

MIRAMICHI

Written by

Brent Rouleau

leafswinin05@yahoo.ca

Crowd CHEERING swells. A BELL RINGS to start a boxing match.

FADE IN:

INT. EMPTY BOXING RING - NIGHT

CHRIS SHABAN, Yvon Durelle's trusted manager, reflects over IMAGES from the ring: one Black fighter, one White fighter. No faces. The CHEERING fades away.

-- the two fighters circle one another.

-- a powerful punch to a body midsection.

-- a mouthpiece flies and blood sprays after a punch.

-- fancy footwork on the canvas.

-- a head snaps back after a sharp jab.

-- a powerful hook/cross combination connects.

-- a body crashes hard to the canvas.

CHRIS (V.O.)

Boxers are there to establish an absolute experience, a public accounting of the outermost limits of their beings. They will know, as few of us can know of ourselves, what physical and psychic power they possess--of how much, or how little, they are capable.

A jubilant crowd ROARS.

FROZEN IMAGE of Yvon and Archie Moore from their epic 1958 fight, their locked eyes aflame with invincibility and faith.

CHRIS (V.O.)

I saw that in a book on boxing. I read it to Yvon once. He understood the sentiment. Another guy who understood it: Archie Moore.

FLASH TO: Yvon slumps on a stool in the corner of a boxing ring, his head bowed, eyes half open, mid-fight. Sweat, blood drip off him.

A muted BELL RINGS. Yvon slowly rises, advances.

CHRIS

That's what I love about boxing: a
dichotomy buried in a riddle
wrapped in 16 ounces of cowhide and
a fist.

FLASH TO: Yvon pauses outside the Montreal Forum in a
delicate snowfall, 1958, the night before the Moore fight...

... the light of destiny in his bright eyes, the weight of a
country on his back.

CHRIS (V.O.)

Sometimes a man gets both hands on
his dream, sometimes just one. And
Destiny... well, Destiny comes
calling once. If you're lucky.

CLOSE ON the eyes of both Yvon and Moore from the picture we
saw a moment ago: two men in a private war.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PICK-UP TRUCK (MOVING) - DAY

A mud-splattered pick-up speeds recklessly down a rough rural
road. YVON DURELLE (18) drives. He's got a wild streak a mile
wide and a smile to match.

His brothers PLACIDE (27, the charismatic father figure) and
ERNIE (19, a natural-born follower) brace themselves.

PLACIDE

Yvon, Jesus, take it easy. The
trees aren't going anywhere.

YVON

That's how I drive, big brother.
Pass me a coke, Ernie.

Ernie passes a can up.

ERNIE

Placide?

PLACIDE

No.

The truck swerves and skids off the road for a second.

PLACIDE (CONT'D)

Hey! Tabarnak! Try the road!

With daredevil glee, Yvon takes both hands off the steering wheel. The pick-up roars deep into the woods.

EXT. LUMBER CAMP - DAY

The campsite is busy with several rugged LUMBERJACKS working. The Durelle brothers saw and chop wood.

Later, the Men sit around eating lunch amidst campfires, pots and pans. Yvon, Placide and Ernie are off to one side.

A nearby group of burly Lumberjacks makes a merry racket.

BIG LUMBERJACK
(to Yvon)
Hey, sissie boy, the coffee.

Yvon ignores him, not before staring the giant in the face.

BIG LUMBERJACK (CONT'D)
You, Frenchie, bring me the
goddamned coffee pot or I'll go
over there and bend you and your
girlfriends over that stump.

Big laughs from his group. Placide knows where this is going.

PLACIDE
(to Yvon)
Don't. Just give it to him.

YVON
Yep.

Yvon brings the pot over. Stops in front of the crew, smiles.

Big Lumberjack holds his tin cup out. Yvon pours steaming coffee onto one of his boots.

BIG LUMBERJACK
Fucking hey! You little prick!

And it's on. Yvon smashes the coffee pot into his face and jumps him. Placide and Ernie are there in a flash.

The other Lumberjacks jump up. Men from all over the camp rush over. A melee.

Yvon pounds the Big Lumberjack. Blood flies.

EXT. DURELLE HOUSE - DAY

TITLE CARD: *BAIE SAINTE-ANNE, NEW BRUNSWICK, 1946*

A Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) cruiser pulls into the laneway followed by Placide driving the pick-up truck.

Yvon's parents ERNEST (58) and OLIDA (55) watch stone-faced from the front porch.

Ernest is thin, frail, but projects a fierce intensity. Olida's nickname would be "The Storm" if anyone had the stones to give her one.

Scathing eyes from both bore into Yvon as the COP hauls Yvon out of the backseat and marches him up to the house.

Ernest keeps fierce eyes on Yvon and slowly unloops his belt. He nods to the Cop when they get to the bottom step.

ERNEST
(to Yvon)
Inside.

Yvon steps quietly past his father and goes in.

INT. DANCE HALL - NIGHT

A rustic recreation centre. MUSIC plays.

Yvon horses around with his group, the FRENCH KIDS. Ernie eyeballs girls, can barely keep a tongue in his head.

A pack of better-dressed ENGLISH KIDS observes Yvon's group, smokes, taunts them ("*fuckin frogs*," "*peppers*" etc.)

The French Kids return the favour ("*maudit anglais*," etc.)

The English Kids intercept a SMALL FRENCH KID on his way across the floor, circle him menacingly.

Ernie brings it to Yvon's attention. Yvon swaggers toward the English Kids. The French Kids follow behind their leader.

On his way, Yvon notices THÉRÈSE (14), a rare beauty in this ragged town. After a few seconds of eye contact, she tracks him as he strides over to confront the English Kids.

It's a short negotiation. Both groups stomp for the exit.

On his way out, Yvon passes Thérèse again, winks, no smile.

EXT. DANCE HALL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Everyone gathers outside to watch the rumble. Yvon catches Thérèse's eye in the last moment before the free-for-all.

Both groups size each other up, rush in, throw wild fists and savage kicks and hurl English/French slurs.

Yvon is a fighting machine: pulls hair, swings non-stop.

INT. BLACKSMITH SHOP - DAY

Ernest fiercely bangs away on a boat anchor. A home-rolled cigarette dangles from his mouth. He notes Yvon's visible injuries from the rumble.

ERNEST
Scrappin' again? Where?

YVON
The dance.

ERNEST
You'll pick the wrong guy someday.

YVON
Maybe.

ERNEST
Not maybe. You didn't bring home
much yesterday.

YVON
No luck with the weather.

Yvon wanders around, restlessly bangs a few tools.

Ernest hacks from the smoke, spits it out, lights another, slants a fierce eye at Yvon, continues to work.

YVON (CONT'D)
You doing okay, dad?

ERNEST
Are you the doctor now? Go get the
boat out. What are you waiting for?

YVON
I don't know. Something. Everyday
here it's the same thing. And look
at you, dad.

ERNEST

Yeah, look at me what? You afraid of hard work now?

YVON

No.

Ernest pulls a flask, takes a swig.

ERNEST

This life not good enough for you? You were born here. You'll die here. It's what we do. But we feed our family, go to church on Sunday and the next funeral when it's comes.

YVON

And that's it?

ERNEST

That's fucking it. I work in here. You and your brothers work on the bay. And your mother's got thirteen kids to take care of.

YVON

We fight for scraps at the table.

ERNEST

Come here.

Yvon steps over as Ernest yanks a fiery orange steel bar from the forge, places it on an anvil.

ERNEST (CONT'D)

You see this piece of steel?

He smashes it repeatedly with his hammer.

ERNEST (CONT'D)

It doesn't complain. It doesn't wish it was somewhere else. It's got a job to do. And doesn't give a fuck about dances or scraps at the table or thirteen kids or lobsters in the Miramichi fucking bay. This is your life, Yvon.

EXT. DURELLE HOUSE - YARD - DAY

Placide pounds wooden posts into the ground with a sledgehammer. Ernie mends a lobster trap.

ERNIE
What is it?

PLACIDE
You'll see. Go get Yvon.

ERNIE
He's at the boat. We're going out.

EXT. VILLAGE OF BAIE SAINTE-ANNE - DAY

A snapshot of the town: the docks, the boats, sparse crumbling roads and simple homes.

Poverty is obvious, but doesn't look hopeless. Yards strewn with rusted cars, furniture, ragged kids, forgotten toys.

In stark contrast: the majestic beauty of the Miramichi River, impassively flowing eastward.

EXT. DURELLE FISHING BOAT - DAY

On the river, Yvon and Ernie drag up the last of their half-empty lobster traps onto their modest, aging boat.

ERNIE
How many?

YVON
Less than yesterday.

ERNIE
You see dad today?

YVON
He was in the shop. I think he's sick again.

Ernie indicates the scanty lobster haul.

ERNIE
This won't cheer him up.

YVON
Nothing ever does. Let's go in.

EXT. THE DOCK - DAY

On a small boat, an aging fisherman--SAVIOE--struggles with his traps. He wheezes roughly, latches on to the railing.

Ernie docks their boat while Yvon watches Savoie sit heavily down. Yvon hops off, quickly moves to Savoie's boat.

YVON

You having some trouble?

SAVOIE

Lost my breath.

Yvon climbs onto Savoie's boat.

SAVOIE (CONT'D)

You're Ernest Durelle's kid?

YVON

Yvon. Here, you have to stack them.

Yvon tries to sort the tangled mess of Savoie's traps.

SAVOIE

Your father made the anchor for this boat. Never paid him, though.

YVON

Times are tough.

SAVOIE

He's a good man, Ernest. Tell him Mauril Savoie doesn't forget his debt. He pays. How is your father?

YVON

Not too many good days for him.

Yvon gets a few lobster traps ready.

YVON (CONT'D)

Are you okay to go out there?

SAVOIE

I've got six daughters.

YVON

Maybe you could take a rest today.

Ernie secures their boat, readies the catch to go home.

YVON (CONT'D)

Ernie! Bring me two pails.

Ernie obediently brings two pails full of lobsters onto Savoie's boat. Yvon dumps them into Savoie's empty pails.

SAVOIE

Hey, you don't have to.

YVON

Come back tomorrow, we'll show you
a good spot.

Yvon and Ernie go back to their boat. Placide is there in the
pick-up to take them home.

INT. PICK-UP (MOVING) - DAY

Placide drives. Ernie rides in front, Yvon in the back.

ERNIE

He just gives the guy two pails. So
we're only coming home with three.

YVON

He knows dad. And he's got six
daughters.

ERNIE

Yeah, and so does our dad.

YVON

Jesus Christ, Ernie. You think we
bring two more pails home we're
moving into a fucking gold palace?
Did you see the guy? He'll be dead
in a month. And no one's gonna give
a shit he ate two extra pails of
lobster in his life.

ERNIE

Okay, calm down.

YVON

And in case you didn't know, that's
us someday. Forty more years on a
boat, you better hope some kid
comes along with two pails of
lobster and says 'you need this
more than I do'. Cuz that's all
we're ever gonna be. Open your
fucking eyes.

ERNIE

I don't know what happened to him
today.

PLACIDE

What is it little brother?

YVON

Are we gonna live like this forever? Fight my own brothers just to get a few bites of the bread.

ERNIE

And a few of the sisters, too!

Yvon gives Ernie a smack in the head.

YVON

Fuckin' dummie!

Placide stops at an intersection.

A huge white Buick speeds by and HONKS at them. Yvon watches it for a long time. A lady's long scarf trails in the wind.

YVON (CONT'D)

Someday.

ERNIE

Someday what?

YVON

Just someday.

ERNIE

Hey, Placide, step on it. We get there late, won't be anything left.

Placide turns and burns rubber down the road.

PLACIDE

Cheer up, Yvon. I got a surprise for you.

EXT. DURELLE HOUSE - DAY

The pick-up parks outside the house.

Through a front window: chaos as an unruly mob of SIBLINGS(ages 5-25) storms the table, wrestles for position.

Olida meets Placide, Ernie and Yvon on the front porch. With a weary eye she glances back through the window at the dinner time bedlam. Sighs.

OLIDA

Another blessed day.

Ernie and Yvon stop in wonderment when they see what Placide built in the yard: a makeshift but functional BOXING RING.

EXT. DURELLE YARD - BOXING RING - NIGHT

Placide puts the finishing touches on the ropes around the ring. Yvon appears out of the darkness.

PLACIDE
You like it?

YVON
What's it for?

PLACIDE
Fighting. They taught us when we
were in Italy. I heard you like to
fight the English kids.

YVON
Not much else to do around here.

Placide tosses him a pair of 16 oz. boxing gloves.

PLACIDE
Try them. You punch someone with
these on, you don't get a ride home
with the cops.

Yvon isn't totally sure what they are.

EXT. DURELLE YARD - BOXING RING - DAY

Placide pounds punches into a stuffed hockey bag held by Ernie. Yvon watches intently.

A group of four LOCAL BOYS horses around passing the lane. Ernie waves wildly to his friends.

ERNIE
Hey, boys! Come see what we got.

Later, a larger group of Local Boys crowds the ring, hang on the ropes, take turns trying to box.

Ernie, Yvon and Placide watch the action.

ERNIE (CONT'D)
We better get to the boat. Dad says
we'll get good luck today.

YVON
Maybe. The weather's better.

Ernie and Yvon head down the lane just as one of the Local Boys unleashes a lucky punch and puts the other kid down.

EXT. DURELLE YARD - BOXING RING - NIGHT

A single light comes from the side of the house. Ernie holds the stuffed hockey bag. Yvon pounds away.

INT. DURELLE HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ernest observes them through a window. He smokes peacefully, glances up at a wall clock: 10:44 pm. Approval in his eyes.

EXT. DURELLE YARD - BOXING RING - DAY

Placide speaks to six LOCAL MEN inside the ring. Tosses two of them a set of boxing gloves each. Gives them basic instructions. The two men retreat to their corners.

Placide bangs on a tin cup, the two Men charge into the centre of the ring and begin to trade wild haymakers to the shouts and laughter of the Men outside the rings.

EXT. DURELLE HOUSE - YARD - DAY

Ernie and Yvon get into the pick-up truck.

Olida and Ernest wait solemnly on the porch in their Sunday best. They go down the lane past the pick-up to the road.

ERNIE

Someone die?

YVON

Yeah. Old Monsieur Savoie.

ERNIE

Shit. And six daughters.

A large sedan pulls up. Olida and Ernest get in.

EXT. DURELLE YARD - BOXING RING - NIGHT

Placide and Yvon shift around, throw a few jabs, inside the ring under the single light.

PLACIDE

What's the matter with you lately?

YVON

What?

PLACIDE

Going around like a sick dog.

Yvon drops his gloves, Placide stabs him with a soft jab.

PLACIDE (CONT'D)

Keep your hands up.

Yvon snaps, unleashes a chaotic flurry of punches which Placide easily ducks.

PLACIDE (CONT'D)

Hey! What the fuck, little brother?

Yvon retreats to a corner. Yanks hard on the ropes.

YVON

This place is a fuckin' trap.

PLACIDE

What are you talking about?

YVON

Work, eat, die. I might as well be a fuckin' dog. Sacramento! I can't keep doing this. I can't do everything around here. If dad's sick all winter... he can barely get out of bed for Chrissake.

PLACIDE

Everyone's doing what they can.

YVON

Take a look around, Placide. No one's got any money. No one's ever gonna do anything around here.

PLACIDE

Jesus Christ, you're only 18. Give it a chance. What do you want?

YVON

Just some kind of life. Not this. What are you gonna do?

PLACIDE

There's some guys in town looking for fighters. They got a real club. I'll give it a try. See how it goes. Not a lot of money in it. I'll probably end up with you on the boat.

YVON

Yeah... But I mean it, Placide, I can't do this forever.

PLACIDE

Who says you have to? Put your hands up.

They resume the lazy sparring, circle each other.

PLACIDE (CONT'D)

Those guys in Chatham, they set up fights. You get paid. I teach guys round here to fight, maybe they can make some money. Watch my eyes.

Placide squares up to Yvon, the lesson gets serious.

PLACIDE (CONT'D)

Put your left foot ahead. Maybe you can make some money.

Placide throws half-speed but accurate hooks. Yvon isn't sure how to stand or defend himself.

YVON

I don't know how to fight.

PLACIDE

I know. Don't look at my hands. Watch my eyes.

Yvon blocks a few punches, lobs a few decent crosses.

PLACIDE (CONT'D)

Okay, not bad.

Placide slips in a bit of fancy footwork while Yvon punches.

YVON

You can get paid to do this?

PLACIDE

No. Paid to do this...

He dances outside and stuns Yvon with a lightning fast right cross from nowhere. It stings, but mostly just Yvon's pride.

Placide laughs heartily, ducks and dives as Yvon chases him recklessly around the ring.

EXT. DURELLE HOUSE - YARD - NIGHT

Thérèse and a few GIRLFRIENDS pass by the end of the lane.
They stop to watch the brothers in the ring.

THÉRÈSE
What are they doing?

GIRLFRIEND
I don't know.

THÉRÈSE
Are they trying to hit each other?

GIRLFRIEND
Yeah, I guess so.

THÉRÈSE
I think I know that guy. I seen him
at the dances. He's always
fighting, eh? Never talks to girls.

Yvon freezes when he notices the Girls.

GIRLFRIEND
Oh, Christ, he's looking at us.
Let's go, let's go!

IN THE RING: Placide puts a playful but forceful jab into
Yvon's unguarded face, recognizing a teachable moment.

YVON
Sacrament! Fucker!

PLACIDE
Ha! Shit-for-brains, don't get
distracted in the ring! Lesson
number one: you watch the eyes, not
the girls.

END OF THE LANE: The Girlfriends scurry away.

IN THE RING: Yvon swings violently, misses every time. In
frustration, Yvon rips off his gloves, fires them away.

END OF THE LANE: Thérèse lingers, boldly stares at Yvon, then
casually moves on with the others.

IN THE RING:

PLACIDE (CONT'D)
Hey, little brother. You want a
different life, or you wanna be on
the boat forever?

Yvon seethes.

PLACIDE (CONT'D)
Now put the fucking gloves back on.

Yvon stomps across the ring to retrieve them.

PLACIDE (CONT'D)
The guys from that boxing club,
they'll be here in two weeks.

EXT. DURELLE HOUSE - BOXING RING - DAY

Placide and Ernie circle the ring, check names. Inside the ring, a SKINNY MAN and a SHORT MAN comically slug it out.

A bunch of Local Men and Boys hangs on the sagging ropes. They watch, wait their turns, cheer, laugh.

ERNIE
Somebody's gonna get hurt.

PLACIDE
Shit, these girls couldn't
break an egg. Look at this guy.

The Skinny Man swings, misses awkwardly, falls. Huge cheers.

PLACIDE (CONT'D)
Probably just pissed his pants!

A sleek, dark car pulls up and parks on the roadside.

PLACIDE (CONT'D)
That's them.

ERNIE
How many fighters they need?

PLACIDE
I don't know, they said it's a new
club. Look at this.

They watch Yvon climb into the ring against a much BIGGER MAN. They both immediately swing mad haymakers.

PLACIDE (CONT'D)
(shouts to Yvon)
Keep your hands up! Hands! Up!

Yvon peeks over at Placide, didn't hear what he said.

The Bigger Man slugs Yvon flush on the button. Yvon staggers back against the ropes.

PLACIDE (CONT'D)
Jesus, don't look at me, stupid!

Ernie convulses with laughter.

CLYNE CASSIDY (27, a silky smooth Middleweight Champion) and DODE DEALY (30s, the money man) approach the makeshift ring skeptically, like millionaires navigating a slum.

The ragged scene isn't what they expected: shabby-looking Boys and hard-luck Men in mismatched athletic gear.

DODE
Christ, look at these guys.

CLYNE
Supposed to be three or four brothers, beating the shit out of each other.

DODE
This Placide guy?

CLYNE
He's the oldest, the toughest bastard around here. They say.

DODE
You knew him in the Army?

CLYNE
Knew of him.

Placide approaches, all smiles. Shakes Clyne's hand.

PLACIDE
Mr. Cassidy.

CLYNE
Placide, this is Dode Dealy. The new club's ready to go. We need fighters. Let's see what you got.

Later: Placide boxes, shows impressive skills, easily outpoints his OPPONENT, knocks him down.

DODE
Kid's good. Sign him up, Clyne.

CLYNE
Hey, Placide!

Clyne waves him over as Yvon climbs back into the ring.

CLYNE (CONT'D)
Nice work kid, we got a card in two weeks. You gonna be ready?

PLACIDE
Yes, sir. I'm ready now.

Dode watches Yvon fight a HUGE MAN, reacts when Yvon bashes the giant with Marciano-like force.

DODE
Hey Clyne, come watch this kid.
He's giving it good to that big bastard. Oh, shit!

Yvon swings wildly but with undeniable passion. They're amused by Yvon's farcical and frenzied attack style.

DODE (CONT'D)
Five bucks he puts that brick shithouse down.

CLYNE
(to Placide)
Know this kid?

PLACIDE
My baby brother.

CLYNE
No shit. How old is he?

PLACIDE
Eighteen.

CLYNE
You teach him that style?

PLACIDE
He just kinda does it his own way.

Yvon throws some big bombs and puts the goliath down.

DODE
Well, maybe teach him a few things--

In the ring, Yvon thinks the fight is still on. He jumps his fallen opponent, clubs him mercilessly.

ERNIE
--Oh, shit! Yvon! Yvon!

Ernie and Placide charge into the ring to haul Yvon off.

INT. CHATHAM HOCKEY ARENA - BOXING RING - NIGHT

Fans pack the rink. Placide fights in the ring. Ernie and Dode are in his corner.

Yvon hangs on the ropes, follows the action closely.

Both fighters are skillful, evenly matched. Yvon flinches with every punch thrown on both sides.

The BELL RINGS three times to end the third round.

IN PLACIDE'S CORNER -

His face is nicked up. Ernie attends. Yvon rushes over.

PLACIDE
Having fun, kid?

YVON
Christ, I wanna kill that bastard!

PLACIDE
Yeah, me too. Still one round left.

The BELL RINGS for the last round.

BACK IN THE RING -

Placide fights well but is floored by a big punch. The Referee counts.

Before he gets up, Placide peeks at Yvon, who has rage in his eyes and looks like he's about to jump into the ring.

Placide grins at Yvon, winks, springs up to beat the count.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Ernie takes Placide's gloves off. Yvon steams with frustration. Dode consults a small notebook.

DODE
Good fight, kid. Four-round decision, no big deal. You'll get the next guy.

YVON
You nailed him good in the second, though. Fuck, bang!

DODE
(to Placide)
You ready to go again? Three weeks.
Back here in Chatham.

Placide nods.

DODE (CONT'D)
How 'bout you, Yvon? We got a spot
open. Wanna take a shot?

YVON
Fuckin' right, I will.

PLACIDE
The Durelle brothers, eh?

DODE
(to Placide)
Make sure he's ready.

EXT. THE DOCKS - DAY

Ernie prepares the boat. Yvon leans on the dock, watches the
Miramichi glisten and flow.

ERNIE
You coming or what?

FLASH TO: Yvon remembers the glamorous white Buick as it sped
toward them on the highway the day they helped Savoie.

This time it passes in SLOW MOTION.

The beautiful WOMAN in the passenger seat reveals a dazzling
smile for Yvon as her long scarf dances in the wind.

Ernie snaps him out of the reverie.

ERNIE (CONT'D)
Hey, next dance in two weeks. I'm
gonna do it before you do, brother!

YVON
Yeah, but the side of the barn door
won't count.

ERNIE
Let's go. We come home with
nothing, dad's not too sick to whip
your ass. And mine, too!

Yvon ambles to the boat.

YVON
You ever scared you'll end up like
dad?

ERNIE
Sick?

YVON
No. Here. Poor.

ERNIE
I'm already here. I'm already poor.

YVON
I'm gonna get a nice car someday,
Ernie. I'll drive the hell out of
it, too. Then I'll get another one.

ERNIE
Yeah, sure you will.

YVON
You watch.

ERNIE
You ready for tomorrow night?

YVON
We'll see.

He climbs onto the boat, feigns his fighting stance.

INT. CHATHAM ARENA - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

TITLE CARD: CHATHAM, NB, 1947

Yvon's professional debut, on the undercard.

Ernie works on Placide's preparations. Dode consults a
schedule. Other FIGHTERS mill about getting ready.

DODE
(to Placide)
Feeling good? You're on the third
card. Where's the kid?

PLACIDE
Yvon, let's go! You're on first.
Dode's here!

Yvon emerges from around a corner.

He's a sight: old salt-beaten sneakers, flimsy woolen fishing socks and swimming trunks...

... which are severely ill-fitting, frighteningly tight. Shocked silence, history's quietest boxing dressing room.

DODE

Holy shit...

PLACIDE

Sacrament... Yvon... what the hell?

YVON

What?

ERNIE

You throw one punch, your balls are flying out.

Placide laughs to break the tension.

PLACIDE

All right, little brother. Let's see if you can stay on your feet and keep your nuts in your pants.

Everyone resumes pre-fight preparations.

DODE

Get your gloves on, kid. I gotta go over a few things with you.

Ernie arrives to help Yvon get taped and get his mitts on.

DODE (CONT'D)

Yvon, it's four rounds. You get knocked down you watch me. I'll count. You knock him down, go back to the corner.

YVON

Then what?

DODE

Just watch me, Yvon.

INT. CHATHAM ARENA - BOXING RING - NIGHT

Yvon's back is to the other corner as Ernie gives him last-minute instructions.

His opponent SONNY RAMSAY enters the ring.

Yvon spins, wild-eyed and bolts across the ring. Dode, as referee, intercepts him. Ramsay's eyes bulge in alarm.

DODE

The bell, Yvon. Jesus Christ, you gotta wait for the bell!

YVON

The bell? When's the fuckin' bell?

DODE

In a minute, Yvon. Just wait. Christ, we gotta do the intros!

YVON

(glares at Ramsey)
You, I'm gonna fuckin' get you! I'm gonna fuckin' *kill* you!

DODE

Ring the goddamned bell!

The BELL RINGS. Yvon sprints ferociously out of his corner.

Ramsay hasn't taken two steps before Yvon throws savage but chaotic punches. Loud CROWD CHEERING.

Ernie yells encouragement to Yvon. Ramsay just covers his head while Yvon mindlessly pounds away.

INT. CHATHAM ARENA - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

After the fight, Yvon shadowboxes the punches he threw.

YVON

See that, they threw in the fucking towel in the second!

ERNIE

Put him down four times!

YVON

Yeah, four! Christ, I could go another one tonight.

Clyne and Dode come through the door.

CLYNE

Hey, kid! Good start, eh? You gave poor Sonny the big thunder. He didn't know whether to shit or go blind after the first.

ERNIE

And he kept his balls in, too!

CLYNE

Ya, about those trunks, Yvon.
We'll, uh, work on that.

YVON

When's the next one?

CLYNE

Ha, slow down, champ. Lots of
paydays out there. Weekends mostly.

DODE

And we gotta start some training.
Not every night's gonna be a two-
round cake walk against a punching
bag like Sonny Ramsay.

YVON

Don't need to train to punch. Last
man standing, right?

DODE

That's right. I'm glad you got the
whole thing figured out after one
fight. Here's your purse.

He counts out some dollar bills.

YVON

Eight bucks?

DODE

Yeah, welcome to the big time. Not
bad for less than ten minutes work,
eh? I'd tell you not to get too big
for your britches but...

(nods at his trunks)

I think it's too late for that.

YVON

Big for my britches?

DODE

Just keep your eyes on the prize,
kid. Go home, fish, stay in shape,
find a girl. Blow your eight bucks
on her. I'll call you in two weeks.

INT. DURELLE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Yvon fiddles with a battery-powered radio. He gets reception, hears the fight intro (Joe Louis vs. Billy Conn, 1947).

A mob of Kids escapes the kitchen and scatters.

OLIDA (O.S.)

Yvon! Get in here and clean up!

YVON

Ma, I'm listening to the fight.
It's Joe Louis! The Brown Bomber,
ma! Can't the kids?

Olida stomps in.

OLIDA

The brown what? I don't give a
Christ who he is. Get the hell into
that kitchen. Now!

YVON

Okay, okay, just let me hear the
first round. Big Joe's gonna knock
him out.

OLIDA

Yeah, or I'm gonna knock you out!

The CALL of the fight begins in the background. Yvon jumps up, shadows the action as he hears it, takes Joe's part.

INT. HOUSE PARTY - NIGHT

A crowded party.

Yvon (now 20) and his friends mess around, check out the girls. He spots Thérèse (now 16) amongst her friends. She isn't shy about staring back.

He heads toward Thérèse but another BOY gets there first. A tiny hesitation, then Yvon firmly swings the kid around.

YVON

Take a walk, boy.

The nervous Boy immediately understands and leaves. An uncertain moment of silence. Finally:

YVON (CONT'D)

Hi. I'm Yvon.

THÉRÈSE

I know.

The ecstatic eyes of her Friends are glued to the pair.
Thérèse's beaming smile tells them she's captured her prize.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

He escorts her home with a shaky grasp of how the courting ritual works. She's unfazed, happy to lead.

THÉRÈSE

A shy boy?

YVON

Maybe a bit, I guess.

THÉRÈSE

You want to take me to the dance
Friday night? You can if you want.

It's a curveball for Yvon. No answer.

THÉRÈSE (CONT'D)

You used to go to the dances.

YVON

A few times.

THÉRÈSE

I saw you last summer. You were
boxing. With your brother, I think.

YVON

Placide, he was teaching me.

THÉRÈSE

And now?

YVON

Now I fight for money. For real.

They stop, down the road from her house.

THÉRÈSE

I know what the fights are. You
going to take me sometime? That's
my house over there.

YVON

Sure. I guess...

THÉRÈSE

Good. Meet me here in the morning.
Right here. This spot.

Awkward silence. He's lost for the right move. She kisses him quickly on the cheek and skips giggling toward her house.

EXT. THÉRÈSE'S HOUSE - DAY

Yvon stops at the spot, kicks dirt around, waits for Thérèse, gives himself a pep talk.

YVON

Remember to talk, stupid. You show
her a good time. But talk smart.

Thérèse sails down the laneway of a tidy, dignified
farmhouse. A henhouse, neat lawn, lush fields beyond.

YVON (CONT'D)

You must really like living there.

THÉRÈSE

It's nice.

YVON

That your henhouse?

THÉRÈSE

Yes.

YVON

Come on!

He snatches her hand and they race up the lane past a grassy
meadow and into the henhouse.

INT. HENHOUSE - DAY

Yvon scans the hens, yanks one up and swipes two eggs.

THÉRÈSE

Yvon, what...?

YVON

Lunch!

He flies out through the back door.

EXT. GRASSY MEADOW - DAY

On Thérèse's property, a secluded peaceful place. Vibrant flowers, a sturdy fence, grass for days.

Yvon cracks open the eggs, swallows them raw. She's shocked but his wild nature entices her. Yvon surveys the landscape.

YVON
Your family's rich?

THÉRÈSE
No, not rich. Yours?

YVON
Six brothers, six sisters.

THÉRÈSE
I never seen you in school.

YVON
Dropped out at eleven. Too many fights. Even with the teachers.

THÉRÈSE
So, what did you do?

YVON
Went on the boat.

THÉRÈSE
Is it dangerous?

YVON
Fishing?

THÉRÈSE
Fighting.

YVON
Yes. Very. You could get killed.

THÉRÈSE
Killed?

She tries to decide if he's serious.

YVON
How old did you say you were?

THÉRÈSE
Almost seventeen.

YVON
Too young.

THÉRÈSE
For what?

YVON
To go to the fights. Come on! I
gotta meet Placide. I'll show you
where I go to school now!

He grabs her hand and they sprint across the field.

EXT. FISHING BOAT - DAY - MOVING

Summer 1949. Open sea.

Yvon and Ernie haul in their traps. STAN MARTIN (20s), a
trusted casual worker who knows this business, helps.

They work in silence. Some previously-caught lobsters move
listlessly in a tank.

ERNIE
Give me a hand here, Yvon. Stan,
pull that pot in. Anything?

Stan hauls up a trap.

STAN
Six or seven.

Yvon stares across the water, distracted.

ERNIE
Yvon?

YVON
Dode wants me to move to Chatham to
train. Says I gotta decide if I'm
in for real or what.

ERNIE
That's bullshit. Ostie, you won six
fights in a row this year.

STAN
You gonna go?

YVON
Don't know. There's a girl I like.

ERNIE

There's lots more girls there.

YVON

This one lives here. And this one's the one I like.

ERNIE

Thérèse Martin? You still going with her?

STAN

Shit, Yvon! That's my sister's kid! She's only 16!

YVON

Almost seventeen.

ERNIE

She's a hot little number, Yvon. Better marry her before you go. She won't last long around here.

Yvon flashes a mischievous grin, makes a fist with his huge right hand.

YVON

You won't last long around here.

INT. THÉRÈSE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Yvon shows up from training/road work, barely makes it through the door, in bad shape, boils on his back and legs.

LIVING ROOM -

Thérèse rubs ointment on him.

THÉRÈSE

You wear the same clothes everyday. You have to change them, Yvon.

YVON

It's all I have.

THÉRÈSE

I'll get you something of my brother's.

LIVING ROOM LATER -

Yvon--dressed in her brother's clothes--gingerly roams around, inspects pictures, furniture, etc.

YVON

Your house is so perfect.

THÉRÈSE

It's not perfect.

He stops at a picture of her family, sees joy in their togetherness. This whole place seems otherworldly to him.

YVON

At my house. It's always... it's like a junkyard. We're packed in there like sheep. Can't move. Just get up everyday, try to grab something to wear and beat the others down to the table.

THÉRÈSE

You won't live there forever.

She gives him a passionate kiss. Possibly his first one ever.

INT. CHATHAM ATHLETIC CLUB - DODE'S OFFICE - DAY

Dode, Clyne and Yvon meet with CHRIS SHABAN (40's), a Moncton boxing manager who exudes courtesy but doesn't try too hard to hide the fierce competitor inside.

DODE

Yvon, this is Chris Shaban. He manages a few guys around Moncton.

CHRIS

Yvon Durelle, the Fighting Fisherman. You're making a name.

They shake hands.

CLYNE

We're looking at Billy Landry, maybe. Tough bastard. I should know, I fought him twice.

DODE

Beat him once.

CHRIS
Yvon, no disrespect.
(to Dode)
I don't know if he's ready for
Landry.

DODE
Oh, he's ready. Aren't you, Doux?

YVON
Anybody you want, Mr. Shaban. It
don't matter.

CHRIS
(studies Yvon)
Nope, I bet it doesn't. Okay, I'll
set it up, right here in Chatham.
Dode says you only lost one fight.

YVON
No, sir. Undefeated. It was a
bullshit DQ.

CHRIS
Fair enough. Undefeated.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Training Day. Yvon jogs with Dode trailing behind in a car.

DODE
Not too much further, Doux.

Dode laughs. Yvon shoots a death glare back to the car.

INT. DODE'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Dode drives down a deserted rural road. Yvon shivers.

YVON
Christ, it's cold. Might as well be
out on the boat.

DODE
You'll live.

YVON
I'm in good enough shape already.
Who can beat me?

DODE

Right now, a lot of guys can. But what I'm trying to get through your thick head, Doux, we get you in tip top shape, nobody can beat you. *That's* why we're here. There's lotsa dough out there. But these guys we gotta fight, Yvon, they ain't no pushovers. You want to keep fighting for peanuts, no problem, I'll take you home right now for a nap.

YVON

So, are you my manager now?

DODE

Yeah, kinda. I'll set the fights.

YVON

We got a contract?

DODE

How's this work for you?

Offers his hand, they shake.

DODE (CONT'D)

Good, good.

Dode stops the car on the deserted road.

DODE (CONT'D)

Warmed up yet? Out. It's just a couple of miles. I'll pick you up tomorrow. Get to bed early.

Yvon reluctantly gets out of the car, Dode drives off.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - DAY

Yvon runs lazily. Sees a car coming.

He sticks out his thumb. The car slows and stops. Inside, five pretty YOUNG WOMEN peer out at him.

YVON

Bonjour, Mesdames. Hello. Can I get a lift back into town? My car broke down a few miles back.

INT. GIRLS' CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Yvon squeezes into the backseat. They drive. The Girls are excited by the presence of the handsome stranger.

YVON
My name's Yvon. You know, I have
the rest of the day free. Maybe we
could have a picnic.

A RED-HAIRED GIRL seems particularly intrigued. It's hard to miss. Yvon's eyes light up.

YVON (CONT'D)
You girls like the fights?

Muted giggles and tingly, unspoken excitement from the Girls.

INT. CHATHAM ARENA - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Chris Shaban and a pack of GAMBLERS and HANGERS-ON mill about the crowded room. Clyne, Dode and Ernie tend to Yvon.

Yvon and his opponent, BILLY LANDRY, each get taped. Chris's group focuses on Yvon. It's his trunks.

CHRIS
Hey, Yvon! Take it easy on my boy
tonight, eh!

SHABAN CRONIE #1
There he is, the Fighting
Fisherman. Or is that the Swimming
Fisherman?

Huge guffaws from the entourage.

SHABAN CRONIE #2
Hey, Durelle, this ain't the
Olympic swimming trials here. The
pool's two blocks over!

Even bigger laughs.

CLYNE
Don't listen to that shit, Doux.
Hey, where you going?

Yvon stalks over to Landry.

YVON
(to Landry)
Those cocksuckers there, I'm gonna
punch you hard enough *they* feel it.

LANDRY
I didn't say nothin'! Fucking nut!

DODE
(pulls him away)
Hey, hey, Yvon, let's go. Do your
talking in the ring.

Yvon calmly strolls away. Chris's group just glares.

INT. CHATHAM ARENA - BOXING RING - NIGHT

Chris sits ringside. Dode and Clyne give Yvon instructions.

In the ring, Yvon pummels Landry, stalks him like a hound,
floors him with a huge combination.

A BELL RINGS three times to end the seventh round.

Yvon glares at Chris and his group who look nervous, as if
they have large bets on Landry.

The BELL RINGS. Yvon says "*last round*" to Chris. Landry tries
to be aggressive but Yvon quickly puts him down again.

He glowers at Chris's group as they shout insults back:
"*Lucky punch, asshole!*", "*Go back to the docks, fisherman!*"

Yvon celebrates in his corner. Chris rushes over.

CHRIS
Yvon, never mind those assholes.

Yvon nods at Ramsay, who still lies on the canvas.

YVON
Think I'm ready for him yet?

CHRIS
Hey, you want to come up to Moncton
sometime? I need a new fighter.

YVON
Yeah, maybe. I fight anywhere.

CHRIS
What do you say, Dode?

DODE
Come see me tomorrow.

EXT. THE DOCKS - DAY

Yvon and Thérèse gaze at the mighty Miramichi River. Fishing boats, a light breeze, brilliant sunshine.

THÉRÈSE
So many boats.

YVON
Lobster season.

THÉRÈSE
Shouldn't you be out there?

YVON
We were this morning. But maybe
that's not where I belong.

He skips a few stones into the water.

YVON (CONT'D)
When we didn't have enough food, my
father made us kids fight, you
know. Anyone who lost went to bed.
No supper. I always let the younger
kids win. They could punch hard,
some of them. They got sick a lot.

THÉRÈSE
You have a good heart, Doux.

YVON
Now I beat people up. And I hurt
them. And I'm crazy for it more
than anything else. But I don't
know if it's the life I see for me.
Or maybe for us...

THÉRÈSE
Wow, I'm just turned seventeen.
But, what do you see?

YVON
A big world. Lots of things a man
can do with his life.

THÉRÈSE
Where do you want to go?

YVON
To the top.

She doesn't understand.

YVON (CONT'D)
World champion. Like Joe Louis.
You'd get to travel all over.

THÉRÈSE
Me?

YVON
Yep. Everywhere. The champ's wife
gets to come with him anywhere he
goes. And so do all his kids!

He springs up suddenly.

THÉRÈSE
Kids? What kids? What champ's wife?
Yvon, you're talking crazy!

He runs backwards away from her, down to the shoreline,
shouts back to her.

YVON
As many kids as he wants! Cuz he's
the World Champioooooooooooooon!

He shadowboxes as he runs, dances and throws crazed punches.
Thérèse hops up and chases after him.

THÉRÈSE
Yvon Durelle, you're crazy!

They race down the shoreline.

INT. CHATHAM ATHLETIC CLUB - DAY

Yvon pounds the heavy bag. Loud THUDS, heard all over.

Dode stops at the ropes with ARNOLD FLEIGER (20s), a local
boxer with movie star looks and charisma to match.

DODE
Yvon, this is Arnold Fleiger. Local
boy. He's your new partner.

Yvon gives him barely a nod. Slugs the bag. THUD. THUD. THUD.

DODE (CONT'D)
(to Arnold)
He's a sweetheart. Really.

INT. CHATHAM ATHLETIC CLUB - DAY

Arnold and Yvon spar leisurely, throw half punches.

ARNOLD
Chris says you don't train much.

YVON
I'd rather just fight.

ARNOLD
Gotta train to fight.

YVON
You sure?

Yvon speeds up his punching, tags Arnold with a few light punches. Arnold grins and dances some fancy footwork.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Road work. Arnold jogs far ahead of Yvon, who lumbers lazily.

ARNOLD
Pick it up, fisherman! Shake a leg!
Let's go, you're twenty for
Chrissakes not forty!

YVON
Twenty-one!

INT. CHATHAM ATHLETIC CLUB - DAY

Arnold skips rope, calisthenics, shadowboxes. High intensity.

Later, Yvon throws dozens of punches into Arnold's midsection. Arnold reciprocates. They towel off, drink water.

ARNOLD
That was good. Lunchtime.

YVON
I gotta go into town.

ARNOLD
Okay. See you after lunch?

YVON
 Done for the day, Arnie. That's all
 I need.

Yvon tosses Arnold his towel, scoops up a gym bag and leaves.
 Arnold shakes his head at Dode.

EXT. CHATHAM CURLING CLUB - DAY

Arnold squints through a window and sees Yvon play pool,
 drink beer, laugh with other PATRONS. Incredulous, he
 continues down the sidewalk.

INT. THÉRÈSE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Thérèse sits at the table with her mother ROSEANNE (45), a
 prim and proper woman who worries deeply about her children's
 futures. Roseanne peels potatoes.

ROSEANNE
 It hasn't even been two years,
 Thérèse. You're still young.

THÉRÈSE
 I already know I love him, ma. He
 might give me a ring--

ROSEANNE
 --Oh Jesus, you want to be married
 to a boxer? He's so rough, Thérèse.
 He's got some manners, yes. But he
 still comes from the docks. And
 where has he been all winter?

THÉRÈSE
 He's only rough on the outside and
 has to train, that's why he's gone.
 He's so gentle, ma, they call him
 "Doux."

ROSEANNE
 Huh, Doux. Thérèse, you're only
 seventeen and you're so pretty. A
 nice boy will come along.

THÉRÈSE
 In Baie Sainte-Anne? Are you crazy,
 ma? And besides, I don't care. Yvon
 Durelle is the one for me, I know
 it. I know it in my heart.

Her father EDOUARD (47) enters. A man of few words.

ROSEANNE
Tell your father.

EDOUARD
What is it?

ROSEANNE
She thinks Yvon Durelle is going to give her a ring. Marry her. Where the hell would he get the money?

THÉRÈSE
Dad?

EDWARD
Heard him fight on the radio last week. Tough customer.
(to Roseanne)
Is my suit pressed, Mme. Martin?

Thérèse's eyes light up. She wraps him in a huge hug.

INT. CHATHAM ATHLETIC CLUB - DAY

Arnold and Yvon spar. It becomes more intense, each man's competitive side comes out.

Yvon hits Arnold a couple of high shots around the head.

ARNOLD
Hey, we said not in the face.

Arnold increases the ferocity of his punches. Yvon responds. They chirp back and forth. (*"Hey, watch it." "Whatsamatter, can't take it?" "The fuck I can't." etc.*)

YVON
Let's see what you got, Chatham.
Fuckin' pretty boy.

ARNOLD
Fuckin' frog.

It almost seems like a real fight. Yvon eventually puts Arnold down with a series of body shots.

ARNOLD (CONT'D)
Chrissakes, Yvon, what the hell?

YVON
You guard your pretty face too much. Guys do that, you hit there.

He points to Arnold's mid-section.

ARNOLD
Jesus, that punch.

YVON
And I didn't learn that from
skipping a fucking rope all
afternoon, Arnold. Remember that.

Yvon helps him up with a broad smile. Arnold grins.
Friendship and mutual respect.

INT. CHATHAM CURLING CLUB - DAY

Later that day, Arnold and Yvon play pool. A clock on the wall reads 1:45 pm. A framed picture of Yvon in a boxing pose hangs behind the bar.

Eventually, they settle at a table. A BARTENDER brings two large pints of ale. Arnold reaches for cash.

BARTENDER
On the house.

He leaves.

YVON
I signed a picture for him.

ARNOLD
This *is* a nice break from the gym.

YVON
Training's overrated, Arnie. Around my house we had to fight for our supper. We fought everywhere and everyone. In the kitchen, in the woods, at the dance.

ARNOLD
At the dance?

YVON
We used to get some English pricks come in to town, try to take our girls. We had to beat the shit out them, let them know Baie Sainte-Anne was ours.

ARNOLD
That how you found Thérèse?

YVON

Yeah. Those fights were easy. But now, it ain't easy, Arnie.

Yvon drifts away.

ARNOLD

The game's complicated, Yvon.

YVON

Maybe. But not in the ring. There's a guy standing there, I punch him. Then I punch him again and that's all there is. I earned eight fuckin' dollars for my first fight and I didn't give a shit. I say to Chris all the time: just leave me alone, just let me fight my own way, you know, don't give me no fuckin' fancy advice. I hit the guy and he falls down, who gives a shit if I ran five miles the day before?

ARNOLD

Yeah, I get it. Talk is you're close to a title shot.

YVON

You're doing pretty good, too.

ARNOLD

Maybe they'll want us to fight someday, eh?

A fleeting but serious contemplation of the possibility.

YVON

Maybe Arnie. Maybe. Protect the body, remember.

A conversation in their eyes. Respect and understanding.

Later, Yvon speaks with the Bartender who nods over to a table where DENISE (30s) and a MAN sit. Yvon goes over.

YVON (CONT'D)

Hi, I'm Yvon.

DENISE

I'm Denise. You knew my father?

YVON

A little bit. I'm sorry to hear what happened to him.

DENISE

Thank you. My sisters, we miss him.

Yvon pulls out some bills, places a \$20 on the table.

YVON

My friend, take this lovely lady
out for a nice dinner.

Yvon joins Arnold at the door.

ARNOLD

It's hard to believe you're the
same guy who punches hard enough to
knock a man's head off.

YVON

You ever been to Baie Sainte-Anne,
Arnie?

INT. YVON'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Yvon's white Buick bombs down the road at an insane speed. Arnold, terrified in the passenger seat, has a death grip on anything he can hold onto.

Behind them, a COP CAR loops in for the chase. SIRENS and FLASHING LIGHTS. Yvon sees him in the rear view mirror.

YVON

Shit! Here we go! Buckle up, Arnie.

With a mile-wide smile, Yvon puts the pedal to the floor.

EXT. DURELLE HOUSE - DAY

From the end of the laneway, Ernie sees Yvon's car speed toward the house. He waves but Yvon's car whips by.

Ernie watches the cop car rocket by in pursuit.

ERNIE

Good luck!

INT. YVON'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Yvon floors it on a long, straight stretch headed right for the Miramichi Bay. He checks the rear view. No cop car.

The Bay comes into view. Arnie's eyes are frozen, huge. He puts one leg up on the dash to attempt protection.

ARNOLD
Jesus fucking Christ, Yvon!

Yvon gives him a laugh that says *Welcome to Baie Sainte-Anne!*

YVON
Don't shit yourself, Arnold!

Just before it seems they'll fly into the Bay, Yvon slams the brakes, skids and SCREECHES to a stop at the end of the road.

Arnold's heart may have stopped. Yvon bursts a gut.

YVON (CONT'D)
You thought we were going in?

He checks the rear view. Finally, the cop car is there.

YVON (CONT'D)
We gotta go. Left or right?

Arnold couldn't answer to save his life.

YVON (CONT'D)
See ya later, chum.

He spins the car out, blasts off down the road.

INT. CHRIS SHABAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Dode, Chris and Yvon sit around the desk.

DODE
Big news, Yvon.

CHRIS
Halifax, Doux. Next month. It's for the title. Canadian middleweight.

YVON
Against who?

DODE
Roy Wouters.

YVON
Sounds like more training.

CHRIS
Your favourite. We'll make a plan.

EXT. THÉRÈSE'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

A light snowfall. Thérèse is just outside the door, Yvon at the foot of the steps.

THÉRÈSE
Wow, you look really...

YVON
Training. Got a big fight.

THÉRÈSE
Yeah, a big one?

YVON
Next month in Halifax. Wanna come?

THÉRÈSE
Jesus, they'd never let me go.
Doux, are you ever coming back?

YVON
Right after this fight. What did they say when you told them?

THÉRÈSE
One yes, one not so much.

YVON
I'll take the odds.

THÉRÈSE
I miss you, Doux.

He skips up the steps, sweeps her into his arms.

INT. HALIFAX ARMOURY - BOXING RING - NIGHT

TITLE CARD: VS ROY WOUTERS, CANADIAN MIDDLEWEIGHT TITLE,
JANUARY 20, 1950, HALIFAX, NB

Dode and Arnold are in Yvon's corner. The fight is half over.

IN YVON'S CORNER -

ARNOLD
He's a slick bastard, Doux. Don't get stuck on the ropes. Pound him inside. He can't punch with you.

SCENE CARD for the 5th round passes by.

BELL RINGS. Yvon heads for the centre of the ring.

IN THE RING -

They go toe to toe, trade staggering blows. Miraculously, neither man goes down. Both fighters nicked and swollen. The final BELL RINGS three times.

The REFEREE holds both men by the wrists.

RING ANNOUNCER
Ladies and Gentlemen, the winner
on points and *still* the
Middleweight Champion of Canada,
Roy Wouters!

Yvon's weary head lowers as Roy's arm is raised.

INT. HALIFAX ARMOURY - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Yvon, still in his fight gear, weeps bitterly in front of a mirror. His hands are still taped but no gloves.

YVON
Stupid fucker! You fuckin' loser!

He punches the mirror. Gapes at his shattered reflection.

YVON (CONT'D)
You stupid
(punches the mirror)
fucking
(punches the mirror)
loser!
(punches the mirror)

Arnold whips around the corner. Blood everywhere. He bears Yvon from behind then spins him around.

ARNOLD
Doux... Doux, look at me! Hey!
Listen to me. You didn't get beat
by some bum. That's the fuckin'
champ over there!

YVON
(through tears)
Fuck it, I'm goin' home.

EXT. DURELLE FISHING BOAT - DAY

The boat is anchored. Yvon stares into the water. Ernie opens two beers. They sip for a silent moment.

ERNIE
How much do you weigh?

YVON
A hundred and fifty-four, I think.

ERNIE
Too light. You gotta move up. Ten pounds, you're light heavyweight.

Yvon watches the mighty Miramichi River's eternal flow.

ERNIE (CONT'D)
Doux? Doux, what do you think?

YVON
I think... I'm gonna get married.

INT. YVON'S CAR - DAY

A secluded "parking spot" known to all teenagers. Lots of trees around for cover. Yvon and Thérèse sit in the car.

THÉRÈSE
This is the place we came before?
Doesn't look like it.

YVON
Well it was at night. Remember?

Her devilish smile says she does indeed. Yvon fumbles around, agitated, searches his pockets.

THÉRÈSE
Are you okay, Doux?

He finds what he's looking for, turns to Thérèse. A look on his face she's never seen before. Is he excited? Nervous?

YVON
Yeah, hold on.

He gets out, goes around to her side, opens the door, drops to one knee, holds up an engagement ring in a tiny box.

Thérèse can't speak but her tickled eyes say *dream come true*.

INT. YVON'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Yvon drives uncharacteristically at the speed limit. They're both dressed in wedding attire.

Thérèse gives her belly a little rub. She's not showing yet.

THÉRÈSE
I guess they'll figure it out when
she's born.

YVON
How do you know it's a girl?

THÉRÈSE
You wanna bet?

YVON
I won't remember in six months.

He puts a wandering hand on her left breast.

YVON (CONT'D)
Any more than a handful's a waste.

He winks at her and floors the gas pedal.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. YVON AND THÉRÈSE'S HOUSE - DAY

It's a small place, cramped but pleasant enough.

Thérèse, visibly pregnant, peeks out the window to see Yvon
and two MEN transfer cases of beer between two pick-ups.

EXT. YVON AND THÉRÈSE'S HOUSE - DAY

A car drives by the house, slows down. A NOSY WOMAN squints
at the scene disapprovingly then continues down the road.

Yvon gives instructions to the bootleggers, enters the house.

INT. YVON AND THÉRÈSE'S HOUSE - DAY

Yvon stomps in, grabs for his coat.

THÉRÈSE
Take your boots off in the house.
Who are those men?

Yvon ignores her, continues to dress.

THÉRÈSE (CONT'D)
Yvon, Christ, right out in the
open? The neighbours can all see.
What if you get arrested?

YVON
I won't.

THÉRÈSE
We have bills, you know. Do you
have another fight?

YVON
No. I'll be back later.

He stomps out.

INT. CHATHAM ATHLETIC CLUB - DAY

The gym is busy, lots of BOXERS training. Yvon is in street
clothes. Dode watches two fighters spar.

DODE
Yvon! How's married life?

YVON
Not what they tell you.

DODE
Oh.

YVON
Lots of questions. Always worried
about the money. Chris?

DODE
Yeah, he's--

Chris comes out of an office.

CHRIS
--Where the hell have you been? Out
in the woods again? I told you,
stay near a phone.

YVON
It never rings.

CHRIS
We got a call from Arnie's guy.
Before you say anything--

YVON
--I don't know, Chris.

CHRIS
Doux, Fleiger's a big deal now. He runs in the streets, little kids run around with him like he's some goddamned movie star.

DODE
Not a lot of options, Yvon. It's drying up. You want a fight? This is the fight we have.

Arnold comes through the door carrying his training bag. He sees them and ducks into the locker room.

DODE (CONT'D)
Okay, Doux?

Yvon follows Arnie.

INT. CHATHAM ATHLETIC CLUB - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Arnie unpacks his gear. Yvon enters.

ARNOLD
Wish I had a crystal ball, Yvon.

YVON
You saw this one coming. Arnie...

The words are stuck in his throat.

ARNOLD
Same here, Doux.

They shake hands, lock eyes. Nothing needs to be said.

INT. CHATHAM ARENA - BOXING RING - NIGHT

TITLE CARD: VS ARNOLD FLEIGER, JULY 4, 1951, CHATHAM, NB

Yvon and Arnold receive instructions from the REFEREE. Their relationship flutters unspoken but undeniable in the air.

FLASH TO a series of shared memories:

- their intense training/sparring.
- Yvon helping Arnold up from the canvas in the gym.

- both men laughing, drinking, playing pool.
- the quiet moment they shared after Arnold suggested this fight might happen.

Ringside, the ENGLISH CROWD howls insults and threats to Yvon, encouragement to Arnold. The FRENCH CROWD cheers Yvon on, screams back at the English crowd.

YVON
How much you getting?

ARNOLD
Three hundred. You?

YVON
A little more, Arnie. Thérèse says
don't hit me too hard, eh.

A VOICE from the crowd shouts: *"You're goin down, Frenchie!"*

YVON (CONT'D)
You bring all your friends tonight?

ARNOLD
You got a few here.

YVON
Arnold... I'm sorry.

ARNOLD
Just make sure it's your best.
Your *best*, Doux.

Yvon nods, they tap gloves.

YVON
Protect the body, my friend.

Yvon goes back to his corner. Arnold takes a deep breath.

The opening BELL RINGS, both men charge out of their corners.

Big punches on their way from both fighters--FREEZE FRAME.

INT. YVON AND THÉRÈSE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Sun slants through the window. On the table is an English newspaper with the headline:

*"DURELLE KNOCKS OUT BEST FRIEND FLEIGER IN SECOND ROUND
Getting Closer To Canadian Middleweight Title Shot"*

Yvon reads it sadly. Thérèse sees the pain in his eyes.

EXT. DURELLE FISHING BOAT - DAY

At the docks, Yvon and Ernie work on the fishing boat.

A large dark sedan parks nearby. Dode brings BILL TURK (59), a flashy-dressing boxing promoter, up to the boat.

DODE

I had a feeling you'd be here. This is Bill Turk. Bill, Yvon Durelle.

TURK

The Fighting Fisherman.

ERNIE

I fight, too.

DODE

His brother Ernie.

TURK

Two fighting fishermen. I love it!

Handshakes. Turk pulls out a log of a cigar.

TURK (CONT'D)

Fish jumping in the boat today?

YVON

Better than yesterday.

TURK

Good.

DODE

Bill's got a lot of connections.

TURK

Fights are drying up around here, Yvon. No one left after you took your friend Fleiger apart.

YVON

What's all this, Dode?

DODE

Chris is out of the game. Maybe it's time to look around. Lots of money overseas.

TURK

Yvon, what did you make it home
with today? Three dozen lobsters?
Chickenfeed, my friend.

DODE

European markets are huge, Doux.

TURK

Indeed they are, Mr. Dealy. Huge.

YVON

I don't know.

TURK

You're top dog around here, Yvon.
But there's another rung on the
ladder, my boy. If you wanna climb.

YVON

I guess so.

TURK

I'm glad to hear that. They're
gonna love you where we're going.

YVON

Where's that?

TURK

The big time, Yvon. The big time.

He lights his cigar, watches a thick plume of smoke rise.

TURK (CONT'D)

You ever been on an airplane?

INT. CHATHAM CURLING CLUB - DAY

Yvon sits at the bar. His gym bag on the floor. He devours a
greasy cheeseburger and watches a TV set behind the bar.

Arnold slides onto a stool beside him. Two beers hit the bar.

ON SCREEN: an Archie Moore fight replay.

YVON

Thanks for coming.

ARNOLD

You look different. Fatter.

Yvon keeps an eye on the tube.

YVON
Look at him. The guy can't touch
him. Slippery bastard.

ON SCREEN: Moore ducks, dives, jabs, smooth as silk.

ARNOLD
You ever think about it?

YVON
Fighting Moore?

ARNOLD
You never thought about a world
title? Bullshit.

YVON
Yeah, sometimes. Mostly what I
think about is lobster traps,
feeding my family.

ARNOLD
Come on, Doux. You're Canadian
champ. You got a belt! I been *in*
there with you, you could punch a
hole in a cement wall.

They watch Moore deliver crushing punches to his opponent.

ARNOLD (CONT'D)
He's the king. Somebody's got to
come for his crown. You could take
him out, Doux. Just need a shot.

YVON
I got a new manager. Wants to take
me to Germany. Says I got to move
up to light heavyweight.

ARNOLD
I didn't even know they had boxing
in Germany. You gonna go?

YVON
You ever been on a plane, Arnie?

INT. BILL TURK'S OFFICE - DAY

The office is an semi-organized shambles. Contracts,
newspapers, files, fight photographs everywhere.

Turk's ever-present cigar smoulders in an ashtray. Dode slaps
down a newspaper.

The Headline: *Durelle loses UD in Germany.*

DODE

What the fuck were you thinking? A loss to a goddam *German* for Chrissake, where they don't know shit from Shinola about boxing. And a broken fucking hand to go along with a losing streak. Just lovely. He'll probably quit, Bill! And he complains he never has any money. Where's all the dough?

TURK

He got paid every time. You think it's cheap to fly to Germany? There's expenses: hotels, meals, airplanes, all kindsa shit. I got him in a three-year contract, Dode, so what are you doing here?

DODE

He sent me.

TURK

You and Chris are small potatoes. You ain't got nothing to do with him anymore. He's my fighter.

INT. YVON'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

As usual, Yvon drives insanely fast. He pulls out a flask for a healthy swallow. His right hand is in a cast.

Thérèse holds baby YVON JR., GENEVA (2) sits in a car seat in the back. Thérèse glances back worriedly as the car speeds.

THÉRÈSE

Can you slow down, Yvon?

The car slides through a turn.

THÉRÈSE (CONT'D)

Jesus, Yvon! Slow down, the kids!

He reduces his speed. She waits a moment.

THÉRÈSE (CONT'D)

When are you going to fight again?

YVON

When my hand's better. That's what
you get from punching some kraut
prick in the head.

Beat.

THÉRÈSE

And the drinking...

He flashes her a threatening look.

THÉRÈSE (CONT'D)

We got bills to pay, you know.

Yvon grips the wheel hard. The car speeds up.

EXT. DURELLE FISHING BOAT - THE DOCK - DAY

Yvon works on the boat, arm still in a cast. Turk drives up.

TURK

We coulda met in my office.

YVON

Ever been on my boat, Bill?

Turk clumsily climbs aboard.

TURK

Nice. How's your hand?

Yvon tends to the traps. Tension lingers.

TURK (CONT'D)

Okay, so Germany didn't turn out
too good. What do you want to do?

YVON

Maybe I'll just come back to the
boat. It's probably where I belong.

TURK

Come on, Yvon. You don't mean that.

YVON

I don't know anyone in this place
ever went anywhere, did anything.
You know why I'm out here? Cuz I
listen to people like you. And I'm
poor as a church mouse.

TURK
Expenses, Yvon.

YVON
That's what you always say, Bill.

TURK
Well I'm all you got, Yvon. So I
was thinking... you want to make
some quick cash, we take a fight.
I'll get a few bets down.

Yvon stops working.

TURK (CONT'D)
You're on a losing streak anyway.
Look, you take a fall, we clean up.
Fifty-fifty split. Easy money.

Yvon glares, strides menacingly toward Turk.

EXT. THE DOCK - DAY

Ernie arrives at the dock to see Yvon toss Bill into the bay.

INT. MONCTON GROCERY STORE - CHRIS SHABAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Yvon appears in the door, holds up his right hand. No cast.

YVON
It's good. I need a fight.

CHRIS
You're not exactly a hot commodity
these days. They think you're
washed up. And, technically I'm not
your manager any more.

YVON
That's okay. I need a new one. Turk
was robbing me blind. I had to
throw him in the bay.

CHRIS
You probably did. Heard you been
hitting the sauce.

Chris watches closely for Yvon's reaction, but there isn't
one. Chris notices Yvon's extra weight.

YVON
I can get the weight down.

CHRIS
Hhmmm, I think I heard this--

YVON
--I'm not done yet, Chris! You're
the only one I trust. It's like I'm
in a car driving up the mountain
but every time I look in the mirror
all I can see is the fucking docks.
We can get back to the top of the
mountain, Chris! You and I. It
can't end this way!

Chris considers Yvon's request. Yvon's passion moves him.

CHRIS
The mountain's not very big around
here. Isn't that why you left?

YVON
I left cuz I didn't want to be poor
the rest of my life. I've got two
kids now and one of them's not
doing too good.

CHRIS
Which one?

YVON
Yvon Jr. Not sure what it is. They
won't grow up like I did, Chris.

CHRIS
The doctor have a look at him?

YVON
We don't have one.

CHRIS
I know a good one.

Chris comes around the desk, sits on the edge near Yvon.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
I'll make you a deal, Yvon. You
been doing any training?

YVON
Yeah!

CHRIS
Don't bullshit me. You wouldn't
know a serious day of training if
it bit you in the balls.

YVON

I really need to fight, Chris.

CHRIS

Okay, here's the deal: I'll get you some fights, put some dough in your pocket. Two things you gotta do. You listening, Yvon? Two things you gotta do: train for real and win those fights. And cut the booze.

YVON

That's three things.

CHRIS

Three things then for Chrissakes.

YVON

Deal.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Yvon runs with actual effort. Chris drives beside him.

CHRIS

Come on Durelle, Jesus Christ, let's go, pick it up! Holy shit, Yvon, you got two broken legs or what? You couldn't beat a Grey Nun!

YVON

Lemme hit the bag, Chris. I'm sore all over.

CHRIS

You're sore cuz you're outta shape!

YVON

When are we gonna fight?

CHRIS

When you're not a goddamned sack of marshmallows!

Chris pulls the car out in front, takes off.

YVON

You son of a whore!

He lowers his head and pushes on.

EXT. YVON AND THÉRÈSE'S HOUSE - LANEWAY - DAY

Yvon finishes his run, turns up the laneway.

INT. YVON AND THERESE'S HOUSE - SMALL BEDROOM - NIGHT

Thérèse watches from the window, sits between sleeping Geneva (5) and Yvon Jr. (3). Kisses them, leaves for the kitchen.

INT. YVON AND THÉRÈSE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Yvon hobbles in, a bit out of breath. Thérèse puts his steak on a plate as he sits.

THÉRÈSE
I was getting worried.

YVON
Told Chris I'd lose twenty pounds.
Lotsa running.

THÉRÈSE
Till seven-thirty at night?

Thérèse hovers. Yvon eats.

YVON
What?

THÉRÈSE
They miss you.

YVON
It won't always be that way.

She comes up behind him, massages his shoulders.

THÉRÈSE
Oh, Doux... my big strong handsome
husband. You sure you have to go to
bed so early again tonight?

YVON
Eight o'clock. Chris's rules.

She nods at the wall clock: 7:45 pm. She squirms her way onto his lap with a naughty grin.

FIGHT MONTAGE:

The YEAR and Yvon's RECORD appear and change ON SCREEN as each subsequent scene drifts into the next.

INT. BOXING RING - NIGHT

Yvon touches gloves with a boxer. He delivers big body shots to his opponent. ON SCREEN: 1956, 2-0

INT. BOXING RING - NIGHT

Yvon shows advanced technique, knocks out another fighter. ON SCREEN: 1956, 4-1

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Yvon puts his swollen hands into a bowl of ice after a fight. ON SCREEN: 1956, 5-1

INT. BOXING RING - NIGHT

Chris and Ernie shout instructions from the corner as Yvon fights. ON SCREEN: 1956, 7-1

INT. BOXING RING - NIGHT

Yvon knocks out another fighter with a massive right cross. ON SCREEN: 1956, 8-1

INT. BOXING RING - NIGHT

Yvon winks to Thérèse during a round break while Chris gives him instructions. ON SCREEN: 1957, 10-1

INT. BOXING RING - NIGHT

Yvon stands over a knocked-out opponent, finds Chris. ON SCREEN: 1957, 12-1

END MONTAGE

EXT. YVON AND THÉRÈSE'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Yvon and Thérèse sit relaxed on the porch. Yvon Jr. doodles in a colouring book a few steps away.

A long, dark car pulls into the laneway. A DOCTOR steps out.

Thérèse and Yvon darkly glance over to their son.

INT. YVON AND THÉRÈSE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A file is open on a coffee table. The Doctor holds a report. Yvon and Thérèse sit together, brace for bad news.

DOCTOR

It's called rheumatic fever. We don't see it much before they're five so this is a bit unusual.

THÉRÈSE

He falls down a lot.

DOCTOR

A history of sore throats?

Yvon Jr. wobbles in, wanders over to Yvon. They all glance a bit sadly at the child.

YVON

Yeah, a bunch. You can fix this?

DOCTOR

We can treat it, manage it, but I'm afraid it's a long-term process. Years. It's dangerous, Yvon.

Thérèse is on the verge of tears. Yvon nods acceptance.

EXT. DURELLE FISHING BOAT - DAY

Yvon and Chris drift leisurely around the bay, sip beer.

CHRIS

Christ, you're only twenty-eight.

YVON

I feel forty-eight.

CHRIS

Shit, you got lotsa life left yet, Yvon. Pass me another beer.

Yvon tosses one over. Beat.

YVON

We got the tests back. There could be heart damage. Maybe years till he's okay.

CHRIS

If he's got your heart, Doux, he'll have plenty left over.

A wan smile from Yvon.

YVON

The hospital bills... they could pile up. And who knows what else?

CHRIS

Let's take things one at a time.

YVON

It's funny. I always thought I gotta get out of this place. Can't just live here and die here. And now with Thérèse and the kids, I'm the one has to... Christ, I don't even know what I have to do, Mac?

CHRIS

Yvon, you're doing everything you can. Stuff's gonna happen.

YVON

What if I can't give them a good life?

CHRIS

Your son's gonna get good care. You'll make sure. I know you, Yvon Durelle. You're not scared of anything. And one day, I'll bet dollars to donuts, Yvon Jr. is going to grow up and want to be just like his dad.

YVON

A lobster fisherman.

CHRIS

A champion.

Yvon snaps another beer. Thinks about responding. Doesn't.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

A world champion, actually. What I'm here to tell you: the new rankings just came out. You're number ten. In the world, Doux.

YVON

That's a long way from the belt.

CHRIS

Sure. But I got a call from a guy in New York.

(MORE)

CHRIS (CONT'D)
They're putting fights on TV.
That's the future. We'll have to
take a couple of tough ones but at
the end of it all, Archie Moore'll
be there waiting for us.

YVON
What are you gonna do?

CHRIS
I'm gonna go to New York.

INT. YVON AND THÉRÈSE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

A birthday party in progress. Thérèse sets food on the table,
arranges gifts around a cake. A radio plays MUSIC.

Yvon wrestles with Geneva and Yvon Jr. Thérèse darts around.

GENEVA
You really going to be on TV, dad?

YVON
That's right, sweetheart. Just like
a movie star.

GENEVA
How are you going to fit inside the
TV? You're too big.

YVON
Oh, I can shrink myself real small.
I'll fit right in there.

GENEVA
Go on, dad!

Yvon scoops up Yvon Jr., sets him onto a chair.

YVON
How was he today?

THÉRÈSE
He didn't fall.

YVON
(to Yvon Jr.)
You were a good boy, today.

THÉRÈSE
The doctor's bill came.

YVON

Later, M'am, okay?

(to Geneva)

And were you good, too, on your special day?

GENEVA

Ya! Uncle Placide said if we're bad we go to hell. And it's all fire!

THÉRÈSE

Never mind Uncle Placide. He goes to church too much. Let's eat. Then presents for the birthday girl.

Geneva jumps into Yvon's arms.

INT. MANHATTAN - HOTEL RESTAURANT - DAY

TRUMAN GIBSON (45, African-American), a lawyer and powerful player in the boxing world, sits alone at a table. He wears a suit few could afford and exudes status.

Chris shakes hands at the bar with a LOCAL PROMOTER.

CHRIS

Thanks for meeting me.

They watch Truman order from a WAITER.

LOCAL PROMOTER

That's Truman Gibson. Head of the IBC. You want a TV fight, you gotta talk to him. He has lunch here everyday. We'll wait till he orders his Grand Marnier.

Later, they approach Truman's table.

TRUMAN

Hello, Marty.

LOCAL PROMOTER

Mr. Gibson, this is Chris Shaban from Canada. He's got Yvon Durelle.

TRUMAN

The Fighting Fisherman, no shit. Welcome to New York, Mr. Shaban. Have a drink with me.

Later, all are seated. Grand Marnier and cigars.

TRUMAN (CONT'D)

They tell me Durelle, he's got hands like cement.

CHRIS

If he hits you, you know it.

TRUMAN

So, what brings you to town?

CHRIS

Yes, well, Mr. Gibson, Yvon is ranked now in light-heavy. And we were thinking, Yvon and I that is, we were thinking we're ready to take a shot.

TRUMAN

What kind of shot?

CHRIS

Moore. The belt.

TRUMAN

Archie Moore? Well, Mr. Shaban, the Old Mongoose has got a lot of dance partners at the moment. He's fighting Tony Anthony in two weeks. He'll beat this young man who is half his age because what people don't know about old Archie is that he grew up without a pot to piss in and once he got his mitts on that belt, was no way he was ever going to let go. Archie Moore's won a hundred and sixty fights. You think your boy is ready for that?

CHRIS

With all due respect sir, we do.

Truman blows a thick cloud of cigar smoke.

TRUMAN

Oh, he might think he's ready. But trust me, Archie Moore knows tricks they haven't even thought of yet.

He pours more Grand Marnier all around.

TRUMAN (CONT'D)

Tell you what, Mr. Shaban, you keep the Fighting Fisherman sharp. Keep winning. I'll keep watching.

(MORE)

TRUMAN (CONT'D)

And one day, when he *is* ready, *if*
he is ever ready, I'll be on the
other end of a phone call that will
change your lives.

CHRIS

I'll drink to that, Mr. Gibson.

And they do.

INT. YVON'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Yvon's huge white Buick speeds down the road. People wave,
shout "*Hey, Doux!*" or "*Champ!*" etc. Ernie sits beside him.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Yvon pulls in. Three OLDER MEN perched out front study Yvon.
Older Man 1 reads a newspaper.

The STATION OWNER dashes out.

STATION OWNER

Yvon! Hey, Doux.

Yvon shakes his hand, turns to the three Men.

OLDER MAN 1

Says here Archie Moore took care of
that Tony Anthony kid in seven.

OLDER MAN 2

Kid dropped in the ranking. You
moved up.

OLDER MAN 3

You gonna get that Moore fight?

OLDER MAN 1

You'll be world champ.

YVON

Well, that sounds nice.

OLDER MAN 1

Hell, you could beat him, Doux. One
hand tied behind your back.

OLDER MAN 3

Yeah, you're gonna kick his old
black ass.

YVON
 You really think so? Well, I guess
 I better phone him up. Ask him if
 he wants to dance.

Nods of agreement and approval from the Men.

GAS ATTENDANT
 All filled up, Mr. Durelle. She
 needed every drop. You must have
 been running on fumes.

YVON
 It's the only way to run, Jaimie.

GAS ATTENDANT
 Yes, sir. Mr. Durelle, sir, would
 you, uh, would you mind maybe
 signing this here piece of paper
 for me? I just love your fights and
 all that and I just know you're
 gonna be world champion someday,
 and, uh, you know we're all, uh...

He's flustered, trying to speak for an entire province.

YVON
 I know Jaimie, I know. Here you go.

Yvon signs.

YVON (CONT'D)
 (to the Men)
 Say hi to the missus, boys.
 (to Station Owner)
 What do I owe ya?

STATION OWNER
 Your money's no good here, Doux.

Ernie and Yvon climb back in their car. Yvon peels out of the
 lot, HONKS his horn. Dirt and dust swirl.

INT. CHATHAM CURLING CLUB - DAY

A huge poster of Yvon on the wall.

Underneath it reads: *COMMONWEALTH LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION
 AND CANADIAN LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION*

Yvon and several MEN drink beer at the bar. A TV set shows
 boxing. Yvon drains his pint, tosses bills on the bar.

YVON
Gotta run, les boys! Thanks, Lou.

LOU
See ya, champ.

Bartender LOU wipes the bar. Yvon is out the door.

ARCHIE MOORE appears on the TV screen.

MAN AT BAR
Hey, Lou! Turn it up, they got the
Old Mongoose on.

Lou watches Yvon's car peel out.

LOU
Ah, shit.

He turns up the set.

ON SCREEN: Moore is interviewed.

REPORTER
Archie, not much trouble with Tony
Anthony. So who's next?

MOORE
Don't know. There's lots of good
fighters out there.

REPORTER
How about that Canadian fellow,
Yvon Durelle?

Bar Patrons noisily cheer, bang their glasses on the bar.

MOORE
I've heard of him. Hard hitter they
say. I might have to give that
young man a chance.

Shocked faces around the bar.

REPORTER
Can we confirm you'll put your belt
on the line against Yvon Durelle?

MOORE
He's been moving up. So we'll see.

Cheering and expert opinion from the Patrons:

"Doux's gonna be world champ!" - "Durelle'll kill him!" - "Lights out for you, Moore!" etc.

LOU

Next round's on the house, boys!

INT./EXT. YVON'S CAR/COUNTRY ROAD (MOVING) - NIGHT

Dark night. Yvon drives a massive new Buick. Placide, Ernie and Stan all drink beers.

The car speeds down the road, skids into the turn of a long laneway up to a house.

INT. YVON'S CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

The lane is uneven. The car bumps, scrapes on the dirt path.

YVON

Calice! I just bought this thing.
Fuckin' road's like the moon.

PLACIDE

You sure this guy's home?

YVON

He's always home.

He parks in front of a house with a garage.

YVON (CONT'D)

Ernie, go get a couple of cases.
Stan, you too. Cheapest in town.

EXT. LANEWAY - NIGHT

They all exit the car. Ernie and Stan knock on a garage door. Placide and Yvon drink beer and lean against the trunk.

PLACIDE

Archie Moore, eh?

YVON

Maybe.

PLACIDE

I'm proud of you, little brother.
We all are. Hey, you'll be famous
as a movie star. Not as good
looking. You could beat him, Doux.

Yvon ponders the possibility.

PLACIDE (CONT'D)

And even if you don't, just
stepping in there with him...

YVON

It's been long road, big brother.

From the garage, Ernie and Stan carry out cases of beer.

PLACIDE

Well, whatever happens...

ERNIE

Get the trunk! Jesus Christ, these
are heavy!

YVON

(to Placide)

Who knows, eh?

Yvon and Placide embrace then Yvon pops the trunk.

Ernie and Stan drop the cases into the trunk. The car sits
lower to the ground with the extra weight. Yvon frowns.

YVON (CONT'D)

Shit. I gotta back out. Okay, you
guys walk down to the road or we'll
just rip up the bottom of the car.

Ernie, Placide and Stan start down the lane behind the car.

Yvon reverses slowly, squints through the back window. It's
pitch black. The only visibility comes from his tail lights.

Halfway down lane, a LOUD THUMP. Then a second THUMP.

Yvon sees a BODY emerge from under the front of the car,
illuminated by the headlights. He jams the breaks.

ERNIE AND PLACIDE

Stan!

YVON

Fuck!

Yvon jumps out. Placide and Ernie scream for Stan, rush to
him. Stan is motionless, barely breathing.

INT. YVON AND THÉRÈSE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Thérèse pours coffee for an RCMP OFFICER.

THÉRÈSE
He'll be right down.

Yvon lurches in looking like a man who has had a rough night.

RCMP OFFICER
Sorry to get you out of bed, Yvon.
You had an accident tonight?

YVON
Yeah, with Stan. We got him to the
hospital. They said he'd be okay.

RCMP OFFICER
(to Thérèse)
I understand he's your uncle.

THÉRÈSE
Yes. Yvon, you didn't tell me.
(to the Officer)
Is he okay?

RCMP OFFICER
I'm afraid not. He died about an
hour ago. We're going to have to
have a look at your car, Yvon. Did
you have anything to drink tonight?

Thérèse is speechless. Yvon steadies himself on the counter.

EXT. YVON AND THÉRÈSE'S HOUSE - DAY

Chris drives up the lane, parks. Heads around back.

EXT. YVON AND THÉRÈSE'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

Yvon chops wood. Empty beer bottles scattered. He hacks
violently. Chris comes around the corner.

CHRIS
I just got off the phone with the
RCMP. Jesus suffering fuck, Yvon!
You know how close we are?

Yvon grabs more wood, chops relentlessly.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
 It's one thing after another with
 you! You know how hard we worked to
 get here? To get you here.

Yvon stops chopping, drains a beer, stomps around the house
 toward his car. He carries the axe. Chris follows.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
 And I told you, cut the booze!
 Where you going? You think you can
 just do whatever the fuck you want,
 don't you? You're ranked 4th now
 but time's running out, Yvon.

EXT. YVON AND THÉRÈSE'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - DAY

Yvon gets to his car, checks for his keys. They dangle from
 the ignition, locked inside.

CHRIS
 Hey! You want to fight Archie
 Moore? You want to be world champ?
 Or you just want to be Yvon Durelle
 the Fighting Fisherman who came
 from some fucking place no one's
 ever heard of? You know, they're
 not pressing--

SMASH! The driver's side window explodes when Yvon puts the
 axe through it. He unlocks the door, gets in.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
 Well, that's great.

Thérèse comes out onto the front porch.

Yvon starts the car, reverses and spins into a turn. He bolts
 down the laneway, swerves onto the road, burns rubber.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
 (to Thérèse)
 I came to tell him they're not
 pressing charges. Calling it an
 accident. He must have a horseshoe
 up his ass. Call me if he gets home
 in one piece.

INT. CHATHAM ATHLETIC CLUB - DAY

Arnold coaches a fighter in a ring. Dode and Chris stride
 urgently through the gym.

DODE
You heard from him?

ARNOLD
No. He cleaned out his locker.

CHRIS
This ain't good.

ARNOLD
You check with Thérèse?

CHRIS
She hasn't heard from him in a week. He's never been gone a week.

DODE
We checked all the usual spots.

ARNOLD
He'll show up.

DODE
He better. Jesus Christ, this is all we need.

CHRIS
We gotta find him. We could get the call any day.

INT. YVON'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Yvon drives alone toward a low sun. He speeds and weaves a bit, takes corners too fast, skids occasionally. He swigs from a bottle between his legs.

INT. YVON AND THÉRÈSE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Thérèse nervously watches his car approach the house.

Yvon enters with a few duffel bags and a large army bag full of his clothes and gear. He looks barbaric, voice is hoarse.

YVON (O.S.)
Thérèse?

THÉRÈSE
In here.

YVON
Where's the kids?

Geneva (6) and Yvon Jr. (4) huddle fearfully in the doorway from the kitchen. They barely recognize Yvon.

YVON (CONT'D)
What the hell's wrong with them?

THÉRÈSE
They haven't seen you in a week.
And you come in looking like that?

YVON
Geneva, come here sweetheart, it's
daddy. Come to daddy, Yvon.

Reluctantly, they move toward him. He tries to hug them.

YVON (CONT'D)
Daddy missed you guys. Don't be
scared. It's ok, I'm home now.

Later, Yvon sits dispiritedly on the sofa with a beer.
Thérèse, with a cup of tea, sits in a chair across from him.

They inhabit two different worlds: He's upset at the
children's reaction. She struggles with a different issue.

YVON (CONT'D)
They don't know their own father
for Chrissake?

THÉRÈSE
They know you haven't been here.
Chris and Dode are calling every
day. Stan's funeral is tomorrow.

YVON
I never saw him, Thérèse, I swear.
I needed some time to just... you
wouldn't understand.

THÉRÈSE
You're too busy to pick up a phone?

YVON
I called you three, four days ago.

Temperatures rising.

THÉRÈSE
Mary, mother of God. Do you even
know where you were four days ago?

YVON
There's a lot of things going on.

THÉRÈSE

What things?

YVON

I'm busting my ass out there,
sacrament! You think it's easy
making money in this game?

THÉRÈSE

What money, Yvon? Where's all this
money you're making, eh? I don't
see it. But I see new fishing boats
and lots of booze for those leeches
who hang around and let good old
Yvon buy everything for them. And I
see lots of cars--how many this
year? Four? Always a new car for
Yvon Durelle, the famous boxer.

YVON

Tabarnak! That's what you see, eh?
Jesus Christ, woman, I gotta pay
gym time, sparring partners and
then I gotta pay Chris and Dode to
set the fights up. Sacrament,
what's left for me? Not much,
Thérèse! Not too fuckin' much!

THÉRÈSE

Enough to keep your buddies drunk!

YVON

Go to bed if you're gonna talk
crazy. I'm home now, calice, why
can't you be happy with that?

He knows there's more. He can't mistake the pain in her eyes.

THÉRÈSE

And there's... stories.

YVON

What stories?

THÉRÈSE

Stories. You know what I mean.

YVON

People talk about all kinds of
things. Doesn't mean they know
anything. I know who I am, Thérèse.

THÉRÈSE

Who are you, Yvon?

YVON
Just a man.

THÉRÈSE
Yes, just a man.

A painful understanding between them.

YVON
I'm no angel, Thérèse. Christ, you think I like coming home and my own kids are scared of me?

THÉRÈSE
You wanted this life, Yvon. New cars. New friends, people buying you drinks, they want your autograph! You want all that! Not me! Your kids are growing up without you. When are you ready to be a real family? A man who comes home to us, not some good-time Charley who's always got his eye on the girls, who--

YVON
--I'm so close, Thérèse! I'm so close! I can see it. I can see it.

THÉRÈSE
See what?

YVON
I could be world champion. My dream. *Our* dream.

THÉRÈSE
And then what?

A CRASHING NOISE from upstairs: Yvon Jr.'s rheumatic fever.

THÉRÈSE (CONT'D)
Yvon!

She flies from the room. Yvon follows quickly.

INT. YVON AND THÉRÈSE'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

They bound up the stairs to find Yvon Jr. sprawled outside his room, bawling. Geneva cries over him.

INT. YVON AND THÉRÈSE'S HOUSE - SMALL BEDROOM - NIGHT

Yvon and Thérèse sit bedside. Yvon Jr. sleeps. A worried-looking Geneva watches from her bed across the room.

GENEVA

He's not getting better is he?

THÉRÈSE

He will, sweetheart. Go back to sleep. Don't forget your prayers.

THÉRÈSE (CONT'D)

(to Yvon)

You see why we need you here?
Maybe... maybe we could move up to
Moncton to be with you.

YVON

To keep an eye on me.

THÉRÈSE

To be with you, Yvon. Are we a
family or not?

YVON

This is our home.

THÉRÈSE

Where I get to raise our kids by
myself. While my husband's off
running around, with who knows--

Yvon Jr. sits up, a few snuffles. Thérèse rubs his back.

THÉRÈSE (CONT'D)

It's ok, my pet. Shhh, just lie
back down.

(to Yvon)

We need you here.

YVON

Hey champ, listen to your mother.
Here... we're right here.

He gets Yvon Jr. settled, tucked in.

THÉRÈSE

Doux...

They search each other's eyes for answers. He goes to her,
embraces her tenderly.

YVON
Come here, M'am.

THÉRÈSE
Doux, come back to us.

His eyes fill with tears, as the eternal battle rages on within: family vs. the ring.

INT. CHATHAM ATHLETIC CLUB - DAY

Yvon trains: calisthenics, medicine ball, heavy bag.

Chris is there with PADDY COLOVITO (45), an experienced trainer unafraid to tell his fighter how it is.

CHRIS
Yvon, hey, take a break. This is Paddy Colovito.

PADDY
Yvon.

YVON
Colovito. Italian?

They shake hands.

PADDY
Irish Italian.

YVON
So you like booze and pizza. We should get along just fine.

CHRIS
Wonderful. Anyway, I just got off the phone with the Championship Committee. They say you gotta defend the Commonwealth title.

YVON
Then I get Moore?

CHRIS
You win, then you get Moore.

YVON
So, who's this guy?

PADDY

Mike Holt, South African champ,
light-heavy. He's got a hard-on for
Moore, too. Winner gets the shot.

Arnold comes across the ring.

ARNOLD

Book is he punches hard like a son
of a bitch. Head of cement. It'll
be like fighting yourself, Yvon.

YVON

We gotta go to Africa for this?

CHRIS

Christ, no. We'll set it up in
Montreal. He'll think he's coming
over to fight you then Moore. This
guy's no creampuff, Doux.

PADDY

I'll make sure you're ready, Yvon.

INT. MANHATTAN - HIGHRISE SUITE - NIGHT

TITLE CARD: VS MIKE HOLT, JULY 16, 1958, MONTREAL FORUM

Truman Gibson watches the Holt fight on TV with a group of
silk-suited MEN who smoke cigars, drink cognac.

TRUMAN

Come on, fisherman, Archie's
watching. You want it or not?

On TV: a BELL RINGS while the Referee walks Yvon to the
centre of the ring with his arm raised.

Truman fires up a colossal victory cigar.

INT. TRUMAN GIBSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Truman on the phone with Chris.

TRUMAN

(into phone)

Archie Moore says he's ready. What
do you say, Mr. Shaban?

Silence.

TRUMAN (CONT'D)

Chris?

INT. CHRIS SHABAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Chris slowly replaces the receiver.

CHRIS

Holy shit.

He takes a deep breath, dials a number.

EXT. YVON AND THÉRÈSE'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Yvon hugs Thérèse and the kids as Chris's car pulls in.

YVON

I'll see you in three weeks.

Chris waves. Yvon piles luggage into the trunk.

INT. CHRIS'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

They drive in silence on the country road. Yvon flicks the radio on, switches around to find a song he likes.

CHRIS

You didn't forget anything?

YVON

I used your list.

CHRIS

You feeling okay, Doux?

YVON

Everything's ok, Mac.

Beat. Chris wonders if Stan's death is on Yvon's mind.

CHRIS

Everybody knows it was an accident.

YVON

Yeah. Christ, this car got any heat? What's our odds?

CHRIS

(turns the heater up)
He's only a four to one favourite.

YVON

Ha! I seen worse.

CHRIS

No shame in it. He's won a hundred and seventy-two fights. I looked it up.

YVON

You got a plan, Mac?

CHRIS

I got a plan.

YVON

Gonna tell me this great plan?

CHRIS

When we get to Montreal. I heard Joe Louis'll be there.

YVON

Wonder what he'll say.

Yvon reaches over and turns the heat on full blast.

INT. MONTREAL - GYM - DAY

Busy gym, fighters train/spar in the rings.

Yvon, Chris and Paddy squeeze through the packs of REPORTERS, PHOTOGRAPHERS, TV cameras and lights being set up.

JOE LOUIS (44) chats with Reporters, spots Yvon.

LOUIS

Hey, there he is! The Fighting Fisherman! Yvon, come on over here, my friend!

Yvon goes over. Cameras turn, bulbs FLASH to capture a warm greeting by the still imposing-looking former champion.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

Good to meet you. I'm Joe Louis.

Yvon is awed to meet his first boxing hero. They shake hands.

Later, Yvon and Louis find a private corner.

YVON

I remember that Billy Conn fight. Sounded like a war on the radio.

LOUIS

It was. Billy was a tough little bastard. He was like a mosquito, hit and run, hit and run. But I told him: Billy, you can run but you can't hide.

YVON

You really say that, Joe?

LOUIS

I did, indeed.

YVON

What would you tell me?

LOUIS

Yvon, old Archie Moore once knocked Rocky Marciano down. He's the only man to do that. And he'll put your lights out if you give him the chance. Now, you're a lot younger than he is but he's slick as a snake and smart as a fox. When you fight a guy like that you gotta keep his mind busy.

YVON

How the hell do I do that?

LOUIS

Very simple. Keep punching him!

They share a good laugh.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

I believe you can beat him, Yvon.

Yvon is more than a bit stunned.

YVON

He hasn't lost a fight in two years.

LOUIS

So, I guess he's due. I was world champ for twelve years. Let me tell you, my friend, it's a different life, a *better* life for you and your family. So go after him hard, blitz him in the first. Send him a message. That's how Rocky beat him. The longer it goes, the odds play to him.

(MORE)

LOUIS (CONT'D)
 He'll be looking to settle in, see
 what you've got for him. I fought a
 guy just like you once. They called
 him the Cinderella Man.

YVON
 Braddock. But you won.

LOUIS
 Believe in yourself, Yvon.

Paddy approaches. Yvon and Louis shake hands.

YVON
 Thanks, Joe. A blitz in the first,
 eh?

LOUIS
 Go get that belt, champ. Go change
 your life.

INT. MONTREAL - GYM - DAY

Yvon in the ring with Paddy. Chris sits ringside, reads an
 article in a boxing magazine written by Archie Moore.

CHRIS
 Old Archie calls you a "club
 fighter with no style or class."

YVON
 Oh, yeah?

CHRIS
 Compares you to Marciano, though.
 Says you're like a pit bull, you'll
 fight to the death.

YVON
 He's been talking to Thérèse.

CHRIS
 Says he's got a system and you'll
 fall for it just like all the rest.

Yvon increases the fury of his punches. Paddy notices.

YVON
 Yeah? And what is it?

CHRIS
 Outsmarts guys, he says.

Yvon stops punching, strolls to the ropes. Paddy sucks air.

YVON

He didn't outsmart Rocky though,
did he? Sorry, Paddy.

CHRIS

Says that he'll have to be in top
shape because--this is my favourite
part--

(reads)

"this Canadian bull will take a lot
of killing." How do you like that,
Doux? A Canadian bull!

YVON

That's a new one. A bullfight then.

CHRIS

Yeah, then he ends with some kind
of Shakespeare shit.

YVON

What the hell's Shakespeare?

PADDY

You know, he's the play writer.

YVON

A play writer? What's it say?

CHRIS

(reads)

"Uneasy lies the head that wears
the crown."

YVON

What's that supposed to mean?

CHRIS

The Christ if I know. Ask him
tomorrow when you see him.

INT. MONTREAL FORUM - DAY

Press conference before the weigh-in.

Yvon wears a grubby knit sweater, soiled work pants. His
fishing boots and cap don't upgrade the outfit any.

Reporters and Photographers discuss his rustic appearance,
make notes, snap pictures. One Reporter starts:

RED

Yvon, Red Fisher, Montreal Star.
 Have you seen today's headline?
*"Durelle Given Little Chance
 Against Moore."* What do you think
 of that?

YVON

They can write whatever the hell
 they want.

KANE

Yvon, Martin Kane, Sports
 Illustrated. How long do you see it
 going?

YVON

Hard to say. If I knock him out
 in the first round, I only see
 it going one round.

A wink and a smile at Chris. The Reporters get a good laugh.

YVON (CONT'D)

And remember, as I always say to my
 wife--what's that I always say,
 Mac? Uneasy lies the... the what?

CHRIS

Head that wears the crown.

YVON

That's it. Uneasy lies the head
 that wears the crown.

Blank looks from the Reporters.

INT. MONTREAL FORUM - WEIGH-IN ROOM - DAY

It's crowded around the scale with the usual suspects.

ARCHIE MOORE (42) makes a grand entrance in an outrageous
 costume: a camel-hair coat over a tuxedo jacket, Homburg hat
 and a fancy walking cane.

All heads turn to gape at him. Moore's large ENTOURAGE clears
 people out of his path. He reaches the scales.

He stops before Yvon, scans him up and down, clearly amused.

MOORE

Now that's an outfit, Yvon.
 Original. Who's your tailor?

Loud laughter from Moore's group.

Yvon's expression and body language react to the insult. Chris nimbly steps in between the two fighters.

CHRIS

It's ok, Yvon. Mr. Moore, I believe you're first on the scales.

MOORE

Well, let me just slip into something a bit more comfortable.

He ceremoniously removes various parts of the costume then steps up to the scale in a dazzling light silky robe.

WEIGH-IN OFFICIAL

Archie Moore, one hundred and seventy-three and one half pounds!

CHRIS

Okay, Doux.

Yvon kicks off his boots, coarsely rips at his scruffy duds, flings stuff everywhere.

Down to his work pants, he checks Chris then Moore before removing it *all*, posing buck naked.

Stunned silence in the room.

Reactions from Chris, Paddy, Moore and his Entourage, the Weigh-in Official.

Yvon steps onto the scale. The silence remains unbroken.

YVON

Well, what's it say, for Chrissake?

WEIGH-IN OFFICIAL

Yvon Durelle, one hundred and seventy-two pounds! On the... nose.

Yvon hops off the scale, snaps a grin at Moore.

YVON

Didn't want to take any chances.

Moore peers at Yvon like he might be crazy. Red Fisher chuckles to himself. Photographers' bulbs FLASH.

EXT. MONTREAL FORUM - NIGHT

Alone in a light snowfall, Yvon gazes up at the lights, the Forum. He feels the weight of its history along with his thoughts about the next night's fight.

Behind him, Thérèse steps out of a cab. He hears the soft closing of the car's door and somehow knows she's there.

He smiles, closes his eyes, doesn't move a muscle when she gently wraps her arms around him from behind.

THÉRÈSE
Tomorrow, Doux.

YVON
Tomorrow, M'am.

THÉRÈSE
It's your dream.

YVON
Our dream.

THÉRÈSE
No matter what happens...

YVON
I know, M'am. I know.

He turns, hugs her tightly. Chris slips out of the Forum.

CHRIS
Early to bed, Doux.

Snowflakes speckle the night sky.

INT. MONTREAL FORUM - NIGHT

TITLE CARD: VS ARCHIE MOORE, WORLD LIGHT-HEAVYWEIGHT
CHAMPIONSHIP, DECEMBER 8, 1958, MONTREAL FORUM

Posters of famed Canadiens' players and championship banners hang like Gods from the rafters.

The crowd files in. Thérèse works her way to her seat, quite a few rows back from the ring.

INT. MONTREAL FORUM - YVON'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Paddy loosens Yvon's muscles. Chris approaches with a huge roll of paper. Reporter Red Fisher lingers.

YVON
What you got there, Mac?

CHRIS
Telegram. There's gotta be ten
thousand names here.

YVON
Let me see that.

Yvon scrolls through, reads a few.

YVON (CONT'D)
Hey, Paddy, listen to this: *Dear
Mr. Durelle, please win this bout.
My daughter wants to be a boxer
just like you.*

CHRIS
Forty-five minutes, Yvon. Think we
could warm up a little?

YVON
You see, Chris, they love me. It's
gonna be a good night.

He continues reading through the telegram.

INT. MONTREAL FORUM - MOORE'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Moore shadowboxes. His handlers are silent. All business.

MANAGER
Fifteen minutes, Arch.

INT. MONTREAL FORUM - YVON'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Yvon appears relaxed. Chris gets the gloves ready. Red Fisher
makes a few notes, checks his watch.

RED
Showtime. Beliveau sends his best.

YVON
Le Gros Bill's here? Shit.

RED
You win this, you'll be Canada's
first king.

YVON

Thanks for dropping by, Red. Get the headline right tomorrow, eh?

RED

I don't write the headlines. Go get him, Doux. You can do this.

Yvon inhales deeply, studies his bare hands. Slowly curls them into fists. Destiny on his face.

INT. MONTREAL FORUM - MOORE'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Moore's hands get taped. His face is stone serious. His CORNERMAN gives a pep talk, but we can't hear his words. Another TRAINER massages his upper back and neck.

INT. MONTREAL FORUM - YVON'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Paddy tapes Yvon's hands. His face is now all business. Paddy goes over the plan but we can't hear his words.

INT. YVON AND THÉRÈSE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Yvon and Thérèse's families gather around the TV set, some sitting, some standing, some pacing. Thick tension.

INT. MANHATTAN - MEN'S CLUB SMOKING LOUNGE - NIGHT

It's crowded, smoke-filled. Truman Gibson sits in a leather chair, smokes a cigar, drinks whisky, eyes glued to a TV set.

INT. MONTREAL FORUM - DRESSING ROOMS - NIGHT

Quick ALTERNATING FLASH CUTS from each dressing room:

- Each fighter gets his gloves on.
- Each fighter rises, dons their robe, paces to the inside of their dressing room door.

INT. MONTREAL FORUM - YVON'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Chris leans against the door. Yvon approaches. Chris puts his hands on Yvon's shoulders as if to steady the both of them.

From the arena, the crowd chants, "*Durelle, Durelle...*" The sound gradually reaches into the room.

CHRIS
Deep breath, Doux.

INT. MONTREAL FORUM - NIGHT

A huge CROWD ROAR as each man emerges from his dressing room.

Each fighter makes his way to the ring through the animated crowd. The scene is set by two ringside COMMENTATORS.

COMMENTATOR #1
Good evening folks. Well, it might be a cold night outside this old Forum, but the atmosphere in here is anything but. The challenger Yvon Durelle, he'll be the crowd favourite tonight. Here they come.

Both are halfway to the ring. The passionate crowd hollers, tries to grab at the fighters.

COMMENTATOR #2 (O.S.)
That's right, Jack. Yvon Durelle may be the reigning Canadian champ but he's coming into tonight a hefty 4-1 underdog against the "Old Mongoose" Archie Moore.

COMMENTATOR #1 (O.S.)
There could be a few jitters for the challenger, fighting in front of his fellow countrymen.

INT. MONTREAL FORUM - BOXING RING - NIGHT

Yvon climbs into the ring first, Moore a few seconds later. Both men keep their bodies in motion, exchange glances.

COMMENTATOR #2 (O.S.)
I'm sure he's feeling some of the pressure of this noisy crowd. Gotta be some on Archie Moore, though. His belt's on the line and he's fighting in hostile territory.

Yvon scans the crowd, finds Thérèse. She smiles, he nods.

A BELL RINGS to bring each fighter face to face at centre ring for final instructions from the REFEREE.

An intense, unspoken moment between Yvon and Moore.

COMMENTATOR #1 (O.S.)
 Folks, we're broadcasting live
 across both Canada and the United
 States. This fight is scheduled for
 fifteen rounds...

His voice trails off as the CROWD'S CHEERING drowns him out.
 PHOTOGRAPHERS snap photos then lay their cameras on the edge
 of the ring as the fighters return to their corners.

IN YVON'S CORNER -

CHRIS
 Okay, Doux?

YVON
 (breathes heavily)
 Yeah. How do I look?

CHRIS
 You look good. Just gear down a
 bit. You're runnin' a little high.

PADDY
 Remember the plan. He's not gonna
 come to you. You go get *him*.

YVON
 Yeah, yeah. Okay.

PADDY
 It's your time, Doux. You're not
 here by accident.

CHRIS
 You got the whole country. Now go
 knock his fuckin' head off.

INT. MONTREAL FORUM - BOXING RING - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: Yvon's fiercely determined eyes.

CLOSE ON: Moore's fiercely determined eyes.

The BELL RINGS. Yvon charges out of his corner.

The Commentators' call is heard over the action we see:

COMMENTATOR #1 (O.S.)
 Both fighters trading a few jabs
 to start, as they circle one
 another. A crisp jab there from
 Moore backs Durelle up.

(MORE)

COMMENTATOR #1 (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Just approaching the end of the
 first minute and the consensus
 before the fight was that Durelle
 would have to come storming in at
 Archie Moore early if he were to
 get him--

Yvon unleashes a devastating right hand, knocks Moore down.

COMMENTATOR #1 (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 --which he just did! Oh, my
 goodness!

The crowd ERUPTS.

COMMENTATOR #2 (O.S.)
 That was a crushing right hand to
 Moore's jaw! Moore is down!

REACTION SHOT from:

-- YVON'S HOUSE, where his family watches: LOUD CHEERING.

BACK IN THE RING -

Moore still lies on the canvas.

REFEREE
 ... six... seven... eight...

Moore rises.

COMMENTATOR #1 (O.S.)
 And he's up at nine but staggered!
 Moore is on his feet!

Yvon rushes in, delivers a furious barrage of loaded punches.
 Moore valiantly defends himself.

COMMENTATOR #1 (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Archie Moore, dazed and staggering
 around the ring now. Yvon Durelle
 knows he has the champ hurt. Moore
 just trying to survive in there.
 Durelle now, nailing him with
 everything he has. The gallant old
 champion just hanging on for dear
 life. Another hard combination and
 down goes Archie Moore again!

The crowd takes it up a notch at the second knockdown.
 Everyone is on their feet screaming their lungs out.

Yvon bounces to a corner but the Referee waves him back in.

COMMENTATOR #1 (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 But he's right back up at the count
 of two! This is un-be-lievable!

Yvon explodes across the ring and throws a lethal overhand
 right which decks Moore to the canvas. Third time down.

The crowd loses its mind.

Paddy notices the slow start to the count for the third
 knockdown. He screams at the Referee.

PADDY
 The count! Start the fuckin' count!
 Start the fuckin' count!

The Referee gets to Moore, starts counting.

Yvon's wild eyes scan to Paddy then to the Referee. Moore
 appears finished.

REFEREE
 ... seven!... eight!... nine!...

Moore rises groggily, needs the ropes to make it up.

PADDY
 Finish him, Doux!

Yvon blitzes Moore with everything he has left. Moore blocks,
 deflects, clinches and tries to stay alive.

COMMENTATOR #1 (O.S.)
 One minute to go in round one. And
 it has been a nightmare for Archie
 Moore. Down three times! If he
 lasts this round it will be
 boxing's modern miracle.

Moore somehow steadies himself, gets in a few decent jabs.

The BELL RINGS three times.

Moore lurches exhaustedly to his corner.

Yvon bounds back to his. The usual corner work: the stool,
 the water, the towel.

IN YVON'S CORNER -

PADDY
 Son of bitch! He didn't start the
 count on time! Jesus Christ, Doux!
 He's a wounded duck out there.

CHRIS

Keep on him, Doux. He's scared. He doesn't know what the Christ just hit him.

YVON

I can't hit him any harder.

PADDY

Just don't stop.

IN MOORE'S CORNER -

They work furiously on him to alleviate the fog.

MOORE

Goddam! That boy tagged me good.

CORNERMAN

How are ya, Arch?

MOORE

I'm gonna be alright. Startin' to feel okay.

RINGSIDE -

COMMENTATOR #2

What a start for the Canadian Yvon Durelle. Who saw that coming?

COMMENTATOR #1

Moore knows he's in a fight now.

IN YVON'S CORNER -

Yvon finds Thérèse in the crowd. He smiles a little and she returns it. She has hope.

PADDY

Ready, Doux? We got points but it's still gonna be a war.

YVON

A war.

A BELL RINGS to start the second round which leads into a sequence of fight scenes for rounds 2-3-4. No commentary.

Both men have promising moments when they get in a good head-snapping jab or a powerful combination, but the fight is even for the next three rounds.

Yvon routinely throws wild righthand haymakers, tries to land the knockout punch. They mostly miss or are blocked.

Moore displays dazzling speed, head-snapping jabs and stinging punches from a variety of angles.

We gradually see the difference between the fighters: Moore is technically efficient; Yvon is a brawler.

COMMENTATOR #1 (O.S.)
Just seconds left in the fourth.

Both fighters simultaneously throw wild right crosses which both narrowly miss.

A split second before the bell, Moore catches Yvon with a short left which lands like a hammer. Stuns him.

The BELL CLANGS three times.

Yvon reacts, thinks it was a late punch. He swings a left-right combo into Moore's face, backs him up sharply.

Moore takes a deranged swing back but misses as the Referee steps in to separate them.

REFEREE
Time!

Both men glare at each other and exchange words as they cross back to their respective corners.

COMMENTATOR #2 (O.S.)
Fireworks here to end the fourth.

IN YVON'S CORNER -

YVON
Son of a bitch!

CHRIS
Stay calm, Doux.

YVON
You see that?

PADDY
Yeah. Doux, stay away from the jab. Keep moving. You see him drop that left, bang! You bring that fuckin' hammer over the top.

CHRIS
Put a couple in his belly. He'll
drop that left for ya.

IN THE RING -

A BELL RINGS. Fifth round. We see the action, hear the call:

COMMENTATOR #1 (O.S.)
Here comes Yvon Durelle. He's
brought some kind of hell-fire to
the champ here tonight.

COMMENTATOR #2 (O.S.)
Archie Moore, now looking
stabilized. There's a sharp jab.
That catches the Canadian.

COMMENTATOR #1 (O.S.)
Durelle's still coming. We know
he's looking to--and there's that
big right hand straight to the jaw
and the champ is down again!

The crowd ERUPTS. The Referee counts over Moore.

REACTION SHOTS from:

- YVON'S HOUSE: the family SCREAMS, hugs, etc.
- MEN'S CLUB SMOKING LOUNGE: Truman Gibson, eyes wide,
barks "Now!"

BACK IN THE RING -

Moore rises. He doesn't look beaten.

COMMENTATOR #1 (O.S.) (CONT'D)
And Moore is up at six! Here comes
Durelle, looking to finish him off.

PADDY AND CHRIS
(yelling over each other)
Finish him, Yvon! Take him out! Put
him down, Doux!

Yvon surges in furiously but can't connect the knockout
punch. Moore ducks, parries, jabs and circles away.

COMMENTATOR #1 (O.S.)
Archie Moore is just hanging on for
dear life now.

COMMENTATOR #2 (O.S.)
How is he still on his feet? And
another big right from Durelle!

Moore is staggered but somehow finds the will and energy to fight back. He throws desperate bombs, lands good shots.

COMMENTATOR #1 (O.S.)
I've never seen anything like this.
The old pro is somehow fighting
back. There's a solid right to the
head of Yvon Durelle.

Just then Moore rocks Yvon with his best punch of the fight. Yvon staggers sideways but does not go down.

The fight descends into SLOW MOTION as another of Moore's big rights connects.

It looks like Yvon will go down. The crowd ERUPTS again.

REACTION SHOTS from:

- THÉRÈSE: her terrified eyes.
- PADDY/CHRIS: screaming to Yvon.
- MOORE'S CORNERMEN: they howl for the knockout punch.

BACK IN THE RING -

Yvon staggers sideways. The action returns to REAL TIME.

COMMENTATOR #1 (O.S.) (CONT'D)
That was some dynamite of his own
from Archie Moore. That rocked
Durelle, no doubt about it.

They trade punches that would put lesser men to sleep all the way up to the bell's THREE RINGS.

IN YVON'S CORNER -

PADDY
You okay, Yvon? Let me see.

Yvon is a bit unsteady on the stool. His eyes swell.

YVON
It's okay. He got me good. I'm
okay. What do we do now?

CHRIS
He wanted a bullfight. Remember?

IN MOORE'S CORNER -

TRAINER
Take the stool, Arch.

MOORE
Nope. Gonna stand.

IN THE RING - The next sequence covers rounds 6-9, the most brutal stretch of the fight as they trade fearsome punches. No commentary. ROUND CARDS can be inserted.

Both fighters' eyes swell enormously and eventually Yvon's nose will bleed profusely.

Yvon plods ahead, throws countless punches, some landing.

Moore counters and begins to connect with more frequency, good right hooks and jabs.

Paddy and Chris sense the shift.

The Commentators' call kicks in. A turning point:

COMMENTATOR #1 (O.S.)
Look out! Archie Moore drops Yvon
Durelle with a thunderous right.

The crowd ROARS. Yvon rises.

COMMENTATOR #1 (O.S.) (CONT'D)
But he's up at the count of three.
My goodness, you could hear that
punch land. That had to hurt!

Yvon ducks a punch, careens off the ropes. Three BELL RINGS.

IN YVON'S CORNER -

Yvon's face is a bloody mess. He somehow finds Thérèse. Tears stream down her face. She sees the dream slipping away.

Chris and Paddy work on Yvon's bleeding nose. They shout instructions which he appears not to hear.

REACTION SHOTS from:

-- YVON'S HOUSE: his family looks worn out, exhausted.
Ernie can only say, *"He had him, he had him."*

-- MEN'S CLUB SMOKING LOUNGE: Truman Gibson bolts from his chair. To the screen in a low voice: *"Come on, you son of a bitch. You're not done yet, Fisherman."*

BACK IN THE RING -

The BELL RINGS. The fighters approach each other cautiously.

COMMENTATOR #1 (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Round ten, here we go. It's been
 all-out war from the first bell.
 The brawler from Baie Sainte-Anne,
 New Brunswick, the Fighting
 Fisherman. And the dancer, the
 elegant and wily champion from St.
 Louis, Mississippi. A fight for the
 ages.

Each man lands solid blows but Yvon noticeably tires, his
 legs wobble. Moore sees it, stabs him with a series of jabs.

Blood from Yvon's nose covers his chest. He occasionally
 unleashes an energetic flurry of punches.

Moore's eyes are visibly swollen but no other injuries. Moore
 continues to dance and duck, tags Yvon almost at will now.

The BELL RINGS three times.

IN YVON'S CORNER -

PADDY
 Doux?

YVON
 Can't get my breath. Hard to see.

The crowd chants "*Durelle! Durelle!*" Paddy works on his cuts.

PADDY
 You hear that? Listen, listen! This
 fight ain't over yet, Monsieur
 Durelle. You just need one more
 opening, a tiny little crack. One
 more fuckin' shot, Doux. It's right
 here in this hand, I know it is.

Yvon stares hard into Paddy's desperate eyes.

PADDY (CONT'D)
 Tag him. Drop that hammer you
 brought from the docks. Put it on
 him, Doux.

Yvon rises. The fighters exchange steely-eyed contact.

YVON
 Start the music.

The BELL RINGS.

There is only 45 seconds left in the fight.

Moore dances out, throws punches, nails Yvon up against the ropes with crisp, stinging combinations.

Yvon goes down. The crowd HOWLS. Yvon grasps the ropes, lumbers up onto one knee.

The Referee counts "... *six!... seven!... eight!...*"

The CROWD NOISE fades out. Yvon hears nothing.

With defeat so close, he wonders if he should--or can--get to his feet. He peers at Moore across the ring, who gives him a tiny nod of encouragement.

Chris and Paddy look anxious and helpless. Thérèse looks devastated, can barely watch.

The CROWD NOISE fades back in with a chant of "*Doux! Doux!*" Ringside Photographers click furiously.

Yvon stares at his right hand, rises, decides he'll throw one more haymaker to see where his destiny lands.

He glances to Paddy and Chris, offers a weak smile.

COMMENTATOR #1 (O.S.)
And Durelle is up at the count
of nine. Can he have anything--
anything at all--left in the tank?

Yvon charges across the ring, unleashes the murderous right hand which has put so many men on their backs.

But he misses and absorbs a crushing shot from Moore which ends the dream.

COMMENTATOR #1 (O.S.) (CONT'D)
A stunning right from the champ and
down goes Durelle again. Can he get
up from this one?

He cannot. The Referee counts over Yvon.

Yvon lies on his back, barely moves. Time slows down, his world goes SILENT.

IMAGES swim through his mind's eye:

-- his first boxing lesson from Placide.

- sitting on the dock with Thérèse discussing the future.
- sharing a laugh with Arnold Fleiger in the pool hall.
- hugging Thérèse outside the Forum the previous night.

Gradually, the ROAR of the crowd fades back in. Yvon turns over as the count reaches seven.

COMMENTATOR #1 (O.S.) (CONT'D)
... that's seven, that's eight,
struggling at nine... and that's
ten! He's out, folks. It's over
here in round eleven.

The Referee counts him out. Yvon staggers to his feet.

The BELL RINGS three times. The ring fills with both teams.

COMMENTATOR #2 (O.S.)
The fight of the year, no doubt
about it! This one's for the
history books!

Moore finds Yvon at the centre of the ring, embraces him.

MOORE
Yvon, Yvon, great fight. You did
great! Thank you.

YVON
Yeah, we gave 'em a show, eh?

The Referee holds Moore's weary arm in the air.

Thérèse is on her feet along with the crowd. She cries but applauds, finds solace that it's over.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

Next day, Yvon's face is still swollen, signs of medical attention. Yvon and Thérèse sit pensively, holding hands.

Sorrow and heartache choke the air.

Yvon gives her hand a gentle squeeze and shuffles down the aisle to an empty seat beside Chris. Neither man is sure they'll be able to speak.

YVON
We came a long way, though, didn't
we, Mac?

CHRIS
An awful long way, Doux.

YVON
We nearly had it, eh?

CHRIS
So close. Yeah. One hand on it.

YVON
Put a scare into the old bugger.

CHRIS
Scared him to death, Doux.

YVON
We'll get him next time, then?

CHRIS
Yeah, next time.

Yvon peeks past Chris out to an ageless pale blue sky and a never-ending bank of downy white clouds far below the plane.

YVON
Let's have a drink, Chris.

DISSOLVE TO:

On a dark background, text reads:

Yvon Durelle fought an unsuccessful rematch with Archie Moore in 1959. He was knocked out in the third round.

In his last great fight, he challenged George Chuvalo for the Canadian Heavyweight title. He lost in 12 rounds.

He was inducted into the New Brunswick Hall of Fame in 1971, the Canadian Sports Hall of Fame in 1975 and the Canadian Boxing Hall of Fame in 1989.

Yvon Durelle died on January 6, 2007 (age 77) after suffering a stroke and battling Parkinson's Disease.

His boxing record stands at 88-24-2.

FADE OUT.

THE END