

Echoes of Defeat Part I

Backstage of Breakdown after the loss to Colleen McDonald

The loss stings like a fresh wound, raw and aching, each pang a painful reminder of what just transpired. As I step out of the ring, the weight of defeat wraps around me like a suffocating shroud. The cheers and jeers of the crowd fade into a dull roar, their voices a distant echo as I try to process what just happened. I feel as if I'm moving through a fog, the cacophony swirling around me, an unreal soundscape that contrasts sharply with the heavy silence settling in my chest. The pressure of their expectations presses down on me, more suffocating than any title belt I've ever worn. This isn't just a loss in the ring; it's the crumbling of the dreams I've held onto for so long, the hopes I clung to that now lie shattered at my feet like broken glass, sharp and jagged, cutting deep into the fragile fabric of my self-worth.

"You fought hard, but it wasn't enough," I mutter to myself, the bitter taste of the words lingering on my tongue like poison. Each syllable resonates within me, a cruel reminder of my failure, echoing in the hollow space where confidence used to thrive. My thoughts drift back to Colleen's face—her fierce determination lighting up the arena, the way she moved with purpose and poise, every action deliberate and precise. It felt like we were locked in a dance, two warriors pushing each other to our limits in a fierce battle of wills. But while she emerged victorious, standing tall amidst the accolades, I find myself here, drowning in a tide of despair, feeling helpless and diminished—a hollow shell of the fighter I once was. The bright lights of the arena fade, replaced by the dim reality of my inadequacies, and I can't shake the feeling that I've let everyone down once again. I'm left grappling with the haunting question: Who am I if I can't even win a match?

As I make my way through the dimly lit corridor backstage, the air is thick with the smell of sweat and adrenaline, remnants of the battle that just unfolded in the ring. I can't escape the nagging feeling of defeat clinging to me like a heavy fog, suffocating and inescapable. Each step feels like an uphill climb, my body weary and sore from the match, muscles aching with fatigue, but it's not just physical exhaustion weighing me down—it's the crushing weight of disappointment. My mind races, relentless in its replay of the moments that led to this loss, each one etched into my memory like a brand.

I find myself trapped in a loop, revisiting every misstep with vivid clarity. I can still see Colleen's determined expression, the way her eyes sparkled with fierce resolve as she countered my every move. The memory of her agility and speed feels like a shadow haunting me, taunting me with my own shortcomings. I remember the moments I hesitated, the instinct to strike faltering at the crucial second, leaving me vulnerable and exposed. It feels like a thousand tiny daggers, each one twisting deeper into my psyche, reopening wounds I thought were healing.

Every time I replay her successful counters, it stabs at my confidence, reminding me of my own weaknesses. Why didn't I push harder? Why didn't I see those openings? "**You had the chance,**" I whisper to myself, frustration bubbling to the surface. It's as if the weight of my own doubts is manifesting physically, each step becoming a struggle against the relentless tide of regret. I feel hollow, a shell of the fighter I aspire to be, burdened by the realization that this defeat goes beyond just losing a match—it's a personal failure, a setback in a journey I thought I was finally reclaiming.

As I navigate the corridor, the walls seem to close in around me, amplifying the loneliness of my thoughts. There are no cheers or jeers now, just the quiet aftermath of my defeat, and I am left to face the reality of what it means to be beaten again. It's a feeling I had hoped to leave behind, a ghost that refuses to fade away. "**What's wrong with me?**" I think, battling the internal storm brewing within. But as the echoes of my shortcomings reverberate in my mind, I know I can't allow myself to stay in this place of despair. I must find a way to rise from this moment, to transform this pain into something constructive. But right now, all I feel is the weight of my failure pressing down on me, a reminder that I am still on the path to reclaiming my identity.

As I continue down the corridor, the frustration begins to bubble over, churning in my gut like a storm. The disappointment morphs into something darker, a fiery anger that courses through my veins like a shot of adrenaline. Each step feels heavier as I wrestle with the reality of my situation. I'm tired of feeling this way, tired of the relentless cycle of hope and despair. The echoes of my failures mix with the remnants of the crowd's cheers, taunting me with what I can't seem to achieve.

"**Why can't I just get it right?**" I mutter under my breath, the words laced with venom. My fists clench at my sides, and I feel the heat rising within me, a familiar rage igniting like a match striking against steel. "Why am I still struggling when I've put in the work?" The image of Colleen celebrating her victory flashes in my mind, a stark reminder of what I failed to achieve. It cuts deeper than any blow I took in the ring, and the sight of her triumph sends a wave of anger crashing through me.

I stop abruptly, pressing my back against the cold concrete wall, my breath coming in sharp bursts. The frustration morphs into a mantra of self-doubt that threatens to pull me under. "**You're a joke, Lawler. You can't even win a simple match anymore.**" The words echo back at me, cruel and relentless, and I feel the tears of rage prick at the corners of my eyes. I hate this feeling of helplessness, the way it drags me down into a pit of despair. I want to scream, to let the world know how I feel, but all that comes out is a choked growl of frustration.

“This isn’t how it’s supposed to be!” I shout, the sound reverberating off the corridor walls, echoing my inner turmoil. I’m furious, but the anger feels futile. What’s the point of shouting into the void when I’m the one responsible for my downfall?

“You’re pathetic,” I whisper to myself, the sting of my own words cutting deep. Each syllable feels like a knife, piercing through the fragile facade of confidence I’ve tried to build. I’ve let every loss, every moment of doubt, pile up until I can’t see anything but my failures. The weight of expectation bears down on me like a ton of bricks, and I’m suffocating beneath it. I’m not just angry—I’m scared. Scared that this is my new reality, that I’m not the fighter I once was, and that I may never reclaim my place in the ring.

I take a shaky breath, trying to steady myself, but the doubts continue to swirl, relentless and suffocating. “What if I don’t belong here anymore?” I question the emptiness of the corridor. “What if I’m just a shadow of my former self, chasing a dream that’s no longer mine?” The truth hangs heavily in the air, a reality I’m struggling to accept. My chest tightens, and I close my eyes, wishing for clarity, for a way to banish these demons that haunt me. But they linger, refusing to fade, just like the memory of my defeats.

As I lean against the cold concrete wall, the world around me begins to blur, the weight of my disappointment pulling me into a void. Each breath feels like a struggle, a reminder of the fight that just ended and the uncertainty of what lies ahead. I’m not just battling opponents in the ring; I’m grappling with myself, the demons of my past lurking in the shadows, waiting for the chance to drag me back down.

“Get it together, Lawler,” I tell myself, though my voice sounds small in the empty corridor, echoing back like a mockery of my resolve. I push away from the wall and start pacing again, each step heavy with the burden of my thoughts.

Every footfall feels like a reminder of my inadequacies. I think back to the countless hours spent training, the sacrifices I’ve made, and yet here I am, unable to secure a single victory. “Why am I still here?” My mind spirals deeper into despair. “What am I even doing?”

With each passing moment, my frustration builds, morphing into a tempest of anger. It’s like a fire igniting within me, threatening to consume everything in its path. “You can’t just stand here feeling sorry for yourself!” I shout into the empty hallway, my voice echoing back, taunting me with my own helplessness. “You’re better than this! You’re supposed to be better than this!”

I grip my hair tightly, pulling at the roots, hoping the physical pain will distract me from the emotional storm raging inside. The cheers of the crowd fade, replaced by the oppressive silence, leaving only the roar of my thoughts. “Colleen fought hard, and she deserves that win. But I’m

not just going to roll over and accept this! I refuse to be just another name on a list of has-beens!”

The anger swells within me, a burning rage that feels both empowering and terrifying. “I didn’t come back to be an afterthought! I came back to reclaim my legacy!” But as the words leave my mouth, doubt creeps in, whispering that maybe I’m not enough, that maybe I never was.

I stop, my breath hitching as the weight of those thoughts crashes over me. “What if I’m just fooling myself?” I whisper, my heart racing as the enormity of my situation sinks in. “What if this is it? What if I’m destined to keep losing and letting down everyone who believes in me?”

The frustration threatens to spill over, and I fight against the tears stinging my eyes, refusing to give in to weakness. I can’t let this consume me. I can’t let it take away the one thing I’ve fought so hard to reclaim. “This isn’t how it ends,” I say firmly, though my voice trembles with the weight of my doubts. “I’m not going out like this.”

Taking a step back from the edge of despair, I cling to the remnants of my anger like a lifeline. I won’t let this defeat define me, but the fear gnaws at my insides, relentless and biting. “I have to find a way to push through this. I can’t keep letting fear dictate my every move.”

With a heavy heart, I take a shaky breath, the doubt and uncertainty swirling within me. This fight isn’t just about the win; it’s about reclaiming a part of myself I thought I had lost. But even as I face the truth, I know I need to confront these demons. I can’t let them linger; I have to find a way to channel this anger and pain into something that will propel me forward.

As I continue pacing the corridor, I wrestle with my thoughts, feeling the weight of my struggles pressing down on me. I may not have the answers, but I refuse to let this moment dictate my future. The echoes of my defeats will not be my final chapter. I will find a way to rise from this darkness, but for now, I need to navigate the chaos swirling inside me. I barely notice the sound of footsteps approaching until they’re nearly upon me. A security guard, a burly man with a scruffy beard and an air of authority, steps into my path.

“Hey, Lawler,” he calls out, his voice breaking through the haze of my anger and frustration. “I need you to—”

“Not now!” I snap, my voice sharper than I intended. The words spill out in a rush, fueled by the pent-up rage and disappointment coursing through me. I can feel the tension coiling in my chest, ready to explode.

The guard raises an eyebrow, taken aback by my sudden outburst. “I just need you to sign this,” he replies, holding out a clipboard with a paper attached. “It’s for the upcoming events. Standard procedure.”

I stare at the clipboard as if it’s a snake ready to strike. “Standard procedure?” I echo, my voice rising. “You think I care about some damn paperwork right now? I just lost a match that mattered! I’m not in the mood to play nice!”

He shifts uncomfortably, clearly caught off guard. “I get it, man. We all have our bad days, but this is important for the company—”

“Important?” I cut him off, the words laced with venom. “You think your little clipboard is important to me right now? Do you even know what it feels like to put everything on the line and come up short? To step into that ring and fail when it matters most?”

I can feel my heart pounding, anger bubbling over, and I’m aware of how I’m coming across, but I can’t stop myself. “You don’t know what it’s like to feel like you’re drowning in your own failures, to feel like every person in that crowd is judging you for not being good enough! So forgive me if I don’t give a damn about signing some form!”

The guard looks taken aback, but there’s a flicker of understanding in his eyes. “I’m just doing my job, man. I’m not trying to get in your way—”

“Then get out of my way!” I roar, frustration boiling over. I can feel the heat radiating from my face, my fists clenching at my sides. “I don’t need this right now! I need space to breathe, to think, to—”

Before I can finish, the guard nods, holding up his hands in surrender. “Alright, alright. Just... take it easy, okay? I’ll be over here if you need anything.”

I watch as he steps back, clearly wanting to avoid further confrontation. The anger fades slightly, leaving behind a feeling of embarrassment mixed with the remnants of my earlier frustration. I take a deep breath, trying to calm the storm inside me.

“Sorry,” I mutter, though it feels hollow. “I just... I have a lot on my mind.”

He offers a sympathetic nod before walking away, leaving me alone again with my thoughts. As the silence settles back in, I can’t shake the feeling of inadequacy that lingers like a shadow, hovering over me as I grapple with the reality of my situation.

As the guard walks away, I feel the heat of embarrassment creeping up my neck, but I push it aside. The anger, though momentarily released, leaves behind an unsettling residue that I can't quite shake. I lean against the cool concrete wall again, trying to gather my thoughts, but the echoes of my outburst linger in the air like smoke.

I close my eyes for a moment, willing the chaos in my mind to settle. "Get it together, Lawler," I whisper to myself, feeling the weight of my failures pressing down like a heavy blanket. "You can't afford to lose control like that—not now, not ever."

But the memories of my loss against Colleen flood back, each one more painful than the last. I replay the match in my head, the moments where I hesitated, the opportunities I let slip away. "You're just a shadow of who you used to be," I remind myself, a bitter taste filling my mouth. "How are you supposed to keep fighting when you can't even win?"

I take a deep breath, attempting to drown out the negativity that swirls around me. I've faced demons before, but this feels different. This feels like a war, one I'm losing. "Focus on the next match," I tell myself, clinging to that thread of hope. "You've got another chance coming up, and you can't let this doubt consume you."

But as I stand there, alone in the corridor, I can't ignore the creeping sense of despair that washes over me. The match with Blake Mason was supposed to be my turning point, a moment where I would reclaim my identity. Instead, it felt like I was stuck in a never-ending cycle of disappointment.

"What if this is it?" I think, the thought chilling me to the bone. "What if I've run out of chances?"

As I pace the floor of the gym, a familiar weight settles on my chest, thick with frustration and regret. I glance around at the surroundings—the training mats, the heavy bags swinging in rhythmic motion—but they offer no solace. Each step I take feels heavier, burdened by the shadow of my recent losses that loom over me like a dark cloud. The once-vibrant energy of the gym buzzes around me, but I find myself trapped in a storm of self-doubt, the cheers of the crowd now a distant echo that stings like an old wound.

My fellow wrestlers move through their routines, their faces set with determination and focus. I can't help but feel adrift among them, a ghost of the fighter I used to be. "Why can't I just get it right?" I mutter under my breath, frustration bubbling up inside me. The weight of my failures gnaws at me, relentless in its torment. "Why do I keep letting myself down?"

Anger simmers beneath the surface, feeding off the disappointment that seeps into every corner of my mind. “I’ve worked too damn hard to let this slip away,” I think, clenching my fists as the memories of my recent matches flash through my mind—every miscalculation, every moment of hesitation. It all feels like a chain of defeats, tightening the noose of self-doubt around my neck.

Insidious doubts creep back in, whispering their harsh truths. “You’re just a shadow of who you used to be,” they taunt me. “What’s the point of fighting when you can’t even win?” The pressure of those words presses down on me, suffocating the flicker of resolve I try to maintain.

I glance toward the training area, where my fellow wrestlers are immersed in their routines, completely unaware of the demons I’m grappling with. “Maybe I should just walk away,” the thought slithers in, unsettling me further. “What’s the point if all I do is lose?”

A wave of heat rises in my chest, a mix of anger and despair threatening to spill over. I close my eyes, attempting to block out the noise of self-doubt, but it clings to me like a second skin.

“You’ll never reclaim what you once had,” they echo in my mind. “You’re wasting your time.”

Helplessness settles deeper within me, making it hard to breathe. I take a shaky breath, desperately searching for clarity amid the chaos. Each thought feels like an anchor dragging me deeper into the abyss of my insecurities.

As I stand there, feeling lost and overwhelmed, I realize that the real battle isn’t just against my opponents; it’s against myself. Right now, I feel trapped in a web of my own making, with no clear way out. The memories of my losing streak loom large, a constant reminder that no matter how hard I train, the results haven’t changed, and with each failure, I wonder if I’ll ever find my way back to the top.