENTER, COLORADO SPRINGS - DAY

A COLOSSAL FLAME, roaring atop a three-story iron torch.

POP WIDE TO:

The torch burning over a sprawling campus, Ray looking up as he's driven through the gates. Flags whipping in the wind over bronze statues, the Olympic rings looming above it all.

INT. LOBBY, OLYMPIC TRAINING CENTER - DAY

From afar as Ray is cleared through security, slipping a lanyard over his head.

INT. OLYMPIC TRAINING CENTER, VARIOUS - DAY

Watching through glass as he's escorted through campus, elites of their sport silently training inside. Marksmen firing in optical head gear. Gymnasts powdering hands. Fencers lunging at electronic targets.

INT. ATRIUM, OLYMPIC TRAINING CENTER - DAY

Alone now Ray walks the walls, statues and murals continuing inside. Jesse Owens...Mia Hamm...Jackie Joyner-Kersey...Ali.

A flock of athletes run past outside. Ray wanders to the window, watching them work their way around the track.

DANNY (O.S.)

Ray.

Another man waiting down the hall, lanyard dangling. Ray placing the face as he walks over, a little younger than Ray, smiling to a fault. This is DANNY PEÑA.

RAY

Danny...

DANNY

You get called up too?

RAY

Yeah, committee must be getting desperate.

They shake.

DANNY

How are you? We missed you at the Detroit conference last year.

RAY

Yeah I had trial. Let me guess, I missed Ritchie retell how he fed a Bally's steak to Tyson's tiger after the Ruddock fight.

DANNY

Couple of times.

RAY

How's Atlantic City been?

DANNY

Slow. Luna and I are actually in Vegas now.

RAY

Vegas...

DANNY

Yeah. Jersey Athletic Commission's got a hundred refs and no fights to give them.

(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

Bunch of guys waiting by the phone.
So, you know, go where the work is.
(gazing around)
But hell, can you believe this...

Silence. Both taking it in.

RAY

Not yet.

Kurt Redford appears down the hall.

KURT

Gentlemen. Sorry to keep you
waiting. I'll bring y'all inside
now.

INT. BOXING GYM, OLYMPIC TRAINING CENTER - DAY

The lights coming on, revealing the ropes and red leather of a boxing acropolis. A grid of vacant boxing rings flanked by white boards and weights, gloves and speed bags. Every piece gleaming like it's been spit-shined the night before.

Kurt leads them across the gym.

KURT

Be a little quiet until we get the
team together. Couple months you'll
hear these bags running all night.
Office is right over here.

Ray falls behind as they move ahead, seeing something...

A wall of team photos, boxers dating back to the 1930s. He drifts over, eyes falling on one of the teams.

1984. Haircuts and gear of the time. A young Evander Holyfield smiling in the top row. Other fighters, names and weight classes listed below. A line at the bottom:

***NOT PICTURED: Tennyson, Raymond, 69kg - Welterweight**

Kurt appears beside him.

KURT (CONT'D)

'84. Good team that year.

Ray just nods, looking on...

RAY

...Yeah. We were.

He flashes a pained smile, turns for the office.

INT. GYM OFFICE, OLYMPIC TRAINING CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

All three flipping through regulations paperwork.

KURT

...286 boxers, 273 bouts, 76 countries, translates to about 35 officials. We're sending three.

Kurt sets the binder aside.

KURT (CONT'D)

As for the fighters, used to be pretty simple. Eight weight classes, eight spots, you win at trials you're on the team. But boxing went off and got too damn popular, so now we have the qualifiers. It's at these two we'll have you guys come in, run your matches, prove your stuff.

Ray and Danny staring back. They're ready.

KURT (CONT'D)

Now we just finished the Eastern Qualifier in Philadelphia. That leaves the Last Chance Qualifier here in Colorado Springs, then the trials themselves two months later in Dallas. Ray, that'll be yours. Danny we'll bring you back here in a few weeks.

(digging through papers)

This is the list of the fighters enrolled for each event. Take a look, let me know if you see any conflicts of interest, sign off at the bottom.

Kurt sets out two sheets, sliding them across the desk. Ray stares at his a moment, throws Kurt a nervous smile.

RAY

Should I have my lawyer present Kurt?

KURT

(hands going up)

I'm required to ask that. After what happened in Rio with the Russians, Olympic task force is coming down hard on this one.

(MORE)

KURT (CONT'D)

Expelled every boxing official that year, even brought in Pricewaterhouse Coopers as a third party to run the new vetting process. Part of which includes me asking you that question.

Ray takes this in, silently goes back to his sheet. Danny scribbles his name, slides it back.

DANNY

No conflicts.

Ray reaches the bottom of the page, looks up at Kurt. He sets it back on the desk, and signs.

RAY

No conflicts.

INT. PUB - LATER

Two drinks getting low on the table. Spasms of laughter.

DANNY

Wait what event was this?

RAY

Painting.

DANNY

Bullshit.

RAY

Until 1948. Painting was a sanctioned, medaled Olympic event. Along with literature, sculpture, architecture, town planning...

DANNY

How about lawn mowing?

Laughs again as a waitress drops a fresh round of drinks.

DANNY (CONT'D)

You ever been? To the games. Just to see it?

RAY

Nah.

(staring at his drink)

I wanted to be the guy that got to be down there. You know, walk that lap around the track.

(MORE)

RAY (CONT'D)

Look up and realize, no matter
where it's being held, that night,
you're in the center of the world.

Danny leans back, likes the sound of it.

DANNY

How'd the guy that replaced you do?

RAY

Lost to a Croatian, first round.

Danny winces. Ray smiles, Ray grabs his drink.

RAY (CONT'D)

So Vegas huh. Enjoying it?

DANNY

Yeah, been about a year now.
Actions good. You and Connie are
what, up in Reno? Hell of a commute
on a fight night.

RAY

Yeah well, it suites us.

DANNY

We'll have to bring you back down,
have you over for dinner.

Ray nods. Then --

RAY

Think we have a chance at getting
this thing?

DANNY

I think one of us does.
(a knowing grin)
Didn't expect the tribunal though.
Conflict paperwork bullshit, what
happened to handshakes?

Silence. Finally -

RAY

I knew someone on yours.

DANNY

...Yeah?

RAY

Cameron Mills.

Danny stares back.

DANNY

Shit Ray... everybody knows Cameron Mills. Golden Gloves, PAC Challenge. You run his fights before? He owe you money? He sleep with your sister?

Ray smiles, shakes no.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Then forget it. Just cause you heard of a guy doesn't mean you gotta take yourself out. He's not even on your card.

(then)

You know, I heard him and a few other guys have a prelim next week, charity exhibition in Carson. I was thinking of going. Why don't you come with, check it out.

Ray considers it, sets his drink aside.

RAY

Next time.

(off his look)

Like you said. Hell of a commute.

EXT. GARAGE, RAY'S HOME - NIGHT

Connie perches over a saddle, working the leather with a brush. A row of stables outside behind her. A doorbell rings inside the house. Connie rises, grabs a rag.

EXT. RAY'S HOME - NIGHT

Opening the front door to find Graham Yates on the steps, a shit-eating grin between a plant and a bottle with a card.

GRAHAM

Desert Hibiscus and some overpriced gin. A little salutations for you and Ray.

CONNIE

Awww well thank you Graham.

They embrace and she takes the gifts, juggling them...

CONNIE (CONT'D)

...Ray's actually out of town...

GRAHAM

Well then I'll let you pick which one he gets.

(another grin, then)

Oh and uh, if I could drop this off-

He unearths a bundle of papers, "TRANSCRIPT COPY" stamped across the top sheet.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

...Unless you speak legalese?

CONNIE

I do. But not at eight o'clock on a Sunday. And I charge 300 an hour.

(then)

But I can leave it on his desk for you.

GRAHAM

That'd be swell.

She smiles back, holds up the bottle.

CONNIE

You wanna come in?

But Graham is already drifting back down the stairs.

GRAHAM

Oh... no. Gotta get back. Cats would worry.

(starting down the path)

Water that hibiscus!

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

An abandoned intersection. Ray's car waiting for the light. The only one there.

INSIDE

Ray staring forward. His eyes drift up, settle on the street signs. After a moment he flips his blinker on, goes right.

EXT. HIGHWAY - LATER

Ray stands next to the car. It's cold but he doesn't care. His emergencies blinking silently at....

The empty shoulder of the road ahead, gravel falling off into darkness. Ray walks over, looks down into the ditch below...

Nothing but prairie grass and patches of the last snowfall.

PRELAP:

 CONNIE (OVER PHONE)
Does it look any different?

EXT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Behind Ray as he sits on the bed, phone to his ear, hints of scar tissue beneath his undershirt.

 RAY
Like nothing happened.

 CONNIE (OVER PHONE)
Good.
 (Ray pauses at this)
Cause a lot of good has happened since. You know that right.

 RAY
I know.

Ray stares off. Some shuffling on the other end.

 CONNIE
Oh, Graham Yates brought some transcript papers over. I left them on your desk. Brought some flowers with it. Little card too, man's a sweetheart isn't he.

Ray's eyes roll. He eases himself back on the bed.

 CONNIE (CONT'D)
When's your flight get in?

 RAY
I'll have to check.

 CONNIE
I'll pick you up. You've had lots of calls. Interviews and things. Sounds like word's spread a bit.

 RAY
From who.

 CONNIE
Nevada Bar Association. Ring Magazine. Reno Star wants to take your picture.

 RAY
I don't want my picture taken.

CONNIE

Well I want your picture taken.

Ray grunts. Connie, earnest now.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Hon. This is a good thing remember.
You earned this. Try to enjoy it.

SERIES

INT. RENO BOXING GYM - NIGHT

The metal chairs now packed to the brim. Ray climbs into the ring, takes in the larger crowd.

RAY

Okay. Let's get started.

EXT. RAY'S HOME, FIELD - DAY

Ray sits on a horse, looking stiff.

On the ground a PHOTOGRAPHER repositions an assistant with a bounce-board, Connie proudly standing by. The photographer takes a few more shots, looks up.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Go ahead and smile a little.

Ray squints some. The Photographer sees it through the lens.

PHOTOGRAPHER (CONT'D)

Little more.

Ray awkwardly curls his lip.

INT. RENO BOXING GYM - NIGHT

The two student boxers now pummeling each other. Ray guiding a student ref, prowling behind them.

INT. EXAM HALL - DAY

Catching GLIMPSES of an exam:

"ring regulation dimensions" "Bandages applied in presence of" "offending boxer's infringement" "the neutral corner"

Ray seated with twenty others, silently taking a proficiency exam. Someone walking the aisles behind them, proctoring.

INT. VACANT BUILDING - DAY

Open and gutted. Enough for a gym. Ray tours the space with a Contractor while a Building Owner points along the foundation

INT. HALLWAY, COURTHOUSE - DAY

Walking along, smiles and shakes from bailiffs and staff attorneys as he heads toward his chambers.

END SERIES

INT. OUTER CHAMBERS - DAY

Ray enters. Lyle rises.

LYLE

Welcome back sir.

(Ray waves him back down)

Left your mail by your door. Need your signature on the top form there.

Ray walks over, sees the 'form' is an issue of **The Reno Star**, Ray's photo on the cover. Ray rolls his eyes, finds Lyle hiding a smirk.

LYLE (CONT'D)

There's a student from the U of N Law Review waiting outside chambers- I told him we'd make him an appointment but he said he'd wait.

RAY

U of N. Alma mater, Go Wolves...

Ray continues to sort his mail, comes across a pre-opened manilla envelope. He lifts it, staring at something inside.

RAY (CONT'D)

What's this?

Lyle glances up.

LYLE

Oh yeah some guy dropped that while you were out. Told him your mail needs to be screened and he took it downstairs, but I got his name here somewhere...

(searching his desk)

Ah, yeah. Cameron Mills.

Ray, motionless.

RAY
He say what he wanted?

LYLE
No sir. Why, you know him?

Ray looks back inside the envelope, finally tosses it aside.

RAY
Anything else?

Lyle shakes his head. Ray starts for his office... halts in the doorway.

RAY (CONT'D)
Would you pull the latest parole hearing for that name, Cameron Mills. I wanna know who the DA was that approved that deal.

LYLE
Yes sir.

RAY
And the law kid outside. Go ahead and send him in.

INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - MOMENTS LATER

Ray sifting through stacks accumulated on his desk. A manicured young man appears behind him, knocks on the door frame. Overdressed, a U of N bag on his shoulder.

This is HAMPTON.

HAMPTON
Thank you for seeing me your honor.
Hampton Fischer.

Ray clears a stack of motions off a chair for him, takes a seat himself.

RAY
So, law review huh? Good for you.
Most extracurricular I got was dating a girl in the law school acapella group. "Habeas Chorus."

HAMPTON
(smiling politely, then)
I'm not actually on law review sir.

RAY

...So what is this. Looking for a clerkship? Externship?

HAMPTON

Not exactly.
(and then)
I work in Vegas.

Ray stares, quietly sits back.

HAMPTON (CONT'D)

I'd like to speak with you about your other line of work. I facilita-

RAY

I know what you are.

A weight in the air now. Hampton tries again.

HAMPTON

The industry has grown beyond wins and odds. Round by round datum. Holding calls in the 4th. Headbutts in the 8th. Your unique position-

RAY

And you're a fucking stupid one at that.

(Hampton goes quiet)

Do you know how many bribes, in how many countries I've been offered? You ever hear of me taking one?

HAMPTON

Which is why you make an ideal-

RAY

Shit boy, the Japanese at least have the decency to bring some saki along with their offers. And maybe you didn't hear but I'm about to retire. There's nothing left to fix you dumb shit. Next time do your homework-

HAMPTON

You filed a trademark for an intramural boxing gym late last year, and a construction permit for a Washoe county building renovation in August.

Silence. He has Ray's attention now.

HAMPTON (CONT'D)

I don't mean to offend, and I don't mean to waste your time. But if you'll hear me out I'd like the opportunity to discuss how we can secure your retirement, forego your loans... and with all due respect, there is one thing left to fix.

(direct now)

If you'll hear me out.

Ray stares at him for the longest time. Then, calmly...

RAY

Go close the door.

INT. OUTER CHAMBERS - CONTINUOUS

Lyle typing at his desk as the door clicks shut across the room. Silence. Then a muffled thump from behind the door, something hitting the floor. Lyle looks over. Quiet inside.

The door pulls open and Hampton emerges, hand cupping his nose, a smear of blood on his cheek. He walks silently through the outer room, disappearing into the hallway.

Ray appears in the doorway, eating an apple.

RAY

What are we thinking for lunch?

INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT

An empty rib container on the desk. Ray working late.

He rises, heads toward a wet bar in the corner, eyes drifting to the outer room as he pours...

The opened manilla envelope on the table.

Ray takes a drink, staring at it.

INT. RENO COURTROOM - NIGHT

Lights out and empty. The sound of metal rolling back and forth on wood, echoing across the room.

WITH RAY

Sitting at the bench. The envelope discarded beside him.

We see he's brought his drink with him, sipping as he idly spins what we now see is a metal belt buckle on the desk.

As it comes to rest we see its face: the sculpted relief of a pair of boxing gloves. It's crude, amateur.

And on the back: Four letters stamped into the brass.

H.D.S.P.

INT. OUTER CHAMBERS - DAY (**THE PAST**)

That same buckle, face down, initials up.

Daytime now. We're in Ray's outer office, his old clerk Melissa sorting mail at her desk.

Ray's bailiff Odell perches on the corner, eating his lunch as they stare down at the buckle.

MELISSA

H.D.S.P.?

ODELL

High Desert State Prison.

Ray in his office, studying a flyer in his hand. Odell lifts the buckle, inspecting the engraving.

ODELL (CONT'D)

Got a secret admirer in the metal shop?

RAY

Something like that.

Ray holds up the flyer. A black and white fight poster "UNIFIED PRISON SYSTEMS LEAGUE" across the top.

RAY (CONT'D)

Prison match. I've been cordially invited, week after next.

ODELL

Nobodies gonna be dragging their ass all the way to Clark County.

(back to his sandwich)

You know, I saw a baseball game at San Quentin once. Dude got stomped stealing second, Muslims said foul. Umpire got the fuck out of there...

But Ray doesn't hear him, reading a note scrawled on the back of the flyer. Finally he lowers it.

RAY
Wanna be my date?

EXT. HIGH DESERT STATE PRISON, NEVADA - DAY (THE PAST)

Barbed wire and white concrete baking in the desert sun.

INT. RECEPTION, HIGH DESERT STATE PRISON - DAY (THE PAST)

Spectators removing personal items. Keys, watches, belts.
Surrendering as others are buzzed through a turn style gate.

EXT. YARD, HIGH DESERT STATE PRISON - (THE PAST)

Converted to an outdoor arena with a ring in the middle.

Corrections officers lining the apron. Inmates hanging on the
fence in a caged set of bleachers, riot gear on hand in the
wings. A sense of anarchy about to break. And in the center:

Two inmate fighters trading blows, a hulking guard pulling
ref duty around them.

Ray and Odell sit with the rest of the public, tracking the
bout while waiting for the next match.

ODELL
What's this guy fight at?

RAY
Welterweight.

ODELL
Wasn't that yours?

RAY
It's a weight class Odell not a
Chevy. I don't own the thing.

Just then a fighter goes down in the ring, crowd rising, ref
sending his opponent to the corner as he starts the count.

ODELL
And this the guy that jumped you?

RAY
No thanks to you.

ODELL

Hey you're still here aren't you?
Unfortunately people have the
tendency to just not like you. At
least this one's trying to make
amends.

Ray glances at him, then digs into his pocket, hands him the
flyer invitation we saw earlier.

RAY

Wrote a note on the back.

ODELL

(reading aloud)
"..Sublimem posuisti ut te ipsum.."
(lowering it)
What is that, Italian?

RAY

Latin. For go fuck yourself. Wanted
to get it past the mail check.
(and then)
Think he pissed on it too.

Odell makes a face, sets it aside. In the ring the corner men
wave over their fighter. He's done.

ODELL

So then why the hell did we come?

RAY

Thought it might be nice to see the
shit kicked out of him.

YARD - MOMENTS LATER

The ring has been reset. An announcer coming through the PA
system as two new fighters are released into the yard.

ANNOUNCER (OVER PA)

Hopkins, Andre. Folsom.
(then)
Mills, Cameron. Nevada.

Ray watching as CAMERON emerges. He's older now, 20, the
skinny kid in court now showing early tattoos on muscle. He
walks in with an inmate in a Muslim skull cap, the man with
him in the stands at Ray's opening fight. This is KUFU.

They lean in the corner, strapping on his headgear as they
confer with his trainer, an OLDER INMATE, brawny and bearded.

RAY
Goddamn. That's Bernard Scott.

ODELL
Colleague of yours?

RAY
Never met him. He was the IBF
Middleweight champ for three years
before he went in. Thought he was
in Angola.

As the ref waves them to the center...

ODELL
What'd your guy do again?

RAY
Drove his car through two kids.

Odell, going still at this. Ray leans forward. The bell rings-

Andre is the bigger fighter here, steering Cameron around the ring. A few exchanges, Cameron batted away each time. Finally Andre lands a temple blow just as the round ends. The crowd yelling, Cameron staggering hard.

Odell cheers, smacks Ray's shoulder. Ray just watches.

Cameron, still reeling as the next round begins. More of the same, Andre looming, Cameron retreating...

ODELL
Should have put some money dow-

Suddenly Cameron plants and snaps, a blind pop under the chin that sends Andre stumbling back. But Cameron stays with him, step for step, a metronome pounding away.

A mouthguard goes flying. Cameron doesn't stop. Andre's nose breaks. Cameron doesn't stop.

The crowd rising. Ray on his feet, the world shifting.

A flap of headgear is knocked loose. The ref moving in now but Cameron's merciless, gloves chipping away, again, again-

The headgear goes flying off in a spray of sweat and blood. Guards flooding the ring now, dragging Cameron back as Andre collapses, penitentiary physicians sliding in.

The inmates shaking the fence now. Roaring through the chain link as Cameron is pinned to the corner, roaring back.

Suddenly his eyes start to roam, the faces, the bleachers...

They lock on Ray.

Ray frozen as a glove rises, pointing straight at him. Split lips curling back into a grin of teeth and blood.

INT. OUTER CHAMBERS - MORNING (**THE PRESENT**)

Lyle comes from down the hall, arriving for the day. He sees Ray's door open.

LYLE

Good morning your honor.

RAY (O.S.)

Good morning.

Lyle sets his bag down, slows. A form sitting on his desk. He lifts it, reading...

LYLE

A restraining order?

RAY (O.S.)

File that for me would you? Make sure a copy is on file with courthouse security, in case he tries coming back in.

LYLE

Yes sir.

Lyle adds it to his pile, starts settling in.

LYLE (CONT'D)

Oh DA's office sent over that release record you asked for. Looks like Don Farber's case.

Ray emerges from the office, reaching for the file.

RAY

Farber? I thought this was Jim Hawkin's trial.

LYLE

Must have inherited it when Hawkin's left for senate.

RAY
 (flipping through)
 ...still, shouldn't have been
 eligible again for another five
 years...

LYLE
 He wasn't. It wasn't parole. DA
 approved a petition for early
 release.

On Ray.

INT. WASHOE DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Donald E. Farber writes at his desk. Bookish. Innocent.
 Perking up as Ray lets himself in.

FARBER
 Well hello Judge. Hey I heard you
 just got nominated for some big-

Papers exploding in his face as Ray throws the file at him.

RAY
 What the horse shit kind of deal is
 that!

FARBER
 Now h-hold on a minute what're you-
 (collecting one of the
 pages)
 The Mills case? Hell this was three
 years ago...

RAY
 Jim Hawkins would have *never* signed
 off on that. You just undid half a
 decade of appellate hearings-

FARBER
 Well quite frankly I'm surprised
 the charges weren't vacated
 altogether. Honestly I was just
 trying my best to protect the
 county from getting sued.

RAY
 What the hell does mean?

Farber, aware of the authority. Lowering his voice.

FARBER

Listen I think Jim's a good lawyer.
I respect him. I respect the court.
(leaning in)
But you tried him as an adult. You
threw out his plea deal. You gave
him the maximum sentence... if
someone had looked closer into this-

RAY

He did not qualify as a
youthful offender. The plea
negotiations were done
without court consent.
Sentencing under NRS penal
code 484B-

FARBER (CONT'D)

You squashed his parole. A
defendent may not be
disqualified as a youth based
on their controlling offense -
People vs Edwards-

RAY (CONT'D)

(voice rising above)
He killed someone Don.
(then)
An eighteen year old girl. Ripped
the arm off her brother. Their
futures. Were the rest of their
lives worth 1500 days of his?

Silence. Then, evenly...

FARBER

Judge what I've read, incarceration
conduct, probation reports... it
all indicates Mills has made every
effort at rehabilitation.
(then)
I don't think he's the same man you
remember.

Ray, holding his stare. He turns for the door.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Court is in session. An attorney, JOHANSSON speaking.

JOHANSSON

...if you recall it was the People
who moved in limine to exclude the
indemnification litigation...

ANGLE - UNDER THE DESK

As she continues: the belt buckle being turned over and over.

Ray sitting on the bench, staring off, mind running.

INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - MOMENTS LATER

Lyle trailing Ray inside.

LYLE

I'll pull those limile motions for
decision. Do you want...

Surprised to find Ray, his robe already off. He slides the
gun harness from his shoulders, removes the pistol.

RAY

Call my wife. Tell her I'm in
mediation tonight. It's going to be
late.

Ray leans over, locks the gun away in a safe. When he rises
he sees Lyle stalling, uncomfortable.

RAY (CONT'D)

Just tell her Lyle.

Walking past him on the way out.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DUSK

Sunset and gravel. Ray's car as it drives past a sign:

CARSON CITY

EXT. CARSON PLAZA HOTEL - NIGHT

Limos and valet in line out front. Ray climbs the steps
through arriving guests toward the plaza doors.

INT. HALLWAY, CARSON PLAZA HOTEL - NIGHT

Tuxedo'd bodies and dresses drifting into a ballroom. A sign
beside the doors reads: RINGSIDE FOR ST. NICHOLAS RESEARCH
FOUNDATION

Ray approaches the sign-in table. An ATTENDANT looking up.

ATTENDANT

Name?

RAY

Raymond Tennyson. I'm not on the
list.

ATTENDANT

Oh I'm sorry, this is a private event for the St. Nicholas Hosp-

RAY

Listen, I just came from court...
(reaching for his wallet)
I'm a judge with the second district. Some colleagues invited-

ATTENDANT

It's black tie only with reserved seating. And RSVPs were two-hundred a plate...

Ray starts counting out money, sets it on the table.

RAY

That's five. And I don't need a plate.

INT. BALLROOM, CARSON PLAZA HOTEL - NIGHT

Stepping into an ornate ballroom where a BOXING MATCH is taking place as a medical fundraiser. Couples mingling at dining tables around the ring.

Ray standing out amid the formal elegance. He's handed a champagne flute, promptly sets it on another waiter's passing tray as he moves closer...

High dollar donors congregating near the ropes, watching the fight. Amongst them: a young man, a bandage across the bridge of his nose. It's *Hampton*. He whispers to a large Native American man in a suit beside him. We'll call him WYATT.

Ray halts. Hampton doesn't notice him, eyes on the fight.

Suddenly the bell sounds. Opera claps and colored paddles going up around the room. Everyone here is a "judge" tonight.

The two fighters bow politely as the referee hands a BENEFACTOR the mic. He examines the audience.

BENEFACTOR

Looks like Red has it. Saw some Anterior Cruciate Ligament surgeries in the making there...

Soft laughter as the fighters escort themselves off.

BENEFACTOR (CONT'D)

Next up we have our welterweight fight but first, let's keep those donations coming. Show your support out front, at the bar, don't forget the auctions. So far we've raised..

DANNY (O.S.)

Ray.

Ray turns. Danny threading his way over.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Braved the commute huh?

RAY

Yeah well, good cause.

DANNY

Absolutely. C'mon...
(lifts his empty glass)
Go make some contributions.

Ray clocks Hampton again, follows Danny back.

INT. HALLWAYS, CARSON PLAZA HOTEL - NIGHT

The attendant smiling as someone steps up to the table.

ATTENDANT

Name?

GRAHAM

Graham Yates. Should be under The Vegas Sun.

ATTENDANT

...Yes it is, and here you go.

GRAHAM

Thanks. Any booze left?

A wink as he plucks up his name tag and heads inside.

INT. BALLROOM, CARSON PLAZA HOTEL - NIGHT

As the bartender delivers two drinks.

DANNY

Still gotta have you over for dinner. How's Sunday?

RAY
 ...Sunday...sure.

Ray distracted, facing the now empty ring.

RAY (CONT'D)
 How's the action been?

DANNY
 For an exhibition?
 (shrugs)
 Fights only three rounds but,
 invite the press, make some money.
 White people get to think they saw
 boxing. But the guys will break a
 sweat, give 'em a show.

Suddenly applause as two fighters enter the room: HIROSHI, a
 buzz cut asian fighter. And behind him: Cameron.

Ray watches as Cameron climbs into the ring. Matured now, old
 scars on new muscles. Tattoos in Arabic across his skin. Too
 focused to take in the crowd as he heads for the center -

RAY
 Who's training him?

DANNY
 Mills? Dunno. Think he's working
 out of Rhodes Gym in Henderson.
 (and then)
 So who you got?

Ray shoots him a look. Danny shrugs.

DANNY (CONT'D)
 C'mon, make it interesting. Twenty
 on Mills.

RAY
 Bet cash on cards and horses. Never
 boxing.

DANNY
 Fair enough...
 (beat)
 Drinks then.

Ray doesn't answer, just turns away toward ring. Then:

RAY
 ...Two gins on Hiroshi.

Danny grins. As the fighters step up...

DANNY

You know my guy was in prison?

RAY

...that so.

The bell rings.

PRESS TABLE

The fight underway in the background. Graham knocking back his champagne as he arrives at the press table, a few journalists jeering as he pulls up a chair.

REPORTER

Nice of you to show Yates. Only missed the first two fights.

GRAHAM

Well that's dandy, cause I only owe five hundred words of copy.

(to a passing waiter)

Pour me one more if you would?

INTERCUTTING WITH

Ray and the fight. It's slow, neither fighter risking injury here, throwing punches for the crowd.

Suddenly Cameron takes a headbutt to the mouth, blood running. It's an illegal move but the crowd doesn't know that, cheering as the referee separates them.

Cameron just walks away, staying in his corner, obedient.

DANNY

Well he took that well.

Ray studies Cameron, head lowered as he waits, lips moving silently in what looks like prayer.

RAY

...he did.

He looks out as the ref waves him back in, releasing them.

DANNY

Olympic committee confirmed my technical team yesterday. How you feeling about Dallas?

RAY
 (glued to the fight)
 Fine.

DANNY
 Colorado's creeping up on me. I
 don't know, got me nervous.

RAY
 Nervous?

In the ring the two men collide, locking up. The ref hovering-

DANNY
 Yeah, I mean you're on the roster
 Ray. Me, I'm not getting those HBO
 calls. But getting this... that's
 big leagues. That's business. I
 just didn't realize there'd be all
 this background check shit, you
 know? Find some reason to cut us.

Ray turns from the fight.

RAY
 Like what?

DANNY
 My wife's residency papers, fucking
 parking tickets I don't know what
 these Pricewaterhouse guys look at.
 You're not worried at all?

On Ray. Suddenly a *SLAM*. A rise from the crowd.

The ref is COLLAPSED ON THE CANVAS beneath Cameron, Cameron's
 gloves pulling away as he backs to the corner. The benefactor
 scrambles in to the ref's side, checking him.

Out cold.

Graham with the press table, paying attention now. He looks
 down. A bloody tooth on the mat in front of him.

GRAHAM
 Goddamn.

At the bar Danny and Ray stand to see above the rest. Ray
 spots Hampton through the crowd, in his seat, on his phone.

Ray's gaze then drifts across the room, over to the ring...

Cameron at the ropes, *staring right back at him*.

Ray numbed as he smiles through his bloody mouthpiece, hauntingly familiar to the prison match as his glove rises in salute to the man at the bar. And ACROSS THE RING...

Graham sees it.

PRELAP:

ODELL (V.O.)
Bad blood? Nah.

EXT. RENO COURTHOUSE - DAY

Graham sits across from Odell, listening as Odell eats his lunch on a courthouse bench.

ODELL
If there's bad blood it ain't coming from Judge T.

GRAHAM
You don't think there might be a reason he'd remember the guy? Keep tabs on him?

ODELL
Like what?

GRAHAM
I don't know, kid says the wrong thing at trial, offends his mother.

ODELL
Pretty sure Judge T. doesn't have a mother. Besides, you know how often judges get cursed out, spit on... I've seen people take shits on the courtroom floor, and he still gave 'em probation. Guy's the patron saint of leniency.
(another bite)
If anything, it's the other way around.

GRAHAM
What's that mean?

ODELL
Inmates. Trial doesn't go their way, it's never their fault, or the jury's fault. Nah, sustained this, overruled that - Judge fucked me over. Gonna keep reminding him too.

Odell looks over from his lunch, sees Graham's confusion.

ODELL (CONT'D)

You know how many death threats these guys get? It's why they gotta screen their mail, get their own elevator. Why do you think one in four judges carry a gun?

(another bite)

If it were me, I'd be worried the guy was coming to fuck with me.

INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Ray at his desk. A half-written motion decision typed on his screen, but Ray's not reading, instead staring out his window-

A grey afternoon, the wind hinting of a storm.

Just then the phone in the outer office begins to ring. Ray peers over: Lyle missing from his desk. He rises and answers.

RAY (INTO PHONE)

Yeah.

VOICE (OVER PHONE)

Judge Tennyson?

RAY

Yes?

The line goes silent a moment. Ray listening closer. Then:

VOICE (OVER PHONE)

Lieutenant Gordon in the security office. We have a restraining order on file for a Cameron Mills, is that correct?

RAY

It is. Is there a problem?

VOICE/GORDON (OVER PHONE)

He attempted to enter the building a few moments ago your honor. But he was identified immediately, and is currently being escorted out to his vehicle now.

RAY

(beat)

I understand. Any trouble?

GORDON (OVER PHONE)
No sir. Just wanted to keep you
informed.

RAY
Thank you officer.

Ray goes to the window. Outside:

PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Two security officers supervising as Cameron climbs into the
passenger side of a red SUV. KUF1 in the driver's seat.

VOICE (OVER PHONE)
If you'd like we can send notice to
the marshal's service, have them
send a car over.

The officers wait there, making sure the SUV exits the gate.

RAY
...that won't be necessary.

Ray hangs up, returns to the window, watching the SUV as it
pulls out of the lot, and disappears down the street.

EXT. STABLES, RAY'S HOME - NIGHT

Connie at the side of a brown and white mare, cradling its
front leg as she works it's hoof clean with a metal pick.

Ray comes around the wall, leans on the fence.

RAY
How's the leg?

CONNIE
Well you were right, it's a stone
bruise. Hoof wall looks a little
tender but I think it's thrush...

She looks up, sees Ray idly picking at some straw, mind
elsewhere. She moves on to the next leg.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
So you going to tell me what's been
eating you? Or you want me to keep
pretending this is one of those
seasonal brooding phases.

RAY
...there's a case. Tough one. Been
dragging on a while.

CONNIE
You wanna talk it over?

RAY
(staring off, then)
Nah, should be about settled now.

Ray discards the straw. Connie not convinced but letting it go, moves around the horse.

CONNIE
Well in that case, grab a leg.

RAY
...Rather grab your leg.

Connie looks up, finds Ray grinning at her.

CONNIE
Well then get your old ass over
that fence and come and get it.

Ray amused, considers it.

RAY
Nah. Might pull something. Think
I'll go inside, ice my back.

He starts strolling back to the house. She smiles, unreins the horse. A roll of thunder as she follows him inside.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

A storm rolling through. Trees swaying hard across the plain.

EXT. RAY'S HOME - EARLY MORNING

Ray steps out. The morning air is cold, his breath steaming as he sets his watch for a run.

Suddenly YELLING from the road. A car honking, the bestial cry of an animal screaming in the distance.

EXT. ROAD, RAY'S HOME - EARLY MORNING

A horse, eyes wild and panicked, bucking in the air between two cars parked across the road, their drivers circling -- attempting to keep it from bolting.

DRIVER 1
Whoah... whoa...

DRIVER 2
Watch it. Watch the kick --

Ray arrives, jumps back just as a hoof cuts the air. He yells to one of the drivers --

RAY
Flash your lights, your brights. Go-

The driver runs to his cab, hits the high beams. The horse suddenly stalls, a thousand pound deer in headlights. In that instant Ray dives for the reins, reels them tight.

The horse pulls but Ray holds it close, settling as it recognizes Ray's scent.

DRIVER 1
She yours?

RAY
(catching his breath)
Yeah... yeah she's one of ours.

DRIVER 1
Better check your fences.

Ray looks out: His horses free from their pasture, scattered across the desert prairie.

DRIVER 1 (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Storm must of knocked something.

Ray looks back toward the house, Connie now on the steps. A look on her face.

EXT. FIELD, RAY'S HOME - LATER

From afar as Connie rides out to collect another horse, grazing in the distance.

FENCE LINE

Strands of barbed wire bobbing in the wind. A break in the fence where the horses got through.

RAY on his own horse, approaching in the background.

He dismounts, walks over to examine the break. A post on its side. He kneels beside the wire, inspects the ends. Unclear if they've been cut or just worn.

Ray goes to the horse, unloads some tools, looking out as he pulls on his gloves:

Nothing but insects and the wind. But somehow eerie. Like someone's out there, looking back.

EXT. STABLES, RAY'S HOME - DAY

Connie rides in from the field, finds Ray hovering over a work bench, knotting a thread of wire.

CONNIE

Checked the south creek, rode near all the way to 67. No sign of her.

RAY

I'll call the Merritts. And the McCrays. Have them keep an eye out. She'll show up.

Ray goes back to work. Connie's eyes drift to the stall the mare was in yesterday, now sitting empty.

CONNIE

Was this the storm?

Ray turns, looks up at her on the horse. A deeper question in her voice. He smiles softly.

RAY

Yeah. Just the storm.

She relaxes a little, leads the horse off down the row.

Ray watches until she's gone, then turns back to the bench, pulls back a cloth:

He's got a lever action .223 rifle laid out on the bench, chamber open, a scope laid out beside it. He resumes, setting the mount over the barrel. He locks it in place.

EXT. PEÑA CONDO - NIGHT

The door opening. Ray and Connie smiling on the front steps, a bottle of wine in Ray's hand.

Danny answering with his wife, LUNA. Music on in the background, welcoming them inside.

INT. DINING ROOM, PEÑA CONDO - NIGHT

The plates cleared and alcohol low. We see now Luna is pregnant, the two couples laughing around the table.

CONNIE

...first amateur match, so proud of him. I go to take his picture, accidentally leave the flash on. He had me ejected.

Wide eyes and laughter, Ray grumbling.

RAY

I had you reseated.
(to the others)
It was a youth circuit. All the seats were fine.

LUNA

First time Danny introduced himself he told me he was a fighter. Middleweight from Tapito Mexico City. Next morning I'm getting dressed, I see his little bow tie... suddenly he's a *retired* fighter. And he's from Peoria.

More laughter, Danny shrugs bashfully.

LUNA (CONT'D)

Ray you ever box?

Frozen smiles. Danny subtly shaking her off. Ray sees it.

RAY

It's okay.
(to Luna)
Used to. I was in an accident when I was nineteen. There's a fissure in my 3rd and 4th vertebrae, left me open to something called musculoskeletal seizures. Wrong punch in the right spot... that pretty much took me out of it.

Luna listening. Connie grabbing his knee under the table.

DANNY

You know, when my cousin blew out his shoulder he couldn't give it up. Stayed on as a trainer. You ever consider that?

RAY

Not really, no.

(then)

Never felt right, not being in the ring.

Hanging in silence again. Ray leans forward, lifts the wine.

RAY (CONT'D)

C'mon, who can I get?

INT. PEÑA CONDO - LATER

Luna and Connie talking in the kitchen in the bg.

INT. OFFICE, PEÑA CONDO - CONTINUOUS

Ray follows Danny into his office, subtly pulls the door closed behind them as Danny heads for the shelf.

DANNY

Whiskey okay?

RAY

Yeah, thanks.

Danny pours into two coffee mugs, handing him one as he takes a seat.

DANNY

Sorry for the mug. Never move. Been over a year and we're still unpacking.

Ray smiles, stares down at his drink. A beat.

RAY

Danny I need to show you something.

Ray softly unearths a folded document, holds it out. Danny takes it, not sure this isn't some kind of a joke.

DANNY

What is this?

RAY

It's an injunction. To disqualify
Cameron Mills from Olympic
eligibility.

(as Danny reads)

It's all within the AIBA
guidelines.

DANNY

Then why aren't you filing it?

RAY

...Because eight years ago I sent
Cameron Mills to a Nevada
penitentiary for second degree
murder. And now he's following me.

Danny looks up at this.

RAY (CONT'D)

I lied to you earlier. I'm sorry.
(then)

I have been working for this for
thirty years. And if
Pricewaterhouse discovers I have a
personal history with him now, well
it's like you said. This guy isn't
worth taking myself out. I have a
conflict of interest. You don't.

DANNY

...No, but I'm about to. How's that
going to look Ray? I'm trying to DQ
a fighter from my own match? Forget
them finding a reason to cut me,
I'd be handing it directly to them.

RAY

Judicially your report would be
inadmissible for any dismissal,
they shouldn't even contact you-

DANNY

Inadmiss- Ray this is boxing not
court.

RAY

He's been threatening me
okay? Calling my home,
showing up at my office. He-

DANNY (CONT'D)

If you've got a problem with
the guy call the cops. This
has nothing to do with me-

RAY (CONT'D)

He is not worthy of this sport.

Ray, rattled now. Danny sees it. Finally --

DANNY

Ray... I swear to you, I won't say anything. But no. No.

They sit there, a silent stare ultimately broken by a knock at the door. Luna peeks her head in.

LUNA

Honey, hey can you help with the espresso machine. The filter thing is overflowing again.

DANNY

...yeah. I'm coming.

Danny looks at Ray, saying nothing as he sets the injunction aside and follows her out.

Ray, alone now. Ashamed. Angry. Staring off now...

He rises, as if to rejoin them. Instead he steps quietly over to Danny's desk. On top:

Papers, bills, check books. Ray casually sifts through the them, finds one with Danny's signature at the bottom.

Ray glances up toward the door. The others away in the kitchen.

He lays the paper next to the injunction letter, eyeing the signature. A quiet storm brewing inside...

Ray reaches for a pen.

INT. INCHEON STADIUM, SOUTH KOREA - **(THE PAST)**

A darkened arena, foreign chanting, the ring harshly lit behind us through the haze of a thousand cigarettes.

ANNOUNCER (OVER P.A.)

...Geuneun du beon-ui paebae, se nyeon dong-an mupae! Segyeui du beon welteo eiteu chaempieon...

Ray's silhouette leans into frame, holds, then vomits into a bucket.

SUPER: INCHEON, SOUTH KOREA

Wiping his mouth as he rises we see he's slightly younger, his uniform impeccable, probably ironed twice.

GRAHAM watching from his seat several rows back, snorting as Ray checks himself over. He frowns at his bow tie, goes to wipe it --

ANNOUNCER (OVER P.A.) (CONT'D)
Ije jeonyeog uliui gwanli -
Seonsaeng Raymond Tennyson!

Ray steels himself, ascends the stairs...

But we stay on the floor as Ray begins his instructions, floating toward a TIMEKEEPER at a table around the apron, her hand gripping the brass hammer beside the bell.

The volume rising as the fighters position. She waits for her signal, raises it --

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. RENO COURTROOM - DAY (THE PAST)

The gavel pounding. Ray back in court. Odell waiting as he gathers his papers, dismounting from the bench.

INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - DAY (THE PAST)

Ray working at his desk. A knock on the wall. A tall man in western business attire leaning in his door frame. This is distract attorney JIM HAWKINS.

HAWKINS
Welcome back your honor. Konichiwa.

RAY
Wrong 3000 year old Asian empire.

Hawkins grins, wanders in.

HAWKINS
How's the backlog?

Ray elbows his pile, keeps working.

RAY
What's up Mr. Hawkins?

HAWKINS
Mills case is up for parole. Just got notice.

Ray looks up at this, sits back.

RAY
You talk to the family?

HAWKINS
I did. They were wondering if you had any intentions on a letter of recommendation.

RAY
For them?

HAWKINS
For him.

Ray doesn't follow.

HAWKINS (CONT'D)
I assumed not but, they're asking as a courtesy while they prepare their statement for the parole board. Mills wrote to us hoping to make some restitution. Believe he sent you the same. Imagine it's in there somewhere.

He nods at Ray's pile. Ray glances at it a moment.

RAY
...I'll take a look.

He goes back to work.

INT. HIGH DESERT STATE PRISON, DORMITORY - NIGHT (THE PAST)

Inmates echoing down the block. Cameron in his room, grunting as he does hand-stand push ups against the wall.

GUARD (O.S.)
Mills.

A GUARD at his door. Cameron kicks off to the floor, rises.

GUARD (CONT'D)
Visitor.

INT. HIGH DESERT STATE PRISON, VISITATION ROOM - (THE PAST)

Glass partitions reflecting the fluorescents above. Cameron is led into the room, now wearing a Muslim cap. He slows as he's seated, seeing who's waiting on the other side.

It's Ray.

He watches Cameron lift the phone from the receiver. Finally -

RAY
Islam huh? Nice touch. Parole
board's gonna love that.

Cameron weathers it, goes to speak.

CAMERON
I don't know if you got it, but I
wrote you a letter. I wanted to-

RAY
I got it.

Ray slides the letter onto the metal counter. We see it's
unopened.

He leans back, at ease. Then, matter-of-factly:

RAY (CONT'D)
You know, I was in an accident
once. Never caught the guy but,
from the way people saw him drive
off they could tell, he'd had a
night... Took something from me
that day. And I've often asked
myself what he'd need to say in
order for me to forgive him...
Never did come up with an answer.

Ray then motions to the letter.

RAY (CONT'D)
You were looking for restitution.
You know the kid you hit? Violin
player. Started when he was six.
All lined up to go to this
conservatory out in Boston. I'll
make you a deal. You cut off your
right arm too, I'll write you a
letter of recommendation.

Ray smiles at him. Then drops it, troubled.

RAY (CONT'D)
Guess that doesn't do much for the
girl though does it...

Staring off, deep in thought. Finally he sits up.

RAY (CONT'D)

So let's make different deal. I don't know what you think I did, but the state of Nevada entitles you to a fair and public hearing by an impartial tribunal to render a reasoned verdict. That's what you got. So whatever you think it is I owe you, forget it.

(direct now)

The letters stop, packages stop, the calls stop. You do that, and I'll forget you exist and trust me, that's to your advantage. That's the best deal you're going to get. Am I heard?

Staring him down. Finally Cameron nods. Ray rises, slaps something down on the counter.

RAY (CONT'D)

You can have that back.

Ray hangs up the phone, walking out. Cameron's eyes drift down... the BELT BUCKLE, resting on the counter.

EXT. RANCH ROAD - DAYS LATER (THE PAST)

Ray's car cruising toward his house up the hill.

I/E. RAY'S CAR - SAME

Ray in a suit now, returning home from work. He looks out the driver's window:

His wife, riding in the field the distance. He smiles.

EXT. RAY'S HOME - DAY (THE PAST)

Ray locks the car, starts for the house, sees: A package left on his porch, sitting on the rocking chair.

INT. RAY'S HOME, BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Looking over the package, now open on the bed. A note on top:

"Keep it off your shirt next time - Graham"

Ray lifts a small box out, removes the lid. A wry grin.

A referee's black silk bow tie, resting on the felt.

Ray takes off his work tie, stands in front of the mirror.

The house phone starts to ring. He lets it, threading the tie through his collar. Suddenly a yell from downstairs:

CONNIE (O.S.)
I got it.

RAY
(calling back)
Let the machine get it.

The ringing cuts off. Ray stands in the mirror. It suddenly occurs to him who this call might be from. He listens, the silence lingering, drawing out... Then:

CONNIE (O.S.)
It was Jim Hawkins. He asked me to
give you a message:
(a beat)
"Parole's denied."

Ray takes in a breath. Another. He looks back in the mirror. Something settling over him. A peace.

He resumes tying, watching as the bow tie takes shape...

PRELAP:

OLYMPIC ADMINISTRATOR (V.O.)
...declare open the games of this
33rd olympiad of the modern era.

INT. THEATRE STAGE, OLYMPIC TRAINING CENTER - **(THE PRESENT)**

We're mid rehearsal of the opening ceremony speeches. Ray and the other nominees standing on stage, OLYMPIC ADMINISTRATORS watching in the aisles as a STAGE MANAGER leads them through.

STAGE MANAGER
...at which point the torch will be
entering the stadium, as that comes
around your stage will rise...

The manager waves in an assistant waiting off stage. She brings out an Olympic flag, posts it beside the microphone.

STAGE MANAGER (CONT'D)
...the flag will be brought in, the
honorees will step down. You will
all step forward....

Ray follows suit with two others, an ATHLETE and a COACH.

STAGE MANAGER (CONT'D)

You'll each be introduced. The oath of the athlete as we rehearsed. Then Mr. Tennyson you will come forward...

(Ray does)

You will take hold of the flag in your left hand, swearing to it...

Ray does so as the Manager temporarily plays orator.

STAGE MANAGER (CONT'D)

Ladies and gentlemen, to take the oath of the Olympic official, boxing judge and referee Raymond Tennyson.

He steps aside, nodding Ray forward. Ray goes to the mic, bringing forth a small placard. Reading off it now...

RAY

In the name and on the behalf of all the judges and officials of our profession, I swear we shall officiate in these Olympic games with complete impartiality, respecting and abiding by the rules which govern them, and commit to ourselves to uphold the fundamental principles adhered to in these trials of man and sport.

A beat. Ray lowers the card, looks out at the lights. The moment sinking in.

STAGE MANAGER

Perfect. You will then rejoin with the others. Across the stage the secretary general will start...

As he proceeds with the rehearsal Ray glances out in the audience, finds Kurt Redford leaning against the wall in the back, waiting.

INT. HALLWAY, OLYMPIC TRAINING CENTER - DAY

They step into the hall. Kurt lets a few athletes pass through, disappearing down the hall. Alone now:

REDFORD

I've got some news.

RAY

Let me guess, I've got to learn the thing in ten more languages.

Kurt smiles, gets quiet.

REDFORD

It's not good news.

(a breath)

I'm afraid as of this morning Danny is being removed from consideration on the Olympic roster.

Ray stares back, says nothing.

REDFORD (CONT'D)

I got a call a few hours ago...

RAY

Kurt, listen before you make any decisions I think we shou-

REDFORD

Danny is in the ICU at Vegas Memorial.

Ray, going still.

RAY

What happened?

REDFORD

We don't know. He was found downtown sometime last night. The injuries are... significant.

RAY

And Luna?

(Redford, not following)

His wife.

REDFORD

Wasn't with him.

Ray breathes a little. Then -

REDFORD (CONT'D)

Ray the committee is requesting that you take over his matches at next week's Olympic qualifiers.

RAY

What about Dallas?

REDFORD

Well you can keep Dallas if you'd like. But frankly, at this point they need someone they can rely on while we look into some things. You're essentially vetted, not really a safer bet.

(then)

If you can step in now, that'll give us time to find someone for Dallas in a few months.

Kurt digs out a folder, offers it to him.

REDFORD (CONT'D)

Roster for next week, fighter's names are in there.

Ray stares down at it, still processing. Redford sees it.

RAY

Listen, I'm sure you want to get back. Go home, see your wife. When you have a chance though look it over, let us know.

Kurt lingers a moment, starts down the hall.

EXT. LAS VEGAS AIRPORT - NIGHT

The silhouette of a plane passing over the lights of Vegas.

INT. INTENSIVE CARE ROOM, HOSPITAL - NIGHT

The lights lowered inside. We barely recognize Danny laying still in the bed, face swollen, his neck braced. Luna asleep in a chair at his bedside.

HALLWAY

Ray at the window, luggage at his side, looking in. Danny's fingers bandaged, staples in his skin. It's a hard image.

VOICE (O.S.)

Ray.

The Nevada athletic commissioner Tom Hoover standing down the hall, a styrofoam coffee in his hand. He's been here a while.

INT. COMISSARY, HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Nearly empty. Custodians and hospital brass taking their breaks. Ray and Hoover sit at a table against the wall.

HOOVER

Found him over behind The Bellagio.
Probably coming from the Martinez
fight.

RAY

What'd the physician say?

HOOVER

Broken ribs, broken hands. Right
eye is blown. Detached Retina.

(Ray looks away, phased)

LVPD came to sit with Luna for a
statement but she's more or less
catatonic. Can't blame her.

RAY

They know anything?

HOOVER

Not really. Money was gone. They
think it could be a mugging.

Ray, watching him.

RAY

But you don't.

HOOVER

Hell of a beating just to take a
guy's wallet.

(and then)

Has he said anything to you?

Ray frowns, shakes his head.

RAY

Why?

Hoover shakes it off, reaches for his coffee. Ray presses:

RAY (CONT'D)

Tom, why.

HOOVER

...there was a complaint.

Ray, at attention now.

HOOVER (CONT'D)

There's word he might have had a dispute with someone. I don't know.

RAY

A fighter?

HOOVER

I really don't know Ray.

RAY

Where'd you hear it from. The committee?

HOOVER

People, Ray. You know how it is, could be something, could be bullshit. People talk. Hell we're still dealing with that Baker accusation from '05. Until there's an inquiry, wrong thing gets out, risks a guy's career...

(grabbing his coffee)

People get angry.

On Ray, his own anger burning.

EXT. LAS VEGAS STREETS - NIGHT

Ray's BMW roaring through the streets.

We're away from the strip here, the industrial side of town. Cash-advance outfits and tire shops behind gated lots.

Ray clocks his street, hits the turn.

EXT. RHODES BOXING GYM - NIGHT

A crumbling parking lot. Window paint blacking out the glass. A gate pulled down over the door: **"Rhodes Boxing Gym"**

This is the training gym of Cameron Mills.

Ray pulls to the curb, steps out. He starts for the door, eyeing the red SUV on his way, sitting silent across the lot -

Ray reaches the door. Flecks of light inside through scratches in the paint. He grips the gate, pulls. Locked down. He pounds on it a few times, listens... nothing.

Finally he turns, starts back toward the street...

Then suddenly bends down, lifting a piece of concrete off a broken parking bumper. He takes a few steps toward the gym...

And launches *it against the door*.

Glass shattering behind the fence.

A view inside now showing the gym empty. Just a utility light left on in the back. Ray stares inside, starts for his car.

And then - *glass crunching*. A figure filling in the doorway behind him. Ray turns to find Kufi behind the gate.

Ray holding his ground. Then --

RAY
I want to see him.

KUFI
Really. Restraining order suggested otherwise.

RAY
Enough fucking around. Let's talk.

KUFI
I ain't going to talk for him.

RAY
Then bring him out.

KUFI
He ain't here.

RAY
Bullshit.

Kufi shrugs, not moving.

RAY (CONT'D)
What's this about?

KUFI
About what you did.

RAY
And what does he think I did?

KUFI
You made a mistake.

Ray, absorbing this.

RAY

You got a problem with me, you come at me. The man he nearly beat to death last night, he didn't do anything...

KUFI

See now you at it again - my man was with me, you say whatever you-

RAY (CONT'D)

Now he's blind in one eye. His career is over. Do you get what that means you fucking animals-

KUFI (CONT'D)

You will not get him to stop!
(silence)

He ain't gonna break your rules, violate your laws. You ain't gonna find nothin on him. He has spent years living in your world, to get back here. Now you afraid.

(toes the glass)

So you can provoke us, fuck with us, try and get him to slip. Well *alrujulat efu al'akh* brother. He ain't going to give you nothing back. Nah, no matter what you try, he's gonna be up there. You're all gonna see him fight.

Ray, staring him down.

RAY

Come on out to the house again I'll kill you.

Ray starts walking.

EXT. RANCH ROAD - DAWN

Ray runs on a dirt road. A low fog swallowing up the dust trail lingering in his wake.

INT. RAY'S HOME - DAY

Ray stands at the sink, covered in sweat, eyes still locked ahead. The phone on the wall starts to ring. Ray looks at it.

EXT. HIGHWAY ROAD - DAY

Ray's car grinds to a halt on the shoulder. He steps out.

AHEAD:

A sedan and a pickup pulled over, hazards blinking. The sedan's light shattered and grill smashed, painted in blood.

A RANCHER consoling a Woman off to the side. She sees Ray approaching, going to him...

WOMAN

(shaken)

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. We...

Ray walks passed her to the road, sees:

The painted mare, struggling on the ground. A gash in her side, her two front legs broken. Fearful eyes roaming as she struggles to breath.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

We had our fog lights on but she just stepped out...

She starts crying. Ray says nothing, watching.

He walks off, heading back to his car. He returns, now holding the rifle. He aims it down at the horse -- *fires*.

The rancher flinches. The woman continues sobbing softly in the bg. Ray stands there, gun still raised. There is not fear in his eyes, or sadness. There is only fury.

INT. GYMNASIUM, OLYMPIC TRAINING CENTER - DAY

WORKMEN preparing for the upcoming tournament. Bleachers going up, a ring being constructed in the center. Kurt talking with a foreman, stepping away as his cell rings.

He answers.

KURT (INTO PHONE)

This is Kurt.

RAY (OVER PHONE)

It's Ray Tennyson.

KURT

Ray, hey - sorry for the noise. How is everything there?

Silence on the other end. Then:

RAY

No conflicts.

KURT

...Okay then, that's good to hear.
So we'll see you here next week.

Kurt waits for more. The line goes quiet.

INT. ICU HALLWAY, HOSPITAL - DAY

Through the window: Luna at Danny's bedside, head down.

Ray sits out in the hallway. He's claimed a row of chairs, court documents laid out, working from here.

As he makes notes on a case file a figure lowers into the chair beside him. It's Luna. In a daze. Finally --

LUNA

We came out here to get away from
all this.

Ray searches for some words. Finally he holds up the file -

RAY

You know I've been doing this from
one side of the table or the other
for 25 years. I promise you, it all
comes around. The guy who did this -

LUNA

Danny wasn't mugged.

Ray falls silent. She stares forward, unable to look at him.

LUNA (CONT'D)

He owes people money.

RAY

...which people?

LUNA

(not hearing him)

He can't control himself, gambling.
Racked it up the first time back
East, should of caught up to him
then but, he found an out. Fixing
in the ring. Made it look good too,
point off here, knee down there.
Got himself even. Out here was
supposed to be a fresh start...

(and then)

But he cannot stop himself.

Looking to Ray now, tears welling, half smiling.

LUNA (CONT'D)

Told me the Olympics, that'd be the out this time. Make, 2-3 times a match after that. Just gotta make it there, hold out, just a little longer...

RAY

What does he owe.

LUNA

I don't know, thousands- he stopped telling me, he was hiding so much--
(breaking now)
I couldn't tell the police. I didn't want to tell you. But he just left me by myself...

She starts crying, leans into him. Ray embracing her, listening to her cry. Then, soberly --

RAY

Tell me where to go.

INT. LUXOR HOTEL - NIGHT

A looming onyx pyramid in the center of Las Vegas.

INT. ATRIUM, LUXOR HOTEL - NIGHT

Immaculate Egyptian decor eclipsing the guests. Ominous stone faces lit from beneath, the illusion of temple pyres burning.

Ray rides an escalator to the gaming floor.

INT. CASINO FLOOR, LUXOR HOTEL - NIGHT

Alive at this hour. Ray walks through, lights and sounds calling from every direction. He finds the blackjack section:

Half a dozen dealers hosting the tables. Loners and small groups playing the wheels.

Ray watches a moment, moves on. Whatever he's looking for, it isn't there.

INT. CASINO BAR, LUXOR HOTEL - LATER

A drink on the bar. Ray turned away, eyes fixed:

A view of the blackjack tables from here. Traffic has died down, tables clearing out.

BARTENDER (O.S.)
Get you a refill? Maker's right?

Ray turns back, his glass down to the ice.

TOM
Yeah, thanks.

A look back out at the floor. From afar a pit boss walking over and relieving a dealer. Ray watching...

BLACKJACK TABLE

Ray takes a seat as the new DEALER preps the table, shuffling at the card shoe, back turned away. Over his shoulder -

DEALER
Good evening. Just about ready here.

RAY
Take your time.

The dealer turns around, smiles. It's HAMPTON. Masking his surprise. Ray slides a few bills forward.

RAY (CONT'D)
Hundred in chips please.

HAMPTON
(calling out)
Changing a hundred.

The pit boss floating nearby in the background. As Hampton counts out Ray's chips...

HAMPTON (CONT'D)
So how are we doing tonight sir?

RAY
Call me Danny.

Hampton nods, slides his chips forward. He gets Ray's intention here. Ray sets out his bet. Then --

RAY (CONT'D)
You know what, let's do three.

Setting chips at the seats on either side of him. Ray is now playing three hands at once.

DEALER

Money plays to the table limit. No foreign cheques.

RAY

Okay.

They play a few hands. Hampton is fluid, practiced. Ray stays on two, hits on one. Hampton draws, and busts.

HAMPTON

Player wins.

He collects the old hand, deals again, nodding at Ray's stack-

HAMPTON (CONT'D)

Looking to play a while?

RAY

Just looking to break even.

Ray hits on all three. As Hampton deals...

HAMPTON

Even's a nice place to be.
(off his chip pile)
Not sure that'll get you there.

RAY

Yeah. What would you say it'd take?

But Hampton just continues the game, the pit boss circling. He flips his own card: a King, giving him twenty.

HAMPTON

Goes to the house.

Hampton starts clearing the table. Ray still awaiting an answer, then noticing Hampton has paused. We see he's left three cards out on the felt. A **3**, **10**, and **King**. \$310K.

A beat before he sweeps them in with the rest. Ray stares at the felt a moment, cracks a smile.

RAY

Bullshit.

Hampton smiles with him as he shuffles the next hand. Then --

HAMPTON

You married Danny?

Ray smile falls. Hampton continues to shuffle.

HAMPTON (CONT'D)
 I bet you tell her everything too.
 I would. You know, just in case.

Behind them a few college kids start to make their way over.

HAMPTON (CONT'D)
 I'm off at three. Room 289.
 (louder)
 Cash out sir?

The kids filling into the chairs around him. Ray sits with this a second, then slides his chips off and steps down.

INT. CASHIERS WINDOW, LUXOR - NIGHT

From afar, Ray at the cage as a teller counts behind the glass.

INT. HOTEL ROOM, LUXOR - DAY

Hampton's body man Wyatt sitting near the door. A knock. He glances through the door, pulls it open and steps aside.

Ray in the doorway, a shopping bag in hand. Stepping in...

The room cleaned and ready. A quality card still on the bed. Not living in, just borrowing.

Hampton perches over two laptops on the desk, spreadsheets and a live ticker scrolling something in the corner.

A *click* behind Ray. He turns, sees Wyatt closing them in.

RAY
 A federal judge goes missing. You know what happens then?

HAMPTON
 (smiling crisply)
 They're some of my best clients.
 (then leaning back)
 Relax, this is a loner from a friend in housekeeping. If this was other business we'd be at the Palms

A smile. Ray just sets the bag on the bed. Business. Hampton shrugs, tips open the bag. Poker chips inside, oranges and grays. \$500s and \$1000s. The bag is full. He appraises, then:

HAMPTON (CONT'D)
 (matter of factly)
 Okay.

Hampton sits back, studies Ray.

HAMPTON (CONT'D)
I gotta know, that bag - what is that to you? Your gym? Early retirement? Just the next few years?

Ray holds his look, then:

RAY
So we're good?

HAMPTON
...we're good your honor.

He pivots back to his laptop. Ray starts for the door, Wyatt rising, pulling it open for him.

Ray steps through the doorway, stands there, looking down the hallway. Adrenaline releasing...

He glances back inside.

INT. PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Folders and file boxes. Overworked and understaffed. Melissa working at her desk, calling out at a knock at the door.

MELISSA
...Yeah...

Graham's head pokes in, takes the room in.

GRAHAM
Graham Yates. I called earlier...

MELISSA
Right, the Clark County restorative justice piece.

GRAHAM
Right. Mind if I take a seat?

MELISSA
Grab it where you can find it.

Graham clears a chair.

MELISSA (CONT'D)
Surprised The Sun is interested in a Juvenile detention study.

GRAHAM

Well yeah, they're not.

Graham, sheepish as he pulls out the transcript. We see it's dog eared, post-its flagging pages throughout.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

You know I have tried just about every name on that cover. Everyone is either *attorney-client, retired, wrong number* or, *go fuck yourself.*

(holding it out)

I was hoping there's a chance you would not give me the latter.

Melissa studies it. Then, evenly --

MELISSA

I'm sorry. I consider Judge Tennyson a friend.

Graham, hearing something in this.

GRAHAM

Good. So do I.

(and then)

But why would you assume this is about Ray Tennyson.

Melissa, caught in a corner.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

Look, I could take this over to the DA, or the old PD, but frankly I'm afraid I might shine a light on something that's a little above my station. Legal just ain't my business... but boxing is.

(and then)

And I'm afraid to say it's no longer the sport we both fell in love with. It's infested; drugs, boys throwing fights, hitting their wives, buying off officials. Ray is one of the few guys that we can still point to, to prove the gentlemen have not left the sport.

(and then)

And now I'm worried he's about to do something that'll throw that away. If he is, I'd like to give him the chance to stop himself before he does.

He sees Melissa wavering, winning something here. Graham cautiously leans forward, opens to the first marker.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

Page 72 here...

EXT. RAY'S HOME, FRONT PORCH - AFTERNOON

Ray returned home, sitting on his porch. We see the rifle propped in corner while he stares out across his acreage.

Something catches his attention on the horizon. He reaches for the gun, peering through the scope.

ANGLE - SCOPE

His neighbor resetting a post along his property, his own fence broken down the line.

Ray lowers the gun, seeing this. Doubt crawling in.

INT. CASINO BAR - NIGHT

The same bar we saw him post-fight in the beginning. Ray at the counter, his haunt, a paper in hand as he drinks alone.

A beer bottle suddenly slides in from down the bar, stopping short beside him. Ray looks over, finds Graham smirking at the other end. Ray shrugs, takes the beer. *Seat yourself.*

Graham starts over but posts up a few stools down, giving Ray some space. They drink silently for a moment. Then:

GRAHAM

You ever hear of a guy named Bobby Dunlap?

RAY

Cut man from Detroit?

GRAHAM

Yeah... cut man from Detroit.

He smiles to himself, drinks. Falls back into silence.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

Used to be a trainer. At least that's how I like to remember him. Good one. Brought up Graziano, Caputo, Hagler. He was the guy...

Ray, still reading. Graham watching the tv.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

But there was one fight. Cow Palace, San Francisco, ABA Middleweight title. His guy was fighting a kid he used to train, broke up over some shit, I don't know. Anyway, his guy comes out... just throwing hammers. Kid can't return, can't come back. He's gone before the end of the 3rd.

Ray listening patiently now.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

Janitor later says he finds powder on the floor in Dunlap's locker room beneath his wraps. Plaster of Paris, mix with a little sweat, guy's gloves would have been swinging concrete. Did he ever get caught though? No. Fight stayed, belt stayed... but it was enough. Caputo drops him, Roy Junior drops him... Dunlap's integrity, it'd been questioned. Ends up running corners at the American Legion.

(takes a drink)

Thirteen good years as a trainer. But what does everyone remember him as? A cut man from Detroit.

Graham kills off his drink, looks down from the TV.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

So do you know Cameron Mills or not Ray.

RAY

...Yeah. I know him.

(turning to him)

He's the guy whose life I fucked over, right?

Ray suddenly staring right at him.

RAY (CONT'D)

Nevermind he committed three felonies, or twelve people saw it the same. Never mind he refused a plea deal, or dismissed his first three public defenders. No, that's all on me.

(direct now)

And you know what? I sleep fine.

(MORE)

RAY (CONT'D)

I don't second guess, and they'll try to get you to. You know how to tell you're getting a call from a state penitentiary? You hear a little pause, and little click, and then after the recording: a voice reminding you they're coming for you. And you just hope your wife wasn't the one to pick up the phone that day. Those kind of guys are hard to forget.

(and then)

So no I don't need any more reminders from you, or to read any transcript to remember exactly who Cameron Mills is. He's my job.

Graham looks down, out of words. Then, digging into his coat--

GRAHAM

You know, you're right. You don't need to read it. There's nothing there. No procedural misconduct, no violation of inalienable rights. For all purposes, record shows Cameron J. Mills had a fair trial.

He counts out a few bills, rises to leave. Holds a moment...

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

The plea hearing though... interesting bit at the end there.

He sets the money on the counter and exits. Ray, thrown, watching as he walks out.

INT. OFFICE, RAY'S HOME - NIGHT

The lights turning on. The transcript Graham brought over, still sitting on the desk. UP TO:

RAY, staring at it from the doorway.

IN THE HALLWAY

As he quietly steps inside, closing the door behind him.

PRELAP: Violin music RISING. Fast, chaotic...

INT. RENO COURTROOM - DAY (**THE PAST**)

The courtroom sitting still, all listening to what we see now is a recording of a violin.

Ray on the bench, Melissa at the clerk's desk. A different public defender next to Cameron, sitting expressionless as the prosecutor JIM HAWKENS turns off a speaker.

He lets the silence linger a moment, then rises.

HAWKINS

I was asked by the family to play this in lieu of a victim impact statement, because no words can describe what they've lost here.

A TEENAGE BOY sitting in the gallery, part of his right arm removed, shirt sleeve pinned and folded. His mother and father beside him, eyes red, staring forward.

HAWKINS (CONT'D)

This was the last time Ryan played. Two weeks later Mr. Mills and Mr. Brooks would be arrested for the DUI crash that left Ryan without his arm, and all of us without his sister. The only reason Mr. Mills has this plea in the first place is because the family wants to show compassion, to try and forgive this defendant for his actions in hopes of finding some sense of closure.

Hawkins takes his seat. Ray clears his throat.

RAY

I understand we've reached a settlement on the arraignment, part of which the defendant has agreed to publicly acknowledge his complicitness in the charges.

PUBLIC DEFENDER

That's correct your honor. My client is ready to proceed.

Ray nods for Hawkins to go ahead.

HAWKINS

(addressing Cameron now)

On the afternoon of March 7th, did you and Samuel Brooks purchase alcohol from the convenience store located at 667 Virginia Avenue?

Cameron looks to his lawyer, who nods for him to go ahead.

CAMERON

Yes.

HAWKINS

Did you then proceed to purchase a small amount of methamphetamines from the 1600 block of the Oxbow apartment complex.

CAMERON

Yes.

HAWKINS

And what did you do then?

CAMERON

We went back to the car.

HAWKINS

And who did the car belong to?

CAMERON

My uncle Kenny.

Hawkins nods, lets this be heard.

HAWKINS

What happened next?

CAMERON

Sam lit it up. We smoked it there.

HAWKINS

And how about the vodka.

CAMERON

We drank it.

HAWKINS

All of it? How much?

CAMERON

Two bottles of New Amsterdam and some Tito's we already had.

HAWKINS

And despite this you then proceeded to re-enter the vehicle.

Cameron nods his head.

HAWKINS (CONT'D)

Where you then drove through the intersection of Arroyo and Wabash, failing to adhere to the red light, striking the Tanner's sedan, severely injuring Ryan and hospitalizing Kaitlyn where she would later die.

Cameron says nothing. Ray watching, waiting. The defender leans forward:

PUBLIC DEFENDER

That is a correct statement your honor.

HAWKINS

In exchange for the plea the people move to dismiss count 2 of the indictment. The sentence agreement on counts 1 and 3 stipulates the defendant will serve no less than two years in the Nevada Department of Corrections, those two counts will run concurrent to each oth-

Wood banging. In the gallery the teenage boy has heard enough, walking out of the courtroom. Ray watching.

HAWKINS (CONT'D)

For the resolution on count 4, as part of this plea agreement the people will be accepting an Alford Plea for his involvement in the vehicular homicide of Kaitlyn Tanner, whereas the defendant does not admit guilt but concedes there is sufficient evidence to find him guilty at trial.

PUBLIC DEFENDER

Your honor my client and I have reviewed the presentence agreement, and the Defense is satisfied.

HAWKINS

The people are satisfied your honor.

The court, waiting on Ray, his eyes still locked onto the doors the boy disappeared through. Finally:

RAY

You know I have never in almost fifteen years not accepted a plea agreement between parties...

(a moment, then)

But I am not comfortable with him not pleading straight up. Used to be, when we practiced law, we would approach the court, and we would resolve the case with the court's direction and approval. That's been lacking in this case. On top of that the defendant's demeanor-

PUBLIC DEFENDER

Your honor my client is 17 years old, he has some emotional problems, and frankly he's scared-

RAY

It's unprecedented in my experience on this bench, and I cannot in good conscience, looking at the facts and circumstances of this case, file the sentence agreement that you all put in place. Your options are, negotiate a new deal commensurate with the charges or-

HAWKINS

Defense has shown no willingness to accept further guilt on recor-

RAY

Then we'll go to trial.

(cold now)

Mr. Mills you tore a boy's arm off his body. Nevermind you took away what he was meant to be, you took away his sister. You took away his heart. You crushed her skull. You snuffed out her life. That took away more than you'll ever feel.

PUBLIC DEFENDER

Your honor-

RAY

Shut up.

(returns to Cameron)

(MORE)

RAY (CONT'D)

And if you're convicted of felony murder you'll go to prison for the rest of your life - that means *you'll die there*. And that's the least Laura deserves.

Melissa looking up from her desk. The court reporter's hands coming to rest as she finishes.

GRAHAM (V.O.)

Who was Laura?

INT. PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE - NIGHT (EARLIER)

Graham now sitting beside Melissa, paging through from the transcript.

GRAHAM

I went back through, couldn't find any reference to her. The victim's name in the crash was Kaitlyn, I wasn't sure if this was a middle--

MELISSA

Laura was Ray's sister.

Graham looks up at her.

EXT. FIELD - (**THE PAST**) NO SOUND

We're at the opening scene of the film. A car overturned in a roadside ditch. Battered and smoking. The door kicked open:

A nineteen year old Ray lays in the grass. Blood on his Olympic boxing sweats, back broken, tears streaming as he screams back into the car...

MELISSA (V.O.)

She was in the car, driving him to practice the day he was hit. Other car hit her side first. She died that morning.

A YOUNG WOMAN suspended upside down by the seat belt, lifeless eyes frozen open, staring back at him.

INT. RENO COURTROOM - CONTINUOUS (**THE PAST**)

On Ray, staring down. Melissa looking out. A few murmurs around the room but many just listening as Ray continues on.

RAY

The adoption of the plea agreement
is rejected. We will notify the
district administrator's office...

Sound fades as he continues.

MELISSA (V.O.)

That day everyone just figured he
mispoke. Tensions were high, he
never acknowledged it, defense
never raised it - how could they?
No one there knew she existed, he
never talks about her...

(finally)

And I never did either.

Ray pounds the gavel.

EXT. RAY'S HOME - NIGHT (**THE PRESENT**)

Ray's car running in the driveway. From behind we see Ray in
the driver's seat. Building to something.

INT. GARAGE, RAY'S HOME - DAWN

The garage door rising to reveal Ray's car now gone.

Connie stands in the doorway, staring at the vacant driveway.
A worry on her face. She looks back inside: a room at the top
of the stairs.

EXT. NEVADA - DAWN

Driving. Desert drifting by, purple before the sun arrives.

INT. RHODES GYM - MORNING

The gate is up. A black garbage bag taped over the door where
the glass used to be, flapping in the wind.

Ray slides the bag aside, steps through. Lights on but no one
in sight. Still early. But we hear the irregular heartbeat of
a punching bag in the back.

Ray wanders further in, finds a man training, chain rattling,
obscured by a heavy bag in the back corner.

Circling from a distance we find Cameron, in a trance, locked
ahead. Breaking as Ray comes into view.

Cameron lowers his gloves, his eyes flickering down, and for the first time we see: the HOLSTER on Ray's belt, pistol handle showing beneath the leather.

This is Nevada.

They stand there a minute regarding each other. Finally --

CAMERON
We shouldn't be talking.

RAY
Then what were you trying to do the last couple weeks.

CAMERON
That was before I was on your card.

RAY
So you heard from the committee.
(beat)
You could have said something then.
Why didn't you?

CAMERON
Why didn't you?

Ray, no response. Cameron resumes punching.

CAMERON (CONT'D)
Like I said, not appropriate for us to talk about it now.

RAY
So we'll talk about something else then.

Cameron just keeps swinging, doesn't oppose. Ray wades in.

RAY (CONT'D)
Was that you that called my house?
Talked to my wife?

CAMERON
...didn't mean to scare nobody...

RAY
Yeah? Want to tell that to the ref you flatlined in Carson.

CAMERON
That was an accident.

RAY
Horse shit.

CAMERON
(smiles, keeps pounding)
And how's your eye your honor? That
guy at the MGM, you press charges?
(scoffs)
This is boxing. Get out the way.

Ray concedes, wanders a few steps.

RAY
You came to my home. Middle of the
night.

CAMERON
Yeah? When?

RAY
You know when. Last week.

CAMERON
Eid-al-Adha.
(off Ray's look)
Islamic holiday. Festival of
Sacrifice. If it was at night - I
was at temple.

Ray, considering this.

RAY
Anyone else see you?

CAMERON
Only about a hundred brothers.

Ray stares off, done with the bullshit. Direct now.

RAY
What are we doin here?

Cameron slows, faces him.

RAY (CONT'D)
I'm tired of this over the shoulder
chicken shit. What do you want with
me?

Cameron just stares at him. Ray, growing unnerved.

RAY (CONT'D)
You want an apology? You got a
problem with me, let's finish it.
(MORE)

RAY (CONT'D)

You gotta hit me? Beat the living
shit out of me...

Ray's voice rising, desperate for an answer. Not sure if he should be furious, terrified, ashamed. Finally Cameron sighs, rips the tape off his gloves, starts unwinding...

RAY (CONT'D)

That's right. There we go...

Ray loosens his belt, lets the gun fall to the mat.

RAY (CONT'D)

Let's do it. I ain't gonna say
anything...

(takes off his glasses)

It's just you and me. C'mon you son
of a bitch, you wanna tell me
something, I make a bad call...

(discards his watch, his
wedding band)

You wanna fucking hurt me? Hurt me!

Ray stands there, disheveled, out of breath. Cameron steps forward, bare knuckled now. Their eyes inches apart. Then...

CAMERON

I wanted to.

Cameron rests his gloves on the bench. On Ray, frozen there as Cameron starts across the gym.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

Five years. Lost my mom, lost my
brother. The nights I spent blaming
you. Like a wheel just, running...

Cameron gets to his gym bag, starts breaking down his gear.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

You know in the Qur'an, there's an
entire chapter on the quality of
forgiveness. I could use some of
that, the way I was back then.
*Whoever is injured, let them
pardon, for his own pardon will be
his reward upon God.*

Silence. Ray's voice drifts over from across the gym...

RAY

Did you do it?

He looks back at Ray, reading his face. Needing to know.

CAMERON

Yeah, I was in the car. I was drunk, high as shit...and any other day I probably would have been driving too... just not that day.

(then, sheepish)

I can't drive stick.

On Ray, his face falling. Realizing what he's done.

Cameron hikes his bag up on his shoulder...

Suddenly he grabs Ray by the shoulders, Ray flinching, not sure what's happening. Cameron leaning into him -

CAMERON (CONT'D)

Mmaghfira, aleafw, alssafh, almaghfira.

Cameron releases him, steps back.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

No, I'm not coming for you. I was coming to forgive you. I'm still figuring that part out with my God. ...imagine you are too.

With that Cameron disappears into the locker room, leaving him there.

INT. RAY'S HOME - DAY

Footsteps on the porch outside. Ray comes through the door. He looks hollow, a vacant stare as he slides his jacket off.

CONNIE (O.S.)

Where'd you go?

Connie on the couch across the room, her back to us. She turns, glancing over.

RAY

Just for a drive.

Her eyes drift lower to the gun on his waist. *More than a drive.* He sees it, starts unfastening it. Then...

CONNIE

Did you know? What you said.

Ray slows. Connie rises from her seat. We see now she has the transcript in her hands. She walks to him, quietly setting it on the counter beside them.

Ray looks at it, goes back to removing his harness.

RAY
 You don't know what you read Con.
 You know how many-

She slaps him. Not letting him off. He stares down.

CONNIE
 Did you know?

A long silence.

RAY
 No. Not at first.
 (then)
 Afterwards, I started wondering...

CONNIE
 ...you could have looked back.

RAY
 I never wanted to.

Finally looking up, facing her.

RAY (CONT'D)
 If I didn't look, then I'd never
 have to know.
 (then, measured)
 I was upset-

CONNIE
 You weren't upset... You stole
 years from that man because you
 were *small*.
 (he says nothing)
 You could have disclosed after
 sentencing, you could have recused
 yourself from the start, you could
 have-

RAY
 But I didn't! All right!?

Bursting suddenly, yelling at himself more than her.

RAY (CONT'D)
 It's over. I can't do anything for
 him now - you want me to fix this-

CONNIE
 You can't fix this...

RAY

So what do you want me to do
goddamnit!? Hate myself for it? *I*
do! Blame myself every day for it?
I will!

CONNIE

Good!

(cutting him off)

If that's what you need. How many
other cases will there be Ray? Who
else might you get? Christ who else
have you already had...

(then)

You decide the course of people's
lives. You're either supposed to be
worthy of that, or decent enough to
know when you're not.

That hangs there, their pulses running, their breaths
settling. Finally --

RAY

What are you saying?

CONNIE

...I'm saying it's time to know
that maybe you're not.

On Ray. He stays there as she moves past him, walking out.

INT. RAY'S HOME, BEDROOM - DAY

Through the window: Connie now in the distance, riding alone.
Ray stands at the glass, watching. Mind running.

Finally he turns away, goes to a drawer. He unearths a small
box, sets it on the desk. We float toward it as he turns on a
closet light, starting to pull down luggage and clothes in
the bg.

Arriving over the box we see inside: A black silk bow tie.

EXT. OLYMPIC TRAINING CENTER - DAY

The flame in full blaze.

Cars swarming through the gate. A message on the marquee:

"USA BOXING: LAST CHANCE OLYMPIC QUALIFIERS"

INT. GYMNASIUM, OLYMPIC TRAINING CENTER - DAY

Hundreds on the stadium floor, the ring in the center, lit and hovering above it all.

QUICK SHOTS OF:

- Pockets of boxing teams and gear. Athletes warming up.
- Spectators and VIPs in the stands.
- Cameras and journalists logging in at press tables.
- Judges testing electronic score cards. Timers at the bell.

Ray getting an incoming call as he enters the hall. He clocks the screen, silences it, looking up to take it all in. The flags of the globe above. The Olympic rings on the mat.

The adrenaline.

Kurt Redford finds him through the crowd, greets him.

KURT
Quite a show, huh.

RAY
Yea. Little bigger than I remember.

KURT
Well, last stop. No one's gonna miss it. Listen, we got the inspectors making the rounds. After roll we'll get you introduced, bring in the ring physician. Need anything else I'll be in the stands with the committee.

RAY
Thanks, I'll be fine.

Seasoned. Good to go. Kurt nods.

KURT
C'mon then, let's get you ready.

INT. LOCKER ROOM, OLYMPIC TRAINING CENTER - DAY

An organizer shows Ray into a private single bay locker room, leaves him to dress. Ray wanders further in.

A shirt laid out on the bench. White collared, freshly pressed. A patch on the breast where the Nevada Athletic Commission symbol is usually found. Ray lifts it up:

A familiar blue star background against a red and white striped glove: **"USA BOXING"**

PRELAP:

GIRL'S VOICE (V.O.)
(singing)
*...the bombs bursting in air, Gave
proof through the night, that our
flag was still there. O say does...*

INT. GYMNASIUM, OLYMPIC TRAINING CENTER - DAY

All standing silent, eyes on the ring as a girl sings the anthem.

RAY, now in uniform. Notices across the arena: GRAHAM in the press pit, hat off and over his heart.

GIRL'S VOICE
*...that star-spangled - banner yet
wave. O'er the land of the free...
And the home of the brave...*

Applause as the lights come up. Ray takes one last glance into the stands. Kurt talking with a small aristocratic group seated off to the side. The Olympic Officials committee.

Ray shakes hands with the head judge, then climbs into the ring, and gets to work.

PRELAP: The BELL

INT. GYMNASIUM, OLYMPIC TRAINING CENTER - SERIES

BOUT 1

Two fighters colliding, rapid fire in-fighting.

Ray running a match. Fighters in Red and Blue. FIVE JUDGES seated around the ring, craning necks to follow the action.

Ray leaning dangerously close, a face near a buzz saw, eyes tracking with each blow. Finally --

RAY
Step it back. Break. Break!

Ray halts the action, walks them apart. Calling out the charges to blue...

RAY (CONT'D)
Hitting with the forearm. Hitting
with the elbow. Caution.

Then to Red.

RAY (CONT'D)
 Holding, back of the head.
 Knock it off.

A series of hand signals to the fighters, the sign language of boxing. Then repeating them around the ring to the judges, deducting a point.

The judges looking down, typing into an electronic score pad.

IN THE STANDS

Kurt leaning over to one of the committee members, pleased.

BOUT 2

Fighters circling. Suddenly a straight right SNAPS Blue's head back. Blood gushing from his nose. Red still coming...

Ray's already there, stepping between them,

RAY (CONT'D)
 Corner!

Sending Red back as he grips Blue's headgear, tilts it back.

A RING DOCTOR appearing at the ropes as Ray inspects. Ray waves him off. Not broken.

Instead he whips some gauze out of his pocket, scrubbing the nose, blood streaking, stopping the flow.

RAY (CONT'D)
 You good? You good?
 (Blue sniffs, nod)
 All right.

Ray gives some space, commands to resume. Leather flies.

PRESS TABLES

Graham chewing on a straw, typing as he balances a laptop on his thigh.

BOUT 3

An ANNOUNCER with the mic as the two fighters are introduced.

ANNOUNCER
 In the red corner, lightweight from
 Ann Arbor Michigan, Jackson Hess.

Applause from the crowd. Ray standing aside, blood spatter starting to accumulate on his shirt. As the announcements continue Ray looks out at one of the event monitors, Cameron's fight in an upcoming slot:

"Welterweight - MILLS, C. vs NAVARRO, A."

Around him the ring starts to clear, the announcements over.

Ray starts for the center.

EXT. HALLWAY, OLYMPIC TRAINING CENTER - LATER

Ray, exchanging nods with staff as he threads his way down the hallway. He reaches his room, pushes through the door...

INT. LOCKER ROOM, OLYMPIC TRAINING CENTER - DAY

He grabs a towel off a stack, wipes his face. Suddenly his head is FLATTENED against the locker wall. He struggles but is pinned further, a thick hand pressing him from off screen.

HAMPTON steps into the eyeline beside him.

HAMPTON

I told you, I don't fuck people over. I make an arrangement, I honor it. I'm *reliable*.

(and then)

It's a good reputation.

Wyatt continues to pin as Hampton holds up the phone.

HAMPTON (CONT'D)

So want to tell me what the hell this is?

RAY

Don't run it. Pull the bet.

HAMPTON.

Pull the bet...

Hampton shakes his head, motions for Ray to be let up.

HAMPTON

Ray this was your proposition, not mine--

RAY

So fuck what I said. The money, you keep it. Danny's clear, you're even. That's what you wanted.

HAMPTON

It's too late for what I wanted. That's not how this works. This is out there Ray.

(off Ray's face)

Online. Union pools, college kids in Jersey. Fucking guys in lockup. I told you, the industry will bet on *anything*. And that's just the weekend players. We don't deliver, there are people bigger than both of us that we would answer to.

(beat)

This is way beyond your 300k now.

RAY

...How much then?

HAMPTON

(pitying)

More than you can afford to give.

Ray tightens his lips, shakes his head. He can't do it. Hampton sighs, looks off his phone.

HAMPTON (CONT'D)

Black Audi, 7HI-42R Nebraska plates—that's your rental car, right?

(reading on)

The Broadmoor Hotel, room 311.
United Airlines, Flight 586,
departing 4:38, gate 12...

Ray, losing some color now.

HAMPTON (CONT'D)

C'mon Ray don't put me in this position.

(then, direct)

There is nowhere else to go. So this is going to go *reliably*. Mills to go down, by decision or knockout, any round. You make it look how you need to. Right?

Ray lowers his head, defeated. Hampton straightens his shirt, starts to leave. Wyatt goes to unlock the door...

RAY (O.S.)
I'm not going to do it.

Hampton stalls in the doorway.

HAMPTON
(resigned)
You mean that don't you.

A look. He does.

Hampton speaks something low to Wyatt. He starts toward Ray, cornered in the locker bay. Ray struggles, manages to clip him in the face. Wyatt goes red, hits Ray under the ribs, in his side, *in his back* --

Ray's eyes go wide.

Going docile all of a sudden. He may be having a seizure. Hampton doesn't realize it, watching as Wyatt lays Ray's arm across the bench...

HAMPTON (CONT'D)
You have two choices. Make a scene,
or go out and finish.

He steps back, nods. Wyatt grabs Ray's wrist...

HAMPTON (CONT'D)
You don't go out there, your
committee's going to pull you. You
complain, we're going to have a
different problem.

And STOMPS Ray's upper arm. We hear a pop. Ray yelps.

HAMPTON (CONT'D)
You go out there and the bet
doesn't show - we break it all.

Wyatt releases him, Ray sliding to the floor.

We stay with him as they exit in the bg, Ray breathing in short bursts, teeth clenched, writhing on the ground.

INT. GYMNASIUM, OLYMPIC TRAINING CENTER - DAY

The arena ready to go.

Spectators in their seats. Judges at their tables. Cameron and his opponent, NAVARRO, staying loose on the floor with his trainer, ready to ascend.

Kurt in a sidebar with the Announcer, glancing toward the hallway. He checks the time on the monitor...

Ray emerges onto the floor, his steps normal, if not a little gradual.

GRAHAM watching as he makes his perfunctory greetings with the ring crew, his left arm kept subtly tucked near his body.

*note: all movement with this arm will be with limited motion

Ray goes to a Ring Deputy, signing a release. He nods toward Cameron.

RAY

Where's his second?

DEPUTY

He doesn't have one.

RAY

What about him?

Kufi, sitting outside the ring perimeter.

DEPUTY

Not licensed. Only AIBA certified trainers in the corners.

Ray turns back, finishes, walking up the steps into the ring.

ANNOUNCER

Ladies and gentlemen we are ready
for our 4th bout, for the
welterweight contender of Team USA.
(to the fighters)
In the red corner, from Oxnard
California, Anthony Navarro.

Applause. Ray pulls on his rubber gloves, wincing slightly.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

And in the blue corner, from
Henderson Nevada, Cameron Mills.

Over the rope Kufi puts his head against Cameron's, a few last words before he ascends. Ray waves them to the center.

RAY

Gentlemen, low lines are going to
be here, and here... I call stop,
you stop. I call break, you break.
(MORE)

RAY (CONT'D)

Watch the heads, no holding, you cannot be saved by the bell at any time except the final round. Will you comply with my wishes?

Navarro nods. Ray finds Cameron staring at him. Finally he nods.

RAY (CONT'D)

Touch gloves.

They do. Ray looking out as they retreat to their corners:

IN THE STANDS

The noise level rising now. Committee settling. Hampton and Wyatt taking seats in the crowd, watching him.

Ringside a gavel hovers over the bell.

Ray raises his good hand out, holding them. Sweat already stinging his eyes...

The bell rings.

NAVARRO'S TRAINER

Piernas fuertes chico!

KUFI

This is yours Cam this is yours!

Navarro coming out strong. Half the mat suddenly behind him. Cameron planting just in time -- a wave of melees washing over him. The world thundering inside his headgear.

He ducks, slipping out, ears already ringing.

Navarro pivots, keeping Cameron to the outside. It's immediately clear, he's outclassed here. Cameron about to reset when Navarro rushes again. Cameron burying his head, enduring another savage round.

Ray stands aside, letting it happen.

Out of nowhere Cameron suddenly slides and bursts out with a right around the side of the head. Navarro stumbling.

Ray leaps forward, signing to Cameron.

RAY

Back of the head.

Kufi yelling out. Ray ignores him, facing the judges.

RAY (CONT'D)

Blue, back of the head, warning.

The committee watching in the stands, unalarmed by the call.

PRESS TABLE

Graham and another journalist looking on as fight resumes.

JOURNALIST

Close.

GRAHAM

Yeah... close.

RING

The fighters tangling until the bell rings. Ray breaks them apart, a finger to Navarro as he directs him to his corner.

RAY

Watch the laces red.

Informal but visible. In the stands Wyatt gives a look to Hampton.

HAMPTON

He knows what he's doing.

The fighters circle as the next round resumes, diving into a clinch. Almost instantly Ray is on them, prying them apart. A moment as he stands between them, then...

RAY

One point deduction, Red. Lacing.

Navarro's trainer cursing. Judges' heads dipping as they make note. Hampton paying attention now.

The fight resumes. Navarro, fighting conservatively after the call, throwing long arm punches. Cameron making up some ground. The crowd volume rising...

Off the momentum he over-swings, opening himself up. Navarro takes advantage, drops an overhand right to the face. Cameron wobbles back...

His knee, dipping to the mat.

He regains his balance. Navarro already walking toward the corner, waiting for the count to start...

Ray just drops his hand.

RAY (CONT'D)

Fight.

Confusion around the ring. Navarro's trainer screaming.

TRAINER

Where's the count? He's down!

Ray stares at him a moment. Glances at the judges.

RAY

He's up. Didn't touch.

A low RUMBLE from the crowd. The closest judge eyeing Ray warily now. Even Cameron looks confused. Ray doubles down.

RAY (CONT'D)

Fight.

The fighters wade back in. The Committee talking amongst themselves now. Kurt beside them, watching closely.

Cameron takes another hit, splashing him against the ropes. The crowd screaming as Navarro roughs him up, Cameron pawing blindly, his glove gripping the rope in the fray...

It grazes the mat.

Ray doesn't call it.

Groans in the arena. Hampton typing on his phone now.

TRAINER

Oh c'mon what the fuck is this!?!

Cameron watching as Ray halts the action, letting him up. Realizing what's happening here...

Ray is throwing the match for him.

Ray pulls both fighters off the ropes. As he does Navarro inadvertently knocks into his arm. Ray grimaces, pain plunging the world into white noise. As it returns...

Navarro's trainer yelling at him. Ray calls down --

RAY

Stay back and shut up, or I'll have the deputy remove you!

IN THE STANDS

Kurt looking on as they yell, seeing it unravel around the ring. The crowd on high now, feeding off the drama. Judges trying to narrow their focus as the fighters return from their corners.

Graham watches Ray. He looks pale, winded, sweating now as he cuts the air to start the fight.

Both fighters stepping out measured, gauging each other...

WHAM! A surgical blow from Navarro beams Cameron. His head rolls, his body crashing to the mat. Undeniable.

He's down.

The crowd deafening now, blood in the water, leaping to their feet. Graham leaning forward. Hampton craning his neck.

Ray rushes over, kneeling at side.

He starts the count.

RAY (CONT'D)
...1..2..c'mon get up...

Cameron getting his bearings, yelling something. Ray can't hear it, drowned out by the crowd. He continues:

RAY (CONT'D)
...5..6...

Cameron gets to a knee, calling out above the noise now:

CAMERON
I said don't do this!

Ray stalls. The count has stopped. Cameron facing him.

CAMERON (CONT'D)
Let me do this on my own.

Ray stares back down at him, conflicted, eyes pleading.

But Cameron gets to his feet. The crowd cheering as they see him rise. He nods at Ray.

He's ready.

Ray stands there, the center of the ring waiting for him, the room thundering around him, but he's not hearing it. He's watching the kid in the blue shorts, already beaten to hell, huffing in the corner as he waits to take it all over again.

Ray walks to the center, holds out his hand...

...lets it drop. A blur as they clash.

INT. GYMNASIUM, OLYMPIC TRAINING CENTER - LATER

The ring has been cleared. The fight is over.

Ray stands in the neutral corner while across the ring the Announcer leans over the ropes, conferring with a lead judge. A tally coming in. They nod to Ray.

Ray brings the fighters to the center. Grips their wrists.

ANNOUNCER

In the center ring, our Olympic
welterweight contender for the
United States of America...

(a moment)

The red corner, Anthony Navarro!

Cheers from the stands. With great strain Ray raises Navarro's hand, masking the pain. Navarro leaps into the air, starts for his corner.

Ray yanks him back. Over the noise...

RAY

You shake this man's hand.

Navarro quiets a moment, embarrassed, shakes with Cameron. Cameron nods congratulations, goes for his gear as Navarro is enveloped by his people.

Ray navigates his way to the edge, sees Hampton watching him from the bleachers. Holding his gaze a moment.

Finally Hampton looks away, starts for the exit with Wyatt. *Settled*. Neither hoping to see the other again.

VOICE (O.S.)

Hey ref!

Ray looks down on the floor. Graham at his table, his things packed, an unlit cigarette bobbing in his mouth.

GRAHAM

Good match.

Meaning it. He slips his hat on, disappears into the crowd.

Ray turns back, looking for Cameron over the fray. He catches him across the gym, bag on his shoulder, walking out with Kufi. As much as Ray wills it, he does not look back.

Ray stands there in the ring as the celebration continues around him. Drenched in sweat, speckled in blood, arm crooked against his side. Hating himself.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. OUTER OFFICE, OLYMPIC TRAINING CENTER - WEEKS LATER

The executive side of the campus. Olympic logo outside offices and reception desks.

Ray sits alone in a waiting area. He looks rested, his color returned, but somehow he seems older now. He's got a blazer on, one side draped over the small cast now around his arm.

He watches the snow flurries out the window. Looks over as a woman arrives, taking a seat. Late 30s. Adjusting her blazer, her papers, her posture. This is AMY.

RAY
Interview?

AMY
Yeah. You too?
(Ray nods)
Well we did all the hard stuff
already. This should be the easy
part right?

Failing to convince herself, knee still bouncing. Ray notices, tries taking her mind off it.

RAY
Where'd you run your matches?

AMY
Philadelphia. Eastern Qualifiers.
You?

RAY
Here.

She nods. Remembering herself she leans over, offers her hand-

AMY
Amy Seaver.

RAY
Ray Tennyson.

AMY
...I know who you are.
(off his look)
I have HBO.

A half smile. Then, motioning to his arm.

AMY (CONT'D)
Did you ref, or did you compete?

Ray smirks, looks down curiously at his cast.

RAY

...you know I boxed for ten years,
never broke more than my tooth. Now
I get taken out by a patch of ice.
(he grins, shrugs)
Should be off end of the month.
You? Ever a fighter?

AMY

Me? No.
(a beat)
My brother was.

Ray looks up at this. She continues on --

AMY (CONT'D)

I'm a marriage therapist, Monday
through Friday anyway.
(a look, like she knows
how that sounds)
Watch my patients fight though.

RAY

I bet you keep them in line.
(smiling, then)
They know about this? Your side
gig.

She contemplates a moment.

AMY

I'm not sure they'd get it. Why we
do it.
(then)
But that's all right. For me, this
job isn't the side gig...

Then she leans toward him, her voice low, like it's a trade
secret.

AMY (CONT'D)

They are.

An innocent smile. Ray absorbs this. Suddenly --

KURT (O.S.)

Ray.

Kurt Redford emerging from a conference room.

KURT (CONT'D)

We're ready for you.
(to Amy)
(MORE)

KURT (CONT'D)

Amy good to see you. We'll be with you right after.

Amy nods back, goes back to her papers. Ray slings his bag over his shoulder, getting ready to rise. Looking over:

Amy sitting there. Lost in her reading. Knee still bouncing. Ray reaches into his blazer...

RAY

Actually why don't you go ahead.

Amy looking up as Ray digs out his phone. He clocks the screen, flashes it to Kurt. He starts texting...

RAY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, court's been trying to track me down. Case management teleconference, supposed to be this afternoon but, I just need to call in for a few. I'm really sorry - You all get started. I mean if it makes no difference to everyone...

Gazing up, checking with Kurt. Kurt shrugs.

KURT

No, no we can see her now.

AMY

(to Ray)
You sure?

RAY

(already typing again)
Yeah, probably better I don't have this hanging over my head anyway.

Amy exchanges a look with Kurt, *okay then*. He steps back, pulling the door open for her. Ray continues on his phone.

AMY (O.S.)

Hey.

Ray looks up. Amy paused in the doorway.

AMY (CONT'D)

Good luck.

Ray grins, nods back.

RAY

You too.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, OLYMPIC TRAINING CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Committee members rising as they walk in, Ray outside through the doorway behind them, typing in his seat.

We stay there, Amy making the rounds in the foreground, sound dropping as they float over to greet her, shaking hands.

One by one they take their chairs, clearing the frame...

As the door closes we see Ray's chair. It's now empty.

INT. APARTMENT - DAWN (NEW DAY)

A spartan one bedroom. Weights on the floor, laundry hanging over furniture. The sun starting to rise through the blinds.

Cameron walks through frame, brushing his teeth. He heads for the kitchen, crossing a TV glowing in the corner. On screen:

The Opening Ceremonies of the Olympic Games. Enclaves of nations in matching sweats and suits, circling the track.

ANNOUNCER (OVER TV)

...here now we see the delegation
from Morocco. Returning medalists
in both men's 800 metres and marath-

Drowned out as Cameron starts a blender on the counter - protein and wheat grass. He grabs a duffel bag, starts throwing in gear around the room.

The ceremonies continue in the background: Silent light shows and pyrotechnics. Flags waving around a stage in the center.

As the blender cuts off we become aware of a noise outside.

A car horn.

INT. RED SUV - IN MOTION - DAWN

Cameron in sweats. Kufi in the driver's seat. He flips the sun visor down.

KUFI

You got your sauna hood?

CAMERON

Yeah in my bag.

KUFI

You bring your Titles or your
Reeboks.

CAMERON

Neither. Stop crawlin' all up my
ass. I ain't gonna need them today.

Kufi keeps driving. Mumbles...

KUFI

Keep it up you ain't gonna have a
ride home. Need 'em then.

Cameron looks over, then back out the window, cracks a smile.

EXT. HIGHSCHOOL FIELD - MORNING

Pulling up to a football field, a track running around the
outside. Abandoned this early.

A figure waiting on the grass, in sweats of his own. Ray.

He sees Kufi in the parking lot, offers him a nod as Cameron
starts over. Kufi returns it.

TRACK

As Cameron gets to him on the field.

RAY

Morning.

CAMERON

Morning your honor.

Cameron grins. Ray watches him. Smart ass.

RAY

Let's see the smirk after you run
twenty. Go on.

Cameron sets down his bag, starts his run. Ray starts
walking, following after. It's no Olympic track, pitted
asphalt, fading lanes... but it will do.

Ray starts to jog behind him... a little faster now.

Then, something coming over him.

Ray begins to run.

THE END