



The Provider: Chapter One: The Family Tree

Mason's Consequences? Just seems like the type of label an out of touch ingrate like CHBK has been waiting to use for a long time. And I honestly wouldn't put it past you, Drachewych, to have put such a morsel of utter crap in his ear.

I get it, I get it. The powers that be really, really, really want to push this narrative that Blake Mason is this uncrowned champion. This uncrowned king of pro wrestling, but he's just not. Never has been. Never will be. Can we move on from that? I believe we'd be better off. Don't buy what I'm selling? Just ask me. I'm right.

I mean, where's the promotion for Polly Pingotti? Has she not spent the last year just taking the so-called top stars to their very limits? The answer to that is an absolute yes. But the SCW is gonna SCW. I know you're still pulling the strings from your lofty Canadian paradise, Mr. D.

The over reliance on Selena, Hudson, Xander, etc. It needs to stop. The SCW needs new stars, instead of going to the well being on a consistent basis. Polly deserves better. Who better to elevate her than me? I elevated Kim and the Underground Championship. I can't help it was left to drift in the realm of obscurity after I took a leave of absence.

That's on her.

That's on you!

So, this isn't Mason's Consequences. I can't find a fuck to give about Blake Mason and what he's apparently done. We've all done bad shit. Grow up.

Don't worry, Polly. I've got your back. I'll get you where you want to be. I'm the hero the SCW doesn't deserve, ever but the one it needs more than it may ever realize.

For my entire life, I've been unwillingly tasked with taking care of my family. I've been unwillingly tasked with providing. For my entire damned life, and it has been a damned existence.

I've had the voices in my head. My parents were addicts. My grandfather was a monster in ways I never knew about. I've been used as a guinea pig for all of them. I've been experimented on in some way for them to all get their fix.

And look at my chosen career path. The world knows what's occurred in my time as a pro wrestler. From the Chosen to the House of James, they all know. They know the successes, just as they know about the failures.

They know about the times I've left. They know about the numerous returns. And return, is something I've done recently. I wanted to finish things off with Kimberly Williams, but she has proven she can't handle the pressure that comes with being top tier. She's nothing more than scraps.

And I am not going to provide for my family by picking through scraps. No. This return has been bullshit, and that doesn't take a lot for me to admit. If you want to ask me, these thoughts will become words, and those words will become the truth, pure and crystal clear.

And it needs to be crystal clear what I'm about. What the **Fall of Man** is about. I'm not the same James Evans everyone is used to seeing. I'm not some supposed schizophrenic, homicidal maniac. No. That is a concept that is long gone, dead and buried like my parents. Like my grandfather.

No, my soul...if such a thing exists, is indeed corrupted. Corrupted down to its very core. It eats, sleeps, and breathes all those elements that have left me the way that I am. And the way that I am, I am a survivor. But I'm not some victim, no. Scratch that ever present victim mentality the SCW universe is used to with so many fucking people on their television screens. I'm not a victim. A survivor, because I'm resourceful. I'm responsible for everyone around. Always have been. And that means that I know how to get shit done. I know how to get things taken care of.

And what do I want to get done? It's simple. I want the SCW to be remade in my vision. Now, I know that everyone has their vision for how things should be.

That piece of shit Hudson wants the Wild, Wild West. I'm sure he wants anything to take away from the fact that he's on borrowed time. His body has been put through the ringer, and he's limping on his last leg. Selena, that cunt, wants to hide behind her contracts. She wants integrity but knows nothing of it.

What do I want? I want the SCW. I want to hold that universe in the palm of my hand, and I know what I have to do in order to do so. Selena has to die out like the fading star she's become. Hudson has to die out like the fading star he's become.

I know that I have to do what they won't. I have to raise the dead, and the dead are names like Polly. Colleen. Andrew Raynes. David Striker. They are dwelling in the abyss of apathy. They can say the words, but those words aren't put into action.

And in this business, in this sport, especially this company, action means so much more than one might think.

Now, I have all these names in my head. They're like my family. Needy. Unable to really do for themselves, and they are looking for someone to show them the way. They need to know that I am here for them. That I, James Evans, will take care of them. I welcome them to all stand against the **Fall of Man**, because I know, in my heart of hearts, that it'll help them grow. It'll motivate them. And the SCW roster needs to be shaken and motivated.

Selena. Hudson. They have killed this place. CHBK has killed this place. Mr. D may have created it, but he has killed it, failing it in every conceivable manner possible. I have tried to save this place before, but that bag of dicks Drachewych and his moronic family have kept the SCW in the shit. This company is in a pandemic, and I know that I am the cure it desperately needs.

With the way things are going, the Enigma is getting more TV time and he's not even on TV. The idiocy displayed when Deanna has a seizure with an over the top perfected performance, is enough to make people change the channel. And they do. Deanna, like her estranged scissoring companion, is a ratings killer.

This place has been drained for the last few years. From beauty factories to snow queens. To executioners and legends that claim they'll never die, yes...SCW has been infected. It's positive for an absolute negative. An infection. I'm a virus, myself. I'm going to inject myself into the lifeblood of the SCW. People can see that as a negative, too but what happens when you add two negatives? You get 'a' positive.

Now, as I proved when Breakdown came to a close on the clusterfuck of a go-home show, neither Selena Frost nor Blake Mason will lead this company to the promised land. I will. Because I have to provide. I'm a family man, even if I don't like my wife and kids all the time. I do what I have to do for them. I will do the same for SCW.

I know it's not something everyone will like, but as I've said to my children when I've disciplined them, you don't have to like the ruling, but in the end, you'll respect it. This is something the SCW and its universe will come to learn.

The education everyone shall receive, it will not always be painless, but it will be necessary...

"Necessary?" Braelynn asks me, slamming her hand on my desk. We're in my study, and she's just learned about my interference in another fight our son, Sawyer, has gotten into. This time at his school, with a fellow student in his kindergarten class. "Why do you think it's necessary to tell our son, our five year old child, that he needs to hurt someone if they pick on him?"

I scoff, "What would you have me do, woman?!? Would you rather me pat him on the back and tell him to say something to his teacher, who will more than likely tell us that boys will be boys? Ask yourself, Braelynn. What good would that do?"

"I don't want our son to grow up as some kind of monster, James. You went through a lot of shit as a child. Sawyer doesn't need to," Braelynn states, crossing her arms over her breast.

"I don't want that either," I say, finally standing up from my desk chair. "That is why I have told him to defend himself. So what if the teachers think he goes a little overboard? Sometimes you need to set someone straight. The more you do it," I shrug, "the less you have to worry about it in the future."

She shakes her head, "So what if he goes overboard? There's nothing 'little' about what Sawyer did to that child and I know you know that," I give a gentle nod, trying not to smirk because I know she's right. But, I'm proud of my son. "I am just begging you to leave things to me. We don't need shit getting any further out of hand, James. Can we agree on that?"

"No," I say. "I'm not agreeing to that. Look at how things went over the summer. Sawyer fucked that kid up at daycare. They wanted him removed. I put a stop to that. The school wants to try that shit with us, then I'll put a stop to that, too. My family will be taken care of. They're not going to be shunned like outcasts," I shake my head. "That happened to me as a kid. It's not happening here. Not while I'm a father. Not while I'm in the picture."

"James, please..."

"No, Braelynn. You...you stop," I point at her. "You're my wife. I take care of you just as I do with our children. That's my goddamn job. I do it, and I do it well. You can't stand here and say otherwise."

“You’re a great father,” she states. “And that’s not even remotely close to what I’m saying. I just don’t want our children to be subjected to unnecessary violence, James.”

“Defending yourself isn’t a display of unnecessary violence. Going out to hurt someone just to hurt them, like those other kids have done...that...THAT!” I shout while shaking my head once again. I don’t like being questioned. I know my intentions and methods are sound, “that’s unnecessary. That’s unacceptable, just like telling Sawyer to roll over and just let it happen.”

“I’m not telling our son to just roll over, James. You’re not hearing me,” my wife shakes her head no, looking like she’s trying to hold back tears. “I wish you’d just listen to me.”

I turn away and laugh for a few seconds before giving her my full attention once again. “I don’t think you’re listening to me. I told you over the summer that I’m not raising our kids to be pushovers. This gentle way of doing things,” I shake my head yet again, “it doesn’t work.”

“I need you to learn how to separate the wrestling world from our lives, James. Our lives are bigger than that.”

“That wrestling world, as you call it, makes sure our lives are bigger than what they’d be without it, and you know it.”

“James...”

“No, no. I put my life on the line for my family, Braelynn.”

“And I’ve seen what you’ve done before, James. When it comes to wrestling, you have no issue hurting people.”

“And it’s not something I do just to do it,” I fire back. “When I fight someone, attacking them backstage or anywhere that they least expect it, it has a purpose. I’m not some fucking bully. When I go after someone, I’m trying to make them better. A bully does something to make themselves feel superior. I don’t need to do that.”

“And why’s that?” Braelynn asks, cocking an eyebrow. “Are you already superior? That’s a great mentality to have in life,” she adds, the sarcasm seeped deep into her words.

“I know who I am, Braelynn. I know who I am and what I am. I don’t need to explain something like that to anyone.”

My wife rolls her eyes, “Well, when you have the meeting with the principal about Sawyer, you may have no other choice than to explain your views on things. So, I don’t know, be prepared, I guess.”

“They already want a meeting?” I snort. “Why am I not surprised? The way of this world these days, it scares me for the future. The weak want to be seen as equal. They want to be seen as heroes even when they portray themselves as victims in every situation they find themselves in.”

“I can’t believe what I’m hearing, James.”

I shrug, “I believe that’s why I’m the one taking care of everything,” I roll my eyes.

“What was that?”

“What? I just did what you did.”

“Then why?”

“You were a lot stronger when we first got together. I don’t know what’s happened to you.”

Silence falls between us for a few moments before she scoffs, “I love you but how fucking dare you say something like that to me. I’ve always been true to myself, James. You change your views all the damned time and you know it, so don’t try to put that on me.”

I sigh and then my phone rings once. Twice. I look down and see it’s William Heaven.

Looking back at my wife, I say, “Excuse me. I need to take this.” Another eye roll before Braelynn exits the room. I walk over, closing the door to my study before bringing the phone to my ear, “William. How are you?”

“I’m good, James. How are you?”

I smile, “I feel I’m in a much better mindset compared to what I have been.”

“Is that why you asked me to call you?” He’s right. I sent him a text late the night before. My mind had been racing as I contemplated my next move, before I finally found something I felt, and still feel, I could sink my teeth into.

“Yes, it is.”

“Well, I don’t know about you but I’m happy with the way Breakdown ended, James. We, as a group, needed that.”

“Glad to hear it,” my tone is mundane as I reply, “but I wasn’t happy about it. I’ve tried to be, but I’m not. It was a nice image, sure. Seeing myself towering over Selena and Blake. But, that’s not enough for me. Where we are as a group,” I shake my head, “that’s not enough for me.”

“Why do you say that?” He asks. “What is enough for you, James?”

I chortle, “I’m not sure there’s a definitive answer to that, Will but what I think will be enough for the time being at least, is pushing the SCW far away from this bullshit narrative they’re letting spread like wildfire.”

“And what narrative might that be?”

“Selena versus Blake.”

“I can understand that.”

“No, no. I don’t think you do.”

“Then, maybe I’m not following. Enlighten me.”

“With pleasure,” I state with a smirk. “Our group, Fall of Man, they’re not at the forefront. It’s Blake trying to push himself as this massive deal when he’s never amounted to more than some man whore. It’s Selena and her love for being overly dramatic and theatrical. It’s that type of shit that I’m done with, Will.”

“You know I’m all about fighting for what your grandfather wanted...”

I cut him off, “No. This is no longer about what he wanted. It’s about what we...you and I...want. Waylon seems to be getting onboard. He may need to be smacked around a few more times, especially after that ghastly performance he gave the other night.”

“He still got the win, James.”

“Yeah, I saw. Barely. By the skin of his fucking teeth. The son of a bitch is a monster. But sometimes, he acts too afraid of his own shadow. I can’t have that,” I grip my cell tightly, “I won’t have that.”

“Waylon is fine, trust me.”

“I do trust you,” I say. “Let’s just not make that an issue. I hope you’re picking up what I’m throwing down.”

“Loud and clear, James. So, is this all you wanted to talk about?”

“No. I’m going to pivot. Like I said, I believe I’ve found something I can sink my teeth into. I’ve been an angry, overly violent bastard for quite some time. I can still be violent, but it has to be necessary,” I say, my conversation with Braelynn springing back to mind. “I’ve no doubt I’m going to get angry here and there, but I’m not going to let it consume me. I’m going to be different. I’m going to be what the SCW needs. This group is going to be what the SCW needs.”

William tries to speak, but I cut him off once more, “I am going to ensure that your baby boy, Waylon becomes a bigger star. This shit with the Elite 15. No, no. No! That is unforgivable and unacceptable. What he’s done...it’s incredible. Like I said, he may need to get slapped a bit more, but he’s going to be the next big thing, and he’s going to be recognized for it,” Grinding my teeth together, I add, “I know I said I wasn’t going to let my anger consume me. It almost did there. Almost. I’m just sickened by the way the SCW is these days.”

“And you believe that you’re going to be the one to change everything?”

I cackle. “William. Will. You, yourself, said that I was the key. Do you remember?”

“I’m well aware.”

“I’m going to run with it. I didn’t understand it at first, but now...,” I exhale sharply, “now, I get it. I’m going to unlock not only my full potential, but yours, Waylon’s, and I’m going to do the same with the SCW roster.”

“That’s all well and good, but we have to worry about my actual son,” William states. “I know you called Waylon my baby boy, but there’s the matter of Billy.”

“Hehe, William. You make it sound like Billy is some lost cause, but he’s not.”

“He’s not?”

“Not at all.”

“Once again...he’s not?”

“No, he’s not. He has no fucking common sense, but that doesn’t mean he can’t be redirected. That’s all he needs. He needs to be guided.”

“James, I’ve tried...”

“And I’m sure you’ve done all that you can, but I believe I can help mold Billy into a true superstar and not some Asher Hayes/Ace Marshall love child, without a sliver of intelligence.”

“I have to be honest,” William says, “He’s in the Underground Chamber. He’s probably going to end up crippled.”

“He will survive, William. Trust me. I don’t claim to know it all, but that’s something I do know,” I say before I hear my study door open. I look up and see my brother, Logan, standing in the doorway.

“I’m onboard, James. You know that,” says the old man, “I can talk to Waylon. He’s not one who wants to be led. I can tell you that much.”

I smirk, “I’ve no doubt that Waylon will fall in line. I’ve been where he’s been when it comes to this business. Just talk with him.”

“Will do.”

I end the call and lock eyes with Logan. “Is there something I can help you with, little brother?”

“Still taller than you,” he says, laughing a bit too much at his own joke. He is taller than me. I tell myself Logan would’ve been a dominant force in any sport he entered, but I did what I did, taking away his hopes and dreams.

“Yeah, well...you have that, at least,” I state with a wink. All the success my brother was supposed to obtain, I did. “So, what do you want?”

“Jesus,” Logan shrugs, “I didn’t know I had to have a reason to talk to my own brother, but alright.”

“Stop it. We had this discussion after Mom’s funeral. You and our sister have only contacted me when you needed something. Now, either you need something or you need something. So, what is it?”

He sighs, shaking his head. “Alright, if you say so. You’ve clearly made up your mind about me. About Holly.”

“Neither of you have done anything to try and change it, now have you?” I bark.

“Like I said,” Logan begins, “if you say so. But I came up here to remind you that we have the reading of Mom’s will in an hour. I heard you arguing with Braelynn...yet again, so I figured I’d give you some time to cool down.”

“So, are you spying on my wife and I?” I chuckle. “Is that it? And what the hell do you mean...*yet again?*”

“You two have been arguing quite a bit over the last few weeks and you know it,” he says, “And, I’m not spying on you. It’s hard to *not* hear you two. You get fucking loud and you know that, too. Holly and I have to take the boys outside so they don’t hear that shit.”

“Which I’m grateful for,” I reply.

“Well...”

“And don’t get it twisted,” I interject, “I’m grateful for the fact that neither of my children have died while under your watch.”

“What the hell does that mean?” Logan asks. I can tell he’s trying to keep his composure. I know I shouldn’t, but I do get enjoyment out of seeing him squirm. Fighting against his emotions. I’ve been there. Hell, I was there not too long ago, but it feels as if I’ve flipped a switch. That I am firmly in control.

“You, Logan...my brother, have never had to take care of a damned thing in your life. When Mom and Dad were strung out, which was all the fucking time, I...” I press a finger to the center of my chest, “I...stepped up and took care of you. Of Holly. I provided. And because of them, because of you...that is all I know how to do.”

“I can take care of myself, James. I never asked you to do anything for me. I’m sorry you felt the need to do so when we were kids...”

I throw my head back and laugh. “Are you kidding me, right now? You’re sorry that I felt the need? Boy, you’re fucking dumb. It wasn’t that I felt the need, Logan. It was the fact that I *knew* nobody else was going to do it. Grandma. Grandpa. Nowhere around when you take the time to really think about it. But, I was there. And I did what I had to do.”

“Look,” my brother puts his hands up, shaking his head again. “I didn’t come up here for this shit, alright? I came up to try and have a civil conversation with you. That’s something we’ve not done in a long time.”

“And who’s fault is that?”

“You can point fingers all you want, James.”

“I don’t need your permission. But,” I shrug, “the reading of the will is soon. Thanks. I got the message. Will there be anything else?”

He glances down. Having known Logan his entire life, having taken care of him for the majority of it, I know he’s struggling with something. This isn’t surprising, in the least.

“What is it?”

“I…” Logan looks at me then back down again. I can’t help but sense shame. He’s after something.

“Out with it, little brother. I don’t have time for games. Speak your mind, or get out. Simple as that. You can come talk to me when you’re ready to be a man.”

He looks up once again. This time, he’s glaring. I’ve touched a nerve which makes me smirk, which in turn, only makes his anger grow. I can see it in his eyes.

“Fuck off, James. But since you’re pushing me, I’ll say it. I know you’ve taken care of me for my entire life, as you’ve put it, but I’m here to ask…”

“You want some money, is that?”

“Will you shut the fuck up for five seconds? Jesus Christ.”

“Oh, look at that. There’s some spunk in you yet.”

“I don’t want your money,” he says. “I want you to train me.”

“I’m sorry. What?”

“You heard me. I know you fucking did. I want you to train me. I want to become a pro wrestler. I can’t play football anymore, but I’m still fit. I’m still athletic. I want you to train me.”

“Are you serious about that?”

“Yes. If you can’t do it then maybe you could set me up with Hudson. I know he was your mentor...”

I slam a fist down on my desk. Letting out a slow breath from my nostrils, I say, “Don’t mention his name. I’m tired of hearing about him.”

“Fine. Fine, shit. So, what do you think?”

“About training you?”

“Yes.”

“I’ll think about it.”

“That’s it? Just...you’re going to think about it?”

“That’s what I said, Logan. Now, if you’re going to have a meltdown or pity party, go outside or something. It’s not happening here. I deal with enough of those with my wife and kids. Not to mention, my job.”

He goes to say something before shaking his head and exiting my study. I know I didn’t give him the answer he wanted to hear, just as I know I can’t help but feel intrigued by the possibilities of bringing him onboard.

The Evans family could take over SCW, after all. It’s what you wanted right, Henry? I know you’d be looking up from your special place in Hell, smiling. But when it happens, it’ll be for me. Not you. For me and my family.

I check my watch, telling myself it’s time to go. Time to see what my dear mother left behind other than several varieties of childhood trauma.

The title shot. The chance to compete for the World Championship is on the line. If certain people had their way, it would just be Blake versus Selena. It’s obvious.

Andrew Raynes is involved because of his ties with Blake. Leave it to Mason to try and buy his way to the World title. So much for truly earning it, right? I can't help but think the SCW universe wouldn't take too kindly to that sort of bullshit.

Raynes shouldn't have allowed himself to get involved with Blake. I get it, though. Like Blake, he didn't gain the success he wanted in the SCW when it came to his past tenures, so he'll do anything to gain what he feels he deserved.

Poor Andrew never grew out of Bree's shadow. He was her go-to girlfriend for when she had no one else. Her last resort. Yes, I remember the wars between them and Redemption. And redemption isn't something that Andrew will experience at Under Attack.

Like the rest of the SCW roster, he needs to be pushed. Just for him, I'll do so. Challenge accepted, old buddy, old pal.

Sitting in the waiting room in the law office of my, and my mother's, attorney Dick Nelson, I can't help but think of the last time I was here. I glance to my left, seeing my siblings. Holly is dressed rather respectably. Logan seems to have stepped it up a notch in that department. As I think of my last time here, I wonder what's going through their minds.

I'm sure you guys believe you're getting a fair shake.

I see myself sitting beside my mother. She's in a better mental, and physical, state than she has been.

"Are you alright?" I ask, taking her hand in mine.

"I think so, I think so." She pats my hand, "I've just never dealt with something like this before. It's all so new to me."

It's my turn to pat her hand, wanting my mother to feel some sort of comfort. She had provided that to me a few times when I was a child, but the bad times have always outweighed the good so it's hard to really remember a specific moment.

"It's going to be fine," I say. "You did this with Grandpa Henry, right? You and Grandma?"

"Yes," my mother nods. "You're right. They just knew more about all this stuff. I never thought I'd have to deal with it, but look at me," she laughs, "I'm old now."

“Hey, hey...” I shake my head, trying to appear as serious as possible, “You’re not old,” I say with a grin. “You’re older, yes, but not old, Mom.”

She smiles, “Thank you, James. I have always known that I could count on you.”

At this moment, I want to abandon all senses and laugh hysterically, because what she’s told me is just plain fucking rich. I want to tell her that she gave me no choice than to be the one she counted on. All my fucking life. But I just smile as well, nodding before we meet with the attorney, and lay the groundwork for the future.

The memory fades when I see Logan standing above me. “Hey, it’s time to do this.” I nod as I get to my feet. “Where were you in that head of yours? I said your name a few times.”

“I don’t think you really want to know,” I say before I shake hands with Dick. I see Holly already seated. She barely makes eye contact with me. “Good afternoon, sis. I feel like I should say long time no see, but you live with me, currently.”

Holly scoffs as she brushes her brown hair away from her eyes. “Just one more thing for you to hold over our heads, right?”

I look at my siblings as they’re now seated beside each other and I think about all the stories my sack of shit mentor used to share about his own brother and sister. Hudson will tell me his relationship with his brother wasn’t the best, but he always had a great relationship with his sister. I’d heard a rumor she’d killed herself. I didn’t go to the funeral or bother to reach out, because as his sister was to him, Hudson was, and still is, dead to me.

“Good to see all of you,” Nelson says as he takes a seat at the table the rest of us are at. We’re in a boardroom. The table nearly takes up the whole room. “So, you all know me but I have to introduce myself and it has to go on record of course,” he states as he points at a tape recorder which rests near his left forearm.

We all nod before we get into the basic formalities. Nelson states, “We are here to discuss the will for the recently deceased Pamela Renee Evans. I will read the document now.”

My siblings sit with their elbows on the table, looking like they’re on the edges of their seats. I maintain my composure, as I already know what our mother’s will states. But then, Nelson reads something that doesn’t go along with what our mother originally agreed to.

She’s splitting everything evenly.

You sly bitch.

“Holy hell,” Logan states, looking a little too pleased with himself. Holly’s expression follows suit. I watch as they hug. Their warm embrace makes me want to fucking vomit.

Stay in control, James.

You’re in control.

“That’s good,” I say, shooting them a glance, followed by a smile I don’t mean. “That’s really good. I’m happy for you guys.”

“And here I thought Mom only loved you,” Holly doesn’t hold back. I don’t want to hold back, either but I manage to do so. For her safety, I tell myself.

I’m not giving you the satisfaction.

“Looks like you thought wrong,” I fake yet another grin. It makes me feel like I’m Selena Frost, which doesn’t make me happy. I tell myself to get back in check. I’m reminded of my conversation with William from earlier.

Don’t let the anger consume you.

Nelson wraps the meeting up and we shake hands with him, before the three of us walk outside the office.

“What are you going to do with your cut, Sis?” I hear Logan ask.

I’m walking a foot or two away, but I watch as Holly shrugs. I hear her chuckle. The sickness performing a balancing act in my stomach begins to slip. “Oh, I don’t know. Probably pay off some of my debt since someone,” she shoots me a look, “won’t help me out. I always knew Mom would have my back. Our backs, I should say.”

“Don’t tell me.” I begin, as I manage to catch up with my siblings, “I’m hearing my sister talk trash about me.”

“I’m just telling the truth,” Holly bellows. “You’ve not helped me like you said you would.”

“I helped you when no one else would. Not just back in the day. You know I was there when you were starting school. I never asked for a single dime back.”

“Well, you won’t have to worry about helping me out again,” she scowls. “I’m going to take care of everything I need to with what Mom left.”

“Yes, what she left...Did you two scam her into amending her will? It’s okay. You can tell me,” I say with a playful nod. “I can handle it. Just do what you said you were doing while referencing me. You know...tell the truth.”

“I don’t have time for this, James. I’ve got things to do. Logan,” they lock eyes, “do you want a ride?”

“Actually,” I step forward, getting in between them, “I want to talk with our brother, Holly. Logan, ride with me. What do you say?” He stares at me, apprehensive so I add, “We can return to our conversation from earlier. I’ve already given it some thought. I have a feeling you’d like to hear what I have to say.”

Logan looks at Holly and shrugs. “Sure, James. Let’s talk.

“Logan...” Holly says, shooting me a look that tells me to go straight to Hell. All she gets is a smirk. “Fine. Just be careful. You never know with James. I know you agree with me even if you won’t admit to that, right now.”

“Always a pleasure to be around you, Holly.”

Logan sighs. “I’ll be fine. Really.”

They hug before Logan stands beside me. I motion for him to follow, which he does. We get to my car and I turn to watch as Holly drives off, disappearing into the city. Once she’s out of sight, I get into the driver’s seat. Logan tries to open the passenger door, but I keep it locked. Rolling down the window, we lock eyes. “Having some trouble?”

“James, what the fuck?”

“You want to get into my business? And I’m talking about pro wrestling, not whatever you two little shits conspired to do with our mother...the mother that I took care of and supported for the last seven years.”

“James, it’s not like...”

I shake my head. “I don’t want lies, little brother. I want honesty. I can tell you’re being the exact opposite. Your eyes give you away.” Logan looks down and away, just as he did earlier. “You can’t hide from me. I thought you’d know that by now.”

“What do you want?” his voice is filled with defeat.

As it should be.

“If you want to get into my business, then you’re going to show your loyalty to me.”

“And how am I supposed to do that?”

“It’s simple really,” I snicker with a shrug. “Sign over your share to me.”

“James! What? No! I need that...”

“No, Logan. You need...me,” I point to myself. “You need me. You’ve always needed me. That is why you’ve come to me for a job. For a true career. To reach the kind of greatness you have never come close to reaching. I have the ability to turn you into a king, Logan. But, you’ve already broken my trust with the bullshit you and Holly pulled.”

“James...”

Snapping my fingers, I growl, “Don’t! Do not interrupt me. You want to regain my trust. You want to be back in my favor? My good graces? Then, do as I say. Sign over your share. And to top the cake, make sure our sister falls in line, too.”

“James...”

“The choice is yours,” I say before starting my car, dropping it into drive and speeding off towards whatever the Big Apple has to offer.

Brittany, Brittany, Brittany...

Sigh.

She should really be ashamed of herself. Like Raynes, she’s allowed herself to be bought and paid for. That’s something I never expected. Not with Brittany, at least. She is supposed to be this cold-hearted, war machine. She’s supposed to be some kind of monster.

That was put on display at Apocalypse, when she beat the hell out of Konrad, Lawler, and Striker. She'd been counted out because she's not really achieved any substantial success. Sure, she got to rest her head between Red Rayne's thighs, but I've been there myself. It's not some flex.

Beating Ducky back when she was seemingly unstoppable, when nobody gave Brit a chance, now that...that's a flex. Brit tagged with Glory, but she was nothing more than a background player for the British dumbbell. I thought that would've changed when she overcame Lawler, Striker, and Konrad, earning herself the position as the number one contender to the Underground Championship.

I mean, I had high hopes that she'd bring interest back to that division, since Kim shit the bed, along with that one-hit wonder who's already forgotten, and poor Leroy. But whatever hope I had, Brit ripped away when she took a spot in the Chamber. All because it's what Blake wants. She went from a top contender, to a background player, all within the span of a few weeks. This is the same competitor who took Waylon to the limit not all that long ago.

Brit deserves respect, but she seems gluttonous for punishment, and by that I mean that she'd rather be led. She'd rather be some fucking cheerleader than the bad ass she has all the potential of being. She took the fall for Hudson's ex-bitch, Rachel, probably in hopes of clapping her Texas cheeks with a strap-on wrapped in barbed wire. Look at how that turned out, right? Rachel went on while Brittany just faded into the mist.

Like she always does.

I can't help but see Polly, Raynes, and Brittany, only to shake my head. The three of them are capable of many things. Raynes has done great on the independent scene, wrestling talent that would never amount to anything in the big leagues, which is where I play. Polly, she seems keen to try and fight for what's right, but her ideals are misguided. Brittany attaches herself to people who do not give a damn about her. They want to use and abuse her.

I see these things, and I know that they simply do not stand a chance in the Chamber. They may get some good shots in, and hit the high spots for a few crowd pops, but in the end, the dust will settle on them as three lonely losers.

I'm not a fan, because I see them and I know they can be true superstars. They can reach the mountaintop.

That is why, at Under Attack, I'm going to ensure that they fall by my hand. They will fall, but that same hand will reach out and let them know that everything will be alright. They will reach

their potential. They will be remembered as more than losers once all is said and done. They will be great and that'll be because of the good hands they found themselves in.

My hands.

I'm going to have the whole world.

They just don't know it yet.

Not wanting to be home, I picked up Sawyer after leaving my brother high and dry in downtown New York. My son and I head over to see an old friend of mine. The world now knows him as Scott Reed, the wrestler formerly known as Beard. The poor bastard is down on his luck, so to speak.

And being the provider that I am, I feel the need to grace him with my presence.

“Where are we going, Daddy?” Sawyer asks from the backseat.

“Going to see Uncle Beard. Do you remember him? I know it's been awhile.” He shakes his head. “Well, he's got some kids around your age. They're boys, too. You guys can play together.”

Scott and I had a falling out a few years back, when he didn't condone what I did to that bitch Syren in the Elimination Chamber. He thought I was wrong and I remember telling him I didn't give a damn what he thought. Syren needed to die. She didn't back then, but it seems that I may have finally gotten my wish.

The SCW is without her and things seem to be better off. The company just needs me to take control and steer the ship.

I'd texted Scott earlier and asked if I could come by. He's moved since the last time we hung out. He was still great friends with that fucktard Gio Aries. Pulling into the lot, I make sure I'm at the right address, before getting Sawyer out of the car and heading up the stairs.

I stop to find my son standing behind me, waiting.

“What's the deal, Sawyer?”

“I want you to carry me?”

“No,” I shake my head. “You’re a man. Real men can walk on their own. They don’t need to be carried. Besides, you’re five. You learned to walk years ago. Now, let’s go.” I can tell he wants to pitch a fit. As it was with Logan, Sawyer’s eyes give him away. I snap my fingers and point directly towards the ground. Letting out a sigh, the child makes his way over to me, making a spectacle of himself until I grab him by the arm, slightly shaking him. “Get it together. Act like you’ve got some damned sense, boy.”

“Daddy, you’re...”

“I’m not doing anything yet,” I glare. “If you keep this shit up, I will. Now, act right. Got it?”

“Got it,” he says, looking away wounded.

We top the stairs and find Scott’s place before knocking. It sounds like chaos on the other side, and I tell myself that the poor bastard needs to get it together, not only professionally, but personally as well.

When Scott opens the door, he looks like he’s three steps from dying. “Hey, guys. Holy cow,” he glances down at my son. “Is this Sawyer? No way.”

“It is,” I state.

“I remember when you were born,” he had been there for the birth, but all he did was congratulate myself and Braelynn before disappearing from my life. “Well, come on in. Sawyer, my kids are in the playroom. They’re already playing Sonic the Hedgehog.”

“I love Sonic!” Sawyer cries before proceeding to charge down the hallway until I whistle at him. I motion for him to return, which he does. I feel the need to show Scott what having control is like.

“What do we tell Scott?”

Sawyer looks up at the former Beard and says, “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome, kid.”

“Thank you,” I say. “Now, run along.” Once Sawyer is out of sight, I turn to Scott who stares at me confused. “What is it?” I ask.

“Why are you here?” he asks, clearly exasperated. “We’ve not talked in years. Sawyer’s what? Five, by my calculations. So yeah, five years.”

“No time like the present,” I shrug. “What’s with the twenty questions? Is this 60 Minutes?”

“Dude, quit bullshitting me. Why are you here?”

“Would you believe me if I said that I’m worried about you?”

Scott crosses his arms, “Why are you worried about me?”

“Are you serious?” I ask, rolling my eyes. “Have you paid attention to yourself? You look like you’ve come unglued. I mean, you were filled with rage when it came to Selena. And you look like you were ready to shoot the place up when you first confronted Ace.”

“You, of all people, have no place to comment on my rage.”

“Well, I’m your friend...”

“That’s debatable,” he states.

“Whatever you say,” I put my hands up in surrender. “But you’ve not been yourself, Scott. I know you can see it. You’ve got something going on in that head of yours.”

“What are you? My therapist?”

“I’m a friend. I just said that,” I say as I begin rummaging through his kitchen. I grab a glass and a bottle of whiskey. I pour myself a drink before finding another glass and doing the same for Scott. He goes to protest, but I push the glass in his direction.

Reluctantly, he takes it.

“So, I was saying that you’ve got something going on in your head, and I want to help you, Scott. It’s what friends do. Even if you don’t agree with how I conduct my business, I’m still here to help.”

“And how are you going to help me? Are you going to ensure that I beat Ace even when he kicks my ass?”

“Would you like me to?” I ask and silence falls between us. I can tell he’s contemplating such an action.

“No,” he finally shakes his head. “I want to beat him, if I do, on my own.”

“That’s so admirable,” I chuckle before taking a sip. He watches me before doing the same.

“How dare you take away the prospect of beating the shit out of Ace Marshall from me. I got a little excited.”

“You still hate him? Even after all this time?”

At that moment, I force a laugh, doing my best to play it off. “There’s no need to do,” I say, knowing full and well that my hatred of Ace is something I’ll more than likely never get over. It’s the scar that’s always there even if it’s not as visible as it once was. “But hitting him a few times is always fun. That’s all.”

“Maybe I’ll feel the same way.”

“You sound nervous.”

“I am.”

“Why?”

“What do you mean? Are you not nervous about the fucking Chamber?”

I shake my head. “Absolutely not. I’m going to fuck them all up. I’m going to become number one contender. End of story.”

“You sound certain.”

“Because I am.”

“Who are you?”

I scoff, “I’m someone who knows what he wants and what he has to do in order to get it. I’m about to change the fucking game, Scott.”

“Are you?”

“Yes,” I nod. “And that’s why I’m here. I see you struggling and I want you to become part of what I’m doing. I’m going to push the SCW forward. You want the world? So do I. And I’m going to take it. I can offer you the same.”

He shakes his head now. “I really don’t even know who I’m talking to, James. Like, this isn’t you.”

“I guess you could say neither of us have been ourselves. I feel free. I feel in control. It’s calming, Scott. I’d like to extend that to you. I feel you deserve it.”

“It’s hard for me to believe what you’re saying right now. I mean, you just show up, back in my life...like out of the blue, dude.”

“I’m not sure why it matters. I’m here with a peace offering. With a gift.”

“Well,” Scott shrugs, “like you said earlier. I’ve got a lot going on in my head. I like what you’re saying, but it’s a lot to process at the same time.”

“Yeah, yeah,” I reach over and nudge him in his left arm before finishing my drink. “Think about it. That’s all I’m saying. But,” I nod, “I need to know before Under Attack. Can you do that for me?”

“I’ll do my best,” he says.

I grin, patting him on the side of the head before pulling Scott in for a hug. I know he’s confused. It’s kinda what I wanted, but I tell myself he doesn’t need to know that.

***Even if he knows, that doesn’t mean you have to admit it.
Exactly.***

“I know you will,” I say. “And I’ll do the same.”