

Dominick Strife was no longer a wrestler.

Dom clung to the back of a garbage truck as it drove along a neighborhood in some indistinguishable Maryland suburb. *Back again*, he thought, with the wind blowing on his blackened left eye, his work clothes fluttering in the breeze. He never thought he'd see the road pass like this under his feet again. It was as disappointing as he remembered it. But he could call it home at the very least.

Hours went by as the morning sun rose over the darkness and ever closer to noon. His work vest shined through the dirt and grime it had accumulated over the course of a shift. Endless black bags and maggot infested cans lined the sidewalks at the end of each driveway. The truck would have to stop at every last one.

Time didn't exactly fly by. But each can he lifted felt heavier now. One house. Stop. Another house. Stop. The brakes squealed and then the engine would roar just long enough to make the brakes squeal again. Yet over time, a few streets left became the last street. A few more cans became the last can for the day.

There was a smile etched on his coworkers' face. One that only the final stop could chisel. And as Dom tipped the can, the hydraulic arm packed what last bags of refuse would fit into the hopper. And just like that, another shift was done.

"See? I *told* you." The older man said as he squeezed Dominick's shoulder. "This is a *real* man's job."

As the two piled into the cab next to the driver, they were able to breathe their collective sigh of relief. The driver glanced over at the shiner on Dom's face and smirked.

"Anyone beat you up out there, kid?" he chortled.

Dom turned away, toward his coworker.

"No."

The driver and his partner laughed.

“I was just tellin’ him, it ain’t glamorous but a check is a check.”

The driver, with his eyes affixed to the road, nodded.

“The kid is still young. He can be whatever he wants to be.”

“Well, not *everything*.”

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You have to be crazy to step foot in the ring. At least, that’s what they tell me.

But to me, you’d have to be crazy not to. They say I’m still young, that I can do anything that I put my mind to. But they don’t think that fighting for scraps is worth it. They say I should rather collect a check out in the field. Or I should sit behind a desk. Answer enough questions until I get that piece of paper that says “degree” that I don’t give a damn about.

Crazy is doing anything but what I want to be doing with my one and only life. Even if that means stepping foot in the ring with Larry Tact and Helena Handbasket, two of the premier professionals of the sport. I may not be Tactalizing, and I may not have a cool name like Helena, but what I do have is heart. This is where I want to be, and I’m ready to prove it.

Helena is crazy enough that it’s probably her straightjacket that we’re going to use. This puts us at a disadvantage, because I don’t think Larry’s going to fit. You see the winner will be the person who can lock one of their opponents into a straightjacket. I can only imagine how far the fighting has to go for someone to be that knocked out. Perhaps all three of us need a straightjacket after taking part in a match like this.

The truth is, what shouldn't be lost is that this is a tribute show and there is at least one person that can only be at Smashed 2 in spirit. I may be crazy, but I'm not about to sit around at home while there are opportunities out there that many won't ever be able to have the chance to take. I may not be the odds on favorite to win, but this isn't about winning. This is about competition, and the drive. The will to fight, and to fight on. To be punched in the face, to be given a black eye, but to still be pushing forward regardless.

I want Helena and Larry to know that come hell or high water, I will be giving them the fight that this match, and this show, deserves.

Because I'm the Natural Born Thriller, baby.

I didn't leave home to come back a failure.