

Buster's Smile

(Buster Douglas vs. Mike Tyson – February 11, 1990)

Jim Washington

Everybody has a plan until they get punched in the mouth.

Mike Tyson, Thirty-Second Lineal Heavyweight Boxing Champion

Until that fight
Buster's nickname
was mostly ironic.
But this time he fought
with his just-dead
mother inside.
No-shows made
the Tokyo Dome
cavernous,
even quiet enough
to hear the Champ,
Tyson, comfortable
in his own dry skin,
snicker at the ritual
touch-gloves before
rounds piled, heavy
the weight on Iron Mike,
until his squashed hubris
left him only strong enough
to reach from his knees
for a mouthpiece
tumbling and tumbling,
across a canvas,
with no smile inside.