

BETWEEN ROUNDS

**a 10-minute play
by Tom Baum**

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Characters (in order of appearance)

JAKE. A fight announcer.

DESHAUN. A fight announcer.

EINAR. 50s-60s. A fight trainer.

DARRYL. 30s. A middleweight fighter.

RING OFFICIAL. Offstage. Prerecorded

RING ANNOUNCER. Offstage. Prerecorded.

Two playing spaces: The fight announcers' table and one corner of a boxing ring.

(Lights up on two fight announcers in front of wireless TV mikes—JAKE and DESHAUN. Surge of crowd noise as a punch is landed.)

JAKE: —Hard right hand up top by Mendez!

DESHAUN: Coleman covers up again.

JAKE: And a left hook to the body!

DESHAUN: That one got Coleman's attention.

JAKE: Darryl's always been a slow starter, but this is a new level of inactivity.

DESHAUN: He showed more aggression at the weigh-in.

JAKE: Could be Darryl's listening to his wife. Yolanda's on record wanting him to quit.

DESHAUN: Which frankly, Jake, I don't like to hear that kind of talk. Yolanda Coleman's living in the lap of luxury, her own seven-figure bank account, every possible perk you can think of. Hanging up the gloves, that is the fighter's decision to make, without a wife or any other naysayer getting in our head.

JAKE: Sorry, Deshaun. Can't agree.

DESHAUN: Why, do you do everything your wife tells you?

JAKE: No cause to get personal, Deshaun.

DESHAUN: I'll take that as a yes.

(Crowd reacts to a punch.)

JAKE: Whoa! Mendez catches Coleman with a wicked body shot.

DESHAUN: Yolanda Coleman's head is in her hands, and the fight's only three minutes old. You can't stand the heat, don't marry the chef.

(Bell rings.)

JAKE: Round one to Mendez, going away.

(Lights down on JAKE and DESHAUN. Lights up on DARRYL, sitting down on the stool that EINAR shoves under him.)

EINAR: What the fuck are you doing out there?!

DARRYL: Dude, I'm having trouble finding him. You knew the ring was gonna be this big, why did we train with an 18-footer? This is how you earn your 10%?

EINAR: 10? Check your contract, brother. 25 off the top. Between getting you to lose the weight and Yolanda crying on my shoulder, I oughta be getting half.

DARRYL: I hope you tell her to chill the fuck out.

EINAR: She's getting sick of the violence, champ.

DARRYL: What do you mean? I never hit the bitch.

EINAR: I'm not saying you did, I'm not saying you didn't.

DARRYL: In my ear all the time about quitting. How's that supposed to make me feel?

EINAR: Never mind your tender feelings. Locate this cocksucker and keep moving to your left.

(Sound of hammer on table.)

RING OFFICIAL: *(over)* Seconds out.

(DARRYL stands. EINAR inserts the mouthpiece, grabs the stool, steps out. Bell rings. Blackout. Lights up on JAKE and DESHAUN. Crowd noise as a punch lands.)

JAKE: —Another left to the head by Mendez. Coleman can't seem to pull the trigger tonight.

DESHAUN: That panicky look on Yolanda's face isn't helping.

JAKE: Did your wives always come to your fights, Deshaun?

DESHAUN: They knew better than to stay away.

JAKE: Well, I hope you kept your temper, Deshaun.

DESHAUN: Hey. You know who never feels like hitting their wife? Lesbians.

(Crowd reacts to a punch.)

JAKE: Left hand by Mendez. Right down the pipe.

DESHAUN: Talk about fair-weather friends—Yolanda Coleman is leaving the building.

(Bell rings.)

JAKE: Coleman stumbles back to his corner. Can he possibly weather another round like that?

(Lights down on JAKE and DESHAUN. Lights up on DARRYL, lurching to the stool that EINAR shoves under him. DARRYL's eye is bloodied. EINAR applies Vaseline and the Eye Iron.)

EINAR: When are you gonna listen to me? I tell you to move left, you go right, he nails you with a hook. Dude, will you fucking pay attention, stop flirting with the ring-card girl!

DARRYL: I wasn't looking at the ring-card girl.

EINAR: Can't say I blame you. First natural tits I've seen in Vegas.

DARRYL: I was trying to locate Yolanda.

EINAR: Yolanda's gone, Darryl.

DARRYL: What the fuck?! It's only two rounds.

EINAR: Well, you better last past the fourth.

DARRYL: What, you got a bet down? You looking to get suspended? *(pause)*
What's the over-under?

EINAR: You don't last beyond the fourth, a lot of books are going belly up.

DARRYL: But you'll be happy.

EINAR: What, you think I bet on you to lose? Are you crazy?

DARRYL: I wouldn't put it past you, Einar.

EINAR: Don't worry about my happiness. Worry about your fucking chin.

(Sound of hammer.)

RING OFFICIAL: Seconds out.

(DARRYL stands. Mouthpiece in. EINAR grabs stool, steps out. Bell rings. Blackout. Lights up on JAKE and DESHAUN.)

JAKE: Compubox numbers after two rounds: Mendez has landed 42 out of 66, Coleman 8 out 32.

DESHAUN: Another left hand inside by Mendez. Coleman's legs are shot.

(Crowd reacts to a punch.)

JAKE: Right hand down the pipe. And Coleman is over the ropes!

DESHAUN: That's a knockdown!

JAKE: The ropes held him up, otherwise he was going down. Coleman takes a standing eight.

DESHAUN: This fight is over if Coleman takes one more punch.

JAKE: At least Yolanda isn't here to see this.

DESHAUN: Jake, you worry too much about women's feelings. They get sick of that after a while. Ask your wife.

(Bell rings.)

DESHAUN: Saved by the bell.

JAKE: That's a 10-8 round for Mendez.

DESHAUN: Now Einar has a decision to make. Does he listen to his fighter or his fighter's nagging wife?

(Lights down on JAKE and DESHAUN. Lights up on DARRYL, sinking onto the stool, bloodied and exhausted.)

DARRYL: Where's Yolanda? Did she ever come back?

EINAR: Her seat's empty, champ.

DARRYL: Jesus, Einar, maybe I should quit. I don't want to lose her.

EINAR: Well, this just in: Yolanda's leaving you no matter what happens.

DARRYL: Who says?

EINAR: That's what she told me.

DARRYL: When?

EINAR: When you went on *Live with Kelly and Whoever*. And said you were never gonna hang them up, no matter what she wanted.

DARRYL: You watched that program?

EINAR: We watched it together.

DARRYL: You and Yolanda.

EINAR: That's correct.

DARRYL: That's a goddamn morning show.

EINAR: Yes. And that's a cute tattoo she has by her pussy.

DARRYL: You been drilling my wife? Is that what you're telling me?

EINAR: Yeah, does that make you want to kill somebody?

(Sound of hammer.)

RING OFFICIAL: Seconds out.

(DARRYL stands. Mouthpiece in. EINAR steps out with the stool. Bell rings. Blackout. Crowd reacts to a punch.)

JAKE: —Coleman lands a right on the jaw of Mendez.

DESHAUN: Hardest punch of the fight.

JAKE: Something got Coleman's juices going.

DESHAUN: He's a different fighter now.

JAKE: Whatever Einar told him, it must have lit a fire.

DESHAUN: Right left combination by Coleman!

JAKE: And as Coleman has rallied, Yolanda Coleman has returned to ringside!

DESHAUN: Looping right by Coleman—and Mendez is down!

JAKE: Devastating right hook!

DESHAUN: Mendez is not getting up from that. He's not even trying. This fight is over!

(Ecstatic crowd noise. Lights up on EINAR, embracing DARRYL.)

DARRYL: You sneaky motherfucker, you lied me into victory! Man, I love you so much, I'm not gonna fight you on the 25%.

EINAR: Don't worry, champ, I earned way more than that.

DARRYL: You dog.

EINAR: Yolanda too.

DARRYL: Shit, no wonder she was freaked out. It wasn't the beating I was taking, it was the rounds I was losing. She saw the knockout, right? That must have changed her thinking, making all that money on me? If she gives me any more grief, you'll help me out? Make her see the light?

EINAR: I believe she's already seen the light.

(EINAR reaches in his inside jacket pocket, hands DARRYL an envelope.)

DARRYL: Fuck is this?

EINAR: As a family friend, I'm entitled to serve papers. *(calls)* Yolanda, sweetheart, wait up, I'm coming. *(to DARRYL)* Bye, champ. Have a nice life.

(EINAR exits.)

DARRYL: Motherfucker, you come back here!

(DARRYL rushes after him. Bell sounds. The RING ANNOUNCER starts to announce the result.)

RING ANNOUNCER: *(over)* One minute and 32 seconds of the fourth round, the winner by knockout—

(Crowd noise surges, drowning out the RING ANNOUNCER. Lights up on JAKE and DESHAUN.)

JAKE: Me oh my, will you look at that. Einar and Yolanda heading up the aisle, arm in arm—my goodness, now they're kissing—

DESHAUN: Coleman leaps from the ring—

JAKE: He spins Einar around, lands a hard left to his jaw!

DESHAUN: This fight is not over!

JAKE: Roundhouse right by Coleman!

DESHAUN Einar hits the deck!

JAKE: Now Darryl grabs Yolanda.

DESHAUN: He's hugging her!

JAKE: That looks like a wrestling hug to me.

DESHAUN: He's pushing her away!

JAKE: Yolanda's down!

DESHAUN: Coleman's offering to help Yolanda up....Whoa, look at that, she spit in his face!

JAKE: Coleman rips off his glove and he's spanking her!

DESHAUN: Serves the bitch right.

JAKE: Whoa. Are you condoning domestic violence?

DESHAUN: First he's henpecked, then he's cuckolded. How much abuse is a man supposed to take?

JAKE: He's not supposed to dish it out, otherwise he's not a man.

DESHAUN: Spoken like a pussywhipped announcer.

JAKE: Fighting words, Deshaun.

DESHAUN: Name the venue, Jake.

JAKE: Man, I was kidding.

DESHAUN: I wasn't.

JAKE: Your fists are deadly weapons.

DESHAUN: Open carry, motherfucker!

(DESHAUN swings at JAKE. JAKE blocks the punch, grabs and holds on. DARRYL enters.)

DARRYL: Gentlemen, stop punching...that's enough...I said break!

(DESHAUN and JAKE stop punching.)

DARRYL: That's better. Go to your corners.

(DESHAUN and JAKE exit in opposite directions. DARRYL grabs one of the mikes.)

DARRYL: First of all, I want to thank God for giving me the strength to beat the odds. Juan Mendez, thank you, brother, you fought a hell of a fight, and as for me, well, Darryl Coleman learned a very important lesson tonight. Nobody knows what goes on in a marriage, and more than that...if the husband is a star performer...if he's a bona-fide world champion putting bread on the table and a Rolex on his lady's wrist, that sorry-ass motherfucker is the last one to find out the truth. So who is the real aggressor here? Who is the victim? It's a free country, y'all can work that out for yourselves. *(pause)* Now whatever happened to that ring-card girl?

(Blackout. END OF PLAY.)