



Layers

“So, who would your main targets be, James? And why?” James sat in his study, phone to his ear as William asked the question, leaving him to ponder. The former World Champion only needed a few brief seconds, however.

“Xander. Selena. Syren. Hudson,” James said, boldly. “Xander for personal reasons. Selena because she was one of Mr. D’s favorites. Syren, because she was, and still is, THE favorite.”

“And why Hudson? Why your mentor?”

“That old bastard is looking for an ending to his story. You can see it in his eyes. His talk of ego and how he’s learned to control it? Give me a break.”

“You don’t think that’s the case?”

“No. He doesn’t have the balls he used to. He’s old and broken down. He’s trying to keep up, but he’s going to be swallowed whole.”

“And you want to be the one to take him out?”

“I will be the one,” James said, coldly. “He’s a hero to many, but a liar in my eyes. Now,” he continued, “I know that may upset you because you set him up to be my trainer, but Hudson is a liar. And not in the way that cunt Selena has tried to make him out to be.”

“Then, how is he a liar?”

“That’s between him...and me.”

“I see,” said William. “You truly are militant. Your grandfather you praised for that. You’re probably more of a soldier than Hudson, and you were never on the battlefield. You get your mission, and you go complete it. No questions asked.”

“Henry would tell me that I was a killer,” James smirked.

“He’d tell me the same thing. So,” William cleared his throat, “I think it would be best practice to not just target those names.”

James’ expression changed. He felt slighted. He wanted to tell the old man he didn’t know what he was talking about. “And why might that be?”

“Well,” William began, “Hudson is a bit of a shocker, as he was your mentor. The others, you’ve talked about them before. It’s always been them in some capacity. You need to branch out.”

“Branch out?” James chuckled. “Why would I not go after the upper echelon? It’s the same people. The same set of stars. All the time. You’ll learn that the longer you’re around. It’s something you should educate Waylon in, as well.”

“I just believe you need to target anyone and everyone, James. Don’t discriminate based on rankings, super stardom or lack thereof. Going after the upper echelon as you put it, is all well and good, but targeting someone like Polly Pingotti or her crony, Colleen...that shows no one is safe, James.”

Hearing the old man say that brought a smile to James’ face, one he couldn’t stop if he tried. That was what James wanted. He wanted a world where no one was safe from the wrath he wanted to unleash. That wasn’t the mentality of some Saturday morning cartoon villain, either. James had nothing less than total disdain for the world, and all those around him.

Why are you the way that you are?

It was a question his wife asked him after their son Sawyer returned home from daycare the day after a nightly conversation with James. Sawyer had his face clawed the previous day, and doing as his father instructed, the child sought, and obtained, revenge.

“Did you, or did you not, tell Sawyer to hurt that child?” Braelynn asked, mascara covered tears streaming down her cheeks as they stood in their bedroom. James’ siblings had taken the children outside.

“I did,” James said. “And you should be thanking me. I’m not going to raise some kind of pushover. With the way this world is,” he shook his head, “you either hurt others, or they’re going to hurt you. It’s survival of the fittest. That’s not just some scientific theory. It’s a fact of life.”

“He is five years old, James!” Braelynn screamed. “He doesn’t need to think its okay to maul someone. Not now, not ever!”

“He’s learning at a young age that you don’t take shit from anyone. We’re getting ahead of the curve. I don’t understand what the issue is.”

“He hurt someone, severely. How do you not get the issue here?”

“Well,” James shrugged, “I’m sure nobody will bother him again. So, take comfort in that, I guess.”

“Yes, he won’t deal with it again because he’s been kicked out of the daycare. So, thanks for that. Jesus Christ.”

James lifted a hand, signaling for his wife to settle down, “Calm yourself. I’ll call them. I’ll take care of it.”

“When I told you that I didn’t want you to be involved, I fucking meant it, James!” Braelynn hissed. “Why are you the way that you are?” she asked, before shaking her head and walking out of the room.

“I’ll keep that in mind, William.”

“I’ll reach out to you soon so we can discuss a little meet and greet between you and Waylon,” the old man stated. The call ended shortly after that.

No one is safe.

They’d be foolish to think, otherwise.

James opened his laptop, signing in and opening his email. Going against his wife’s wishes, he scheduled a meeting with the daycare staff, regarding his son’s behavior. Clicking the link, a window opened for ZOOM.

“Good morning, Mr. Evans,” the director, Alex, said with a smile.

“Yes, good morning,” Sawyer’s teacher, Ms. Rachel added.

“Good morning,” James said. He wasn’t for the pleasantries. “I appreciate you meeting with me today. So, here’s what I want. I want my son, Sawyer, to be accepted back into the daycare.”

Alex chimed in, “Okay, let me stop you right there, Mr. Evans...”

James interjected, “No, you may not. My son, while under your care, care that I pay for...care that is largely expensive which is something we can all agree...but while my son was under your care, he was attacked by another child. His face looked like it had been torn to shreds

when he returned home. My son then came back the next day and defended himself against the child responsible, and your reaction is to have Sawyer removed. How does that make sense?"

"Your son," Ms. Rachel began. She was full of fire at first, before exhaling sharply, "Sawyer hit the other child with a sharp stick. Repeatedly...in the head and face..."

"And where were you? The well-paid caregivers?"

"We can't allow that kind of behavior, Mr. Evans. We simply cannot," the director said.

"I completely agree," James replied. "I wouldn't allow incompetent staff to remain in charge of caring for small children. It seems to me that Ms. Rachel isn't motivated to do her job."

"Excuse me?" Sawyer's teacher exclaimed.

"Now, let's not get out of hand here," Alex added.

"It got out of hand when the other child mauled my son. It shouldn't have happened in the first place. Now, I don't know what goes on there, but with the amount I pay a month, I expect top notch care. I don't want to find out my son was attacked while the teachers were talking about their day, or texting, or spending more time watching fucking TikTok."

"Please, Mr. Evans. There's no need for coarse language."

"Well, when you're trying to make my child out to be some sort of monster when all he did was retaliate, when all he did was defend himself, then yeah, I'll say whatever I wish to say, thank you very much, Alex."

"What would you like to happen, Mr. Evans?" the director asked.

"I think you already know the answer to that, Alex. I want this fixed, promptly. If not, then I guess you'll hear from my lawyers. I'm sure it would be great to have your establishment in the news, with a headline reading: children mauled while under..."

The director cut James off. "We will be in touch, Mr. Evans. Alright? I expect Sawyer can return in the next few days."

"I can live with that. Now, thank you for your time. I've gotta go," James cackled as he closed the laptop down and walked out of his study.

Why are you the way that you are? Indeed.

“To what do I owe this unexpected visit, James?” Dr. McIntosh stood before his former patient, no longer confined to prison walls. McIntosh had been moved to a mental institute back in New York, *The Nolan Sanctuary*.

They walked, with James a few inches behind McIntosh, near the front garden. Orderlies were close by, as well. “I’ve been pondering something. It’d be best to give credit where credit is due. It’s a question my wife put in my head.”

“Still married, I see.”

“Yes. A little over six years, now.”

“Good for you,” McIntosh said as he glanced over his shoulder. “What was the question?”

“Why are you the way that you are...”

“Hmph,” McIntosh said in response, before plucking a rose from the garden to their left. “That’s quite the question, indeed. It brings one to my mind.”

“Which is?” asked James.

“Why did it make you think of me? I figured you’d want nothing to do with me after what happened all those years ago. After you promised you were going to fix all my patients from Trinity.”

James glanced down, “Let’s just say a voice in my head told me some more truth, and that left me in yet another fog.”

“Of course, it did.”

“And I figured...”

McIntosh interrupted, “You figured I could help you fumble through that broken mind of yours.”

“Yes, as much as it pains me to say it...yes.”

McIntosh spun around on his heels, facing James. James, like the orderlies, tensed up. James noticed how it brought the good doctor a hint of amusement and delight. “In my line of work, when I could do so,” McIntosh began, “I learned that every patient’s mind had layers upon layers. And in working with you, I learned you had the most layers of all.”

“What do you...”

McIntosh interjected once again. “Tell me something, James. What is something you’ve learned about yourself, recently?”

James shrugged, knowing that while he had plenty of reason to lie to the good doctor, that he wasn’t going to. He wanted an answer. “That my grandfather pushed me to become a wrestler. He wanted to bring harm to the wrestling family that spat in his face. Metaphorically, of course.”

“Ah, yes. I remember that.”

“You do?”

“Yes. He wanted you to be a killer.”

Hearing McIntosh utter the words caused James to stop in his tracks. “You knew about that too, huh?”

“Layers. Just one of many, James. It seems that your brain has conjured up more stories, more alternate realities...”

“His name was Ruinous,” James growled.

McIntosh chuckled. “Oh, yes. The entity your grandfather wanted to use you for its vessel. I remember that tale.”

“Stop talking in riddles now, doc. I’m done being confused.”

“You’re becoming angrier, again. Aren’t you?” McIntosh asked. “You want to stop it again, don’t you?”

“That’s the thing,” James said, taking a few steps closer, as they locked eyes. “I don’t want to. Not this time. I like how I feel.”

“Do you? That’s new. Very interesting.”

“I don’t like how I feel when I’m not able to let it out. When I’m not able to be violent. Why is that? What does it mean? That’s what I want to know.”

“What it means my dear boy,” McIntosh turned, motioning for James to follow, which he did, the curiosity only growing within, “is that you should be where I am. And why that is,” he stopped and faced James once again, “well, that’s because your grandfather wanted to weaponize you. He saw how weak your mother was. How incompetent your father was. He didn’t have much use for your siblings...”

“Weaponize me? He wanted to be a pro wrestler. He wanted revenge. Yes, I know that. You’re not telling me anything that I don’t already know.” James threw his hands up, “You’ve done nothing but waste my time.”

“He wanted you to do much more than that, James. Pro wrestling was your grandfather’s second love. His first love was something else entirely. Something he felt no one else in your family could stomach.”

“What the hell are you talking about?”

“He wanted his legacy to be pro wrestling, yes...but when he realized it wasn’t going to happen, he turned to something else.”

“Which was what?”

McIntosh sighed, “He was a serial killer, James. That was his legacy.”

“No, no, no...” James shook his head. “You have no fucking clue what you’re saying. None whatsoever.”

“But I do. Your grandfather paid me handsomely for me to push your mind, to train it, so you could think like him.”

Why are you the way that you are?

Layers?

Peel back the layers, James. Peel them on back...

“No. This is some sick, twisted fantasy you’re trying to spin in my mind. I know how you work...”

“And yet you came to see me. Funny how that works, don’t you think?”

“I’m not listening to this.”

“The truth is out there, James. All you need to do is learn where to look. The old man kept a journal of it, son. Deep in that hole in the wall...you remember it, don’t you? It was behind the basement wall.”

“Why is this happening to me? I don’t care about anything...**normal.**”

“Nothing more than the bloodlust that I’m sure is festering inside you.”

“You said my grandfather had a journal?”

“Yes.”

“Do you know what it looks like?”

“Layers, James. You have to learn to peel them back yourself. As to why this is happening...well, all the hard work I put into your head, turning it off and turning it on...seems to know it’s turning on and that’s not changing.”

“How do I make it stop?”

McIntosh shook his head. “You can’t. I’m the only one who can,” the bastard chortled while James wanted to strangle him then and there. “And I’m in here. Right...where put me.”

“No...”

“Yes you did and now,” McIntosh shrugged, “you’re cursed to inherit your true legacy.”

The doctor began to laugh as he turned and walked away, the orderlies brushing past James, leaving him with more questions and an answer he didn’t expect. An answer he knew, deep down, to be more fact than fiction, as well as the feeling of impending doom. Something he couldn’t stop. Something James could only embrace.

Promo

Let me start with this.

Despite what Colleen may think in that pea-sized brain of ours, I wasn’t astonished at whatever strength she managed to display. Little bitch had some fight in her, yeah. Good for her. I don’t like my fights to be easy.

I like to leave with something other than titles and the ‘W’.

What I left with, from the match against Colleen, is that she, like so many others, is a walking parody of this sport. She can claim she wants those top spots, but what she showed me during our match was the exact opposite. She’s perfectly content with floating around, letting others just swoop in and take from her.

Kudos to you.

Speaking of Kudos, let me toss some your way, Blake Mason.

Man, you show up and drop our old friend Josh Hudson on his head on your first night back. You stopped Selena from winning the Trios Tournament, and you even ranked in the top five of the laughable 'Elite 15'. Major props to you.

It makes me think of all the layers a human being has. I know I have many.

Have you taken the time to peel back the layers of yourself? You had asked Chris Lawler if he really knew who he was. Do you?

I mean, honestly.

Do you wanna know what I believe we'd all see if you did just that? I'll tell you whether you wanna know or not, old chum.

You'd see the brashness. You'd see the money. The fancy suits. The women you've bedded. All those hearts you've broken.

But along with that brashness, the money, the suits, and all those women and broken hearts, you'd see a common theme.

Missed opportunity.

Now, I saw Twitter. You stated you'd be SCW Champion if it wasn't for Selena Frost. You two can't seem to quit each other right now, and that's cute and all, but nobody will care in a few short weeks. But you said you'd be World Champion if it wasn't for her.

That is just like you, though.

Would've. Should've. Could've.

But here's the thing...You didn't.

You could've been World Champion when you faced Syren in 2013, but it didn't happen. Hell, you got the rub when I teamed with you and Kelcey against New Eden, or was it Blood Grove? You got the winning pin. The spotlight was shining on you.

Just like it shined on you when you decided to hurt Simon Lyman. When you decided to start mowing people down with cars. The spotlight is placed on you, and what ends up happening, Mr. Mason?

You defeated the current World Champion on the biggest stage of them all, and what happened?

You had no follow through.

That's your story.

That is the Blake Mason Experience.

Oh, and sure. We should all tremble because we're all supposed to know what you can do when you're motivated. I've heard the same song and dance so many times over the last fourteen years from you and so many others, me included. But here's the thing, Blake.

There's no follow through.

I don't tremble when I see you show up. I don't get overly excited about it. I know what's going to happen. As talented as you are in the ring, you're a walking missed opportunity.

And no, I don't care to bring up your parenting. I'm not here to talk about how our daughters will feel if Katelyn lets them watch us duke it out. I don't care. You're an opponent. You're in my way. That's the way I see it. That is why I'm going to have no issue in running you down.

In the ring, not with a car, because what happens in the ring is what matters most when it comes to this business.

And let's go ahead and put another baby to sleep, shall we? You beat me ten years ago for the Adrenaline Championship. Thomas Watson cracked me in the head with a beer bottle and you got lucky. Otherwise, I had you on the ropes.

The same could be said of your World title match last week. You had to go below the belt. You can't go fair and square. As much as you may have paid to stay in these positions you're in when you decide to show up, nobody will buy you as Champion, Blake.

So, do you get the idea of who you are? Do you see the bigger picture?

You can't get out of your own way. You have confidence, but you have more insecurities than anyone I've ever met. You have that little dick syndrome, my friend. That is why you fold up when the going gets too tough to handle.

That is why when you peel back more layers, you'll see that I am everything you still think you're going to be. I'm a two-time SCW World Champion. Two-time Underground and United States Champion. I've held the Adrenaline and Tag titles. Supreme Champion status. I've been in the Rise to Greatness main event and I won.

Sure, I've been injured.

Sure, I've lost my smile from time to time.

But I have achieved so much. I have gone out and fought. I have talked the talk, and I have walked the walk.

I'm not like you.

I'm not some in-fashion fad the people look back upon and laugh about.

I've done it all.

Now, I am hurt. I am harm. I am pain. I am here to course correct SCW and burn down everything Mr. D ever loved and promoted. That includes you, as he was the one who kept that spotlight on you. He believed in you. He bought into the experience, no matter how disappointing the returns ended up being.

You are part of the problem. You don't work hard. You barely work. You have had all the talent in the world, and you've squandered it. You've wasted everyone's time, including your own, and honestly...you just need to be taken out back and put out of your misery.

Breakdown, I put you out of mine. Get your shots in. Make them count. In the end, you'll fold.

Let's give them a show, Blake. Show 'em what you're made of, before I lead you to a massacre, that'll surely lead to your exodus.

Oh, Selena. Show up, too. I'll split you open just as well. No qualms in doing that. I owe you.

Blake, this won't be pretty for you. All eyes will be on you to perform. I know who I am. I know what I'm capable of. You have no idea. The lengths you're willing to go, trust me when I say, I'll go farther. Because I have to. Because I want to.

I'll pull the trigger for you and you can thank me after they've scraped you off the canvas, and I'll whisper...thank you for coming.