

The Greatest Sham on Earth

Hurry, hurry, hurry - The Fight of The Century could be coming to a cinema near you. Yes - You! If you didn't get it on TV recently, here's your chance to get the lowdown on a fantastic plan to make a production out of it - provided the right director can be persuaded to do it. So, check out here a recent talk-around between a possible producer and scriptwriter....

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Hey, you see the big fight?

Huh? I drag my eyes off the script and look at my buddy.

You know – the Big One. At the stadium, two weeks back.

Oh, that One? Nah, gotta deadline with this turkey. I hold up the pages. This is a doozey, a real money-maker.

Here's a better one, my buddy says, pulling out a video tape. He goes to the player, shoves it in, sits back. Watch this – you gonna love it. I took this when I got there and kept it going.... He grins at me, hits the remote.

I roll my eyes as the video opens to show a humongous huggermugger horde outside the stadium, seething like a swarm of locusts. We follow the camera as Security makes a path through the ruckus and we're in. I see the small crowd inside shifting nervously, all eyes on the white square called a ring where the two haggard, sweaty boxers sit in opposing corners, seconds whispering instructions. I hear somebody saying the fight's nearly over. At the ropes, the referee stands aloof, his blackness strongly contrasting with the crispness of his short-sleeved white shirt and blue-red bow tie.

I get a light elbow nudge. Sorry I got in late, bro.

I shrug, grimace. Whatever. I look back to the video. So, what's with the short guys outside in blue coats, hand-held computers, notebooks, pencils, the works? I saw some climbing up the walls already.

Shrugging, he says: Just a bunch of lousy sharks waiting to make a killing, is all. He looks at me. This is The Fight of the Century, y'know. Trillions riding on this one, bucko.

I scan the minuscule audience of what looks like every nationality on the planet; they sit, eyes wide, barely breathing. Hey, there's less than two hundred there. How come such a tiny glee club for this trillion dollar trick?

They're all the marks who paid the billions to get in, dontcha know? He grins as the bell rings.

I didn't bother to ask how my buddy got in but, while the boxers stagger to the center, I do ask: So, who *are* the fighters? What's the prize?

He looks at me. Brothers – R. Washington and D. Washington. Everybody's forgotten what their first names are, or what they mean, even. He chuckles. The prize? Heavyweight Chump of The World, man, what else?

I shrug, look back to the action.

The referee – obviously impatient – circles around, waves the fighters in closer. They shuffle in, fists feinting, torsos twisting, feet weaving, dancing, in and out, circling, huffing, puffing – but never once hitting each other. Not even close, I can see. This goes on for a minute. I turn to my friend: This is some sick joke, buddy!

He spreads his hands wide, shrugs.

Again, I watch the fighters still monkeying around each other, swinging and missing. This? *This* is the fight of the century? I shake my head. They been doing this for how long, jeezz?

Too long, everybody says, yeah, but it's the final round, bro, only a coupla minutes to go.

It's also a time-waster, buddy. I tap him on the shoulder. And you want me t'bankroll a movie about this? I stand up. I need a drink, go to the bar, mix a Manhattan.

Wait, wait for the big finish! He's still looking at the video. Oh, wow, nearly a hit there....

I shake my head, take down a slug and feel the warmth. Big *what?* The Greatest Show on Earth, this ain't, buddy. I go back to my seat, nudge my buddy on his arm. Hey, look at me - I can almost see Cecil B. puking in his grave at this one.

He glances at me, then back to the farce. Lookit, he says, it's still a great story, and a great fight. We just gotta get the right director, make it right.

Yeah? Who you got?

Well, what about Cameron?

Possible, yeah – he's done a lotta fantasy. Who else?

Eastwood? He did that million dollar thing a few years back. And this is *trillions*, man....

C'mon, puleese! The good, the bad and the ugly? Again? No way, buddy.

Well, he did good with *The Unforgiven*.

I look back to the video. Huh, nobody's gonna forgive this fight, that's for sure. I stop and sigh. This one's *The Joke* of the Century, man. I check the wall clock. You got one more minute....

Okay, okay, then what about the guy who did *Fight Club*, what's his name? Oh, yeah, Fincher. Anyway, about a psycho-neurotic fighting himself all the time, y'know. And everything got blown up at the end, big finish and all....

Oh – *Fight Club Redux*, huh? Close but no cigar, buddy. Sorry. I go back to my script and drink.

Okay, okay, I got it: Scorsese! Now he puts a finger-digging, vice-grip on me.

I had to stop reading again; but not because of the grip. You *gotta* be kidding!

Hey, remember – *Raging Bull*?

I cackle out loud. More like *Raging Bullshit* in that stadium, man.

But, but – there's a great rematch coming up, man, with a six-man tag team for each side. A real knock-down, drag out extravaganza!

I stare at my buddy, impassively. I hear the final bell and now watch as the fighters shamble back to their corners. The referee is in the center, arms wide, pointing to each. As a deathly silence descends, the camera starts pulling back up the aisle, out the door and through Security beating back the killer mob.

Alright, then! *Who* the hell d'you want?

I bring my gaze back. It's a tragicomedy, buddy – and a black one at that, no pun intended. I grin, mirthlessly. Call Woody Allen.

On the video, the stadium erupts while the guys in blue coats scuttle away like cockroaches.

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