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YARD WARS

By Jonathan Dorf

Cast of Characters

All the characters are played by one actor. All are in high school.

The Wrestler (Christian Connors), aka John Done, smart and skilled, he thinks too much

Jimmy Talatifierre, aka Double T, well-meaning but not the sharpest tack in the box

Paul Jackson, a black kid who's way too white to be as black as he'd like to be
Jack Scamuto, the other half of the Oreo Express, your average suburban semi-jock

Marley, aka Obgyn, friendly but frightening, something of a redneck

Backyard Brawler, a boy who looks like he has breasts

Mr. Scooper, the announcer

Various Kids at school

(Lights up on the Wrestler, about eighteen years old. He wears muddy street clothes. It looks like he's been in a fight—or rather, that he was in the middle of one and suddenly stopped. Upstage is a mattress.)

WRESTLER

There's no timeouts in wrestling. Maybe in "real" wrestling there are. Kinda'. If you get hurt or you start bleeding. In high school they gotta' stop if there's blood. In case you got AIDS or something. But not in the backyard: realer than real wrestling.

(pause)

There's definitely no timeouts in Jimmy Double T's backyard, where the ring's a couple mattresses, and most of the action's not on 'em.

(pause)

I think I'm in a timeout. I know—I just got done saying no timeouts. But I got powerbombed on my head. A powerbomb's when the other guy picks you up and holds you on his shoulders

(He mimes picking up an opponent for a powerbomb.)

WRESTLER (Cont...)

and then throws you down on your back and shoulders—

(He demonstrates the proper way to land.)

like this. You're supposed to land with your arms spread out. Takes some of the pressure off your back. And you gotta' be relaxed.

(beat)

I'm wrestling the Backyard Brawler. He's this fat kid. Not round fat, but he kind of jiggles a little when he moves, like he's got tits. And he sucks. His one move is the fat-ass splash. I thought that was his one move. It's not. Somebody taught Titty Boy a powerbomb. And he does it to me. He's not supposed to—he's supposed to fat-ass splash me through the table for the win—but he gets all adrenalized, and suddenly I'm getting powerbombed. No warning. Through the table. Of course, he fucks it up and plants me on my head. And it's not like I hit the table head first and I'm done—I'm still flying through the air, and I miss the mattress by three feet, and there's not fuck-all I can do about it except get my head busted.

(beat)

But I can still stand, at least on concussion time. I'm not dead, and I don't think my neck is broken. That's good. I like backyard wrestling, and I don't mind taking the bumps and bruises and even bleedin' a little. But I'm not gonna' die for it. I always said if I ever almost died or got in a spot where I lucked out of having something really serious happen, I'd end the match right there. And that would be it. I'd quit.

(pause)

I always said that, and now it's happened. But I'm lucky. Another three inches this way

(He gestures with his hands to show how his head could have landed.)

and I woulda' broken my neck. Another three inches and maybe I'm paralyzed or maybe I'm dead. I don't know about you, but I don't wanna' get killed by a guy with tits. I mean, backyard's supposed to be fun—right?

(He becomes Jimmy Double T.)

JIMMY DOUBLE T

Dude, this is gonna' be so awesome! We got these mattresses from when my brothers moved out, and my Mom said we can set 'em up in the backyard if we move 'em out of the garage. We gotta' clean the garage first and take all the stuff to the curb—I kinda' had to promise that—but with the two of us, it'll only take a couple hours. She was like ready to throw them out, and I was like bam,

(He slaps his hands together.)

"I'll take 'em."

(pause)

I told her we're practicing holds for school so we can try out for the wrestling team. So if she's there, we gotta' pretend we're practicing. But she never gets home 'til six, so don't even worry about it. If you see her, yell "half-nelson." Like a secret code.

JIMMY DOUBLE T (Cont...)

(pause)

Dude, this is gonna' be so awesome! I'll be the President, 'cause it's at my house, but you can be the Vice-President, and tell everybody what to do—except me.

(beat)

I was thinkin' about the belts, and I think we oughta' have two, the world championship and the hardcore championship. And we gotta' have a tag team championship—Jack Scamuto said he'd do it if he could be tag team champions with Paul Jackson. They wanna' be the Oreo Express, you know, a white guy and a black guy.

(beat)

Dude, the bell is not gay. If we don't have a bell, how are we gonna' start the matches? The WWE has a bell. I know we're not the WWE, but maybe we will be some day. And we're gonna' need a bell. Like in the WWE, when the guy goes crazy and runs up the aisle and attacks the other guy, the announcers talk about how they're gettin' it on before the bell. I can't attack you before the bell if there's no bell. That's just wrong.

(beat)

If my bell's so gay, then *you* get one.

WRESTLER

Most important thing in wrestling isn't the bell. It's the names. The names and the gimmicks. Jimmy Double T's got a big advantage, on account of his fucked up last name,

(pronounced TAH-LAH-TEE-FEE-ERREE)

Talatiferre. First time I met Jimmy I couldn't pronounce it right—'cause I'm not Italian and I'm eight—and I say Tala-tee-fairy. I'm not trying to be a smart-ass; I just can't say the last "l," and he looks like he's gonna' cry, only he doesn't. And then it starts: first his pants get all wet 'round his crotch, and then the stream runs down his leg. Then he starts crying, and he tells his Mom, and his Mom calls my Mom, and my Mom starts yelling at me, and pretty soon I'm crying, and she drags me over to Jimmy's.

(pause)

And when we get there he's standing in the bathtub—'cause I don't know where he's gettin' it from but he just keeps pissin' and cryin'—and I'm trying to give him stuff to make him stop. So I'm giving him gum and stickers and whatever else I have in my pockets, and finally I'm like trying to give him my Air Jordans if he'll just stop pissin' and cryin'. But he keeps going—it's like a miracle—and I'm trying to reach into the tub and put the Jordans in his hand. He says "leave me alone," but I don't know what else to do, so I'm still pushing the Jordans at him, and finally he yells, "Stop it!" And I'm thinking it's about to get worse, and my Mom, who's in the other room trying to explain to his Mom that I'm not the spawn of Satan, is going to drop me at the bus station—she was always threatening to put me on a bus when I was little. This time she's really going to do it. But then

WRESTLER (Cont...)

a weird thing happens. He stops pissing and crying and says, “Thanks, but you don’t have to give me your sneakers. You say it Ta-la-tee-fee-erree.” I say, “Can I just say Double T? I’m scared I might mess it up, and I don’t want you to start pissing again.” He thinks about it for a few seconds, then he says OK, and do I want to be best friends and play in the backyard. Funny how not much has changed since we were eight.

JIMMY

Double T stands for Total Terror or Triple Team, ‘cause wrestling me is like wrestling three guys at once. Double T is also the two crosses on your grave if you try to mess with me. If you mess with me, I’ll take you out for the one-two-three with my finisher, Teed Off. Ring the bell, Mr. Referee.

WRESTLER

Jimmy has it easy. He lives with his wrestling name. The rest of us have to think one up. And the problem is that most of the good ones are taken: Nature Boy, the Road Warriors, the Undertaker, Justin Credible. I wanted something really cool. Anarchy. Fear. They’re cool—right? The problem with names like Anarchy and Fear is they’re too abstract. They’re ideas. You can’t root for an idea. Fans want to root for people.

(pause)

And you need a name with an attitude. When you wrestle a guy named Mr. Wonderful or Kane, you know what you’re up against. So I’m thinkin’ and thinkin’, and I got nothin’. And Jimmy comes over and tries to help.

(He sits on the stage right side of the mattress, assuming the position of Rodin’s The Thinker and becoming Jimmy.)

JIMMY

Homicidal Hank. Or Fearless Fred.

(He scurries over to the Wrestler’s position, which is the stage left side of the mattress, and becomes the Wrestler. Each move in this scene is accompanied by a character change. Pause. The Wrestler shakes his head. He then hops into Jimmy position again.)

Sam the Man.

(He hops back to the Wrestler position.)

WRESTLER

Sam the Man? That’s like a fuckin’ Dr. Seuss book. Why do you keep coming up with names that rhyme? They don’t have to rhyme. They sound stupid when they rhyme.

(He hops into Jimmy position.)

JIMMY

Homicidal Hank and Fearless Fred don't rhyme.

(He hops back into Wrestler position.)

WRESTLER

They rhyme with retarded.

(pause)

It's alliteration. That's as bad as rhyming.

(pause)

Jimmy, man, you're not going to piss yourself, are you?

(pause)

You can have alliteration in your finisher, just not in your name. Maybe it worked for Hulk Hogan, but I don't look like Hulk Hogan, and that one's taken.

(pause)

Don't worry—I'll think of a name.

(He hops into Jimmy position.)

JIMMY

OK. No rhymes. No alliterates . . . I got it: Psycho Gilligan.

(He hops back into Wrestler position.)

WRESTLER

Gilligan like on *Gilligan's Island*? The total dork?

(Back into Jimmy position.)

JIMMY

He's not a dork. He just . . . has his own way of doing things. Like he's misunderstood. And you could call your finisher the Three Hour Tour. Or the Three Hour Floor. Like you're putting your opponent on the floo—

(Back into Wrestler position to interrupt Jimmy.)

WRESTLER

Stop. Stop thinking of names. All your names suck.

(Back into Jimmy position one more time.)

JIMMY

You can't wrestle without a name. We're supposed to start on Friday. What if you can't come up with a name by Friday? It's Wednesday already. If you don't come up with a name, we'll have to call the whole thing off. And I'm not pissin' myself!

(He hops into Wrestler position.)

WRESTLER

I'll come up with a name. I swear to God.

(pause)

And I do. In English class. I like English, so I'm usually bored—'cause I read ahead—so I flip through the next section of our book. And then bang—it hits me: John Done. There's this English writer named John Donne. D-O-N-N-E. But I can be John Done, D-O-N-E. Like "you're done." Instant asskicker, but smart too. And the English writer already wrote the perfect move, "Death Be Not Proud." You know, like not only am I killing my opponent, but I'm embarrassing him too. And some of my other moves can be Well-Done, One and Done, Done In, Over and Done, Undone—the name's a fuckin' gold mine.

(pause)

I have a name, I have a finisher—all I need is a gimmick.

JIMMY

Dude, that's awesome. You should come into the match with one of those cooking gloves. A hot glove—that's not what it's called. An oven mitt. That's it. You should come in with an oven mitt, and each match, after you kick ass, you should leave it on top of the guy—like a calling card.

WRESTLER

There's no way I'm wearin' an oven mitt to the ring, but it's not a bad gimmick. Gimmicks are key. Your gimmick is your concept, how you get over with the fans. It starts with the name. Think of Ric Flair. Simple, right? "Flair" says that he's a star, that he's slick, cocky. Then you add in "Nature Boy." Nature Boy Ric Flair. Natural talent. Natural blond hair. Natural flair. Does what he wants. Just like Ric. R-I-C. Spells his name the way he wants. Nature Boy Ric Flair, the master of the figure-four leglock.

(pause)

Now it's Thursday. Just over twenty-four hours to go before our big debut, and still no gimmick.

(pause)

Just after dinner. Twenty hours to go. Nothing.

(pause)

Sixteen hours. Still no gimmick. Time to go to bed.

(pause)

I stayed up 'til three, 'til I finally passed out. Jimmy and the oven mitt really screwed me up, 'cause for a while, all I could think about was oven stuff. Oven mitt. A toaster. That little thermometer you stick up a turkey's ass to see if it's done. In a moment of total desperation, I think "what if I gut the oven at my house and drag it out?" The little part of my brain that's still working says that's crazy, that it's too heavy, that it'll wreck the oven, that it'll wreck the kitchen. That same little part of my brain says, "What about the microwave?" Finally, at two-

forty-seven AM, I get the oven mitts and everything they make me think of out of my head. But there's nothing to take their place. One minute there's this monster oven screaming encouragement as I kick Jimmy's ass up and down the yard, and the next minute there's nothing. Total silence. For thirteen minutes. I watch the digits on my clock go from two-fifty-nine to three.

(pause)

My alarm wakes me up for school at seven-o-two. My lights are still on. Eight hours away, and still no gimmick. Without a gimmick, it's like being naked.

(beat)

I totally can't concentrate in school. Maybe I'm trying too hard. Last period, English class again, I'm actually sweating. Sweating so much it's dripping onto my book. Drip. Drip. Drip. The pages are starting to get seriously wet, like soaked through kind of wet.

(pause)

Just for kicks, I start turning pages to see how many pages are wet. First, there's really wet, then there's kinda' wet, and finally just damp. Forty-eight pages until I hit a totally dry page. John Donne again. Somebody's tryin' to tell me something.

(pause)

I'm tryin' to get a vibe on his stuff, but I'm not sparking to anything. Just lots of old poems.

(pause)

Poems . . .

(He is now John Done, backyard villain, in the middle of Jimmy Double T's wrestling ring.)

JOHN DONE

Violets are blue,
Your blood is red.
I'll make it flow,
And I'll make you dead.

WRESTLER

I had my gimmick. I was John Done, bad poet and backyard villain. I had to explain it to everybody, but after that they thought it was really funny.

(It's now the start of their first event.)

JIMMY

OK—is everybody ready to start? Paul, you be the announcer for me and Chris' world title match, and Jack, you're the referee. You guys can switch for the hardcore title match. Dudes, this is gonna' be so awesome!

WRESTLER

I feel bad for Jimmy. He saves up from his bagging job at the supermarket and buys a real bell, just 'cause I said the other one was gay. And he borrows the mike from his little sister's karaoke kit for us to use for the announcer. It works, only it's pink, but Jimmy means well. He means really, really well, and you gotta' respect that, even if it means putting up with some majorly lame-brained ideas. And only Jimmy would say—

(He becomes Jimmy.)

JIMMY

Dude, you know what I just realized? It's *Jack Scamuto* and *Paul Jackson*. It's like you guys are related.

(He becomes the Wrestler again.)

WRESTLER

Paul Jackson is the whitest black kid I ever met, not that I know a lot of black kids. But if I couldn't see that he was black, I'd say he was white. But then he does all this stuff to prove how black he is, like talkin' about Africa, callin' his girlfriend his "black queen"—which totally makes no sense, 'cause she's white—and callin' himself the black cookie crust in the Oreo Express, the soon to be tag team champions.

(He rings the bell and becomes Jimmy again. He sits on the mattress.)

JIMMY

Oh shit. Oh no.

(pause)

I forgot the music. How could I get a microphone and a bell and the ring and totally forget our theme songs? I feel like such a tool. You can't wrestle without theme songs. That's as big as anything. I fucked it up. I always fuck up everything.

(beat)

I don't even feel like wrestling anymore.

WRESTLER

Jimmy, you worked too hard on this to give up just 'cause you forgot some tired-ass music. We got the bell, we got the mike, the names, the gimmicks—I'll fuckin' make up the songs if I have to.

(He becomes John Done doing his theme song and coming out of the dressing room in character.)

JOHN DONE

WE LIVIN' IN A NEW AGE
 EVERY CHILD IS A CHILD OF RAGE
 CHAOS KICKIN' OUT ALL OVER
 SOMEBODY STEPPED ON YOUR FOUR-LEAF CLOVER
 I RHYME FROM THE GET GO
 HEAR ME ECHO WORDS OF DOOM
 SEAL YOUR TOMB
 BREAKING GLASS
 KICK YOUR ASS
 TWO WERE STANDING NOW THERE'S ONE
 'CAUSE I AM I AND YOU ARE DONE

SUCK YOUR BREATH OUT THROUGH THE LIPS
 EVERY NEW DAY BRINGS THE HOPE OF APOCALYPSE
 WELCOME TO ROCKET SHIP EARTH
 LET ME BE THE FIRST TO PUSH YOU OUT THE DOOR
 SO YOU BETTER HIT THE FLOOR 'FORE I EXPLODE
 FOR NO RHYME, NO REASON
 EVERY DAY IS OPEN SEASON
 EVERY DAY COULD BE YOUR FINAL ONE
 'CAUSE I AM I AND YOU ARE DONE

(He rings the bell, grabs the mike and becomes Paul Jackson announcing the first match. Paul periodically breaks from his announcer character with a question or comment.)

PAUL

Ladies and gentlemen—it sounds stupid to say ladies and gentlemen when there's nobody here . . . Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to—what's the name of our fed again? . . . Welcome to the Cannibal Wrestling Federation. Today, we've got three great matches for you. We've got Double T and John Done in a battle for the world title, and then—hey, how can you fight two matches with the same guys? . . . OK. After that, we got Double T and John Done fighting for the hardcore title. And then we've got the main event: the Double Ds, Double T and John Done, taking on the incredible tag team from Mother Africa, the Oreo Express, for the tag team championship. Who's gonna' be the announcer in the tag team match if we're all wrestling?

(He becomes John Done in the ring.)

JOHN DONE

Before we start this match, I've got something to say:
 Roses are red,
 Crab grass is green,
 After I cave in your head,

I'm gonna' kill your family (tries to make "family" rhyme with "green")

(During the next segment, he simultaneously speaks as Paul Jackson and carries out actions as John Done and Double T—as indicated.)

PAUL

The first match of the CWF has started. They tie up in the center of the ring.
(The Wrestler—as John Done—ties up with an imaginary Double T. He then gives Double T a knee in the guts.)

Knee from John Done.

(And another knee.)

And again.

(He applies a front headlock.)

Front headlock.

(He slaps Double T's back and sits on the ground—a DDT.)

DDT! DDT!

(He covers his opponent.)

Double T is Done! One. Two. Nooo! He kicks out!

(He throws a couple of punches to his prone opponent.)

Done's right back on him. Done writes the crappiest poems in the world, but he's a pretty good wrestler for a non-African.

(He grabs his balls. Low blow.)

Ouch. Double T just hit Done in the Double B.

(breaking his announcer character, as Paul Jackson)

Yeah, Double T to the Double B—who's the man with the rhymes—ye-ah!

(He hops off the ground and becomes Jimmy.)

JIMMY

Dude, Chris. I'm so sorry. Are you OK? I so didn't mean to really hit you. I aimed way to the side. Dude, I'm so sorry. You can hit me in the nuts, OK? Come on, dude, hit me in the nuts. Please?

(Physically, he remains Jimmy but vocally he's still Paul Jackson.)

PAUL

Double T's down on his hands and knees talkin' smack to John Done. He hits the man in his Double B—ye-ah—Double T to the Double B—and now he's in his face laying the smackdown. I can't hear what he's saying, but I know Double T is telling John Done what it is and what it's gonna' be.

JIMMY

Come on, dude. One good shot in the nuts. Please?
(pause)

I won't be mad.

PAUL

He's layin' a lot of smack. A lot of smack.

JIMMY

If you don't want to do it 'cause you think I'll be mad, I could hit myself. Would it be OK if I hit myself?

PAUL

(breaks character from playing the announcer)

Yo, this sucks—Jimmy, you look like you gotta' go to the bathroom or something.
(Done begins to pound on the imaginary Jimmy.)

Finally, Done's laying some real smack.

(He picks up Jimmy in suplex position, then falls forward, driving his face into the mat.)

Oh, man. Drives him face down into the mat.

(He makes a throat-slitting sign.)

JOHN DONE

End of the Rhyme!

PAUL

He's calling for his finishing hold, the most devastating move in sports entertainment today, except of course for my finisher, the African Eliminator. But even if it's not the African Eliminator, it's still a devastating move.

(John Done hooks an imaginary leg and prepares for a suplex-like move.)

He's got the leg hooked, like he's going for a Pittsburgh Plunge suplex . . .
(He sits down like a cradle brainbuster.)

Oh my God!!! Right on his head! Double T has gotta' be seein' double you, double me, double everything.

(He becomes Jack Scamuto, referee, and prepares to count the pin.)

JACK SCAMUTO

(slapping the mattress with each count)

One. Two.

(his hand stopping in mid-air)

I thought Jimmy was supposed to win.

(He rolls onto his back and becomes Jimmy.)

JIMMY

Dude, Jack, count it!

(He rolls back into referee position. As his hand hits the ground)

JACK SCAMUTO

Three.

(He rings the bell.)

PAUL

New champion! New champion! John Done is the new CWF world champion!

(He becomes John Done standing over Jimmy's prone body, pointing at him.)

JOHN DONE

Roses are red,
Bruises are black and blue.
I said I'd kick your ass
And now it's true.

(He becomes the Wrestler.)

WRESTLER

I felt pretty bad after the match, because Jimmy was supposed to win, but after he thought he kicked me in the balls, when we were all clinched up talkin' to each other, I tell him if he doesn't let me win, I won't be his friend anymore. It's a dirty trick, and he falls for it every time. I know how bad he wants to be the first champ, but I can't help it. I want to win, and I know I can get away with it—and it just flies out of my mouth. I'll let him win it back next time for sure.

(pause)

At the end of the day, these are the facts: I am the world heavyweight champion of the Cannibal Wrestling Federation, Jimmy is the hardcore champion, the Oreo Express are the tag champions, and we need some more guys fast, because we're gonna' get way bored with just the four of us wrestling each other all the time.

(beat)

Between me, Jimmy, Jack and Paul, we talk to maybe a dozen kids we think would be good in the fed.

(talks to an imaginary potential wrestler)

Hey, Kyle, we got this backyard fed over at Jimmy's house—it's pretty intense—I'm only talkin' to guys I think maybe could handle it.

(He becomes Jimmy trying to sell another kid on the fed.)

JIMMY

Dude, Friday was so awesome. I wrestled Chris for the hardcore title and I won—I have this awesome finisher, Teed Off—we just need some more guys. It's totally awesome and—

(listens)

Don't tell your parents. Tell them you're playing touch football. That's what Chris tells his parents.

WRESTLER

And then Jimmy comes up with his second good idea, the first being starting the whole wrestling thing to begin with.

(He becomes Jimmy.)

JIMMY

We should have practices. Maybe on Monday and Wednesday. If Kyle and some other kids are coming on Friday, I don't want to look like a total spaz in front of them.

(He becomes the Wrestler.)

WRESTLER

Yeah. Practice was a great idea, and it went great, until—

PAUL

Half-nelson! Half-nelson!

WRESTLER

(In the moment, he pretends to put Jimmy in a half-nelson.)

Hi, Mrs. Double T. Thanks again for letting us practice holds in your backyard. We'll make the wrestling team for sure next season.

(pause)

She's gonna' find out sooner or later. Guess it's gonna' be later.

(beat)

Friday finally comes, and three new kids show up: Kyle and two kids I've never seen in my life. They're friends of Jack's, only they go to private school. They seem nice enough, and if they want to wrestle in \$200 jeans, that's their problem. We need the guys.

(beat)

And then there's these two other kids. They're friends of Jack's friends, and they show up fifteen minutes after we start.

(He becomes Jimmy.)

JIMMY

Chris, dude, what do we do? If my Mom gets home and sees all these kids cheering and shit, I'm so dead. Your parents are cool—
(He becomes the Wrestler.)

WRESTLER

Whoa—stop the music. My parents are not cool, but Jimmy has a point. My parents are not that *uncool*.

(pause)

The only reason I don't tell them about the wrestling is because they talk to Jimmy's Mom a lot, and if I told them, they might accidentally let it slip. I think they kinda' know anyway, 'cause my Dad was giving me this winky-winky thing when I came in last Friday and my clothes were all muddy and I said it was from football. They know I'm into the WWE, and I think they know I wasn't playing football. But I guess they figure I'm not in a gang, I'm not on drugs, so if I want to beat up Jimmy, what's the harm?

(to Jimmy)

If she doesn't find out today, she's gonna' find out the next time or the time after that. Why don't you just tell her? What's she gonna' do?

(beat)

When we were nine, this kid that was twelve started pickin' on me. I was pretty tough for nine, but the kid's half a foot taller and a lot bigger than me. Jimmy sees what's goin' on and bam, he takes out the kid's knees, and it takes two teachers to pull Jimmy off of him. And it gets better: Jimmy beats the kid up for the next three days in a row to make sure he gets the message to leave me alone. When Jimmy was nine, he was three inches shorter than me, but the kid's got balls of steel. He's just weird about some stuff, like his Mom. Some stuff just freaks him out.

JIMMY

These guys gotta' go.

WRESTLER

They're fans. You can't throw out the fans. I know the fed is just for fun, but part of havin' fun—at least for me—is havin' fans. You're the good guy—they're gonna' cheer for you. Think about that—people are gonna' be cheerin' for you to kick ass.

(pause)

Jimmy gives me one of those "we're all goin' to hell" looks, but he lets the guys stay. He's half-listening for the sound of his Mom pulling into the driveway the whole time, but she doesn't get home until way after we're done.

(pause)

And this weird thing is happening. The two fans are cheering, and now that we've got some extra guys, they're gettin' into it too, and it's makin' some noise. Not piss off the neighbors noise, but get you pumped noise. I'm wrestling Jimmy, 'cause I told him I'd let him be world champ if he'd trade me for the hardcore title,

and I'm going for Under Done, one of my set-up moves, and people are yelling and booing—they're totally into hating me, and I'm gettin' off on it so much I'm half-scared I'm gonna' get a hard-on. It's like the most incredible moment of my life. Jimmy reverses it and hits me with Teed Off for the W, but it doesn't matter. For seven minutes and thirty-three seconds—yeah, Jimmy bought a clock—I'm the fuckin' center of everybody's universe.

(pause)

Once you start bein' the center of the universe, it's hard to stop. That night, I'm lyin' in bed, and I can't sleep. I'm thinkin', "How can I make them scream at me louder, hate me more?"

(pause)

And it's not just me. We have practice at Jimmy's on Monday, and not only are all the wrestlers there, but there's two other kids I've never seen before in my life—again.

(He becomes MARLEY, a friend of Kyle's.)

MARLEY

Uh . . . hey . . . Kyle said he's in your wrestling fed, and that maybe you need some more guys. He says it's really kickin' and that you got fans and that you guys are gonna' be gettin' hardcore, and I just wanted to come by and tell you I'm down with that, if you still need some more guys.

(pause)

See this?

(He points to his forehead.)

Got that from blading in my old fed, so I'm totally ready to take it to the limit.

(pause)

Yeah, Kyle comes up to me after church yesterday, and he says I should check you out, so . . .

(He makes a gesture as if to say "here I am." He then becomes the Wrestler.)

WRESTLER

Kid's name is Marley. No shit. And he's got one-hundred percent certified skills.

(pause)

But the other kid with him . . . Titty Boy. Kyle didn't want him to come, but Kyle's talkin' to Marley after church and Titty Boy comes over. Kyle says he's a freak, but he's kinda' funny.

(pause)

I tell him whatever. I gotta' talk to Jimmy.

(to Jimmy)

We have eight wrestlers, nine if you count the fat kid. We gotta' make sure everybody gets matches, and we gotta' make up story lines and come up with some gimmick matches, like I was thinkin' maybe a three-way dance or a fatal four-way, and—

(to the audience)

Jimmy's starting to wig out. If you pay real close attention, you can watch his brain hit tilt. His ears get red, then his face—you can watch the red move across his cheeks. I'm actually not tryin' to make it happen this time, 'cause I'm as into this fed as Jimmy—

(to Jimmy)

Jimmy, I'll help you. It's no biggie. Friday's gonna' be awesome.

(pause)

So we plan everything out on Tuesday. 'Til midnight locked in my room. My Mom keeps knocking on my door offering us cookies, then fresh fruit, then nachos—junk food, health food, junk food—she knocks every half hour. I almost want to tell her we're planning the wrestling, 'cause I know she's startin' to think something is going on. You know, like me and Jimmy are queers.

(pause)

Anyway, we get it all planned out, and then on Wednesday at lunch, Jimmy commits suicide.

(Pause. He holds up a colored flyer.)

With this.

(reads)

“Cannibal Wrestling Federation presents Friday Feast at Jimmy Talatifierre's house. Don't park on our block.” It's just one flyer, but it's gonna' bring some people. Enough people that it's pretty much the same as Jimmy telling his Mom about the wrestling—which, in his mind, is suicide.

(pause)

On Friday, we're up to a dozen fans, and we're definitely gonna' get nailed, 'cause nobody read the part of the flyer that said don't park on our block or in front of the house or in the driveway.

(pause)

Jimmy's Mom doesn't have that great of an education, so she sounds like a Marine half the time. I thought the whole fuckin' Marine Corps showed up that afternoon. “Who are these people? Work all week to put food in your trap that never says thank you, and I can't even find a place to park!” Jimmy's so freaked he mumbles something about practicing holds and then clams up. We all stand there—it's probably fifteen seconds, but it feels like fifteen hours, and Jimmy turns whiter than an albino in a blizzard. And oh no—his leg starts twitchin'. He's trying to hold it. If he pisses his pants in front of the fans and the other guys, this fed is history, so—

(to Jimmy's Mother)

Mrs. Double T, Jimmy and I started a backyard wrestling federation in your backyard. And then it's “like on those tapes for sale on cable at one in the morning? My kid's some kinda' crazy animal that throws himself off the roof with a trash can lid?” And “You know what they say about the parents? I'm some kinda' horrible mother, because I can't control my animal son.” And then she hits him with “Your father—“

(pause)

If she starts talking about Jimmy's Dad, Jimmy's gonna' blow. I'll tell you what happened with Jimmy's Dad sometime, but right now I've gotta' stop his Mom.

WRESTLER (Cont...)

(to Jimmy's Mother)

Mrs. Double T, it's not like that. Nobody's jumping off the roof. Nobody even gets hurt, except maybe for a couple little bruises. Football's just as bad. Worse. Jimmy's a really good wrestler, and he helps me plan everything out. We come up with names and characters, and everybody acts like their characters—like I'm John Done and that kid over there—that's Kyle—he's Special K, as in special to the ladies, and Paul and Jack are the Oreo Express, and that fat kid, I don't know his name, but he's the Backyard Brawler—I think we're gonna' change that to Food Truck or Takeout or somethin' funnier than Backyard Brawler, but he just started. And we all come up with costumes, and a few people come over and cheer—they cheer for Jimmy. He's one of the good guys. But it's just pretend, and we practice so everybody knows how to do the moves and nobody gets hurt.

(pause)

You can watch if you want.

(pause)

It's like a cartoon.

(pause)

Isn't it better than playin' mailbox baseball like last year?

(pause, to the audience)

She has to admit I have a point about it bein' better than mailbox baseball. She doesn't admit it, but she goes inside. Jimmy starts to pink up as soon as she's gone, and I hear him breathe for the first time since his Mom walked into the backyard.

(pause)

Then something else happens. I don't know what makes me do it, but I raise my arms like I just kicked somebody's ass, and the fans go nuts, and the other wrestlers go nuts. Everybody's cheering, and even Jimmy starts to sorta' smile.

JOHN DONE

(to the crowd, raises his arms in the air)

Hit my music!

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