

# Prologue

Eight years. *Eight years* since the roar of the crowd, a symphony of adrenaline and ecstasy. Eight years since the sting of sweat mingled with tears of triumph, the taste of victory sweeter than any wine. Eight years since Ryan Lecavalier, the “Lost Monarch,” last reigned supreme in the squared circle.

Eight years of suffocating silence.

She'd tried to fill the void with anything, everything. Painting—a chaotic explosion of colors, each stroke a scream against the canvas. Yoga—a desperate attempt to find inner peace, her body twisting, contorting, searching for a stillness that never came. Even competitive baking, her shortbread cookies infamous for their tooth-shattering crunch, a testament to her simmering fury.

But nothing could quell the gnawing emptiness, the phantom ache of manipulating phantom limbs. Watching her cousins, her own wife, and her friends continue their journeys while she was stranded on the sidelines... It was a slow poison, a constant, agonizing reminder of what she'd lost. The spotlight, the glory, the intoxicating rush of combat.

Until recently, something snapped. A silent scream shattered the suffocating silence. The frustration ignited, a wildfire consuming the ashes of her past. She started training again, in secret, her body a rusted machine protesting every movement, then slowly, painfully, remembering. The old instincts clawing their way back, sharper, hungrier, fueled by years of pent-up rage.

Now, the contract with Supreme Championship Wrestling lay on her kitchen table, already signed the ink was a despondent oath – The Lost Monarch a paragon of a composer, returning to deliver her final crescendo.

Not her first choice, SCW. Too much history, too many egos, not enough grit. In spite of that, Religious Wright was on their roster, a

hypocritical holy roller who'd built his career on preaching fire and brimstone.

Ryan had her own demons to grapple with. Uncertainties, anxieties, the lingering presence of her past self. Yet, she was resolved not to allow any sanctimonious pharisee to obstruct her path. This wasn't just a comeback. It was a resurrection. A chance to prove, to herself, to the world, that the Lost Monarch was ready to reclaim her throne.

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## Past Meets Future

When Ryan arrived, she was met with a beaming smile from Andreas Georgiadis, the ex-Olympian trialist and teammate turned MMA fighter whisperer, who held the door open. "Damn, Ry, good to see you. This place ain't been the same without your..." he paused, searching for the right word, "...unique brand of beautiful chaos."

Ryan chuckled, her eyes crinkling at the corners. "Chaos is my middle name, Dre'. Or maybe it's 'knee brace' these days."

Andreas winced. "How's the rehab coming along?"

Ryan shrugged, as an aloof look over her eyes. "Good enough. Besides, a little wear and tear never stopped a Lecavalier."

They left the office, their laughter echoing through the gym. Just then, a whirlwind in a sports bra and leggings stormed past them, her gaze laser-focused on the ring. Ryan followed her with her eyes, curiosity piqued.

"Hey, grandma," the girl shouted, "Real wrestlers are trying to train here. I hear they're serving 'Seniors eat free' breakfast somewhere else."

Ryan raised an eyebrow, unfazed. "That's cute." She looks over at Andreas, "This one yours?" He didn't say anything, he just shook his head, arms folded across his chest.

Stepping nearer, the girl had a smirk on her face. If you're interested in self defense classes, check out the place next to the ice cream parlor in the plaza. "It's just a brief five-minute drive north from here," she sneers, "If that doesn't catch your interest, feel free to watch me train."

Andreas, sensing the tension escalating, shifted his weight, ready to intervene. But Ryan waved him off, her eyes never leaving the girl's face.

The girl bristled. "That's *my* ring," she claimed, jabbing a finger towards Ryan. "You can leave now..."

With a voice that sounded dangerously low, she murmured, "You're right, forgive me, that's totally *your* ring." she nods in mock agreement.

"I assume you have a training session scheduled with Andreas here? How about I lend you a hand in loosening up, my love?" Ryan proposes that she make the most of the opportunity.

Both women stepped into the ring without saying a word, circling one another like raptors assessing their prey. The girl, whose length was dwarfed by Ryan's, stubbornly tipped her chin up.

Like a wild cat, the girl let out a flurry of claws and misdirected rage. Ryan, however, was just a whiff of smoke billowing in the breeze. The girl's velocity, a flawless turn, and a flurry of motion propelled her past, leaving her exposed. Ryan took advantage of the situation, her arm looping around the girl's waist and lifted her with such ease that she fell to the canvas with a loud thud. The girl was imprisoned in an instant, her limbs entangled in a Kimura lock, and her shoulder was burning intensely. But Ryan didn't hang around. She quickly let off, letting the child fall back onto the mat having learnt her lesson.

Ryan slowly got up as she began to look down at her befallen sparring partner, her voice a single dagger to the heart. "Lesson one, princess: Never underestimate your opponent."

A feral grin spread across Ryan's face, her eyes gleaming with a predatory light. With the grace of a seasoned dancer, she slid under the bottom rope, retrieving her blazer from the ring apron with a practiced flourish. The diamond-studded watch on her wrist winked as she slipped her heels back on, each click a punctuation mark on the lesson she'd just delivered.

The girl's voice, thick with a newfound awe, echoed through the gym. "Hey, coach... *who* the hell was that?"

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## A Mother's Blessing

Dancing patterns were painted on the linen tablecloth of the posh restaurant in Manhattan as sunlight flowed through the stained-glass windows. Ryan sat across from her mother, Fatima Lecavalier.

Ryan resembled her mother perfectly, with the same crisp features, warm olive complexion, and graceful bone structure. It was clear where Ryan's captivating beauty came from. With her silver hair tied back in a loose messy bun to show off a set of pearl earrings that shimmered with every little movement, Fatima was an impressive woman.

"So, Ru," Fatima began, using the childhood nickname that always sent a flutter through Ryan's chest, "How's Nina? Still keeping you on your toes?"

Ryan chuckled, a genuine warmth softening her features. "Nina's good, Omm. Busy as always, but happy. Miami suits her."

With a tinge of motherly devilment in her eyes, Fatima nodded. "And you, Ru? Is Miami life treating you well?"

Ryan paused, her smile faltering slightly. "It's... comfortable, Omm. But comfort isn't always enough."

A shadow of concern flooded across Fatima's face. "What's wrong, Ru? You sound... restless."

Ryan sighed, toying with her salad. “I've been thinking a lot lately, Omm. About life, about choices, about what truly makes me happy.”

Fatima leaned forward, her voice barely a whisper. “Have you been praying, Ru? Seeking guidance from the Almighty?”

Ryan's shoulders tensed, a familiar guilt gnawing at her insides. “Not as much as I should, Omm. I know I've disappointed you and Baba...”

Fatima reached across the table, her hand gently covering Ryan's. “Faith is a journey, not a destination, Ru, my sweetheart. Finding your way back to God is always an option.”

Ryan's eyes met her mother's, a nonverbal request for understanding. “I'm trying’ Omm. I swear I am trying.”

The only sound that broke the strained stillness at the table was the clinking of silverware on china.

“Omm... I'm planning on returning to pro wrestling.”

Fatima's eyes became wide, showing a mix of astonishment and—wait—was that a little feeling of pride?

“Ru...” she said, a little shaky in her voice. “Are you sure? After all this time, after the injury...”

Ryan nodded, her voice firm. “I'm positive, Omm. It's not always about money or greatness (as Baba perceived.) It's about rediscovering who I am and convincing myself that I'm not done yet.”

A rush of acceptance and affection washed over Fatima, softening her gaze. “Then I'm happy for you, Ru. Truly happy. But promise me you'll be careful. Your physique has started changing through most of your hiatus.”

Her eyes welling with tears she fought back, Ryan gripped her mother's hand. “I swear, Omm. I will take precautions. You asked me to take my time, so that's what I'll do.”

In sharp contrast to the laughter and reminiscing of the meal, Ryan's internal anguish bubbled to the surface. Encouraged by her mother's encouragement, she opened up about feeling a lot of sorrow and self-doubt due to the shadows of her previous mistakes. Critics' scathing remarks replayed in her head, a painful reminder of her tendency toward self-destruction.

Ryan demanded that she treat her mother to a day of relaxing at the spa and shopping as they walked out of the restaurant together, arm in arm. It was a tiny thing, a way to make up for lost time, but it brought a warmth to her heart that had been missing for years. Though the path ahead was unknown, she was convinced that she was no longer lost and prepared to take back her reign.

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## Epilogue

The heavy oak door groaned as Ryan slipped into the confessional, the air inside thick with the scent of old secrets. Shadows danced around her in the dim light, mirroring the turmoil in her heart. She started to confess, and although she usually spoke with confidence and elegance, her voice faltered a little bit.

Trembling, she said, "Forgive me, Father, because I have sinned." her voice is almost a bawl. "Eight long years...since I last sought absolution. Eight years since I stepped into that ring, a hollow shell of a woman." Her breath caught in her throat as she hesitated. "Eight years have passed since I entered the wrestling ring, eight years of living a life devoid of feeling, genuine connection."

Tears welled up as she fumbled for a small recorder. Her voice drifted, the weight of her words lingering in the air. She revealed slowly—knowing exactly what she's doing by building anticipation. She pressed play with a shaking palm and placed it carefully on the wooden ledge in front of her. The haunting melody of an instrumental version of Kendrick Lamar's "Meet the Grahams" filled

the small space, its raw emotion resonating within the confines of the booth.

As the music swelled, Ryan's eyes hardened as a single tear streaks down her face. "They call me a legend, Father," she gasped, "but I think myself lost." Her gaze seemed to penetrate the latticework, finding her opponent's unseen face.

"I'm not the most devoted disciple, Father, to tell the truth. But I would be the most devoted follower of any professional wrestling church, if there were one. My congregation is the ring, and I find refuge in the audience. And as soon as I cross those ropes, I transform into a malevolent force—a wrestling deity." she continues, "Father, I see right through his veneer. I perceive the pretense of devotion, coupled with conceit and a desire for power. Everything is staged, a perfectly constructed deception meant to control the populace." she then pauses, her eyes narrow as a slight deviousness takes over her features—she's more serious now.

"Religious Wright...you're like those Pharisees Jesus warned us about. All pious words and hidden rot." A bitter laugh tumbling out of her. "Matthew 23:27, Wright. A whitewashed tomb, full of nothing but death and decay. Just a friendly reminder, Father, not that I'm judging—I cannot condemn the man's character after all."

Her voice dripped with icy disdain. "You fling God's name around like it's a cheap catchphrase. 'Lord this, Lord that.' But your actions? They reek of arrogance, not holiness. You parade around like you're God's gift to wrestling, all while preaching humility. It's sickening."

Leaning forward, Ryan's voice turned razor sharp. "You use religion as a shield, a weapon. But I see through you, Wright. Fake piety, ego, hunger for power. It's a performance, a carefully constructed lie."

A chilling calm settled over her. "The second that bell rings, you'll wish you'd stayed on your knees. I'm not here to play games. I break bodies, not spirits. But you? You've earned a special kind of punishment."

A cruel smile twisted her lips. “Tempting to snap your arm like a brittle twig, but that would be too merciful. No, this is going to be a long, painful lesson. To help you visualize what's in store I'll humor you with a wholesome, god fearing outcome: You're going to have a watershed moment behind the woodshed, Lassie.”

The smile vanished, replaced by a dangerous glance devoid of actual emotion. “This isn't just about winning, Wright. It's about revealing you for the hypocrite that you sincerely are. You are simply a little impediment to my future success. You will be easily taken out, I promise.”

Her eyes showed an undercurrent of enjoyment. “Someone wise once said, 'I'll beat your ass and conceal the Bible if God is watching.' Seems fitting, don't you think?” Based on her tone of satisfaction, it appears that she believes so.

Ryan's voice rose, echoing with righteous anger. “This July 4th, we're celebrating more than just freedom from a tyrant king. We're witnessing the fall of a self-proclaimed prophet. Wright the Religious will be exposed as Wright the Imposter, and the world will see a false idol crumble.”

Her voice was barely audible as she leaned in. “Outside this ring, I might be lost, a fractured soul searching for meaning. A contradiction, topped with a dash of neuroses, but in there? I transform into a masterwork of carefully planned mayhem, a symphony of premeditated violence. You're not just my opponent, Religious. You're an unwilling protagonist in a Sunday school lesson waiting to be taught.” Her eyebrows knitted together as if she realized that, despite her boldness, she may have been misleading, but it felt so refreshing—because she most certainly wanted to dog walk him at this point.

“Preacher man, enlighten us. Prove to us whether your sermons are as powerful as your scripture.” There's a very different smile on her face; but this smile wasn't like anything she might've expressed



before. “Let us test the strength of your prayers against the indignation of a wretch like me.”

Silence descended as the last notes of the song died away. Ryan stood, her eyes burning with a chilling light before softening as a childlike innocence washes over her face. “ Let's see if your faith can withstand the fury of a woman scorned.”

Ryan turns and walks away, a sly grin on her face. As she exits the frame, the faint whistle of “God Called in Sick Today” by AFI, growing in volume until the screen fades to black.

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