“No, I can’t. I can’t perform! Look at me. Damn it, LOOK AT ME,**” Adam jerked his thumb right at the brace wrapped awkwardly around his neck. The artery above his right eyebrow pulstated, bulging out from his big fat forehead. He walked around the set stiffly, the reincarnation of the mummy from those 1940s white and black horror pictures.**

“That’s okay. We actually don’t need you.**” Natalya didn’t even give him a lookover. She kept her arms crossed, pushing up her breasts, barely hidden underneath the summer dress she had adorned. She manned the camera. Adam had even taken a break from groaning in order to compliment her classy outfit, but even that went ignored by Natalya. Natalya had changed. That was for sure. She had become the embodiment of the Iron Curtain. That’s if the Iron Curtain was a real bitch. When he first fell for her, she was all rainbow and sunshine, a good girl that Adam had to save from sex slavery. But now look at her! She ran his porn studio like a tyrant and now she tried to push him out! Over his dead body!**

“I’m the star. I’m the director. I’m the genius behind this studio, and I can’t be replaced like that!”

“We no longer need your services, Adam. You can rest your poor little neck. We’ll be fine here on out without you,” **Natalya doubled down. Adam’s jaw dropped. He winced, not only because he moved slightly wrong with his stiff neck but because he was actually offended by Natalya’s disregard towards him. She wouldn’t have been free if it wasn’t for his gamble, years ago! He sacrificed everything for her!**

“Excuse me. I’m going to put in a call with Dimtri and explain to him that this is all bullshit.”

“Dimtri has left this arrangement up to my discretion. I doubt he’s going to answer your calls.”

“But I have the account credentials for our OnlyFans! You’ll never make money without my access!”

“Oh, about that…**” Natalya started to snicker. She turned, amused that Adam had bought that up. “**Yes, Password-One-Two-Three-Exclamation-Mark was really hard for our nerds to hack.**”**

“Damn it!**” Adam shouted, throwing his arm out in a fit. But the sudden movement bothered his neck, so he ended up crying instead of speaking. He never had felt so eviscerated by a woman before. A tiny part of his cock became aroused by this new experience, but again, the blow to his ego canceled out any net positive to this situation.**

“Bison, come on. Help a brother out,**” Adam went for a hail mary.**

Bison had Anastasia on his lap, who he dwarfed with his massive bulk. Anastasia nibbled on his neck. They were doing the female-friendly arthouse film for that particular shoot; thus why Meow ZeBong was not present. He had protested over Natalya’s creative

decision to stick with her category of porn to go alongside his gonzo, cum everywhere, dicks everywhere, vagina everywhere, in your face style of adult films, so crude and up close that you felt the balls hitting your own cheeks. And then, to make room for Natalya's and Meow's directions, they pushed aside Adam's iconic parodies, the kind that made you horny and laugh at the same time. Another reason why Adam was a sour puss.

"Bison!**"**

"Dude, I'm in the middle of something!"

"Cut- Cut- Cut!**" Natalya yelled. She turned around again, this time marching up to Adam. She placed a hand on his shoulder. She feigned compassion only to smack Adam across the face. She takes him by the jaw, "**Listen here. We're not going to spend all night reshooting this scene because you're having a temper tantrum. Cool off, anywhere but here!"

"Bison!" A**dam tried again. Bison buried his shame into Anastasia's breasts. Adam looked out past Natalya, holding a hand across his chest to display the hurt that this latest betrayal had inflicted upon Adam. "**Come on man, I can't yell like this. Everything hurts. Just help a brother out!**"**

Bison's voice struggled out, muffled by boobs. "You ain't my brother!"

"I'm your brother-in-arms!"

"You're a pain in my ass."

"Et tu, Bison? Fine. Fine! I can see that I'm not welcomed here. Don't come crying to me when none of your artsy, high contrast, low endorphin, bare minimal stimulation-inducing crap doesn't net any Russian Adult Video Awards!**" Adam tosses his arms up. Doing so, avarrergated his neck again and he immediately sounded out 'owwwwww!'.**

"Good bye, darling!**" Anastasia waved to him, not even turning to look at him. That was just salt in the wounds by that point. Adam shook with anger, but not too much to irritate his injuries. He decided he was going to go somewhere else, sulk with a bottle of rum. And people wonder why he had a drinking problem! It was all because he endured abuse from everyone, friends… ex-wives… tag team partners! No one gave him his proper respect. No one didn't thank him for making them stars.**

"You'll rue the day that you made me sad,**" Adam mumbled.**

"What was that?!"

"You can all go fuck yourslves with sandpaper and buffalo chickenwing sauce! Keep it down, I'm going to watch some National Lampoon movies to forget how you all are nothing but a bunch of

traitors and dicks you lot are!**” Adam yelled. No one seemed to look to him to see if he actually left. Natalya stepped up beside the camera to make sure the angle was right. Anastasia was now riding Bison, still positioned in his lap. He lifted her for the assist. Adam took one look at the set that used to be his, also known as his bedroom, and left to go downstairs to watch that movie.**

“It hurts to laugh,**” Adam said, laughing. “**Ohhh-owww, this is the best part… I’m not going to survive.”

He arrived at the moment in the movie when Chevy Chase was in his station wagon with the family. Shit weather, raining dogs and cats, though Adam never understood that metaphor. Was it biblical? He didn’t care. What he connected with was the shithead family, having grinded down their doting patriarch to the point of sheer lunacity. They dragged him right through the ringer. And then, they had the audacity to try to rob him of the right to self-determation for his family, pleading with him to abandon the course, fully aware of the time, the effort, the money, the soul he had sacrificed to put food on their tables AND a fucking smile on each of their undeserving faces.

Chevy Chase issued the manifesto that represented Adam’s fatherly soul: “*I think you're all fucked in the head. We're ten hours from the fucking fun park and you want to bail out. Well I'll tell you something. This is no longer a vacation. It's a quest. It's a quest for fun. You're gonna have fun, and I'm gonna have fun... We're all gonna have so much fucking fun we're gonna need plastic surgery to remove our goddamn smiles! You'll be whistling 'Zip-A-Dee Doo-Dah' out of your assholes! I must be crazy! I'm on a pilgrimage to see a moose---”*

Anastasia’s moans of ecstasy erupted from the master bedroom overhead, “---
OHHH-BIG BAD DARLING!**”**

“Damn it, assholes. I’m trying to watch a movie AND you ruined the best fucking part! I had it with you ungrateful, intolerable fucks. I think you’re all fucked in the---**”**

“Cum in me! Cum in me! Give me your children!**”**

“She’s obviously faking. She’s obviously overacting. I can’t be the only one who thinks that. If I was directing, I’d stop the scene right there and tell that blonde bitch to tone it down a dial or two. Yes, this definitely campy enough dialogue totally will make up women’s deepest and darkest fantasies!**” Adam lamented. He paused the glorious vintage VCR he picked up a few weeks ago at a garage sale, packaged together with a treasure trove of 1980s VCRs. All the testosterone-pumping classics of his children. Videos he used to sneak into the family late at night to watch. Back when real men were men. Jesus, he missed having to tip-toe around, avoiding detection. The last time he had such a thrill was when he was sleeping around on Sarah. That was the best part of adultery. The worst part was the**

divorce settlement and child support.

“DOOONUTTT STOP!”

He struggled to his feet, having to wrestle with the neck brace. He growled. He approached the closest and pulled out a broom. He started stabbing the ceiling, trying to make enough of a racket that they had to suspend the shoot. But the louder he banged on the ceiling, the louder Bison’s grunt. Adam immediately dropped the broomstick. The suspicion that Adam was adding to Bison’s sexual pleasure deeply disturbed him. He conceded. He popped out the video cassette, grabbed his windbreaker and hurried out into the stormy weather. He guessed it was raining cats and dogs in Rochester, but he only saw water droplets. Then a homosexual frog dropped smack dab in the middle of the forehead when he looked up. He guessed it was raining frogs, but that didn’t sound right. Definitely sounded more biblical but that was about it. He picked off the slimy little creature and flicked him off into the darkness.

He proceeded to trudge through the back field, which had become a miniature swamp. He bet some smart ass would have asked him why he wasn’t wearing rain boots, but ask Adam *this*: who older than age six ever wore rain boots other than lighthouse attendants and fishermen. Things got better once he reached the carefully maintained property beyond his domain. The lights were on in the farmhouse, meaning his neighbor was indeed home. Then again, where would the cripple have gone?

Adam knocked on the door. No immediate answer. Adam knocked louder, to make sure the inhabitants could hear him over the storm, with its crackle of thunder. He knocked quicker, conveying that this was an urgent matter. Adam’s socks were soaked from where he stepped in too deep a puddle on his way over. He was a bit chilly, enough so that his nipples were hard. Plus he didn’t know how video cassettes bear underneath such moisture.

Finally, the back light flashed on and the door cracked open. In the shadow of the dark kitchen, Alistaire looked out. He must have limped all the way to greet him. He had the beginnings of a ugly hairy mess on the bottom half of his usual babyface. His hair was shaggy, well for Alistaire. Man, to be young again and have a head full of hair. Young people don’t know what a good thing they have.

“Dad?”

“Hi, son. It’s been a while.”

“It’s like 2AM. What in the darnation are you doing here?”

“Is it really that late? Wow, I thought time only flies when you’re drunk and having fun. I guess not. Anyways, I thought since we are now both injured. You and I can spend some time

together, bond how much it sucks when your body aches everywhere, and all you want to do is crawl up in a ball and die,**" Adam said.**

Alistaire offered him a tight smile. "You're injured?"

"Don't you see the neck brace? I know it's dark and all, but breaking your back shouldn't affect your night vision."

"Yeah… right.**"**

"I know we're not as close as we once were. But, hell, son… why not give this father-son thing one more go.**"**

"No, thank you. I don't want any,**" Alistaire rejected him. To emphasize the rejection, Alistaire swung the door, slamming it right in Adam's face.**

"One day, I'm not going to be around anymore. You're going to regret not spending the time you could have with your old man! Trust me, losing a father sucks!**" Adam yelled through the door. But the guilt trip didn't entice Alistaire to open the door again. Adam tried the handle, but it stiffly rejected him too, being locked and all. Adam turned around, the back light shutting off to leave Adam in utter darkness. Wasn't compassion one of Jesus's teachings? He knew it was a bad Mel Gibson movie, blaming the Jews for Jesus's demise, but still… forgiveness was a virtue, and if Alistaire was supposedly the most virtuous asshole in the world, shouldn't he forgive his father for all his wrongdoings!**

"Don't think this is over!**" Adam bellowed out a yell.**

While he started to march back in defeat, something bloomed inside of him. For the first time since winning the Tag Team Championship belts that he had dedicated 17 years to do, he found a cause. His cause. A reason to live. He was destined to do something other than make porn and pull cheap tricks on wrestling opponents. No, his newfound purpose was to be a Dad, to raise his most favorite, most prodigal son to greatness. But how to do that when the boy was a bitter cripple, hating the world?! Blind enthusiasm was a start. Refusing to take 'no' for an answer was another step in the right direction.

By the time Adam was done, he'd have his fulfillment back in his life. Plus, his liver can't take this overtime schedule anymore. He was afraid to find out how little of an organ he had left.

Before he even was gone from the driveway, he heard the back door open back up. Adam turned, smiling, arms held wide open. But to his dismay, it was Claire Bailey. She stepped out in bright neon pink rain boots and a yellow ducky rubber jacket. "Seriously, how old are you?**"**

“Me? I’m not the kid in a rain jacket and some rubber boots. How old were you when we were hooking up? I seriously think you were of age of consent. I thought I asked for driver license before I let you young ones jump on my---**”**

“Stop talking. Do you ever get tired of listening to the sound of your own voice?**” Claire struck back.**

“Is that a serious question?**”**

“I want you to shut up so you can listen to what I have to say to you.**”**

“I mean, not to be rude, but if it was a legitimate question. The answer is ‘no’. I like the melodic sound of my voice. If I have to compare it to anything, it’s how I think it’s up there with the sound of angels singing their hymns. Just majestic and beautiful, you know?**”**

“Every time I think you reached the pinnacle of obnoxiousness, you just somehow keep proving me wrong,**” Claire responded. In the dim light, he saw Claire’s clenched fists. He had to be careful. Last time, he came face to face with Claire, she drove her foot into his balls. He deserved that one. Hell, he probably deserved another one.**

“Tell me, Claire. What is my boy to you? Are you two finally lovers?**”**

“We’re… we’re just friends. That’s it. Nothing more. Nothing less.”

“You see, the way I look at it, you’re taking advantage of my boy’s hospitality. He’s a made man, even as a cripple. You’re using his injury as an excuse to live rent free.”

“Of all the people to say that. You’re the one?**” Claire hissed. He had definitely pushed a button. He would have accepted her place in Alistaire’s home if she admitted to being his lover. But they weren’t. They were living in sin all right, but not the fun kind of sin. He paused to think of all the things she must have helped the boy with in the immediate aftermath of the accident.**

“You know, you’re right. You probably helped out my son a lot since all that shit went down. For that I thank you for being such a charitable person.**”**

“Is that sarcasm?”

“Take it how you want to. I’m out. I’ll be back, don’t worry. I don’t leave anyone behind,**” Adam stated, throwing up his arms nonchalantly. He suppressed the pained cry from the upwards motion.**

“What does that even mean?**”**

“You’ll find out soon enough. You all will. No one… no one stops me from getting what I want.”

“I’m going to do all the talking, okay?**”**

“What? Why?**” Bison started to protest.**

“Because, while you’ve been on a tear lately. I haven’t. I pissed myself, okay. I pissed myself on live television. While I should be more embarrassed, it still means I have to save face. Plus, Holly’s listening and I have to convince her that I’m her soulmate,**” Adam intisted. Bison groaned. He never understood why Adam simped so hard for Holly. He didn’t HATE Holly, but she was equally annoying as Adam was. Maybe they were a perfect match for each other.**

“And what? Despite all my progress, you’re going to relegated me back to being the cameraman?**”**

“Yep. Now cameraman, let’s get this baby rolling,**” Adam confirmed.**

Bison lifted a finger. He opened his mouth to speak. But he relented, standing back behind the tripod. Adam stood by the opened french doors of his bedroom. The evening breeze came in and whisk up the white curtains, making them blow around him. He posed, one hand on his hip with his chin held high. Bison counted down on his hands to give Adam notice when the film was rolling.

5…

4…

3…

2…

1…

[REC]

“What a lineup of foes Mr. Dickwad has gotten ready for me! The faces of all my past failures are coming back to haunt me. Shilo Valiant, Ace Marshall, and Autumn Valentine. They mock me by their presence. I’m salty because each and every one of them has ruined a potential good memory for me. They left me with a bad taste in my mouth and I have yet to spit it out,**” Adam lowered his head to conceal his grimace. He explained: “**Shilo Valiant, one of the men who denied my dreams of becoming SCW World Champion, a feat well overdue if I say so

myself. I stunned him when he was on top of the world. But when all the marbles were on the line, the stakes the highest, I fell short. I admit, Shilo Valiant defeated me…**”**

Adam gagged. “He defeated me… fair.**”**

He gagged again. “And square.**”**

Adam shuddered, reminding himself that the clown had taken him down. “Granted, I mean, my non-title win over you was way more impressive than your cop out, small package tomfoolery, but a win is a win is a win. And I didn’t win. You did. But it is fitting on the nine year anniversary of that defeat that I get the chance to partially make up for that loss. But you’re not the only one, Shilo, that made me sad over the years. You’re not the only living representation of my past struggles that I have to vanquish. Oh no, you’re just one of three. It always comes in threes.**”**

“Because then there's Ace Marshall. The pledge that got too big for his britches. The man who thinks he can outdo Shawn Winters so he went ahead and became World Champion on several occasions just to spite Shawn and I. Do you really think you made Shawn proud? No, because you were a waterdowned, Flint, Michigan vintage, imitation of his awesomeness. You were half the champion then he was, but then again. Who am I to say? I have never held the SCW World Championship, and with my current neck injury, I might never get that honor. But a boy can dream, you know? And in my heart, I’m still young, I’m still a young bucking bronco!**”**

“But Ace, you had potential. You could have been better than all of us. Not in terms of wrestling success, but in terms of being cool. You think you’re cool, but you’re not. You’re just shy of the mark. And let me tell you, being cool is sometimes more important than being SCW World Champion. Don’t quote me on that one, but I’m sure the math adds up. And when I stare at your smug face,**” Adam paused. His lips curled in a frown. He almost gagged again. “**I see how I let you down as a mentor. You see, all my tough love over the years of Greaternity, was meant to make you into something other than a bitch. But at last, I failed you. I failed SCW. I failed society. I made you into a submissive, a man I heard who doesn’t mind a good pegging, a man that has developed a phobia of flimsy wooden tables that you can buy for cheap at Walmart.**”**

“You could have been much better. You could have ruled the world! But alas, you were my one pupil that I couldn’t reach. Maybe I fed you too much alcohol and you’re partially brain damaged now. Maybe I shouldn’t have kicked you in the head so many times practicing the Enlightenment. Either way, Ace, I’m sorry but I’m going to have to put you down like the sad, butt dragging dog that you are. Whether it be tomorrow night or at Taking Hold of the Flame, either way, a man has to do what a man has to do. I owe you that much to be the one that pulls the trigger. To end the Ace Marshall experiment.”

“And then there’s Autumn Valentine. And how does she represent past mistakes? More like a missed opportunity. I remember when you came into this league, Autumn. Young, energetic, perky tits, an ass too big for that graceful frame. And like the locker room leader that I was, I

walked up to you and tried to welcome you to the fold, in the only way I know, by getting in your pants. Now, I'm not sure what I was on, can't frankly remember, but I swore that I shot my shot and you were immune to my advances. Now that anecdote could apply to a lot of other young women around that time, or even now, but the moral of the story is… I could have had you but I never was able to get a taste of Autumn Valentine. Gable, of all people, did so maybe I'm just too good for you and you were too afraid of a good thing. People self-sabotage all the time. Especially people who have deep rooted insecurities, intimacy as well as commitment issues. Now, I'm not one of those losers who have any of those three, but most people are. And Autumn, you're most people. Definitely the case now that your poor face has aged.**"**

Adam nodded vigorously, with a smile on his face. "So yes, this entire match is about my past mistakes and now I see this as a blessing in disguise. I get to rectify. Purge myself of my past sins. Make things right again. And to do that, I can't look no more future than the bundle of joy, the sole bright spot in this entire goddamn universe, Holly Adams… and of course, my best friend, my platonic life partner, the yin to my yang, Big Bad Bison Jones. My best student to date. A man who is just starting to tear it up. And when I look upon our opponents, I feel sadness, betrayal, and disappointment but when I look upon Holly's heavenly body and Bison's stupid mug, all my worries melt away. They're good people. They're the people I want to be with, to associate with, and in Holly's case, one day marry and not have kids. And I know she's betting a lot on his life coaching, which Bison and I signed onto, so I'm not going to let her down with a loss here. That is bad advertisement. See how great a businessman I am.**"**

"Plus, Bison likes winning, so I guess I don't want to let him down. But that's a bonus---**"**

"Hey!**" Bison roared behind the camera.**

Adam ignored him and continued, "Basically, all I'm trying to say is this…"

"I'm not going to let my past failures form my future. Hell no. Not now. Not ever. The past is the past, and that's where all three of you bums belong. You see, I'm just entering the prime of my career. I might be a late bloomer, but god damn it, when I bloom, it's going to melt your brains in orgasmic destruction. And while I might be hampered by his sore neck, I'm one tough son of a bitch. And I refuse to be held back by yesterday, no… I'm going to keep marching into my bright future. While the three of you sops have peaked, I have yet to become erect. Soon, soon, you'll see what I'm talking about, but Breakdown, you get a sneak peek of what I'm cultivating.**"**

"I like sign off on a quote from my birthday buddy, Dr. Suess. *Oh, the Places You'll Go!* But in this context, the 'you' is me, because I'm going places, and you're not!**"**

[/REC]

"What was that?**"**

"Bison, I understand that you're illiterate but please don't resent me for being a learned man.

I’m proud of my education. I won’t have you shame me for being a genius,**” Adam preemptively stuck, and stuck hard. He marched out of the room into the master bathroom. Adam gargled some mouthwash to finally get rid of that bad taste in my mouth from all those years ago.**

“Hey, asshole. I’m the one with the college degree.**”**

“What? Underwater basket weaving?**”**

“Fuck off.**”**