

Frenzy, Ch.1

The nightmare began one cold January night for thirty-nine year old, Asher Hayes. A top athlete in the realm of combat sports, his chosen profession being that of pro wrestling, where he achieved the mantle of World Heavyweight Champion.

He was set to defend his title live, on Pay-Per-View, and in Asher's mind, victory was inevitable. With that triumph, Asher had the rest of his night planned out. His best friend, Felix had tagged along with him. They were going to hit every bar in sight, and they wouldn't stop consuming whatever they could until one, if not both, of them passed out.

Asher laced up his boots, smirking to himself as he thought about all the glory his future was to be filled with. He figured his match would last close to thirty minutes, where he'd achieve success, before having a shower, and out on the town they'd go. The door to his locker room opened up and in walked Felix, who removed an envelope from the right pocket of his leather jacket.

"What's that?" **Asher asked, acknowledging the envelope, unable to take his eyes off it.**

"Oh, what's this?" **Felix asked, the light fixture shining brightly on his bald dome.** "This is something new."

"New?" **Asher asked, the thought of something new always made him nervous when it came to drugs, which is what he assumed the envelope's contents to be.** "Can't we just stick to weed, man?"

Felix shook his head, “Not after the money I just spent,” **Asher watched as his cackling friend opened the envelope, which contained neatly packaged multicolored circles.** “This is called *‘Frenzy’*,” **he said, lifting one up for Asher to inspect.**

“These look like suckers you get as a kid at a doctor’s office. I’m not going to lie, Felix.”

“You say that, but they’re supposed to blow your balls off, man.”

“Not sure I want to do that, friend.” **Asher snatched the envelope from his friend, taking a closer look.** “And I’m not the biggest fan of synthetics. You should know that, already.”

“Why are you being such a party pooper, dude?” **Felix jerked back the envelope.** “I paid a lot of money for this. If you’re not going to take them, then I guess it’s more for me. That’s the only way to look at it.”

“It’s synthetic and you claim it’d blow my balls off, so I assume that means I’ll be tripping hard.”

“Right, you are.”

“Where did you hear about this shit?”

Felix shrugged. “I know people.”

“Good for you, but I’ve done a lot of drugs in my day. You know that, just as you know that I know people, too. And I have never heard of this,” **Asher said, pointing at the object in between his fingers.** “That’s worrisome. I’m all for having a good time, but surely you see it.”

“Look man,” **Felix rolled his eyes and shook his head, showing signs of disappointment,** “I’m here for you. You’re going to steamroll that bitch tonight. You wanted to celebrate, so I went out and got something we could try together. It’d be like old times.”

“The ‘old times’ as in weed and the occasional line of coke? This is definitely neither of those.”

“According to my source,” **Felix said proudly,** “it is nothing but a rush of highs, man. Even makes you laser focused. There’s like Adderall in it, among a few other things.”

“Still not selling me on it, dude,” **Asher stated as he placed the circular object back into the envelope.**

“Why do you have to harsh a potential mellow, Asher? Seriously. I got this for us, so we could have a good time. You deserve to have a high that’s not some run of the mill, especially when you win tonight.”

Asher sighed. Felix was let down with his reaction. It made Asher's 'best friend senses' tingle. Knowing that becoming a newly appointed was to blame, the World Champion cursed his sensitive side as it began to take over.

"Alright," **Asher put a hand up in surrender,** "alright. I'll do it with you. I just hope it's as good as your dealer claims it is. Who is your dealer by the way? You never told me. And wait. I shouldn't say dealer. You called them your source."

"I can't tell you, dude."

"Why not?"

"That's for me to know and for you," **Felix flicked Asher in the chest,** "to maybe find out. Now, finish getting ready. You've got a title to defend."

A knock came at the locker room door, with a voice belting out that Asher had five minutes. Asher stood up and grabbed the World Championship draping it over his shoulder. "Damn right, I do."

"But seriously," **Felix said,** "if this shit turns out to be worth the hype, I'll let you know who my source is, because I'm sure we'll want to do business with them again. And again."

"Don't take any of that without me," **Asher smirked.** "I'll be back soon enough with plenty of reason to celebrate," he added, motioning towards the championship.

Engaging with his best friend in their not-so-secret handshake they had since they were kids, Asher exited the locker room and made his way towards the entrance ramp, telling himself that what lied before him was the biggest match of his disjointed career. Selena Frost was the pinnacle of pro wrestling, even if Asher hated such a thought.

He couldn't stand her, and he'd been enduring a love/hate relationship with the sport, with things leaning more towards the hateful side of things, Asher couldn't help but feel losing would set the promotion back a few years.

Losing to her was not an option.

There was no reason to celebrate. Asher was no longer Champion. Losing to Selena wasn't an option. It was definite. It happened and nothing could change it. All Asher wanted to do was get so fucked up that he wouldn't remember the last month or so.

Asher stormed back to his locker room, while Selena was still relishing in her victory. The crowd booed her, but she seemed to eat it up. The former Champion wanted to eat enough drugs that he'd feel on top of the world, where he felt he belonged.

Reaching his locker room, Asher found CHBK standing on the outside. His immediate thought was that Felix's staff had been discovered. That his best friend decided to trip balls without him. "Asher."

"Alex. What's up?"

"Rough night?"

"Are you about to make it worse? If you are, just go ahead and say it," **Asher exhaled sharply. He was tired and pissed off. Nothing a good night of partying couldn't erase.**

"No, not trying to do that," **CHBK said.** "I wanted to speak with you about your contract. You hit your year mark a few weeks ago, and as you know," **he shrugged,** "we've been on a handshake deal ever since. I wanted to see if you wanted to re-sign with SCW."

Asher looked down, contemplating. He could re-sign and maybe fight his way back to the World title. *Shit,* **he thought.** *Selena was given a rematch without earning it. Maybe the same could happen for me. She knows she got lucky, and I'd have no qualms with driving that fact home, along with my knee into the side of her fucking skull.*

But then again, **his thoughts continued,** *I'm not Selena. She can get away with murder. She's going to have the easiest fucking reign, while I defended the strap four times in two months. Every other week was a damned title defense. For someone who's claimed to have fallen out of love with pro wrestling, I became the very definition of a fighting champion.*

Ask this Canadian cocksucker if he's banging Selena. Ask if she is his Hoe Queen. His Snow Bone. Go ahead, ask him. **Asher sighed, shaking his head.** "I don't know. Can I leave you with that?"

"I need an answer sooner rather than later if you catch my drift."

"Yeah, I gotcha," **nodded Asher.** "I'll sleep on that and let you know in the next day or so. Does that work for you?"

"We have something drawn up, so if you decide to do so, I'll make sure it gets sent to you right away."

"Okay then," **the two-time Adrenaline Champion said.** "Will there be anything else?" **he asked, his body craving that sweet release. He couldn't get the dabs of '*Frenzy*' off his mind.**

"No, that's it for now. Just let me know as soon as possible."

Asher said nothing else, leaving the legendary Heartbreaker in the chaos of the backstage area, and closing his locker room door.

Felix was still there, standing up abruptly, "Dude! Are you ok?"

"No, I'm not," **Asher shook his head.** "Have you taken any of that shit yet?"

"Of course not," **Felix glanced down at the envelope once he pulled it back out of his coat pocket.** "You told me to wait and I'm doing as you asked. What kind of friend do you think I am?"

"Probably the worst kind," **grinned Asher.** "But I'm ready. I want some of that shit. Pass it over."

"You don't want to wait until we leave the arena?"

Asher scoffed. "Fuck 'em!" **he bellowed, reaching over and digging his fingers into the envelope. Grabbing one of the dabs, he waited for Felix to follow suit, which he did after what appeared to be some newfound reluctance.** "Bottoms up," **Asher said, before placing the dab on his tongue. Felix did the same, and then, they waited.**

Checking his phone, Asher noticed his girlfriend, Kristen, had been calling. The effects of the synthetic seemed to be settling in, and he didn't want her to hear him, as while he may have sounded normal in his mind, there was a good chance Kristen wouldn't feel the same.

"Are you going to answer that?" **Felix asked as they drove through the city. They knew it wasn't a good idea, but Asher, despite not saying the same to his best friend, felt he had nothing left to really live for. Losing the one thing he'd fought for, for nearly twenty years, had been taken from him.**

"No," **he replied**. "Are you going to talk with your lady?" **Felix's lady was named Claire. The three of them grew up together, always playing and causing trouble in the same Windy City neighborhood. Asher had always loved Claire, and he felt the feeling was mutual. It was just that Felix was in the picture, so he'd kept his distance for years. Even the mention of her name made Asher choke up slightly.**

“Oh, I talked to her during your match,” **Felix chuckled.** “I only caught the ending where you got your ass handed to you.”

“You’re such a great friend,” **Asher replied.** “So fucking supportive.”

“Thanks for noticing.”

I hate you, **Asher thought.** “Well, how is she? How’s Claire? Is she doing alright?”

“Yeah, she’s great, man. She loves being a stay-at-home mom. She’s way better at the parenting thing than I could ever be.”

“That’s good,” **Asher said, doing his best to mask any jealousy or sadness behind his words.** “Hey, are you feeling anything? Like has this shit actually kicked in?”

“I think so,” **Felix said.** “I’m feeling way more mellow than I was earlier. And I think the focusing part has kicked in, too. How’s my driving?”

“I think you’re doing okay,” **Asher said, only to discover Felix let his hands off the wheel.** “Dude!” **Asher cried out,** “don’t do that! What the hell?”

“Hey, I’m doing great. I am in the fucking zone, alright?”

“Yeah, yeah,” **Asher groaned.** “Just don’t do that shit, again. Please.”

“You really need to change your attitude.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well,” **Felix began,** “my source said that if you take this shit while you’re in a negative headspace, it could increase that negativity, and your trip will be the fucking worst.”

“Oh, great!” **Asher cried out, shaking his head again,** “now you tell me!”

“Okay, okay,” **said Felix.** “Go to your happy place, dude. Think about your daughter. Think about Kristen. Think about the love of your life. That should help.”

If you only knew, man. Kristen and I have a child. We have a relationship, but I’m not sure that’s even what it is. Our sex still hasn’t picked up. There’s no real physical, or emotional, connection these days. If you only knew, Felix about how I wanted to fuck that broad from my acting class. If you only knew the toll that took on me, and how far to shit that went.

If you only knew.

“Are you thinking about her?”

"Who?" **Asher asked.**

"The love of your life?" **Asher just nodded as Felix continued**, "Kristen. You know? The mother of your child."

"Yeah, man. I am," **the former United States Champion stated, letting the back of his head crumble into the headrest. He didn't see Kristen, however. He didn't see his daughter Hope, either. They made him happy, but not the type that Asher felt that he craved above all viable variations of happiness.**

He was content, but even that was depressing.

Thinking of Claire was food for his soul, however. Asher felt he needed that.

The pain ricocheted throughout Asher's body as he came to. It was sharp, deep, and constant. All signs that everything was real. That this wasn't just some bad trip.

"Wha…" **he tried to speak, but even that hurt. His head felt like it was being pulled open then closed, only to be pulled open again. Asher's brain felt as if it was pressed deep into bone, and his eyes wanted to pop out of their sockets. They just needed the tiniest amount of pressure to do so.**

A sweet release would be death.

Trying to slow his breathing in order to regain a sense of calm, Asher kept his eyes closed. Using his left arm, he reached up and touched his head and face. Warm liquid met his fingertips. Calm arrived so Asher opened his eyes. It was then that the truth revealed itself, and panic tried to return.

To his left, in the driver's seat, was Felix. He was in bad shape, covered in blood and broken glass. Looking ahead, Asher could see the dimly lit wilderness, along with the tree that seemingly brought their fall to a halt.

At that moment, Asher wanted to call Kristen. He wanted to tell her that he loved her. With the end looming near, he wanted to see his daughter one last time; to tell Hope he loved her so much and that she'd become the best thing to ever happen to him.

The thought of such a phone call prompted Asher to move, using his good arm, as the right felt dead, to pat himself down in search of his phone, but to no avail.

He glanced over at Felix, slowly reaching over and nudging him. Such a movement shot pain throughout his shoulders, neck, and chest.

“Felix,” **he whispered.** “Felix, are you okay, buddy?”

His friend moved a bit, slowly. Felix’s face told the whole story. He was in agony. “What…what happened…where are we?”

“I don’t…I don’t know,” **Asher said.** “We’ve been in an accident. That’s all I do know. Do you have your phone on you? I can’t find mine.”

“I can’t…” **Felix groaned loudly, before coughing up blood.**

“Jesus, Felix. Stay calm. Okay, just stay calm.” **Asher managed to lean forward, keeping his eyes on Felix, and that was when he saw it. A shard of glass was sticking out of his friend’s abdomen.** “Fuck…fuck…no, no.”

“What…what is it?” **Felix asked weakly.**

“You’re going to be okay, buddy. I promise.”

Felix coughed up more blood before giving a gentle smile. “No, I’m not. We…we both know…we both know that.”

“No, no…” A**sher shook his head as his voice trailed off. Clearing his throat, he added,** “I said you’re going to be okay. Just…do you…do you have your phone? If we can find your phone,” **he paused for a moment, as his own pain began to blend in with dread,** “if we can find your phone, I can call for help.”

“Ash…Ash…” **Felix’s voice began to break.** “It’s fine. You’re going to be fine.”

“No. You’re my brother,” **Asher said, his mind bringing up memories of their childhood, racing through Chicago on their bikes, getting Chicago style pizza at their favorite spots. Sneaking into movie theaters to watch R-rated movies when they were ten. Rocking out to their favorite bands, while trying to make music of their own, in Felix’s garage while they were in high school. Going gambling. Meeting women. Drinking. The laughter.** “You’re going to be fine. Now,” **Asher leaned over a bit more, stretching himself beyond his current means, and he began to fumble through Felix’s coat when he touched something wet and sticky. Pulling his hand out a little bit, he saw it was covered in blood.**

“Ash…”

He looked up and saw Felix had seen the same thing.

“Felix, this…this,” **Asher grinned, chuckling a bit to avoid the tears that wanted to come,** “this is nothing. We can get help and get you patched up.”

“Take care of Claire for me,’ **Felix managed to say, the life fading from his eyes.** “Make sure she ends up happy…”

Despite being in love with Claire, Asher knew he didn’t want to lose his friend. *She’s supposed to be happy with you, and only you, you asshole!*

“You’re going to be okay, Felix. I’m going to get you outta here. Trust me,” **Asher lied, which ate at him that much more.**

“I…”

“Felix,” **Asher said, feeling all the blood drain from his face, as it seemed ice replaced the pain coursing through his muscles.** “Felix…”

Asher nudged his best friend, but there was no response. Just a faint choking sound, followed by a soft exhale, and then, nothing.

“You’ve let everybody down, Asher.”

Asher opened his eyes, and he was no longer in the car. He was in a chair, with a bright white light shining upon him. Everything else was black.

“Who’s there?” **he asked, his eyes scanning his surroundings, wondering if someone, or some*thing*, would emerge from the shadows**. “I said who’s there!!!”

“There, there dear boy,” **said the voice. It sounded closer the second time around.** “There’s no reason to be upset with me. Only yourself.”

“Step into the light, motherfucker! Show yourself!” **Asher yelled, nearly coming out of the chair, only to realize he couldn’t. He was bound at the ankles and wrist with thick rope.** “What the hell is this? Huh?!”

His shouting and the other voice were replaced with the sound of footsteps. A foot shot out from the darkness and pushed the chair back a bit, before a figure emerged. Asher looked up and they locked eyes. “No fucking way.”

The figure before him was his deceased sister, Amanda. Her long strawberry blonde hair fell at her shoulders, covering half her face, and yet, didn’t hide the disappointment in her eyes. “When are you going to learn, Ash? You should know by now that you can’t escape your bad habits, unless you really want to. So, I ask again. When will you learn?”

“Learn what?”

“That it’s time for you to grow the fuck up! Felix is gone. You’re gone. Now, Kristen has to raise Hope on her own. All because you wanted to have a good time.”

Shaking his head, Asher said, “No, no. We wanted to celebrate.”

“And you had nothing to celebrate, big bro,” **Amanda scolded him.** “You lost, and you went overboard because you weren’t happy with how things went for you. Now, look at you. You have nothing. This is it.”

Asher shook his head again, “No. I’m okay. There’s more. I’m not dead. I’m not…”

Amanda cut him off, as she leaned down, her nose inches from his face, “Then, you need to wake up. Wake up! Wake up! WAKE! UP!”

Asher’s eyes opened wide, and he fought for each breath. His sister’s face was replaced with white walls. Her screaming was swapped with beeping sounds. Blinking for a few moments, Asher realized he was in the hospital, and he was hooked up to a variety of machines.

The door opened and in walked a male nurse, and they locked eyes,“Hey, man. Good to see you’re awake.”

“Where am I?”

“First off, my name’s Kevin, I’m your nurse. And you’re at Mass General. You’re still in Boston. You were in a car accident.”

“W-where’s my friend? I was with someone else. His name’s Felix…”

“I’m sorry, Mr. Hayes but your friend…”

“Don’t say it. He’s not dead!”

“I’m afraid he didn’t make it, sir.” **Asher looked down, slowly beginning to sob.** “I’ll call your doctor. I know this is a lot.”

Kevin exited the room, leaving Asher to his thoughts. Thoughts that were telling him that he was lucky to be alive, but Asher felt pretty fucking far from lucky.

He felt he’d be better off dead.