

BRAWL!

By: Connor Ermir Bradshaw

THE CHARACTERS (in order of appearance):

LUCKY. Early 20s. A skilled boxer.

DIESEL. Late 30s to late 40s. Boxing coach. Spyder's Partner.

COLT. Late teens to early 20s. An eager boxer.

SPYDER. Late 30s to late 40s. Diesel's partner.

GREENIE. Mid 20s. Former boxer. Military veteran.

THE PLACE:

A valley nestled beneath the Mowbray Mountains. A plot of land with a couple trailers. A 12x12 ring. The space between a boxing glove and a row of teeth.

A NOTE ON MOVEMENT:

Every boxing match, every sexual encounter in this play – unless explicitly stated otherwise – is a dance. There's a thin line between fighting and loving. The same can be said of a dance and a boxing match. With this in mind, the dances that represent intimacy and the dances that represent fighting should share pieces of visual language.

NOTES ON LANGUAGE:

A // indicates the beginning of overlapping dialogue.

A – indicates the interruption of speech, whether from the character currently speaking or from another character.

The play makes use of indents to denote beats and pauses. The further the indent, the longer the intended beat.

“Attention to the meaning of the central male slang term for sexual intercourse—“fuck”— is instructive. To fuck a person is to have sex with them. To fuck someone in another context...means to hurt or cheat a person. And when hurled as a simple insult (“fuck you”) the intent is denigration and the remark is often a prelude to violence or the threat of violence.

Sex in patriarchy is fucking. That we live in a world in which people continue to use the same word for sex and violence, and then resist the notion that sex is routinely violent and claim to be outraged when sex becomes overtly violent, is testament to the power of patriarchy.”

– bell hooks

ACT ONE

MOVEMENT ONE

LUCKY stands in the middle of a boxing ring marked by frayed ropes. A customized license plate that reads "THE PIT" is nailed to one of the boxing ring's posts. We're in The Pit.

COLT lightly bounces on the balls of his feet opposite LUCKY. SPYDER stands by an above ground plastic pool that's next to the boxing ring. SPYDER's left leg is covered in a compression wrap / bandage. He shifts his weight to ease pressure on it every now and then.

The rest of the space feels like a trailer park backyard; there's a boxing dummy, white plastic lawn chairs, several coolers, and open beer cans. DIESEL tightens the ropes around the ring.

DIESEL.

I want a clean fuckin' fight! And Colt, if I see you droppin' your left shoulder I'm gonna knock you out myself, aight!?! Gotta see improvement!

COLT.

Yessir.

DIESEL.

And 'member what I told ya 'bout your footwork?

COLT.

I'm walkin' on a cloud not wet cement.

DIESEL.

Thas' right!

Now y'all ready?

Aight, meet in the middle so we can get this shit started!

LUCKY and COLT bump fists.

DIESEL.

Aaaaaannnnndddd BRAAAAWWWLLLLL!!!

The lights drop, focusing only on COLT and LUCKY.

COLT tentatively slides forward before gripped around the waist by LUCKY. This is a dance, half-tango, half-contact improv. COLT spins away from LUCKY, who advances. COLT is jittery.

He attempts to bat away LUCKY's hand but LUCKY's too quick. He grabs COLT and leads him around the ring.

DIESEL.

Break outta that hold, man!! Break out of it break out of it!!

COLT writhes against LUCKY, who maintains his hold.

DIESEL.

Come on, Colt! Don't get stuck now!!

COLT is frustrated. He breaks free before reengaging LUCKY and guiding him across the ring.

DIESEL.

Thas' right!! Fuckin' keep 'im on the defensive now!

Don't drop yer shoulder!!

COLT maintains control. But suddenly, LUCKY's body goes limp in COLT's arms. COLT falters under this dead weight just long enough for LUCKY to gain an upper hand. COLT drops his shoulder – and his eyeline.

DIESEL.

God fucking dammit!! Don't drop your fucking—

LUCKY quickly seizes COLT's jaw.

The two freeze in this moment.

LUCKY then shoves COLT's chin to the left.

COLT whips around, as if struck by a punch, spinning out onto the ground.

DIESEL.

I'm callin' it!!

SPYDER enters the ring with an ice pack and two bottles of water, one for LUCKY and one for COLT.

SPYDER.

Drink it slow now.

DIESEL.

Lucky, go shower up.

LUCKY exits.

DIESEL.

I dunno why you're lookin' at me. Ya know what I'm gon' say.

COLT.

Sorry.

DIESEL.

I don't want you to apologize. I want you to fucking fix your bad habits.

 Spyder, can you grab 'im an ankle brace? Thought I saw a slight twist at the end there.

SPYDER.

Sure thing.

DIESEL.

They're on the counter. I grabbed 'em 'fore the fight started.

 Drink it slow.

COLT drinks the water even slower than he was. DIESEL stands over him.

MOVEMENT TWO

It's late. COLT and LUCKY are passing a cigarette back and forth. COLT is still wearing the ankle brace. LUCKY takes a long drag.

LUCKY.

These cigs are bunk, man.

COLT.

Blame Spyder.

LUCKY.

You jacked these from Spyder?

COLT.

Can't pay for 'em myself.

LUCKY.

Diesel not put the money in our accounts yet?

COLT.

Fuck no.

LUCKY.

Fuckin' hate Pall Malls.

COLT.

Then don't smoke 'em. Damn.

LUCKY.

I din't say I wasn't gonna smoke it. I just mean like, Dang, Pall Malls suck.

COLT.

I guess.

Here. Finish it.

LUCKY.

Where you goin, Gimpy?

COLT.

Fuck you.

LUCKY.

Wait no but furreal.

COLT.

Gonna run at the track.

LUCKY.

Why?

COLT.

For conditioning.

LUCKY.

Can't run on that bum leg ya got.

COLT.

It's how ya get better. Ya walk it off.

LUCKY.

That's fuckin' stupid.

COLT.

Okay well maybe I'll just chill here.

Luxuriate in our private pool.

LUCKY.

I know for a fact Spyder goes in there an' pisses his Natty Lites away.

COLT.

Mmm gives it some flavor.

C'mon.

LUCKY.

Ehhhhhh. I dunno.

COLT.

What's so good out there?

LUCKY.

There any more cigs?

COLT.

Should be on my flip flops.

LUCKY.

Dope. Thanks.

COLT.

You seriously just gonna sit there?

LUCKY.

You ever smoke a wet cigarette?

COLT.

You're so fucking lame.

LUCKY.

Says the gimp.

COLT.

Don't let Spyder hear you sayin' that.

LUCKY.

The fuck is Spyder gonna do?

COLT.

I dunno.

LUCKY.

He'd laugh anyway.

He'd totally laugh, dude, come on.

COLT.

I dunno.

LUCKY.

Fuck you. He'd totally laugh. He likes wordplay and shit.

COLT.

You almost done?

LUCKY.

“Smoke them hoes down til they stingers”. In’t that what Wiz Khalifa says to do?

COLT.

I dunno what yer talkin’ about.

LUCKY.

It’s a great song. Yer missin’ out.

COLT.

I’m sure.

LUCKY.

Whatchu think bout this tournament thing?

COLT.

I dunno.

LUCKY.

That your fuckin’ catchphrase or sump’n? “I dunno”. “I dunno”.

If you fucking say // “I dunno” I’m gonna

COLT.

I dunno.

LUCKY throws COLT’s flip flop at him.

LUCKY.

Stupid ass.

No but seriously. This tournament.

COLT.

I’ll answer if ya get in the pool. I’m bored.

LUCKY.

Fine.

COLT.

And bring the basketball hoop over!

LUCKY.

Aight.

Okay. The tournament.

This conversation occurs while the boys play a loose, pool basketball game.

COLT.

We know what the take home could be?

LUCKY.

Gotta be more than...15, right? It's three days.

COLT.

That the total pot?

LUCKY.

Prob'ly. Main card should get at least 10 on its own.

Fuck yeah! One zip.

COLT.

We not playin' Make It Take It?

LUCKY.

Nah. You deserve to get the ball some time.

COLT.

Funny.

LUCKY.

You think it'd be more than ten?

COLT.

Uhhh, I mean, maybe. Depends...on...how...many—

Blocked.

COLT.

Fuck.

Depends on how many entries there'd be.

LUCKY.

You still tryin' ta get into that janky, fake WWE thing?

COLT.

It's a semi-pro circuit, asshole.

It's part of the come up.

LUCKY.

Coulda fooled me.

COLT.

Fuck off.

LUCKY.

You ever think of Diesel as like, our pimp?

COLT.

What the fuck?

LUCKY.

Yeah like. Like we stay here.

We don't get paid directly for our fights.

We don't know how much money's gettin' thrown around.

And everything we do is, like, through Diesel.

Can't guard me, boy! Two zip.

COLT.

Thas' a bit of a reach.

LUCKY.

Maybe.

COLT.

That'd make us, like, whores.

LUCKY.

Yeah?

COLT.

Yeah.

LUCKY.

I'm a whore. Big whore.

COLT.

Shut up and check me the ball.

LUCKY.

Aight. Prude.

COLT.

Just...gotta...get...to-fuck.

LUCKY.

Blocked, bitch!

COLT.

If my ankle weren't—

LUCKY.

Ay wait, lemme adjust myself here.

LUCKY digs into his shorts.

LUCKY.

You wanna look the other way while I got my dick in my hand?

COLT.

You wanna put your dick away while we're playing basketball?

LUCKY.

Okay all good.

Take your shot.

COLT.

How d'ya know I'm not gonna dunk?

LUCKY.

Because you've tried and failed.

Shoot.

COLT.

Fuck.

LUCKY.

Damn that didn't even hit the backboard.

COLT.

I'll get it.

LUCKY.

Nah I got it.

COLT.

Thanks.

So if you had to guess; how many entries you think'll be there?

LUCKY.

You can have the ball.

COLT.

No. It's your ball.

So how many?

LUCKY.

Least 18.

COLT.

18?

LUCKY.

Yeah. It's the Fourth o' July. M'sure some dad who coaches his son's wrestling team wants to rock some tweaker's shit. Feel like a patriot or whatever.

COLT.

You think there'll be a lotta tweakers at this one?

LUCKY.

How else you s'posed to be 5'8 and 115 pounds?

Tweakers are everywhere, Colty Boy. Just cuz' they don't got track marks up an' down their arm doesn't mean they don't tweak. Just means their coaches give 'em the good stuff.

COLT.

I thought tweakin' was a meth thing.

LUCKY.

You think those fuckin' chemical cocktails filled with Tren, Creatine, and HGH don't basically make meth?

COLT.

I dunno.

That feels different.

LUCKY.

Why?

COLT.

That's like... cleaner.

LUCKY.

Then why do so many professional wrestlers fuckin' die in their 40s?

COLT.

That's different. They got, like, brain damage and shit.

LUCKY.

You think downing half a gallon of that shit won't give you brain damage?

COLT.

Not like meth!

LUCKY dunks over COLT.

LUCKY.

We want a skunk rule?

COLT.

Just take your ball back.
Jesus Fuckin' Christ!

LUCKY's made another shot.

LUCKY.
Damn, I shoulda played basketball in high school. Four zip.
Anyway. It's all meth.
Pre-workout can be meth.
Those Pall Malls can be meth.
Anything can be meth.

COLT.
I don't think so.

COLT bricks his shot.

COLT.
Fuck.

LUCKY.
Want the ball back?

COLT.
No. It's yours.

LUCKY.
Okay.
You think they gonna have us fight against each other?

COLT.
How much you weigh right now? Ya feel light.

LUCKY.
I'm a lean, mean, 155.

COLT.
155?

LUCKY.

You think it was more?

COLT.

Less. You barely been eatin' anything.

LUCKY.

Since when?

COLT.

Since like two weeks ago, I dunno.

LUCKY.

Bro, I – LET'S GO! Five zip.

I literally ate four hot dogs at dinner and helped Spyder dust the rest of the corn.

COLT.

Aight.

LUCKY.

Whatta you weigh?

COLT.

145.

LUCKY.

Psshhh, fuckin' ten pounds lighter'n me talking about "You haven't eaten in two weeks".

COLT.

Whatever.

Oh my god, finally! A fuckin' basket. Here, gimme the ball back.

I don't think they'll have us fightin' each other. Not right away.

LUCKY.

You really wanna post up on me right now?

COLT.

Uh-huh.

LUCKY.

You need to cut yer fuckin nails, dude.

COLT.
Shut up.

LUCKY.
Gonna fuckin' claw me to death, damn!

COLT.
Wasn't an issue when you was able to stop me.

LUCKY.
Oh you think I can't stop you right now?

COLT.
Try.

LUCKY.
Oh I don't needa try. I'll...shit.

COLT dunks over LUCKY.

COLT.
I'm a menace in the paint!!

LUCKY.
Yeah alright.

COLT looks at LUCKY, grabs him by the neck, and kisses him. The two slip beneath the surface.

MOVEMENT THREE

SPYDER, COLT, and LUCKY are in a state of hurry / panic / mania. LUCKY is grabbing water bottles. COLT is looking for car keys. SPYDER is on the phone with someone. This scene should feel high-octane and tense, but in the “We’re gonna be late!” kinda way.

COLT.

Where the fuck are the keys?!

SPYDER.

Well shit man, don’tcha think we’d ‘a been there by now if fuckin’ Dale had let us know?!
Stupid fuckin’ Dale!

LUCKY.

You speakin’ to Slim // right now? Or Dale?

SPYDER.

Yeah yeah // I’m speaking to Slim right

LUCKY.

Slim, I swear to fucking God if we lose out on this registration because you got fuckin’ dyslexia!

SPYDER.

Pick up those water bottles, man! And gimme my phone back.

DIESEL.

Who’s got the keys?? We needa // get this shit

COLT.

I’m **looking** for them!

DIESEL.

Where’d ya have ‘em last?

COLT.

That’s the stupidest fucking question ever oh my fucking god!

DIESEL.

Check the counter.

COLT. [*muttering*]

I already checked the counter...

DIESEL.

Imma throw these shoes in the back; need me to grab // that for yeh?

SPYDER.

I got it.

DIESEL.

Jus' looked like you was struggl-

SPYDER.

I got it, Diesel.

DIESEL.

Aight.

LUCKY.

Once I see Slim, I'm gonna punch him as hard as I can in the back of the head.

Fuckin' Donkey Kong his ass.

DIESEL.

Well jus' make sure it's not your right hand.

LUCKY.

Where the fuck is Colt?

DIESEL.

Lookin' for the keys.

LUCKY.

Are ya fuckin' kiddin' me?

DIESEL.

Ay, Spyder, drop that shit in the back of the truck. Lucky, go help Colt.

LUCKY.

Aight.

SPYDER.

Wait didja grab the hand wraps?

DIESEL.

Course I grabbed // the hand wraps.

SPYDER.

I don't see 'em.

DIESEL.

That's because they're in the car // in the cup holder.

SPYDER.

Headin' to the car now.

COLT.

Found the keys!!

DIESEL.

And where were they?

LUCKY.

Who cares just get in the fuckin' truck!

DIESEL.

Got yer boxin' gloves?

LUCKY.

In the bag.

[*To COLT*] Grabbed yours too.

COLT.

Thanks.

DIESEL.

I'm drivin'.

COLT.

Why??

DIESEL.

Because I'm a better driver an' if we get pulled over, y'all can hoof it over to the compound. Gimme the keys. And here. Take your shoes, Colt.

SPYDER.

Y'all are movin' slower than molasses in January!

LUCKY.

He's talkin' to you, Colty Boy!

COLT and LUCKY race offstage. DIESEL quickly grabs another gym shoe and exits right behind.

Stillness.

GREENIE enters. He's holding a duffel bag. He kicks around some beer cans, inspects the basketball hoop.

GREENIE.

Yo! Diesel, you here? Spyder?

GREENIE, ruffles through his backpack, and pulls out a crumpled letter. He places it on the table, surveys his surroundings, and exits.

MOVEMENT FOUR

We are back at The Pit. DIESEL and SPYDER are sitting out by the pool. SPYDER has his leg elevated. DIESEL is jotting down on a notepad with a calculator balanced on his thigh.

DIESEL.

That should get us through uh, through the end of the month. 'Fore the fight anyway.

SPYDER.

Kroeger's got a sale on hot dogs. Buy two packs get one free.

DIESEL.

The nature valleys aren't on sale, are they?

SPYDER.

Not from what I saw.

Never know though.

DIESEL.

How bout those, uh, the ding dongs? The hostess cakes.

SPYDER.

I think they got a cycle for those. Like every month or sump'n like that.

DIESEL.

Damn.

SPYDER.

They raised the price of eggs.

DIESEL.

You mentioned that yeah.

How much?

SPYDER.

Fifty cents.

DIESEL sucks his teeth.

SPYDER.

I was talkin' with Bill earlier.

DIESEL.

Yeah?

SPYDER.

Said he probl'y couldn't get us a deal on his corn.

DIESEL.

And why the fuck not? Fuckin' stingy // ass tryna

SPYDER.

Is' the drought. Said he was worried 'bout crop yields this season. Can't keep deals with anyone.

DIESEL.

You tell him that cuts both ways?

SPYDER.

Yeah, I did.

DIESEL.

And?

SPYDER.

Said if he can't pay his bills there's no sense in watchin' fights for free.

DIESEL suddenly tears out the sheet on his notepad, tosses it on the ground, and paces, fiddling with something in his pocket.

DIESEL.

Greenie wrote us.

SPYDER.

What?

DIESEL.

Yeah he uh, he...

DIESEL takes the letter out of his pocket.

DIESEL.

Noticed it when we got back.

SPYDER.

Whas' it say?

DIESEL.

Take it.

SPYDER.

His handwriting fuckin' sucks.

DIESEL.

Yeah that uh, that says "Discharge".

SPYDER.

Least it wasn't dishonorable.
He at the motel?

DIESEL.

Assume so.

SPYDER.

Aight.
Whatta you wanna do?

DIESEL.

I dunno.

SPYDER.

You was talkin' earlier 'bout tryna recruit soon.

DIESEL.

Yeah.

SPYDER.

Ya think he'd wanna join back up?

DIESEL.

No.

No, if he did, he woulda left some sorta contact info, I figure.

SPYDER.

Maybe.

Course if he didn't wanna join, why leave a note in the first place? Y'know?

DIESEL.

I dunno. I dunno.

Jus' like him to do this sorta shit.

No warning whatsoever before BOOM. Detonated bomb.

SPYDER.

Bombs beep before they detonate.

DIESEL.

Okay fine, he's a fuckin' grenade then.

That work for yeh?

SPYDER.

Colt and Lucky'll know he's back soon enough.

Word spreads.

DIESEL.

M'sure they will.

But if he wanted us to tell 'em, he'da said so in the letter.

This was just him lettin' us know he's back so we don't see him in the candy aisle at Kroeger and think we're seein' a fuckin' ghost.

SPYDER.

We don't gotta tell anyone.

M'sure Colt still knows boys on the wrestling team. I'll ask 'im later this week. Get our little feeder program up and runnin'.

DIESEL.

Okay.

SPYDER looks at the grocery list.

SPYDER.

Ice pops'll be on sale next week.

Disability should be hittin' soon.

DIESEL.

Next 48 hours or so yeah.

SPYDER.

Maybe we can get the ice pops anyway then?

SPYDER turns his body to rephrase his question to DIESEL.

SPYDER.

Maybe we can get—

SPYDER suddenly grimaces, twitching his leg slightly, balling his fists. DIESEL impulsively massages SPYDER's calf, gently.

DIESEL.

Gotta drink more water.

SPYDER.

Maybe.

DIESEL.

No.

You gotta drink more water.

DIESEL reaches into the cooler and hands SPYDER a bottle of water, before lightly massaging his leg.

SPYDER.

Is' the change in barometric pressure.

DIESEL.

Yeah ya keep sayin' that.

SPYDER.

Is' gonna rain.

DIESEL.

Yeah.

SPYDER.

Is' gonna rain heavy.

DIESEL.

Hope yer wrong about that.

Last thing we need after this drought is a fuckin' storm. Flood the valley.

Mudslide everything to fuck.

Maybe I could call the motel.

Just to see, y'know?

See if he's there?

SPYDER.

Ya could.

DIESEL.

I know I *could*. I'm askin' 'cause I wanna know if it'd be right to.

SPYDER.

I don't see a problem with it.

If he wanted to be here in secret, he wouldn'ta left the note.

DIESEL.

But that dun't mean he wants to join back up, Spyder! I mean, Jesus Christ. There's a difference between acknowledging something and joining in. Maybe he just wanted us to know. Maybe he's sick of joinin' shit. Ever think of that?

No. Course ya din't. Because you don't got the complexity.

SPYDER.

I got plenty a' complexity, Diesel.

DIESEL.

Just finish your water.

SPYDER.

The boy's not even old enough to rent a fuckin' car. Just came back from war. Hand delivered a letter. I dunno how you can look at all that and think he's tryna avoid us or that he's got his shit set.

DIESEL.

I din't say he was! I'm just sayin' that he left and maybe it's good that he did and maybe we don't gotta try and cram this square peg into a round hole. People leave for a reason, man. I don't gotta be all up in someone's business just 'cause they're nearby.

SPYDER.

Yer the one who asked if you should call the motel.

DIESEL.

Yeah and I still don't got my answer.

SPYDER.

I'm gonna get ice pops.

DIESEL.

Colt an' Lucky can go. You don't needa be trudgin' around with this "barometric // pressure" bein' so

SPYDER.

I'm goin'.

I like goin'.

SPYDER slowly, deliberately, gets up and exits. DIESEL leans his head back in his chair and looks into the sky.

DIESEL.

Not a cloud in sight.