



Even people with thick skulls, such as myself, learn— eventually. I came up short against Selena. That hurts. I had that match in the bag, and I let it slip through my fingers. Maybe I underestimated her craftiness. Perhaps I played myself in those final moments. To make matters worse, I immediately lost to Deanna because I made the mistake of letting myself become distracted by a woman. I don't know why. She's hot, so what? But for some reason, I want her. So I allowed myself to be dragged into this Bermuda Triangle between Carrie, myself, and that asshole, Asher Hayes. And I lost. Not to say that Deanna hadn't improved immensely since I ran circles around her a year prior. She had. But even Deanna's beauty couldn't prevent me from focusing on Carrie. What was with her that entranced me? Hell, I even attacked Asher out of some strange kind of jealousy. I saw that man as a threat to my dominance as a sexual deity. ASHER HAYES.

Let's admit it. I might be in a tailspin. Carrie might simply be a distraction. As a top gun, I should regain control of my fighter jet and get back on track. I was moments close to being World Champ again; I couldn't let myself piss all of that away. No, I need to double down on myself. I might not have the Ranch anymore. I might not have a family. I might not have anything but my pride, and I need to protect that for once in my life. Pride is what is going to hold me up straight. Pride is the bottle from which I will drink. Not some rubbing alcohol vodka. Not some bargain basement bourbon. No, I take pride in my abilities as a professional wrestler. As a man. And to stop, let me lend myself some grace for the mistakes I might have made and not make matters worse. The Ranch taught me that much. My fiasco with Alistaire spelled that out too. I need to stop compounding things, and typically, that means taking a step back, taking a deep breath, and accepting that mistakes were made.

Day 85

I hung my head while I dragged my feet to Margaret's apartment. A cold rain splattered against me, dampening my tee. Partially melted snow crunched underneath my sneakers. I wasn't invited to her place. Memories of that fateful night danced in my head. I still could taste her. I still could smell her scent. The soft touch. Everything came back vibrantly. Made me second-guess my laissez-faire attitude about the whole affair. I enjoyed that night. It made me feel alive for the first time. And then maybe I got greedy. Having Cat right in front of me, mine for the taking, I wanted more and more. I paid the price. I paid the fucking price. Human beings seemed to be wired that way. Always wanting more, never satisfied with what they already have. I fell victim to that mentality far too many times, more than I can count.

I knocked on her door. I forced a smile and allowed my rap to have an upbeat tempo. Behind that grin, dread swirled around. I expected her to slap me. I caused her a lot of pain and couldn't calm her earlier. Still, I had to make things right. I made a mistake, and she was suffering from that. Soon everyone will be talking about my announcement: we had sex, baby. I was sure the powers that be would investigate her. Of course, I'd lie for her sake. Lie. Lie. Lie. I always had a knack for lying. They said the younger a child started to lie, the more intelligence he possessed. Well, lies came out of my mouth while I was still in the cradle. Deception is a multidimensional human behavior that requires analytical thinking. Being a genius and all, I became good at it.

The door opened, and to my surprise, there stood Cat. She, too, seemed like she spent a little time out in the rain, not dry enough to have been there long. I spoke to her earlier in confidence, but she must have sought out Margaret out of concern. That complicated things for me. I hadn't expected the other member of this love triangle to be present while I asked for forgiveness. Part of me wanted to believe an ulterior motive was at play here. That Cat didn't come just to ensure Margaret was fine; instead, she tried to play interference to ensure things never became right again between us. After all, Cat and I almost dove headfirst into a night of romance. There were feelings between us. Complicated, messy emotions.

"She's not in the mood to talk, Adam. You've gone too far this time."

"Did you ask her? Or are you assuming?" I asked, not appreciating the tone she used towards me. Yes, I'm the bad guy here, but show some compassion.

"She won't come out of her room."

"Let me try."

"I think that's the worst idea you could possibly think of— Adam!" I pushed past Cat. She attempted to offer up some resistance, but her petite frame provided as much challenge as a well-oiled gate. I entered the neo-hippy liar Margaret called home and directed

myself straight to the bedroom. I didn't bother knocking; I waltzed right into her bedroom with all the audacity I could muster. And that said something. She immediately shot up from a fetal position into a sitting one, still hugging a tear-stained pillow. Her hair went every which way, filling out her disheveled appearance.

"Don't you knock?!" **Margaret asked.**

"I tried stopping him," **Cat added behind me in the door frame.**

"Look, I'm here because I care. I did something absolutely awful. And yes, I realized I might have gaslighted you and downplayed the consequences of my actions. So I came here tonight so we can figure this out. I want to fix this," **I said. Margaret threw her pillow towards me but armed with catlike reflexes, I plucked it out of midair. I should have dodged and allowed Cat to become collateral damage. Having missed the opportunity, I approached Margaret, tossing the pillow behind her onto the bed. I knelt down before her. "I am sorry. I really screwed things up."**

"You're telling me," **Margaret answered.**

"I have a plan. We can fix this. All we need to do is work together. That's all. Can't we do that at least?"

"I don't want anything to do with you, Adam. You've made a mess out of everything. I'm sure your plans will only make matters worse. I'm going to admit my professional wrongdoing. Turn in my resignation; hell, I might even consider switching careers at this point. Ha— at my age." **Margaret choked out a sardonic laugh. I shot my hand across the gap between us and gripped her knee. I squeezed. She didn't recoil at my touch but tilted her head backward to keep some tears at bay. I wasn't going to let her give up like this. The one thing I learned in life is that you never surrender your wants.**

"You can't do that. We need you here, Margaret. You do good work here. You can't let this cost you your job," **Cat said.**

"I deserve this," **Margaret answered.**

"No, you don't!"

"I know if Pete was here, he would say the same as Cat. You play a vital role in their recovery. Damn it, the whole reason why I was upset was because you kicked me out of the band. You were the lead singer! I didn't want anyone else to be my therapist," **I explained. I rose to my feet and went to the corner of the room, where I crossed my arms. Cat slid onto the bed beside her and gave her a tight embrace. Margaret didn't deserve to be fired over this. Primarily not because of my stupid antics. It wasn't her fault that I was so ruggedly attractive. I aged like a fine wine. Insatiable. Once a woman lowered her guard, they**

became utterly defenseless against my charm. I preyed on that weakness. I was the smooth criminal, not her.

"I'm not worthy of that praise. Adam, I botched our working relationship because I was lonely. It's lonely here at the Ranch. I don't have time to— it doesn't matter now. The point is that I had a lapse in judgment, and I shouldn't have. Now I must pay for it," **Margaret answered.**

"You two were consenting adults. There's nothing to be ashamed of!" **Cat argued.**

"And you probably saved me from myself!" **I added. I pointed towards my chest.** "I, too, was lonely. I was bored. I had been dying of boredom since I arrived. I started to think about ways to sneak out. Think about smuggling shit in. Breaking bad shit. And you came along and saved me from lapsing."

"See, you even helped this asshole out," **Cat said. I shot a hurt expression her way for good measure. I didn't know what I did to wrong Cat, but she seemed hostile towards me the moment I showed up tonight. Had things soured behind us? I feared that might have become the case. A shame, really, because we could have made some exhilarating love if given a second chance. I shook my head, knowing this wasn't the appropriate time to daydream. I came to make things right, not gawk at Cat's petite frame.**

"All I'm saying is let me lie for you. If anyone asks, I'll fall on the sword. I'm a drunk coming up with bullshit stories about us because you won't let me have my bottle," **I suggested. Cat nodded in agreement. But Margaret didn't seem sold; she hung her head, letting her hair cascade around her face. I knew she cried beneath her cocoon.** "You got nothing to lose. Even you admit to it, or you can deny the whole thing. And I'd deny everything. They don't have any physical proof of anything!"

"That's the thing. If we cover it up, I will live with fear the rest of the time here. That someone will uncover some evidence that we did have sex."

"What do you think this is? You're not Bill Clinton. No one is out to get you. We're all here for you," **I responded. She sighed deeply, looking up now. She sniffed while rubbing her reddened eyes. Margaret looked over to Cat for answers, gripping Cat's thigh thankfully for support. I thought my idea was good, but she ignored my good intentions and brilliant scheme. I didn't know why I bothered sometimes. You go the distance to help someone out of a jam, and they don't seem appreciative of the effort. Yes, I was the cause of this situation, but I wasn't talking about just this one instance. Throughout my life, I devised the best plans for people and laid them out perfectly for success, and they snubbed their noses at it. Wrestlers that turned down stardom. Babes that refused my bed. All of them didn't know what was best for them.**

"You have to do what you think is right. Ultimately, that's what is most important," **Cat said.**

"You're right. I need to think if living a lie is worth the price of keeping the job I love."

"It's easy. You'll get used to it. Not long after, you'll forget that this ever happened," **I said.**

"Adam, I appreciate you're trying to help, but you can't force things. I think I need time to think. I thank you both for coming over and checking in on me. And Adam, for now, I think we should keep our distance. Given the circumstances," **Margaret decided. I rolled my eyes. How were we supposed to collude if we kept our distance? She didn't trust my intentions. I came here in the rain to help bail her out, but she became entrenched with resentment. Cat, too, for some reason. They stared at me, leaving me no other choice than to turn around and leave the apartment. After all, I knew where I was unwelcome. While I didn't appreciate the send-off, I wouldn't change my course of action. I was loyal as a puppy, damn it. They were going to see that and forgive me for my transgressions.**

People need to know one thing about me: I never give up easily.

Day 546

The park stretched out in all directions. Hills rose up against the sky. A treeline marked the boundaries of the main section. In the middle, a large pond rested with its abundance of waterfowl. Families spent their Saturday afternoon at the playground or having a picnic. Some walked their dogs or maybe even tossed a frisbee to the good bois. A few annoying drones buzzed in the air. I wished I had a shotgun to take them down. Click-click-BOOM. No more whining attacking my ears. So you might ask, why was I at the park on a day when I could be doing better things? Like binging my old victories at home on the leather couch or chasing skirts at the strip club, pretending to still be young? Because I made a decision that I was going to put more effort into being a family man. I knew Vanessa wasn't sold on the idea of me, but too bad, I was her father. No matter how she wanted to avoid acknowledging that fact, she had to. A man had the right to see his family.

I only knew she and my granddaughter were in the park because her housemate told me when I dropped in unannounced. I wanted to credit that intel gathering on my being as suave as James Bond. Still, honestly, the girl seemed loose lips and pretty disdainful towards my daughter for some unknown reason. What better way to show off my new and improved credentials of being a grandfather than by swinging by? Take them off to dinner and for some ice cream afterward. Wine and dine, but rated PG for the kiddo. That sounded right. And if it was money Vanessa needed, I could always buy groceries or something for them. I was more than willing to prove I could provide for my family. I might have skipped out for a number of years, but I was back, ready to pay my debts with interest.

Take that, Amy. I wasn't THAT horrible of a person. Not anymore.

I lowered my Ray-Ban sunglasses and searched the surrounding landscape for my two girls. I ignored the high-pitched screeching that kids unfavorably expelled while they had fun. Nothing sounded worse to my ears, and I wondered why anyone signed up to be the parent of a small child. They were the worst of humanity. Still, my granddaughter was one of them. So I had to give her a pass for existing. I started my wander through the park. A gentle breeze slipped through my partially unbuttoned white shirt. I didn't see them until I almost trampled over their picnic. And to my surprise, they were gathered around a wicker basket, sitting atop a blanket with paper plates in their hands, carrying cheese, crackers, and other snacks. Oh, don't forget a few cans of soda.

"Dad?!?" Vanessa exclaimed, recognizing me. She coughed up some soda she accidentally choked on during her surprise. She dabbed her blouse with a napkin while trying to process my presence.

"Oh my god. What are the odds?" I feigned ignorance.

"What are you doing here?" Vanessa's tone turned from genuine surprise to sour.

"Here I was, amazed at how nice a day it was. I thought to myself, how about I'll go for a walk in the park. And look at this, we run into each other."

"You don't even live around here."

"Who is this?" Alyssa interrupted. I knelt before my granddaughter. We never met before, face-to-face. I wanted to blame Vanessa for never introducing us, but I was at fault. Vanessa gave birth to Alyssa while I was aboard in Russia. Since returning to the States, my schedule has been packed. Could I have made time for a visit? Of course. Would Vanessa have welcomed that? I don't know, but I never bothered to ask. I offered up my hand. In the corner of my eye, I noticed Vanessa's disapproving gaze.

"I'm your grandfather. Nice to meet you," I said as the girl accepted my hand. I raised the hand to plant a soft kiss on the back. She smiled, casting a spell of warmth over me. The innocence she possessed stirred something inside my soul. Was it some sort of hope, maybe? Perhaps that was the best thing about kids; the only good thing was that they inspired something in you. Made the future seem a little less bleak. My granddaughter did a fantastic job at that. Perhaps, the best job ever by a small person.

"But Mommy told me you were dead!" Alyssa said.

"Dead?" I shot a puzzled look over at my daughter.

"You were dead to me!" Vanessa answered.

"She said you drowned in a big puddle after you drank too much."

"Did she now? Well, your mother got some false information then. But here I am, alive and well," I said. **I didn't want to throw Vanessa under the bus for such a ridiculous lie about me. After all, I was on thin ice here as it was. Now I understood why she kept Alyssa away from me. She didn't want to lose face by explaining that her grandfather was, in fact, still breathing. I eased down into a seated position between the two ladies, resting my hand on my granddaughter's knee. "It's about time we met. I've heard good things about you, so I was excited to see what a good woman my granddaughter became."**

"I'm still only a girl."

"Dad, can we have a word in private?" **Vanessa chimed in.**

"Alyssa, would you care for a lollipop?"

"Okaaaay," **Alyssa answered. I reached into my pocket for my secret weapon and returned with a dum-dum. I handed it over to my granddaughter while standing up to my feet. I dusted off my ass and turned towards Vanessa. I pulled out another lollipop and gestured it to Vanessa, but she did not seem to be in the mood for candy. I sighed, knowing she had outgrown those tricks. "Don't worry, Grandpa. She always gets mad, but you can handle it."**

"Alyssa!" **Vanessa exclaimed.**

"Thanks for the wise words, young lady. I'll keep it in mind. I still don't know what I could possibly have done to get your mother angry with me."

"Alyssa, we'll be right over here while I talk to your grandfather," **Vanessa decided. Vanessa led me about a good ten yards or so away from the girl, just out of hearing range but easily in eyesight. Vanessa planted her hands on her hips and tilted her head. Yep, she was definitely furious, emulating all the same tell-tale signs her mother used to give off. Funny how that works. "Seriously, what the fuck, Dad."**

"She blew me away at the recital. I couldn't stop thinking about how badly I wanted to meet my granddaughter. Was that so wrong?"

"I thought I told you to stay away."

"You're a very rash individual. Not that it is a bad thing. I'm rash."

"Don't compare us. And don't pretend that I'm being rash by denying you access to my daughter. I'm doing it to protect her from you and your— your lack of character," **Vanessa said. I placed a hand over my heart as if that insult drove an arrow right through my chest. I thought she couldn't be far off. I boasted much character. A lot more character than the**

average man. I possessed a larger-than-life personality! That was why people couldn't get enough of me. I walk out to the ring and get a reaction because people care about me one way or another!

"You've never given me a proper chance. I've changed, Ness. I've sobered up. I reprioritized what's important. And one of the things that made the list is family. I think it's unfair that you are denying me a second chance. Everyone deserves one," **I answered. I might have walked out on her and Alistaire while they were still young. I understood there were grounds for resentment. But people change over time; they grow up. I wasn't the same man I was then, let alone I was two years ago. I continued,** "I might have been a poor dad back then; however, I think I make for fantastic grandfather material now. I bet you I can spoil her like the best of them."

"I don't want my child spoiled."

"You know what I mean."

"I think you don't understand where you stand. You're an outsider. A stranger. I know you're guilty over how things turned out between Alistaire and you, but we're not a substitute. Look at her," **Vanessa paused, pointing a finger toward her daughter. She sipped on the soda, pretending she wasn't trying to listen in on the conversation. I wondered if Vanessa knew that she was trying to eavesdrop.** "I raised the most beautiful, wonderful child imaginable. All on my own. And I don't want anything or anyone to jeopardize that. Our lives aren't some proving grounds for you to show to Alistaire or whoever that you're a changed man."

"You're right. Your happiness and well-being are more important than my need for a family."

"I'm glad you understand."

"But Vanessa, you are all I got. I feel like I have an opportunity to be better. I don't know how to explain it. IT FELT GOOD when I handed over the check for Alyssa's schooling. For once, I didn't resent paying for someone's tuition, but proud of it. It has made me wonder what I have been doing all these years. I've made money, but I've pissed it all away. I contemplated how I could have better utilized my money, and top of the list is you two," **I explained. Vanessa's expression seemed to soften. She curled her bottom lip while she watched her child. I appealed to her maternal instincts. Was that manipulative behavior? I didn't intend. I simply stated the facts. How she took, it was her business. I laid my case before her, and she became the judge to decide how to proceed. This time, I would respect her decision.**

"I don't know, Dad. What do you want me to say?"

"I want you to say that you'd give me a chance."

"I really want to, but—" **Vanessa** said. She scoffed, rolling her eyes while deliberating. I recognized the conflict that waged war within her when I saw it. She fought against two instincts; the first telling her not to trust me, the second to embrace me as the father she never had. Words that would try to nudge her in the right direction came to mind, but I kept my mouth shut. I knew better now.

See, Amy, I was a **BETTER** person.

The old Adam would have said more, perhaps sprinkled in some sweet lullaby lies. I know I placed her in a tough spot and that I was being selfish to a degree, but I really wanted the chance to be selfless. I didn't have anyone else in my life I could practice with. Alistaire refused to talk to me. I lost contact with Aries. I had no girlfriend. I had no friends. Who knows what my relationship with Carrie could become? But that was some sort of conquest, not something relating to this scenario whatsoever of a guy trying to be more—compassionate? Empathetic? A better person to society? I didn't know precisely how to phrase what I was trying to become. Simply be *better*. That was the gist of it.

"I am happy to have another grandpa if you ask me," **Alyssa** interrupted **Vanessa's** deep thoughts. She crept over to where we gathered and showed her hand that she listened in on the conversation. I found myself impressed that the girl understood the situation. She tugged at **Vanessa's** pleated white skirt with doe eyes. The kid was on my side. **Alyssa** knew what was best for her, and that was giving me a chance to be in her life. Smart kid. Outstanding.

"What have I told you about listening to other people's conversations?"

"You told me not to. But since it is about me, I thought I'd give my two cents," **Alyssa** answered.

"Your grandfather hasn't always been the nicest guy."

"He seems nice to me. Maybe you didn't allow him to be nice."

"Now, now. Little one, your mother's right. I haven't always been the best. So she's telling you the truth." I winked at **Vanessa**, showing her I could be a team player if needed. That seemed to frustrate her more. I didn't know if that was a good or bad thing regarding her decision.

Alyssa turned towards me. "We are family, after all. Family is about being together. So we can't be together?"

"That's what I'm saying. How about it, Ness?"

"I swear to— grrr, if you mess this up, Dad. I'm never ever going to speak to you again. If you want to join us for lunch, you can, but no more of this dropping in out of the blue. That's not how

I operate; I don't even let Mom or her parents do that," **Vanessa conceded.** I clapped my hands, hugged the girl, and pulled her tightly against my thigh. Together we returned to the picnic, where I dropped down across from them. There was, fortunately, a spare paper plate that stuck to the rest and more than enough snacks for me to gorge on. I started already with the tales of my travels around the world that seemed to captivate the young girl. I spoke of Paris. I spoke of Russia. I spoke of Japan. She wanted to learn more and more about them. Of course, I left out all the party stories and about the women. That would be reserved for any grandsons. Alyssa didn't need to know about that dark yet fun side of Grandpa.

"I think that's enough stories for one day," **Vanessa decided,** placing the garbage into a plastic bag. "It's getting late."

"But I want to hear more about the cherry blossoms."

"We can always talk about them next time," **I said.**

"When will that be?" **Alyssa asked.**

"That's up to your mom."

"Your grandfather's a very busy man. I'm sure we'll figure something out, but don't expect him anytime soon," **Vanessa said.** I had a lot more time on my hands than I used to. I wanted to correct her but took her statement as a warning. She didn't want my presence to be a regular thing. At least, not at first. I needed to earn her trust, and ultimately, that was fair. I planned to be around more, and perhaps whatever daddy issues I created when I abandoned her with her mother, we could clear up while we were at it.

"How about we get some ice cream before we call it a day?" I asked.

Vanessa cried and rolled her eyes, already regretting her decision.

Day 553

I decided to treat myself. After all, it was fucking summer. Lake Ontario had a decent climate in the summer months. I rented out a yacht. Paid some strippers to come to serve as my crew. Sure, they could drink all the champagne as they wanted; I still kept to my Shirley temples. I walked around, pinching asses only protected by bikini thongs. I had the whole captain outfit going for me. A captain hat with a gold anchor in the middle rested on my head. My shirt remained unbuttoned for the entire world to see the small patch of chest hair I boasted. I felt like I was moving through the motions though. I wanted to say I was having fun, but I wasn't really. My mind drifted towards my triple threat at Rise to Greatness. God, nothing was worse than thinking about work when trying to relax.

I decided to clear off the boat. Tipped the girls nicely to get the fuck off the boat while I took the yacht out on my own. I arranged for a videographer to send a drone out to follow me while I sail the seven seas--- well, the five great lakes. I killed the engine out farther enough that it wouldn't bother anyone. I set myself adrift while I pondered my career. Rise to Greatness could have been so much better this year. But you have to be grateful for what you did have. I had a match. Some people didn't. I did. I had some thoughts I needed to share.

[REC]

"Rise to Greatness is for wrestlers what a trip to Disney World is for kids. To put it bluntly, Rise to Greatness is the mecca of this sport. And to compete on the card is like going on a holy pilgrimage of sorts. It's inspiring. It's profound. It's a goddamn honor, even for a jackass like myself," I began. I lowered my Ray-Bans. I walked alongside the yacht, drifting in the mellow waves of Lake Ontario. In the distance, the city line of Toronto impedes against the horizon. Bright blue skies stretched from all directions, and the gleam of an angry summer sun was caught by the reflection of my sunglasses. I narrowed my eyes.

"A year ago, I headlined the event. And that was a special moment in my life. One that I will never forget. And I've competed on this show quite a few times, and still, the magic doesn't disappear. The atmosphere surrounding the event is something. I've done many drugs in my lifetime, and something about being around the fans, even those many are dumb and stupid, you feed off their energy. Everyone's hyped. The locker room is one big party. So much positivity, and to be on the card once again, I can't help but smile. Sure, I wish I had won at Taking Hold of the Flame and punched my ticket to the main event. Damn, who wouldn't want to walk into this megaevent with the SCW World Championship belt wrapped around his waist? I could have done that, but I fell short against Selena. And that was all she wrote."

"Now, I must do mop-up duty against Amy Chastaine and Asher Hayes." I sighed.

"That's definitely a step-down. Oh, I know Amy's a member of the Hall of Fame. I know she became the quickest to become a Supreme Champion. Her accolades are on repeat whenever she is on television. The announcers could not get enough of her, especially when that dolt Simon Lyman was working the booth. I get it, Amy. You're good. You're one of the best to have ever done this. You were a sensation, and hell, I thought we had a lot in common, both recovering alcoholics. But between your attitude on the mic and in your columns, you're really nothing but a bitch. I thought we could have some mutual respect between us, but you've always looked down on me. And if there's one thing that Wrestling's Enlightenment doesn't take too kindly is when some uppity bitch looks down on him," I warned. I reached the boat's bow and sat down on a seat that ran the ship's width. I stretched out my arms and crossed my legs. I tipped my captain's hat.

"See, Selena acted that way towards me. She underestimated me. She pissed all over me. And last year's Rise to Greatness, I made her pay. Naturally, I will exact the same revenge upon you, Amy. Because we really aren't that much different. We live our lives the way we want to. Asher included. And I know for one that you wouldn't want to be judged for all your activities. You wouldn't want to be judged for your past mistakes. So why are you being an absolute hypocrite? It's because there's this jealousy between us, isn't there? You're jealous now that you're not the only recovering alcoholic success story. That I impeded on this niche, you carved out for you. And Carrie? She only became the premise for you to come at me. It's clear as day that you're a petty individual, Amy. And the world should be disappointed since you're supposed to be a role model."

"See, this is what this match at Rise to Greatness is all about. That's the ugly emotion that we call jealousy. Asher Hayes always has been jealous of me. You're jealous of me. And lately, I've been acting a bit envious myself regarding Carrie Lovejoy and her business. Envy is a powerful motivator. Makes men--- and women do some despicable things. And to think Carrie is looking out, considering prospects other than me, that grinds my gear. I'm not afraid to admit it," **I paused. I tilted my head backward against the sunbaked fiberglass wall behind me. I laughed slightly before pointing towards the drone taping me.** "I see the way she was scouting out Simon. And I became jealous. I'm much more a man than he ever could hope to be. And we all saw what happened when she paid too much attention to Asher. I couldn't control myself. I attacked him."

"I'm a former SCW World Champion. I have been the champion more recently than Amy. Asher has never tasted the metallic tinge of the SCW World Championship. I know what it takes to get on top. I have the drive, the skills, and the genius to become SCW World Champion again. Why does she even think that there are better suitors? That is what frustrates me more than anything. I have proven myself. And I will do that again at Rise to Greatness by eliminating two contenders from the conversation. Carrie Lovejoy, babe, you better be watching as I outclass the competition on the biggest stage of them all."

"And it's not like it will be an easy take. I get it. You both want to kick my ass as well, for whatever reason. Asher Hayes has a lot of reasons why he should resent me. I look better than him. Once upon a time, the Golden Boys took his tag team titles. I've accomplished more. Everyone in their right mind thinks I'm cooler. Once again, he's jealous and wants to finally be able to one-up me. It's like that annoying kid that chases after you on the playground. He thinks there's this rivalry, but in all honesty, there's no competition. The King of HARDstyle is out of your league. But I can sense you'll go put some extra sauce on your punches because you need to prove yourself. And all I tell you is. Go ahead, Asher. Bring it, babes, because I am not going to back down. I might talk a lot, but I walk the walk," **I said. I rose from the seat and approached the very top of the bow. I placed my hands on the rail and leaned forward, almost as if I offered up my face for Asher to get a free shot on.**

"So while jealousy is driving everyone to throw some hands, we all know in the back of the head, people are watching. It's the biggest show of the year. We all have those credentials on

our resumes. I bet you, whoever comes on top of this brawl will end up being the next in line for a sweet, sweet SCW World title shot. Amy, you want to go back to your glory days? Don't you? Asher, do you want to soar higher than you have ever been before? Don't you? Well, I know for one that I'm still teed off that the belt's not around my waist. I have had my chances this year, and I haven't followed through, but at Rise to Greatness, I will keep my name in the conversation. I will make it so they can't forget the Renaissance Man. And they are forced to give me another shot. And if Carrie wants to be in my corner, rubbing my shoulders, or not. That's her decision. But b-baby, I'm going to go into Sunday, guns-blazing, on fire like none other. And I'm going to show the world that Adam Allocco is still the man."

[/REC]

I backpedaled and fell back onto the seat. I really did feel like I was trying to prove something to myself. Maybe it was something to do with my age. Carrie Lovejoy seemed to be staring right past me as if I wasn't a potential target. That wounded me. Yet against Amy and Asher, I vowed I would convince her that if she wanted to ride the coattails of a future SCW World Champion, I was the horse to pick. I was on my way up again. Just wait and see.