Kings of the Ring

Written by

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In this over the top, fictional re-telling of the sex, drugs, and muscles world of 1980's Pro-Wrestling, an obsessive genius seeks to destroy and re-create an entire industry ruled by him, while the forces of good line up to stop him.

SUPER:

While the characters are fictional, many of these events, no matter how unbelievable or outrageous, are versions of something that actually happened in the wild and crazy world of Wrestling. Kids, do not try these things at home...

FADE IN

INT. BACK STORAGE ROOM

Like an ancient viking in the flesh, THOR HANSEN (White, 20s) stands in a janitor's storage room shrouded in darkness. 6'6" 275 pounds with long, blond hair, oiled up in wrestling boots and trunks. He stares ahead, trying to psyche himself up, while he hears the deep, hypnotic voice of JULIAN CAIN (White, 30).

JULIAN (O.S.)
Thor Hansen... Are you ready?

THOR
(unsure)
Yeah. It's just--

JULIAN (O.S.)
--Thor. This is the right move.
For the business and yourself.

Thor nods...unconvincingly. The glow from Julian's cigarette reveals the pretty face of a model, but that's not what he is.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
You don't owe those bastards a thing! Like me, they held you back. From what you are. What you could be. And tonight we prove it by doing what we were both destined to do.

THOR
What's that?

JULIAN
Change the fucking world!

MUSIC CUE: "Opportunities (Let's Make Lots of Money)" by Pet Shop Boys

OPENING CREDITS

SUPER: One Month Earlier...

INT. DARKNESS

Julian Cain looking like he stepped off the cover of GQ magazine, stands in darkness bathed in light.

JULIAN
Can you <u>feel</u> it? When you see a billboard of Michael Jackson drinking a Pepsi... When you pass a teenage girl wearing a black lace glove like Madonna... when you have more than three channels on the TV, an arcade game system in your living room, and Charles Bronson has just been replaced by...He-Man. 1984 is upon us, and we have the power to create what America is dying for, thirsting for: change. Football has the NFL, basketball has the NBA, but what do <u>we</u> have? Pro-wrestling is stuck in the past--in a system. And I'm like the Apple commercial from the Super Bowl, running with that giant hammer to hurl it at 'Big Brother' and smash that system...

Julian sneers.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
... and anyone who stands in my way. The 80's is a magical time when new era's can begin, but--

A loud echoey KNOCK on wood throws Julian off.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
Where was I?... But only when the old ones die. My father, Arthur Cain created the Empire Wrestling Federation in New York City--

The door opens, snapping him out of his mode. Julian stands in front of a mirror in a small room, when SAL SPINELLI (Italian-American. 40) a 300-hundred pound brute straight out of a mafia movie, bursts in.

INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN OFFICE SIDE ROOM

SUPER: Arthur Cain's
EMPIRE WRESTLING FEDERATION
Madison Square Garden
New York City, New York

SPINELLI
(New York accent)
Yo, Julian! What the Hell are ya doin? You're almost up!

JULIAN
Is Mr. Griles still here?

SPINELLI
Who?

JULIAN
From MTV!

SPINELLI
MT-What?

JULIAN
MTV, the cable TV channel. I had Rita bring him backstage.

SPINELLI
Oh, da guy in the suit wanderin' around the locker room? We kicked him out. The boys were going over their matches, we can't have some outsider back there.

JULIAN
Dammit! He was here to see me.

SPINELLI (laughs)
Why? To hear what it's like to be the worst referee in the business?

Sal tosses him a black and white striped shirt.

JULIAN
No! Not tonight.

Sal shoves Julian against the wall! His confidence shatters with a flinch as Sal has been bullying him his entire life.

SPINELLI
You listen here, Junior! Your father didn't kick the bucket *yet*! And as long as he's still out o' commission but breathin', I'm in charge! Now put on the fucking shirt! Capice?

INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN ARENA FLOOR

In the ring are two EWF wrestlers grappling, while in the front row are CRISS CASTILLO (Latino, 22), a portly young man with a face made for radio, and his mother JASMINE CASTILLO (40).

CRISS
(New York Rican accent)
Mamá, these seats are incredible!

JASMINE
(New York Rican accent)
Anything for my college graduate!

CRISS
But I wanted you to take me instead of Uncle Freddie, so you can see what this Empire is all about because (deep breath) I'm going to work here.

JASMINE
Work where?

CRISS
The Empire Wrestling Federation.

JASMINE
You want to be a wrestler?!

CRISS
You know I don't have an athletic bone in my body. I want to run a wrestling company one day like Arthur Cain.

JASMINE
Who?

CRISS
Arthur Cain, the owner of all this. I've been talking with him for a while now, and he said after I graduated, I could work for him as his personal gopher. Surprise?

JASMINE
You're going to turn down that job writing for that Dragon magazine?

CRISS
You know how much I love wrestling. I want to be more than a fan, I want to change things.

JASMINE
But you're such a gifted writer, you had a novel published when you were in high school!

CRISS
Yeah and they threw me out there making me tour bookstores and hobby shops? It was a nightmare. I get too anxious, hyperventilate, then I need a paper bag--

JASMINE
Dios mío, if you're going to work for this Empire wrestling, won't you have to come out of your shell? And when can I meet this Arthur Cain anyway?

CRISS
He's still in the hospital. But when he's out I'll start in the ticket booth or writing programs or something. Nice, slow, and easy. So I can learn the wrestling business, *nice, slow, and easy.*

JASMINE
And you'll make money?

CRISS
Mamá, Mr. Cain has gotten to know me and he believes in me. He says *the destiny of all great men begins at the bottom, and that's where I'll start.* I was a bit surprised he wanted to bring me in so close, but maybe he's getting old and wants to pass on all he's learned? Who knows? But this is a chance of a lifetime. I mean Empire is the best in the country.

JASMINE
There are others?

CRISS
There are 7 smaller leagues in different parts of America. But all together it's called the World Wrestling Alliance. Our wrestling is the EWF from Baltimore all the way up to Maine...

CUT TO: The big blond Viking Thor Hansen in a giant packed arena with ringside fans wearing CHICAGO BEARS jackets

CRISS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...and there's AMW in the Midwest, from Chicago to California.

A TV set with a studio audience, and a wrestler with bleach blond hair, sunglasses, in a $5000 suit being interviewed.

CRISS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
There's SCW out of Atlanta, that covers Georgia and Florida.

Muscular Black wrestler being choked by a cowboy wrestler on the ringside floor of a hot steamy rodeo arena surrounded by a thousand fans in cowboy hats. Some overly excited fans try to peel the cowboy off, and he punches and shoves them!

CRISS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
There's All-South Wrestling out of Texas. There's Heartland out of St. Louis, the Carolina--

Back to the Madison Square Garden:

JASMINE
I don't think I've ever heard of any of those.

CRISS
I follow them through magazines, otherwise you have to live in those areas to see their shows. It's one of the things I'd like to see change. And that's getting wresting on cable so everyone can see everything!

JASMINE
Cable?

CRISS
I know we don't have it yet, but it's growing. And if you had a wrestling show on cable it'd be on every TV set in the country that has cable. Right now that's like thirty-five million and in a year will be another ten million.

JASMINE
(laughs)
How do you know all this?

CRISS
While my friends were at school, I was at the newsstand reading magazines about the TV industry!

JASMINE (angry)
¡Ven para acá, pequeño pillín!

She takes her shoe off to whack him.

CRISS
I mean, after school, Mamá.
(Sheepish grin)

She puts her shoe back, while red-faced Criss crosses himself.

JASMINE
The one in Texas with that cowboy Burt Ironside? Are they on cable?

CRISS
How do you know who *Burt Ironside?* is?

She gives the same sheepish grin Criss just gave.

CRISS (CONT'D)
Anyway, that's All-South Wrestling. Not on cable. And it shouldn't be anyway. It's total redneck wrestling. And that Burt is a living stereotype of every bad thing about Texas there is.

JASMINE (coy)
Oh?

MUSIC CUE: "Cocaine" by Eric Clapton

INT. FREEMAN COLISEUM LOCKER ROOM

SUPER: Burt Ironside's
ALL-SOUTH WRESTLING
Freeman Coliseum
San Antonio, Texas

It's more a fraternity house than a sports locker room, as the wrestlers of All-South chase each other, snort cocaine, shit in each other's boots (as pranks), drinking beers, playing cards, and sorting through drugs. It's a varied crew of different sizes and ages, and then there's MICHAEL ANGEL (White, 20's)

Michael is a living piece of Art. The curly blond haired face of a model on the physique of a bodybuilder. Michael is stretching out his rippling body as his brother GABRIEL ANGEL (White, 20's) walks over. While not on Michael's level, Gabriel is still great looking and ripped, with shaggy blond hair and a laid back demeanor.

GABRIEL
(Texas accent)
Hey Michael, we need to work on the double dropkick again. You looked lost out there last night.

MICHAEL
(Texas accent)
Fans didn't seem to notice.

GABRIEL
I'm sure they did, but they don't care because you're *you*. But, can you at least try? God gave you all the tools, but ya gotta use 'em.

MICHAEL
Who says this is God's plan for me?

GABRIEL
Daddy does. And if we don't get the timing down he's gonna bring the hand of God on our asses!

At mere mention of the name, Michael tenses and recoils.

RANDOM WRESTLER (O.S.)
Burt's coming! Hide the shit!

Everyone with drugs or beer scrambles to stash it away.

GABRIEL
It's okay, Michael. I'm sure today he'll be fine.

INT. FREEMAN COLISEUM HALLWAY

The 6'5", 280-pound BURT IRONSIDE (White, 60) stomps down the hallway in his 10-Gallon hat, shit-kicker boots, tobacco chew in mouth, and dusty button shirt and blazer. Burt is as intimidating as the biggest bull in the yard, because he is.

Just outside the locker room, PRETTY BOY WILLIE DEAN (White, 40) *who ironically isn't very pretty at all*, is cozied up to a teenage girl whispering in her ear.

IRONSIDE
(deep voice, Texas accent)
Dammit, Willie! No rats in the locker room!

WILLIE
Sorry, Burt! (Turns to the girl) Beat it, Candy, I'll meet you under the stairs after my match. I'm gonna need some head.

INT. FREEMAN COLISEUM LOCKER ROOM

As Burt shoves the doors open, the wrestlers scurry about. He wades through until he finds his sons, where Michael is stretching towards his toes, his head all the way to his knees.

IRONSIDE
There you are. The fuck you doin'?

Michael scrambles to his feet.

IRONSIDE (CONT'D)
I swear I can't believe you came from my balls. Sitting here trying to suck your own dick while the rest o' the boys are all out trying to round up poon-tang.

MICHAEL
I gotta stretch or I'll cramp up.

IRONSIDE
Cramps? What're you on your period or somethin'? Listen, boy, you need to get some pussy tonight.

MICHAEL
Daddy, I just wanted to get home--

IRONSIDE
--So you can paint your stupid pictures? I didn't raise no wimp.

Michael looks down in shame.

MICHAEL
Yes, sir.

IRONSIDE
Now listen up. You two need to do what I tell all the boys.
(MORE)

IRONSIDE (CONT'D)
Get out there and fuck as many o' these girls as you can. If the girls think they can get fucked by the boys, they buy tickets. If guys see all these girls showin' up with their titties all out, lookin' to get fucked, that's even more tickets sold. Ya git it? In the South, rasslin' is built on that formula, and we got more pretty boys than anyone in the Alliance, startin' with you two. Which is why there are 10,000 people on the other side of this concrete wall, now get to fuckin'!

GABRIEL
While I appreciate the pep talk, you know I am quite happy to fuck my wife and only my wife.

Burt shakes his head in disapproval then turns to Michael.

IRONSIDE
What's *your* excuse? In my day, being a top wrestler got you *some* attention, but I still had to work at it. These rats are throwin' their pussies at ya and yer swattin' em away like flies. What's wrong with you?!

GABRIEL
Don't listen to this old codger, Michael, you don't need to prove nothin' to nobody. Besides Daddy, he's not into these local ring-rats, he's just waiting to wrangle that Daisy from *Dukes o' Hazzard!*

IRONSIDE
As usual I don't know what the fuck you're talking about.

GABRIEL
Dukes of Hazzard? It's like the biggest TV show in the universe?

Burt shakes his head, and walks away.

INT. MILWAUKEE MECCA ARENA - ARENA FLOOR

SUPER: Charlie Gotch's
AMERICAN MIDWEST WRESTLING
MECCA Arena
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

In the ring of a jam-packed arena, "HOLLYWOOD" BUDDY MELROSE (Blond, 50) thumbs NELLY GOTCH (White, 30) in the eye.

TV COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
Hollywood Buddy Melrose with another dirty trick on Nelson Gotch! Come on referee!

At ringside, cheering on the good guys, is TERRI BLAZE (White, 20s) with her wavy red hair over a white satin "USA" jacket.

Buddy drags Nelly by the hair to a corner where the Viking-like hulk, Thor Hansen is. Thor tags in and a surprising amount of fans CHEER. Thor reflexively turns his head to the crowd for a moment, then smashes Nelly's back, causing another CHEER.

INT. MILWAUKEE MECCA ARENA - HALLWAY

A sweaty Nelly Gotch (remarkably unremarkable looking, but his Dad <u>is</u> the boss...), tag partner Brad Milkins, and Terri Blaze enter the hallway, and look ahead to see a sweaty Thor and Buddy Melrose getting reamed out by CHARLIE GOTCH (White, 60.) The bald ex-wrestler in a dress shirt and slacks wags his finger at the giant Thor in the distance.

NELLY
Look. Dad looks pissed off.

BLAZE
I bet it's because Thor got cheered out there. But this isn't the first time, the fans just <u>want</u> to cheer him, don't they?

NELLY
So it's not just because they don't like <u>me</u>? What a relief!

BLAZE
No, brother, <u>I'm</u> the only one who doesn't like you.

She playfully bumps him as they get closer.

CHARLIE
...
(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Thor, you're reacting to the fans like a babyface. You're the flunky of Hollywood Buddy Melrose, the #1 villain in AMW history!

THOR
Mr. Gotch, if I did anything to make the fans cheer, it wasn't on purpose, I swear.

HOLLYWOOD
Don't sweat it, kid. Charlie gets mad when anyone doesn't do exactly what he wants. Even the fans.

BLAZE
Especially the fans.

Charlie, not amused by his daughter's wisecrack.

BLAZE (CONT'D)
Pop, even a blind man can see Thor's a natural babyface.

HOLLYWOOD
Terri's right. Our young fans are just drawn to him.

THOR
(bashful)
Aw come on Buddy.

HOLLYWOOD
I'm serious Thor, that 'x-factor' can't be taught. But we are the heels, so be patient and when the time is right, I'll turn on you and bam, you're the new hero.

CHARLIE
Come on now, that might get us a cheap pop, but you can't have a babyface a foot taller than the heels? He needs to be an underdog.

BLAZE
Goliath is 7-feet and he's the most popular wrestler in the biz!

Charlie gives his daughter another dirty look.

CHARLIE
I haven't decided what I want to do with Thor, but everything is set up anyway, so we can sit on this as long as we need to.

BLAZE
What?

NELLY
Please, Terri, the man has spoken, can't we just drop it?

Yes-man Nelly playfully taunts his sister with his eyes, while he puts his arm around his father's back, and walks them off.

HOLLYWOOD
Charlie, I'm not the spring chicken I used to be. We need to start looking at someone for me to pass the torch to.

CHARLIE
1983 was our biggest money year ever. Why change anything?

Thor and Terri look at each other awkwardly silent.

CUT TO:

INT. MILWAUKEE MOTEL - NIGHT

Thor and Terri Blaze are having VIGOROUS SEX on the motel bed. After they finish, he peels himself off and lays back exhausted. She leans over to get a cigarette and notices herself in the wall mirror and pulls the sheet to cover her *solidly built* physique.

THOR
What're you doing?

BLAZE
I see them skinny rats you guys get with, you might not be used to a *lady wrestler* body.

THOR
I <u>like</u> your body. Figured a <u>lot</u> of guys liked your body.

BLAZE
Hey now! You're the first wrestler I've been with!

THOR
Now that I don't believe.

She laughs and playfully smacks him.

BLAZE
Well, first one in a long time.

He gets up and walks to the sink, washing his dick thoroughly.

BLAZE
I don't have herpes or anything!

THOR
Sorry baby, just a habit from being on the road. We gotta be careful with the social diseases.

BLAZE
It's okay... Y'know Buddy's right. You <u>can</u> be a great babyface.

THOR
Seriously?

BLAZE
Totally! Tonight, you just gave a look, and the people reacted. It was kind of incredible.

THOR
I guess I just can't picture myself up there like that. But I tell ya, I can see why your Dad stayed on top for so long. Once you hear one cheer, you want more.

She crawls out of bed and holds him from behind. They look in the mirror at him, while he flexes.

BLAZE
I can picture you as <u>the</u> top good guy. Like headlining AMW for years. You'd never have to leave.

They kiss.

THOR
Well none of it'll matter if Charlie finds out I'm screwing his daughter! He'd kill me!

He gives a loud belly laugh, and puts his pants on.

BLAZE
(Shyly)
Where are you going?

THOR
Some of the boys are going to a new bar downtown. Uh... did you want to go?

BLAZE
(hiding disappointment)
Oh. I'm knocking off anyway. Goin' up to Winnipeg in the morning.

THOR
Outside the Alliance?

Thor lays out a line of cocaine on the counter and sniffs.

BLAZE
Not much for ladies wrestling these days, so I got to take these shots when I can get them!

THOR
Say hi to the Tomahawks for me. And don't worry, I'm not going to pick up any rats tonight. Just hangin' out with the boys.

He winks at her and opens the door.

BLAZE
Hey! Me and Buddy'll work on Dad to change his mind about you, okay? I promise.

INT. DARKNESS

Julian Cain stands in darkness bathed in light.

JULIAN
Complacency is the Devil's brew, and the Alliance is drunk with it. Look beyond the limited vision of these cantankerous old crows, and imagine something bigger!

INT. JERSEY CITY HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

SUPER:
Jersey City Memorial Hospital

Jersey City, New Jersey

ARTHUR CAIN (White, 70) in bed, attached to the tubes keeping him alive. He speaks to his son Julian, but is very, very weak.

JULIAN
... You've been making me jump through hoops for years.

ARTHUR
The destiny of all great men starts at the bottom. It's what I've always told you.

JULIAN
And it's caused nothing but problems, and wasted time. It's 1984, we need to evolve into modern conventions, and modern mediums like cable television.

ARTHUR
More of this Harvard Business school mumbo jumbo.

JULIAN
My whole life has been building to this. My vision, my ideas are going to take wrestling to heights it's never seen before.

ARTHUR
It will take the Empire to those heights, not wrestling.

JULIAN
What's the difference?

ARTHUR
Everything, Julian! We've been having this argument for years. You want to change wrestling from a sport to a spectacle. But worse than that, your plans would destroy the World Wrestling Alliance. My friends!

JULIAN
Your *friends*... They never liked me, they never respected me. To Hell with your friends.

Arthur's agitation makes him cough and he tries to calm down.

ARTHUR
Charlie, George, Burt, the others. Couldn't you wait a few years, give them a chance to retire?

JULIAN
I don't have a few years.

ARTHUR
(wheezy laugh)
You don't have a few years?

JULIAN
If I wait, the world will pass me by.

ARTHUR
The motto of the impatient youth.

JULIAN
If you even make it out of here, do you think you're even fit to run the EWF anymore?

ARTHUR
If I make it?--

Arthur weighs the words and realizes the hard truth.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
Yes, Julian, I think I might be done anyway. The Empire Wrestling Federation will be yours, Julian. We can begin the handoff.

Julian nods in triumph.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
But for my friends' sake, we're going to handle this transition slowly. Will give me more time to talk some sense into you. (winks)

JULIAN
If you're giving it to me, then give it to me. No conditions. We're leaving literally millions on the table, each and every year we sit still--

Arthur weakly raises his hand to silence his son.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
Let me sleep on it. I'm exhausted.
(MORE)

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
Tell your mother I'll see you two tomorrow.

Julian looks at the machinery keeping his father alive and thinks about the future.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM

GLORIA CAIN (Italian-American, 60) sits in the waiting room beside her grandson, CAMERON CAIN (White, 10) and Julian's wife SARAH CAIN (White, 30) when she sees the nurses jump up from behind the desk running towards the room where Julian emerges, distressed, pointing back to the room as if something went wrong. Gloria WAILS as Julian looks at her and shakes his head.

LATER

INT. JERSEY CITY HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Arthur Cain lies in the bed, eyes closed, as the nurse pulls the sheet over his head and leaves. Julian, his wife, son, and mother surround him.

Sara takes her distraught young son away, leaving Julian and his mother. Gloria dabs her tears with her handkerchief.

GLORIA
I should call Charlie Gotch.

JULIAN
I can't go five minutes without someone waving the Alliance in my face.

GLORIA
This again? Julian we owe everything to the Alliance.

JULIAN
(sarcastic)
Yes I know, *'it put a roof over our heads'*

GLORIA
Your father devoted his life to build this Alliance, for everyone.

JULIAN
And what did he have left for us?

Julian's mother points in his face.

GLORIA
You've always been a miserable boy, Julian. Ever since you were a child. Ungrateful. You may not have respected your father but he was a kind and gentle man, truly beloved by everyone in the wrestling business. Will you be able to claim that?

JULIAN
Who says I want to be beloved?

Gloria scoffs at her son.

GLORIA
Charlie runs the Midwest and becomes President now. It is my duty to tell him that his dear friend Artie is gone. He will ensure proper respect is shown.

JULIAN
Have Dad's secretary do it.

GLORIA
I'll call him. I want to.

JULIAN
Figure'd you'd be the last person who'd want to talk to Charlie?

GLORIA
What's that supposed to mean?!

She dares him to say more, like there's an unspoken secret.

JULIAN
Nothing.

INT. NASSAU COLISEUM

The arena is dark and filled with fans, with a light shining down on an empty wrestling ring.

SUPER: Arthur Cain's
EMPIRE WRESTLING FEDERATION
Nassau Coliseum
Long Island, New York

RING ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
(somberly)
We have just received devastating news. The founder of the Empire State Wrestling Federation and the World Wrestling Alliance, Arthur Cain, died this evening.

A gasp of sorrow ripples throughout the arena.

RING ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
In tribute to Mr. Cain, we will honor him with the ten-bell salute and a moment of silence.

MUSIC CUE: "Cavatina" (from the Deer Hunter)

SOUND: BELL GONG ten times with five-second pauses between

MONTAGE

Fans saddened and crying throughout the arena. Backstage EWF wrestlers and officials crying and consoling each other.

This echoes the sentiment nationwide as we get glimpses of the faces of the wrestlers and power brokers throughout the US. Wrestlers in locker rooms or bars throughout the country reacting in shock or sorrow at the news the most beloved and respected figure in wrestling is dead. Fans learning about Arthur's death in the newspapers, or on the streets.

Arthur's peers being wakened in the middle of the night via phone or telegram, or standing in solace with a drink reflecting while looking at old group photos.

END MUSIC AND SOUND

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE DEN - DAY

Charlie Gotch stands in front of a mirror, Terri and Nelly helping him put on a new jacket.

NELLY
The new suit looks good, Pop! Fitting look for <u>the</u> boss!

Terri rolls her eyes at her butt-kissing brother.

BLAZE
But how're you doing, Pop? Really?

CHARLIE
I've shed my tears, Terri, but the resolve of what me and Arthur built, keeps me strong.

Charlie looks into the mirror like a mob boss about to be made.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
And as I ascend to President of the Alliance, I need to be even stronger in preserving our legacy.

BLAZE
What happens to the EWF now?

CHARLIE
His son, Julian Cain will inherit the territory.

BLAZE
I don't really know him, other than he's awfully cute.

NELLY
I do. He's a Harvard kid. A total yuppie, and totally not cut out for wrestling. Y'ask me, he's gonna let Sal Spinelli run the EWF while he collects the checks. Drinking martinis at the country club or whatever them yuppies do.

CHARLIE
That would actually be the best scenario. It's all about maintaining stability. Good God, you should've seen what the business was like before Artie and I created the Alliance. It was like the Wild West out there. Every promoter for themselves. Companies stealing TV from each other by paying off stations, guys no-showing cause they've been stolen by a rival promotion, wrestlers being paid off to injure other guys, you name it. Just pure and utter chaos.

NELLY
Glad I never had to live through that. I can't even imagine.

INT. CRISS CASTILLO'S HOUSE IN THE BRONX-DAY

SUPER: The Bronx, New York City

Sad Criss Castillo is eating dinner with his mother.

JASMINE
Hijo de mi corazón, we need to talk. I know you've been down since that Cain man died.

CRISS
Well, yeah. He was a great man... and my only way in.

JASMINE
So... if he's dead, that means no job, right?

CRISS
Yeah. No one else at the EWF even knows who I am.

JASMINE
Okay, if this is still what you want... do you know that wrestling program out of Texas with Burt--

CRISS
All-South? The redneck wrestling with the racist cowboy in charge? Why do you keep bringing them up?

JASMINE
You know, your love of wrestling doesn't come from me. It's actually more from... your father.

CRISS
Mamá, I've told you. I don't care who that deadbeat is. You were always enough for me.

JASMINE
I know, but I think it's time you knew who he was and met him... because he can help you.

CRISS
What do you mean?

JASMINE
Your father is a wrestler.
(MORE)

JASMINE (CONT'D)
He's not from up here, he wrestled once at the Garden, and me and my girlfriends went out to the matches, and... there was just something about him. Made me tingle in all the right places--

CRISS
Mamá, please.

JASMINE
Anyway, it was just a fling. And nine months later...

She pats her son's hand and smiles warmly. Criss gulps.

JASMINE (CONT'D)
He knows about you but I never asked him for a thing... until now. I told him your situation. And he wants you to come down.

CRISS
What?! I can't leave here!?

JASMINE
You can learn about wrestling, and change the world like you say.

CRISS
Mamá, who is he?

JASMINE
You're moving to Texas to meet your papi... Burt Ironside.

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

Julian nervously puffs away at a cigarette beside his mother, wife, and son. All dressed in funeral attire.

GLORIA
Every big name wrestler in the business will be there today.

JULIAN
I'm counting on it.

GLORIA
Oh pshaw... listen to you. Mr. Big Shot. You don't fool me, Julian. You're nervous. As you should be.
(MORE)

GLORIA (CONT'D)
The Heads of the Alliance are flying in from around the country to pay their respects to Arthur and to welcome you into the club.

JULIAN
Can't you just grieve for your husband instead of prattling on about these old puppet masters?

GLORIA
Ha! You're shaking in your boots aren't you, Julian? I know you.

Sara glares at her mother-in-law needling her husband.

GLORIA (CONT'D)
But you <u>should</u> be nervous. These are accomplished, powerful men, while you've done nothing. But you'll learn. Including the dark underbelly of what really goes on.

JULIAN
Do Sara and Cameron need to hear all this?

GLORIA
Cameron is ten, he should know the truth of wrestling.

JULIAN
(sarcastically)
You sure about that, *Gloria*? I was eight when <u>I</u> saw everything that wrestling was--

A BLURRY IMAGE FLASH of 8-YEAR OLD JULIAN's horrified face, and a woman getting RAPED.

She rolls her eyes as he flicks his cigarette out the window.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
In the ring, wrestling can be the <u>perfect</u> show for kids. Behind the curtain? Not even close.

GLORIA
Let me talk to my grandson. Cameron, wrestling isn't a true sport. It's fixed. The matches and winners were chosen by your grandfather.
(MORE)

GLORIA (CONT'D)
And now that job, falls to your father. If he keeps it. I'm not sure he's up to it.

JULIAN
Actually *mother*, I am looking forward to seeing the other Heads of the Alliance. I've got a surprise for them.

GLORIA
Good for you, son. Start out on the right foot with a nice gift.

As the limo approaches the cemetery, Gloria scoffs.

JULIAN
What?

GLORIA
Wrestling as a kiddie show, Julian? Ridiculous...

EXT. JERSEY CITY & HARSIMUS CEMETERY - DAY

MUSIC CUE: Sounds of Silence

SUPER: Jersey City & Harsimus Cemetery
Jersey City, New Jersey

As a light snow falls on this gray afternoon, there are hundreds lined up throughout the cemetery. Mostly older ex-wrestlers limping about with their 'cauliflower' ears and foreheads riddled with deep creased scars. Intermixed are the younger wrestlers of today, who look rather ridiculous. These giant men with long, bleached hair stuffed into suits.

Julian walks slowly, his crying mother Gloria beside him. Behind them, Six large wrestlers carry a coffin.

As Arthur Cain's coffin is lowered into the Earth, Julian is expressionless as he stands beside his mother.

END MUSIC

INT. BANQUET HALL - DAY

The reception hall is jam packed. At the front, Charlie Gotch stands beside a podium and a large FRAMED PHOTO of Arthur Cain. He stands with pride and confidence as he surveys the room.

CHARLIE (ON MIC)
Good God, only someone like Arthur could bring together such a collection of legends and All-Stars to one place.

The room APPLAUDS.

CHARLIE (ON MIC) (CONT'D)
It was over thirty years ago Artie and I laid the groundwork for the system we all belong to, the World Wrestling Alliance. A system that has reaped benefits for all of us, as 1983 was the biggest money year in the history of wrestling!

The room applauds.

CHARLIE (ON MIC) (CONT'D)
An Alliance that has over three-hundred wrestlers, referees, and officials working full-time throughout all seven territories. Because that is the system. Built on the understanding we prosper together. Equally and fairly.

Julian watches from their table and scoffs.

JULIAN
Equal and fair? Charlie has the largest Territory in the country.

His mother gives him a dirty look.

CHARLIE (ON MIC)
...but the days of promoters stealing talent from each other are over, Now, we rotate our wrestlers between territories. If the fans get tired of Mr. Shimasaki in the Midwest, I might give Burt Ironside a call and send him down to Dallas. In exchange he might send me Leroy Brown--

IRONSIDE
In yer dreams Charlie! Ya <u>still</u> can't have my number-one horse!

The room laughs and looks over at the All-South table where Burt Ironside sits with BAD BAD LEROY BROWN (30, Black) and his sons, Michael and Gabriel Angel.

CHARLIE (ON MIC)
Of course, we all have our mainstays. Leroy's headlined some of the biggest shows of the past decade for Burt Ironside...

Burt puts his arm around Leroy like a possession. Leroy strains a smile through gritted teeth. Julian notices.

CHARLIE (ON MIC)
... But the one guy we all share is the WWA World Heavyweight Champion, Diamond Donny Gold. Since winning the belt a year ago, he's been the best drawing World Champion we've ever had!

Right on queue, Donny, drunkenly SHOUTS his catchphrase echoing throughout the dining hall.

DONNY (O.S.)
Oooohhhh Yeeeaaahhhh!

The entire room bursts into laughter, as Julian and Cameron look over at his table where DIAMOND DONNY GOLD (White, 30) sits with a pile of empty glasses. He wears shades beneath a helmet of feathered platinum blond hair and a $5000 suit draped in diamonds, just oozing charisma.

CHARLIE (ON MIC)
And three cheers for the Marvel from the Middle East, Prince Abdullah Akbar!

PRINCE ABDULLAH AKBAR (Brown, 30s) in a suit and kufiya headscarf like a proper Sheik, raises his beer.

CHARLIE (ON MIC) (CONT'D)
One of Artie's final acts was setting up the Prince to challenge Dan Sanders! Not surprised at all, as Abby was one of the best I ever trained. But when I look around the room I see the legacy of Arthur Cain. The guys he gave their first break to, the ones who built their name in New York, and everyone he made money for.

Charlie turns to the portrait of Arthur Cain and raises his glass, as everyone in the room does the same.

CHARLIE (ON MIC) (CONT'D)
Thank you Artie.
(MORE)

CHARLIE (ON MIC) (CONT'D)
My long-time partner, and our Brother, for all that you have done for our sport. As Artie used to say... Salut!

LATER

With everyone talking, drinking, and smoking throughout, Julian returns to the table looking like the cat who ate the canary.

GLORIA
Where've you been?!

JULIAN
Like you said, lot of names here today. I've been talking to a lot them about... my father.

GLORIA
Again with that smirk. Les Henderson's been lookin' all over for you. You're about to be *made*.

Julian starts to get nervous, unsure if he has the nerve to--

HENDERSON (O.S.)
(Southern accent)
Julian!

One of the Atlanta owners, LES HENDERSON (White, 50s), a stocky ex-wrestler wearing an old suit two sizes too big, puts his hand on Julian's shoulder. He takes a deep breath and rises.

HENDERSON (CONT'D)
It's time you took your proper spot at the table.

Henderson leads Julian through the room. Along the way, he sees Leroy Brown and nods to him, then turns his eyes to the 'Power Table' ahead and breaks into a cold sweat...

MUSIC CUE: "All Along the Watchtower" by Jimi Hendrix

FLASHBACK

INT. HALLWAY INTO A DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Eight-year old Julian, carrying a giant bottle of Jim Beam, nervously walks into a kitchen where his father and the Heads of Alliance are. They're dressed like the 1960's, graying and aging, but still fit. Smoking cigars, drinking, and LAUGHING AGGRESSIVELY.

Young Julian is scared and intimidated by the entire scene. His trembling hands try to set the bottle down.

IRONSIDE (40 years old)
Come on boy, ya dumb fuck! Yer gonna drop the hooch!

Julian is frozen as he looks up at the monstrous Burt.

IRONSIDE (CONT'D)
What's with your boy Artie? He soft in the head or somethin'?!

As the others laugh, Julian looks to his father who's talking with someone, when Charlie Gotch enters, his mother behind him.

IRONSIDE (CONT'D)
Fuck's wrong with you? Wake up!

END FLASHBACK & MUSIC

INT. BANQUET HALL - PRESENT - CONTINUOUS

IRONSIDE (CONT'D)
I said, wake up!

Julian stands before the elder owners of the Seven Territories of the Alliance. He tries to stop trembling, standing before these men he's been physically scared of his entire life.

CHARLIE
Sit here Julian. I want you to take your father's seat.

Burt Ironside lays out a line of shot glasses and splashes bourbon into all of them, booze spilling everywhere. GEORGE GILMORE (White, 75) shakes his head.

GILMORE
That's expensive piss ya spillin'.

IRONSIDE
You can lick it off the table when we're done ya cheap Jew! Bwa-haha!

GILMORE
Ah, Burt. Charming as ever.

Burt drunkenly hands out the shots.

IRONSIDE
To Artie! The King o' New York!

ALL AT THE TABLE
To Artie!

Burt pours another round.

IRONSIDE
And to Julian! The <u>new</u> King o' New York!

ALL AT THE TABLE
To Julian!

CHARLIE
As Arthur's son, you understand the importance of the Alliance and our values. Daniel here, is just like you.

Julian glances at the only one here his age, the classic eighties *nerd* DANIEL HAWKINS (White, 27), and sits himself up straighter to show they're *not* the same.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
In '82 he took over the Carolina Wrestling Association from his mother, and has kept things afloat ever since. And of course, you'll get help every step of the way...

Charlie's voice drones on in his head as Julian fidgets with a toothpick on the table. Flicking the end over and over.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
...I had a guy I was going to pass onto your father, Bull Von Heimer. If you match him with Dan Sanders, you're lookin' at a six-month run!

Charlie pleasantly waits for a thank you. Julian can barely think as the walls seem to be closing in on him... when he finds the courage and the toothpick SNAPS!

JULIAN
I'm <u>not</u> going to do that.

CHARLIE
Beg your pardon?

JULIAN
I don't want your leftovers or your advice. From <u>any</u> of you.

The others pause. Julian takes a deep breath. This is it.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
Let's start at the top. Charlie Gotch. You have a guy who could be the biggest star in wrestling, right under your nose and you can't even see it.

CHARLIE
Who?

JULIAN
Thor Hansen.

CHARLIE
Thor? Don't make me laugh.

JULIAN
If you don't turn him babyface, you're a fool.

The table groans in shock, as Charlie waves the others off.

CHARLIE
I know you're young and still learning, but Thor is a muscle-head without any legitimate fighting skill. Fans wouldn't believe him as the toughest guy in the room. Thor is best used as flunky to the #1 villain in the sport, Hollywood Buddy Melrose.

JULIAN
Times have changed and none of you realize that. Today's fans don't want someone who looks like they can win a bar fight. They want someone who looks like they can throw a car through a bar window!

HENDERSON
That's ridiculous, no one can do that! Though I do remember I saw Antonio Saburszki try lifting a car once, on a bet. He got it--

CHARLIE
--Shut up Henderson!

JULIAN
You're all playing 'Cowboys and Indians', when the people... want 'Star Wars'.

IRONSIDE
We've been doing this longer than you've been alive, boy. We know what the people want.

JULIAN
Not anymore. You're all dinosaurs. Or maybe a better analogy is you're ducks...

Julian smirks as he sits back, looking straight at Charlie, whose face is turning red with anger.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
... sitting ducks.

CHARLIE
You watch how you talk to us! I'm an Olympic Wrestling Medalist! I could take you and--

JULIAN
--Charlie! You failed to even qualify for the Olympics let alone medal. You've been telling fans and reporters your bullshit gimmick for so long you don't even remember what's real anymore!

CHARLIE
I can still take a punk like you!

Charlie stands and grabs Julian by the collar and pulls him up knocking his own chair down with a CRASH. Julian shows no fear.

HENDERSON
(whispers)
Charlie, not here!

The room is completely silent as Charlie notices everyone watching them. He tries to play it off like a joke.

CHARLIE
(playfully)
Here ya go Julian!

Charlie lifts his hand up in into the air and slaps Julian's chest. Henderson stands immediately, raising his glass.

HENDERSON
Welcome to the club, Julian Cain!

Everyone in the room CHEERS and TOASTS Julian's *initiation* and resumes their chatter.

Julian's chest is stinging but he won't show it. Charlie straightens Julian's collar, battling the urge to strangle him, while Julian stares into his eyes.

JULIAN
I hope you enjoyed your day, old man, because it's over.

Julian flicks Charlie's arms away, picks up his shot, and looks them each in the eye, before downing it and slamming it down.

He walks away feeling ten feet tall. With Charlie's ranting voice fading behind him, he glides by his wife.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
Goodbye Sara, I've got another plane to catch.

INT. TULSA CONVENTION CENTER

SUPER: Burt Ironside's
ALL-SOUTH WRESTLING
Convention Center
Tulsa, Oklahoma

A nervous Criss Castillo waits in the box office. After several awkward moments he goes to the ticket window.

CRISS
Um excuse me. I was told to come here to meet Burt Ironside.

BOX OFFICE BETTY
(Southern accent)
Ya can't just *see* Burt Ironside! He's the legend, he's the hoss! I mean, who're you young feller?

CRISS
Criss Castillo.

BOX OFFICE BETTY
Castillo... Oh, well hot damn! Why din't ya say so?! Ol' Burt got a ticket right here for ya!

She rifles through a drawer and pulls out a ticket.

CRISS
He's not here?

BOX OFFICE BETTY
Good gracious, no.
(MORE)

BOX OFFICE BETTY (CONT'D)
He's getting the Angel boys ready for their match. He's such a good father!

CRISS
Yeah...

INT. TULSA CONVENTION CENTER ARENA

Criss enters the arena that smells of sweat, hot dogs, urine, and farm animals. He sees thousands he would refer to as "hillbillies", yet also WAY more females than they get at EWF shows up in New York.

Looking towards ringside he sees the TV cameras on Bad Bad Leroy Brown in street clothes being carefully lead to ringside as he has with bandages completely covering both eyes.

As he speaks the SOUTHERN REBELS tag team trio run out and attack the helpless Leroy. The fans lose their minds, as security works hard to keep the fans from charging, until an OLD MAN FAN in overalls and no teeth PULLS OUT A PISTOL!

CRISS
Holy shit is that a gun?!

Criss is amazed that he's the only one ducking as he sees the fan pointing the gun at the Rebels, backing them off of Leroy, whom he stands over, protecting his hero. The Rebels look at each other unsure how they can deal with this crazy fan without breaking the illusion of pro-wrestling. When suddenly the actual POLICE tackle the man and drag him off.

Criss runs to his seat, next to a local couple in their 30's.

CRISS
Did that guy just pull a gun out?! Was he part of the show?!

MALE FAN
Huh? He was a concerned citizen and God bless 'im! Them fuckin' Southern Rebels blinded Leroy Brown in New Orleans with the Rebel hair cream and they were gonna finish the job tonight!

CRISS
Is that normal to pull out a gun?!

MALE FAN
No, but certain occasions call for a little back up, know what I mean pardner? He-heh!!

He slaps Criss on the back hard when suddenly “Stranglehold” by Ted Nugent blasts throughout the arena and the 5,000 fans packed into this giant barn become completely unglued!

Michael & Gabriel Angel step out to the floor surrounded by cowboy hat wearing security and the room fills with DEAFENING SCREAMS that make Criss’ ears rattle and the hairs on the back of his neck stand up. The walls and floor shake as everyone around him jumps up and down bumping and spilling beer everywhere. He is overwhelmed by the sheer passion and intensity of these fans.

MALE FAN
Michael Angel! Please fuck my wife! I just want an autograph! Do whatever you want with her!

Criss turns, as his wife hits him. *Good for her.*

FEMALE FAN
Hey! I want Gabriel to fuck me *too!*

Criss’ eyes are saucers as Michael Angel makes it to the ring apron where he is mobbed by a hundred girls at the ring all giving him flower bouquets. Michael looks out into the stands as thousands of flashbulbs go off, oblivious to the women worshipping him at his feet like a God.

INT. DARKNESS

JULIAN
A wrestler could sellout Tulsa, or some other hick town, yet if that same guy took a stroll through Milwaukee? They wouldn’t have a fucking clue who he was! It takes months, even years, to become a star in a Territory. And after you reach that level, if the Alliance decides to move you to Chicago or Charlotte, you start *all* over at the bottom. I believe when you become a star, you should be a star everywhere. The Alliance does nothing but hold you back...

INT. DES MOINES CIVIC CENTER - LOCKER ROOM

SUPER: Charlie Gotch's
AMERICAN MIDWEST WRESTLING
Civic Center
Des Moines, Iowa

Charlie writing in a ledger when Terri approaches backstage.

BLAZE
Uh... Pop. How was the funeral?

CHARLIE
I already told you and your brother all about it. What do you want?

BLAZE
Um... there was something I wanted to talk to you about.

CHARLIE
Make it quick.

BLAZE
I was wondering if you had a chance to think about... you know, what we talked about last time?

CHARLIE
Huh?

BLAZE
You know... uh... Thor. If you had a chance to think about, y'know turning him babyface?

Charlie stops and stares at her, remembering Julian's words.

CHARLIE
Turn Thor babyface? Turn Thor BABYFACE! Over my dead, fucking body! We will NEVER turn Thor!

Blaze is shocked at the intensity and certainty of his answer.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
That worthless slug in New York doesn't know didly squat and no one questions me! I'd sooner turn Buddy babyface before Thor!

BLAZE
(confused)
Ok!? Sorry I asked...

Charlie curses under his breath, as Terri runs off and spots Thor on the other end of the locker room smiling at her, and she looks back with a warm but apologetic frown.

INT. TULSA CONVENTION CENTER LOCKER ROOM

TAMA THE SAMOAN BEAST (Brown, 30s), a 300-pound Polynesian with a giant afro and monstrous scowl, enters the wrestler-filled locker room and Leroy pulls the tape off his eyes.

TAMA
(Hawaiian accent)
Oh brada! Anybody see that hot babe in the red dress in the hall?

The boys hoot and wolf-whistle.

LEROY
No man, I can't see shit out there. You strike out?

TAMA
Yeah brada, she don't want the Samoan Beast. But I give you one guess who she ask for?

ALL WRESTLERS
Michael!

Feeling all eyes on him, including his father's, Michael covers his disinterest with a laugh and heads out as everyone cheers.

INT. TULSA CONVENTION CENTER - HALLWAY

Michael steps into the hall when he hears the click of high heels, and out saunters the WOMAN IN RED (20s). She looks nothing like the usual All-South female fans, she's quite glamorous and wears a tight red dress.

Making sure the security guys are watching, he moves in, psyching himself up to <u>want</u> to do this. She kisses him, and he kisses her back, maneuvering her around the corner while putting his hand down his trunks, squeezing his penis to get ready. She cups his balls over his trunks.

WOMAN IN RED
Not here.

He looks down and sees she's holding a hotel key against him.

WOMAN IN RED (CONT'D)
I want you bathed and clean first.

He takes the keys, she lets go and confidently walks away.

INT. TULSA CONVENTION CENTER - LOCKER ROOM

Michael walks back into the locker room and triumphantly holds up the hotel keys, making sure his father sees.

MICHAEL
Don't wait up for me boys!

All the boys cheer and laugh and Burt grins in approval. After everyone disperses, Burt turns and finds BOBBY RIVERS (22), who looks like an 80's rockstar with pink punk rocker sunglasses, a sleeveless pink tiger striped shirt to show off his short but muscular body, and big, teased curly blond hair.

IRONSIDE
Bobby! I need you to do somethin'.

BOBBY
Anything, Hoss.

IRONSIDE
There's a Mexican kid out here from out o' town. He's my so---my *nephew*. Name of Criss Ca-STILL-oh. Take him out with the boys, get his dick sucked or something.

BOBBY
You got it, hoss!

MUSIC CUE: "I Can't Drive 55" by Sammy Hagar

INT. THOR HANSEN'S APARTMENT

Thor Hansen INJECTING a needle into his muscular ass cheek.

Drinking a glass of raw eggs.

INT. GOLD'S GYM - VENICE BEACH

Thor working up a sweat, throwing around massive weights.

END MUSIC

EXT. GOLD'S GYM - VENICE BEACH - EVENING

Thor is in front of the beachfront gym surrounded by a group of kids getting his autograph.

When BILL THE PHOTOGRAPHER (30s) takes a picture of them, and approaches Thor.

THOR
Bill! Pro-Wrestling Digest's #1 ace photographer! How's it hangin?

PHOTOGRAPHER
(New York accent)
AMW hasn't run California in years yet these kids flock to ya anyway, like the fuckin' Pied Piper!

The boys finally leave.

THOR
Yeah, they just said I look like a *somebody* and wanted my autograph! But I love kids, dude. And these days they need role models more than ever, to keep 'em off drugs.

PHOTOGRAPHER
Ain't that the truth. So what, you got the day off or somethin'?

THOR
Yeah, gonna catch some waves today, though I'm getting so big I'm lookin' silly on my surfboard!

Bill holds up his camera.

PHOTOGRAPHER
Don't worry I won't put this picture in the magazine. It'd give ol' Charlie Gotch a heart attack.

THOR
Thanks dude, I'm still a heel.

PHOTOGRAPHER
But you know this is the kind of shit you should be doing, right? Like a real-life superhero.

THOR
Yeah? You think so too?

PHOTOGRAPHER
Totally! Just a shame they didn't turn you yet. Lot o' good you could do as a babyface.

THOR
Charlie says he'll think about it. I should trust him, right?

PHOTOGRAPHER
Not for nothin' but, ya gotta ask yourself. How long you gonna wait?

Bill hands Thor a business card.

PHOTOGRAPHER (CONT'D)
Call the number *on the back*. Friend o' mine can help ya... with uh... helping kids and shit.

Thor sees a number scrawled on the back marked: **J**.

THOR
Hey dude, what're you doin all the way out here in California anyway?

Thor looks up and Bill is already gone.

EXT. LUXURY HOTEL-NIGHT

A shiny 1984 Red Corvette RIPS up to the front of the hotel, stopping halfway up the curb.

Michael Angel inside, opens up a baggie of pills, POPS a few into his mouth and washes them down with his beer.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL LOBBY

He walks across the marble floor in his tight shirt, jeans and cowboy boots. Heads turn as he passes other guests and staff. As usual, oblivious to the effects his movie star looks and bodybuilder physique has on people, and goes to the elevator.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL PENTHOUSE SUITE - NIGHT

Michael INSERTS the key in the gold-trimmed door and OPENS it. And there she is. A *Perfect 10*, her nude body covered only by a loose black silken robe, and bright red lipstick.

WOMAN IN RED
Michael, please come in.

He moves forward and they start kissing passionately. Unbuttoning his jeans as he moves her towards the bed.

JULIAN (O.S.)
Michael Angel ...

Michael turns around, and behind him is JULIAN CAIN!

INT. LEROY'S CAR - TULSA, OKLAHOMA - NIGHT

Criss Castillo is in the back of Leroy Brown's Cadillac, with Bobby Rivers in the front. They're driving through the roads of Tulsa drinking beer, which Criss carefully keeps below window level.

CRISS
Thanks for letting me tag along guys, this is pretty cool.

BOBBY
No problem brother, Hoss told me to get your dick sucked tonight and away we go!

LEROY
(quietly)
Burt told you to suck his dick?

Criss' eyes get big.

BOBBY
No get him laid you dweeb!

CRISS
I mean, I know everyone from magazines and stuff but to see guys like you, Leroy, in person. It's... an honor.

Leroy notices Criss staring at him from the moment they met.

LEROY
No problem, man, but just uh... be cool, alright?

CRISS
Yeah, yeah I'm sorry. I will. It's just you were blind two hours ago and now you're driving--

Leroy impatiently turns to Bobby.

LEROY
Do I need to kayfabe or what?

BOBBY
Burt said no, so--wait turn here!

They turn towards the CHICKEN COOP bar, see the Southern Rebels and others in the parking lot, then Leroy speeds away.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
Dangit! They beat us! They got the best rats at the Chicken Coop!

CRISS
Isn't that where we're going?

LEROY
That's where the Southern Rebels are and the rest of the heels.

CRISS
Wait, so you really *are* feuding with those guys? It's *real*?

LEROY (laughing)
No, man. Half the people there saw us fightin' them guys tonight, so we ain't going in.

BOBBY
Even if we stuck to our side o' the bar, we'd look like pussies for not fighting 'em, or if we belly up to the bar doing shots together as pals, it says wrestling is bullshit.

CRISS
So it becomes a joke to the fans?

BOBBY
Or they feel like fools. Burt Ironside's rule number one: Faces and Heels do not sit together in a bar full of marks.

LEROY
You gotta protect the business!

INT. LUXURY HOTEL PENTHOUSE SUITE - NIGHT

Michael instinctively clenches his fists, looking for others.

JULIAN
I apologize for the deception, but I have to speak to you alone.

MICHAEL
What's going on? This your girl?

JULIAN
This is Sofia.
(MORE)

JULIAN (CONT'D)
She's not my girl, but she's a master of tasks and always gets the job done.

MICHAEL
Wait, I know you from the funeral. You're Arthur Cain's kid aintcha?

JULIAN
Yes, I'm Julian Cain. Now please, relax. Sofia?

Sofia gently takes Michael by the hand while grazing her other hand across his broad shoulders soothing him to the couch.

JULIAN
Would you care for a drink? How about some champagne and caviar?

Julian strides to the bar, pulls out a bottle from a bucket of ice and opens it. Sofia sits beside Michael resting her hand on the inside of his tree-trunk like thigh.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
It's Dom Perignon. Hundred dollars a bottle. Only the best.

Michael looks at the gold-rimmed glass with hesitation.

JULIAN
To the Ironside wrestling family, and your lasting legacy.

They clink glasses and Michael reluctantly takes a large unrefined gulp. He winces and scrunches his face. Sofia laughs.

MICHAEL
(Choking on the taste)
I'll take a beer if ya got it.

Julian disappointed he's misreading Michael, takes the glass from his hand and walks to the sink, then switches to Plan B.

JULIAN
Or perhaps... something else?

On the table in front of Michael and Sofia is a large silver-domed cloche beside the caviar tray. Julian grabs the handle.

MICHAEL
Uh, I'm not hungry.

JULIAN
Oh, you'll want to eat this.

Julian lifts the large silver-dome to reveal an assortment of pills, joints, and cocaine already lined out. He notices Michael's eyes light up as he leans in to help himself, as Sofia runs her fingers through his curly hair.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
I brought you here, because I wanted to share something with you. A new idea. The world out there, is changing isn't it?

Julian looks intensely into Michael's eyes.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
Can you <u>feel</u> it? When you see a billboard of Michael Jackson drinking a Pepsi... When you pass a teenage girl wearing a black lace glove like Madonna. When you have more than three channels...

INT. TV COMMERCIAL - CLOSE ANGLE - TV

The new EWF logo graphic EXPLODES in outer space. Pixelated stars shoot across the screen in cutting edge 1984 production technology to Michael Jackson's "Beat It".

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
The Empire Wrestling Federation is coming to Chicago! Come to the Rosemont Horizon and witness the debut of the new E-W-F!

Pictures of the EWF wrestlers inside star-shapes move across the screen followed by a trail of 80's stardust.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
In the main event, All-American Dan Sanders will defend the one and only World Heavyweight title against Prince Abdullah Akbar--

CHARLIE (O.S.)
Alright, alright that's enough! Shut that off!

INT. AMERICAN MIDWEST WRESTLING OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

SUPER: AMW offices
Chicago, Illinois

Charlie Gotch, Nelly, Terri Blaze, and Hollywood Buddy Melrose are in street clothes, gathered around a speaker phone on his desk. Terri PUSHES a button to turn the TV off.

The rest of the World Wrestling Alliance are all on conference call, listening to it all.

CHARLIE
Nelly, you need to start being in these meetings. Terri, go outside.

HOLLYWOOD
She should stay, Charlie. We need all hands on deck.

Buddy winks at her, while she smiles back in gratitude.

Raylen Crenshaw on the phone from his offices in Nashville.

RAYLEN (NASHVILLE)
(Tennessee accent)
Is Julian Cain really trying to run Chicago, the same night <u>you</u> runnin' Chicago?!

NELLY
Can you believe it? It's AMW's biggest town!

George Gilmore from St. Louis.

GILMORE (ST. LOUIS)
He can't run a show in your Territory. It's a flagrant violation of Alliance rules. We have these borders so we can all co-exist and thrive!

Nigel Davies, Jesse James, and Les Henderson from Atlanta.

HENDERSON (ATLANTA)
And did they just call Dan Sanders the World Heavyweight Champion?! *Donny Gold* is the World Champion.

HOLLYWOOD
And the production value is a lot slicker than any of us our doing.

CHARLIE
Exactly. That must've cost a fortune. Burning money on gaga!

BLAZE
Pop, just say the word and I'll cut this fucker's prick off!

Charlie tells his daughter to shut up with his eyes.

CHARLIE
At the funeral, Julian revealed his true colors. He's nothing like his father. He has no honor.

IRONSIDE (DALLAS)
How the Hell do they expect to draw a Chicago crowd with just commercials and no TV?

PEYTON (DALLAS)
The bigger question is what are we going to do about this?

NIGEL (ATLANTA)
I can write a cease and desist letter for starters.

IRONSIDE (DALLAS)
I say we fly up to New York and take turns slapping' the shit out o' this kid!

BLAZE
Let's fight! Load up our show. Where's Donny booked that weekend?

PEYTON (DALLAS)
Terri's right, snuff 'em out. Maybe we can send the Angel Brothers up to Chicago, or at least Leroy?

CHARLIE
Don't even bother!

CRENSHAW (NASHVILLE)
Well, what're we gonna do then?

CHARLIE
Nothing... Not a damn thing. His show will fail. And when it does he'll learn his lesson through humiliation. Ask George and Nigel, they know. Every five years or so, some upstart tries to move in on Alliance turf and we beat 'em down, every single time.
(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I won't even need extra for my show.

Charlie sits back and lights a fat cigar with a wooden match.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I loved Artie, but he became too loyal to his own guys, and only rotated wrestlers with us once in a while. Which means AMW fans in Chicago won't have a clue who the EWF guys are. Being a *new and exciting* league won't sell.

NELLY
Once again you are right, Dad! We have Buddy Melrose, an institution of AMW! We have up and comers like Thor Hansen! They can't compete!

CHARLIE
I been in this business for five decades and seen it all. Julian is a pebble in my shoe. That's it.

INT. BUBBA'S SINKHOLE - BOOTH

This country bar isn't very crowded, with few female patrons. Leroy is at the bar with Tama the Samoan Beast and a few others, while Bobby Rivers is with Criss at their own booth.

CRISS
I have to admit I wasn't a big fan of Southern wrestling. But that show tonight... I mean the matches, the intensity from the fans, the way they went crazy when the Angels came out--shows at the Garden are like being at a Giants game, but All-South? It was like a spiritual revival or something!

BOBBY
Nobody does rasslin' like the South brother, because there ain't nothin' more real'n this shit!

Bobby laughs and slaps the table.

CRISS
You said *Faces and heels* before. That's good guys and bad guys?
(MORE)

CRISS (CONT'D)
And what's a *mark*? Is that like marks at a carnival or grifters?

BOBBY
You got it, brother.

CRISS
Wow, wrestling has like an entire language, doesn't it? Leroy said 'kayfabe'. What does that mean?

BOBBY
Kayfabe is everything. That's the line between the real world and the world *we* live in. The business is built on that illusion and us doing everything to keep it. 'Cause once the illusion is broken, there's ain't no turning back. No one smartened you up on <u>anything</u>? Aren't you Burt Ironside's nephew?

Criss laughs while gritting his teeth in anger.

CRISS
No... I am his son.

Bobby spits out his beer.

BOBBY
You're his kid?! I thought you were a Mexican!

CRISS
White people can have brown kids you know. And I'm Puerto Rican.

BOBBY
Of course. Sorry, brother.

CRISS
You remember when Burt wrestled at Madison Square Garden to challenge Dominic Dante back in 1961?

Bobby shakes his head while slamming another beer.

CRISS (CONT'D)
Me neither, but nine months later I was born.

Bobby chokes on his beer again.

BOBBY
Yer Mama was a rat?!

Criss not knowing what he means exactly, but doesn't feel good.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
Er ... sorry brother. My mouth tends to move before my brain can tell it to shut up.

CRISS
What's a 'rat'?

BOBBY
Ringrat. The girls. Groupies.

CRISS
Wrestlers call them 'rats'?

BOBBY
I don't even rightly know why? I think it's cause you'll find these girls scurrying around the halls and backrooms trying to get to the boys. So why you here now?

CRISS
I was going to start working for Arthur Cain, teaching me how to be a promoter, not a wrestler--

BOBBY
I was gonna say, you're five-foot five, fat and ugly. No offense.

CRISS
Well, since you said *no offense*... Anyway, she called up Burt to--

BOBBY
Shit, I'm still trying to figure out how you and Michael Angel are <u>brothers</u>? Guy looks like a movie star, while <u>you</u> look more like ... E.T. And not normal E.T. but after they captured him with the tubes and all the gimmicks--

CRISS
Thanks Bobby! I'm aware I didn't inherit the 'Angel' genes!

Bobby tries to cheer him up.

BOBBY
Hey, Burt's face is <u>just</u> as fucked up as yours ...

Not working.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
... but maybe ... you got his 'mind' for rasslin'? Burt's temper and other shit can get in the way, but he <u>knows</u> the business. That what he's been doing? Teaching ya?

Criss looks down at his beer.

CRISS
I haven't even met him yet.

BOBBY
Dang...

CRISS
And I don't like playing along with his little nephew charade, as if *I'm* not embarrassed that Burt Ironside is my father? I hated him before I knew we were related and after today I hate him even more.

BOBBY
Fuck all that Criss! I don't know what happens with you and Burt! All I know is you're here right now, and God put ya here for a reason dammit! Here's to you and the start of your career in rasslin! Whatever that might be!

Criss smiles and they clink their beer mugs.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
Stick with me and I'll not only smarten you up to the business, but I'mma get you laid tonight.

CRISS
That seems to be what all you guys do, all the time. Girls.

BOBBY
Hey brother, it's just part o' been' a rassler, don't try to figure it all out in one night.
(MORE)

BOBBY (CONT'D)
But I am seeing a pair of tits at twelve o'clock, and she looks like a fan of Bobby Rivers!

CRISS
Or maybe she's lookin at that?

Criss motions to the ASW TV championship belt Bobby has displayed on the table in front of them.

BOBBY
Good point, I'll bring it. Peel your chubby ass off the vinyl.

Criss looks over at the pretty girls and wimps out.

CRISS
No, I'll stay here for a bit.

BOBBY
Suit yourself. I'mma do a few shots while I'm at it. Your sob story really killed my buzz...

INT. LUXURY HOTEL SUITE

JULIAN
... I have deals in place with parties nationwide to make this a reality. The only thing we're missing... is you.

Julian Cain looks at Michael Angel who he still can't read. He signals Sofia, and she pulls Michael's jeans off.

JULIAN
My champion Dan Sanders, is the shits. My company needs a new face. Like *yours*.

Sofia starts blowing him.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
Not the Angel Brothers, not anyone else. You can be my champion, *the* top guy. Picture your face on billboards, magazine covers.

As Michael looks deep into Julian's eyes, Sofia speeds up.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
No more being held back by being in a team or the limitations of All-South... or your <u>father</u>.

Michael's eyes widen.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
You can be whatever you want to be, do whatever you want to do. It's New York City! Come with me Michael. COME with me...

Michael opens his mouth to respond, and is just about to--

INT. BUBBA'S SINKHOLE - CONTINUOUS

A GIRL (White, 20) wipes the foam off her mouth and puts her beer down. Criss is beside her in a booth, neither saying a word. Bobby and the girl he spotted earlier, BEULAH (White, 20), exit the same bathroom. She pushes her skirt back down as Bobby drunkenly pulls up his pants and joins them.

BEULAH
I can't believe I just got fucked by Bobby Rivers the same night he won the TV title!

CRISS
Actually he was already champ, so you got fucked by Bobby Rivers the same night he *retained* the TV--
oh, never mind ...

Bobby pulls Beulah onto his lap tickling her, looking at Criss.

BOBBY
(Slurring)
This is what the business is all about brother ... Sex, drugs, and muscles baby...

He flexes his bicep and Beulah kisses it.

LATER

Criss is at the bar waiting for his pitcher, standing next to Leroy (wearing his sunglasses to look *blind* for any wresting fans in the bar) with Tama the Samoan Beast and some others.

CRISS
Leroy, the guy with the gun? Does he like... work for All-South?

LEROY
Nope. He was just a crazy fan.

TAMA
A mark pulled a gun?!

LEROY
Man, I am gettin' too old for this shit. Check this out, me and the Rebels were doing the deal tonight where they jump me, but this guy in the front row whips out a .45, points it at the Rebels and says *I got your back Leroy!*!

Tama, Leroy, and the other wrestlers burst into laughter.

OTHER WRESTLER
Leroy, this *blind* angle is hot!

LEROY
Yeah, too hot motherfucker! So I wanna tackle the guy, but all I can hear is Burt telling' me *I'm supposed to be blind and that'd kill the gimmick!*

The wrestlers laugh even harder, while Criss isn't even sure how he should react to this craziness, so he heads back.

At the booth, the mood isn't as jovial, as a tall, young, local, ANDY is trying to pull Beulah off Bobby's lap.

FRIEND
(Southern accent)
Andy just fuck awf. She ain't witchu anymore, she's with the All-South TV Champeen!

ANDY
(Southern accent)
You one o' them fake rasslers? You trying to git with my girl?

Criss stands there as a wasted Bobby slowly pulls himself up, and looks up to Andy's face with a drunken glossy-eyed grin.

BOBBY
Git with her? I already fucked her!

He turns to Criss as he drunkenly giggles, hoping for a laugh.

ANDY
What?!

Andy PUNCHES Bobby square in the face. Bobby goes down like a light. As Bobby slumps to the floor he KICKS him in the face.

Criss is standing there with the pitcher, paralyzed with fear. The girls are screaming at Andy to stop.

Tama CHARGES IN like a bull, knocking Criss to the side, sending the pitcher flying. Tama grabs Andy by the hair from behind, pulls his head back, and puts his mouth completely over Andy's nose CLAMPS down and BITES HIS NOSE OFF!

He spits it out, and it lands right into the beer glass of the friend! She screams in horror.

Andy clutches his face with blood squirting everywhere, the girls are screaming, Bobby Rivers is unconscious on the floor covered in his own blood, and Criss is stunned, covered in beer, looking up at Tama who starts doing a HAKA war dance, roaring with blood smeared across his chin! Criss SCREAMS in fear and closes his eyes tight trying to teleport back home!

CRISS
(wimpering)
Mama ... help ...

INT. DARKNESS

JULIAN
Instead of celebrating violence to try to make wrestling as real as possible, I'd rather make it palatable to a <u>wider</u> audience? Families aren't looking for the best match or the most intense feud, they just want to be dazzled with major league TV production, flashy lights and smoke! Wrestling can be like Disney or the Muppets! In 1978, Star Wars sold over one hundred-million dollars in toys alone. If we can get the public to stop thinking of wrestlers as violent athletes, and more like cartoon characters, we could make millions from toys before we sell a single ticket!

EXT. ROSEMONT HORIZON ARENA - NIGHT

SUPER: Julian Cain's
EMPIRE WRESTLING FEDERATION
Rosemont Horizon

Chicago, Illinois

Thousands of Fans are lined up outside the ticket box office this wintery night to get into the suburban arena.

EXT. CHICAGO STADIUM - NIGHT

SUPER: Charlie Gotch's
AMERICAN MIDWEST WRESTLING
Chicago Stadium
Chicago, Illinois

Across town, thousands of fans filing into the downtown arena.

INT. CHICAGO STADIUM - BACKROOM OFFICE

You can cut the tension with the knife as Charlie Gotch, Nelly, Terri Blaze, and Buddy Melrose are in an office adjacent to the locker room, the sounds of the wrestlers dressing coming through the door. Nelly finishes on the phone.

NELLY
He said 5,000 and counting. The advance was weak but people are still buying tickets.

HOLLYWOOD
Empire drawing over 5,000 tonight for their first shot in Chicago... Looks like the commercial did something after all.

BLAZE
I couldn't even get through an episode of 'Family Ties' without seeing that damn thing. They plastered it everywhere.

NELLY
(annoyed)
Shouldn't you be getting ready for your match?

BLAZE
I need to be here. I'm the only voice of reason.

Nelly looks at her and mock gags himself with his finger. She looks back and flips him off. he pulls out both hands and--

CHARLIE
Enough, you two! What's <u>our</u> house?

NELLY
I'll go confirm, but I think we're actually a bit down.

Nelly dashes out.

CHARLIE
That's because... because... I don't know, people want to stay home where it's warm. It's the middle of winter for Crissakes!

HOLLYWOOD
I know you don't want to hear this Charlie, but our house is down because some of our fans are at the Empire show.

CHARLIE
Malarkey. No one wants to go to the suburbs to some new arena. And even if we're down, we're still going to have 10,000 fans at bare minimum. And last I checked ten is greater than five. It's over. We won, we beat Julian Cain.

HOLLYWOOD
If they put on a strong show, word will spread. They'll be back.

BLAZE
Dangit Dad! We needed to spice this show up, and you turned down the Alliance's offer to send us extra guys. We could've drawn a big enough house there wouldn't be anyone left to go to the Empire's!

CHARLIE
If we did anything other than the ordinary, it'd be <u>admitting</u> that we're threatened by Julian Cain.

HOLLYWOOD
Charlie. You're my best friend in the business, but you're wrong. We need something big for tonight. So that all Chicago will be able to talk about is *our* show, not Julian Cain's... Let's turn Thor.

CHARLIE
Here we go again.

TERRI
You already said everything's set up for it, right?

NELLY
Didn't Dad already decide, no?

HOLLYWOOD
I turn on him tonight in the ring, and we got 'em. He'll be the biggest babyface draw AMW has seen since... well... you.

CHARLIE
Listen, I'm not going to turn Thor babyface just because Julian Cain thinks I should.

HOLLYWOOD
Wait, what are you talking about?

CHARLIE
At the funeral. Julian told me I'd be a fool to not turn Thor, that he could be the biggest star in wrestling.

Terri puts her hand on her forehead in frustration.

HOLLYWOOD
And <u>that's</u> why you won't turn him? Who cares if Julian came to the same conclusion, this is business!

BLAZE
You're worried about Julian controlling your wrestling. If you <u>don't</u> turn Thor, then you're letting him control you.

CHARLIE
(beaten)
Alright, enough already! Do the angle... Turn him...

The door BLASTS OPEN and Nelly bursts into the room.

HOLLYWOOD
Nelly, we're going to turn Thor. Go get him and we'll figure out how we'll do it in the match.

NELLY
He no-showed.

TERRI
What? I ate lunch with him today, like three blocks from here?

NELLY
I don't think you understand. No one in the locker room has seen him all night. He's not here!

Terri's heart breaks, as she realizes where Thor must be.

INT. ROSEMONT HORIZON ARENA

SUPER: Julian Cain's
EMPIRE WRESTLING FEDERATION
Rosemont Horizon
Chicago, Illinois

In the darkened arena, 6,000 fans BOOING while the bell RINGS.

A sweaty Prince Abdullah stands in the ring, raising the championship belt, while Dan Sanders is on the mat clutching his ribs, a doctor checking on him. Brand new TV cameras capturing it all.

TV COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
I can't believe it, we have a new champion! Prince Abdullah Akbar has ended the five-year reign of Dan Sanders here at the first ever Empire--Oh, come on now!

Abdullah kicks and stomps Sanders. The referee tries to pull him off while the bell rings over and over.

TV COMMENTATOR (V.O.)(CONT'D)
Prince Abdullah is attacking Sanders again! This is disgusting. His ribs are already destroyed! By God, somebody do something! Wait a second.. Who's that?

Suddenly a ripple of excitement courses through the arena, as fans look to the aisle to see THOR HANSEN!

TV COMMENTATOR (V.O.)(CONT'D)
It's Thor Hansen! It's Thor Hansen! These people in Chicago know him! What's he doing here?

JULIAN (V.O.)
... *You* don't owe those bastards a thing!
(MORE)

JULIAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Like me, they held you back. From what you are. What you could be...

Thor slides into the ring! Abdullah CHARGES Thor with a punch. Thor BLOCKS it and PUNCHES him! The arena explodes as Abdullah flies onto his back and flops around all the way to the floor!

TV COMMENTATOR (CONT'D)
He's saving him! Thor is here to <u>save</u> Dan Sanders! He changed his evil ways and the fans love him!

JULIAN (V.O.)
And tonight we prove it by doing what we were both destined to do.

THOR (V.O.)
What's that?

JULIAN (V.O.)
Change the fucking world!

Thor LOOKS OUT into the throngs of fans with tears in his eyes, as for the first time he's allowed to *feel* the cheers from the fans without any guilt. It's a buzz he never wants to end.

TV COMMENTATOR (CONT'D)
Ladies and gentlemen, Thor Hansen is in the Empire Wrestling Federation, and things will <u>never</u> be the same again...

MUSIC CUE: "Sympathy for the Devil" by the Rolling Stones

INT. DARKNESS

JULIAN (V.O.)
...I am not content to being the best Territory in the Alliance. I am taking my father's company and transforming it into the all-new Empire Wrestling Federation!

MONTAGE of Julian giving suitcases stuffed with cash to TV station managers and shaking hands with men in suits in boardrooms, banks, and the muscular arms of different wrestlers at his father's funeral, hotel rooms and airports including:

THOR HANSEN... BAD BAD LEROY BROWN... MICHAEL ANGEL... and the Alliance's World Champion, DIAMOND DONNY GOLD!

JULIAN (V.O.)
I will steal the most popular wrestlers from every Territory of the country and form an All-Star roster. We will blast through the borders of the Alliance, running shows in all 50 states! We will saturate the nation with our TV, and go head to head with every Alliance group in the land using their own stars against them! I have deals in place with parties nationwide to make this a reality. The only thing we're missing...

Julian Cain looks at us.

JULIAN
... is you.

THE END