

The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity

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Kristoffer Diaz

kristofferdiaz@gmail.com

www.kristofferdiaz.com

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CONTACT

Derek Zasky

WILLIAM MORRIS ENDEAVOR ENTERTAINMENT

1325 Avenue of the Americas

New York, NY 10019

(212) 903-1396

DZasky@wmeentertainment.com

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CHARACTERS

Macedonio Guerra (also known as The Mace)	A Puerto Rican professional wrestler. Good at what he does, undersized, our hero.
Everett K. Olson (also known as EKO)	The Caucasian owner of THE Wrestling. Brash, confident, ostensibly our villain.
Chad Deity (also known as Chad Deity)	The African-American champion of THE Wrestling. Confident, handsome, not a very good wrestler.
Vignesh Paduar (also known as VP)	A young Indian-American Brooklynite. Charismatic, natural, effortless.
Joe Jabroni	A non-descript professional wrestler. (non-speaking; also plays Billy Heartland and Old Glory)
Ring Announcer (Can be pre-recorded)	A ring announcer.

A NOTE ON WRESTLING ENTRANCES

I've given specific ideas for the wrestling entrances of some of the characters (particularly Chad Deity) -- directors and design teams should feel free to adapt the entrances according to their own capabilities. The important thing to remember: the size, expense, and spectacle of a wrestler's entrance all speak volumes about his role in the company. Music choices and other specifics can and should be changed to fit the production.

For good examples of what we're talking about here, try to track down Hulk Hogan's *Real American* entrance, Triple H's *Time to Play The Game* entrance, any of The Rock's entrances, Ric Flair's classic *Thus Spake Zarathustra* entrances, Sandman's *Enter Sandman* entrance, and Goldberg's pyro-filled entrance, among others.

A NOTE ON WRESTLING PROMOS

The wrestling promo is a lot like the sideline interview in legit sports, often without the sideline interviewer. Intense, humorous, or somewhere in-between, the subtext of every promo (if not the overt text) is (a) I am better than you, and (b) I'm more of a real man than you. For good examples, see the work of Ric Flair, Dusty Rhodes, The Rock, Mick Foley, Stone Cold Steve Austin, and Chris Jericho, among others. For scary intensity, check out Jake "The Snake" Roberts or Taz (ECW days, not WWF). For Chad Deity and other over-the-top, cartoon style promos, see the work of Hulk Hogan, The Ultimate Warrior, Randy Savage, and Scott Steiner.

A NOTE ON THE RING ANNOUNCER

Howard Finkle (of the WWF) is the greatest of all-time. See also Michael Buffer.

A NOTE ON WRESTLING MOVES

Certain moves are mentioned and referenced in this play. Not all versions of these moves are created equal.

Powerbomb: Look at guys like Sid Vicious, Vader, or Brock Lesnar. Batista does a fancier version. There are many variations on the powerbomb. You're probably looking for the simplest one.

Superkick: Many wrestlers include the superkick in their arsenal, but the undisputed epitome of the superkick is Shawn Michaels's "Sweet Chin Music."

A NOTE ON WRESTLING STEREOTYPES

Most of the classic and truly offensive ones are from the WWF/WWE, largely in the eighties and nineties. Some names to check out for reference: Akeem, The African Dream; Saba Simba; The Wild Samoans; The Iron Sheik and Nikolai Volkoff; and of course, Muhammad Hassan and his sidekick Daivari.

A NOTE ON INTERMISSION

It's probably a good idea to have an intermission at the end of Act Two.

A NOTE ON VIDEO

If the capabilities exist, it might be pretty sweet to video tape the various promos as they are happening and project them on a wall or screen onstage.

A NOTE ON WRESTLING

As the audience enters the theater, it's probably a good idea to have a couple of guys wrestling in the ring (on the stage). I'd probably recommend two legitimate pro wrestlers as opposed to using the actors, because (a) the wrestlers will most likely put on a better show, and (b) you don't want to give away the reveal of each character. In cases where hiring wrestlers is unrealistic, I'd suggest having Mace and one of the other actors both wearing masks to disguise their identities. While I'm at it, I'll mention that a wrestling match at intermission could be a good idea as well. Again, I'd avoid using the actors if at all possible.

And while I'm at it again, let me add this last note: it is vitally important--VITALLY--that any wrestling or wrestling moves that are used in the course of the play are indeed *wrestling* moves and not stage combat. There is a subtle but massively important difference. A wrestling technical advisor would be a great person to have on the artistic team.

AND FINALLY...A NOTE ON THE POWERBOMB

This one definitely deserves its own page. The powerbomb is extremely difficult and very, very dangerous, even for professionals. Be prepared to spend time figuring out the best way to handle those sections. You might have to be creative.

For real. Take it seriously.

The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity

PROLOGUE

Blackout.

We hear the ringside bell.

RING ANNOUNCER

The following contest is scheduled for one fall with a {actual length of act one} time limit. Introducing first, already in the ring because he's not enough of a star to warrant his own elaborate entrance, weighing in at a way too small to be impressive 195 pounds, hailing from Parts Unknown because we can't be bothered to come up with a better hometown for him, this is The Mace!

MACE wears wrestling attire including a nondescript mask. He plays to the crowd, subdued. Maybe a simple raise of the arm. Maybe a pantomimed fist towards the audience, as if he was going to punch them all in one fell swoop. His actions are big and broad, designed to reach the entire crowd without words.

And his opponent...

Lights change. Mace pulls his mask up and off his face, and directly addresses the audience.

MACE

Everett K. Olson invented professional wrestling.

Nah. Revision: Everett K. Olson invented THE Wrestling.

Everett K. Olson also invented THE Wrestlers.

THE Wrestling action figures, THE Wrestling video game, THE Wrestling t-shirts and foam fingers.

He invented THE Wrestling.

Now don't get this confused with the wrestling, which is what I grew up watching Saturday mornings, sitting on cold wood floors on Cruger Avenue in the Bronx, eating Frosted Flakes that were really just generic flakes of corn with generic spoons of sugar sprinkled on top with a little drop of milk to give the impression that shit was gonna get soggy when even then, nineteen eighty-six, I'm six years old, my younger brother's five, my older brother's eight, and even then we all knew that there wasn't no Tony the fucking Tiger grrrrrr-owling at our poor Puerto Rican asses from the front of that box, but we ate it,

and we drank a quarter water right along with it. No soda in our house. Unhealthy.

So Saturday morning, on the floor, Underoos, 11am -- nah. Go back to 10:45. Still on the floor, still cereal, still Underoos and shirtless, me, my brother, and my brother, and we're playing with wrestling guys. Not dolls, not action figures, nah -- we played with wrestling guys. My brother and my brother, they played with the big World Wrestling Federation wrestling guys, with the big molded rubber that was like almost a foot tall and they were heavy, they were like hockey pucks, they were like two hockey pucks melted and molded into a wrestling guy that you couldn't even move his arms cause they came already shaped into some muscle pose -- man, that shit wasn't even worth playing with. I think my brother and my brother only got them cause they were the British Bulldogs and Kamala -- they were all colorful and they looked like the guys -- they had the characters right, but you couldn't *wrestle* with them.

So my brother and my brother played with the big doofy WWF guys, and nah, they're not even playing with them, cause you *can't* play with them, cause they're not built to be played with really, they're built to be put on a shelf, they're not toys, but it's worse than not being toys -- they're nothing, they're not *productive*, and they give you the wrong idea about what wrestling is. Those big rubber things that don't move, they make you think that wrestling is about big and static and pre-posed and color, that it's about what the toymakers dictated based on what they thought would be interesting to kids, but nah -- I *was* a kid, and what was interesting to me, as a kid, was being able to do some, you know, *playing* with my fucking toys.

So what I had, I had the AWA -- American Wrestling Association -- wrestling guys, see, cause they were smaller, and their arms moved, and their legs moved, and the heads could even turn a little, and you could play with them, you could kind of almost have real matches and do real moves with them, but see, the thing was, nobody in New York City knew nothing about the AWA. The WWF was on TV at eleven o'clock, they had Wrestlemania, they had Cyndi Lauper and the MTV hook-up, the Rock n' Wrestling Connection or whatever, and all that made it *look* like their toys would be fun. But those toys weren't shit. I fucking hate those toys.

But the AWA guys, yo. I could tell stories with those guys. I had whole drawn out epic storylines about who hated who and who won what belt, and I acted them out with six little AWA wrestling guys. And my brothers made fun of me, and fuck them, because when the wrestling came on at 11am on Saturday morning, and they got all excited about the colors, and the music, and the like, cool, I don't know, hair or whatever the fuck they got excited about, and they would stop eating the fake Frosted Flakes and start hitting each other and trying to do the moves they saw Junkyard Dog or Ricky Steamboat or The Hart

Foundation doing, while they were doing all that, I was *watching*, for real, and I was understanding every second of the stories that were being told.

None of this is even the point of the story.

11am, Saturday, Underoos, fake flakes, big rubber wrestling guys, small perfect wrestling guys, my brother clotheslining my brother and my brother setting my brother up to try to body slam him -- and that's when my grandpa would walk in, already dressed, always dressed, the head flick up so he's looking down his nose at my brother and my brother and they stop in a second and he doesn't have to say nothing cause the bodyslamming ain't gonna happen when he's in the room, and the cup of coffee, and he looks at the TV, and he laughs, and he says:

“Carajo. Mis nietos locos y the wrestling.”

End of prologue.

ACT ONE

Continuous.

EKO

Off-stage.

In English, please!

MACE

Sorry, Boss!

To audience.

That's Everett K. Olson. He's my boss.

EVERETT K. OLSON enters. He's on a bluetooth headset. He does business on the headset anytime he's not speaking To EKO.

"My crazy grandsons and the wrestler."

EKO

What?

MACE

That's what I said. In Spanish.

EKO

What?

MACE

You told me to translate --

EKO

Who cares what language you speak?

MACE

He just said...whatever. He does this a lot. I don't mention it. When you're a wrestler, you don't criticize the guy who runs the biggest wrestling organization in the world.

EKO

In headset.

Hold on. No, don't hold on. Call back.

To Mace.

Mace, Mace, Mace. Let's have a lesson on branding.

EKO (CONT.)

I walk into a room, and I tell somebody I run a wrestling organization, and they're probably not that impressed. Wrestling isn't high cache. Or it wasn't until I came along.

I walk into the room, and I tell somebody I am the founder, CEO, and central creative mind behind a 200 million dollar a year entertainment empire, and he's afraid his girlfriend is sleeping in my bed tonight. And she just might be.

EKO answers his bluetooth.

What? No. You called back too early.

To Mace.

Where was I?

Branding.

Seems simple enough.

But it gets tricky.

I tell you that the heart of my 200 million dollar a year entertainment empire is a wrestling organization -- and I'm instantly not maximizing my brand. I'm admitting there are other brands.

MACE

It's not enough for EKO to be the biggest company in the business.

EKO

No. We ARE the business.

MACE

He doesn't like to think about competition.

EKO

We have no competition.

We're the only wrestling there is.

We're the only wrestling there was.

We're the only wrestling there ever will be.

We're the only wrestling.

We're THE Wrestling.

MACE

Not to be confused with World Wrestling Entertainment, Total Nonstop Action Wrestling, Ring of Honor Wrestling, Windy City Pro Wrestling --

EKO clears his throat. Mace considers, then continues.

-- or any of the now-defunct organizations, like the aforementioned American Wrestling Association, World Championship Wrestling, World Class Championship Wrestling --

EKO clears his throat louder.

I don't mention them.

EKO

The only wrestling that matters!

EKO exits.

MACE

That's right, boss.

See, I'm one of THE Wrestlers, I'm one of the really fucking good THE Wrestlers, and that means, unlike other jobs where when you get really good, you become a boss or a star or you get paid more, in wrestling being really fucking good--like really fucking better than like how good you think I'm gonna be from me telling you that I'm really fucking good -- when you get really good at the wrestling part of the wrestling business, you're not rewarded. You're unrewarded. De-rewarded. De-warded?

Point is, being really skilled in the ring is a disadvantage, because being skilled in the ring means you make the other guy in the ring with you look better than he is, so you get in the ring with some guy who sucks, and he looks like he's kicking your ass, and the audience wants to see guys who can kick guys' asses, so that guy gets the applause, and then that guy gets the credit, and then the bosses love the job you did making that guy look like he didn't suck, so you get to make the next guy who sucks look like he doesn't suck, because the more guys who don't suck the better for THE Wrestling because guys who don't suck sell t-shirts, but the problem with that is that while I'm getting my ass kicked by guys who only look like they don't suck because I'm making them look like they don't suck, the audience starts to think -- guess what? *I'm* the one who sucks.

So then I go to the bottom in the minds of the bosses because I'm losing so much, and as bad as I want to walk in to their corporate nightmare office and remind them that wrestling is *not a legitimate sporting event* and I am losing because *they are writing scripts that tell me to lose*, as bad as I want to tell them that, I don't tell them nothing.

Because it's actually a good job.

A dream job.

An Underoos-and-bootleg-Frosted-Flakes-on-the-floor daydream job.

And I'm happy to lose.

And I'm happy for the crowd to tell me that I suck.

Because when I wake up in the morning, I don't even need an alarm clock.

And I don't mind that my knees hurt.

My hands hurt.

My everythings hurt.

I don't mind.

Because I'm one of THE Wrestlers.
And I'm in love with who I am.

Now I don't have no illusions about who I am though.
I am one of THE Wrestlers.
I am A THE Wrestler.
I am not THE THE Wrestler.

That's this guy.

MUSIC: something very hip-hop, very flashy, and somehow money-oriented. Maybe Kanye West, maybe Lil' Wayne -- something big and obnoxious and preferably current and contemporary.

And that's the perfect definition of this entire section: The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity. It's hip-hop, it's flashy, and it's certainly money-oriented.

The lights go out.

The word DEITY is spelled out onstage in bright obnoxious letters.

Add your own bright obnoxious scenic and musical elements. Just make sure it's huge and ostentatious and ridiculous.

THE RING ANNOUNCER

Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to introduce to you, hailing from THE United States of America, he is THE Wrestling Champion, he is...CHAAAAAAD DEEEEEEEEEEEEEITY!

Finally, he is revealed: CHAD DEITY. He is huge. He is strong. He is African-American. He is extremely well-dressed. He wears or carries a big gold championship belt. He is literally tossing money around as he enters through the audience and heads to the stage/ring.

MACE

Here are the facts about Chad Deity, organized in handy numbered outline form. Number one: Chad Deity is extremely muscular.

Chad Deity strikes a pose.

Number two: Chad Deity has a winning smile.

Chad Deity smiles winningly.

Number three: Chad Deity is good on the mike.

Chad Deity is handed a microphone.

CHAD DEITY

{Spectacularly charismatic ad-lib.}

MACE

Number four: Chad Deity has made a lot of money for THE Wrestling, thanks to numbers one through three.

CHAD DEITY

Number four A: Chad Deity has made a lot of money for Chad Deity, thanks to number four.

MACE

Number four A one: Macedonio Guerra has not made himself even a fraction of what Chad Deity has made, even though you could argue that the Macedonio Guerras of the wrestling world are just as essential to the success of THE Wrestling as the Chad Deities--

CHAD DEITY

There ain't Chad Deities.

MACE

--The one, the only, THE Chad Deity. And the reason why I am as important to his success--which means the success of THE Wrestling--the reason why I am as important to the myth of Chad Deity as Chad Deity himself is fact number five:

CHAD DEITY

Chad Deity is a terrible wrestler.

MACE

He's got charisma.

CHAD DEITY

{even more spectacularly charismatic ad-lib}

MACE

He's got the look.

Chad Deity rips off his shirt and poses.

He's not above cheesy shit like that.

CHAD DEITY

Not even remotely above it!

MACE

He's got everything you need to be a superstar wrestler. Cause remember, being talented really ain't a factor of key importance.

CHAD DEITY

Not even remotely important!

MACE

When I'm on the attack in a wrestling match, it's a constant process of action, reaction, and evaluation, thinking about the outcome of the match, which yes, we already know going into the night, so don't dismiss my art form on the basis of it being predetermined unless you're ready to dismiss ballet for the swan already knowing it's gonna end up dead, and I'm thinking about the crowd and how they sound, if they hate me as much as they should hate me, if I got them to the point where they need the good guy -- cause I'm always the bad guy -- to beat me down and pin me and bring them with him to glory. I'm thinking about which move I bust out next to get the audience responding in line with the story I'm trying to tell, whether I throw a Pelé kick or if that's too fancy and might make them actually cheer for me instead of booing me the way they're supposed to, or do I choke the good guy down and will they be pissed at me for cheating or will they just be bored with such a visually unimpressive representation of my villainous skill set, and that's just the beginning of a million adjustments and readjustments I'm making -- and I'm the guy who they all think sucks, because when Chad Deity is on the attack, his thought process is a little more easy to follow:

CHAD DEITY

Punch! Punch! Clothesline! Elbow Drop! Pick 'em up -- Powerbomb 'em -- Pin 'em.

MACE

That's the most popular wrestler in THE Wrestling, folks.

CHAD DEITY

Mace, come here and let me powerbomb you, brother.

MACE

This is the powerbomb.

Mace allows Chad Deity to powerbomb him, then returns to his feet.

When Chad Deity powerbombs me -- and it's happened a lot over the years -- I allow myself to be bent over with my head between his legs. I jump into the air when he's pretending to pick me up. I bend my body in half and sit straight up and elevate myself into position on his shoulders.

CHAD DEITY

Then Chad Deity takes over.

MACE

He falls forward.

CHAD DEITY

That's my part.

MACE

He doesn't even do that so good. I make sure my back hits the ground evenly, I keep my chin tucked into my chest to prevent concussions, I smack both hands on the mat to evenly distribute the impact, and most important to the reputation of the champion of THE Wrestling --

CHAD DEITY

-- Chad Deity --

MACE

-- I bounce off the mat and convulse in pain and scream and howl to make it seem like this guy, this unbelievably untalented freak of physical and charismatic nature is actually worth a damn as a professional wrestler.

CHAD DEITY

Teamwork.

MACE

It is teamwork, even if I'm the only one on the team doing the work. And that, ladies and gentlemen, not the storylines, not the competition, not the dazzling physiques or the pretty colors or the elaborate entrance of Chad Deity is the reason that professional wrestling is the most uniquely profound artistic expression of the ideals of the United States:

CHAD DEITY

You can't kick a guy's ass in wrestling without the help of the guy whose ass you're kicking.

MACE

People love the powerbomb. They love the power, the beauty, the implausibility of it, and whether they got the first sense of it or not, they know someplace in them that's not their rational head that it takes two people to pull that beautiful bullshit off, and they love the fact that it takes two people to pull it off. There's community in that move, and there's unity, and togetherness, and somehow the fact that me and this genius are uniting to make it look like he's murdering me, when in actuality I'm doing what I can to make him look like the all-world fighting machine he's made out to be, and he's doing what he can with his limited capacity to make sure I don't break my neck, and so at the bottom of what we're doing is we're both trying to ensure that neither one of us gets hurt -- that fact is powerful and beautiful and, like I said, one of the most profound expressions of the ideals of this damn nation.

CHAD DEITY

Pick 'em up -- Powerbomb 'em -- Pin 'em.

EKO appears.

EKO

We should put that on a t-shirt.

Into bluetooth.

Did you hear that? Make a t-shirt. Black. Red writing. Go.

MACE

And that right there, that's why Chad Deity is more important to Everett K. Olson than Macedonio Guerra is.

EKO

That's not your name.

MACE

In THE Wrestling, I'm known as The Mace.

EKO

That other name is too hard to pronounce.

MACE

For white people.

CHAD DEITY

I can't pronounce it.

MACE

For non-Spanish speaking Americans.

EKO

For wrestling fans. Wrestling fans do not speak Spanish.

MACE

He's my boss, so I don't bring up Lucha Libre, or the World Wrestling Council in Puerto Rico, or the late Eddie Guerrero or Carlos Colon or El Hijo Del Santo or...I don't bring up any of them. I let my boss be right.

EKO

Now put on your mask.

MACE

I don't bring up how the mask is a sanctified, holy Mexican wrestling tradition. I know my role. I shut my mouth. I know that tonight, The Mace will go out there and put on a show and Chad Deity will be the benefactee of all my hard work. I know that even if I'm the AWA wrestling guy, and I have multiple points of articulation, which is what they call the movable parts these days, and you can use me to tell a real story, and even if Chad Deity is the big, unbendable, pre-posed lump of hockey puck rubber that ain't really good for nothing but collecting dust on a back shelf, I know my brother and my brother would still rather play with Chad Deity, and the rest of the United States would still rather play with Chad Deity, and ultimately, because of that undeniable fact, I know that Chad Deity deserves every ounce of respect and dollars and championship gold that he receives.

And I know that the only role that I'm destined to fulfill in all my days in THE Wrestling, as long as they may last, is the one I'm in right now: Jobber to the Stars. The guy who loses to make the winners look good.

So I'm still telling stories, and my brother and my brother, they're still playing. Only now it's basketball, cause they're so fucking predictable and they gotta go play basketball like every other kid of our Like-Mike-If-I-Could-Be-Like-Mike generation. They moved to Red Hook, Brooklyn, and they go across the Brooklyn Queens Expressway into Carroll Gardens to play ball. My brother and my brother call me when they're playing ball in Carroll Gardens to tell me about this kid.

VIGNESHWAR PADUAR (VP), on a cell phone.

VP

Nah, but --

MACE

This tall, lanky, Indian kid.

VP

Nah, but --

MACE

He calls himself VP.

VP

Nah, but Baby, mira, I'm saying, but --
 I'm saying! Carajo, I'm saying --
 Cause I'm Indian.
 Cause I'm fucking Indian.
 Nah, but that's my culture, Baby.
 You don't know nothing about my culture.
 You're Dominican.
 Nah, I'm not saying --
 I'm not saying Dominicans are stupid.
 I'm saying, you Dominican, so you got no reason to know nothing about no
 Indians.
 Until me.

MACE

My brother and my brother find the kid's use of Spanish slang when he's
 hitting on Latinas hilarious, and since the kid stays steady hitting on Latinas,
 my brother and my brother stay calling me. And if once in a while I get lucky, I
 get to hear when he stops hitting on Latinas, or black girls, or white girls with
 full sleeve tattoos, or Asian girls with full sleeve tattoos, or girls in general,
 cause when he stops hitting on them, most of the time it gets funnier.

*VP, covering the phone as he yells to
 someone offstage.*

VP

Motherfucker, you step on my sneakers again and I will fuck your ass up.
 Me and my whole country got the capabilities.
 Long-range nuclear missile status, doggy.
 We the new Superpower.
 We make your Air Jordans, train your doctors, AND help desk your ass when
 your Mac breaks down.
 New Superpower, bitches. Get your ass up off my street with that shit.

Back to the phone.

Nah, but this is what I'm saying about India.
 Kama. Sutra.
 Yo, if you choose not to respect my peoples, then, then, then...then you a racist
 motherfucker.

MACE

And then, my brother and my brother hang up the phone, cause VP is ready to get game, and I sit in my hotel room, moderately obsessed with the way this kid works with words, switches codes, drops slang and makes me laugh, indirect, him in his cell phone and me on my brother's or my brother's. And a few hours later, my brother and my brother call me, and they tell me the same thing every time: VP wrecked them on the court.

This kid, he can play they say.

Like Billy Hoyle in *White Men Can't Jump*, like he's hustling us, yo.

Like he comes in, goofy, awkward, Indian, man.

Not even Chinese, so you get a little of that Yao Ming warning shot.

He's INDIAN.

And he speaks Spanish.

Fuck that, he could trash talk you in English, Spanish, Hindi, and Urdu.

That's what they say.

And he's a big doof.

And he wrecks us every single time, they say.

Kid don't get tired.

And he got hops like Spud Webb, hangtime like that And One dude who did the 720 dunk on youtube, they say.

And he's already tall.

And he's strong.

And they stay saying things about this kid and I stay listening cause they stay fascinated by who he is and how he's not nothing like nothing they'd ever expect to find nowhere on the planet, let alone right there in Carroll Gardens, where almost everyone is either old-style Italian family or new school hipster just-marrieds with babies in expensive strollers -- you ain't supposed to find this Indian, this Indian, this Indian, I don't know, this Indian fucking rock star, they say, you're just not supposed to find something like this nowhere, let alone here in Carroll Gardens.

And then one time, my brother and my brother say: I'd pay to see this kid.

I'd *pay* to see this kid.

They see him every week, and they'd *pay* to see this kid.

Huh.

Next time THE Wrestling comes to New York to do a show, I head straight down to Carroll Gardens, in theory to play basketball with my brother and my brother, but really to watch basketball, but really to watch my brother and my brother and really really, to watch VP, who is really Vigneshwar Paduar.

VP

The mayor of Smith Street.

MACE

Smith Street is the hopping new social center of Brooklyn reborn.

VP

BROOKLYN, WHAT!

MACE

Vigneshwar Paduar's family owns a pizzeria by the F train at Carroll Street, a dry cleaner near Bergen, a botanica one block in from Atlantic Avenue and an apartment building just off the BQE.

VP

LUXURY LOFTS, WHAT!

MACE

Everything my brother and my brother said about this kid was true and insufficient. His mouth never stops moving. Trash talk in English, Spanish, Hindi, and Urdu, yes, but sprinklings of Polish, Italian -- shit, when a Japanese girl strolls past:

VP

In Japanese.

Yaa, yaa, kawaiko-chan. Ocha demo shinai?
(*Hey, hey, cutie. Can I take you out for tea?*)

MACE

And he gets the number. And he wins the game. And I end up amazed. And I end up talking to him.

To VP.

You ever think about going pro?

VP

Man, basketball ain't no kind of job. I'm an entertainer, Papa. All I need is an audience and there's audience everywhere, Doggy.

MACE

I think that's about that -- he'll be going off to get discovered someday, head to Hollywood, surround himself with women and be where he really wants to be, which ultimately, is really right where he always is: wherever he is, because anywhere he goes, he is the party, he is the most amazing thing happening in the room. And then he says something, the thing, the one sentence that impacts the rest of my life more than anything I heard before, more than any

Everett K. Olson contract renegotiation, more than any Chad Deity misguided dream for a new finish to our matches -- Vigneshwar Paduar says this:

VP

Nah, I need more than an audience.

MACE

You do?

VP

I need, what I need is, I need someone to work with, someone to push me, someone to make me work harder and reach higher and steal more of the show than I already know how to do.

MACE

And I'm listening.

VP

I need that dance partner, I need that Larry Bird vs. Magic Johnson, only I don't want to be trying to squash him, I don't want to be trying to beat him and win no fucking championship ring that's going on my finger for a minute then back in the box and under the bed or off to Ebay. I want to be working with somebody, I want him to elevate me, make me funnier, make me play ball better, make me pull more chicks and learn more languages and --

MACE

And have your back and make sure he don't hurt you --

VP

And it ain't nothing that's romantic or love or nothing like that --

MACE

It's community.

VP

It's fucking community.

Silence.

MACE

I'm gonna get you a job.

VP exits.

It's not my place to get involved in the money side of THE Wrestling. I ain't a financial factor far as EKO is concerned, and I ain't ultimately interested in making no more money for no one and I don't need no more money for me since I came from watered-down sugar flakes and sugar water and I figure

anything I got that ain't got water and sugar in the name is gravy, so I stick on out of business discussions.

But Vigneshwar Paduar is money that will make itself, money that can make me jump from underrated-Chad-Deity-punching-bag to respected talent scout responsible for locating and securing the future of the next star, the next big charismatic thing, the next, well, the next Chad Deity. But more than that, the kid, this VP kid, he has the business in his body, he has the real thrust of the business as an extra vein pumping around the outside of his aorta, not pumping blood but pumping need, need to be part of something, need to elevate himself while elevating someone else, need to run opposite of the rest of this country's cold-hearted and short-sighted insistence on stepping on the next man's face and driving him, grinding him deeper into the earth under the misguided belief that as long as that motherfucker is falling deeper and further away from me, I must be rising to new heights.

VP knows what I know, what any professional wrestler who really understands what he does for a living knows, which is that what we do is metaphoric, that the value of two men in silly outfits pretending to beat each other into submission is not in the fight -- it's in the communion. And forget his intangibles. With the tangibles this kid brings to the table, he could outshine even the elaborate entrance of Chad Deity.

MUSIC: Some DJ Rehka Basement Bhangra. Hip-hop meets Bollywood. Maybe MIA's Bird Flu or Boyz. (And yes, I know she's not Indian. That feel though).

It's the soundtrack for this little section: call it The Elaborate Entrance of Vigneshwar Paduar.

RING ANNOUNCER

Ladies and Gentlemen, the following contest is scheduled for one fall, with a next generation of human history time limit.

This is Chad Deity's Elaborate Entrance but bigger and more exciting. Lights, pyrotechnics, beautiful dancing girls if you can afford it. Kathakali dancers, completely made up.

This should be an extended section, and it should be amazing. Most importantly, it should be culturally accurate. As

many aspects of traditional Indian celebrations as possible should be present.

Some of this can take place on video, if necessary.

RING ANNOUNCER (CONT.)

Introducing first, hailing from The Bomb, Bombay, India, hailing from Mumbai Do-Or-Die, India, hailing from the planet of Brooklyn, New York, hailing from the new global society, weighing in at an incalculable sociopolitical weight, this is VIGNESHWAR PADUAR!

The Elaborate Entrance of Vigneshwar Paduar needs to convince the audience that he is a can't miss star.

And at the end, reveal Everett K. Olson watching the whole thing.

EKO

I don't think there's a place in the company for him.

Everything involved in the entrance disappears, leaving only EKO and Mace.

MACE

I suggest I'd take a pay cut.

EKO

I don't pay you enough to split your salary.

MACE

I suggest maybe Chad Deity doesn't need quite so elaborate an entrance.

EKO

You see, you see, you see, Mace, that's why you don't get it. You don't get the business. It's not the concretes in this business. It's the metaphor.

MACE

Right. I'm the one who doesn't get the metaphor.

EKO

Chad Deity's elaborate entrance is America.

MACE

He's got that right.

EKO

Chad Deity's elaborate entrance makes soldiers remember what they fight for, makes fathers teach their sons to stand up and cheer on greatness. Chad Deity's elaborate entrance, by proxy, is America's elaborate entrance, ongoing, giving proof through the night that the flag is still there.

MACE

By throwing hundred dollar bills in the air as he enters. God Bless America.

EKO

We've never drawn the connections overtly because we don't need to draw the connections overtly. No one wants politics in their entertainment. No one wants to think about the United States and how we suffer to maintain our meager basic standard of living.

Into his bluetooth.

What? No. If my dog wants steak, you cut it for him. That's what I pay you for.

To Mace.

Where was I? Meager basic standard of living. And it's not all about money. Chad Deity is the focus of this company not just because he brings in the most income --

MACE

That's the main reason. Do I mention it?

Mace shakes his head no.

EKO

-- but because he is an inspiration. He is our vision of our collective self: all-powerful, all-popular, all-polish and heart and smooth talking self-assurity. Chad Deity defeats demons, and we feel like our demons deserve that defeat, and we feel, more importantly, that we can be the ones to defeat them.

MACE

This is why I stay out of the money.

EKO

Your boy, this, this kid, this -- where is he from anyway?

MACE

Brooklyn.

EKO

No, I mean, he's brown, not like you -- and that's not racist, so relax -- what is he, Afghan? Oriental?

MACE

That's a rug. And a rug. But I don't tell my boss that. I tell him Vigneshwar Paduar is from India.

EKO

He's not a fundamentalist, is he? I think I might be able to sell a fundamentalist.

MACE

I had a feeling that we'd go in this direction. I don't mention that Vigneshwar Paduar is Indian and Hindu and Brooklyn and that the history of pro wrestling is filled with sloppy bullshit Middle East stereotypes and Russian stereotypes and Native American stereotypes and *Samoan* stereotypes and it's bullshit and it's bullshit but this isn't the time to rant against the system that's failed people like Vigneshwar Paduar for decades. So instead, we come prepared. Instead of talking about what Everett K. Olson proposed and railing against it, we propose a little outer borough counter-action.

VP enters.

VP

Call me Lord Kartikeya, Hindu God of War. Imagine the t-shirts, multi-armed fury, deep earth tones, radiant lines, Eastern mysticism, all that hippie shit cut and processed with violence and--

MACE

He wasn't feeling that.

VP

Aight, fuck that -- we don't play up India. We go to Brooklyn. Viggie Smalls is the illest. The Notorious V.I.G. The VP of funk. Vig O Russ, the Leader of the V-V-V-V-V-V-V-Unit.

Rapping.

So dope in the ring that it's really unfair
I see your boys in the back and I'm killing 'em there
Now ladies don't worry it ain't silly to stare
You getting pinned by the slumdog mill-i-a-naire

MACE

It's an unlikely thing to see, this kid with the brown skin that's not brown like my brown which ain't brown like the brown that folks like my boss expect to hear words like this flowing out of, and that's why it's money, it's the future of our business and fuck that, it's the future of the world.

VP

It worked for John Cena, and he's a white kid from Boston -- from BOSTON!
You got me, from the home of hip-hop --

MACE

-- I don't stop him to say that Brooklyn ain't the home of hip-hop, even though
as a Bronx kid, I'm deeply offended --

VP

You got me, VP, and I can make this work like no one else, see?

MACE

And EKO looks up from his computer screen and his in-between bite pastrami
sandwich and gives the dismissive hand wave I-ain't-feeling-it kind of move.

EKO

What kind of street credibility can I sell between the coasts with a skinny paki?

MACE

I cringe, but VP doesn't even slow down to acknowledge that (a) he ain't from
Pakistan and therefore (b) he ain't a paki, and (c) how the fuck you gonna call
someone a paki in the first place? And for a second I think about Everett K.
Olson complaining about the spic he's got curtain jerking under some stupid
mask, or the nigger his company is built around. Nah -- he'd never call Chad
Deity a nigger. Chad Deity is no nigger to Everett K. Olson. Chad Deity is a
money machine. The spic and the paki haven't made EKO a dime.

VP

That's cool -- the Brooklyn thing don't take advantage of the fact that me and
my people are the new superpower anyway. You know we're the new
superpower, right? Brazil and Russia and India and China -- that's the BRIC.
That's the future, yo. And yo, I speak all kinds of Indian and some kinds of
Chinese and the Brazilian's just like Spanish and give me a week in Brighton
Beach, I'll pick up the Russian. I'll pick up a bunch of Russians.

MACE

The kid's tongue gets overexcited getting to talk about it, so I look him down
and he readjusts and he shows me even more that he gets what the business is
really about.

VP

Okay, so India got the ill economic growth action jumping off right now, and
I'm saying, my family, for real, is already making for real money. So what I'm
saying is you play off that, and you put me in a suit, and I'm this rich playboy
kid who fucking takes up wrestling just as a hobby and I'm all disrespectful,
and I'm talking about outsourcing tech jobs and booming economics and telling

the audience they should be investing in my companies that are gonna turn right around and buy up American companies. They'll hate me.

MACE

I think this one has a chance, seeing as how it revises off a classic wrestling stereotype -- mid-1980s Japanese hostile corporate takeover, to be exact -- and it still stirs up the kind of nationalistic fear and loathing for an exotic outsider that this industry loves and has thrived on, and Everett K. Olson is actually listening and he's thinking hard and --

EKO

THAT'S IT!

MACE

That's it?

VP

Fuck right, that's it.

EKO

What wrestling needs right now is a Muslim fundamentalist!

MACE

Fuck. There's already been a Muslim fundamentalist in professional wrestling. Muhammad Hassan. It didn't end well. You can look it up. Google. Eighty-eight thousand results. I don't mention this.

EKO

Only problem is, I don't know what we got with this kid.

MACE

He's got a point. VP isn't a wrestler. I hadn't really thought about that until right now. And no matter what you might think from watching muscleboy Chad Deity in the ring, this ain't the kind of business you could just walk into and suddenly know what the fuck you're doing. I gotta teach him how to fall, how to pull a punch, I mean, a body slam could take weeks for him to learn to do the right way, I don't care how athletic the kid is on the basketball court. Only thing the kid knows for sure, only thing I know the kid knows, only thing I know the kid is never possibly gonna have a problem with in his long, prosperous career in THE Wrestling is working the microphone.

EKO

But we make him a fundamentalist, we say he's from someplace else --

Into Bluetooth.

Where are Muslims from? A cave, right?

EKO (CONT.)

To Mace.

A fucking cave or something, and we put somebody else with him to handle the heavy lifting. It's the gimmick that's important. We're just lucky we found someone who fits it so perfect.

MACE

He doesn't fit it perfect, but as soon as my boss mentions the heavy lifting, everything comes clear and I understand why I was the one who had a brother and a brother who crossed the BQE to find this kid -- I'm his heavy lifting. I'm his community. Vigneshwar Paduar and Macedonio Guerra -- we got war in our names, we got colonialized blood pumping in our arteries and even though it's nothing like the same thing, we got some kind of symbiosis in our approach to the world, and he could talk, and I could wrestle, and fuck Chad Deity and fuck Everett K. Olson and this is fucking money and fuck money, this is storytelling, this is what I've been looking for since AWA wrestling guys on the floor on Saturday morning.

To EKO.

I'll do the heavy lifting.

EKO

You? You're gonna talk for him?

Pause.

MACE

Talk? For him?
We've got a bit of miscommunication.

EKO

The kid is supposed to be this militant cave-dwelling fuck-damentalist, right? And he's in here rapping and sounding like your average street hood from cell block C.

MACE

We've got a bit of huge miscommunication.

EKO

We don't need you. We need someone...someone to manage him. Someone to come out and speak Arabic and rant and rave and really give the suckers in the cheap seats something to get riled up over.

MACE

Go home and Google Muhammad Hassan tonight. Please.

EKO

And what am I gonna do, put a Cuban kid like you out there --

MACE

-- Puerto Rican --

EKO

-- to rant and rave in Spanish --

MACE

Spanglish. At best.

EKO

And piss off the crowd for this Israeli Iraqi whatever he is?

MACE

Israeli? I can't even.

EKO

Mace, Mace, Mace -- you don't work for this, Mace.

Chad Deity is revealed somewhere in the room--he's been there the whole time, unnoticed. Maybe he's in a oversized chair facing away and spins into view.

CHAD DEITY

Make him Mexican.

VP

Fuck did he come from?

CHAD DEITY

Mexican guy, hates America, hates freedom, comes here to steal away jobs, leech off services, make our good hard-earned American money and send it back to his militant revolutionaries in Mexico. And he's got connections with Venezuelan oil, and Columbian drugs --

EKO

-- And Cuban communism --

CHAD DEITY

-- and those all connect him with Al-Qaeda and Hamas and The French for the destruction of the greatest country on Earth. And the Mexican enlists this great Iranian or whatever he is warrior, trained in the deadly Muslim martial

arts where they believe you can murder a man with pressure points and prayer.

EKO

I gotta admit, the kid has that look.

CHAD DEITY

And the Mexican and the Middle Easterner come to the States and they want to bring us down from the inside --

EKO

So they figure the best way to do that is to start at the top with a major symbolic victory --

CHAD DEITY

So they come to THE Wrestling --

EKO

They come after Chad Deity --

CHAD DEITY

They come after the heart of America.

MACE

I definitely don't tell them that there is no country named America.

EKO

Mace, Mace, Mace, this could work, Mace.

MACE

This isn't what we're --

VP

Let's do it.

Pause.

Yeah. We're in. Let's do it.

MACE

And I look over at Vigneshwar Paduar, and he doesn't say anything else, and he doesn't have to say anything else, because I look at him, and I see what he's saying, I see that he's not unfamiliar with anything that's happening right now, that he's heard it on basketball courts and in pizza places and from beautiful but ignorant Brooklynites with words like "pink" and "hottie" stenciled across subtle sagged sweatpants. He's heard this. He's fought it. He's beaten it not through fistfights and the stink of swagger, but through no look passes and perfect pepperoni slices and multiple ripple-effect orgasms. I look to VP and he

tells me without speaking, he tells me that the best way he knows to overcome is by taking up the challenge and ripping the terms of that challenge to his own, new, fashionable shreds.

VP

We'll do it.

MACE

So we did it.

EKO, VP, and Chad Deity exit.

The first thing Everett K. Olson did with his newly created Axis of Enemy Combatants was to script our debut promo -- the moment that The Fundamentalist -- yeah, that's the name they came up with -- and Che Chavez Castro -- I swear, folks, this is what I'm working against here -- the moment that The Fundamentalist and Che Chavez Castro were first unveiled to a national television audience.

The second thing Everett K. Olson did was to disavow any association with the words we were about to speak.

EKO, addressing the television audience.

EKO

THE Wrestling fans, what you are about see and hear is a paid announcement from a new member of THE Wrestling and his mouthpiece manager. The views and opinions expressed in the following do not represent the views of THE Wrestling. In fact, on behalf of THE Wrestling, I would like to condemn the comments to which you are, unfortunately, about to be subjected.

MACE

I don't mention that it's his fault that people are about to be subjected to our comments...or that he wrote our comments. Instead, as usual, I go ahead and do what I have been paid to do.

VP enters as The Fundamentalist. VP prays.

Mace changes to his Che Chavez Castro costume. He speaks with an exaggerated Mexican accent and delivers a bad, over-the-top wrestling promo.

Attention Capitalist pigs! I am Che Chavez Castro, Mexican revolutionary and denouncer of all things American!

VP

For real, that's what they wrote for him to say.

MACE

I have traveled long and far from el see-u-dad de el Mejico, weaving my way through scorching desert and desolate countryside in search for freedom, in search for a better life, in search for...America. And now I have crossed the border. I have found freedom and glory and the American Dream...and I hate it.

VP

Flawless logic they gave this dude.

MACE

I hate everything that I have discovered in America. I hate your fast cars and undressed women and your financial superiority. I am consumed with the hatred of everything that your nation stands for, and as a Mexican man of action, I have decided to take a stand.

VP

From the audience, silence. They want to boo us, they want to do exactly what Everett K. Olson wants them to want to do, which is wrap themselves in an American flag and tell us to go back where we came from, tell us to love it or leave it, tell us U-S-A, U-S-A and everything that goes along with jingo patriot mindless entertainment national empowerment via men playfighting in spandex panties, but they can't. The words coming out of Mace's mouth don't let them. The words are foolish, and the audience has heard them before, and they accomplish nothing but diminish the threat. We're a caricature in a world of cartoons. We're pencil sketched. The audience wants animation and color.

MACE

And *this* is the stand I have chosen to take.

VP

And that's my cue, and I nail it. I rise from prayer, Muslim prayer I assume, although I'm not sure my turban and my Greek worry beads and my yoga mat are exactly Allah-approved, and I pose fear-inspiringly, and I glare, and I don't flex a muscle or frown or do any other of the bad guy stereotype bullshit that bad pro wrestlers think makes them look like a threat. I lock my eyes on the camera, and I glare, and I got no expression on my face, and Mace vibes off it, he feels it, and his voice settles in, and he's getting creepy, and it's powerful, and it's a start.

MACE

Behold The Fundamentalist.

VP

And it's a start, even if the words are that. And some music starts, and I think it's a Bollywood love song, but it might be cut with some chanting Tibetan monks and maybe I even hear some Riverdance Gaelic shit someplace in the mix. But me and Mace, we keep glaring, and we stop speaking, and the pose we hit and the look we give and the connection me and him got on some psychic mind meld status, like those evil twin brothers from GI Joe, all that combines to make the nonsense fade to the background just long enough that we feel like we did everything that could be done with what they gave us. And we don't say another word.

MACE

We stare them the fuck down.

VP

And it's silent. And they're scared. And it's perfect.

MACE

Maybe not perfect. But it's way better than anyone could have expected.

EKO's Office.

EKO

Guys, guys, this is great. This is just what I was looking for.

MACE

It's definitely not what he was looking for, but I don't mention that.

EKO

The reaction, they were there, they were present, they were booing.

MACE

They weren't booing. I've learned not to speak in these things.

EKO

I'm projecting, of course. They weren't booing. But the boos will come. I'm projecting. Boos will be there.

MACE

I agree.

EKO

Don't change a thing. Don't change a thing. Less words, maybe. The silent part, that's gold. The boos will come. Don't change. You're evil. They'll hate you.

MACE

This is one of the few businesses where hatred is the best thing you can hear. And it took me I don't know how many years, and I had to do it as Che Chavez Castro, the Mexican revolutionary and generic Middle East sympathizer, and I don't know for exact what I did, but tonight, I did something, and it was something good, and it was alongside someone who I trust, and all I know is we're gonna build on that, and all I know is somehow I've been building on that since cold hardwood Saturday mornings. Since 1986. We took the wrong thing. We made it the right thing. I'm proud of that.

EKO, addressing the television audience.

EKO

The views and opinions expressed in the following do not represent the views of THE Wrestling. In fact, on behalf of THE Wrestling, I would like to condemn the comments to which you are, unfortunately, about to be subjected.

VP

Only we don't make no comments. We make shit uncomfortable and creepy.

MACE

In the horror movies that my brother and my brother watched on the floor on Cruger Avenue, psycho killers chased virgins with giant knives caked in old brown blood, and there was lots of screaming and running and chaos and it wasn't scary for a second, because in our neighborhood the potential for violence was measured by how straight-faced and silent the mood on the block was at any given moment. We know this country has nothing to fear from noise.

VP

Thirty seconds they gave us onscreen.

MACE

Thirty seconds we didn't speak.

VP

We ain't said shit.

MACE

And neither did the audience. Ten seconds we stared at the camera. Intensity.

VP

And I caught the ghost or something -- I ripped off the prayer robe shawl tent thing they had me in this week, and I threw it on the floor and I threw myself

on the floor and I started doing one-handed push-ups and yo, I never knew I could do one-handed push-ups but I banged them the fuck out and I kept my eyes on the camera the whole time.

MACE

And I stayed where I was, in the front of the frame, and I glared.

VP

And fifteen seconds after the push-ups started, I'm back on my feet, and I'm sweating just a little, and I got perfect drops, two of them, dripping slow and tracing the bends of the bones in my face, and I'm right back where I came from, me and Macedonio Guerra -- fuck that Chavez Castro shit -- me and my boy Mace scaring the back of the neck of every wrestling fan in the country.

MACE

And in the last two seconds, it felt so much like the moment when you realize who you are and what you do and why you do and where you fit that a smile broke in the back corner of the left side of my mouth.

VP

At the same time the same smile broke on mine. Perfect.

EKO's Office.

EKO

Chill bumps you guys are giving me. Back of my leg, every hair is running away from every other hair.

MACE

Nothing Everett K. Olson says by way of praise means a thing. Still, it's nice to be recognized for a job well done.

EKO

And I think the excitement has left the front of my boxer briefs a little wet.

VP

Dude.

EKO

They don't know what to make of you two. They know you're the enemy. They know you're out to end our way of life. They know they want to boo you and they know they will boo you but right now they don't know where you're coming from and it scares the fucking fuck out their fucking fuck fucks.

VP

High praise.

EKO

I might never have the neither of you speak again.
Into Bluetooth.

Order me new underwear!

*Chad Deity is revealed somewhere in
the room.*

CHAD DEITY

The government demands that there be a minimum number of raisins in each loaf of raisin bread.

Silence.

That's what it says on the back of my bag of raisin bread. I thought this kind of ridiculous. The federal government is intervening in raisin bread raisin allotment. If a company wants to give me two raisins in something that they call raisin bread, the market will balance it out. Give me raisins, I'll buy your bread. Hold back raisins, the people who don't like raisins all that much, they'll buy your bread. The government can do what the government needs to do, and the raisins are the least of anybody's concerns. It's ridiculous, right?

It is **not** ridiculous, because there are people who care far more than Chad Deity about the minimum acceptable amount of raisins in raisin bread, and those people have clearly spent time and resources to establish the minimum acceptable amount of raisins in raisin bread. And the value of that work, regardless of if it is apparent in every bite of every slice of every loaf of raisin bread, lies in the fact that that work has been done and the dedicated people who did that work can stand behind the product they have played a role in creating and be proud. That is the American Dream, and that is what Chad Deity stands for.

And you, Mace, of all the people in this room, should understand the American Dream, particularly as relates to raisin bread, because your people fought, and protested, and boycotted for the right to pick grapes, to be properly compensated for their dedication and devotion to the picking of grapes, and the fact that you can't see the harm that you're doing to your ancestors shows me that you have no respect for any stage of this process, be it grape, raisin, or bread.

Silence.

MACE

I'm not Mexican.

VP

I only eat whole grain.

CHAD DEITY

The whole no word thing? It's cute.

VP

Cute? The audience loves it.

CHAD DEITY

Sooner or later, they're going to want you to speak.
What are you going to have to say?

Silence.

You ain't got the raisins. Right now, you're giving them bread, and it's different bread, so they're all excited while they figure out what to do with it. But they'll realize you don't work for French toast, they'll realize you don't work for cream cheese and jelly, and they'll come looking for the raisins.

Chad Deity exits.

EKO

He's right, you know.

VP

How can you tell?

EKO

You're doing good. You're doing fine. But we could use...we could use some more words. That's the reason we've got you in there with him, Mace. You're the one who I'm paying to deliver the raisins.

To Bluetooth.

What? No, not you. I hate raisins.

EKO exits.

VP

Mocking EKO.

I might never have the neither of you speak again.

MACE

I don't mention how Everett K. Olson had just told us that.

VP

Chill bumps you guys are giving me.

MACE

I don't mention that either.

VP

The front of my boxer briefs --

MACE

-- Dude. I don't mention any of it. But VP does.

VP

Ay yo, get that dude back in here and let's get this all understood that we go out there and we do our shit the way we been doing it and we get the same reaction and this dude can't be telling us to do one thing and then to do something else cause the guy with the fucking belt comes in and, and, and thinks he got an idea about what you and me are doing.

MACE

I let VP vent --

VP

-- Pepperidge Farm ass motherfuckers. --

MACE

-- I let VP vent, and when he's good and vented, I let him know that I spent the whole raisin conversation thinking about what we were gonna do next. I spent the whole raisin conversation thinking about the only two words we possibly needed to say.

EKO, addressing the television audience.

EKO

On behalf of THE Wrestling, I would like to condemn the comments to which you are, unfortunately, about to be subjected.

VP

First thing you saw after Everett K. Olson disavowed all connection with everything you were about to see was --

VP holds up a life-size poster of Chad Deity.

MACE

Not over-the-top.

Chad Deity.

VP

Every five, six seconds or so, Mace dropped the name, and every time he spit that name, the name of the champion of the world, all I did was smirk.

MACE

Chad Deity.

VP

Every time that name shot out of Mace's mouth like that shit tasted bad, my mind raced to raisin bread, and that took care of the smirk -- couldn't hold my ridicule in if I tried. And I had exactly zero interest in trying.

MACE

Chad Deity.

VP

We got a Black world champion and he's rich and he God Blesses America, and he talks vociferous and he's non-threatening unless you yourself are a threat to that which he God Blesses, and you ain't a threat because you're physically imposing or because you might pull off your fucking dashiki -- or whatever the fuck you terrorist types wear -- and bomb an arena full of God-fearing, Chad Deity-fearing, tax-paying, ticket-buying Americans, but you're a threat because Chad Deity drew a fucking line in the sand and instead of stepping over that line so Chad Deity could pick you up, powerbomb you, pin you, you held your ground and didn't speak and dared that dude to meet you on your side of his stupid fucking line of fiction.

MACE

Chad Deity.

VP

And my fucking Indian ass stood right here next to my Puerto Rican brother, Macedonio Guerra, and every time that name came out of his mouth, I could feel him drifting back to The Bronx while it was burning and being told to drop dead, drifting back to Vieques and mandated sterilization and a commonwealth government without the money to keep itself in business and fuck that -- illegal occupations, and extraordinary rendition, and fucking *slavery* -- and Chad Deity's still out here God Blessing America. And yeah, wrestling don't got nothing to do with politics or economics, and Chad Deity ain't the reason that what's wrong is wrong, but for someone who represents everything that's supposed to be right, that motherfucker ain't yet gave me one reason to respect him.

MACE

Chad --

VP spits in the face of the poster.

-- Deity.

VP exits.

In an argument in the streets, the crowd watching things unfold will always let you know when a nerve's been struck.

EKO, Chad Deity, and Joe Jabroni from off-stage as the crowd in the streets.

02/02/08

EKO, CHAD DEITY, AND JOE JABRONI
OOOOOOOOOOOOHHHHHH SHIT.

MACE

When The Fundamentalist spit in the face of Chad Deity, twenty-five thousand people in the arena and millions watching at home went --

EKO, CHAD DEITY, AND JOE JABRONI
OOOOOOOOOOOOHHHHHH SHIT.

MACE

We only put two raisins in our bread. But they were some big fucking raisins.

End of Act One. INTERMISSION.

ACT TWO

JOE JABRONI, in the ring. He is entirely non-descript. He wears a mask.

The Ring Announcer, in the ring as well.

RING ANNOUNCER

The following contest is scheduled for one fall with a {actual length of act two} time limit. Introducing first to my right, Joe Jabroni.

A non-descript gesture from Joe.

And his opponent...

THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY begins. His music starts, his pyrotechnics go off, the whole thing.

But Chad Deity doesn't walk down the aisle slapping hands and tossing money in the air. Chad runs down to the ring, angry and purposeful.

The Ring Announcer scrambles out of the ring.

Chad Deity destroys Joe Jabroni. Kicks, punches, body slams--basic and angry.

After about thirty seconds of punishment, Chad Deity picks Joe Jabroni up, powerbombs him, pins him.

The Ring Announcer returns to the ring.

RING ANNOUNCER

The winner of this match, and STILL THE Wrestling Champion--

Chad Deity snatches the microphone out of the Ring Announcer's hand.

The Ring Announcer flees the ring.

CHAD DEITY CUTS A PROMO.

Chad Deity is legitimately angry.

CHAD DEITY

Do you know how many crispers I have in my refrigerator?

I have four. Four crispers. Two on the bottom, two on the top. Right where your freezer is on your refrigerator, that's where I have two extra crispers. My freezer is as big as your refrigerator, and my crispers are as big as your freezer, and I don't even use a crisper.

My son, he's got a refrigerator, a mini-refrigerator downstairs in the part of the house that's special devoted to him. He's got two crispers. You know what's in his crispers? Chad Deity action figures. He likes his toys cold. I don't know -- he's a weird kid. But my son gets what he wants. Unless what he wants is wrong. And my son, he knows what's right and wrong.

My son, he knows not to spit in the face of anyone, let alone someone who is responsible for him having a job, not that my son has a job, cause he's five and I'm a good father, and he won't need a job ever but he'll find a job when it's time because I'm a good father and jobs build character. And because I'm a good father, my son, he knows not to spit in anyone's face. Ever.

And you, Mace, you might be Che Chavez Castro whatever you're choosing to call yourself now, and you might be getting your oohs and aahs from the audience, from my audience when you mention my name, but a month ago you were under a mask getting picked up and powerbombed and pinned in every arena THE Wrestling traveled to. And me and EKO, we told you how you could change that, and Mace, you were making progress, but now, you mention my name, you spit in my face, and the decision's made.

Chad Deity has to answer, and you both have to go down, and go down big, and you'll both be back under masks the night after I pin The Fundamentalist and send him back to Turkmenistan or Kazakhstan or Armenianistan or wherever we decide he came from.

Because that's what you're missing in this, Vigneshwar. That's what you're missing in this, Macedonio. We decide. Me and EKO. We decide. You just made our decision easy and obvious. Two crispers for you. Two crispers for you. Four crispers for me. Unused.

Chad Deity exits.

Mace.

MACE

Chad Deity is angry.

When Chad Deity is angry onscreen, that's good for business.

THE Wrestling makes a lot of money from Chad Deity being angry on television.

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When Chad Deity is angry behind the scenes?
That's a little more complicated.

And now Chad Deity is angry at me and VP.
That's a lot more complicated.

Cause remember: in wrestling, you can't kick a guy's ass without the help of the guy whose ass you're kicking.

Of course, you also can't kick a guy's ass if he doesn't know how to make it look like you're kicking his ass.

VP enters in wrestling trunks.

I still gotta teach VP to wrestle.

VP trips while entering the ring.

Excuse me. We've got a lot of work to do.

Throughout this next section, MACE TEACHES VP TO WRESTLE. (Note--Joe Jabroni can be used in this section as well, either to demonstrate moves or have them demonstrated upon him.)

Now, the first thing every professional wrestler needs to learn is how to fall.

EKO.

EKO

Wait, wait, kid, wait. Mace, he's not going to be a professional wrestler. He's going to be a THE wrestler. Now kid, when we're creating a THE wrestler, we start with the finish. The *finisher*, to be exact.

To Bluetooth.

No calls. It's time to do my life's work.

EKO tosses the Bluetooth aside.

Kid, you like sports?

VP

Um.

EKO

Come on, come on. Sports. You like them?

VP

Um. Yeah. You know, I play basketball --

EKO

Not listening.

What do you like about them? Come on, I asked you a question.

VP

Uh, I don't know --

EKO

I'll tell you what you like about them. Anything can happen in sports. That's the charm, right? Right?

I don't do this all the time, kid, so listen. Wrestling is not a sport. THE Wrestling? Not in the sports business. You like sports?

VP

Right, I guess --

EKO

I'm not interested in charm. I'm not interested in letting the action unfold and hoping for miracle moments. THE Wrestling is sports idealized. My job is to maximize the potential of the sports event each and every night. Right, Mace? Tell 'em, Mace.

MACE

Well, I --

EKO

You know how I maximize the potential of the sports event every night? I always end on a high note.

To Bluetooth.

Send in my high note.

Chad Deity enters.

Chad Deity has a finisher. It's called the powerbomb.

Chad Deity powerbombs Mace.

When Chad Deity hits the powerbomb, fans know to stand, to cheer.

Chad Deity poses.

They know they've gotten their money's worth. The night is over. The day is won. You saw what you came to see. You go to a baseball game, and Barry Bonds isn't guaranteed to hit a home run that day, no matter what he's been shooting slash ingesting into his body.

CHAD DIETY

Allegedly.

Chad Deity stops posing.

EKO

We don't know anything about those kinds of substances here in THE Wrestling.

Chad Deity exits. Sheepishly.

EKO (CONT.)

All finishers are not created equal. The trick is finding the right move for the right guy.

EKO looks VP over.

The obvious finisher for The Fundamentalist is the Camel Clutch.

To audience.

This is the Camel Clutch.

Mace demonstrates the Camel Clutch on Joe Jabroni.

MACE

You know who did the Camel Clutch? The Iron Sheik. The Original Sheik. Sheik Abdul Bashir --

VP

-- That's not even how you pronounce Sheikh!

MACE

We choose our battles, man.

You know who else did the Camel Clutch? Sabu. Muhammad Hassan. Every wrestler who has ever been portrayed as having "Middle Eastern" ancestry. Because Middle Easterners ride camels. So they do the camel clutch. I swear to God I fucking hate wrestling sometimes. I don't mention this hatred.

To EKO.

You know what I'm thinking, Boss? I'm thinking we go in a different direction.

EKO

There is no different direction. He's a fundamentalist. The Camel Clutch is fundamental.

MACE

I fucking hate wrestling.

To EKO.

No, you're right, you're right, but I'm thinking...quick strike capability.

EKO

I'm listening.

MACE

He's a threat, right? A terrorist threat. And what's the scary thing about terrorism? It can come from anywhere at any time. You don't see it coming.

VP

It's the shadowy nature of a sleeper cell.

Mace shoots VP a look.

What? I can bullshit too, motherfucker.

EKO

Sleeper cell? I like it.

MACE

I'm thinking the superkick, boss.

To audience.

This is the superkick.

Mace superkicks Joe Jabroni. It's quick, it's out of nowhere, it knocks Joe Jabroni off his feet.

You might see a match where a wrestler gets dropped directly on his head ten times, gets low blowed and falls ten feet off the ring apron to a concrete floor, but he still gets up to fight. Now that same wrestler, same match, he gets hit with a superkick --

Mace superkicks Joe Jabroni again.

-- dude could be laid out for the rest of the night. Wrestling's got a different physics than the rest of the world.

EKO

I like it. Use it, kid. We need a new exotic name for it. I'm thinking...

MACE

Please don't let him say it.

EKO

I'm thinking...

MACE

He's gonna say it.

EKO

The Camel Kick?

Mace goes to superkick EKO.

VP stops him.

VP

Doesn't seem like a good idea to superkick your boss.

EKO

Or maybe...Koran Kick. Kabbalah Kick. I don't know. I'll figure it out. I like it. I smell money. Tomorrow night. Fundamentalist's in-ring debut. He wins with The Koran Kick. Kabbalah Kick. Koran Kabbalah Kick.

Pause.

CHAD DEITY

Reappearing.

Um. KKK.

EKO

Maybe not so good. I'll figure it out.

EKO, Chad Deity, Joe Jabroni, and VP leave.

MACE

That's not what I like to hear. Things around here tend to work out better when I figure them out. I don't mention that.

Mace puts on his Che Chavez Castro costume while he talks.

The night of The Fundamentalist's in-ring debut, I am as calm as I've ever been while walking into an arena. I am going to be a manager for the first time in my career, not a wrestler -- all I need to do is walk The Fundamentalist down the aisle, jaw off with the crowd in my stupid fake accent, then raise my guy's hand in victory. Anything goes wrong, I'm there to clean up the mess.

The show starts. I sit backstage and ignore a bunch of matches and promos I don't care about. Then it's our turn.

RING ANNOUNCER

The following contest is scheduled for one fall with a ten-minute time limit. Introducing first, from Hope, Arkansas, Billy Heartland.

Joe Jabroni enters as Billy Heartland, non-descript.

MACE

Billy Heartland. Hope, Arkansas. Really. EKO really lays the Americana on thick. But Billy Heartland makes no difference to me, because he's a prop, a tool, an inanimate object that will be forgotten immediately after he is announced, because The Elaborate Entrance of The Fundamentalist is about to be all anyone could think about.

It might be pretty awesome to have some version of the Fundamentalist's entrance actually happening as Mace describes it.

MACE (CONT.)

The lights in the arena dim.

Ten women in black burkas line the entrance way.

A series of red and yellow streamers descend from the ceiling, no doubt referencing the obvious ties between this radical Islamist terrorist and Communist China.

The Fundamentalist's music begins, and as horribly offensive and culturally inaccurate as it is, it makes my spine shiver in glee.

I appear first, lit cigar -- Cuban, of course -- in one hand, a little set of bongos hoisted above my head in the other.

Seriously. They give me a pair of bongos.

It doesn't matter.

I step aside, and there he is --

VP appears as The Fundamentalist.

-- and I don't look back at him because I know he is exactly where he needs to be.

And it all goes by in a blur, because, for the first time, I am a part of an elaborate entrance instead of watching it from the perspective of the soon-to-be-vanquished.

The Fundamentalist enters the ring.

And the bell rings, and The Fundamentalist soaks up the boos of the fans, and, nah, he ain't The Fundamentalist, he's Vigneshwar Paduar. And the match starts, and Billy Heartland is playing his part...

Billy Heartland plays his part.

...and he's terrified of The Fundamentalist, and he's not sure what to make of it all, and it's the moment, the moment we've built for, and I look at Vigneshwar Paduar...and he doesn't fucking move.

VP doesn't fucking move.

Um.

Poor Billy Heartland, he thought he had an idea of how the match was going to unfold, namely him getting his ass kicked quickly and simply, but this, this is neither quick nor simple, it's the great Middle Eastern Menace frozen in the corner of the ring. He's not The Fundamentalist right now. He's not even Vigneshwar Paduar. He's --

-- some guy.

He's some guy standing there in the ring. And he's not prepared to be there.

MACE (CONT.)

Now of course, I'm responsible for The Fundamentalist. So my job here is pretty simple: without breaking character, without acknowledging that something is even going wrong, I'm supposed to tell poor Billy Heartland and the next-big-can't-miss-thing Vigneshwar Paduar what the hell they should do next, only I can't speak to them, or at least I can't speak to them in plain English, because the eight-year-old boy in the front row still might just believe that what he's watching is real. I've got to maintain the theatrical illusion.

So what can I do?

I jump up on the ring apron, lit cigar in one hand, bongo set in the other. I yell frantically at poor Billy Heartland, calling him every mild anti-US name in the book, hoping that he'll follow my lead and catch the life preserver I'm tossing his way.

And the kid, he's acting his ass off, selling this like he's Amy Morton in *August: Osage County*—

Billy Heartland shoots Mace a look.

What? Wrestlers can have culture.

It would be easy for Poor Billy Heartland to panic in the light of this unforeseen development, but he doesn't hesitate, he doesn't complain, he doesn't bitch and moan about how this guy who is being positioned as the future of the business doesn't know what he's doing, isn't ready for the responsibility being handed to him, and certainly, without question, is currently not even on Poor Billy Heartland's level. But Poor beautiful genius Billy Heartland doesn't care about any of that. He cares about the show.

And I'm watching the referee out of the corner of my eye, and he's just staring at VP, who is still locked, still looking at something that's not any of us.

And since the ref's back is turned, I take it as an opening, just like a real manager would do, were this a legitimate sporting event.

And when Poor Billy Heartland turns around, I slam the goddamn bongos against the flat of his back, just under his neck.

It's a good safe spot to hit someone who isn't expecting it.

Especially when you're dealing with foreign objects.

To a specific audience member.

Remind me to talk about foreign objects later.

And Poor Billy Heartland, god bless his soul even though I'm an atheist, he sells the bongo like he's been shot with a cannon, and he stumbles forward, he stumbles towards The Fundamentalist, who, shockingly, fortuitously, snaps out of his stupor, and--

The Fundamentalist superkicks Billy Heartland.

--hits Billy Heartland with the single most beautiful superkick I have ever seen.

The crowd collectively gasps.

MACE (CONT.)

And then VP freezes again.
Doesn't go for a cover.
Doesn't play to the crowd.
Freezes.
Again.

Poor Billy Heartland stays down.
Brilliant, genius, beautiful Billy Heartland.
He just stays down.
The referee calls for the bell.

The Fundamentalist has won his first match with one move.

VP, removing his costume.

VP

There are a lot of fucking people out there.

MACE

There are.

VP

I don't know if I can do this.

MACE

I don't know if he can do this either. I don't mention this.

VP

What do you think EKO is going to say?

MACE

If I could, if I believed it, I'd tell Vigneshwar Paduar to be prepared for Everett K. Olson to rip his performance to sweaty scraps, but not to worry about it, not to seek acceptance or absolution from the rich, powerful, traditional power structure that pays our checks, because we, as "people of color," as citizens of nation-states with rich cultural histories, we define our own success, and people like EKO, they don't understand that shit.

But I **don't** believe it.

Vigneshwar Paduar fucked up. And I have my moments of being all militant and feeling like a freedom fighter -- and I don't mean this Chavez Castro version of militant freedom fighter -- but if you don't do your job right, especially in this business, in my business, on my behalf? I'm not standing between you and the boss to take the tongue lashing.

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EKO's office.

MACE (CONT.)

And take a guess how he reacts.
No seriously, take a guess.

*Mace interacts with the audience until
he gets the response he's looking for.*

Exactly. He *loved* it.

*Maybe EKO's got a videotape of the
superkick that he's watching over and
over again throughout this.*

EKO

That kick. That goddamn kick.

MACE

I've never known EKO to accentuate the positive.

EKO

You know what I had the announcers call it?
The Sleeper Cell.
How perfect is that?
The Fucking Sleeper Fucking Cell.

MACE

Um. That doesn't really make much sense.

EKO

Doesn't have to make sense. It works.
Like this guy.

Gestures to VP.

He works. I don't get it, but he works.
The audience, they love him.

Into Bluetooth.

What? No, I don't love you. Why would I love you? Go wash my car.
To Mace and VP.

And the kid, the Heartland kid?
Did you see how *scared* he looked?

MACE

That's cause the kid, the Heartland kid, was putting on the acting performance
of a lifetime. I don't mention it.

EKO

The fans, they're eating it up. He intimidates his opponents, then BAM -- he lays them out. Sleeper Cell. Genius.

This is what we're gonna do with The Fundamentalist now, kid.

Minimalism.

It fits with the fucking caves, the fucking anti-technology blahblahblah.

I want you to do as little as possible in the ring.

You'll have the mysterious, annoying, manager guy on the outside, he'll rant and rave, he'll interfere, he'll do the, do the, do the --

MACE

Heavy lifting.

EKO

He'll do the heavy lifting. But you, Vigneshwar Paduar, you stay minimal and mysterious and don't let the audience have any idea what you're capable of. By the time we put you in a match with Chad, I'm thinking like three weeks away on Pay Per View, they'll be dying to see what you're going to have in store. Just remember your game plan: nothing, nothing, Sleeper Cell.

EKO exits.

MACE

Surprising things to come out of that conversation -- besides him liking the match, I mean:

1. He called VP by his name. His full name. He pronounced it right. I'm still not sure he's ever learned to pronounce Macedonio Guerra.
2. He's already planning a Pay Per View match between The Fundamentalist and Chad Deity. Pay Per View is a big deal -- all the TV builds to the Pay Per View, and you put your best stuff on the Pay Per View, because people are paying to view it, so you try to give them something to spend their money on. He thinks VP is ready for that?
- And 3. The Sleeper Cell? Really?

Unsurprising things to come out of that conversation -- there's really only one. *I'm going to be doing the heavy lifting.*

But I guess I don't mind, because the kid is good, even if he didn't show it, and he's still got a chance now, even though I thought he blew it. Hopefully now he's got the butterflies out of his system, and he can put it behind him, and the way EKO is talking, it kind of sounds like this could work.

To VP.

But somehow, I've still got this sneaking suspicion that there's this whole other factor that needs to be looked out for.

CHAD DEITY NAILS VP WITH A CHAIR.

VP falls to the ground.

MACE

To the audience member he spoke to earlier.

I thought I told you to remind me to talk about foreign objects.

CHAD DEITY

When I started wrestling, I had a bit of an ego. Egos are good in this business. When you've earned them. In those days, the old-timers had ways of teaching cocky newcomers a measure of respect for the business. The old-timer who taught me respect, he did it with his fist against my face, right above my eye, repeatedly. Busted me wide open. Knocked me silly.

And when he was done, and we got backstage, and they stitched me up on the spot, he reached his hand out to me -- as the stitches were going in -- and he said "Darnell, I won't do this again if you don't make me." And I ain't had stitches since.

Silence.

MACE

Darnell?

CHAD DEITY

You think I was born Chad Deity?

To VP.

The flat of a chair against the flat of a guy's back or even the side of his head -- it's loud, it looks painful, it looks dastardly, and it's ultimately not all that terrible. And it's a wake-up call. A guy wakes you up with a chair shot instead of thirteen stitches above your eye? Shake that man's hand and thank him.

Chad Deity holds his hand out to VP.

VP does not shake it.

You froze out there.

VP

Nope. Minimalism.

CHAD DEITY

No. You froze.

VP

And you got a refrigerator that's bigger than my living room and a crisper that your son uses to chill his Barbies. The audience liked it.

CHAD DEITY

You know how I know you froze?
You didn't mention Chad Deity.

MACE

I look at VP and he looks at me and I can tell that he thinks Chad Deity is just being an egotist here, and on some level, well, yeah, Chad Deity is an egotist who uses his own full name when speaking in third person. But he's got a point.

CHAD DEITY

Weeks of promos, all you've been talking about is Chad Deity this, Chad Deity that, parading around a big old cut out of Chad Deity. Spitting in his face. You hate him. He's the reason you're in THE Wrestling. And you don't so much as reference his name.

MACE

Shit.
I didn't even think of that, and it's my job to think of it.
I hope he doesn't mention it.

CHAD DEITY

And Mace, you didn't even think of it. It's your job to think of it.

MACE

Shit. He always mentions it.

VP

You know, Chad Deity, I appreciate Chad Deity's point, but The Fundamentalist seemed to get a pretty damn good response tonight without mentioning Chad Deity. Maybe The Fundamentalist just knows new ways to get the audience involved that Chad Deity is too old and set in Chad Deity's ways to even think of.

CHAD DEITY

You froze.
It happens.
Next week, you need to mention Chad Deity.
Because to be honest with you, as soon as you decided to make the destruction of Chad Deity the only goal that your characters have, you wrote yourself into a short little career.
Chad Deity's going to beat you.
And you're going to have nowhere left to go.
If you go out there next week, and you mention Chad Deity, and you wrestle a short little match, and you hit that sweet superkick, we can at least extend this out a little.
Maybe give you a chance to become a character with some legs.

CHAD DEITY (CONT.)

With a reason to exist.

Pause.

You know, you remind Chad Deity...of Chad Deity.

Chad Deity exits.

Silence.

MACE

To VP.

Um.

You know.

Nothing he said was exactly wrong.

VP

Everything he *is* is wrong.

If it wasn't for the respect I have for you, bro, I'd tell him exactly how wrong he is.

VP exits.

MACE

The following week, EKO pulls out a stop I thought would have been too obvious even for him.

RING ANNOUNCER

The following contest is scheduled for one fall with a ten-minute time limit. Introducing first, from Washington, DC, this is Old Glory!

Joe Jabroni, in an American flag mask, as Old Glory.

MACE

Old Glory. Seriously. I work in a subtle business.

RING ANNOUNCER

And his opponent...

VP, as The Fundamentalist.

MACE

The Fundamentalist's entrance is just a touch more elaborate this week than last.

Twenty women in burkas line the entrance way.

The red and yellow streamers are joined by indecipherable (and probably pure gibberish) Sanskrit spelled out in green laser in the center of the ring.

I carry my cigar, but make a point to forget my bongos backstage.

I won't need a foreign object tonight.

Before VP heads to the ring, I plan to walk up to him and discuss the plan for this week's match. But I look at him and see that I don't need to. VP wants to redeem himself. He's destined for glory, finally.

He gestures to Old Glory.

Destined for "Glory" -- forget it.

The Fundamentalist gets to the ring, and he prays, and Che Chavez Castro curses out the fans in Spanish, cause all I know in Spanish is the curses, and the bell rings, and Old Glory does his part, he plays to the crowd and starts a USA USA chant --

Old Glory plays to the crowd.

-- and this, this guy, this menace, this, this...Fundamentalist is terrifying, and he's just staring at Old Glory, and he's not moving, and...

Ah fuck you gotta be kidding me.

Vigneshwar Paduar has frozen again.

Old Glory throws up his hands in disgust.

Now, Old Glory is no Billy Heartland. Old Glory is a legitimate old school tough guy reared in a different era, an era in which if a young whippersnapper who dishonored the craft -- if they took something without giving back -- it was up to the old-timers to give them a *receipt*. A *potato*. Thirteen stitches.

Old Glory wants permission to beat Vigneshwar Paduar's ass.

At this point, that sounds like a really good fucking plan to me.

So I give him the subtlest of gestures, and Old Glory, instead of coming to jaw with The Fundamentalist's manager the way Poor Billy Heartland did, makes his move. He approaches cautiously, still giving the impression that The Fundamentalist is one to be feared, but I know that Old Glory is about to put some serious hurt on --

The Fundamentalist superkicks Old Glory.

The audience gasps.

One collective gasp.

Old Glory later tells me that he was knocked cold legit.

The Fundamentalist does not go for a pin.

The referee assumes that we're following the same game plan as last week, and declares the match over.

The Fundamentalist has won his first two matches with a total of two -- count 'em -- two wrestling moves.

And they were both the same move.

But now's not the time to berate him for what he's done.
 I've got work to do.
 As the bell rings, I grab a microphone and join my man in the squared circle.
 I'm going to be cutting a promo from the ring.
 The goal of this promo is clear to me.
 We hate Chad Deity.
 The Fundamentalist hates Chad Deity.
 Che Chavez Castro hates Chad Deity.
 And what I'm going to do is make sure everyone in the audience knows it --

VP grabs the microphone away.

VP

The Fundamentalist hates America.

MACE

The Fundamentalist is not supposed to speak.

VP

The Fundamentalist hates Old Glory.
 The Fundamentalist hates Billy Heartland.
 The Fundamentalist hates America.

MACE

And even here, at this point, I can tell that this is going to go very, very wrong.
 And it does.

VP

The Fundamentalist hates...

MACE

The Fundamentalist announces a long list of everyone and everything that he hates.
 Conspicuous by its absence, as the late Gorilla Monsoon used to say, is the name of Chad Deity.

VP

The Fundamentalist hates expensive refrigerators. The Fundamentalist hates raisin bread.

MACE

He's showing off, but it's worse than showing off, cause it's just for people behind the scenes, and it's just to show that he can, to show that he knows what he's expected to do, and to make it clear that he's not interested in doing it.

MACE (CONT.)

He's being a dick.

VP

The Fundamentalist hates...THE Wrestling.

MACE

Vigneshwar Paduar just Sleeper Celled us both out of the main event.

The interview ends.

The crowd seems somewhat with it.

We get backstage.

EKO and Chad Deity.

The Boss and The Champ are waiting for us.

And they're just *staring*.

I'm not surprised, because pretty much the most unforgivable sin you can commit in the ring is to be negligent and injure the guy you're working with.

I can tell what they're about to do, and it's the right thing.

Call off the Pay Per View match.

Give VP a few more weeks to work with me on his respect for the business, on taking care of the guy he's in there with.

I'm glad they're here, cause they're saving me the hassle of having to handle the situation myself.

Silence.

They look pissed.

This is gonna be good.

EKO

There he is -- my next THE Champion.

MACE

I should just stop attempting to narrate, right?

EKO

The kicks, they're money. The fans, they love it. You hear it. You never hear reactions like that.

MACE

He's right.

The reactions are amazing. So are the superkicks.

EKO

And now, now's the time, now's the time when we shake things up. Now's the time when we strike. You see, kid, I created this little theory I call the rule of three.

MACE

Everett K. Olson did not create the rule of three.

EKO

Sleeper Cell to Billy Heartland, that's one. Sleeper Cell to Old Glory, that's two. You're making your way through the soul of these United States, kid. The fans, they know there's a third Sleeper Cell on the way.

CHAD DEITY

And the promo.

EKO

Oh, kid. The promo.

CHAD DEITY

I gotta admit, the promo was brilliant.

MACE

He thought the promo was brilliant?

CHAD DEITY

I told you that the only thing you needed to do was mention my name --

EKO

And you didn't even have to.

CHAD DEITY

Rule of Three.

They know that third Sleeper Cell can only be meant for me.

Chad takes off his championship belt.

When I started, EKO told me that throwing money in the air was the stupidest idea he had ever heard.

EKO

I underestimated the champ.

CHAD DEITY

And now I underestimated you.

Chad hands the belt to VP.

Hold on to this for a little while.

You should get used to carrying it.

VP

So you liked it? That? You liked that?

EKO

Kid. I don't like things. Liking is not good for business. It doesn't matter if I like something or not, I do what's good for business. Right now, giving you the belt is what's good for business. We're gonna make millions from folks dying to see Chad Deity try to get his title back.

To Mace.

Get him ready.

Next week, we put the title on The Fundamentalist.

Silence.

Mace and VP look at each other, not sure what to make of all this.

VP

That? They liked that?

VP hands the championship belt to Mace—"what am I supposed to do with this?"

Silence.

MACE

Okay.

So Vigneshwar Paduar—nah, revision—The Fundamentalist is about to become THE Champion.

He's fought two matches.

He knows one move.

I should be pissed, right?

I should be complaining about the fact that he goes out there, almost breaks the jaw of a respected veteran, and when he walks back here behind the scenes, he gets rewarded with the announcement of his first World Championship.

And I'm not gonna lie. There's a part of me that's infuriated by this.

But I don't know.

Maybe I take things too seriously.

I mean, Saturday morning, corn flakes and sugar—maybe I've got this business all built up in my head.

Maybe I forget we're just wrestling guys.

We're just action figures. Just dolls. Vulcanized rubber.

Maybe I was wrong about the metaphor.

And I'm also not gonna lie.

MACE (CONT.)

I never expected to get this close to championship gold.

Mace holds the belt up to his waist.

Silence.

He likes the way it looks.

He really likes the way it looks.

He gets lost in the moment.

He wonders what his grandfather would say if he saw him like this.

Mace snaps out of it.

Shit. Sorry. I'm telling a story.

So my job now is to get The Fundamentalist ready to win the THE Championship --

VP nails Mace with a superkick to the jaw, out of nowhere.

Mace goes down like he was shot.

VP

I'm going back to Brooklyn.

MACE

The whole key to the superkick is that the guy getting kicked never sees it coming.

VP

I'm not ready for this, Mace.

MACE

Never sees it coming.

VP

My family's buying a gas station, and I'm kind of excited about that, cause I'm Indian and now I finally get to actually work in a gas station like every racist motherfucker in Brooklyn told me I should be. Next best thing to owning a 7-11, you know?

MACE

He's lying. He's lying. He's lying.

VP

I mean, look. You and me, we got stories to tell, and they're different, but they come from the same place, man -- there's beauty in that, I'm down for that. That's fun. That's what I came here to do.

MACE

He's abandoning me. I know it. He knows it. I don't mention it.

VP

But they want to turn us, they want to spin our story, fit us in to what they already got in mind. Chad Deity *is* Chad Deity. I don't want to be The Fundamentalist. You don't want to be Che Chavez Castro.

MACE

If I open my mouth, I'm going to kill him. So I keep it closed.

VP

And if we do, if we go along with it, and we play the roles, no matter how we play it, if it's bad and fucked up, or if we sneak in some good and sneak in something to say, they make the money from it, they call the shots, and we gotta go back to Brooklyn, back to the Bronx, we gotta look at little brown kids and defend our decision, we gotta explain why it ain't so bad to exist outside ourselves for the sake of twenty pounds of gold around our waist.

MACE

To VP.

That's bullshit. You're just scared.

To the audience.

And it just slips out of mouth.

VP

Maybe. But am I wrong?

No response.

I didn't come here to be champion, man.

I came to create something dope.

And I think we did as much we can.

No response.

And I know that I'm wrong here, I should just be like you, and deal with it, and make it work. But when I see something's wrong, I gotta say something. I gotta do something. I gotta solve it. This is how I know to solve this.

Silence.

Mace goes to speak.

VP superkicks Mace again--sudden, shocking, laying Mace out flat.

It was good working with you, bro.

VP exits.

Silence.

*Chad Deity rushes in to Mace's side.
He helps him to his feet.*

EKO enters.

EKO

Where's your boy, Mace?

No response.

Where. Is your boy. Mace.

No response.

He's under contract.

As are you.

As is Chad Deity.

*EKO subtly gestures to Chad Deity to
attack Mace.*

CHAD DEITY

It's not his fault, Everett.

EKO

Call me Mr. Olson, *Darnell*.

Silence.

CHAD DEITY

Sorry, Mace.

*Chad Deity reluctantly turns on Mace,
clotheslining him to the ground.*

EKO

You are an important part of THE Wrestling, Macedonio Guerra.

You make this business run.

I respect you.

Chad Deity pulls Mace to his feet.

EKO holds out his hand.

Mace reluctantly shakes it.

EKO holds onto Mace's hand.

*Joe Jabroni enters, carrying the Che
Chavez Castro costume.*

Now get out there and solve my problem.

Silence.
Mace takes the costume.
Mace does not move.

EKO (CONT.)

I said. Get out there. And Solve. My. --

Mace punches EKO, kicks Chad Deity in the gut, and punches Joe Jabroni.

MACE

And I mention it, I mention it all--

Throughout this section, Mace fights off EKO, Chad Deity, and Joe Jabroni with a series of wrestling moves.

Everett K. Olson didn't invent wrestling and he didn't invent wrestling in the United States and the United States didn't invent wrestling and definitely didn't master it and the Japanese laugh at what Everett K. Olson passes off as sports or entertainment or sports entertainment with soap opera writers writing stories and wrestlers afraid to take physical risks and spoil their payday --

-- And Mexico and Japan and Canada are the real world powers in wrestling, because you can be small and penniless and powerful and passionate and devote yourselves to fake fighting, devote yourselves to the art of making beautiful balletic brutality that tells a story of basic human heartfelt emotion --

-- And good guys used to be weak and vulnerable and overcome impossible odds, but now they have to look strong and invincible because the United States, and honestly, that's all wrestling in the United States is ever about, the United States, the United States, it can't be vulnerable, it can't be the victim --

-- And I mention the forced sterilizations and the naval bases, and I mention the invasions and the sanctions and the disenfranchised taxation and the fear-based calls for border fences and deportations, and I mention the irony of Chad Deity standing for what is right and good and powerful about this nation --

-- and I mention I mention I mention I mention I mention until I'm sweating and spitting and crying I mention the money and I mention Cruger Avenue, 10:45am, I mention my brother and my brother and my grandpa and the shit sugar water and the shit wrestling guys and the shit the fucking shit --

-- and I mention how easy it would be for Everett K. Olson and Chad Deity and Vigneshwar Paduar to get the fuck out of my way and let me tell a story, a perfect goddamn story and I mention that this, a story, a perfect goddamn story is all I have ever desired in my existence, and the hoops, and the drama, and the chaos, and the suffering, and the lording it over my head with money

and power and prestige is more than I wanted to ever deal with or should have to ever deal with in order to tell One. Goddamn. Perfect. Story.

Mace stands over a fallen EKO and Chad Deity.

Silence.

EKO and Chad Deity make their way to their feet.

EKO

Do that on television.

EKO and Chad Deity exit.

Silence.

MACE

So I do.

Mace exits.

End of Act Three.

EPILOGUE

VIGNESHWAR PADUAR.

VP

I turn on my television this night, of all nights, and I flick the channels, and there's THE Wrestling.

My job a week ago.

Probably still my job now, if you want to get all legal about it.

EKO enters, on TV, on the show.

And the first face I see, maybe no surprise, is the boss.

EKO

On behalf of THE Wrestling, and on behalf of THE Champion Chad Deity, I would like to condemn the comments --

VP

And I'm watching with a girl, cause I'm, you know, me, and I'm watching with a girl, and the wrestling comes on and she rolls her eyes.

She gets up and breaks for the bathroom, smooshing my face playful, telling me that when she gets back, we best be watching something more real.

MACE enters as Che Chavez Castro.

The Fundamentalist should be standing there, staring through the camera, indefinable menace that's, for honest, kinda cool to the folks who pay their cash to boo indefinable menaces.

But he's not.

Che Chavez Castro is.

Alone.

And he's staring.

And he ain't saying nothing.

And for me, reading his eyes is easy.

Cause I put it there.

I put there the hope and the idealism, the sense that, fuck, we could change some world through this.

I put there the contempt and the disgust, the abandonment and the distrust and the abandonment and the sense that, fuck, the people on your own side of the struggle can't be counted on to soldier through.

Especially if they got a little cash.

Or a dry cleaners.

Or luxury lofts.

Mace begins to remove the Che Chavez Castro costume.

And then I don't know what he's doing.

The costume's coming off.

And he's still not speaking.

VP (CONT.)

He's still staring, at me, at Everett K. EKO Olson, at Chad Deity, at Brooklyn, at The Bronx, at probably Kansas and Montana, at every small city and big town and every thirteen-year-old kid sitting at his kitchen counter doing homework during the commercials, and that's not no Mexican radical revolutionary fascist liberal dictator guerilla freedom-hating freedom fighter. That's Macedonio Guerra.

Mace does not speak.

And he speaks.

He speaks calm and slow, out of character, out of the character we've seen in three weeks of promos, out of the character we've seen in twenty years, thirty years of the wrestling that existed before THE Wrestling existed.

He speaks as Macedonio Guerra.

Mace does not speak.

And the girl, she comes back in the room.

I had forgot her.

She asks "we're still watching this?"

Mace does not speak.

And I think about it.

And I stand up, and I kiss her perfect on the lips, then again on the cheek, and I smile wide, and I might have done the same thing last time she was here, cause I'm, you know, me, but right now this time, I'm not trying to get her pants off.

And I tell her to just listen.

And she listens.

And we watch.

And Macedonio Guerra goes ahead and gives voice to our little corner of the world.

CHAD DEITY enters.

No elaborate entrance.

And when he's done, Chad Deity comes out.

And they stare down.

And they stand off.

And the referee rings the bell.

Mace and Chad Deity do not move.

And we watch

Live via satellite

From the heart of these United States someplace as

To the cheers of an ecstatic throng

Chad Deity

Defeats

Macedonio Guerra

In near-record time.

VP (CONT.)

The crowd goes wild.

Mace exits through the audience, almost unnoticed, as Chad Deity celebrates, the conquering hero.

And the girl, she turns to me, and she says:
Why are they rooting for the bad guy?

VP exits.

*Chad celebrates.
For a long time.*

BLACKOUT.

END OF PLAY.