

[We fade in from black to find Mark Stegglet standing in front of a banner that is half AWA logo and half Battle Of Los Angeles logo. It's weird and likely a poor style choice by someone in marketing. But hey, it's there so we've got to deal with it and own it... which, of course, we do. We own that thing. It's going to go into a warehouse somewhere with the remnants of the Bulldog Brown table and Casey James' finger in a jar - God rest his soul.]

MS: The time is upon us, AWA fans. As I stand here backstage in Los Angeles, we are now just hours away from the biggest event of the summer. The Coast To Coast Tour is about to come to an end right here in the Fabulous Forum - home of championship teams, birthplaces of legacies... and a building where I spent quite a few nights in my formative years. The Battle Of Los Angeles is here... and the stakes have never been higher.

[Stegglet turns slightly as we cut to a second camera, showing a graphic next to his head.]

MS: We've got seven big matches here tonight in Los Angeles. Oddly, there are no titles on the line yet you'd have a hard time arguing against the fact that we may have never faced a more important night in the history of this company. Of course, the one that everyone is talking about is the Cibernetico - twenty-six of the best wrestlers in the world climbing inside the squared circle with the very future of this company at stake. We'll be talking to many of the men inside that match throughout the night but right now, let's take a look at some of the other big matches on this night in the City of Angels!

[The graphic changes to show the Samoan Hit Squad and the Northern Lights.]

MS: The Samoan Hit Squad - now led by William Payne - made major headlines when they made their return to the AWA recently. Almost instantly, they became a pair of human wrecking balls, tearing through everyone who has stepped into their path. But tonight, the Northern Lights are looking to be more than just another building slated for demolition!

[There's a brief fade before the scene opens to an outdoor cafe in Los Angeles. It's a fairly nice spot in the city, though not an extremely quiet place as heavy traffic (mostly vehicular though there is some foot traffic in this area) goes by. Seated in the corner here are Rene Rousseau and Chris Choynet, the Northern Lights.

Rene Rousseau is a classically-attractive French-Canadian white male with high cheekbones and a dimple on his chin. He has a black mullet, but somehow it looks classy on him. Choynet is a clean shaven man with dark brown hair pulled back in a ponytail. He has a slightly angular chin and a youthful look. Both are in street clothes, obviously (they'd look pretty stupid in wrestling attire here!)... Rousseau wears a red-and-white stylish polo shirt, black pants, and brown-tinted sunglasses while Choynet wears a classic white dress shirt, collar slightly open, and dark blue slacks.]

RR: You know, Chris and I have gone through the West Coast part of the AWA tour, and everywhere we go, we see a lot of Samoan fans. A lot of the Samoan people love wrestling, and they cheer for their own.

CC: But unlike you, Scola and Manu, they tend to be articulate, polite... and ashamed of the way you two act.

RR: You want to be savages, you want to embrace the heritage of your people. Do you even know that you are embarrassing them? Everybody knows that the Samoan people are proud, tough people. Survivors. Strong in spirit. But you are twisting all of that! You've taken the best part of your culture and made it something monstrous and evil!

CC: So here's a news flash: it's the 21st century and humanity doesn't put up with that garbage anymore. You wanna run around and act like uneducated idiots that can only use their heads by bashing it into something repeatedly? Fine. Maybe that's who you are. Maybe you guys really are simpletons, I don't know. But don't drag the rest of your people down into the intellectual gutter with you.

RR: William Payne has hyped these two men up as being invincible, unstoppable, and unbeatable. At the Battle Of Los Angeles, here where so many of the great Samoan people live, work, and are a respectable part of society... we're going to show him otherwise.

CC: You're tough. But you're not invincible.

RR: You're dangerous. But you're not unstoppable.

CC: And you've got a track record a mile long. But you're not unbeatable, and when the final bell rings in Los Angeles, we'll have proven that beyond all doubt.

RR: And we'll do it for all of the fans that have had to watch as you've brutalized so many people, for the sake of nothing. Why do you do it? Pride? Bloodlust? Something to prove?

CC: The word you need to learn is 'respect', and the reason you need to learn it is that being Samoan doesn't exempt you from being human beings. And if your parents didn't teach that to you, maybe a loss in front of your own people will. Maybe when you look out and see the Samoan fans cheering because your reign of terror came to a screeching halt, you'll figure it out.

RR: And if William Payne sticks his nose in, we have a lesson we can teach him, too. If three of you don't understand the way civilization works, we'll shine a light on it for you: the Northern Lights!

[Generic babyface clenched-fist pose, and cut away to...]

WP: The arts... they're so... open to opinion.

[And we open to the speaker, a well dressed William Payne, standing in some unknown room before a random painting of some design. He is dressed in a dark pin striped suit with a yellow shirt and white tie underneath. One hand holds a brand new smartphone in a bright white case. The other is tucked in a pocket. He is a balding man of average build, if not on the hefty side. He looks (admiringly?) at the painting, a white wall behind it.]

WP: Some might find this painting priceless. A painting could bring them to tears. A piece of art could flutter their emotions. A trip to the gallery could be an exhilarating process of mind numbing amazingness. Perhaps the technicality of this is what sensuates their thinking. The perfect lines, the balance of colors, the proper application of the proper brushes.

And that right there is why some people enjoy the Northern Lights so much.

[He shakes his head disappointingly, walking away from the hanging canvas.]

WP: Two young men, in the prime of their life. Physically fit, classically handsome. Square jaws and dark tans. A "six pack" and large biceps. Well groomed hair. Well spoken. Polite and hard working. Two competitors who bathe in the glory of technical wrestling. They know every hold and how to execute it right. They know how a joint works, how it is supposed to bend, how it is not. Absolute artists in their field.

[He stares deadpanned at the camera and speaks in an even, more monotone.]

WP: Bravo.

[He shakes his head once more. He continues to walk against the wall in this unknown room, finally stopping and continuing to look forward. The camera pans over to where the hulking Samoans stand in full attire. They pace and snort, look around with feral aggression, stomp their feet, smash their hands.]

WP: I like art. But I like it a bit less technical and a bit more...

[He pauses to search for the words.]

WP: ...hands on.

[And on cue the two Samoans tear into nearby art pieces. Scola headbutts right through a canvas painting, shattering the frame and draping it over his skull. Manu tears it away from his partner's neck, turns and grabs a Roman style bust off a pinth, throwing the white stone to the ground where it shatters. The two roar in delight and unleashed ferocity, stomping away to find more destruction to create.]

WP: Bravo.

[And we fade back to a disgusted Mark Stegglet, shaking his head.]

MS: Yes, the police were called after that little show by the Samoan Hit Squad. Luckily for them, it was a smaller gallery that was willing to settle with Mr. Payne for an... undisclosed amount. But can the Samoans do the same thing to Rene Rousseau and Chris Choynet? We'll find out in just a short time but that's not all the tag team action we're going to see here tonight. Don't forget the big showdown in Japan pitting the Tiger Paw Pro Global Tag Crown Champions AND 2014 Stampede Cup winners, Violence Unlimited, taking on former AWA World Tag Team Champions, Skywalker Jones and Hercules Hammonds! I can tell you that Jones and Hammonds were livid by the Wise Men's pulling of strings to get them to Japan this weekend instead of here in Los Angeles for Cibernetico... and I would NOT want to be in the shoes of Danny Morton and Jackson Haynes back in Japan. But speaking of the Wise Men, let's hear from a member of their team right now - let's hear from the trio known as the Dogs Of War!

[We fade from Mark Stegglet to what we can only assume is a very dark part of the building. There's a small light in the ceiling, just barely illuminating our shot as we see the silhouetted outline of Pedro Perez, Isaiah Carpenter, and Wade Walker.]

PP: It's D-Day for the good guys riding in on their white horses to save the day. It's time for them to learn that there's no such thing in life as a happy ending.

[Perez jerks a thumb at his allies.]

PP: But it's pay day for us. When the Dogs Of War were put together by the Wise Men, they made it very clear what our end goal is all about. They wanted us to torment the good guys - the so-called White Knights - they wanted us to punish them. But in the end, they wanted them finished.

Tonight, we finish it... and get paid very well to do it.

[Carpenter steps in.]

IC: All this talk of money, Pedro. You'll make them think that's all we care about.

[A grinning Wade Walker rubs his hands together, flexing his powerful arms as he does.]

IC: Don't get me wrong... it's a LOT of what we care about.

[Chuckles from the sneering Carpenter.]

IC: But we're invested in this particular cause. We're invested in the idea of a blank slate... a fresh start... a brand new day for three men who got blacklisted from this joint and were never gonna get a chance to be the man here.

But under a Wise Men regime, everything is different. Everything has changed.

Under President Percy, maybe the AWA doesn't bankroll a marketing campaign around Dave Bryant crawling out of a Vegas gutter to try to redeem himself.

Under President Percy, maybe the AWA doesn't reward a self-centered publicity whore like Jones and his manservant, Hammonds, who never could've held our jocks in the Corner yet get treated like the heir apparent.

[Carpenter shakes his head.]

IC: And speaking of heirs apparent, Eric Preston...

[Carpenter sighs, a whistle through his teeth.]

IC: ...why won't you just die already? You come back time and time again, telling the world how things are gonna be different this time... how you're gonna be the man that Michaelson told the masses that you would be... how you're gonna be the hero that Gordon Myers has been waiting years for.

But every single time, you get knocked back down. Whether it's Wright or Monosso or us, you leave on a stretcher, you lay in a hospital bed, and then you make some grand comeback.

[A shake of the head.]

IC: Not this time. This time, you've earned our ire. We made a promise to the Wise Men on the 4th of July... that we'd leave you on the shelf for good.

PP: You made liars out of us, Preston. We don't like that.

IC: That's right. So, tonight... it's time for us to make good on our word and to earn that Preston Retirement Bonus Check. We've been paid and paid well so far but tonight?

[Perez claps his hands together.]

PP: It's time to cash the biggest paycheck of 'em all.

[Wade Walker steps into view, arching an eyebrow.]

WW: The Wise Men send their regards.

[Walker palms the camera lens, forcing it to black before we fade into a sight for sore eyes. The suited San Jose Shark himself, resplendent as ever in a sharp black suit with thin white pinstripes, white shirt underneath and a shimmering golden tie. Broussard is clean shaven, his dirty blonde hair having grown out to shoulder length, and as he begins to speak he calmly brushes off his left shoulder.]

MB: Life is a power struggle. This much is certain.

In this life, as the man once said, if you ain't got power you ain't got nothin'.

The struggle for power has always been an underlying issue in my beloved AWA. And now, as we stand on the precipice of the most high stakes power struggle of them all, many have wondered why Marcus Broussard gets inserted from out of the blue. What have I got to do with this power struggle? The answer, my friends, is _everything_.

Since the inception of the AWA, operating out of a run down studio in Dallas, Texas, there have been two powerful men in the AWA. Todd Michaelson and Marcus Broussard. It was Todd who pounded the pavement to secure that initial funding, it was Todd who made me the first athlete signed, it was Todd who empowered _me_ to become the pillar of the AWA. To set the table for the success and growth we are still experiencing today. I am who I am because Todd Michaelson allowed me to be, because the AWA allowed me to be. Every suit I've worn, every house I've lived in, every school I've sent my kids to was paid for by the wrestling business and the break that Todd Michaelson gave me.

That's power, friends. When you give power to someone else and by doing so increase your own? That's power.

[Broussard stops and holds a finger up.]

MB: Every television contract we signed, every new venue we ran, every show we produced is a testament to the power and work ethic of that man. He eats, sleeps and breathes the AWA. And as such, my stake in the prize got higher. I became champion, I became the face of the AWA. I took a percentage of the Combat Corner, and even though off screen, I took a large hand in producing the talented athletes you see in front of you. Aaron Anderson, Supreme Wright, Eric Preston, Brad Jacobs, Pedro Perez, these are but a few of the students who walked through my Combat Corner.

Through our Combat Corner.

And because of that percentage, because of that interest, because of the break given to me by Todd Michaelson and the responsibility I have to him as an employer, and more importantly as a friend, I am duty bound to monitor the AWA. I am duty bound, on my honor, to make sure that the good of the AWA is put in front of everything else, that the AWA is protected at all costs. And thus, every time a situation arose that needed fixing, every time a disturbance needed to be quelled, the San Jose Shark was tagged in.

[Broussard slaps his hands together.]

MB: When the Southern Syndicate got too big for their britches, Marcus Broussard was there to watch them crumble. When Juan Vasquez needed to be taken down a notch, I donned the mask and became the point man for the Wise Men at their inception.

I _encouraged_ Todd Michaelson to invest in Percy Childes, I encouraged Todd Michaelson to give Larry Doyle power. In the back of my mind, I thought perhaps it might come to this, but I also wanted to believe that this power conglomerate was

smarter. Wiser. This was not something from the mind of that wandering minstrel Waterson, who wanted to be a television star more than anything else. The Wise Men was a brain child hatched by men who wanted to pad their check book and make sure their clients had first right at higher profiles and salaries. That's a conspiracy I can get behind.

[And now Broussard waves a finger.]

MB: But you bit off more than you can chew. Now that the Wise Men have gone beyond the bounds of the power given to them, now that Percy Chiles, Larry Doyle and that laughable child Hayes have repeatedly bitten the hand that feeds them, I am called in again to fulfill my duty. To use a phrase bandied about by a Wise Man associate often, there's only so far you can go before you hit the glass ceiling. And when you do, you'll find me standing above it, looking down on you.

Without Todd Michaelson, Percy Chiles is some abject freak in the South, waving his cane at intersections. Without the AWA, Larry Doyle is calling out bingo somewhere in Fort Worth, Indiana and getting thrown out of amateur night comedy clubs. And without the power that the AWA gave her, Sandra Hayes is just another example of the wisdom of Shakespeare, who quipped that all bastards are ungrateful liars and nothing more.

The forbidden fruit of absolute power, the slow tease of total dominance has seduced Percy Chiles into attempting to trade what has been an inexorably strong hand, and a smartly played one at that, for what could be a closed fist of total control. I was there when the Wise Men were formed over the downed body of Juan Vasquez. And now, because your eyes are too big for your stomach, because your appetite for power has forced you into one power play too many, I am bound by duty to be there when the Wise Men crumble.

Just like the Southern Syndicate. Just like the Juan Vasquez Show Starring Juan Vasquez. You will learn a lesson that you didn't have to, Percy Chiles, a lesson that you could have avoided had you been as advertised – a Wise Man.

There's always a bigger fish, Wise Men. And there will always be a Shark to patrol the waters.

[We fade away from the former AWA National Champion back to Mark Stegglet.]

MS: The Cibernetico is the Main Event. The Cibernetico is the talk of the wrestling world. Twenty-six of the greatest to ever lace boots competing in the same match. Remember, it'll be teams of thirteen on either side - entering in a "batting order," the same order every time. You can get the next man in by tagging out or by exiting the ring. Pinfalls, submissions, disqualifications will all be legal decisions in this one. There's a whole lot of discussion going on online about this match. Who can you trust? Who will be the MVP? What will the batting orders be? We're just hours away from finding out all of that! We're also going to find out exactly who will be the brand new Number One Contenders to the World Tag Team Titles when Strictly Business and Air Strike collide in a long-awaited and much-anticipated matchup!

[Crossfade to Strictly Business standing next to one another, with confident smirks playing across their faces. Andrew "Flash" Tucker is clad in a pair of indigo blue jeans, a white/blue/red plaid shirt unbuttoned with a plain white t-shirt underneath. "Money Driven" Mike Sebastian, meanwhile, sports a pair of dark wash jeans and a charcoal vee-neck tee which is only able to partially shield his fluidly bronzed upper torso.]

MS: Between all the boo-hoo causes, autograph requests and high school prom invites we receive, the one thing fans want from Strictly Business is to know if it

wasn't to get in the ring with a team as exciting as Air Strike.... what made us want to return to active competition?

"Was it a money thing?" we're asked.

[Shaking his head in disgust, Sebastian pauses to crack his neck.]

MS: The suits at the top don't exactly dole out the dough like they did back in Delhi, you know? You aren't going to hear either of us gripe about our tax bracket.

We were the best team in the business. Bar friggin' none. For two years, at the very peak of this sport's popularity, we were as good as it got. And the fact nobody chooses to remember our run of extended success makes us sick to our damn stomachs.

AT: We put Los Angeles on the map way back when. Chris Blue is a millionaire several times over thanks to us. And yet, here we are, forced to get in the ring with a couple o' greenhorns that apparently know somebody who's important in the front office in an effort to remind people that we are, in fact, Hall of Famers.

[A roll of the eyes from Tucker.]

AT: But that's just fine an' dandy by us; because tomorrow night is a home game for Strictly Business. They may call it the City of Angels and while you two may be runnin' 'round sproutin' wings, kissin' babies and shakin' hands... that ain't how you become legends.

You become legends by doin' whatever it takes to get the job done.

And nobody gets the job done quite like Strictly Business.

MS: You two greenies getting the chance to step in the ring with us should have never happened the first time, much less twice. I guess Christmas came early for you boys. Actually, I figure this lines up like your own little Thanksgiving. Clearly you have an awful lot to be thankful for, and there is zero question you filled your dinner plates with more than you know what to do with. My advice? Study up on the Heimlich, fellas.

[A nod of affirmation from Tucker.].

AT: You boys ought to be careful what you wish for. You don't tug on Superman's cape, you don't spit in the wind, you don't pull the mask off an ole' Lone Ranger and you sure as Hell don't cross Strictly Business. You two prayed for rain and now you gotta deal with the mud. That's part of it.

MS: Clearly, we went about the twilight of our careers all wrong. Apparently the blueprint for getting our tickets punched to the Hall was to sit on the front porch watching the last crow fall off the fence with a pouch of Red Man in one hand and a highball of brown liquor in the other. Thumb a ride through west Texas and you can put together a whole class worth of legendary fossils tied up at one end of the horseshoe pit, but we were never going out like that.

We may not be over the moon about stepping in the ring with a couple rooks who are better served working the valet stand, but we understand it's a necessary part of the process. How the history books failed to include an entire chapter on the carnage we left in our career's wake is beyond our comprehension, but we aren't about to let a couple tikes out past curfew turn our storybook finish into an Old Yeller one.

AT: This is a big deal for Air Strike. Number One Contender match and all. A step closer to becoming champions.

[A shrug.]

AT: This isn't about titles for us... This is about legacy. Somehow the memories of the two of us setting this industry on fire has faded from the minds o' most. Well, tomorrow night, school's in session and so begins the lesson in history....

[Smirks.]

AT: ...we're about to repeat it, and you're about to become it.

[Fade. We open right outside the locker room area where Mark Stegglet stands with Michael Aarons and Cody Mertz, collectively known as Air Strike. Mertz is wearing a green and white track suit while Aarons is wearing a white "TEAM AWA" tee shirt with a pair of jeans. Both have black Combat Corner duffel bags slung over their shoulders.]

MS: I'm standing here with Air Strike. Cody, Michael... we are now just hours away from your grudge match with Strictly Business. Your thoughts?

[Aarons smiles.]

MA: Thoughts? You want our thoughts? Our thoughts are the same as they were that night in Japan. We want Strictly Business in that ring and we want them now. But you know Stegs, we've waited months for this moment so what's a few more hours.

[Aarons frowns as he shakes his head.]

MA: You see those two egos, Andy and Mikey, they tried to break my main man Cod's ribs but they could never break his spirit. They tried to break my heart, but it's going to take a whole heck of a lot more than those two to break my will. You see, it's no secret, we've seen the tapes; I worshipped those two as a kid. Those matches that they name drop? I've seen every last one of them. If there was an unofficial fan club for Strictly Business, I was probably an official member.

[Aarons shakes his head again but holds up a finger.]

MA: As a kid – as a kid. But play time is over and it's time to grow up. What you like as a kid, you hardly ever like as an adult; a lesson you two illustrated to perfection at the Stampede Cup. Ever since then the two of you having been costing us stuff. A chance for us to compete for the Cup? Gone! Months demanding a match? Gone. And the cherry on top is our mentor and trainer finally comes back and decides to finally make a stand... when he's looking for people to support Team AWA, Air Strike can't be added to the list because we've signed the contract with you!

[Mertz places a hand on his partner's shoulder as Aarons is clearly disgusted.]

CM: From the time he's trained us to the time he's left, we've made clear where our allegiances lie. And like our trainer taught us, you have to fight the battles that are in front of you.

[Mertz' eyes narrow in a determined look.]

CM: And make no mistake, gentlemen, you are the battle that's in front of us. From the time you attacked us in Japan; to beating those three teams of lackeys you thought were going to stop us – our sole focus has been getting Strictly

Business back into that ring. Now you've tried your best to avoid us – and you've managed to make a mockery of the sport along the way.

[Mertz looks over at his partner.]

MA: So the way we figure it, we'll help the AWA and ourselves. We'll get you two prima donnas in the ring and beat you – again; claim the Number One Contender spot; take the titles from those two thieves; and it will all be done going through the two of you!

[Aarons and Mertz exchange a fist bump.]

CM: Gentlemen, the way we see it, all past crimes and transgressions get accounted for today. See, we were also taught, that sooner or later the time for talking is over and the time for action starts.

[Cody looks at his wrist.]

CM: Looks like it's about that time.

[Aarons smiles, nodding in agreement.]

MA: I couldn't agree more. So, if you want more thoughts, Stegs, you have to go see if Mikey and Andy have any in their empty, little heads. Cause last I checked, they have to deal with the high flying, death defying, never dying, Strictly Business victory denying, soon-to-be Number One Contender spot occupying, Teenage Dream team – Air Strike!

[Fist bump~!]

MA: And last time I also checked, things didn't turn out so well from them when faced with that.

[With that, the duo walk into the locker room area, leaving Mark Stegglet all alone.]

MS: You want to talk about your tag team grudge matches, it might not get any bigger than that showdown later tonight. Fans, the energy backstage is electric. The wrestlers back here understand how important this night is. The building has been sold out for quite some time now so the only way to join us is on the superstition WKIK! It's going to be a night that AWA fans never forg- hey!

[Stegglet's exclamation is punctuated by a camera pan that reveals AWA owner Bobby Taylor standing nearby, speaking with Tommy Fierro, Sweet Daddy Williams, and Soup Bone Samson.]

MS: Mr. Taylor, care to give us a comment on tonight's action.

[Taylor nods.]

BT: Like you said, Mark... the energy is electric. We've been getting ticket requests from old friends for weeks now. Everyone wants to be a part of this.

[Soup Bone Samson nods.]

SBS: That's right, Mark. I wouldn't have missed this for the world. My nephew may be banged up right now thanks to those no-good Wise Men but that don't mean I can't show up here in Los Angeles to see those punks get their heads stomped in.

[Stegglet nods, turning away.]

MS: Thanks, gentlemen. There's a whole lot of tension backstage here tonight as the Wise Men's Army are sticking to their side of the arena. No one wants to see something break out here before the match begins. Team AWA on one side, the Wise Men's Army on the other... just like it should be. Let's hear from yet one more member of both of these teams!

[We fade again, this time to the backstage area of a different building. The video is marked with "AFTER ALL-STAR SHOWDOWN."

There are wrestlers everywhere. It's the Wise Men's team, returning after the big show-ending fight. We don't see many of them in view for very long, but what we get is that there are a variety of moods. Some are not greatly perturbed, some are still feeling the adrenaline of a fight, some are confused and frustrated, and some are outright angry.

The man that comes directly to the camera is one of the latter. It is the "King Of Wrestling" himself, the "Black Tiger" Demetrius Lake. His brown sport jacket is tucked under his arm, and he's still clad in a now-disheveled white dress shirt, dark red tie, black slacks, and brown dress shoes. His fedora is long gone, having been lost to the crowd during the scuffle. He whips his jacket down and points at the camera.]

DL: You! Mr. Cameraman, you get over here! I have something to say!

[And right away, everyone reacts. Some get out of the area, some stop and listen. Percy Childes heads right for Lake, a worried expression on his face (which now sports a welt where Supernova whacked him).]

PC: Demetrius, no! Not in anger! Wait and cool down and collect...

[Nope.]

DL: I want all you no-good ingrateful bums on that team of criminals to listen real good! Each and every one of you lowdown dirty egg-suckin' dogs is nothing more than a common criminal, startin' riots everywhere you go! What are you tryin' to do?! What ARE you tryin' to do?!

They told us never come back to Phoenix! You killed that town! You killed this town! You probably assured that the AWA would never get put on prime time network television again, and you call yourself Team AWA like you want good for this company? I AM THE KING, AND I AM DECLARING EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU GUILTY OF TREASON!

Bout none more than you, Terry Shane. None more than you. I will put my hands on you like nobody other than your daddy has ever done! I will beat you so unmercifully about the head and shoulders that you'll have flashbacks to your childhood! I know that old man must have beat the brains right out of you, because no man with any intelligence at all would have done what you did! You have disgraced the state of Missouri!

PC: We're done! Cut the footage.

[At the President's direct insistence, the camera cuts. We then open up to a more controlled environment. Days later, on an interview set often used for AWA All-Access, Gordon Myers sits at a table with a forest-green backdrop. It is the same set on which he interviewed Terry Shane III, and today he sits across from Demetrius Lake. The six-nine dark-skinned superstar is again clad in sporty attire, wearing a silvery-grey sport jacket, black slacks, and brown dress shoes. He wears a white shirt and lue tie under the jacket, and a scowl on his face. A black fedora

once again adorns his round afro, and his conical beard and mustache present a rough edge to contrast the smooth attire.]

GM: Welcome once again to the AWA's All-Access interview set, fans. I have to confess, I believed my interview with Terry Shane III several days ago was a one-time engagement. But I have been asked to come back here today to have a discussion with the man whom Mr. Shane struck with a steel chair at All-Star Showdown. His own best friend.

DL: Former.

GM: I'd imagine so. First off, Mr. Lake, several times in the past you've been overly aggressive with both myself and other AWA non-wrestler personalities...

DL: Mr. TV Announcer, I have been instructed by Percy Childes that no matter how you provoke me, I cannot lay a finger on you. Now, I don't know why. You're supposed to be an impartial unbiased TV Announcer, but you side with that criminal team. You even put yourself on that team when you talked to Terry Shame.

GM: I should be impartial, yes, but impartiality doesn't preclude knowing the difference between right and wrong. I don't think there is any bias in my decision.

DL: Well, it won't matter. You'll retire after the Battle Of Los Angeles, no doubt about it. You always did have it in for wrestlers with true talent who the fans were jealous of. But I'm not here to talk about a TV Announcer. I am here to talk about Terry Shame. I cannot believe that I was ever so wrong about another human being in my life. And it all comes down to Miss Sandra Hayes. She was so good at coverin' for that egg-suckin' dog that I believed in him. I owe Miss Hayes an apology, and I have apologized to her personally that I ever thought Terry Shame accomplished anything on his own. And now I have to make it public, because a real man always owns up to his mistakes.

GM: And we're supposed to believe that suddenly, all those years of you and Terry Shane running together was an illusion? You talked him up for years, and now suddenly you were just wrong?

DL: Are you questioning me, Mr. TV Announcer?

GM: That's what interviewers DO, Mr. Wrestler.

DL: DON'T YOU GET SMART WITH ME, TV ANNOUNCER! I can't put my hands on you today, but that good fortune can only last so long! As far as Terry Shame is concerned, he betrayed the King Of Wrestling, he betrayed the state of Missouri, he betrayed the AWA, he betrayed his manager who did everything for him, and he is so lowdown that a snake would have to look down to spot him!

GM: But even now he doesn't say one negative thing about you. He says that he was only trying to protect a childhood friend, and does not want to fight you. Are you sure that HE is the betrayer here?

DL: If I believed that, Mr. TV Announcer, I would have to be such a fool that I'd need a DNA test to prove I wasn't a No Honor myself! Terry Shame, if that was true, should have explained himself, left the ring, and not come back. To hit me with a steel chair, crush my hat, and go and join that team of criminals... even comin' down to fight us at the end when they started that riot... no, these are the actions of a traitor. High treason. High treason against the King, and I can assure you that any sob story he tells you is just another practised lie. He has made a life on it.

Let me tell you about Terry Shame. His daddy used to whup him every time he saw him, just about. His daddy couldn't whup anybody in the ring, so he went home and whupped his boy. Hamilton Graham told me all about it.

GM: *dripping with sarcasm* I'm sure that's EXACTLY what happened...

DL: Don't you talk back to me. You're nothin' but a TV Announcer. We could replace you with a barnyard animal and it'd make as much sense.

As I was saying, Terry Shame's daddy would whup his boy, and then his momma would whup Terry Shame's daddy. Which...

GM: Wait. Terry Shane's mother died giving birth.

DL: As much as I wish it were so, that's another lie. Terry Shame don't want nobody to know that his momma whupped his daddy, because no man wants to admit that a woman would whup him. It's a point of pride. She whupped both him and his daddy at the same time and still can. But that's no surprise. Everybody knows that Terry Shame isn't good against opponents more than 300 pounds.

GM: If this is just going to devolve into-

DL: But most of all, Terry Shame had to protect his money. If Old Yeller, Blackjack Lunch, found out that bat Henrietta had another kid, he'd get him for seventy perce...

GM: WHAT?!

DL: It ain't no surprise, Mr. TV Announcer. Henrietta Oinktiz Lunch was nothin' more than a groupie. Actually, she was more like a whole group. Of warthogs. One night, she got Terry Shame's daddy on the road and she wouldn't take no for an answer. It looks like Old Yeller was the same as a husband as he was a wrestler; he couldn't perform to anyone's satisfaction. So they conceived Terry Shame right there on the highway, which is only fitting because that's where all the accidents happen.

GM: I think I've heard enough.

DL: You'll leave when I tell you to, and no sooner. Henrietta Oinktiz kept it a secret, because Old Yeller wouldn't tell her who all them other Lunch kids' mothers were, and she thought it was only fair. Besides that, she could get a percentage cut when Terry Shame got of age to wrestle, without havin' a middleman. We all know that Old Yeller has to give Henrietta Oinktiz a cut after he takes a cut from all his worthless boys.

So there you have it. Terry Shame is kin to the Lunch family, and is therefore no true Missouran. I should have listened to Hamilton Graham. I should have known that Hamilton spoke the truth, but I thought he was just mad at Terry Shame's daddy for gettin' an offensive move in against him in 1980 or something. I apologized to him as well.

GM: You SHOULD be apologizing to Terry Shane III, the Lynch family, and most of all Henrietta Ortiz Lynch for this disgraceful story!

DL: The only apology that the Lunch family including Terry Shame should be involved in is to each and every plant on the face of the Earth. They should apologize to every single plant for using the oxygen that they so generously supplied. At the Battle Of Los Angeles, I will get rid of Jack Lunch like I said I

would, and his half-brother's half-brother Terry Shame will go right after him, no question about it!

GM: That's it. We're done here.

[Gordon gets up and walks off in a huff as Lake angrily shouts for him to get back because he's not done. But he is. We cut.

The camera opens on an idyllic clearing on the famous Lynch family ranch. There appears to be nothing all around except for trees and green grass. And there, leaning against a tree, arms folded over his chest, is Jack Lynch. He's wearing all black, as usual, today a black t-shirt and a pair of black jeans, and his black cowboy hat is tilted downwards, to keep the sun out of his eyes.]

JL: I've been all around this world, and more than once.

[Jack Lynch's laconic drawl is especially pronounced today. Each word slowly coming out in his Texas-accented voice, a voice that's as gravelly as his father's. He speaks slowly, seemingly in no hurry to get to his point.]

JL: Y'all know that I cut my teeth in PCW, workin' for old Blackjack. I've been up to Rodeo Wrestlin', and I've entered the Torture Chamber, and taught them Sharp boys a thing or two about bein' tough. I was there, and I answered the call in Florida, when Vernon Riley called his People's Army to battle Layton's Army of Darkness. I was in St. Louis', makin' the Black Tiger scream in agony. Me and Jimmy spent a year in San Francisco, raisin' hell and kickin' Samoan tail.

Me and Jimmy went to Japan, and we showed VU that they ain't the only gaijin game in town. And I've been to places that most folks in the states don't even know have wrestlin'. I spent six months in India, dodgin' fireballs thrown by the Mad Maharajah himself, Gulam Singh. Australia, New Zealand, South Africa? Been there too.

Guess you could say I've always been somethin' of a gypsy.

Never could stay in one place for too long. Not even in PCW. I came to a place, kicked some butt, and moved on. That's just how I'm wired I guess. I've always wanted to know what was just past the horizon. Always wanted to see if the grass really was greener somewhere else.

That all changed when I got to the AWA.

Me, Jimmy and Trav, we all came to the AWA on a wave of hype. We took this place by storm. We've had our ups and downs. We had an entire year that couldn't be called nothin' but "down." But for the first time in my life, I've stayed put. And you wanna know why?

Because I love the AWA like I've never loved anything before.

[Jack pulls his hat off a moment, wiping the sweat from his brow, before he replaces it.]

JL: The AWA ain't just my home. It's our home. The home of the Lynches. And I think we all know what happens when you try to mess with a Texan's home. If ya don't – I'll tell ya this, it ain't pretty.

Right now, Jimmy is out. But he will be back. He gets better each and every day. And right now, Trav has got his own war to fight.

So it's on me to help defend the AWA against the, ahem, scumbags tryin' to bring it down.

And that's more than fine. That's exactly what I want. Because, like I said, I love this place. All my life? One place to wrestle was just like any other. I've been everywhere and I've seen everything. I've been up every highway and down every road. So when I say that the AWA is somethin' special, I know what I'm talkin' about.

Percy Childes, Larry Doyle, and Sandra Hayes, the Wise Men. You three are the termites gnawin' at the foundation of my home. You three are vermin, and you're doin' just what vermin do – spreadin' your filth and rottin' away the foundations.

Sure, Percy has got an explanation for everything. Sure, Percy has got a way to explain to anyone who'll listen why he's in the right and why everyone else should just roll over and give him their throats.

Well Percy, I might've been born at night, but it wasn't last night.

I've dealt with plenty of smooth customers in my day. And I learned a long time ago that beneath all the double speak and half assed explanations, there ain't nothin' there but lies and corruption.

And I tell ya now, I ain't havin' it.

You three Wise Men have got thirteen guys on your side, and I'll tell ya now, I got no respect for any of them. The world knows how I feel about Demetrius Lake. But, what ya need to understand is that the same hatred, the same desire to watch him bleed extends to the other twelve too. Whether that be crybaby Rick Marley, or the delusional Johnny Detson, or those three dirty egg-suckin' Dogs of War. They say Kolya Sudakov is big and bad? Well, I say there ain't no Russian who could ever stand against a born and bred Texan, and Sudakov won't be the exception to that rule.

Fujimoto, I remember you, and I'll be happy to get my fist reacquainted with your face. Lights Out Express? Me and Bobby are gonna make sure you understand that those tag belts ain't long for your waists. And speakin' of belts? Maybe when I'm in the ring with Supreme Wright, I'll give him a preview of what'll happen when I come gunnin' for that title.

And you, Jacobs.

Another day, under different circumstances, I might be inclined to understand what you're goin' through Jacobs. Hell, I might even respect you for helpin' your brother out. But right now, in these circumstances? Well, if it comes down to your family against my home?

I'm guessin' you already know what my choice is.

Pretty soon, I'll be leavin' my family's ranch and flyin' out to LA. And when I get there, I'm gonna sit down with Eric, Dave, Hannibal, Bobby, Ryan and the others, and I'm gonna let them know that no matter what, I'll be there.

The AWA is my home.

And it's time I helped take it back.

[His final words spoken, we fade to black and then back to Mark Stegglet in front of the hideous banner.]

MS: Jack Lynch and Demetrius Lake have been at war for nearly an entire year now and somehow, it only seems fitting that tonight, they're a part of this company-wide conflict between the forces of good and the Wise Men's Army. You better believe that conflict gets even more personal with those two men involved... especially after what just came out of Lake's mouth on this broadcast.

[Stegglet shakes his head with disgust.]

MS: No titles on the line tonight as I mentioned earlier but there's a whole lot of personal issues that will be at stake - including the big non-title showdown pitting the brand new World Television Champion, Tony Sunn, taking on the Number One Contender, Shadoe Rage. Now, there's no title at stake tonight due to the match being signed prior to the title change... however you better believe that this match will have major title implications. If Rage can defeat Sunn here tonight, you would have to believe that a shot at the title will be coming soon. However, if Sunn defeats Rage, that title shot may never come from the out-of-control Canadian. We got comments from both men earlier... let's listen in first to Shadoe Rage who was with former World Champion, Colt Patterson!

[We fade away from Stegglet to Colt Patterson who is standing before a more eye-pleasing generic AWA backdrop.]

CP: It's just hours to go 'til the Battle Of Los Angeles and one of the night's featured matches is Tony Sunn, the paper champion already ducking his challengers, taking on the man who is gonna make him pay for that cowardice later tonight - the sensational Shadoe Rage!

[And that cues the arrival of Shadoe Rage as he glides in stage left. Shadoe Rage is dressed in a sleeveless black T-shirt. A silhouette of Rage in the Jesus pose adorns the front. Rage faces the camera long enough for everyone to get a shot of the front of the new shirt, his tortoise shell sunglasses, purple bandana and crazy French Fork beard. The immediate impression is that of a psychotic Wildman. After holding still a couple beats, Rage turns to display the intricately wrapped bun of his beaded locs and the slogan on the T-shirt that reads: "Black Jesus is Back!"]

SR: I like the sound of that! "Sensational" Shadoe Rage! I like the sound of that Patterson, I like the sound of that indeed!

[Rage slaps his hands together in front of Colt and hits a double biceps shot that shows that he clearly has been putting a lot of time in at the gym. His caramel skin glistens with oil, demonstrating the striations of muscle and the general lack of body fat. His back swells and threatens the stitching of his shirt. Rage wheels back to face the camera, his tongue flickering lizard-like across his wide-stretched, teeth-baring lips.]

SR: Wow, Los Angeles, it's time to freak out! Greatness is here!

[Colt nods.]

CP: Now, Shadoe, you've been calling out Tony Sunn for being the fraud that he is for a long time now. In fact, the very last time you two squared off back in July, he stole a win from you in the eyes of most experts myself included... but why don't you tell all these people at home exactly what you're gonna do to that musclehead when you get your hands on him.

[Rage again defies conventional interviewing techniques by putting his back to the camera and obscuring his face, but it works for the manic wrestler. The intensity radiates from his tensed posture. He twitches and stretches his neck. Rage bends his arm overhead and jerks his thumb at the back of his shirt.]

SR: See that Colt Patterson. See that name. Black Jesus?

CP: I do indeed.

SR: That's more than just a slogan, Patterson. Do you understand me? That name means something. It means I'm the savior! I'm the savior in this ring! I'm here to save all the sinners. All you've got to do is get down on your knees and say you believe. So what am I going to do to Tony Sunn, Colt? What am I going to do to Tony Sunn?

[Rage spins back to face the camera. His raspy, scratchy, catching voice growls at the camera.]

SR: Tony Sunn, I'm going to make you get down on your knees and I'm going to make you a believer, you swarthy opportunist. You may have fooled the fans out there but you haven't fooled me. Look right into the videoscope, Sunn.

[Rage draws off his pink tortoise shell sunglasses and the full burn of his crazed hazel eyes burns through the video screen. The telegenic Canadian radiates derangement. Beads of sweat stand out on his forehead. His eyes blink unnaturally. His gaze never wavers.]

SR: (stabbing a finger into the camera lens) I know what you are Tony Sunn and I know who you are! And I'm going to hurt you because of it!

[Rage turns his back to the camera, stretching out his arms and lifting his head to direct his words to some invisible body perched over Colt's left shoulder. Even Patterson is forced to check what Rage is looking at.]

SR: I've told you people once, I've told you people a thousand times ... Tony Sunn is nothing but a swarthy opportunist, Colt Patterson. Nothing but a swarthy opportunist. Listen to his song and dance. It's the same ol' Dudley Do Right shuffle. He says he's here for order. He says he's here to respect the referees. He's here for the fans. He isn't here for anything but himself. Look at how he just stole the TV title from Johnny Detson.

CP: That was a travesty.

[That draws all of Rage's attention to Patterson.]

SR: Usain Bolt couldn't have sprinted to the ring any faster than Tony Sunn did when Detson said he'd take on anyone in the back. Sunn knocked down our seamstress and two little kids on his way to the ring! He couldn't wait to steal that title from Detson. He knew he could steal the belt and no one would call him on it because the fans don't have the good sense to cheer Detson like they do that miscreant Ryan Martinez. He didn't do it for the fans. He did it for himself. He's corrupt. He's evil. He's disgusting. He couldn't sell that lie when he took on Martinez. But he's trying to sell it now. See how his mind works? See the evil?

Tony Sunn's that kind of guy. He claims to be from Ithaca but he's pretty Hollywood to me.

[Patterson looks puzzled.]

CP: Hollywood? What do you mean?

[Rage sidles closer to Patterson, taking control of the man's microphone hand. He leans in next to Patterson, speaking out of the side of his mouth.]

SR: Colt Patterson, if you've only seen Hollywood on TV you think it's some divine and glamorous place. You think it's so big and shiny and wonderful! That's Tony Sunn. Looks great from far away.

But you get up close and you realize that the Walk of Fame smells like stale urine. You realize that Grauman's Chinese theatre is a little entrance next to a mall across the street from a bunch of every day clothing stores. Nothing is as pretty. Nothing is as shiny as it seems. Tony Sunn seems bright and shiny from far away, but he's really just sleazy and slimy up close, Patterson. Where was Tony Sunn when Todd Michaelson needed people to sign up for his squad?

Nowhere to be found, Colt. That's where!

CP: I heard he grabbed the belt, jumped in his rental car, and took off as soon as he could.

SR: Got straight out of Dodge! He was busy running to the Championship Committee to make sure this was a non-title match.

[Rage lets that point soak in.]

SR: Do you see what Tony Sunn is all about? He sticks his nose in my business because I outshined him to become the Number One Contender to the TV title. He tried to steal my spot. Then Tony Sunn cheats me at Memorial Day Mayhem by buttering up the referees. Of course he ignores Dave Bryant kicking Meekly in the mouth until I called him on it. Then he stepped up to the former champ and challenged him to a match. Unbelievably he gets a Main Event match. Then he gets a title shot against Ryan Martinez and defers it until he knows when Ryan is hurt. And then fakes his way through that match because he doesn't want the people to turn against him. Then he pledges to help against the Wise Men because it got him in the spotlight as a good guy again and after he steals the Television title he runs out on Ryan, Michaelson, and the fans.

CP: And yet everybody applauds Tony Sunn. Disgusting.

SR: They applaud Sunn just like they applaud Martinez and Team (air quotes) "A W-A." Tony Sunn, Ryan Martinez, all the privileged kids, are all the same. Totally pampered, totally out of touch with the people. They're all fakes, Colt. Just like the sets up at Studio City, just like the hucksters selling maps to the stars' homes on Hollywood and Highland, just like every granola-crunching, Hybrid-driving wannabe West Hollywoodian. And I'm going to bring them down one by one, Colt Patterson. And it starts at the Battle Of Los Angeles by beating Tony Sunn and poking a hole in his armor.

CP: We all know that Tony Sunn is no match for you one-on-one, Shadoe. But what happens when he has a crooked referee in his pocket like last time?

[The mention of that indignity causes Rage to wince and spin around in a circle, shaking his head in disgust.]

SR: Colt Patterson, I've thought long and hard about that! And I'm going to have backup in my corner. Percy Childes couldn't demean his officials but he knew that count was fast. Everybody did. So I'm going to have Marissa Monet watch my back like she should have been the first time. I don't care who likes it. I will not be cheated this time.

CP: Marissa Monet? We haven't seen her for weeks.

SR: Do you know why Marissa wasn't there?

CP: Why?

SR: Because I didn't want her to be. And what I say goes despite what people might think. So she was home. Now I want her here and she'll be there. Try to cheat now, Sunn. Try to cheat now. Just try to cheat now.

CP: Hah, I love it! You've got all the bases covered tonight, Shadoe!

SR: Absolute total control right there, Colt Patterson. Absolute total control! Marissa will keep an eye on the referees and there will be zero outside influence on the match. I'm a pure athlete and when you put this pure athlete up against Tony Sunn... well, it's what you call an eclipse, Colt. I'm going to eclipse that fraud and I'm going to force him to put that title on the line! Battle Of Los Angeles is going to be a one-sided war! Shadoe Rage is going to win. Bet on me, Colt. Because when Black Jesus makes you a promise, it's better than gold!

[And with that Rage slides back out stage left, flexing his arms and flickering his tongue.]

CP: Tony Sunn, you may have pulled the wool over these people's eyes but Shadoe Rage sees you clearly and he's got you right in his sights. What are you going to do when he beats you and exposes you as the fake that you are in front of all the world at the Battle Of Los Angeles?

[We fade away from Colt...

...and we fade in on AWA's newest World Television Champion Tony Sunn in the locker room. He's sitting on a bench, already clad in his black, silver and white ringlet with matching wristbands and black wrestling boots and he's looking thoughtfully at the gold belt lying across his lap.]

TS: I wish you had been there, Dad.

[A faint, rueful smile crosses Tony's face as he glances up.]

TS: I mean, I know you were watching, but...you know what I mean. Then again, if you had been there, you probably would have wanted to take a shot at Meekly yourself during Wright-Bryant beforehand. And I really couldn't blame you...

[He pauses, softly tapping the belt with his index finger.]

TS: Tell you what though, it felt REAL good making that rat Detson submit and getting this belt [Sunn taps it again] away from the slimy clutches of Percy Childes' goon squad! But seeing all the Wise Men gnashing their teeth in impotence afterwards?

[Tony quickly flashes a broad grin.]

TS: That...that was just icing on the cake. And if we're lucky, the beginning of the end for the Wise Men! I wish I could be part of the Cibernetico to help finish them off for good, but I've got my own battle with Shadoe Rage.

[Sunn's expression shifts into a scowl, shaking his head.]

TS: Rage, you don't like me and the feeling is mutual at this point. You're a violent, egotistical maniac and that's all I can say without getting censored! You've stuck your nose in my matches against Dave Bryant and Ryan Martinez and I'm getting REAL tired of you crying conspiracy when there isn't one!

[Tony pauses as the scowl on his face fades into a thoughtful frown.]

TS: Actually, Rage...there might be one after all. Because I'm not the one who made our match non-title. I'd rather defend this belt and shut you up for good! You should be taking a long, hard look at "President" Childes and ask yourself why, for all the honeyed words and slick lines he fed you about the previous Championship Committee being out to get you, why isn't he now giving you the opportunity to take THIS [Sunn raises the belt] away from me?

[Sunn rises to his feet.]

TS: Because he's using you, Rage. You're just a pawn to him! You're not Detson or Lake or Wright -- guys Childes respect. Instead, you're just a tool in his eyes and you're gonna be cast aside when he's gotten all that he can out of you! There's your conspiracy! And if you refuse to see that -- if you are WILLING to be used and disrespected by spineless worms calling themselves "Wise" -- then there's nothing more to say. Except this...

[Tony drapes the Television title belt over his right shoulder and nods.]

TS: ...Percy's gonna need a better man than you in order to get this title away from ME!

[He pats the gold plated belt with a confident smile.]

TS: You know, my dad never told me how heavy these were. But I think I'm more than capable of carrying the weight.

[We fade away from the new champion back to Mark Stegglet.]

MS: Tony Sunn and Shadoe Rage promise to tear the house down here in Los Angeles later tonight in that non-title showdown. You heard Tony Sunn mention that he wishes he could have been a part of Cibernetico. Of course, AWA officials - and I think you know who I mean - made it very clear that a wrestler contracted for one match couldn't compete in Cibernetico, making sure that men like Tony Sunn and Air Strike weren't options for Team AWA. But through one heck of a night, Todd Michaelson and Ryan Martinez managed to piece together their team that they'll go to war with here tonight... let's hear from another member of that team right now!

[We open to a television screen. On it, Gordon Myers and Terry Shane are in the middle of a sit down interview.]

TS: Because deep down, even though it has been years since O'Connor has probably called me a friend, I knew he could take it. I know how much fight that man has in him because he is cut from the same cloth as myself.

[Gordon looks shocked.]

GM: You two are NOTHING alike.

[And with that, the image on the television goes to black as the set is turned off by remote control. We pan back, and see the young man with the remote in his hand: "Bunkhouse" Bobby O'Connor. He's wearing a Blue Oyster Cult long sleeve white shirt with blue sleeves that reads "BOC - FEEL THE THUNDER" along with his usual blue jeans and black and white cowboy style wrestling boots. He scratches his head, careful not to touch the square bandage covering up some of the damage done to him by the Wise Men. He nods thoughtfully before speaking.]

BOC: Well, he has one thing right. It has been years since I called Terry Shane my friend. I wish it was as simple as his war with my mentor, too. But that is just a blip

on the radar. I was so happy for Terry when he signed a contract here. Even though I hadn't yet, it felt like your next door neighbor running into the end zone at the Super Bowl. But then, he debuted... and might as well have been a complete stranger. The man that spoke in the middle of that ring on that night was not the Terry Shane I knew. And then it got worst. The disrespect he showed vets like Mister Carver and Mister Spector. More than disrespect, trying to put them out of this sport just to make himself look like a star. So no, I haven't even thought of that man as Terry Shane in years. He was just another blemish on the sport I love...

[Bobby nods.]

BOC: ... until he spit in the face of everyone he's run with in this company by refusing to smash me over the head with a steel chair. With my own blood covering my face I looked up, and those I eyes saw were those of my old friend Terry. So to address what Mister Myers said a few moments ago on that TV set... no, me and the leader of the Shane Gang don't have anything in common.

[A hint of a smile momentarily flashes across Bobby's lips.]

BOC: But me and Terry Shane, the REAL Terry Shane are plenty alike. Now is my friend back? I have no idea. I'm no wily veteran, but in my short time here I've already seen that you can't take what everyone says at face value. He'll have to prove himself before I can truly believe everything he claimed in that interview. Luckily for him, the best chance he could ever have to prove himself to be as good as his word is coming right up. What has turned into the biggest threat this company could possibly face, The Wise Men. We have a chance to put them out of business for good. Terry, if you hold up your end and help send them packing?

[Bobby grins and nods.]

BOC: I'll welcome you with open arms. Because being part of that struggle? That's exactly the kind of thing the Terry Shane I know would do in an instant.

[Bobby raises his left hand, touching the bandage on his forehead.]

BOC: So once again, the Wise Men think they can make an example out of me. Once again, they think they can use me to instill fear in others and manipulate people into doing what they want.

[Bobby's hand quickly drops as he extends his index finger directly at the camera.]

BOC: Once again they were dead wrong! Every time they've attacked me from behind in the ring or in the parking lot... I get back up. Johnny Detson has to cheat to get me down for a count of three and breaks a cane over my head... and I get back up. By now, you'd think these cowards would get the hint. I will never stop fighting, I will never NOT pick myself up and go back to work.

[Bobby smirks.]

BOC: But now comes the interesting part. Now comes the part where the whole world sees if you can say the same. When the chips are down, will you fight past the pain and the overwhelming odds because you refuse to give up? Because all the shortcuts I've seen all of you take, make me think otherwise. This is the last ditch effort for both sides. But the side that has fought tooth and nail the whole time just to get to this point?

[Bobby nods.]

BOC: That'd be the one I'd bet on. Not the one that depends on tearing a family apart so their figurehead can stay in power. Not the one that talks more about

lawyers and taking people to court than wrestling matches. Not the one that took my mentor and forced him to revert to the animal that broke every rule in the book and spilled blood everywhere he went. That, even more than all the times they've attacked me combined, is why this one night in Los Angeles is the biggest and most important fight in my life. I still haven't been able to speak to Mister Carver about everything he's done recently. No, I don't like it. I don't like him breaking the law and attacking innocent men just because these so-called Wise Men have driven him so far over the edge. I don't know if he can ever go back to the good and decent man that AWA fans everywhere have cheered with all their heart and soul for well over a year.

[Bobby stares with absolute intensity at the camera.]

BOC: But I do know one thing. They will pay for everything they pushed him into doing. They will pay for every great athlete they put on the shelf out of bitterness and jealousy. And for every bit of pain and anguish they've forced upon my family, in the name of the legacy my father and grandfather laid out before me...

[Bobby nods intently, slamming his fist into his open right palm.]

BOC: The O'Connors send their regards.

[We fade back to Mark Stegglet.]

MS: Bobby O'Connor looking to live up to his family name as he heads into the Cibernetico later tonight. O'Connor has really grown as a young rookie here in the AWA, going from a failed tag team to one of the hottest rising - and most popular - stars in the entire AWA. But can he succeed in there tonight against one of the most dangerous teams ever assembled? A team with former World Champions like Rick Marley and Johnny Detson. A team with the World Tag Team Champions and the Tiger Paw Pro Global Crown Champion. A team with this man - perhaps the most dangerous man in the business - "Maniac" Morgan Dane!

[We open up to a warehouse. The grainy, shaky footage tells us that this is a home video.]

The warehouse seems to hold wrestling paraphernalia. There are disused ring ropes, disconnected cornerposts, barricades, and a variety of boxes filled with colorful material. Rigging and lighting and all sorts of things, all packed up and stored away.

Standing in front of the camera is the "Maniac" himself, Morgan Dane. Morgan is an average height man with a bulky build. He's not fat but he's certainly not toned either. He looks more a brawler than a wrestler, the kind of guy who you'd avoid in a bar fight for sure. He's got long, scruffy dirty-blond hair pulled back into a ponytail where we can see the top thinning, a scraggly long beard, and large eyebrows. Dane has several scars on his face, and a flat nose which was broken once too often. He's wearing blue jeans, brown leather boots, a light-grey old T-Shirt promoting a card in Puerto Rico that took place five years ago (the shirt reads DANE VS SULLIVAN), and a brown longcoat.]

MD: Ah, look what we got here. This is the Dane family collection.

[Morgan reaches to a shelf, and pulls open a box. There are some trunks and boots in there, neatly organized, belonging to wrestlers of the past.]

MD: Lori and Jason collect this garbage. Guess they wanna try an' open a brick-'n mortar Hall Of Fame some day. Ya know, lookin' around with this musty ol' crap does make me realize that Percy Childe and I, we got some of the same ideas. We

mighta come to 'em from different directions, but I think we agree that this whole place needs to just burn right down.

They got rings from Los Angeles. They got set pieces from Toronto. They got pay-per-view banners from New York. They bought up everybody's past. And they're only gonna ever show the past they wanna talk about. Everybody else's past? Warehouse.

Like me. Just like me. Warehouse. They'd put me in a box if they could, and stick me right over here. Bet if I croaked tomorrow, that's what they'd do. You woulda never heard a peep about it. Just like all the rest that don't fit their image of the past. Warehouse.

See, I say we just put it all in the warehouse an' let it burn. All of it. Why?

Just because it'd make the two of 'em, an' especially that lousy brother-in-law I got, cry like the babies they always were.

[Dane chuckles, and kicks over a stand that has merchandise from a variety of long-forgotten promotions.]

MD: Ain't that so, Michaelson? This is where you live, ain't it? You can sit your rottin' carcass on a Mexican beach, but this warehouse is where your soul is. Sittin' on these shelves next to your tenth vertebrae. I know they didn't fuse all your vertebrae in your last surgery, because ya can't fuse what ain't there. You're spineless. Ya always were.

Ain't that why I got Ezra's blade? You know where I got it from, too. Right over there from that shelf. They can't kick me outta this property because my name's on the deed. I helped buy this place back a long time ago, years and years ago. Before Blue failed. Before I even got started. And before Lori and Jason turned on me. We were just gonna keep rings and such here. Back then, I went in on it because I was keepin' my eyes open on maybe goin' the Blackjack Lynch route someday. Maybe open up my own promotion when I got ready to slow down. But you three filled it up with junk. Because you're spineless, in the end, Michaelson. You had no present, so you decided to buy the past. You want to shine it up like gold, but it's a warehouse full of junk.

Seems like Miss Sandra and I got somethin' in common, too...

[With an abrupt flick, Morgan flips open the infamous pearl-handled razor blade. It gleams menacingly in center view.]

MD: ...we both know how to find good things amongst junk piles.

All her boys, she pulled outta rejects. Strong, Anderson, and even that little pissant Terry Shane. Nobody wanted them. And Childes did the same with his Dogs. Nobody wanted them. Because they weren't "second generation", except that Perez kid. And he got rejected because when people think o' Puerto Rico, they think of dirt-floor bloodbaths rather than nice clean corporate entertainment.

But with that one notable exception, they were all somethin' more than the AWA really wanted. They went to those dirt floors, they learned how to spill blood and get it spilt. They ain't what Michaelson wanted, ain't what Stegglet wanted, and ain't what that fake, that hypocrite, that lowlife Taylor wanted.

[Dane walks slowly amongst the rows of memorabilia as he speaks. The last few lines cause Morgan's voice to become even lower and more edgy, until he turns to face the camera directly.]

MD: By the way, Taylor. Some day. Some day.

[And then back to walking.]

MD: There's a certain kind of man, if I'd even call it a man, that the owners want around here. Clean. Corporate. Censored. Soulless, to a degree. "Yes, sir. No, sir." A friend to the sponsors and in line with the sensibilities of the mainstream. Not a man who gets his hands dirty. Not a man who speaks like a man. Not a man who comes to fight for keeps.

Not Morgan Dane. Never Morgan Dane.

[And he smiles.]

MD: But now you got a man you don't know how to deal with, Michaelson. You just offered up thirteen sacrifices. Maybe fewer, maybe fewer. I could respect a couple of your men. I could respect Carver, even if he has sold out. I wonder if he knows he's a sell out? That he sold his soul for the proverbial thirty silver? I could respect Dufresne, even if he's gutless and yellow. He at least ain't foolin' himself. He knows he's gutless and yellow. I'd cut him ear-to-ear as soon as look at him, but I'd respect him as he bled out. I could respect Bishop, and his brother who'll probably be around. They just fight where the money is. They don't know how real men get it done yet, and when they figure it out you'll blackball them, too. Maybe they did, and that's why they vanished.

But men like me, men like us, don't fit with what you want wrestling to be. You'll put us all in this warehouse. Same as you stuck Ezra's blade on a shelf. Same as you stuck the carcasses of three dozen wrestling promotions that'll be lost and forgotten forever. Same as you stuck me on a shelf for my whole career. It's the kind of thing that could give a man a complex.

[The smile grows larger.]

MD: Turns out it is a condition that has a cure. Just like in the old days when you got an infection: you bleed it out.

[He holds up the razor one more time.]

MD: Just remember one thing... I only said I'd fight on your terms and by your rules if you joined the match, Michaelson.

So I guess we're gonna do this MY way.

[And he laughs, long and loud, as the scene fades to black...

...and back up to Mark Stegglet who gives a visible shiver as the camera comes back on him.]

MS: That man is the stuff of nightmares, folks. If you've never seen Morgan Dane compete - and consider yourself lucky if that's true - you have missed one of the most violent, the most bloodthirsty, the most savage and cruel individuals this sport has ever known. His wars with Ebola Zaire are the stuff of legend. His body is littered with scars as souvenirs from his time in Japan. But now, he is here... he is in the AWA... and in the span of two weeks, he has threatened men like Todd Michaelson... like Bobby Taylor... like Caleb Temple... like Ryan and Alex Martinez. This man knows no fear and feels nothing... NOTHING... when he's doing his dirty work. The Wise Men have brought a VERY dangerous man to the table, fans. Morgan Dane was a surprise addition to the Cibernetico for the Wise Men... let's hear from two men who were surprise additions to Team AWA!

[We fade in to a generic black backdrop with the AWA logo printed across it. Seconds later, a man saunters on camera. A man who hasn't been seen in almost a year before the All Star Showdown. The man is clad in a light blue dress shirt, tucked in to a pair of blue jeans. He has a khaki blazer on with a dark blue pocket square protruding from the breast pocket. His blond hair hangs down past his shoulders and his hawkish features and piercing blue eyes make him look like quite the predator. He looks far more serious than the last time we saw him, but his lip curls up in a derisive smirk that we know so well. The man is former AWA World Champion, "Ladykiller" Calisto Dufresne.]

CD: "Why?" It's a question that's been asked of me countless times in my career. Why did you throw that fireball in City Jack's face? Why did you send your partner, Adrian Freeman, packing from the AWA? Why did you put Juan Vasquez in the hospital? Why did you join Royalty?

But I've never had the question asked as much as I have in the past two weeks.

[A smirk.]

CD: Why join Todd Michaelson's war against the Wise Men? My throngs of adoring fans want to know. My former colleagues, Larry Doyle and Brad Jacobs, want to know. Hell, my own teammates want to know; they think I should be lined up on the other side of the ledger against them.

It's pretty simple, really.

Calisto Dufresne always pays his debts.

[A steely resolve plays across Dufresne's features.]

CD: You see, sitting at home on the beach, with a back that flares up every 10 minutes or so gives a guy a chance for some serious reflection. A chance to think about how in the world I got there. And it gave me a chance to figure out a list of at whose feet I should lay blame. And that list starts with Percy Childes.

[Dufresne's face turns even more grave.]

CD: Percy, you and I had an agreement two years ago. I would put Juan Vasquez under your control, and you'd keep that dog on a leash. Not only did you not keep him on a leash, but you let him loose and directed him my way. He damn near killed me, the psychopath that he is. I don't blame Juan Vasquez for that; he's too stupid to do anything except bash in heads. It's what he is. That's why I sent him to you. To either train him, or put him down, like you should any wild dog.

But you just chuckled at me and sent me on my way and let Vasquez try to kill me. Did you honestly think I was going to let that just slide? Like water off of a duck's back?

[An incredulous look plays across Dufresne's face as he shakes his head.]

CD: I was busy being World Heavyweight Champion, so I couldn't be bothered with you at the time, but I didn't forget. And now those chickens have come home to roost, Percy.

[A long pause from the former World Champion.]

CD: I've had a long time to consider this revenge. But calling it simple revenge is like saying a Rolls Royce is a vehicle with four wheels; something like a hay wagon. This burns far deeper and far hotter than simple revenge.

And that revenge will extend to Larry Doyle, too. Supposedly the guy who was looking after my best interests as part of Royalty.

Playing both ends against the middle. Royalty and the Wise Men. Figured you'd throw your lot in with whichever side came out victorious.

[Dufresne snorts and chuckles a bit.]

CD: I almost applaud the plan, in theory, Lar. It's a plan worthy of my own mind. You thought that with Calisto Dufresne gone, that the Wise Men were the winning side. Well Calisto Dufresne isn't gone. He's right here and he's still the dirtiest player in the game.

The only problem is, you made your move too early, Larry. You Wise Men play checkers while I play chess. Your queen moved out of position, exposing the king.. I am the grandmaster of plots, schemes and deceptions. It's exactly why Todd and Ben wanted me to be a part of this.

You don't fight a war with men like Ryan Martinez, TORA or the Lynches. They fight wars with one arm tied behind their back. You fight a war with men like Calisto Dufresne, men like Terry Shane. Even men like Stevie Scott. You fight wars with men who are not afraid to get their hands dirty and do what needs to be done to _win._

[A confident smirk from the Ladykiller.]

CD: And we all know Calisto Dufresne knows how to win. Which is exactly why Todd made the deal with the Devil.

The Battle of Los Angeles is about paying my debts. And I owe those debts to Todd Michaelson and Ben Waterson too. Ben made me a part of the greatest collection of wrestling talent in the history of the AWA, the Southern Syndicate. Stevie got all the glory, but we know who really made that group go.

[Dufresne jabs a thumb towards himself.]

CD: Ben orchestrated Wrestlerock; making me National Champion. He pointed me towards stardom, and the rest, as they say, is history. So when he needed someone to get revenge on the Wise Men, there was no question as to whether I was answering that call.

Todd trained me a decade ago. He doesn't like to mention it, but I know he's proud of what he produced. He's not proud of my methods, but he gets to be the one who says he trained the greatest professional wrestler in the history of the business.

And yeah, I owe him a little bit for that.

[A simple nod.]

CD: By the time Battle of Los Angeles is over, most of my ledgers will be balanced. That's not to say I don't still have scores to settle, because I do. Supreme Wright has something that doesn't belong to him. Stevie Scott and Dave Bryant, we have some issues to address as well. But those can wait for another night. You may need eyes in the back of your head going forward, but you won't need them in Los Angeles.

Don't get too philosophical about it; "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." and all that. He's not. But at the Battle of Los Angeles, there's no such thing as good guys and bad guys. There's just guys. Guys who see that the Wise Men have redecorated _their_ house and don't really like what they've done with the place.

And on Saturday night...

[A nod. A wink. A smile.]

CD: ...I'm comin' home.

[Dufresne turns and walks off camera, leaving it focused on the words "AWA" on the backdrop...

Terry Shane, in dark washed denim jeans and a gray and slightly damp t-shirt look, stands in front of an AWA back drop, grin thin and straight, eyes narrowed through strings of black hair and staring forward. His demeanor is calm, cold even, though there's an eerie feeling as he stands there alone.]

TS: Now.

That is all the stands in the way of the future of our company. Right. Now.

[He smirks.]

TS: That and the interchangeable parts on either side of the line carved down the center of the ring. We have noble and righteous men dripping with integrity and humility paired with cunning, callous, and ruthless individuals all with the same burden.

Save our company.

Destroy the Wise Men.

Suddenly the line down the ring is not so clear, is it? Yet all of these men, myself included, had to make a choice. A choice between simpering, wretched, totalitarian morality imposed on us by this decadent society, this corrupt culture lead by the most conniving and manipulative forms of mankind on God's green Earth...

...or the freedom of choice, freedom of statement, freedom to act at will without those empty and artificial pangs of guilt the insecure and arrogant force known as the Wise Men would have you feel.

Which was it to be? Spend the rest of your life like a prisoner in a penitentiary...
...or show some damn spine.

Men like Stevie Scott, Calisto Dufresne, Cletus Lee Bishop, and myself are not known for our nobility, in fact, our decision making is at times questionable at best. But like the men standing with us. Like Ryan Martinez, Eric Preston, Bobby O'Connor, Jack Lynch and the other individuals representing our brand WE will not fall victim to the wrath of Percy Childes and his legions. We will not go quietly into that good night and we will not rest until Childes, Doyle, Hayes and their army are torn from limb to limb and left gutted and bleeding on the battlefield.

On this night, in that ring, everything we have ever done and the means of our execution and reasoning do no matter. What matters is what we fight for and who we fight for today. I am not here to give assurance to anyone or give them that warm and fuzzy feeling that I am all around good guy. I have not come to Jesus, if anything, I have fallen further down the dark road that has tormented my soul for the past two years and aided me in making decisions that have been deemed immoral and unlawful. I am not here to take back those wrongdoings or to apologize for my actions.

Those decisions.

These scars.

[He points to his jaw.]

TS: They made me the man I am today.

They made me the Ring Leader that struck fear into the heart of opponents and doubt into the minds of the men who stood across from me in the ring.

Somewhere, somehow, that mentality was lost in the past few months but I promise you... I promise my team... I promise Todd Michaelson and the AWA that tonight that cutthroat menace, that ravaging wolf, that seething terror that rose up the AWA ranks by cutting down any man or force that stood in his way will be alive and present in that ring tonight and the only thing anyone needs to know is real, real simple...

...I am on your side.

I am on it until my heart is ripped from my flesh and the Wise Men are left dying on the floor beneath my feet.

[Fade back to Mark Stegglet.]

MS: Does it all come down to trust? Ever since All-Star Showdown, it's been the question you hear everywhere you go... the question you're asked online in every forum and social media account. Can Team AWA trust... anyone? You heard the list. Men like Terry Shane... like Calisto Dufresne... like Cletus Lee Bishop... men like Louis Matsui, Chris Blue, and Ben Waterson having a direct hand in the building of this squad. Can they be trusted? And what about this man?

[We cut to a table in a darkly lit room. Someone is resting their feet in a pair of black boots on the tablecloth, which after a moment we realize is not a table cloth at all, but the "DETSON CENTER" banner torn down at the Crockett Coliseum not long ago by Hannibal Carver.]

"Come on in, have a seat."

[And sure enough, we pan up past those big black boots to see their owner.]

HC: Snake oil salesman stand and ply their wares, truth-tellers just sort of hunker down wherever there's a seat.

[Carver shrugs as the cameraman seems intent on remaining on his feet. Carver is dressed in a pair of black jeans and a black zip-up hooded sweatshirt. He finishes the half empty bottle of his beer he's holding in his right hand before chucking it at the wall behind the cameraman, causing a loud commotion of glass exploding and falling to the floor as the camera shudders. Carver smirks as he continues.]

HC: If yer gonna shiver and shake over a bottle, yeh might want to get the hell outta Dodge right now. That is going to be the nicest thing to happen for a long time now.

[Carver raises his arms to the side, looking around.]

HC: And what better place than this town. King of the Death Match. The Killing Box. This town has a hell of a bloodlust...

[Carver grins.]

HC: ... and so do I. The problem?

[Carver nods with faux-sadness.]

HC: I've been hungry, near starving to death for far too long now. Mostly, it's been my own damn fault. Wasted so much time believing their lies. That my past was something to be swept under the rug, to be hidden in the darkest corner I could find. I hear it enough times, and it even starts to make sense. I might've wasted the rest of my life in their fantasy. If not for one thing.

[Carver sits up straight, swinging his feet off of the table in front of him.]

HC: The Wise Men. Playing by their rules, I found one thing out. No matter what I did, it didn't matter. Because I was staggering blind in a fog. Gagged by decency and handcuffed by morality. But no more. Because fat man, all you did?

[Carver nods.]

HC: Was make two things crystal clear to me.

Their truth is a lie...

[Carver cracks a grim smirk.]

HC: ...and at my worst, I'm at my best. I'm finally free. And I know I've said it before...

[Carver stands up, kicking over the table in the process.]

HC: ... but it's the end of the world. The man who said it before? He no longer exists. He was a caricature of a human being, a parody of what THEY wanted me to be... demanded me to be. But while they were tying my hands so all the kiddies didn't get any bad ideas from seeing a real man go to work?

[Carver scowls.]

HC: Their company was taken from them. The rug was pulled right out from under them... and they didn't even notice until they fell flat on their asses. But that all changes now. But not because of Kid Martinez's army. Not when I stand back and see the very men that introduced this cancer to the AWA welcomed with open arms. Not when I see Eric forced into a spot he never should've been asked to fill. All because the son of a movie star can't help but drag his friends into his business. And not when I see...

[Carver's hands ball into fists as he shakes with anger. He grits his teeth, spitting out a name like snake venom.]

HC: ... Shane.

[Carver begins pacing back and forth, finally breathing in and exhaling deeply before continuing.]

HC: This is who they expect me to fight side by side with. The snot nosed punk that tried again and again to END MY CAREER? The slime that they compare ME to? "We already have a Carver"? No see, that's where yer wrong.

Yeh never had Carver, only I do. Just like the only team I recognize, the only team that's gonna step on the Wise Men's collective heads until they pop like a beer can?

[Carver slaps himself in the chest.]

HC TEAM CARVER. I started this fight, so I'M the one who's gonna finish it. Dogs of War are gonna get spanked like the misbehaving pups they are. Marley? I enjoyed putting yer lights out almost as much as I did Shane's so get ready for round two. I don't give a damn if yer in the middle of a lover's spat with Detson, yer getting stretchered out of this joint anyway.

[A hateful grin spreads across Carver's face.]

HC: And Detson... I owe you thanks. I've got a debt of gratitude that I intend to pay in full. Yeh were right. I was fooling myself. But now I'm free, buddy... and as thanks I'm gonna take this elbow...

[Carver pats the same elbow that has knocked out countless opponents.]

HC: ... and bash yeh in the mouth until every last one of yer teeth hits the mat. Who knows? Maybe if I'm in a good mood I'll even string 'em together and give it to some lucky broad in the front row.

[Carver cackles.]

HC: And hell, when I'm done I might give myself a real treat and stomp Shane's head right through the canvas. Because this ain't about friendship. This ain't about teamwork, Hell, it ain't even about the AWA anymore. It's only about one simple thing.

[Carver raises his fist to the camera, grinning wildly as he begins to shake violently.]

HC: I SAID I'D STOMP YEH DEAD, YEH GET STOMPED.

[Carver just barely restrains himself, both hands gripping each other with such ferocity that they begin turning red.]

HC: And no matter what happens either to that scum or the scum on my supposed team...

[Carver flashes another humorless, sick smile.]

HC: ... yeh said it herself, Ryan.

[And just as quickly, the smile fades.]

HC: NO ONE IS SAFE.

[Fade out and back to Mark Stegglet.]

MS: The entire company has been enveloped by this war with the Wise Men as the ascension of Percy Childe to the role of AWA President came a surge of power - some might say abuses of power - that led directly to all three AWA titles changing hands in the favor of the Wise Men's Army. Now, Tony Sunn may have slightly balanced that book with his victory at All-Star Showdown but when you realize that the World Title - the ultimate prize in our sport - has changed hands two consecutive times in controversial fashion thanks to the Wise Men - you begin to understand just what Team AWA is fighting for. And you certainly understand why both the current World Champion, Supreme Wright, and the now-former World Champion, Dave Bryant, are in this match. Let's hear from both men.

[Fade into a familiar scene -- Dave Bryant standing in front of a large AWA banner. The former champ is wearing a white dress shirt, tie, dark slacks, nice shoes, nice

watch, the whole bit, looking surprisingly undisheveled for a man not far divorced from the pure theft of the AWA World Heavyweight Championship. Bryant folds his arms in front of his chest, sighing.]

DB: So, I left the city of San Francisco missing a few things...one? All the money I ended up paying out to replace the furniture I broke. Two...well...

[Bryant looks at his shoulder, then down towards his waist, then back to the camera.]

DB: You'd think it might be some consolation to know that, once again, Supreme Wright had somebody else fight his battle...the one battle he just can't win, might I add...for him, but it really isn't. It isn't, because the championship now lies in the hands of a man who has literally never earned it.

[Bryant almost smiles.]

DB: You heard me, Supreme...never earned it. You've never beaten the champion honestly to take his title. This time, it took Percy's entire entourage surrounding the ring, a crooked referee, and a man who deserves far better releasing some of his overwhelming anger on me in order for you to steal the title. You stole it from me at SuperClash, letting Calisto Dufresne fight your battle for you there, and you stole it in San Francisco, letting...well, nearly half the roster do your fighting for you. You even brought a long your own little cheerleader to keep your spirits up...and no doubt you'll stroll to the ring at the Battle of Los Angeles like you actually own that title around your waist, like you did a damn thing in the world to earn it.

[Bryant chuckles.]

DB: What a fraud you are, Wright. You want people to think you're the best in the world, that all your previous failures to win the belt before you took me down last year at SuperClash were flukes, or conspiracies...well, you got exposed in San Francisco, Wright, and now the world knows just how full of crap you really are. You get to walk down that aisle with the belt, and you get to call yourself champion, but there isn't a soul in that ring who believes it, not even your Team Supreme flunkies. A man who truly wanted to be champion instead of a man who wanted to just CALL himself champion never takes that pinfall, and if you don't believe me, well...I know at least one man who wouldn't take that pinfall in his life. That man is a man I'm proud to call my teammate, the man who brought this all together, who is going to lead the AWA out of the dark age Percy has brought upon us...the AWA's own White Knight, Ryan Martinez.

[An actual smile finds its way onto Bryant's face.]

DB: You want a testament to his leadership skills? Listen to this roster. Calisto Dufresne. Stevie Scott. Supernova. Bobby O'Connor. Hannibal Carver. Marcus Broussard. Eric Preston. Jack Lynch. Terry Shane.

[Bryant's expression changes briefly when he utters Shane's name, but he quickly gets back on track.]

DB: Cletus Lee Bishop...whoever or whatever Matsui is bringing to the table, myself...and Ryan Martinez. All sorts of different men, all sorts of different personalities, every motivation you can think of...and that's the only thing that gives me pause. Masterson brings Stevie Scott and Dufresne into the fold as the Southern Syndicate, and I'm pretty sure we all know what they're most famous for. Hannibal Carver...

[Bryant trails off.]

DB: I don't know if he gives a damn about Team AWA or not. The San Jose Shark and Supernova have been on the shelf for ages, Eric's brains might still be scrambled, Terry Shane...

[Bryant's face hardens.]

DB: He's got a savior complex, thinks he's waltzing in here to save the day, and I don't trust him one damned bit...but maybe we can make his delusions of grandeur work for us instead of against us. Who knows what Matsui is up to...and by the way I'm going on, you might think the only men worth trusting on this team are Jack Lynch, Bobby O'Connor, and Ryan Martinez.

[Bryant pauses.]

DB: You'd be wrong, and that's the testament to Martinez. I'm not stupid enough to think I can trust Dufresne past the Battle of Los Angeles, but on that night, I have his back 100% and I know he has mine. Nobody is crazy enough to believe Terry Shane's nonsense, but on that night, he is 100% Team AWA. Supernova, Marcus Broussard, they're going to find things in themselves they didn't even know they had, the rust will all fall right off, and it'll be like they were never gone. Eric's going to march in there and stretch out everyone in sight, Hannibal Carver is going to rip the spine out of whoever's in front of him, Jack Lynch is going to strip the King of his crown.

[Bryant's eyes are weirdly alight with fervor.]

DB: The Redneck Wrecking Machine is going to do what he does best...Matsui WILL bring fear to team Percy, Bobby O'Connor might finally say a bad word, I am going to lock anybody I can in the Iron Crab, Stevie will be throwing Heatseekers all night long, and finally, when it's all said and done, Ryan Martinez will bring Knightfall to the darkest period the AWA has ever known!

[Bryant finally pauses to catch his breath.]

DB: Maybe that all sounds way too optimistic, but damned if I don't find myself believing it anyway. I believe it because it's what has to happen for us to win. I believe it because it's what has to happen for the AWA to keep living, keep breathing, keep being the home of the best wrestling the world can find today. We all have to be on the same page, all have to have the same goal in mind, and luckily, that goal is real, real simple...

Victory. At any cost, victory. If I have to leave myself in a broken pile to make sure Team AWA wins, so be it, and I know for a fact every other man in that ring is going to feel the same. There is nothing we won't do, no sacrifice too large to make.

[Bryant takes a deep breath.]

DB: This is the career of every member of Team AWA, because once we all agreed to do this, there was no going back. For some of us, it's beyond careers. I said that this place gave me my life back, and that was no damned joke. This is my home, the place that took me back in when I didn't deserve it...and I'll be damned if I fail the AWA, damned if I fail my teammates, damned if I let that scumbag Percy Chiles and his cronies spend one more day smearing mud all over this place's name, its reputation.

[Bryant reaches back, slapping the AWA banner.]

DB: THIS is what we're fighting for. THIS is why all these disparate personalities, all these varied motivations will come together and fight as a unit in Los Angeles. THIS is what we'll bleed for, what we'll give everything for...and THIS, Percy...

[Bryant slaps the banner again.]

DB: THIS is why we'll win!

[Fade out.]

We fade into a shot of AWA World Heavyweight Champion, Supreme Wright, pacing back and forth in front of the members of Team Supreme, standing at attention. Standing prominently in the middle and at the front of the group is the dreadlocked Cain Jackson, who like the rest of his teammates, stare straight ahead with an emotionless look on their faces.

Wright is dressed in an olive and red checkered tweed suit with a green button-up waistcoat, a pink dress shirt underneath, and crimson trousers. Resting on his shoulder is the greatest prize in all of professional wrestling, the AWA World Heavyweight title.]

SW: People wonder why I'm fighting for Percy Childes and his Wise Men. They wonder why I fight for HIS vision of the AWA.

[Supreme stops pacing and turns his head towards the camera.]

SW: It wasn't too long ago, when Mr. Michaelson returned to the AWA and told the world that I STOLE his students.

[He chuckles quietly to himself, amused by the ridiculousness of that accusation.]

SW: I didn't steal a damn thing, old man.

[Supreme looks up, staring straight into the camera. His voice suddenly filled with a soft spoken, slightly menacing tone.]

SW: It was you who abandoned them. It was you who selfishly left them behind. While you were busy working on your tan on a beach in Mexico, I gave these men standing behind me a choice. I gave them hope. They could either follow me to glory or they could stay in the Combat Corner and die on the vine.

[A beat.]

SW: They chose wisely.

[He smirks.]

SW: The ignorant and the misinformed will tell you that I'm a user. A manipulator. A treacherous man that cannot be trusted.

And what if I was?

I'd only be following in the footsteps of my teacher.

[He tilts his head to a side and grins, mocking Michaelson.]

SW: Just take a look at the team that Mr. Michaelson has constructed. Selfish cowards. Mercenaries. Dumb kids who stand for nothing fighting FOR nothing. Worthless souls who wouldn't give a damn if the AWA lived or died as long as they extracted their pound of flesh.

And then there's Eric Preston.

[A roll of the eyes.]

SW: The one that Mr. Michaelson calls his "son". Concussed. Brain damaged. Dragged out of a hospital bed risking life and limb to fill the quota on a desperate man's team roster.

Expendable and dispensable. Inessential and replaceable. Ultimately disposable.

[The anger in his voice builds with each damning word.]

SW: This is what it means to be a student of the Combat Corner.

[He looks from side to side at the members of Team Supreme, standing behind him.]

SW: THIS...is what it means to be Todd Michaelson's "son".

[There's a look of contempt on his face as he spits out the word "son" like it was poison on his tongue.]

SW: These men standing behind me are my brothers. My students. My comrades.

And they know I would NEVER forsake them like you have, Mr. Michaelson.

[Supreme turns around and walks over to Cain Jackson, stopping in front of the massive bodyguard.]

SW: Cain...

[He turns back to the camera.]

SW: ...you never trusted him, did you, Mr. Michaelson?

[The already stern expression on Jackson's face hardens ever so slightly at Wright's words.]

SW: Top of his class. Brimming with potential. Ready to become a star the moment he would step foot out from under your shadow and into the AWA.

[Supreme shakes his head.]

SW: But old habits die hard, don't they, Mr. Michaelson?

[He gives Jackson a quick glance, before turning back to the camera, seemingly satisfied that his words are having their desired effect.]

SW: He was your "son", but he wasn't your "boy". And that's why you refused to graduate him.

[Jackson's expression doesn't change much, but it's obvious that he's a powder keg ready to explode. For him, these are not pleasant memories.]

SW: But *I* trust Cain. More than just about anyone else in the world. Where you saw disloyalty or insolence, I see greatness. And there's no doubt in my mind that he will take care of Robert Donovan.

[Jackson answers, his voice filled with a barely concealed anger and rage.]

CJ: I WILL.

[Supreme smirks, patting Jackson the shoulder.]

SW: I know you will.

[He turns his attention back towards the camera.]

SW: And just as I place my trust in Team Supreme, they've placed their trust in me.

[He readjusts the AWA World title resting on his shoulder.]

SW: You want to know what I'm fighting for?

I fight, so the AWA will not be obligated to feel indebted to the likes of scum like Calisto Dufresne or Ben Waterson for helping "save" the AWA.

I fight, so there will be no more Eric Prestons or Willie Hammers. Unfortunate statistics in a war fought because of the bruised egos of selfish men.

I fight, to preserve this kingdom we've all fought so hard to build.

[His arm cuts a wide swath behind him, gesturing to Team Supreme.]

SW: I fight for them.

[He repeats himself, this time shouting.]

SW: I FIGHT FOR THEM!!!

[The champion lowers his head, quiet for a moment.]

SW: And yet, you have the nerve to think that your collection of broken parts and misfit toys truly represent the AWA. You think that your army fights for a righteous cause. You think that you stand for something great and noble. You've lied to yourselves so many times, you actually believe that your trash can step into MY ring and succeed.

[He squeezes his eyes shut, visibly annoyed by the notion.]

SW: You actually believe you can WIN.

[Supreme opens his eyes, staring into the camera with a fierce, stone-faced expression. He turns his head to one side and then the other, before staring straight into the camera and taking the World Title belt off his shoulder, lifting it into the air.]

SW: We respectfully disagree.

[Fade back to Mark Stegglet.]

MS: The World Heavyweight Title is NOT on the line tonight but you better believe these two men will tear one another apart one more time if they manage to get their hands on each other. The only two two-time AWA World Champions ever are set to collide at some point in Cibernetico right here tonight in the Fabulous Forum where former L.A. Laker great, James Worthy, was in the locker room earlier today, treating some of our younger competitors with stories of those legendary NBA Finals that took place right here in this very building. There is sports history in this building - the home of NBA Finals, NBA All-Star Games, and the Summer Olympics.

Tonight, the AWA adds their name to that list. There is entertainment history in this building - the home of concerts from Led Zeppelin, the Jackson 5, Queen, and Elvis Presley himself. Tonight, the AWA adds their name to that list. It's a night destined to go down in AWA - and professional wrestling - history. The Battle Of Los Angeles is just moments away but right now, let's go to previously-recorded comments from a man who many are concerned shouldn't even BE in this match here tonight - of course, I'm referring to the one and only, Eric Preston!

[We fade to Eric Preston, sitting on an easy chair with an old plaid design, rocking in place. Preston is unshaven with rings under his eyes, and wears a loose grey shirt and sweatpants. And slippers.]

EP: AWA said they needed a word from me. So I told 'em they had to come here. To my place.

[Preston sits in the rocking chair, gently rocking back and forth.]

EP: Usually we do all this stuff at the office, at the venue, wherever. But the doctor told me that until the day I travel to LA, I shouldn't be getting in a car, let alone a plane or any other kind of transportation. And when I get there, until I actually ride to the Battle of Los Angeles, I'm to stay in my hotel room. Shades down, lights dimmed, television optional. To rest.

[Preston just shakes his head.]

EP: That's a lot of alone time. A lot of time alone with your thoughts. So I've gone over the Battle of Los Angeles a thousand times, I've turned it in my mind over and over and over again, I've considered it from every angle, because that's all I'm allowed to do.

Sit and think.

The obvious question is did I achieve my goal? About a year ago I relieved Chris Blue of his managerial duties and set my sights on the World title, set my sights on the belt that was actually fitted with my in mind. The piece of gold I was the model for. Am I any closer to that World Title than I was a year ago? Not one bit.

But the best laid plans of mice and men... they often go awry. I had plans. I had plots. I had wheels within wheels to get that strap around my waste as soon as possible. I had an entire team lined up to support me, I had tricks laid out at every stop, there would be no depths I wouldn't sink to. That World Title meant EVERYTHING to me... and then I saw how Supreme Wright stole it at SuperClash. Slightly worse than how he just stole it from Dave Bryant. Again.

[Preston again just shakes his head, and now leans forward.]

EP: Watching that atrocity stirred something in me. It awoke a part of me that I thought had been lost and buried forever. The need in me to do right. The need in me to have honor and respect. The need in me to treat this business with the love and reverence it DESERVES. It's not that I ever lost that part of me, it's that I always thought someone ELSE would be that guy. Somebody else would do the right thing, so I could do my own thing. I didn't want to wear the burden. Not after Monosso. Not after Percy Childes. I had worn the white hat long enough.

And yet somehow what happened at SuperClash with Supreme Wright and the World Title made me want that burden. If the pinnacle of our sport, the holder of the biggest prize, if he hasn't got an honest hair on his head, if he is a transparent piece of garbage like he is, then what does that belt stand for? What are we who chase it? If you stand for nothing, you'll fall for anything, and I damn near fell into a trap of my own making because I stood for nothing.

Early on in my career, that burden was thrust upon me well before I was ready. But this time I sought that burden out, not only because I was ready to carry it but because I was smart enough to see that I should have NEVER given it away. As a young man the people believed in me and trusted in me and loved me, and that's something I foolishly threw away. But having to crawl back and earn your respect and your trust and your support has been nothing less than the hardest thing I've ever done in my career. And how apropos that it brought me back to one man...

...Percy Childes.

[Preston stops and steeples his fingers, resting his head on his thumbs and staring off for a moment.]

EP: At this point in time, I've forgotten where the dislike started. I really don't know what started this whole "thing". Business interests, I'm sure. But it became personal long ago. It became hatred to the bone so long ago that I cannot remember a time in my life where you and I weren't on opposite sides. And I've got to call it like it is, you've won most of the battles. Sure, I choked out Monosso, and then I put him out for good, but you've come out on the winning end so many other times that what stand as monumental triumphs in my life are just minor blips on your radar. For five years you and I have exchanged epithets and hatred and whatever else, and somehow it's come to this.

This is the critical hour for each of us. If you lose, you're out on your ass, and we all know that my career can be ended at any moment. We are BOTH in fragile situations. And there are so many other things in play, so many other people involved in the equation, so many other side deals and dislikes and personal disputes that I'm just going to ignore them all. This is one hell of a frenzied flow chart in this match, this Cibernetico.

And when Todd came to me and explained what he wanted to do, he didn't even have to ask me what I thought. All I told him was get me a plane ticket and I'll take care of the rest. I'll sign the waiver, I'll risk my health, I will walk on hot coals to compete in this match. And I'm not saying I'll dominate, shoot, I'm not even sure how this match works.

But I am sure that I will survive. I will survive long enough to see you escorted out of the AWA. I will WIN this WAR. I will be the last man standing in this five year fight of ours, I will put this era of darkness to rest.

And that, my eternal dance partner in hell, is worth more than any championship belt will ever be.

[We fade away from Preston back to Mark Stegglet.]

MS: We've talked a lot in the past hour about the Cibernetico - and rightfully so. However, it's not the only match going down tonight at the Battle Of Los Angeles. We've run down the rest of the show except for one more match - the No Disqualification showdown between Sunshine's chosen weapon, Ebola Zaire, and the man she's pledged to drive from wrestling, Travis Lynch. We caught up to both Lynch and Sunshine earlier this week. Let's hear what's on their minds!

[We fade from Mark Stegglet to the interior of a hotel room where Travis Lynch is sitting at the end of the bed, looking at the camera. He's attired in a super smedium black T-shirt and a pair of blue jeans. A bandage still covers his stitches from the fork attack at the hands of Ebola Zaire.]

TL: As I sat on the ring apron at the ranch, I told Gordon that Ebola Zaire was... IS a savage animal. An animal with an uncontrollable thirst to rip flesh from the bone, to watch blood drip from the wounds.

This animal will run its paw through the fresh blood, as it begins to coat your face, smearing it across the flesh and smiling as it does so. If you are the unlucky one whose flesh is being torn open and you look closely enough into its eyes, you will see a glimmer of joy in his eyes; a perverted glimmer that haunts you every time you close your eyes.

[Travis closes his eyes for a brief moment. He quickly opens them and resumes speaking.]

TL: Since Phoenix, that glimmer has haunted me... tormented me... it forces me to wake up shivering with chills as a cold sweat drips down my face.

[He slowly lifts his hand, placing it on the bandages.]

TL: I can't help it. Every time, my hand goes right here... and I can feel where the fork pulled layer after layer of skin off my skull...

[Travis pauses and slowly shakes his head.]

TL: I can't close my eyes immediately after I wake up. If I do? I relive it... again and again. But it's not a wrestling match I'm reliving, no.

[He pauses, pressing his hand against the bandage a little harder.]

TL: It's a horror movie. A nightmare come to life.

[He jerks his hand down, pointing at the camera.]

TL: Here's the thing though - at the end of a horror movie, the credits roll and the nightmares end when you open your eyes.

I'm done with nightmares.

I'm DONE with seeing my bloody face in the mirror.

I'm DONE seeing the old man attached to tubes and machines.

I... AM... DONE being haunted by this savage animal and his handler.

[The youngster stares at the camera, a look of determination upon his face.]

TL: For months, she has tried to drag my family's name and my legacy through the mud. She has done everything she can think of to prevent me from achieving my goals in the AWA... she wants me to bleed, wants me crippled... she wants me out of wrestling and she MAY finally have the animal who can achieve every single one of goals.

[Travis reaches up and grabs at the bandage, which is covering his stitches. In a fluid motion, he begins to slam his balled up fist into the stitches. Each smack resonates throughout the quiet hotel room.]

SMACK!
SMACK!
SMACK!
SMACK!

[After a few good shots from his fist, the stitches bust open and blood begins to flow from his wound.]

TL: LOOK AT ME, SUNSHINE! I'M NOT AFRAID TO BLEED!

[He runs his hand over the wound, smearing blood all over his face, turning the Texas Heartthrob's handsome face into a crimson mask.]

TL: I didn't back down from the Lost Boy when you first turned him loose on me. And I wasn't afraid to get back in there with him after he hanged me with that electrical cord.

[Once again, Travis runs his hand over his face, and as he flicks his wrist and fingers, drops of blood fly in all directions.]

TL: I didn't run away from him. I haven't run away from any of them. And I'm not about to start now.

[Travis shakes his head no.]

TL: I know that's what you expected, Sunshine. I know you hoped those childhood memories of Blackjack in the hospital, would make me run in fear... not at all, Sunshine.

It's time for Ebola Zaire to pay for all the Lynch blood that he's spilled over the years. It's time for Ebola Zaire to pay his pound of flesh to the Lynch family. And most of all, it's time for the credits to roll on BOTH of your times here in the AWA.

[The bloodied yet determined Travis stares at the camera.]

TL: I told Gordon that at the Battle Of Los Angeles, I'm going to put this animal down and that's EXACTLY what I'll do.

[The camera lingers on the bloodied face of Travis for a few moments before fading to a shot of Sunshine in front of the AWA banner. She's all alone. Her platinum blonde hair is tied back in a ponytail as she smiles a seductive grin at the camera. She's clad in a red and black #ScumbagTravis t-shirt that she's cut at the neckline to reveal cleavage. A black leather miniskirt and matching heels round out the ensemble as she begins to speak.]

S: So, I'm guessing if Marky Mark or Jason Dane were here, they'd say something like...

[She puts on a serious face, wagging a finger.]

S: "I notice that Ebola Zaire is nowhere to be seen."

[The impression is uncanny as she smirks.]

S: That's true, yes. Ebola Zaire is nowhere to be seen... now. But he's here. Believe me when I tell you that he's here, he's been paid handsomely by my benefactor, and he's ready to break the hearts of millions of teenage girls.

[She pauses, tapping her chin with a well-manicured fingernail.]

S: Gee, I hope the seats of the Fabulous Forum can be used as a floatation device because when the tears of the Scumbag Sympathizers start to rain down, it'll take Moses himself to part the salty waters so we can all get to safety.

[She claps her hands together.]

S: I can't wait! It's the moment I've been dreaming of for almost a year now. Travis Lynch talks about his nightmares... let me tell you about my dreams.

I dream of a world without Lynches. Not Jack. Not Jimmy. Not that disgusting old man or his wench of a wife. None of them!

ESPECIALLY... NO... TRAVIS!

[She giggles gleefully.]

S: Oh, and tonight is the night. Tonight is the night where Ebola Zaire strikes, digging anything he can find into Travis' pretty face until he bleeds buckets. I hope you took lots of 8x10s this weekend, Travis. I hope you took selfies until your thumb was sore. Because after this night, you'll NEVER look the same. Your old man will NEVER make another dime off your looks. Your legion of prepubescent girls will NEVER hang your poster above their bed, learning to become a woman while staring into your eyes.

NEVER... AGAIN.

[Another giggle.]

S: Ebola Zaire is in the building somewhere. He doesn't come to do an interview because he's Ebola Zaire. He's the Walking Nightmare! He's the uncontrollable beast! I don't tell him where to go. I don't tell him when to get there. I can't control him. I just take a very big envelope of cash provided by my friend, hand it to him, and get out of his way.

Travis, if you were a smart man, you'd do the same.

[That devious smirk returns.]

S: But no one has EVER accused the Lynch boys of being smart, have they?

[A shrug.]

S: Call your mother, Travis. Tell her to climb up on the roof, twist and turn that antenna around on the double wide, make sure the old man can see it as clear as day.

Oh, and make sure it's the color TV... I wouldn't want him to miss the blood running red down your head.

Such a beautiful color... such a beautiful sight.

[She lifts her hands, looking at her fingernails.]

S: I think I'll get my nails done in that color when this is over.

[She turns her hand into a cold wave, flashing a grin as we fade back to Mark Stegglet.]

MS: No Disqualification for one of the most personal rivalries in the entire company. That one is going to be a war. The Battle Of Los Angeles is set to be one of the biggest nights in AWA history and as we get ready to wrap up this special Preview Show and head over to live action inside the arena, it's time to hear from two more men - two more individuals talking about the Cibernetico and this ultimate showdown between Team AWA and the Wise Men's Army. First off, let's hear from the leader of Team AWA - the AWA's White Knight himself - Ryan Martinez!

[We fade. Ryan Martinez sits up high in the LA Forum's stands, wedged into one of the many empty red chairs. Chairs that soon enough will be filled by screaming fans. But in this, perhaps the Forum's last quiet moments, the AWA's White Knight is all alone.]

RM: No one is giving us much of a chance.

They're saying that Team AWA is doomed. That we've got too many untrustworthy men on our team. They say that it's a team captained by a hot-headed dumb kid. They say that even the heroes on our team are broken down, beat up, or half crazy.

They say that we're sheep among wolves.

[Exhaling, Martinez leans forward.]

RM: They say the Wise Men are holding all the cards.

Percy, Doyle and Hayes, they've got their team together. Even Marley and Jacobs, they say will play ball at the end of the day. Team Wise Men? That's a house that's in order. They say that Todd Michaelson foolishly doubled down on a bad hand, and the Wise Men are about to cash in.

I say "no."

[Ryan's face begins to redden, as the expression on it intensifies.]

RM: And when I defy you and your flunkies, Percy Childes, it's not naïveté that guides me. I know things you'll never understand.

I know that when a man is challenged, he steps up.

You've spent so much of your life forcing people to live down to your expectations, Percy, that you've forgotten that people want to stand up. People want to rise. People want to do the right thing.

All you have to do is give them a chance.

Eric Preston did a lot of bad things in his life. He did terrible things. But when he came to me, when he felt the need to redeem himself, all I did was give him a chance. All I did was challenge him to step up.

Eric Preston has risen higher than even he thought he could.

Eric Preston became the man the world wanted him to be, and the hero that I knew he was. All I did was tell Eric Preston to step up. And he did.

What would you have done, if he'd come to you? You would have pushed him down. You would have tried to twist his mind around. You would have tried to make him a broken thing, the same way that you broke Supreme Wright, and the same way that you're trying to break Brad Jacobs.

That's the difference between you and me, Percy Childes. I don't think the worst in people. I believe in people. And you know what? I've been right more often than not.

I believe in Jack Lynch and I believe in Bobby O'Connor.

I believed in Dave Bryant when no one else would give him the benefit of the doubt.

I believed in Eric Preston, and he's never once let me down.

Like everyone else in the world, I believe in Supernova.

Stevie Scott believed in me, and I believe in him.

All of those men have done great things. All of them have found ways to overcome you, Percy Childes. And no matter what you tried, you could never stop them from stepping up. You could never keep them down for long.

I don't take credit for that. They get the credit. They stepped up. They did the right thing. All I did was believe in them, and they did all the rest.

They haven't let me down yet.

[Ryan comes out of his chair, leaning forward.]

RM: And now, others have answered the call. There are others who are ready to step up. There are men in the AWA who won't lower themselves to your level. But who will stand up and make themselves known. And no matter who they are or what they did, I believe in every single one of them.

I believe in Marcus Broussard, Cletus Lee Bishop, and Calisto Dufresne.

And when he says he wants to do better... I believe in Terry Shane!

You can call it stupid, you can call it naïve, you can call it anything you want.

But, to coin a phrase, I'm not wrong.

[A slight smirk touches Ryan's lips when he says that.]

RM: You might have the appearance of unity on your team. You might all look like you're together. But no one on your team is man enough to step up. You're surrounded by men who've never been able to do anything but get down on their knees.

I'll take my men over your lapdogs any day of the week, Percy.

Months ago, I made the call. People dismissed me at first. They thought I was doomed to fail. And there've been plenty of dark times. There have been times when it looked like all hope was lost. But every time there was darkness, the light came shining through.

I called, and they answered.

Team AWA stands tall while the Wise Men crouch in the shadows.

You tried to bring us down, and what happened?

We stepped up.

Now it's time for us to knock the Wise Men down.

[The camera draws back, focusing on young Ryan Martinez. Tall, proud, and defiant. It lingers on his image for a time, before fading...

...The office. We've been here before.]

PC: This... is the office of the President of the AWA.

[It is a spacious wood-paneled room, a cross between a home office and a home library. Shelves and shelves of books line the walls, and the dark blue upholstery and carpet provide the contrast for the brown panelling. A large variety of exhibition cases are found in various parts of the room, each detailing some antiquity, fossil, or artifact of some kind. The centerpiece of the room is a magnificent antique desk, a huge piece adorned with an expensive computer, a stained glass lamp, and various bits of decor.

Seated behind the desk, naturally, is the "Collector Of Oddities" Percy Childes. Wearing a blue suit, white dress shirt, and pewter-and-red tie, the short bald manager sits in his nice handmade chair and gazes over his office wistfully.]

PC: There are not many professions where one can still work his way up the ladder of success, sacrificing so much of his life to make it to the top through hard work and personal risk. And fewer still, I imagine, where a small faction in the company can essentially steal all of that from you. Steal your life's work from you.

That is what Todd Michaelson feels that the Wise Men have done to him, because he is childish, self-absorbed, and oblivious to everyone who is not Todd Michaelson. You can certainly ask Eric Preston's neurologist the day after the Battle Of Los Angeles about that last one. But when I speak of a small faction stealing everything that someone worked fairly for, I am referring to this attempt from the team of usurpers to take my career away. I earned my position fairly. There is nothing illegal at all about how I came to be President, any more than there was about how Jim Watkins came to be President.

There are allegations about bias, allegations about favoritism, and allegations about... honestly, I don't really know if there are any other legitimate-sounding allegations. I could say "allegations about failure to give bias and favoritist status to the people who had it before", but that makes them sound as inane as they really are. Jim Watkins was the President for how long? And when he displayed favoritism every week, thrusting himself and his enormous ego in front of the camera to thwart the people he personally didn't like and promote the people he personally hated...

Well, let's just say that I have a hard time buying that Ben Waterson, Louis Matsui, Stevie Scott, Calisto Dufresne, and Cletus Lee Bishop are standing on the other side of the ring. You all either have extremely short memories, or are complete imbeciles.

No, on second thought, Stevie Scott doesn't surprise me. He really is a complete imbecile. He has broken my jaw, he has injured me, and yet he still thinks I'm the one who has wronged him. But the others, I expected better from.

And the irony is? The irony is that if Todd Michaelson loses, he has literally lost nothing. On the contrary. He's still the co-owner of the AWA, and for the next year I will be making him a wealthy man... after which he could then try to fire me in a fit of pique. My only hope would be that a year of prosperity would move Jon Stegglet and Bobby Taylor to make a sensible decision.

If my team, the team that actually represents the AWA... the REAL Team AWA... wins, do you know what will become of the ones who Todd rustled up? Their fates will still be in their own hands. Hannibal Carver is the only one whom I will fire. I expect that the likes of Dufresne, Terry Shane III, and Cletus Lee Bishop will adapt and choose the path of prosperity. The others will either leave of their own accord, or fall in line in their own way... I don't expect that they'll stop fighting the men on our team, surely. But they won't have any further opportunities to effect change. And eventually, they'll get tired of being fined for every cent they make, and simply stop doing the things that get them fined.

And the AWA will be better than ever, because we'll see a much broader diversity of athletes get opportunities. Without the implicit fast-track to the top for fan favorites and second-generation athletes, there will be unprecedented opportunity. By this time next year, we'll finally be the truly global force that every wrestling promoter has always aspired to be, and always failed to become.

[Percy stops for a second. It seems that he has just realized something, as a flash of sudden recognition comes across his face.]

PC: ...hm, until I said that, I had wondered why Chris Blue, of all people, had shown up to help Michaelson... if convincing somebody who lives for fighting to get into a fight was really 'help'. But his own failures must drive him mad every time the AWA produces a show on the ruins of his Empire. A desperate, sad effort to become relevant again. Another figment of the past that has no place in the present.

Like you, Michaelson. Clearly, you're so spiteful that you're willing to destroy your company to get me out of it. And make no mistake, if you somehow win, I'm leaving. One would have to be a fool amongst fools to stay where an owner will literally ruin his entire company rather than see you succeed. And more than half of the roster agrees with me on that.

That was what the Wise Men were, don't you remember? Not a wrestling stable... the eternal fallacy you people have always made. You think that winning a match will cause people to stop trying to act in their own interest. "If we win, I don't want to ever hear about the Wise Men again?" That translates to "I don't want your specific group of people to ever disagree with anything that happens to you again, no matter how bad it is." The Wise Men originally ensured cooperation not through force, no. Through the threat of a walkout. Everyone in the company who wasn't one of your golden children.

And if you win, Todd?

[Percy's face darkens, and he practically snarls the rest.]

PC: EVERYONE LOSES. EVERYONE.

Over half of your roster will vanish. Almost every one of your referees, who you have NEVER protected the way we did. A good number of your behind-the-scenes workers, who have been treated as if irrelevant because they, I quote, "don't make money for this company". And do not get me started on the legal action.

You coerced me into this, so I'm going to make one thing very, very clear. You, and your terrorist organization, are trying to essentially bomb this company back to the Stone Age. You've started four riots. One of them was at a nightclub. A NIGHTCLUB. You've let Carver put three construction workers in the hospital and do thousands of dollars of damage to your own building. All based on the belief that I might do the kinds of things that your favored puppet DID for years without any complaint from any of you.

What have I done so far? I've protected referees! I've gotten a network deal done... yes, you WORKED on it for months but it took ONE DAY for us to finish it. I've moved us out of the self-destructive hero-worship of the past into an environment where we can focus on the people that are still here making us money! I've given opportunities to people who never had them. The only thing I could see you using against me is the business of Ryan Martinez's title loss. I admit that I went too far there, but I did it because Martinez had proven himself a malignant cancer who was stirring up unrest and causing an unsafe working environment. And even THAT would have ended up making Martinez a large

payday if he had stopped acting like a petulant spoiled brat, and turned around to be a professional.

You say you want to end the Wise Men? You'll get exactly what you asked for. The fastest way to get rid of a bomb is to detonate it. You'll set off the nuclear option if you win, Todd. You'll take your company down in flames, and in the end you'll owe me and others a great deal of money. And here's the kicker, Todd. Here's the kicker!

Look around at the landscape of professional wrestling today, Todd. If you bury your company? If you ruin your company? What's left? Who else is there? Nobody, Todd. THERE IS NOBODY LEFT. Professional wrestling itself is on the line, Todd Michaelson. Professional wrestling itself is at stake in the Battle Of Los Angeles. And if you win... IT DIES AT YOUR HAND.

[Percy shakes his hand.]

PC: You people think you're the heroes of this story?

Grow up. Grow up. Grow up. You're not Team AWA... you're the Lords Of The Flies.

And we're the adults who will put an end to your childish rampage before you burn our entire sport down.

[Percy sits back, having finished. And we fade away to Mark Stegglet who looks quite excited.]

MS: We're almost out of time but during the airing of that interview, we were invited to take our cameras INSIDE the locker room where some of the AWA's fan favorites have assembled to hear Todd Michaelson address them. Let's... right through there...

[Stegglet gestures for the cameraman to move through a corridor. As he does, we hear Todd Michaelson's voice.]

TM: ...not here because of me.

[The camera pulls into view of Michaelson, standing on a crate with Jon Stegglet and Bobby Taylor nearby. We see various AWA competitors - current and former - scattered around him.]

TM: We're here because of this!

[Michaelson holds up the very first AWA t-shirt - a simple red t-shirt with a white logo on the front with the company's name.]

TM: We're here because Percy Childes, Larry Doyle, and Sandra Hayes - despite all their efforts to plead otherwise - have turned this place into their own personal playground. They've talked about equality and opportunity while employing a crooked referee and an army of followers to snatch titles out of the hands of men like Ryan Martinez... like Skywalker Jones... like Hercules Hammonds... and like Dave Bryant.

They've talked about YOU being the bad guys. They've talked about YOU being the problem.

[Michaelson shakes his head.]

TM: When dealing with the truly delusional, you get to find out just how full of sh-

[Todd pauses, looking down at Stegglet who shakes his head.]

TM: -crap they are. Percy Childes says that they're the heroes... that they're the REAL AWA.

[Michaelson takes the t-shirt in his hand, spits square in the middle of it, and throws it angrily down to a buzz from the assembled grapplers.]

TM: If that's true, then I'm going to shut this place down right now... tonight... and start all over again. And these two are going to be right there with me.

[Stegglet and Taylor nod.]

TM: Those men do not represent the AWA. They don't represent everything that the men in this room have fought for... have sweat for... have bled for... have spent time away from their families for... have sacrificed for...

[Michaelson points.]

TM: Men like Sweet Daddy Williams who was here on Day One, standing in a hole in the wall office in Dallas, Texas in front of us saying, "I just want to be a part of something special and I don't give a damn what I have to do for you guys. I want in."

[Michaelson points in a different direction.]

TM: Men like Jack Lynch who walked into the same office and said, "You're buying out my old man's territory. I've got half a mind to punch you in the damn jaw."

[Laughter erupts in the backstage area.]

TM: Thank god he didn't. Instead, he shook my hand and said, "I just want to be a part of something special. I'm here to do whatever you need me to do. I want in."

[He turns, pointing again.]

TM: Men like Ben Waterson.

[The assembled masses grumble.]

TM: I know, I know. But Ben Waterson was with me in Los Angeles. He was a wet-behind-the-ears rookie who walked into a wrestling practice and said, "I can do this. I believe I can... and if I can't, I know I can help you somehow. I just want to be a part of something special. I want in."

[He turns again, pointing time after time.]

TM: Men like Tommy Fierro... men like Clayton Shaw... men like Marcus Broussard... men like Jim Watkins... men like Supernova... men like Ron Houston... men like Juan Vasquez... men like Raphael Rhodes... like MAMMOTH Mizusawa... like City Jack... like Calisto Dufresne...

[He pauses, taking several deep breaths as the assembled wrestlers are buzzing with enthusiasm. Michaelson slowly raises his arm, pointing one more time.]

TM: Like Ryan Martinez. A kid who could've taken the easy path into this business. A kid who could've ridden his father's coattails and been a millionaire his first year in the sport. A kid who could've had a job at any company he wanted... all his daddy needed to do was make the phone call.

But he said no. He wanted to do it the right way. He went to Japan and busted his ass as a young boy! He came back to the States and lingered in places running in Jewish Community Centers and Elks Lodges and... and finally, he landed here. Still doing things on his own.

Until about one year ago, when he stood tall when no one else would, and said, "What these Wise Men are doing is wrong... and I'm not going to let it happen."

People laughed. People mocked him and called him a "dumb kid." People said that the AWA had faced down the Southern Syndicate and Royalty and the Unholy Alliance and lived to talk about it... that the Wise Men were no different.

But he stood tall. He stood his ground. And he kept fighting when no one else would.

[Michaelson nods.]

TM: HE'S the reason you're all here. Not me. This company is the reason you're all here. Not me. And if... WHEN we win tonight, HE'LL be the reason why... YOU'LL be the reason why... those fans out there, THEY'LL be the reason why.

Not me.

[Michaelson gets quiet.]

TM: I've watched Blue give locker room pep talks like this so many times in my life, you'd think I'd know how to end it.

[Stegglet and Taylor laugh first, causing a ripple to occur.]

TM: I... I don't know what else to say, guys. This is it. I'm done talking. Jon and Bobby are done talking. This is... well, it's like Juan said a while ago...

[The camera drifts slightly to show Juan Vasquez watching the peptalk.]

TM: ...this is your fight now.

[Michaelson drops down off the crate, walking over to Ryan Martinez. He reaches out a hand, firmly shaking hands with the AWA's White Knight. Martinez looks up at Michaelson, staring into the AWA owner's eyes. He quietly delivers the only words he can at this moment.]

RM: Count on it.

[The assembled wrestlers let out a roar, encouraging one another as we slowly fade to black.]