

“WHAT DO YOU MEAN SHE DENIED OUR HELP?!”

Loretta screeched her annoyance to Drake as he sat calmly on the couch relaying the unfortunate news from his breakfast with Dawn. He was not under the impression Loretta would perform a happy dance upon hearing the news. For the past couple of years she had acquired a fondness for Dawn. At one point she viewed the Wonderful One as a possible heir apparent to usher in the new age of purity. Somethings aren't meant to be as Drake would come to accept. Getting Loretta to accept that fate had its own grand plans wasn't the easiest job in the world.

Didn't bring Drake comfort to watch his lifelong childhood friend (and ex-wife) drop down to her knees. She acted like she was going to rip her own hair out. “You should have tried to convince her we are the way to her own personal enlightenment!” Loretta screamed yet again.

Drake crossed his legs. He was content to allow Loretta to purge the anger out of her system. What needed to be done.

The silence in the room was deafening. Loretta clenched her fist. “We need to try again. I know.” Loretta's eyes sparkled, an idea materialized to her in an instant. We can kidnap Jordan. Force her hand.” Loretta desperately suggested.

Drake shook his head. “No more kidnappings, Loretta.”

“Do you have any better ideas?” She simply glared at him.

Drake rose to his feet. He walked over to Loretta. Towering over her for a few seconds he takes a seat in front of her on the floor. Resting his hands on his knees, he told her with an eerie calmness. “Allow Dawn to walk her own path. Should the day come that she stands beside us, Fate will be the decider.”

Loretta sighs. She lowers her head, unable to look Drake in the eyes.

He reaches out, running his hands through Loretta's thick black hair.

She summons the courage to look him straight in the eye. A tear trickled down her left cheek. “I was so certain...” she says, finally resigned to the news Dawn wouldn't become part of their collective. A sigh escapes her. “I am so tired of nothing going my way.”

With a smile Drake reminds her, "We are back on the same team, that counts for something, right?"

She lightly nods her head. "I am eternally grateful we're back in each other's lives. I won't take that for granted. "I--" She pauses for a few seconds to gather her thoughts, "-- feel like I am not the woman you once knew. I tried adapting to the world without you, what good did that do me? I allowed your mother to get inside my head. I wasn't a good enough friend to Cookie, she's off being brainwashed by that Cid mongrel. What hurts most of all is I betrayed you. I should have listened to you about Blake. I was blind. So desperate for someone, anyone to see me as good enough. I feel victim to the sins of this world. Look at me, a shrieking mess unworthy of your admiration."

Drake was taken aback by the words coming out of Loretta's mouth. Rarely has he ever seen her this vulnerable. He had become accustomed to seeing her as this headstrong, determined, bullheaded woman on a mission, the reality that she is exposing her innermost feelings to him did not fly over his head. He leaned in, giving Loretta a tight hug. She completely collapsed in his arms, not bothering to hold back crying.

"I'm sorry for showing weakness." she managed to say.

"Don't be ridiculous. I am in awe of your courage." he reassured her.

Loretta pulls away to look into Drake's eyes. She finally smiles. "Really?"

Drake uses the back of his hand to stroke her cheek. "Would I lie to you?"

Loretta shakes her head. "Of course not."

"And I never will." Drake smiles.

Drake's smile brought one to Loretta's face. In an assuring tone she tells him, "I promise I am going to be the woman you put your faith in years ago. No more of this mess I allowed the world to make me. I am going to be the best version of myself."

Drake picks himself off the floor. He extends his hand to Loretta.

She doesn't hesitate to grab his hand, allowing him to help her off the floor.

Both of them linger into each others eyes. Taking a step forward, Loretta opts to rest her head on Drake's chest. "I'll try not to disappoint you again."

He wraps his arms around her. "You're forgiven."

Hearing this brings a smile to her face. "Thank you."

All Drake wanted to do was be in the moment. He felt closer to Loretta now than he has in recent months. He is confident this is a positive step to building on a relationship that can evolve past what they once shared in their heyday. He doesn't express his emotions often, he needed Loretta more than she likely realized.

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PROMO TIME
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The scene opens inside of an empty church. Drake Hemingway is standing behind a brown podium at the front of the church. His hands are resting on the podium. He looks out into the empty seats as if they were full of people anticipating a sermon he is prepared to deliver.

"Owen Cruze... it's time you pay for your transgressions."

Drake hesitates slightly.

"Wait... I am supposed to refer to you by your current surname? You forfeited the right for any molecule of respect when you reappeared from the gutter you crawled out of to use the Jackals to procure sympathy from the maggots who pay their hard earned money to escape their utterly meaningless lives. Right out of the Cruze playbook."

A light hearted chuckle can be heard from Drake.

"The man you knew as your father did stage an invasion on Supreme Championship Wrestling... oh and he joined The Monarchy in another company that is long dead. Hate

to break it to you boy, lies and deception still runs through your veins. One of the biggest liars this industry has ever produced was Daisy Lee, your current mommy figure. Blood Grove ring a bell? Your actual birth mother, she is a liar too. You already know that. Doesn't matter what last name you adopt boy, you have grown up being molded by the biggest liars, deceivers, and manipulators the sport has ever produced. To compromise a little, how about I just call you Owen?"

He briefly pauses to allow for an answer he knows he isn't going to receive.

"Something that continues to baffle me about the professional wrestling landscape is the lack of consequences that befalls the actual villains of the sport. Take yourself for instance. Several months ago, you attacked the owner of this company. In the world outside of the one we venture in, you can't attack your boss and get away with it. Instead of outright firing you, you wrote a check, paid your fine, then bought out the remainder of your contract, slinking away like a thief in the night. You didn't stick around long enough to answer for your crimes. Even to the end, Supreme Championship Wrestling protected you from actually paying for your transgressions. You were allowed to hide. Your third mommy hid you off the grid. Typical. She was able to find a place of employment readily after being pushed out of this company. Funny she is your manager now. So much for being blackballed from SCW huh?."

"No surprise you would make your grand return off the back of The Jackals, like I said, typical Owen behavior. Your actions spoke louder than any meaningless words you uttered a couple weeks ago on Breakdown, your actions told me you are STILL under the assumption you could come back. Do whatever the hell you want. Avade consequences. The Cruze arrogance still pumps through your veins, boy. For the first time in your life you are gonna learn there isn't enough money on God's green earth to protect you from the wrath of The Jackals... mainly me."

A smirk forms on his face.

"God's like me exist to punish maggots like you. I learned from my mistakes. I was a naive man who believed that giving the maggots a way out of their madness would inspire them to become better than they had every right to be. Jesus did say forgive mankind, forgive them for they do not know what they do. He was enlightened enough to recognize the maggots are blind to their own sin. His biggest mistake was actually believing they were worth saving. I am not willing to sacrifice myself for an arrogant world that is incapable of learning from their own stupidity. Supreme Championship Wrestling allowed you to come back, fully aware of the crimes you committed. Why Owen? Why do you think that is? They don't give a crap about your sob story. They

don't care about your path of redemption. Trust me, if The End of the Year Special was your first and last match back, the maggots in the crowd wouldn't miss you. The inconvenient truth about this company Owen, they still see you as Owen Cruze. They still view you as marketable, a merchandise pusher. If your name was STD and you committed the same transgressions, do you honestly believe you would have been allowed back?

"I doubt it."

Drake shakes his head.

"This corporate machine will always be a soulless monster with no real integrity. Their negligence has produced men like me. I have grown to understand my purpose in the grand design, Owen. I am left with no other choice but to take on the role of judge, jury, and sometimes executioner."

"I am not a completely heartless man, Owen. In a small way I feel compassion for you, some say I shouldn't. I am one of the few people on this planet who can relate to the common phrase of heavy is the head that wears the crown."

Drake pauses briefly, allowing the revelation to sink in.

"You are not the only person in the history of the world who has grown through their fair share of family issues. For better or worse, I am a part of the Hemingway-Mason clan. My brother you are more than familiar with. He cast a very huge shadow that I have spent part of my lifetime escaping. Before I knew my true bloodline Owen, I was under the assumption that the man and woman who raised me were my birth parents. I grew up with a very different legacy, not one of riches and escaping of consequences. My upbringing some would consider... dark. Learning the truth about my true heritage didn't break me. It didn't force me to coddle in a fetal position to exile myself from the world. I embraced everything that was presented my way. Oddly enough, it's an adage my brother often subscribes to. Amor Fati... the love of fate."

"Everything that happens to us in our lifetime, appreciate it. Bad and good alike. You can make the best out of your circumstances. I embraced my fate, Owen. You? You have been constantly rejecting your circumstances your entire life. You rejected your friends. You rejected your fans, you rejected the name you were handed, blood or not. You pushed away a young woman who was perfect for you. You rejected this job that handed you everything you ungrateful brat! I can't say my life has been a calamity, yours is more of a blessing than you realize, Owen. And for that crime, fate brings you

to me. I am thoroughly going to enjoy hurting you. That is the task fate handed unto me by a Higher Power. By God's Will, your punishment shall be carried out."

"A-men."

Drake lowers his head briefly in a silent prayer. The scene closes on Drake exiting stage right off the stage, walking off camera to god knows where.