

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



Destination: Morgue!

James Ellroy

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About the Book

This is James Ellroy's second collection of short pieces following on from *Dick Contino's Blues*. Starting in 1983 and ending in the present day, these interlinked novellas tell the story of a bad cop, Rick Jenson and his twenty-year obsession with Donna Donahue, a beautiful Hollywood actress. The only way Rick can get close to Donna is by bringing her into investigations of the teeming Tinseltown underworld: psychopathic killers, stalkers and terrorists commingle in an unholy cocktail of sex, sleaze and violence. Jenson and Donahue cut a swathe through the cases, treading a high wire of danger and a fatal sexual attraction.

The book also contains eight previously unpublished non-fiction articles ranging from cases from the Los Angeles Police Unsolved Homicide files to the first article Ellroy has written on his imaginative process.

About the Author

James Ellroy was born in Los Angeles in 1948. He is the author of the acclaimed 'LA Quartet': *The Black Dahlia*, *The Big Nowhere*, *LA Confidential* and *White Jazz*. His most recent novel, *Blood's a Rover*, completes the magisterial 'Underworld USA Trilogy' - the first two volumes of which (*American Tabloid* and *The Cold Six Thousand*) were both *Sunday Times* bestsellers.

ALSO BY JAMES ELLROY

THE UNDERWORLD U.S.A. TRILOGY

American Tabloid
The Cold Six Thousand
Blood's a Rover

THE L.A. QUARTET

The Black Dahlia
The Big Nowhere
L.A. Confidential
White Jazz

MEMOIR

My Dark Places
The Hilliker Curse

SHORT STORIES

Hollywood Nocturnes

JOURNALISM/SHORT FICTION

Crime Wave

EARLY NOVELS

Brown's Requiem
Clandestine
Blood on the Moon
Because the Night
Suicide Hill
Killer on the Road

D e s t i n a t i o n :

M O R G U E !

L.A. TALES

James Ellroy

 WINDMILL BOOKS

To Oscar Reyes

Part I

CRIME CULTURE/
MEMOIR

Balls to the Wall

BOXING IS:

Blood sport declawed and reregulated. Cockfights for aesthetes and wimps.

Boxing is microcosm. Boxing baits pundits. Boxing rips writers and rags them to riff.

Boxing taps testosterone. Boxing bangs to the balls. Boxing mauls and makes you mine meaning.

Mexican boxing is:

Boxing distilled. Boxing stoicized. Boxing hyperbolized.

Mexican boxing is machismo magnified. Mexican boxing is bristling bravado. Mexican boxing means you die for love and live to impress and subjugate your buddies.

Vegas boxing is:

Lowlife pomp. Westminster West. Best-of-weight class as best-of-breed.

Vegas boxing is Rome revived. Gladiators divert high rollers. Imperial goons exploit muscled maxi-men and mainline their money.

I got the word:

Erik Morales meets Marco Antonio Barrera.

Junior featherweights. Title tiff. Vegas.

I had to go.



I love boxing. We go back.

My folks divorced in '55. My dad got me weekends. We holed up. We watched the fights.

We had a bubble-screen TV. We snarfed Cheez Whiz. My dad rooted on race and “heart.”

He liked white fighters best. He liked Mexicans next. He liked Negroes last.

Heart eclipsed race. Heart mitigated race. Heart gave Mexicans White Man status.

“Mexican” meant all Latins. Mexican meant some Italians. Mexican meant the Cuban Negro Kid Gavilan.

My dad fucked up race and geography. He was a Wasp. He hit L.A. and learned Spanish. He dug inclusiveness. He knew the White Man ruled. He knew the Brown Man craved in.

He wanted him in. *If* he kicked ass to his specifications.

Race. Heart. My early education.

I lived in L.A. I watched TV fights. I watched fights live.

The Olympic. The Hollywood Legion Stadium.

Smoke. Ceiling lights. Beer and crushed peanuts.

My dad took me. We sat with Mexicans. We watched Mexicans kick triracial ass.

My dad went chameleon. My dad gestured wild. My dad Mexicanized.

He talked to Mexican men. He slapped their backs. He translated for me.

Male-speak. My early education.

Headhunter. Go to the body. Cut off the ring.

Pendejo. Cojones. Maricon.

My dad divided Mexicans. Illegal immigrants were “wetbacks.”

Wetbacks had heart. They swam the Rio Grande. They sought *trabajo*.

They scuffled. They worked hard. They craved White Man status.

Hoodlums were *Pachucos*. *Pachucos* lacked heart.

They oiled their hair. They overbred. They packed switchblades.

They shivved cops. They smoked mary jane. They disdained White Man status.

I met two Mexican kids. Reyes and Danny. They came from T.J.

They saw T.J. fights. They saw the mule show. They loved Art Aragon and Lauro Salas.

We smoked mary jane. I was ten years old.

I got dizzy. I punched the air like a *maricon*.

My mother died. I bunked full-time with my dad. We watched fights. We snarfed TV dinners.

12/5/58:

Welterweights. Title tiff. Don Jordan versus Virgil "Honey-bear" Akins.

Jordan wins. Jordan's a Dominican *negrito*.

He's mulatto. My dad digs him. My dad grants him Mexican status.

He's psycho. He was a child hit man. He killed men at age ten. He killed thirty men in a month.

Mexicans were killers. My dad said so. My dad spoke Spanish. My dad saw the mule show. My dad knew his shit.

12/10/58:

Light heavyweights. Title tiff. Archie Moore versus Yvon Durelle.

It's Armageddon. Moore wins. Moore's Negro. Durelle's Quebecois.

My dad upgrades Moore's racial status. Moore gets Mexicanized. My dad downgrades Durelle. Durelle gets Mexicanized.

Durelle "eats leather." Durelle "leads with his face."

5/27/60:

Welterweights. Title tiff. Jordan bows to Benny "Kid" Paret.

Paret's a Cuban Negro. My dad hates him. My dad gets his race right.

3/24/62:

Welterweights. Title tiff. Paret versus Emile Griffith.

Griffith's Negro. Griffith's island-bred. Griffith stomps Paret.

Paret dies.

Paret trash-talked Griffith. Paret called him queer.

Sex hate. Revenge. My early education.

I went to fights. I watched TV fights. I read fight magazines.

I still lived in L.A. I bopped around. I dug racial stratification.

Negroes lived south. Mexicans lived east. Whites lived everywhere.

Negroes craved civil rights. Mexicans craved conflict and personal honor.

Mexicans grew small. Mexicans moved swift. Mexicans ran stoic *and* expansive.

Mexicans coveted. Mexicans aspired. Mexicans knew the White Man was El Jefe.

Mexicans hobnobbed with whites. Common tastes united. Common language flowed.

Chili con carne. *Una cerveza, por favor*. Hook to the liver.

I Mexicanized. I Mexicanized with Wasp circumspection.

I wore Sir Guy shirts. I provoked fights with little kids. I notched mixed results.

I lacked power. I lacked skill. I lacked speed. I lacked heart.

It showed. My defeats were ignominious. My victories were pathetic.

Summer '64:

I was sixteen. I stood 6'2". I weighed 120. My dad said I ruled the Toilet-Paper-Weight Division.

I challenged my pal Kenny Rudd.

Six rounds. With gloves. Robert Burns Park.

Cornermen. Ref. Five-dollar purse.

I had height. I had reach. Rudd had heart. Rudd had speed and power.

Rudd kicked my ass. Rudd fought barechested. I wore a Sir Guy shirt.

My dad got sick. He went to the hospital. He bunked with a Mexican guy.

They talked fights. I brought them cheese enchiladas.

My dad died. The Mexican guy recovered.

I lived by myself. I watched TV fights. I hit the Olympic.

I saw Little Red Lopez. I saw Bobby Chacon. I saw six million guys named Sanchez and Martinez.

I sat ringside. They bled on me. I ate cut residue.

I sat top-tier. I shared piss cups with Joses and Humbertos. They protested bum verdicts. They tossed piss cups. They doused *puto* officials.

I pulled some dumb stunts. I got in trouble. I detoured and paid.

I did county jail time. I talked fights with wicked Juans and rowdy Ramons. I fought a Mexican drag queen named Peaches.

Peaches squeezed my knee. I popped him. I aped Benny "Kid" Paret. I called him a *maricon*.

Peaches kicked my ass. Guards pulled him off. Triracial inmates cackled.

I dissected my defeat. I put something together.

Mexican boxing explicates the mind-body split for white wimps worldwide.

MEXICAN BOXING IS WORKMANLIKE. Mexican boxing is inspired.

It's savage emphasis. It's basic boxing retuned to short range.

You move in. You stalk. You cut the ring off. You intimidate with forward momentum.

You crowd your man. You eat right-hand leads. You counter and left-hook to the body.

You instigate exchanges. You trade in close.

You take to give. You forfeit your odds for survival. You eat shots. You absorb pain. You absorb pain to exhaust your

man and exploit his openings. You absorb pain to assert your bravado.

You clinch when desperate. You backpedal when stunned or insensate. You fight coy to avert the brink and buy moments.

The body shots sap wind. The momentum saps will. The absorbed pain saps brain cells. The absorbed pain builds character and fatuous ideals.

Mexican boxing is lore.

Mexican fighters chew steaks. They drink the blood and spit out the meat.

Mexican fighters slurp mescal. They gargle and swallow the worm.

Mexican fighters do roadwork at 10,000 feet. Mexican fighters train in bordellos.

Mexican boxing is memory.

Fights in bullrings. Fights at weigh-ins. Fights at victory balls.

Fights.

The Trifecta. '70-'71. Ruben Olivares and Chucho Castillo.

The Inglewood Forum. Sellout crowds.

Rockabye Ruben rocks. Chucho presses and bleeds. Round 3—Ruben rests recumbent. Ruben rises and rallies *rapidamente*.

Ruben takes tiff one. Unanimous decision. The mayhem mandates tiff two.

Ruben rips. Chucho chops and chisels. Ruben launches left hooks. Chucho counters contrapuntal.

Ruben cuts. His left eye leaks at the lid. The cut calls it. It's over. Chucho—TKO 14.

The rubber match rocks. It's all pressure. Chucho drops Ruben. Ruben rises and rebounds.

Ruben roils. Ruben wracks the ribcage. Ruben rules the ring. Ruben reigns in the rubber.

4/23/77:

The Forum. Nontitle tiff. Carlos Zarate and Alfonso Zamora.

Seventy-two fights collective. Seventy-one KOs.

Round 1 goes slow. Zarate tests Zamora. Round 2 disrupts.

A geek jumps in the ring. Cops haul him out. Cops kick his ass.

Round 3. Zarate zips close. Zarate zaps Zamora.

One knockdown. Eight count at the bell.

Round 4. Zarate in close. Zamora's got zilch. Two-knockdown TKO.

It's over. It's not momentous. It's not competitive.

Zamora's dad's in the ring. Zarate's dad ditto. Zamora's dad zaps Zarate's dad.

It's instantaneous. It's Zarate-Zamora II.

Memory:

Zarate. Lupe Pintor. Rafael Herrera.

The great Salvador Sanchez. Julio Cesar Chavez—*el grande campeón*.

Mexicans. White Men all. Ask my dad.

Morales-Barrera vibed walk-through or war.

Morales was 35 and 0. He had the WBC belt.

He had youth. He had speed. He had a more diversified attack.

He had career momentum. He had an HBO contract. He had the Next Chavez prophecy.

Barrera was the last Next Chavez. He ate some right hands. He got de-propheesied.

He was 49 and 2. He had the WBO belt. Wags called it WBOgus.

Barrera *owned* the Mexican attack.

He closed in. He cut off. He left-hooked. He went downstairs.

He *had* career momentum. He *had* HBO ties. Junior Jones de-momenticized him.

Right hands.

One KO loss. A rematch. One loss by decision.

Barrera learns defeat. Barrera fugues out. Barrera regroups.

Barrera's a Mexican. Barrera's a Catholic. Barrera digs redemption.

Barrera's a rich kid. He hails from Mexico City.

Boxing ends someday. He knows it. He's eyeing law school.

Morales was middle-class. He hailed from T.J. His dad was a fighter.

He's a soft touch. He donates Christmas dinners. He won his belt. He banked the check. He stocked T.J. schools with computers.

They were good kids. "Good kids" is fanspeak. Good kids are killers who limit their rage to the ring.

VEGAS WAS T.J. UNCHAINED.

I hit T.J. in '66. I got a head job. I saw the mule show.

T.J. was scary.

I hit Vegas in 2000. Vegas was worse.

I stayed at the Bellagio. I heard it had "class." I heard right and wrong.

It featured an art gallery. It featured silent slot machines. It featured stretch limos.

License plates: Cezanne/Matisse/Picasso.

My suite was big. My suite had a church directory. My suite had cable fuck films.

I settled in. I walked the Strip. I misjudged distances.

Hotel facades streeeetched.

Medieval moats. Paris skylines. Mock Mannhattans.

Street traffic crawled. Foot traffic gawked.

Folks carried kiddies and cocktails. Folks carried slot-machine cups.

I grabbed a cab. The cabbie was psycho. The cabbie vibed Klan.

He picked his nose. He picked his teeth. He slurped beer in a McDonald's cup.

He talked fights.

He liked Morales. Barrera was stale bread. J. C. Chavez was a punk. He lost to Frankie "the Surgeon" Randall. He trashed his suite at the MGM Grand.

He talked Mexican fights.

The cholos had heart. The cholos fought dirty. The cholos fucked goats.

He talked Vegas fights.

Morales-Barrera was small. Hipster stuff. Rap stars and movie shitbirds verboten.

Big fights rocked Vegas. Big fights flew on big money.

Site fees. Pay-per-view. Casino perks. High rollers lured in to lose.

Big fights drew big names. Ringside recognition.

Big fights meant heavyweights. Big fights meant Tyson and bad juju. Big fights meant Oscar de la Hoya.

Oscar was pretty. Oscar bruised pretty. Oscar magnetized chicks.

He ain't a real Mexican. You can't be real and come from L.A.

I FOUND a Mexican restaurant. It vibed L.A.

I ate a Mexican dinner. I schmoozed a Mexican waiter. He came from L.A.

We talked fights.

He liked Morales. Barrera was shot.

His wife liked Oscar. His daughter *loved* Oscar. He thought Oscar was queer.

I walked to the Bellagio. A waiter brought coffee up.

He was Mexican. He came from L.A.

We talked fights.

He liked Morales. Barrera was through.

His wife liked Oscar. He didn't get the allure.

The waiter split. I dug my view.

Ant swarms. Streeeetch facades. Seduction signs.
Caesars. The Mirage. Gay white tigers.
The swarms vibed migration. Peons with cups.
Supplicants hot for cash and diversion.
I felt like El Jefe. Call me Batista. Call me Juan Perón.
I viewed my Third World. I dispensed benedictions. I
scrutinized and exploited small men.
Sanctioning bodies ruled boxing. *Puto* patriarchs
reigned.
The IBF got indicted. The WBC held in. A wag called it
“World of Bandits and Charlatans.”
The WBA. The IBA. The WBOgus.
The I’s meant “International.” The W’s meant “World.” It
stressed dominion and shared thought.
Official judges judge fights. State commissions appoint
them.
Sanctioning bodies court them. Sanctioning bodies
corrupt them. Sanctioning bodies stress shared thought.
Fractured titles. Multi-championships. Two I’s/three
W’s.
Titles mean money. Titles drive a fighter’s momentum.
Judges judge off it. Judges vote what’s perceived best for
boxing. Judges know the formal rules. Judges know subtext.
Judges enforce consensus thinking.
Not all judges. Not most judges. Some judges in key
fights.
Bribery.
Implicit. Covert. Unindictable.
The migration continued. The light show blipped on.
I fucked with the TV. I hit HBO.
Wags called it Home Breast Office. I hit breasts and an
end-title crawl. I hit a *Boxing After Dark* teaser.
Two days hence:
Morales-Barrera. *Sangre*. The Holy War.
BAD had it. *BAD* should have it. *BAD* knew.

BAD was the best boxing show in TV history. *BAD* broadcast great fights. *BAD* broadcast bravura.

Great blow-by-blow. Jim Lampley in tight. Pro scoop and malapropisms via Roy Jones and George Foreman. Larry Merchant on meaning.

Bad Boy Barrera top-lined *BAD* card #1. He KO'd Kennedy McKinney.

A fierce fight. A tuff tiff. A proud prophecy.

I went to bed. I slept late. A waiter brought coffee up.

He was Mexican. He came from Oregon.

We talked fights.

He liked Morales. Barrera was fucked.



The Mandalay Bay:

Slot-Machine Acres. Blackjack Estates. Keno Kountry forever.

I walked through it. I got lost. I gagged on smoke. I smelled spilled cocktails.

I rerouted. I trekked on.

Card-Table Terrace. Roulette Rendezvous. Blow-Your-Mortgage Mesa.

I hit a corridor. I saw directional balloons.

Tricolor. Mexican. Red, green, and white.

I followed them. I hit the press gig.

Dais. Lectern. Steam tables. Buffet in gear.

I mingled. I saw Wayne "Pocket Rocket" McCullough. Morales decisioned him. I saw Richie Sandoval. Gaby Canizales KO'd him.

He got hurt. He quit boxing. He went into boxing PR.

I saw Latin reporters. I saw Latin cornermen. I saw some Anglo press.

The room chowed down. The food was bad. All starch and grease.

I sipped coffee. I listened. I bootjacked conversations.

Male experts dueled. Male experts interrupted. Male experts riffed lore.

I was there. *I* saw it. Dig *my* perception.

The honchos hit the dais.

Lou Di Bella. Mr. HBO. State commissioners.

Morales. Barrera. Promoter Bob Arum.

Morales looked calm. Barrera looked drained.

Weight.

Stabilize. Walk at 135. Make 122 by tomorrow.

Weight.

Eating disorders. Boxing's dirty secret. *Cosmo*— take note.

Intros went around. Honchos sanctified. Arum worked the mike.

His cheeks glowed. Perfect circles. He Mexicanized.

His kids spoke Spanish. We all should.

Mexicans were great fighters. Mexicans were great people. Mexicans were great fans.

He cited Mexican battles. He overpronounced names.

He coaxed his boys. Speak English, *por favor*.

Morales spoke. Barrera spoke. They spoke haltingly.

They pledged results. They showed their youth. They oozed dignity.

The gig broke up. Morales and Barrera mingled.

Reporters closed in. Interpreters assisted.

Standard stuff.

Nobody said, "You get my rocks off."

Nobody said, "You make me feel alive."

Nobody said, "Nationalism is all shuck-and-jive."

I thought about youth. I thought about glory. I wondered how brain cells dispersed.

I thought about middle age. I grooved on self-preserving circumspection.

Morales brought some guys. They vibed buddies. Barrera brought some guys. They vibed entourage.

They wore reflecting sweat suits. They waxed sullen.
They looked like the Tonton Macoute.

They brought some girls. The girls brought babies.

One baby cried. Mom fed him Pepsi. Mom shut him up.

Bob Arum mingled.

He glowed. His cheeks glowed. His cheeks looked
rouged and augmented.

TICKETS SOLD. Mexicans bought them.

They eschewed "Latino." They eschewed "Chicano."
They were born here. They were born there. They were
"Mexican."

Tickets sold fast. Tickets sold out.

I schmoozed PR flacks. They extolled the demographic.

Working folks. Mexicans. Cognoscenti.

I prowled the Mandalay Bay. I caught the weigh-in.

Barrera looked drained. Barrera looked scared. The
Tonton looked apprehensive.

I prowled the casino. I surveilled the ticket booths. I
cataloged rumors.

Morales hates Barrera. Barrera hates Morales.

Turf tiff. T.J. versus Mexico City. Class clash. Middle
meets moneyed.

They had soccer teams. The Morales Marauders. The
Barrera Banditos.

They played. They clashed. The hell-bent jefes almost
hurled heat.

My wife flew in. Some friends drove up from L.A.

We viewed a friend's wedding. We ate in mock cantinas.
We strolled mock-Mexican streets.

We polled personnel.

The cognoscenti said walk-through. The starstruck said
war.



The fans arrived. Mariachis piped them in.

It got loud.

The walls boomed. The walls trapped noise. The walls echo-chambered.

The fans lugged posters.

Morales. Barrera. Exhortings *en español*.

Balloons tapped the ceiling. Tricolored all.

A sound system cranked. Mariachi shit exclusive.

The room filled. The room roared. The room vibed bullring.

Fans positioned. Fans waved signs. Fans slugged cerveza.

Factions mingled. Factions placed bets. Total strangers held money.

I sat with the press. I watched the prelims.

They went fast. They went loud. The Mexicans drew cheers. The non-Mexicans drew silence.

TKOs. One decision. One woman's fight.

I hit the john. I crashed a rehearsal.

A baritone. A prime gig. The Mexican anthem.

We talked fights.

He liked Morales. Barrera was shot.

I bopped back. The noise reignited. I sat with my wife and friends.

A Morales guy flanked me. He was expansive. He was loud.

He waved a roll. He peeled C-notes. He placed bets.

Barrera guys bet him. A neutral popped up. He held the *dinero*.

A band filed in. Thirteen musicians.

Sombreros. Embroidered threads.

They entered the ring. They played loud. HBO cameras turned.

Fans held signs up. Cameras panned. Signs eclipsed views.

The noise built.

The fighters filed in.

The noise built.
The ring announcer spieled.
He spieled bilingual. He rolled his *r*'s. He rolled rich and rapt.

The noise built.
That cat sang the Mexican anthem.
The noise built.
The announcer introed the officials. The announcer introed the men.

He ratched his *r*'s. MoRales extended. BaRReRa rolled long.

The noise built.
The men derobed. They'd added weight. They'd sapped and replenished.

The ref gave instructions. The men touched gloves.
The noise built.
They went to their corners. They knelt. They crossed themselves.

The noise built.
The bell rang.
The noise stratosphered.
They moved. They squared off. They hit center ring.
Morales pops a jab. Barrera hooks to the body. Morales moves back.

Barrera. Fast hands. A shock.
Barrera moves in. He lands a right. He left-hooks downstairs.

Morales moves back. Let's bait and counter.
Barrera moves in. Barrera cuts off. Barrera double-hooks low.

Fast hands. Shocker. "Shot"—bullshit.
Morales backs up. Morales moves in. They trade right hands.

Morales backs up Barrera. His rights sting.
They square off. They trade. Morales backs up Barrera.
They circle. They pause.

Morales backs up. Let's bait and counter.

He taps the ropes. Barrera's on him. They trade hooks at the bell.



The 122-pound showdown between Erik Morales and Marco Antonio Barrera for the junior featherweight title would become the fight of the year. (*Photo by Ben Watts*)

The noise built. The noise leveled. The noise leveled loud.

Round 2:

Barrera stalks. Morales jabs.

It's a range finder. It's a sizer-up. It's a reach enhancer.

He's dancing. He's on his toes. Barrera closes in.

He lands a left hook. He lands a left/right.

Morales stands firm. Morales steps inside. Morales lands an uppercut. Morales rocks Barrera.

They stand. They trade. They deliver.

Morales has right hands. Morales has uppercuts. Barrera has killer hooks.

They disengage. Barrera moves in. Barrera hooks low.

Morales jabs. Morales moves in. Morales lands lefts and rights. Morales eats hooks.

He's fighting Barrera's fight. He's standing in. He's taking to give.

He's fighting close range. He wants to. His work vibes abandon.

He's pausing. Barrera's on him. He's launching hooks.

The bell. Hard to hear. One mini-gong.

The noise built. The noise releveled. The noise releveled loud.

Round 3:

Morales circles. Morales jabs. Barrera lunges. Barrera hits his knees.

He gets up. The ref wipes his gloves. Morales comes on.

Morales jabs. Morales leaves a jab out. Barrera hooks low.

Morales moves back. Barrera stalks. Barrera lands hooks.

Morales moves in. He lands two-handed. He moves back.

Barrera presses.

He misses hooks. He lands hooks.

Morales leans on the ropes. Morales blocks hooks. Morales eats hooks.

Morales spins off. Morales lands two-handed. Barrera spins off. Barrera moves in. Barrera repins Morales.

He lands. He misses.

Morales launches. Barrera launches. They trade fucking wild.

The bell. A beep in a cacophony.

The noise cranked. The noise releveled.

I yelled. My wife yelled. Words went undiscerned.

A sign bopped me. A guy apologized. The Morales fan yelled. I read his lips. He said, "Barrera!"

Round 4:

Barrera stalks. Morales jabs. Morales spins and falls.

He gets up. The ref wipes his gloves.

Breather.



In round 4, Barrera focused almost exclusively on Morales's thin frame, investing in punches to the ribs that would weaken him later in the fight. (*Photo by Ben Watts*)

Barrera circles. Morales circles. They're rubber-band-tight.

Barrera works the body. Morales moves back.

He flurries. He moves. He flurries. His work rate's up.

They regroup. They're in sync. They're synced to stand and deliver.

War. Collaborative. Mexican.

They fight off the ropes. They spin loose. They reverse positions.

It's wild.

It's war in sync.

Barrera flurries. Barrera rings the bell.

The crowd stood. The nose releveled. I got the gestalt.

Bipartisanship. National pride. Love inclusive.

It had it even. Morales: punch stats. Barrera: aggression.

I held a piss. My heart fluttered. The noise hurt my head.

Round 5:

They move. They meet. They trade jabs.

Barrera hooks to the body. Barrera plows Morales. Morales hits the ropes.

Morales flurries off. Morales pops Barrera. Morales dominates.

Morales lands rights. Morales staggers Barrera. Morales lands uppercuts.

Barrera wobbles.

I vibe turning point. I vibe wrong.

Morales fades. Morales wings arm shots.

They both weave. They both wing. They both miss.

Barrera comes on. Barrera backs up Morales. Morales taps the ropes.

Barrera fades. Morales wings arm shots. Morales extricates.

They square off. They weave. They circle and stalk.

Sync. Pre-attack mode.

Barrera sucks it up. Barrera pounds Morales. Morales taps the ropes.

Barrera flurries. He's got juice. Morales fires weak.

The bell. A peep. One heartbeat heard.

I watched the prompters. I got close-ups.

I saw welts. I saw bruises. I saw deadpan will.

Round 6:

Slow-mo now. Save it. Sync the breather.

Jabs. Center ring. Barrera's lead right.

It's weak. Morales taps the ropes. He's weak. He pushes off.

He jabs. He lands. His jab looks weak. His arms look heavy.

Barrera hooks to the body. Barrera hooks twice.

Morales hooks to the body. Morales hooks twice.

They separate. They pause. They *breathe*.

Barrera lands. A right. A left. Body rockets.
Morales measures. Morales jabs. Morales uppercuts.
Morales stuns Barrera. Morales pushes him back.
The bell. Loud now. Loud against held breath.
Six down. Six to go. My card: three rounds each.
The noise notched down. The noise went hoarse. The
noise deleveled.

Round 7:

They meet. They square up tight.
They brush heads. They trade body shots.
They work. They rest. They breathe. They claw at
momentum.

Barrera's stronger. Barrera lands a right.
Morales jerks back. Morales moves back. Morales hits
the ropes.

Barrera's on him. His head's down. He's landing
combinations.

Morales rests. Morales reaches. Morales rallies back.
He comes off the ropes. He lands a right. He rocks
Barrera.

Barrera takes it.

Barrera reaches.

Barrera rallies back.

Barrera rocks Morales.

The crowd yells. The crowd stomps. The crowd outrings
the bell.

It was Barrera's fight. Barrera made Morales fight it.
Morales wanted to fight it. Barrera made him. Barrera
stamped the ticket. Barrera defined their mutual will.

Round 8:

Barrera moves in. Morales moves back.

They jab. They exchange. Barrera lands a one/two.
Barrera rocks Morales.

Morales moves back. Morales hits the ropes. Barrera
works the body.

Four shots. Evil. Evil shots back.

Morales shoves off. Morales lands lead rights. Morales lands uppercuts.

Barrera eats shots. Barrera goes low. Barrera lands to the liver.

They stand.

They deliver.

They launch arm shots.

They land and miss.

The noise schizzed on me. The roar went normal. Time schizzed. Three-minute rounds took six seconds.

I checked the prompter. I caught the damage.

Barrera bruised light. Morales bruised dark.

Dark rings. Sharp cheekbones. A ghost effect.

Dark eyes. Both men. Will smashed insensate.

Round 9:

Center ring. Exchanges. Barrera's advantage.

Morales hits the ropes. Morales flurries. Morales rallies back.

Barrera rallies back. Morales hits the ropes. Morales rallies back.

He finds some snap. He dredged it. Barrera takes it.

Sync:

They're both fried. They circle. They buy some breath.

Barrera charges. Barrera knocks Morales back.

They both flurry. They both miss. They both land.

They rest. They regroup. They earn breath.

They're slack. They're arm-shot. They're on deficit.

Barrera comes back. Barrera lands. Barrera hurts Morales. Barrera pounds him to the ropes.

The bell rang.

Fans screamed.

Fans screamed "Morales!" Fans screamed "Barrera!"

The syllables blended. The names clashed. The names unified.

Round 10:

Center ring. Wide punches. Misses.