

To say that Rise To Greatness had not been a great night would be a gross understatement.

Wendell didn't know where things were going to go next, but he could tell there was a tension in the air that wasn't there before.

Dexter had lost... his first 'proper' defeat since coming to SCW, for anyone who cared about trying to play specifics. In the process, the adrenaline championship now belonged to Kimberly Williams. Weeks of messing with Dexter and actively torturing Wendell himself at one point in time, and now SCW and its fans were congratulating her for all of it.

Wendell had tried to distract himself by seeking out Destiny Page after she was finally freed from THEM, but he found himself conflicted. After watching...whatever that was, he didn't know if this whole thing had been a big staged production to promote the attempted Dependables reboot or if she'd legitimately been kidnapped and saved. He had stepped away to let Destiny have her selfie with the woman who was likely a producer of some kind, not wanting to get in the way of her potentially budding movie career, but Wendell was conflicted about where he stood with Destiny.

If they could just talk, one-on-one, with nobody else to get in the way, then maybe...maybe he could lay all his cards on the table and see if Destiny was willing to hear him out or at least let him down easy if their paths were converging too much. Trying to make that happen, however, seemed almost impossible. If he could maybe get her number and set something up via text, that could help, but he also didn't want to seem like he was some sort of creep just asking for a girl's number.

"Oh, why has social media made this all so complicated?" Wendell lamented as he trudged through the backstage area. Considering he'd seen the cameraman off to the side, clearly filming, he knew that trying to just have a private conversation with Destiny wasn't going to be allowed to stay private, not so long as she was an interviewer who could need to be on-camera at a moment's notice and he could be followed in case SCW could find anything to uproot Dexter's message.

As if things weren't complicated enough, he opened the door to Dexter's locker room and immediately had to use it as a shield when a steel chair smashed against it. Carefully poking his head in again, it was startling but not surprising to see Dexter in a full blown rage, tearing up the locker room regardless of the fines he knew he was going to rack up for it.

"That bitch!" he roared as he drove his foot straight through the little TV that was playing the rest of the show. "Of course...of course SCW celebrates their precious adrenaline title being 'saved' from me. Of course they'd rather have someone who's probably inspired people to

murder through bullying or severely hurt themselves trying to emulate her as champion, because she can be promoted and more people can be lost in this death spiral!”

“D-Dexter?” *Wendell carefully called, only briefly stalling Dexter’s furious rampage, though the absolutely unhinged side-eye he got made him nearly piss himself.* “It’s...it’ll be OK. You, um...you can use your rematch! Get the title back and...”

“It’s not about the title, Wendell!” *Dexter screamed as he grabbed a water bottle and hurled it so hard at the wall he actually put a dent in it.* “It’s about the principle of the whole thing! That’s what it’s always been about! But SCW doesn’t understand, not when it could cost them money and attention in the online space!”

Dexter growled as he looked around at the ruined mess he’d left the locker room in, knowing SCW was going to have a field day with fining him over this. With a huff, he went to dig around in his bag before pulling out a wad of cash and slapping it into Wendell’s hand, causing his flunky to wince a bit at the force.

“Consider that payment for a flight back home,” *Dexter told him, his voice low and barely composed.* “Spend some time with your family, maybe think about your next steps with your crush on Destiny. I just...need to be alone for a while to figure out my next move, and I’m not going to risk accidentally hurting you while I get my shit together.”

“Are...are you sure, Dexter?” *Wendell struggled to ask.* “I could...”

“I’m sure, Wendell,” *Dexter huffed.* “Get yourself a cab to the airport, and I’ll pick you up before SCW resumes their goddamned touring schedule and I hopefully have things figured out.”

That was the last thing Dexter said before he shuffled around Wendell and stormed off, leaving the poor guy with one last look around the destroyed locker room before he sadly sighed and began to leave, pulling out his phone to call for a cab that would take him to the airport. He’d never seen Dexter this furious before, ever, but the fact that he was trying to keep Wendell out of harm’s way...it worried him more than Dexter probably thought it would. Still, he would abide by the man’s wishes, hoping that when they reunited upon SCW’s return post-Rise To Greatness, things would somehow be on their way back to normal.

Or at least as normal as they could get in the neverending crusade of the Digital Detoxer to put an end to the scourge of social media.

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The following VHS tape was delivered to SCW headquarters via mail, courtesy of Dexter Grant. Despite Dexter's demands not to do so, the following video was extracted from the tape and converted into a digital format for general viewing.

We start with all the hallmarks of a recorded VHS tape. Blue screen with the occasional crackle of visual white noise, an audible mains hum, the little text in the corner that reads "PLAY" next to the play symbol. This eventually gives way to a black screen, and through the darkness, we can hear the crackling of a fire. Slowly, we fade in, finding ourselves somewhere deep in a forest at night, slowly making our way through the thick trees to follow after the warm glow of the fire we hear. After a few moments, we finally make our way into a small clearing, finding a familiar figure sitting beside this fire, using a sturdy stick to poke at it and subtly rearrange the wood that's fueling it. As we approach, we do see something else within the flames: the adrenaline championship. To be more accurate, it looks like one of those replicas made of plastic and foam that SCW tends to sell, because it's not resisting the fire as well as actual gold and leather probably might. Dexter Grant doesn't even turn his head to acknowledge us, his voice almost numb when he starts talking.

"Are you all happy now? The big, bad Digital Detoxer is no longer holding the adrenaline title hostage. Now it's in the hands of a woman who lacks the mental capacity to care for anybody, even herself. A woman who had made it clear she is going to embarrass and spit in the face of everything SCW hopes for that championship gold, but SCW themselves don't care. After all, it's once again in the hands of someone who will actually play along and promote it like the brainwashed little puppet she is.

Let me be clear about something before any of you jump to conclusions like I know you mindless peons are already doing: I do not care that I have 'finally been beaten' for the first time since I showed up here almost one year ago, nor do I care that I am no longer adrenaline champion. Hell, I would have destroyed that title if SCW wouldn't have been able to simply throw money at the problem to get a whole new title belt, just decide my reign was over and then give that title to someone else if that's how I was going to disrupt their little marketing machine. Let Kimberly Williams gloat and act like she actually accomplished something meaningful for once in her worthless life, let her keep chasing after a high that is ultimately irrelevant and she will fail to realize it until her career is over and she finds out just how quickly people forget about her and move on. That's how it works in this modern age of social media being the driving force behind everything: the moment you stop for even a second is the moment you are erased, forgotten, an afterthought. You all cheer for a self-professed lunatic now, but I know it won't be long before none of you could even answer the question 'who is Kimberly Williams'?

Of course, I wouldn't be surprised if the very few of you out there who actually do care about me and my cause are pointing out that I could pursue her for a rematch. Glory Braddock did the

same to me, and she ultimately couldn't play by my rules and hasn't stopped complaining about it to this day. I bet she would love the thought of me having to play by Kim's rules to try and get back that title, but...to be perfectly honest? I don't CARE about the adrenaline title, or any title for that matter. In their current form, SCW's championships are nothing more than a marketing tool than an actual prize to be won. They are meant to be flaunted and shown off like the attire any celebrity wears on the red carpet, all just to draw attention. Being a champion doesn't actually mean you're the best anymore...look at every single name holding championship gold in SCW right now, along with every confirmed challenger thus far for those titles, and tell me I'm wrong. I made this point back when the joke that is the rigged drawing of fatal fortunes gave me the chance to earn the title shot I capitalized on, and the only reason I fought to keep that title was because if I had it, then it may as well have not truly existed in SCW because it wasn't getting promoted, nor was it even showing up in pristine condition week after week.

No...if I were to pursue my rematch, it will be in the hope that Kim does exactly as I know she would: try to turn the tables on me, attempt to lure me into a match where she feels comfortable, a match where violence reigns supreme so she can flaunt how crazy she is and shove her 'deathmatch queen' title down everyone's throats like it actually means something. And I would accept, not because beating her at her own game would get me that bastardized hunk of gold back...no, I would accept because I would be given the platform to expose Kimberly Williams, show her what happens when her 'insanity' meets someone who actually wants to hurt her, render her incapable of walking. The prize I would seek would be the end of her career, a true moment of Disconnecting her from this business once and for all so that she, and all of you, would realize the lengths I am willing to go to in order to save all of you from yourselves.

So please Kim...poke the bear, think you're outsmarting me by goading me into exactly what I want, so I can put you into a nightmare you will never be able to wake up from."

Despite his claims of not being bothered by his Rise To Greatness loss, Dexter's voice starts to gain some emotion towards the end, sounding almost unhinged at the prospect of a rematch where he could actually get to cause serious harm to Kim under her own terms. One huff later, however, and the emotion is gone, punctuated by Dexter roughly jabbing the melted plastic of the toy belt's center plate with his stick and using it to twist and distort what's left of the replica of the title he once held. As he tilts the stick so that it falls into the fire to keep it going, his head turns towards us at long last.

"Championship or no, my mission continues. No rest for the wicked, after all, though knowing that any of you see me as such instead of as your only hope of being saved is starting to get tiring. I'm out here, constantly doing the work nobody else will, trying to prevent the downfall of the human race, but who do you hail as your heroes instead? People like La Pequena Luz and her wife, people who are manufactured by this system to be your heroes and you all eat it up hook,

line and sinker because it's what you're told to do. The fact that the both of them are even second generation talents is proof that they were specifically born and bred for this business, set up to be the shining beacon that you all can follow because maybe, just maybe, you, too, can live your dream of being a wrestler.

How does it feel, Luz, knowing that you're one of SCW's golden children, someone they will always just hand opportunities to because it keeps the mindless sheep happy and willing to stay connected? Don't deny it, anybody who isn't wearing the rose-tinted glasses can see clear as day how you're just here playing the role you were manufactured for. The friendship with the forgotten wife of SCW's true golden child, the ones the fans reject and she embraces that hatred because it's what she was told to do to draw attention...the fact that you being U.S. champion once again is meant purely to either cater to fans in Spanish-speaking countries or open the door for any sort of political chaos that ultimately benefits SCW because people are talking about them? Even your wife, Amelia, is saved from being lost in your shadow despite the absolute failure she's proven herself to be because the two of you are that bright beacon that opens the door for conversations about LGBTQ+ representation in this business.

Now, let me clarify since I know certain circles out there are chomping at the bit to take me out of context and villainize me further: I don't care about the political garbage that has infected the world almost as badly as the plague of social media, and I am not one of those mindless bastards who sees two women in a relationship and spits in the face of god by using his name in vain to justify their hatred. If you two love each other, then what business is it of mine? But consider this: the fact that I have to clarify at all just shows how even something that years of blood, sweat and tears have gone into fighting for are all trivialized and turned into a joke because of social media and what it has done to us as a species.

And this, Luz, is the foundation upon which you are willing to fight for?"

Dexter scoffs as he glances over at his campfire once more.

"I think it's painfully clear that you, like most others in this business, are too naive to understand the real problem here, Luz. You prefer to live in your little bubble where all you have to worry about is wrestling and being a loving and supportive wife, and people consider you a hero. Meanwhile, I'm over here trying to dismantle this corrupt system that is slowly destroying the world, this system that glorifies psychopathic bullies like Kim Williams and convinces others that it's OK to hurt, torture and maim innocent people so long as it gets them that sweet online notoriety. But hey, if you don't do anything and remain ignorant, then you're not part of the problem, right?

That, Luz, is exactly why I'm going to walk into Breakdown on Thursday night and not only put an end to this joke that you're helping to promote, but I'm also going to see just how much money SCW is willing to fork over when I take that worthless championship belt you now hold and destroy it right before your very eyes.

I'm done playing games, SCW, and Luz is going to be the first victim of my increased efforts to Disconnect your sick little system to Reconnect the entire world to what truly matters. If she ends up on the shelf and you end up down a title, that's your fault. This has nothing to do with me trying to usurp the title shot of some other worthless social zombie to replace the gold I lost...if that were the case, I would've ripped the contract David Striker won from his cold, dead hands as he was carried from the arena on a stretcher and signed my name on the dotted line instead. No...this is about destroying SCW from the inside-out and forcing it to rebuild from scratch, just like you built yourselves from nothing back at the very beginning. No social media, no digital trends, no unnecessary over-the-top nonsense just to get attention. In saving SCW from the wires and cables choking it, I'm kickstarting a revolution that will spread like a wildfire across the world.

All it all starts with you, Luz.

So feel proud of what I'm going to do to you come Breakdown in Orlando, because when you Disconnect to Reconnect...

The whole world will finally start to follow suit."

Dexter begins to sound unhinged again the more he gets into his spiel, and the look in his eyes even seems to become so wild that whoever's filming this is actually beginning to tremble. Very slowly, we begin to back away as Dexter returns his attention to the fire, and it's at this point that we begin to fade to black, then we cut to static, followed by a blue screen, and then...nothing.