THE DEAD ZONE
"THE COMBINATION"

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 EXT. BANGOR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - ESTABLISHING - DAY

2 INT. AIRPORT ARRIVALS/BAGGAGE AREA - DAY

A SIGN reads "TRAVEL SMART. FLY THROUGH BANGOR." Tilting down to find a few LIMO DRIVERS all holding up cardboard signs for their respective clients. One says "LEWIS," and we REVEAL JOHNNY holding it, trying to keep a poker face as he sees BRUCE approaching, a small duffel slung over his shoulder.

JOHNNY
Mister Lewis? Mister Lewis?

Bruce sees him, does a double-take.

BRUCE
What the...? John?

JOHNNY
Your limo awaits, sir.

BRUCE
Right, my "limo." More like a busted-ass Jeep. (smiles)
But I'll take it.

They hug warmly, then move toward a LUGGAGE CONVEYOR to wait for Bruce's suitcase.

2A EXT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

As Johnny and Bruce exit the terminal, Johnny's attention's drawn to a MAN signing some autographs as a newspaper PHOTOGRAPHER snaps pictures and TWO REPORTERS take notes.

JOHNNY
Who's that?

BRUCE
Danny Avila, boxer who's fighting Darryl Tibbs up here on Friday.

JOHNNY
Tibbs? Isn't he the...?
BRUCE  
(nods)  
...middleweight champ.  
(MORE)
BRUCE (CONT'D)
Yeah, it's a regular Rocky story.
This fight is his big shot.

Avila sees Bruce and waves. Bruce waves back and Avila
starts toward them.

JOHNNY
You know him?

BRUCE
I helped Danny rehab his knee a
while back. Nice guy.

ANGLE ON DANNY AVILA
He's a trim middle-weight in his late 30s. He's trailed
by his three-months-pregnant wife HELENA, 30, as well as
the photographer and reporters.

AVILA
Hey, man, long time, no see.

BRUCE
In my business, that's a good
thing.

(they bump fists)

AVILA
Honey, you remember Bruce Lewis...

HELENA
(smiling)
Of course.

AVILA
Hey man, guess what, I'm going to
be a dad...

BRUCE
Congratulations!

(then to Helena)
I thought you had a glow about
you. Danny, Helena, this is my
friend, Johnny Smith.

Johnny hangs back slightly, and has picked up one of
Bruce's bags, avoiding a handshake.

JOHNNY
Nice to meet you.

One of the reporters notices Johnny and Avila together,
and whispers to his photographer who lifts the camera --
REPORTER
Hey Johnny, how 'bout a picture with the contender?

Johnny tries to back out, but the Reporter is already nudging Avila next to him, squeezing Bruce and Helena aside.
JOHNNY

...Look, I uh...

REPORTER

C'mon, a coupla local heroes...
just take a sec...

Avila shrugs, it's okay with him, and Johnny shoots Bruce a look, but he's trapped; it'd be rude not to oblige. Avila steps beside him and Johnny smiles gamely as the photographer snaps a couple of shots. Then:

AVILA

Hey wait, get one like this.

He playfully pretends to punch Johnny in the jaw. Only on the light contact, we RAMP TO JOHNNY'S JAW and...

INT. LEWISTON ARENA - RING (VISION)

A GLOVED FIST CONNECTS WITH AVILA'S JAW. WHAM!

Then WIDER, dozens of cameras flashing now as DARRYL TIBBS, a powerfully built black fighter, bulls a bloodied Avila across the ring with punishing body blows, the thudding impacts all but overwhelmed by the roar of a crowd brought to its feet by the sense that a knock-out is imminent. Avila defends but A FINAL COMBINATION catches him flat-footed: a series of blows ending with a haymaker that sends him falling, suddenly in SLOW-MO, out of frame -- REVEALING JOHNNY standing in the ring, watching.

CLOSE ANGLE ON AVILA - STILL IN SLOW-MO

as he hits the canvas, bounces slightly then lies there, his muscles slack, eyes staring open dully, lifelessly.

BACK TO SCENE

Johnny's still in his post-vision fog as Avila moves off with his wife, calling back to Bruce.

AVILA

Gotta run. Come see the fight.

BRUCE

You bet. Take care of that knee.

Johnny eyes Avila as he walks off, press trailing, along with a few more autograph seekers. Then quietly to Bruce:

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

JOHNNY
He's gonna get killed.

BRUCE
He's a long shot, but I wouldn't go that far.

JOHNNY
Well, I just did. He's going to die in that fight.

And as Bruce turns to look at him...

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER
FADE IN:

6 OMITTED

AND 6

7 OMITTED

AND 7

7A EXT. SMITH HOUSE - DAY - ESTABLISHING

7B INT. JOHNNY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

STARTING CLOSE ON A BANGOR DAILY NEWS in Bruce's hands. The front page has a photo of Johnny and Avila with the teasing head: "Johnny Sees Bright Future for Local Boxer."

BRUCE (reading)
"Johnny Sees Bright Future for Local Boxer."
(then)
"Bright Future"? Man, how can they just make up stuff like that?

They're headed for the front door, Johnny gathering his car keys, anxious to get going.

JOHNNY
I don't want this to turn into another media circus. We've gotta handle this quietly, give Avila a chance to hear us out in private. It could help that he knows you.

BRUCE
Yeah, I know him all right.
(off Johnny's look)
I know he's been fighting a long time and this is his first title shot. It's a big deal for him, John. He's not gonna like hearing what we've got to say.

JOHNNY
He doesn't have to like it, just believe it.

And they're out the door...

8 INT. BOXING GYM - DAY - STARTING CLOSE ON A BOXER'S FISTS 8

buzzing a speed bag, the sound melding with HIP HOP music from a boom box.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Then more quick CLOSE-UPS: a boxer's feet lightly skipping rope; another boxer's gloves pounding a heavy bag; then glimpses of Avila's determined eyes, visible through his headgear as he trades blows with a heavier black SPARRING PARTNER (CARL), all the sounds adding up to a timeless rhythmic symphony.

Cutting away to a battered TIMEX with a broken band. It's being used as a stopwatch by Avila's trainer, VIC MURPHY, a wizened Irish ex-pug in his 70s.

WIDER - WITH JOHNNY AND BRUCE

as they enter, take in the rough-hewn gym. SEVERAL YOUNG FIGHTERS, Latinos mostly, train in the open area in front, where HEAVY BAGS dangle, one of them firing punches at the target mitts held up by a beefy black assistant trainer. Bruce sees Avila sparring in the RING in back, nods to Johnny and they start toward him. Vic sees them coming, reacts with annoyance.

VIC
Time.
(moving to intercept)
Sorry, guys, no press allowed the week of the fight.

BRUCE
We're not press, we're friends of Danny's.

VIC
Yeah, you're all friends of Danny's. Now I'm asking you nice --

AVILA (O.S.)
Yo, Vic, it's okay. I know 'em.

He's leaning on the ropes... indicates Bruce.

AVILA
That's Bruce Lewis, did the P.T. on my knee. And the dude with the cane there is Johnny Smith, man who predicted my very "bright future."

VIC
Right, the "psychic."

And if Avila sounds like he's already taken the rosy prediction to heart, Vic sounds like it irritates and worries him.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

But he lets Johnny and Bruce follow him back to the ring.

   VIC  
  Okay, take ten minutes. But then  
    I want you to work his body like  
      I been telling you.

As the fighters climb down, Avila grabbing a towel and  
Carl heading for a water cooler...

   AVILA  
   Tibbs wants to bang, I'll bang.

   VIC  
   Sure, you can punch, but you go  
   for the head against a headhunter,  
   guess whose ass winds up in the  
      pot? Remember what I told you  
    from the beginning, chop the...

   AVILA  
   (overlapping, breezy)  
      "Chop the trunk and the branches  
       will fall." Yeah, I remember,  
       Vic. I remember everything you  
     tell me. But right now I wanna  
    hear from Johnny here.

He turns to Johnny, throws some playful mock punches.

   AVILA  
   Just tell me when he's going down,  
     man. I'll do the rest.

Johnny glances around at the other fighters, all of whom  
seem to have one ear cocked as they continue training.

   JOHNNY  
   Can we talk in private?

   AVILA  
   Yeah, sure. Step into my office.

He leads them around to the back of the ring. Vic follows,  
still eyeing Johnny uneasily.

   JOHNNY  
   Look, Danny... that newspaper  
   headline, it was... misleading.

(CONtinued)
AVILA
Misleading how?

BRUCE
In the sense that he didn't actually see your "bright future."

AVILA
You mean you didn't see the fight?

JOHNNY
No, I did, actually, but... um...

(Day)
Danny, to be honest, I didn't see you winning. In fact, I saw you getting hurt, badly hurt.

AVILA
Whoa. Hurt? Hurt how?

VIC
We don't need to hear this crap.

AVILA
No. I want to understand him.

JOHNNY
(Day)
I saw Darryl Tibbs hitting you... I saw you fall... and then I saw you lying in the ring.

(beat)
You were dead, Danny.

And there it is. Avila stares at him like he can't quite process it; instead he just disbelievingly repeats...

AVILA
Dead?

BRUCE
(quickly)
But just because he saw it doesn't mean it has to happen. There's still time to --

But Vic cuts him off, glaring at Johnny.

VIC
Okay, who sent you?

JOHNNY
Nobody sent me, sir.
VIC
It's Tibbs' people, right? That friggin' Jimmy D. This is all some kind of set up!

BRUCE
Sir, John's just trying --

VIC
Trying to mess with my fighter's head. Well, you got another thing coming, you sick bastard!

And he jabs Johnny with his index finger, sparking --

INT. ARENA - RING - NIGHT (VISION)

Vic kneeling by Avila. He breaks a smelling salt... no effect... then desperately shakes Avila's shoulders...

AVILA
Danny?! Danny?!

Pulling back to find Johnny watching from ringside, behind a seated row of sportswriters and JUDGES. The chaotic scene FREEZES. Looking for clues as to when or how this will happen, Johnny focuses on the nearest judge's --

SCORECARD
It's for the twelfth and final round (and so far it's going to Tibbs, should we notice). As Johnny reacts...

RESUME

VIC
I want you outta here now!

JOHNNY
(to Avila)
Twelfth round. That's when it happens. It's just one fight. Is it worth your life?

But Avila just gives Bruce a disgusted, betrayed look, then walks away as the other fighters gather around menacingly. Vic's voice is now ice cold with fury.

VIC
I said now.

(CONTINUED)
Johnny and Bruce, realizing it's hopeless, start moving toward the door. As they exit, Johnny and Avila exchange a final look.

INT. JOHNNY'S JEEP - MOMENTS LATER

As the doors slam shut and both men just sit for a moment.

BRUCE
Well, I guess that could've gone better.

JOHNNY
(beat, thinking)
I'm not giving up yet. There must be somebody who can stop this fight.

And as Bruce considers this too...

CLOSE ON AN OFFICE DOOR

bearing the title: "Maine Athletic Commission," and below it: "Fred Jenkins, Executive Director."

JENKINS VOICE
Gene Purdy, Arthur Markoff, Harrison Fischer... very impressive references.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

JENKINS, a somewhat stolid man in his 50s, holds a sheaf of phone messages as DOC KOWALSKI, 60s, the ring physician seen earlier in Johnny's vision, eyes Johnny and Bruce.

JENKINS
Not that it matters. This commission isn't about to overlook a concern about a fighter, no matter what the source.

JOHNNY
This isn't just a "concern," sir.

JENKINS
Yes, I understand it may seem very real to you. But you should understand, there are limits to what we can do based on... this sort of information. Doc?

(CONTINUED)
KOWALSKI
(shrugs)
Avila may be an underdog, but you can't claim it's a total mismatch... He's passed all his medical exams...

BRUCE
(frustrated)
We just told you a man's going to die. There's got to be something you can do.

And as Jenkins and Kowalski share a look, the door bursts open and boxing promoter JIMMY D, 40 -- a man whose flamboyance masks a ruthless obsession with the bottom line -- enters trailed by a young assistant, ANDREW.

JIMMY D
Well, well, looks like my sources were correct. Closed door meetings, secret cabals... Snap a picture, Andrew, tell my lawyers we have proof of conspiracy.

And as Andrew whips out a tiny digital camera and takes a picture of the flabbergasted foursome...

JENKINS
Conspiracy? I assure you, Mister D'Angelo --

JIMMY D
The name is Jimmy D! What's my name, Andrew?

ANDREW
Jimmy D.

JIMMY D
Thank you. And please don't have the temerity to deny the evidence of my own eyes.

As those eyes now fix on Johnny...
JIMMY D
Mister Smith, I presume. Is it not true that you are carrying on a malicious campaign to undermine the legitimacy of a rigorously planned and vetted business enterprise, to wit this fight, first by claiming a spurious knowledge of the outcome...

JOHNNY
If you mean that newspaper headline...

JIMMY D
...and now, I hear, by raising medical concerns about my fighter. Which are ridiculous on their face because not only is Darryl Tibbs in top physical condition, but --

JENKINS
Actually... Jimmy... Mister Smith's concerns relate to Mister Avila.

JIMMY D
(surprised)
They do?

KOWALSKI
Not to put too fine a point on it, but he's convinced your man's going to knock him dead, literally.

A moment of silence follows as Jimmy D, normally the undisputed master of his domain, absorbs this. Then...

JIMMY D
He's saying Darryl's going to kill the sorry son-of-a-bitch?

KOWALSKI
(nods)
Now of course this is highly unusual, but I suppose we can require additional medical tests... maybe even an MRI...

JOHNNY
That's not going to change anything.

(CONTINUED)
JENKINS
I'm afraid it's the best we can do. We can't just stop a fight based on a psychic's "vision."

JIMMY D
That doesn't mean we can just ignore this kind of information.

And now the others react as Jimmy D does an about-face and drops his act, his concern seeming very genuine.

JIMMY D
Mister Smith, I apologize. I'm a businessman and I thought you were playing some kind of angle here, trying to hurt Darryl somehow. But if you're sincere...

JOHNNY
Sir, if we don't stop this fight, a man's going to die. And that will be a tragedy for Darryl Tibbs as well as for Danny Avila.

JIMMY D
Then I guess we'll have to make sure that doesn't happen. Which means, if you'll excuse us for a few minutes, these gentlemen and I will have to seriously reconsider our options.

As Jenkins and Kowalski react, Johnny and Bruce exchange guardedly relieved looks on their way out...

OMITTED

INT. ATHLETIC COMMISSION - RECEPTION AREA - LATER
Bruce flips through a BOXING MAGAZINE while Johnny taps the crown of his cane, waiting.

BRUCE
Think they'll really stop the fight?

JOHNNY
Sounded like it. Maybe we'll get lucky.

Andrew appears from the inner sanctum.

(CONTINUED)
ANDREW
Mister D has called a press
conference for nine a.m. tomorrow
morning and he'd like you to
attend, Mister Smith. You are
available, aren't you?

JOHNNY
Absolutely. They're calling off
the fight?

ANDREW
That's why he's calling the press
conference. Nine a.m. Please
don't be late.

Andrew disappears back inside, leaving Johnny and Bruce
alone again. Off their relief...

EXT. ATHLETIC COMMISSION BUILDING - DAY (STOCK)
Several TV NEWS TRUCKS parked in front, their antennae up. We hear Jimmy D prelapped...

JIMMY D (V.O.)
As you all know, Ali-Liston II
was the last big fight to be held
in Lewiston, so I was proud to
bring boxing back to Maine.

INT. PRESS ROOM - DAY
Andrew leads Johnny and Bruce through a mob of press into
the back of the large room, where the press conference is
already underway, Jimmy D holding forth, seated between
Avila and a glowering Tibbs, who in turn are flanked by
their trainers, all facing a mob of press.

JIMMY D
But now, information has come to
light which threatens this historic
bout.

A knot is forming in Johnny's gut.

JIMMY D
The source of this "information,
"is here with us now.

(MORE)
JIMMY D (CONT'D)
(pointing to Johnny)
That's right, Mister Smith, I see you lurking there in the shadows, like some prophet of doom and gloom afraid to face the light. But I'm sorry to disappoint you and say that your dire prediction will not dissuade this brave man.

REPORTERS
Prediction? What's he saying?

And as Johnny realizes he's been set-up, the photographers and TV cameramen are already swinging their lenses around.

JIMMY D
That's right, Maine's very own Johnny Smith has made a psychic prediction that Danny Avila will not only lose the bout on Friday, but will lose his life. Does that prospect frighten you, Mister Avila?

AVILA
I got a prophecy of my own... (raises his fists)...and I'm gonna make it come true with these.

JIMMY D
And how about you, Mister Tibbs?

TIBBS
I'm gonna put him down, and I'm gonna put him down hard. He ain't dead, he's gonna wish he was.

JIMMY D
Whoo! There you go, folks, call it a grudge match, or call it a death match, but whatever you call it, don't miss Friday night's fight, 'cause you're gonna wanna see how this one ends.

Meanwhile reporters are mobbing a stunned Johnny. "Is it true, Johnny?", "What'd you see?" etc. Bruce pulls Johnny away, elbowing his way through the mob of press.

BRUCE
C'mon, let's get you outta here.  

(MORE)
BRUCE (CONT'D)
(then to press)
Move -- let the man pass -- back off...

And as Bruce leads him out, Johnny looks back and exchanges a glare with Jimmy D, who beams at the highly marketable chaos he's unleashed, as we --

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE
ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. SET OF ESPN'S "TUESDAY NIGHT FIGHTS" SHOW

Anchored by boxing announcers BRIAN KENNY and MAX KELLERMAN.

KENNY
And in other news, the return of big-time boxing to Lewiston, Maine, taking a strange twist...

KELLERMAN
...a very strange twist...

KENNY
...with a psychic's "prediction" that challenger Danny Avila will die in the course of his 12-round match-up with middleweight champ Darryl "The Terminator" Tibbs.

KELLERMAN
Tell me, is this boxing or professional wrestling?

KENNY
Well, one thing I can tell you: interest in this fight is skyrocketing, along with ticket sales, no doubt making promoter Jimmy D very happy.

KELLERMAN
But not everyone up in Maine, apparently.

He cues a clip as we CUT TO:

INT. PURDY'S OFFICE - DAY

GENE PURDY (ID'd in a super) responding curtly into reporters' tape recorders.

PURDY
If Johnny Smith says a man will die then a man will die. What disgusts and saddens me is that his gift of prophecy is being used to publicize this event rather than cancel it.
INT. JOHNNY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Where Johnny is busily multi-tasking, watching Purdy on TV while scrolling through a web page on his Powerbook that's headlined "TIBBS RELEASED FROM JAIL AFTER ASSAULT."

PURDY (ON TV)
Have we become as debased as the Romans when they threw Christians to the lions?

JOHNNY
You tell 'em, Gene.

The doorbell rings. Sighing, Johnny clicks off the TV, rises.

OMITTED

INT. SMITH HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

Johnny opens the door to reveal Avila, looking distracted and suspicious, as though unsure exactly why he's here.

JOHNNY
Danny... I didn't expect to see you here.

AVILA
Yeah. I didn't expect to be here either.

(looking around)
Nice crib. Guess being a psychic must pay pretty good.

JOHNNY
Actually, my last paying job was as a teacher. This was my parents' house... it still is, I suppose... it's held in a trust.

And Johnny's admitting this partly out of awkwardness, but also because he can feel Avila's suspicion and doesn't want to give him any grounds to distrust him.

AVILA
Must still cost you some bucks keeping it up though, huh?

JOHNNY
I don't sell my services, Danny, if that's what you're getting at.

(MORE)
JOHNNY (CONT'D)
I'm not working an angle for Jimmy D or anyone else.

AVILA
Then why are you trying to screw this up for me? You got any idea what this fight could mean? For me? For my family?

JOHNNY
You mean money?

AVILA
Screw the money. This is a title fight. A championship fight. I worked for this! You understand that?

JOHNNY
I'm not trying to hurt your career, I'm trying to save your life.

AVILA
This is my life, and you're gonna stop messing with it!

And Johnny eyes him, realizing Avila's deeper concern.

JOHNNY
Why? Because you're starting to believe me?

And now he's really hit a nerve, Avila's anger ratcheting.

AVILA
You hear what I just said?!

JOHNNY
Were you hoping I'd admit it was just a lie, a scam, a curse I can take back?

AVILA
I'm telling you to shut up!

JOHNNY
Because I can't take it back...

And now with a shout of rage and frustration, Avila grabs Johnny and throws him up against the stairwell.
SUDDENLY - (IN A VISION)

THE BANISTER SUPPORTS BECOME ROPES, AND NOW JOHNNY'S BEING HELD AGAINST THE RING APRON IN...

INT. ARENA - NIGHT (VISION - CONTINUOUS)

On the other side of the ropes, Doc Kowalski and Vic Murphy are trying to revive the dead future Avila as Tibbs prances around the ring, arms raised, and the crowd roars.

JOHNNY
...just like I can't stop what I'm seeing... what I'm seeing right now...

AVILA
(pulling back a fist)
Shut up! Just shut the hell up!

JOHNNY
You're lying on the canvas. Vic's trying to revive you but he can't, because you're already dead.

IN THE STAIRWELL

Avila can't resist glancing through the banister supports, imagining the grim scene that Johnny's describing. Then, even angrier, he turns back, ready to throw that punch...

INT. ARENA

More people entering the ring now... PARAMEDICS administering CPR... but it's clearly hopeless...

JOHNNY
You want to change the future?
You want to live? Then quit. Walk away.

And somehow these words defuse Avila's anger, leaving disgust instead. He releases Johnny and the VISION ENDS.

RESUME REALITY

AVILA
I ain't walkin' away from nothin'. I never ran from a fight in my life, and I'm not starting now.
(backing away)
I'm warning you.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
AVILA (CONT'D)

Stay away from me, and stay out of this fight.

He exits. Off Johnny, his sense of hopelessness growing...

OMITTED

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

Bruce and Johnny approach a bench in some T.B.D. scenic locale.

BRUCE

You sure this is the spot?

JOHNNY

We're early.

BRUCE

Next question: Why are we here?

JOHNNY

Because it occurred to me -- while Danny Avila was pinning my head against my stairwell -- that maybe we're going about this the wrong way. If we can't stop the fight, maybe we can arrange a different ending.

Bruce senses where he's going.

BRUCE

You're thinking of trying to use your abilities to help him win?

JOHNNY

I'd settle for helping him survive. But I can't help him if I can't get near him.

(MORE)
JOHNNY (CONT'D)

(beat)
He won't talk to me anymore and his trainer's already thrown us out of his gym. Which is why we need somebody who can talk to him, somebody he trusts.

And he turns as we see Helena Avila walking toward them, carrying a store-bought lunch, wearing a wary expression.

EXT. CITY PARK - LATER

Tracking in front of Johnny, Bruce and Helena as they walk along, Johnny finishing up his story, Helena pensive, fingering A SMALL CRUCIFIX PENDANT.

JOHNNY
I know it must be hard to believe... hard for anyone to believe...

HELENA
No, it's not.
   (eyeing Johnny)
I think things happen to people for a reason. Things like your accident. Like your meeting Danny.  
   (beat, forthright)
To me you are an angel, Mister Smith, sent to protect my husband.

JOHNNY
I think he'd probably disagree with you.

HELENA
You have to understand boxers. They think if they admit their fear, they're finished. But I know my husband, and he is afraid.

BRUCE
Anyone would be afraid of dying.

HELENA
Maybe it's that, or maybe it's something that scares him just as much. Failure... the end of his hopes and dreams... I don't know. What I do know is he'll never quit.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

HELENA (CONT'D)
No matter how scared he is.

JOHNNY
Then help us use what I saw to change the future. Your husband's future... your child's future.

HELENA
How?

INT. AVILA'S GYM - DAY

POV ANGLE as we come through the door and boxers part to make way for us, giving us both curious and hostile looks.

We approach the back, where Avila's hitting Tyrell's target mitts, Vic's supervising. As all three men turn to us...

REVEAL HELENA LEADING JOHNNY AND BRUCE

HELENA
Danny... I know --

But he cuts her off angrily.

AVILA
What the hell you doing bringing them in here?

HELENA
Be quiet and listen. They want to help.

VIC
Yeah. Help him into a coffin.

HELENA
(strong)
That's not true.
(to Avila, re: Johnny)
I want you to listen to what he has to say. 
(he's about to object)
Please, Danny. If not for yourself, then for me.

Avila shakes his head... eyes Johnny skeptically.

AVILA
I already told you, I ain't quitting.

(CONTINUED)
JOHNNY
I'm not asking you to.

AVILA
Then why are you here?

JOHNNY
Like your wife said, to help you.

AVILA
Help me how?

JOHNNY
By using my abilities... to guide you... in any way I can.

AVILA
Yeah. Right.
(to Helena)
Okay, I listened. Now get him out.

But now Bruce quickly steps forward.

BRUCE
You watched Tibbs' fight tapes, didn't you?

Avila shrugs. Vic eyes Bruce guardedly.

VIC
Sure, we always watch tapes to see what a guy does.

BRUCE
You mean to see what he did. In the past. Well what if Johnny could show you "fight tapes" from the future so you can see what Tibbs is gonna do, in that ring, Friday night?

Avila's grudgingly impressed; he hadn't considered the ramifications of Johnny's putative powers. He eyes him.

AVILA
Okay, say I'm just assuming you're not entirely full of it, you can really do that?

And Johnny glances at Bruce, who may just have oversold his abilities, but he hides his uncertainty and nods.
CONTINUED: (2)

JOHNNY
Possibly. You need every edge you can get and I can be that edge.

BRUCE
Trust him, Danny. I've seen him do amazing things.

And Avila's not quite ready to trust him, but then his skepticism is also competing with his fear, and his hope. He glances at Vic, who's similarly conflicted, protective of his fighter but also superstitious. He shrugs.

VIC
We got three days left. This is all about your head now. It's your fight kid.

A beat, then Avila takes a couple of steps closer to Johnny, looks him in the eye.

AVILA
You know there's no second place here. You're on my team, you fight to win, just like me. You down with that?

A beat, then Johnny nods. Avila holds out his taped hand, but as Johnny takes it, we RAMP TO HIS FACE.

INT. ARENA RING - EXTREME ON AVILA'S GLASSY EYES (VISION)

As we pull up, revealing Avila lying dead on the canvas, Vic and the Doctor beside him. And now Johnny's there too, wearing an Avila team jacket, no longer an observer but part of this grim scene.

Then we continue pulling up until their figures become tiny and insignificant, framed in the slowly rotating square of the ring. THE VISION ENDS.

RESUME ON JOHNNY

still holding Avila's hand and forcing a smile, never feeling more like the Grim Reaper come to visit as he says:

(CONTINUED)
JOHNNY
Yeah. I'm down with that.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO
FADE IN:

INT. ARENA - RING - NIGHT (VISION)

Once again it's the twelfth round and the crowd ROARS as Tibbs bulls Avila across the ring with a series of punishing body blows, then slams that first left hook into his already battered face, the force of the blow closing Avila's eyes (which will be significant later) and sending droplets of sweat and blood -- the latter from a cut over Avila's right eye -- flying. Only now --

THE ENTIRE SCENE FREEZES

And we WIDEN to show Johnny walking into frame (sans cane) as he studies the fighters. He moves closer, observes Avila's cut, and the droplets of sweat and blood NOW SUSPENDED IN MID-AIR. Then he turns to Tibbs, runs a hand along the man's hooking punching arm.

JOHNNY
A left hook. That's how it starts.

SMASH TO:

INT. AVILA'S GYM - PRACTICE RING - DAY

Vic and Tyrell observing from outside the ropes, Bruce beside them. In the b.g., some of the other fighters have stopped training to watch the odd scene as well. Vic's expression is decidedly skeptical.

VIC
That's how what starts?

INT. ARENA - RING (VISION)

Johnny's still eyeing the two frozen fighters.

JOHNNY
That last combination... in the twelfth round. It's always the same.
INT. GYM - CONTINUOUS

Vic and Tyrell exchange looks. Vic decides to go along with this for now and challenges Johnny.

VIC
Okay, a left hook. Then what?

INT. ARENA RING (VISION)

The CROWD ROAR RESUMING as Tibbs throws a second punch -- a straight right that rotates his body into a southpaw stance -- and once again the ACTION FREEZES at the moment of impact. Johnny steps alongside Tibbs' frozen figure, starts to repeat the punch.

JOHNNY
A right... a straight right, I'd guess you'd call it...

INT. GYM - CONTINUOUS

As Johnny now rotates his body, pulling Avila toward him with his left hand, while his right fist stops just short of his jaw.

JOHNNY
Only he rotates his body as he throws it... like this.

And Avila finds himself staring into Johnny's eyes, eyes that clearly aren't even seeing him, and he's spooked.

VIC (O.S.)
A "Fitzsimmons Shift."

And Avila and the others turn to Vic, who's now eyeing Johnny with surprise, this last move provoking a memory, which in turn prompts the boxing historian in him.

VIC
Bob "Ruby Robert" Fitzsimmons, first triple world champ. He'd use his right to switch to a southpaw stance, then throw a big left hook to the solar plexus. Devastating.

He's engaged now, or at least curious.

VIC
All right, what's he throw next?

And again Johnny turns to the fight only he can see as...
INT. ARENA - THE FIGHT RESUMES

But just for a moment as Tibbs again freezes as he indeed connects with a big left hook to Avila's body.

JOHNNY
Yeah, it's a left to the body...

And now the fight resumes, in a sort of STOP-MOTION, Johnny narrating as each punch lands, briefly freezing the action...

JOHNNY
Then another right, an uppercut...
Then a left hook to the head...

Once again the final haymaker sends Avila crashing to the canvas like a felled tree. Camera follows him, then pulls back and up to a CLOSE-UP of Johnny looking down.

JOHNNY
That last left hook blind-sides you on the temple.

As camera now PANS TO:

INT. PRACTICE RING - AVILA'S UNSETTLED FACE

As he also looks down, seeing only empty canvas but now imagining the rest. He winces as he feels --

JOHNNY'S HAND

now gripping his wrist so hard it's shaking. Unnerved, Avila jerks his wrist away, and Johnny reacts as he comes out of the vision.

VIC is now considering it all thoughtfully.

VIC
Assuming this ain't just a circus act, it's the shift that sets it all up. I ain't seen a guy use it for years...
(beat)
...but I know Tibbs' trainer, and he's the kinda guy who might just dust it off, see if they catch us napping.

He eyes Johnny, reappraising him, then:

(CONTINUED)
VIC
Mister Smith, you can step out of the ring...

Then he turns to Avila's sparring partner, Carl.

VIC
Carl, get your ass in there, we've got work to do.

INT. GYM - LATER - CLOSE ON VIC'S BATTERED TIMEX

The second hand sweeping past the 12, then revealing Vic, glancing down at it as he watches Avila and Carl sparring in the ring. Avila isn't throwing any punches, just blocking as Carl whales on him, Vic egging him on.

VIC
That's it, beat on him like you just found him screwin' your wife.
(to Avila)
Remember, kid, this happens, it's gonna be after twelve long rounds with the toughest middleweight out there.
(glances at his watch again, then)
Now!

And Carl throws the COMBO, tagging Avila with a left and a straight right, shifting his stance, then throwing the left to the solar plexus that follows the shift. Avila drops his gloves in response to the body blow, leaving himself open for the right uppercut and left hook to the head, knocking him back on the ropes. As Avila shakes it off and dances away, we find --

BRUCE AND JOHNNY

watching from ringside as Vic now offers some reassurance and advice.

VIC
That's okay, that's okay. Remember: When you see the shift you drop your right -- the right elbow -- and block that body shot 'cause that's the killer. Then you've got to get you gloves back up before that uppercut or you'll be wide open for the left hook. Got it?

(MORE)
VIC (CONT'D)
(Avila nods)
Then do it.

TIME CUT - NEW ANGLE
Avila and Carl sparring again, Avila getting tired.

VIC
Now!

Once again, Carl nails him with the right. But this time after the "shift," Avila drops his elbow, neatly blocking the left hook to the body, then jabs with his other hand to get clear. He smiles through his mouthpiece at Vic.

AVILA
Piece of cake, Vic.

Johnny and Bruce exchange encouraged looks, but Vic's not satisfied.

VIC
Sure, when you know it's coming.
(to Carl)
This time, you pick the moment.

Carl nods, and the two men resume sparring. As Johnny and Bruce continue to watch, Carl throws the combo again, and once again Avila blocks it, lowering his elbow to block the body blow, then getting his glove back up in time to deflect the left hook to the head.

AVILA
Like I said, I can handle it.

VIC
You're still late getting that glove back up after dropping the elbow. When Tibbs throws this combo at you, it's going to be like trying to catch a bullet with your teeth -- any doubt, the slightest hesitation and your dead.

Avila exchanges a determined look with Johnny, then...

INT. AVILA'S GYM - AVILA'S LEFT THUDS INTO A HEAVY BAG
(FORMERLY SCENE 48)

Pulling back to show Vic stopping him to again demonstrate

(CONTINUED)
**CONTINUED:**

the elbow drop, then the follow-up defensive jab, Johnny and Bruce watching, as we begin a --

**TRAINING MONTAGE (FORMERLY SCENE 49)**

Series of shots of Avila being run through exercises designed to break down the combination into its component parts, then defend against those parts.

A CLOSE ANGLE highlights AVILA'S FEET, as he's taught to shift his weight back in response to the Fitzsimmons shift.

Vic demonstrates how to anticipate the move, drawing a line of sight from Danny's eyes to his own hips as he rotates them to deliver the right.

Another angle shows Avila dropping his right elbow, absorbing the follow-up left with increasing success.

A flurry of left hooks to the head, Avila doing a better job blocking them with each successive punch.

Johnny and Bruce both participate as well, Bruce assisting by holding a heavy bag, and Johnny again demonstrating some of the punches he saw in his vision: a hook followed by an upper cut, etc. The sequence culminates in --

**THE PRACTICE RING**

as Avila now consistently defends against Carl's attack, Johnny and Bruce standing with Vic watching, all of them encouraged.

**VIC**

That's it kid. Thought and action become one thing. No hesitation, that's the key.

**BRUCE**

I'd say he's got it licked.

**JOHNNY**

Sure hope you're right.

But he sounds more hopeful than convinced...

**INT. AVILA'S GYM - LATER (FORMERLY SCENE 50)**

The rest of the boxers are long gone. Johnny and Bruce watch Vic gesturing to Avila as he reviews some moves. Avila nods dutifully, wiping his face with a towel.

(CONTINUED)
As they approach, they catch the end of a Vic pep talk.

VIC
Okay, weigh-in's tomorrow, so go home, rest up and think happy thoughts about killing the bastard.
(turns to Johnny)
You satisfied?

Johnny smiles, then nods to Avila.

JOHNNY
You looked good, man.

AVILA
I feel good... I'm ready...

Avila picks up on Johnny's concern.

AVILA
What's the matter, you don't believe me? Go ahead, see for yourself...

Avila raises a fist up to Johnny, who hesitates to touch it. Bruce and Vic watch, all of them afraid of what Johnny might see.

VIC
You're ready kid. You said so yourself. Leave it at that.

AVILA
I'm not afraid. Not anymore.

Avila reaches out, his fist gently connecting with Johnny's chin, triggering...

SUDDENLY A BIG RED BOXING GLOVE, WIELDED BY DARRYL TIBBS, IS HEADED RIGHT FOR HIS FACE

INT. ARENA RING - NIGHT - POV SEQUENCE

as Tibbs rains more blows on us -- we're caught in the headlights of this combination as we INTERCUT WITH --

INT. GYM - CONTINUOUS - ON JOHNNY

as he reacts to the punches.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

ANGLE - BRUCE STANDING WITH AVILA

as they both see Johnny jerking like a spastic rag doll fighting with the Invisible Man. Other fighters notice too, and the sight is at once weird and almost comic; a couple point and smile. But Bruce knows this is anything but funny, and rushes toward Johnny, just as --

INT. ARENA RING - POV ANGLE AND SLOW-MO

Tibbs cuts loose with that final haymaker, his right hand rocketing toward us, the red glove filling the frame --

FLASH - AVILA'S DEAD EYES STARING UP (FORMERLY SCENE 51)

Johnny's fatal vision now reduced to imagistic shorthand.

INT. GYM - JOHNNY

reels as if hit by a truck, then starts to fall -- and is caught by Bruce barely in time. As Bruce helps steady him, Johnny opens his dazed eyes and mutters...

JOHNNY

I'm sorry... nothing's changed.

Avila explodes as Vic pulls him away.

AVILA

You're wrong! You hear me? Wrong!

Johnny and Bruce watch helplessly as Avila storms off.

OMITTED

INT. ANOTHER GYM - PRACTICE RING - DAY (FORMERLY SC.38)

As DARRYL TIBBS' GLOVED FISTS smash into a sparring partner's headgear and exposed face. Tibbs continues the savage assault until the man falls, one arm tangled in the ropes. It's an intimidating performance, especially since it's just a rehearsal for the bout to come.

TIBBS

Get up, bitch! Get your ass up!

The other fighter weakly waves him off. Tibbs fumes, calls out to his TRAINER as the groggy man is helped down.

(CONTINUED)
TIBBS
Yo, Frank, get me someone in here who can hit.

The Trainer gestures to another fighter, who approaches with a touch of trepidation. (NOTE: This gym is a spiffier redress of Avila's, the staff more neatly garbed and better equipped. Tibbs' trainer uses a DIGITAL STOPWATCH as opposed to Vic's strapless Timex.)

ANGLE REVEALING JIMMY D
reading glasses perched on his nose, reviewing contracts while finishing a call on his cell phone.

JIMMY D
Don't worry, my friend. Your assistance is appreciated and will be amply rewarded.

TIBBS (O.S.)
Yo, Jimmy.

He's leaning over the ropes, gesturing Jimmy over. Jimmy tosses his cell to Andrew as he backs toward him.

JIMMY D
Tell ESPN Darryl'll do a one-on-one for Sports Center.

He approaches Tibbs, flashing a broad grin.

JIMMY D
Just got a call from one of my "contacts" in the Avila camp. Seems our friend Mister Smith is sleeping with the enemy. They must really be running scared if they think a psychic's gonna help 'em.

TIBBS
Yeah, well I wanna talk to you about that guy. (looks around, then quietly)
What if he's right and I really kill this chump?

JIMMY D
Feeling guilty already?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

TIBBS
I mean, can I be prosecuted?  'Cause I won't do no more jail time.

And Jimmy D smiles a bit indulgently at his charge, and we sense that of the two, he's the scarier predator.

JIMMY D
I checked with the lawyers and there's no problem. So you just put it out of your mind and do what comes naturally.

TIBBS
(smiling)
All right then...

Tibbs nods, reassured, then pounds his gloves together and eyes his new opponent, who's adjusting his headgear.

TIBBS
Well what you waiting for, chump? Come and get your ass whupped.

And as Tibbs wades in and fires a jab, we CUT TO:

INT. JOHNNY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Johnny pokes at a container of Chinese food, taking out his frustration on the leftovers.

BRUCE
I know what you're thinking man, but you did everything you could.

JOHNNY
And it still didn't make a damn bit of difference.

BRUCE
He beat that combination every time in practice. You gave him a fighting chance...

(CONTINUED)
Johnny

...but I'm still seeing him die.
What if the problem isn't how he blocks the jab or counters the "Fitzsimmons shift"?

Bruce

Then what is it?

Johnny

(a beat, then realizing)
It's me.

Bruce

That's crazy John.

Johnny

No it isn't. I've made a self-fulfilling prophecy. You heard his trainer. One bit of doubt, one bit of hesitation and he's dead. And who planted that doubt in his head? Me. Danny Avila believes in me... in my prediction... more than he believes in himself...

(an idea forming)

...So if this is a self-fulfilling prophecy -- maybe it's the prophecy that needs to change.

Bruce

Change how?

(then, understanding)
You mean lie to him about what you're seeing? Make him believe he's going to win?

And it's apparent this doesn't sit too well with him, but Johnny doesn't see another choice.

Johnny

Maybe believing in a lie is better than knowing the truth.

Bruce

That's a scary thought, John.

Off Johnny, considering this... and his lack of options...
INT. LEWISTON ARENA - DAY - CLOSE ON A WEIGHT SCALE

As a pencil pushes a counterweight a fraction of an inch until it balances, and we hear:
CONTINUED:

DR. KOWALSKI (O.S.)
Daniel Avila, 156 pounds.

WIDENING TO REVEAL

Johnny and Bruce standing at the edge of a crowd of press gathered in front of the ring and empty arena seats. Tibbs is here too, naturally, along with officials including Kowalski and Jenkins; Vic, Jimmy D and Tibbs' trainer; plus cops and security personnel.

JIMMY D catches Johnny's eye and smiles. Johnny smiles back, then turns to watch...

TIBBS takes off his robe, then deliberately bumps Avila as he steps off the scale.

TIBBS
Watch where you're going, bitch.
(when Avila glares)
Yeah, you bad. Better get measured for your box, 'cause I'm gonna put you in it.

Avila tenses. Vic puts a hand on his shoulder.

VIC
Save it for the ring.

But Tibbs, intent on provoking him, overhears this and turns it into even more incendiary fodder.

TIBBS
I'm gonna save it for your wife, 'cause I know she's gonna need consoling.

And that does it. Avila goes after him and a MELEE ensues as both men are barely held away from each other.

JOHNNY has been watching this and now, with a glance at Bruce, he charges into the middle of the fracas and puts his hands on both fighters as he tries to keep them apart.

BRUCE
(genuine worry)
John!

But he can't get to him through the crowd, though his shout alerts the photographers, who begin snapping away.
And then the fighters are pulled apart and Johnny collapses, though this time it's a very deliberate swoon. Bruce moves to help him up as reporters crowd around shouting questions.

REPORTERS
What'd you see, Johnny? Is Avila still going to die?

JOHNNY
(weak)
He's going down... he's going down...

REPORTERS
Who, Johnny? Avila?

JOHNNY
(weak but clear now)
No... Tibbs. Darryl Tibbs.

And as the reporters scribble notes, we see Jimmy D reacting -- is this real or what? He tries to regain control of the situation...

JIMMY D
Don't listen to him! This man is a fraud!

But he's drowned out by the flurry of questions shouted at Johnny.

And then we see Johnny's true target audience: Danny Avila. He looks stunned, reacting to this surprising turn, not sure at first what to make of it, but we can see it already working on him as we:

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT THREE
ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

OMITTED

INT. LEWISTON ARENA - NIGHT

A PAIR OF PARAMEDICS roll a medical gurney down an aisle, accompanied by TWO DOCTORS in white coats, carrying medical bags. PULLING BACK to find a TV CAMERA panning to follow them as they go by as we hear:

JOE TESSITORE (V.O.)
Two teams of paramedics, plus
Boston's top cardiologist and
neurosurgeon...

REVEALING Jimmy D being interviewed by ESPN2 COMMENTATORS JOE TESSITORE and TEDDY ATLAS while ANOTHER TV CAMERA films them. The ring can be seen behind them, along with a boisterous crowd filling the arena.

TESSITORE (CONT'D)
...isn't that going a little overboard, Jimmy?

ATLAS
Especially with this Johnny Smith
guy saying now Avila's gonna knock Tibbs out.

JIMMY D
Well, I admit the gentleman's
prognostications have proven a tad capricious, but I'm not about
to risk the health of either of these two brave gladiators.

TESSITORE
Any "prognostications" of your own, Jimmy?

JIMMY D
Only that I think we're in for one hell of a scrap. And now if you'll excuse me, I'm gonna wish my fighter good luck.

And as he moves off with a wave...

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

ATLAS
There's one guy who's never at a loss for words...

TESSITORE
...or a good publicity stunt. Still, you gotta wonder if underdog contender Danny Avila isn't getting a "psychic boost" from Johnny Smith's latest "prophecy."

These last words taking us to --

OMITTED

AND

INT. AVILA'S DRESSING ROOM

Where a JUDGE finishes signing one of Avila's hand wraps while Vic smears Vaseline on Avila's scarred brows. Vic, Johnny, Bruce and Helena look on, Johnny glancing at the assistant trainer, who's somberly assembling his BAG OF CUT MEDICATION.

VIC
Remember to keep your right up, or you'll end up as ugly as me.

HELENA
(lightly)
You mean as handsome, don't you?

Avila throws a fast combo as the Judge exits.

AVILA
Man, I can't wait to get it on.
(to Johnny)
So'd you see how it's gonna happen?

Johnny smiles, encouraged by Avila's upbeat attitude.

JOHNNY
I just saw him going down, but remember, you've still got to put him there.

Avila begins shadowboxing, throwing hooks and combos.

AVILA
I hear ya. No problem.

(CONTINUED)
HELENA
My sister's waiting.
(kisses Avila's cheek)
Good luck, baby.

AVILA
Don't worry. I ain't the one's gonna need it.

Helena passes Johnny, her face beaming gratitude.
She mouths "Thank you" and SQUEEZES HIS ARM...

SLOW MOTION FLASH - RINGSIDE - CLOSE ON HELENA RISING FROM HER SEAT, HANDS GOING TO HER HORRIFIED FACE

RESUME ON JOHNNY

Rattled but maintaining his composure as Helena exits, only Bruce noticing his unease.

AVILA
Hey Vic, we got jackets for these guys, right?

VIC
On the table.

Avila grabs two TEAM JACKETS with his name emblazoned on them and hands them to Bruce and Johnny.

AVILA
You're in my corner, you gotta look sharp.

BRUCE
Thanks.

But as Johnny accepts his, we RAMP TO HIS FACE AGAIN.

SLOW-MOTION FLASH - AND NOW JOHNNY IS SEEING HIMSELF, WEARING THE TEAM JACKET AND FACING THE O.S. RING, AS HE REACTS TO SOMETHING AWFUL, HIS EYES CLOSING

RESUME

Johnny now hanging onto that smile for dear life as he sets the jacket down, and this time Avila's eyes narrow. A beat, then he speaks with deliberate casualness.

AVILA
Hey, how about everyone give me a minute with my medicine man here?

Vic eyes Johnny suspiciously, but nods.

VIC
Keep warmin' up.

Avila nods and smiles obligingly as Vic and the others file out, Bruce glancing back worriedly at Johnny.

(CONTINUED)
But when the door closes, Avila's expression changes.

AVILA
It's all a crock, ain't it?

JOHNNY
What do you mean?

AVILA
You didn't see me taking him down. You still think I'm gonna die in that ring.

JOHNNY
Danny, I told you what I saw.

AVILA
Yeah? Well, tell me again. 'Cause I want to know what you see right now.

And he holds out his taped hands. And now realizing he has no choice, Johnny reaches out and grips them. And as he does, camera spins around them and they become Avila and Tibbs locked in combat as Johnny experiences --

A RAPID SERIES OF FLASHES - THE COMBINATION REDUX

Tibbs hitting Avila with the combination punches; Avila falling, hitting the canvas. -- Then Avila dead, eyes open.

RESUME

As Johnny releases Avila's hands and now puts on his best poker face.

JOHNNY
It's just like I said. You hit him, he goes down.
   (then, off his dubious look, more forcefully)
My visions have changed, Danny. And that's because the future's changed. I see you're going to do this. I see it's going to happen. Believe me.

Avila eyes him, wanting to believe him but still unsure.
Finally, he nods. And then the door opens and Vic and other team members (not Bruce) come back in.

VIC
Five minutes. Time to get your gloves on.

Johnny starts to go, but Avila calls after him.

AVILA
Hey, don't forget the jacket.

And when Johnny turns, there's a hint of both a challenge and a plea in Avila's voice, as Vic helps him on with his gloves.

AVILA
Like I said, you're in my corner, you gotta look sharp.

Johnny reaches to pick up the jacket again, as though half afraid of getting another vision, but nothing happens. He gives Avila a last encouraging smile, then exits.

INT. ARENA - BACKSTAGE CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Bruce and Johnny walk along carrying their jackets.

JOHNNY
I lied to him. I touched him, then lied right to his face.

BRUCE
I thought that was the game plan.

JOHNNY
Only it isn't working. Nothing's changed yet. He must not believe me.
CONTINUED:

BRUCE
Maybe he'll believe it when you do.

JOHNNY
Believe what, Bruce? I made it up, remember? It's a lie.

BRUCE
It's not a lie, it's a hope. And my Dad used to say, what makes a hope reality is faith.

As Johnny meanwhile is distracted by...

A SILHOUETTED FIGURE (FUTURE MAN)
standing at the end of the hall, one hand in his pocket, backlit by the light of the Arena beyond (which needn't be seen). Johnny has an unsettling flash of recognition.

BRUCE (O.S.)
John...

JOHNNY
looks back at Bruce, and when he glances back down the hall, THE FIGURE IS GONE. He shakes off the seeming vision.

BRUCE
You've done everything you can, so why not just have some faith? In yourself, in Danny Avila, even in your visions. They didn't lead you here just to watch a man die.

NEW ANGLE
As they reach the end of the corridor, which opens to the crowded arena and the empty ring, glowing like a blank page under the lights. Johnny eyes it as though he can already see the future that will be written there.

JOHNNY
For Danny's sake, I hope you're right.

And as he eyes the ring, a BELL sounds, taking us to --
Avila charging in, scoring body shots with his left hook, but getting repeatedly stung by Tibbs' jab. His face is swollen, and he's working much harder than Tibbs, who dances to keep Avila in range of that punishing jab.
CONTINUED:

TESSITORE
An impressive performance by Avila so far, but after five rounds, Tibbs' jab is taking its toll.

ATLAS
He's still landing that left hook to the body, but he's getting hammered each time he rushes in. And if you look at the CompuBox numbers, Tibbs is outpunching him two to one.

REVEALING JOHNNY
watching near Bruce, Vic and Tyrell in Avila's corner. He winces as Avila absorbs a left-right combo, then ties Tibbs up. Turning away, Johnny sees:

HELENA
also looking pained. She's sitting with a slightly older woman, her SISTER. Contrasting her anxiety with:

JIMMY D
who smiles broadly as he watches the fight and Andrew lights his cigar. Then:

THE CROWD
excited and vocal, and perhaps there's no more blood lust than usual but that's not how it seems to Johnny. He turns back to the ring just in time to see --

AVILA GETTING KNOCKED DOWN BY A TIBBS LEFT HOOK
He's up quickly, takes the standing eight, a CUT bleeding over his right eye. During which we hear:

TESSITORE
And a big left from Tibbs knocks Avila down! He bounces back up, taking the standing eight, but that was no slip and what's more it looks like Tibbs has opened a nasty cut over his right eye.

The BELL rings.
AVILA'S CORNER - ON THE CUT MAN (ASSISTANT MANAGER)

working hard to stop the bleeding, and it's not pretty in close-up. Vic is sponging down Avila's heaving chest, shouting M.O.S. instructions to "Keep up the right" which we barely hear over the crowd noise and because we're watching from Johnny's perspective, seeing him now as he hands the Cut Man some medications, his face grim.

BEGIN MONTAGE - THE FIGHT CONTINUES

NOTE: And working with our technical consultant, and perhaps professional announcers, we'll flesh out a bit more of the fight and add snatches of appropriate voice over (SEE ADDENDUM A for additional dialogue for Tessitore and Atlas), but the shots we'll see will include:

A.) Avila hanging in there but increasingly rocked by Tibbs big punches.

B.) A RING GIRL HOTTIE

struts with a CARD for Round Six.

C.) AVILA

on the ropes, wincing as Tibbs pounds his body, then re-opens the cut with a savage hook.

D.) ALL INTERCUTTING WITH JOHNNY

watching, our focus on his reactions to Avila's increasingly desperate battle, as another round passes, another ring girl holds a card for Round Eight; then more fighting and Avila is knocked down again, getting more slowly this time, as we continue to PUSH CLOSER on Johnny, until another BELL sounds.

AVILA'S CORNER - CLOSE ANGLE

as Bruce throws up the stool and Avila sits heavily, his face a mess, taking in heaving breaths.

THE COMMENTATORS TALK EXCITEDLY INTO THEIR MICS

ATLAS

One round to go and frankly it's amazing Avila's still standing with all the punishment he's been taking.

(CONTINUED)
TELITORE
Terrible punishment from Tibbs' powerful jab and right hand, and at this point you've gotta wonder if Avila's trainer, Vic Murphy, isn't tempted to throw in the towel and maybe save his fighter even worse punishment...

And as he says this last line, we're already looking at...

JOHNNY
who sees another ring girl about to climb into the ring with the card for Round 12, and he turns to Bruce --

JOHNNY
Twelfth round.

And at this point Bruce doesn't know what to say anymore; he's as worried as Johnny as he hands a water bottle up to...

VIC
He's also watching the ring girl, now strutting with the card, and then turns to Avila, who winces as Tyrell again tries to close the cut, the eye under it red and swollen.

VIC
How you feeling?

AVILA
(breathing heavily)
All right. I'm all right. Just need that second wind.

VIC
(to Tyrell)
How's that cut look?

Tyrell just shakes his head. Vic eyes Johnny, who's again helping Tyrell, his face a mask, then makes a tough decision.

VIC
I'm callin' in the doc.

AVILA
What? No!

(Continued)
CONTINUED:

VIC
That cut's bad. You could be risking the eye.

But Avila can tell that isn't Vic's real concern. The trainer's remembering Johnny's original prediction, his superstitious nature abetting his concern for Danny.

AVILA
No way. No way you're taking me out.

VIC
You fought a great fight, kid, but it's still just one fight.

AVILA
No!

And now Avila looks to Johnny, his pained eyes asking a question. And as we push in on Johnny's troubled face, and on Avila's, our shots isolate them, in SLOW MOTION and perhaps shallow focus as well, so that for an extended moment they seem like the only two people in this arena.

MEMORY FLASHES OF AVILA
From Johnny's encounters with him throughout the show:

POSING WITH JOHNNY AT THE AIRPORT

WAVING JOHNNY INTO HIS GYM...

CONFRONTING HIM ANGRILY AT JOHNNY'S HOUSE...

TRAINING AT HIS GYM
getting knocked down, and getting up for more...

HOLDING OUT HIS FISTS,
challenging Johnny to touch him in the dressing room: a portrait of a man at once vulnerable and resolute.
CLOSER ON JOHNNY... THEN --

ANOTHER FLASH

This time of Johnny's devastating earlier vision of Avila dead on the canvas, eyes staring up vacantly...

RESUME - CLOSE ON JOHNNY, A BALANCE BEING WEIGHED

And finally he just gives in to his gut -- his empathy for this man, his hope or belief or faith or whatever you want to call it -- and he just nods slightly. And...

AVILA

receives this small gesture like an infusion of pure manna, Gatoraid for the soul, and now he finds that second wind, turning back to Vic...

AVILA

Give me the mouth piece. Give it to me!

Vic does. The BELL rings and Avila charges into the ring.

ROUND TWELVE - VARIOUS ANGLES

Avila and Tibbs go toe-to-toe, Tibbs at first surprised by Avila's new tenacity, then turning on his own juice.

TESSITORE

And Avila is just a different man this round... really giving it everything... and --

ATLAS

Now Tibbs is connecting with a series of shots to the body... driving Avila across the ring...

And indeed Tibbs is now bulling Avila across the ring with punishing body blows, the preamble to the COMBO.

JOHNNY TENSES AS HE RECOGNIZES THE MOMENT

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

THE CROWD SENSES IT TOO, RISING TO ITS FEET, ROARING AS...

TIBBS

lands the opening left hook of the combo and TIME SLOWS

ANGLE - JOHNNY'S HANDS GRIP THE EDGE OF THE CANVAS APRON...

AVILA - SLOW-MOTION

As he absorbs the first blow of the combo.

TIBBS' FEET AND HIPS - STILL SLOW-MO

starting to slowly come around with his right hand.

AVILA ADJUSTS - SLOW-MO

his weight shifting back, so that when Tibbs' second blow -- the right that initiates the "Fitzsimmons Shift" -- connects, it's off by a fraction of an inch, and Avila rolls with it, shedding some of its force.

AVILA DROPS HIS RIGHT ELBOW - SLOW-MO

Deflecting the body blow.

THE UPPERCUT - SLOW-MO

Lands on his chin, raising his head, setting him up for the final blow...

AVILA RAISES HIS RIGHT - SLOW-MO

His glove rises toward the incoming left hook, but the instant before contact...

THE COMBINATION REPEATS

IN REAL TIME, and it all happens so quickly that it looks very much like the sequence we've seen repeatedly in Johnny's visions. And so when it ends the same way, with Avila going down hard, we can understand why --
JOHNNY REACTS

as if this is indeed the tragedy he's foreseen, while...

HELENA

rises from her seat, hands flying to her mouth just as Johnny saw in his flash in the dressing room. And now....
A HUSH falls over the entire arena, as the crowd, which has been morbidly teasing themselves with the prospect of psychic-predicted death, is now faced with the seeming reality.

THE REFEREE begins counting over Avila's still form as we intercut with:

BRUCE

VIC

HELENA

JIMMY D

and finally...

JOHNNY

who CLOSES HIS EYES, again in a repeat of his other dressing room flash. And indeed it looks as though just what he was afraid his visions were showing him has indeed come to pass. Only now --

A ROAR FROM THE CROWD

opens his eyes and he reacts as he sees --

AVILA

rolling onto his side, then climbing to his feet just in time to beat the count. The Ref holds his gloves, asks him a question we can't hear, and Avila nods that he's okay.

HELENA

is already crying with relief, the crowd CHEERING WILDLY as --
AVILA now takes the fight to Tibbs, finding a still deeper reserve as he rains lefts and rights that have Tibbs sagging on the ropes when the final BELL sounds. And now Tibbs slumps down, tangled in the ropes. It's too late to be ruled a knockdown or a knockout, but as the ref pulls Avila away the crowd goes nuts. (NOTE: And this final fight action may be accompanied by shards of relevant voiceover commentary -- again see ADDENDUM A)

Avila drops to his knees, spent, and his corner empties into the ring, other people crowding in too, all except for...

JOHNNY who hangs back, weary with relief. He sees Jimmy D looking at him, wondering perhaps if somehow Johnny's engineered this. And Johnny just smiles at him.

INT. ARENA - LATER

Empty now, except for A CLEANING CREW sweeping up the refuse.

BRUCE AND JOHNNY

Their team coats exchanged for their own, stand near one of the aisle exits.

BRUCE

So what do you think was the turning point?

JOHNNY

Well, it could've been at the weigh-in, or even before the fight, in the dressing room. The flashes I had there, they seem to correspond with what ended up happening.

(beat)

Then again...

BRUCE

What?

JOHNNY

"Change one detail and all of life changes," right?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
JOHNNY (CONT'D)
Do you think sometimes that one
detail can just be you, and what
you're willing to believe, have
faith in?

BRUCE
Maybe... if that belief touches
someone else.

And he nods down to the ring, where a solitary figure is
stepping through the ropes, a small gym bag in one hand.

JOHNNY
I'll meet you outside, okay.

Bruce nods and we stay on him for a beat as he watches
Johnny head toward the ring. And then he smiles ruefully,
heads through the exit.

INT. ARENA - RING

Danny Avila, his cuts stitched and taped, stands in the
empty ring.

JOHNNY (O.S.)
Heard there was a hell of a fight
here tonight.

He's standing on the apron just outside the ropes.

AVILA
I lost, 'case you didn't notice.
'Course, I also didn't die... or
knock the guy out.

JOHNNY
No? Looked to me like he was
saved by the bell.

And Avila smiles; he's still not sure if Johnny was
bullshitting him about his visions, but he also knows
what Johnny's support and faith did for him.

AVILA
Yeah, you can argue that. But I
still don't think this is going
to help your career as a psychic.

JOHNNY
(lightly)
Now that would be a tragedy,
wouldn't it?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

He holds up the rope for Avila. We watch from the ring as they head back up the aisle, and perhaps we again hear the ROAR of the crowd, from fights past or fights still to come.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

THE END