

Fighting for Everything

It was late, the kind of hour when the world feels like it's holding its breath, waiting for something to break. I found myself back at the gym, the fluorescent lights overhead buzzing faintly. The place had changed over the years—new equipment, a fresh coat of paint—but the memories were still here, hanging like a fog.

I grabbed a set of dumbbells, not really paying attention to how much weight was on them. I was already sweating, already angry, already feeling the burn in my muscles that was supposed to drown out the thoughts racing through my head.

A slam.

I dropped the weights onto the floor with more force than I intended, the echo of it ringing through the empty gym. I'd been working out here for years—back when I used to think it was enough. Back when I used to think I was enough. Now, it felt hollow.

I picked up the weights again, my hands tightening around them. My body screamed at me to stop, but it was the only thing that made any sense. The only thing that made the anger settle, even for a moment.

Sarah walked in. She didn't say anything at first, just stood by the door, watching me.
"You think this is going to help?" she asked after a long moment.

I didn't answer right away. The sweat dripped down my face, and I forced myself to lift again, focusing on the burn in my arms.

"This isn't you, Chris," she said, stepping into the gym, her voice sharp. "This isn't you anymore."

I slammed the weights down again, this time harder, the clatter of metal against the floor vibrating through the walls.

"Then who the hell am I?" I snapped, my voice hoarse. "I'm not winning matches, I'm not who I used to be—hell, I'm not even sure who I was anymore."

She was quiet for a second. I couldn't look at her. I knew what she'd see.

When she spoke, it wasn't the comfort I was used to. It was frustration, a challenge. "You're not a machine, Chris. You're not a fighter in a ring. You're a man who's fallen apart and keeps trying to glue himself back together with broken pieces."

I set the weights down and walked away from them, my hands shaking slightly. But I didn't sit down. I couldn't. My head was still too full of the night of the attack—of Pierce and the Shinigami Foundation, of everything spiraling.

"I attacked Pierce because I couldn't stand being weak anymore," I said, the words spilling out before I could stop them. "I felt like I had no control, no way to show that I still mattered, so I hurt someone. And now... they're coming for me. They've made it personal, Sarah."

She crossed her arms, her gaze hard. "You think you can fix this with more anger? With more fighting? Because that's not what you need."

I turned away from her, clenching my fists at my sides. "Then what the hell do I need, Sarah? What's left when you've spent everything you've got and still come up empty?"

She didn't flinch, didn't back down. "I don't know. But what I do know is that you don't get to destroy yourself in the process. Not again."

Her words stung. I wanted to shout back, but I couldn't. I just stood there, frozen, feeling the weight of everything pressing down on me, suffocating me in a way the gym never had. I didn't know what to do next.

But she was right. I couldn't keep running from this. How do I move past it? Maybe I don't. Maybe getting around it isn't the answer.

I left the house in a daze. The night air hit me like a wall, but it didn't feel cold enough to snap me out of it. The weight of Sarah's words was still hanging in the back of my mind, like a shadow I couldn't shake.

I was used to running on anger. It fueled me, kept me moving, kept me from falling apart. But now? Now, it felt more like I was suffocating in it. The bitterness, the frustration—it was all building up inside me, like a storm that couldn't be contained.

I walked aimlessly, the sound of my boots hitting the pavement echoing in the quiet night. The world was still around me, but it felt distant, like I was trapped in a bubble. I didn't know where I was going. I didn't even care.

There was a small park up ahead, the kind no one ever went to at night. It was familiar in a way I didn't want to admit, a place where I'd come years ago when I needed to be alone. Back then, I'd sit on the same bench, think things over, wrestle with my doubts, and always manage to come to some conclusion. But tonight? Tonight, it felt like I was standing on the edge of a cliff, with nothing to hold on to.

I sat on the bench, staring at the empty playground in front of me. My hands trembled as I buried them in my hoodie pockets, trying to steady my breath.

What the hell am I doing?

I'd been asking myself that a lot lately. Since I'd come back to SCW, it was like I was fighting a war I didn't even know the rules to. My matches had been a mess—losing, then attacking Pierce, then getting ambushed by the Shinigami Foundation. Now, it felt like every step I took was just another mistake waiting to happen.

The anger was still there. It always would be. But was it even helping? Or was it just keeping me from facing the truth?

I rubbed my face, trying to force the thoughts away. But they were relentless. I attacked Pierce because I couldn't handle the pressure anymore. I was desperate to prove something—to myself, to everyone—but now it felt like I was just spiraling deeper into this pit of self-doubt. I thought about the ring. The roar of the crowd. The adrenaline that used to make everything feel clear.

But it didn't feel the same anymore.

I used to believe that winning—that being the best—would make everything else fall into place. That it would make me feel like I was in control again. But now, every loss, every mistake, every misstep, it just felt like it was tearing me apart.

Maybe Sarah's right.

I wasn't just angry at Pierce or the Shinigami Foundation. I wasn't even angry at SCW. I was angry at myself. I was angry for letting this define me, for thinking that a title, a match, a crowd's approval could fix the parts of me that were broken.

I stood up suddenly, the movement jerky and uncoordinated. My breath was ragged, my heart pounding. I didn't know what I was supposed to do now. I didn't know how to fix it. All I had was anger. And maybe, just maybe, that wasn't enough anymore.

I ended up by the river—one of those places I'd gone to when I was younger, back before everything got so complicated. The water reflected the moonlight, calm and steady, the complete opposite of what was happening in my head.

I sat on the edge of the bank, elbows on my knees, staring at the water like it had the answers.
What's the point of all this?

The thought came before I could stop it, but once it was there, I couldn't ignore it. The losses, the frustration, the anger—it felt like I was running in circles, chasing something that was always out of reach.

The fight with Pierce, the ambush from the Foundation—it wasn't just about wrestling. It was about control. About proving I wasn't as lost as I felt. But every time I thought I was getting close, the ground shifted beneath me.

I grabbed a handful of dirt, letting it sift through my fingers.

I used to love this business. The rush of the crowd, the feeling of stepping into the ring, the pride of knowing I'd given everything I had. But now? Now it felt like it was taking everything from me.

I'm starting to think that Sarah is right, the more I think about it, the more her words ring in my head.

The words hit me like a punch to the gut. Maybe I was falling apart. Maybe I'd been falling apart for a long time, and I was just too stubborn to see it.

But even as I sat there, the anger was still bubbling under the surface. It was easier to be angry than to feel the weight of everything else. Easier to blame the losses, the Foundation, the system, than to admit I didn't know how to fix it.

I threw a rock into the river, watching the ripples spread out. The frustration was still there, but for the first time in a while, so was something else. A question I didn't want to answer.
What happens if I can't put the pieces back together?

The ripples faded, the water going still again. I sat there for a long time, watching, waiting, hoping for some kind of clarity.

It didn't come.

Not yet, anyway.

I don't know how long I sat there, staring at the water, but eventually, the chill of the night started to seep into my bones. The ache in my knuckles from earlier had dulled, but it was still there—a reminder of how close I was to losing it completely.

I stood up, brushing the dirt off my hands, and for a second, I thought about going home. Sarah would probably be asleep by now, curled up on her side of the bed. I'd crawl in, try not to wake her, and lay there with my thoughts bouncing around like they always did.

But the idea of just going home, of doing nothing—it didn't sit right. The frustration was still coiled inside me, waiting for an outlet, but something about tonight felt different.

I couldn't just sit in this anymore.

The walk back wasn't long. It was almost empty now, the fluorescent lights buzzing faintly, casting a pale glow over the rows of equipment. A few stray weights were left out, but the place was mostly silent.

I liked it better this way. No distractions, no noise, just me and the weight of my own expectations.

I walked over to the heavy bag, letting my fingers brush over the worn canvas. It was stained with years of blood, sweat, and anger—just like me.

Wrapping my hands slowly, I felt the familiar ritual start to settle my mind. The stretch of the tape around my knuckles, the bite of it against my skin. It wasn't about preparing for a fight right now—it was about finding a way to pour everything I was feeling into something that wouldn't break under the pressure.

The first hit was tentative, almost hesitant. The bag barely moved, and for a second, I felt that flicker of doubt creep in again.

What's the point?

I hit it again, harder this time, the sound echoing in the empty gym. My breath came faster, my shoulders tightening with each strike. The anger was there, bubbling just below the surface, but instead of letting it explode, I focused on the rhythm.

Jab. Cross. Hook.

Every punch had a purpose, every movement a release.

I thought about Pierce, about the smug look on his face when he blindsided me last week. I thought about the Foundation, about how they stacked that ladder and shelf on me like I was some kind of afterthought.

Jab. Cross. Hook.

The bag swung back, but I was already moving, stepping forward, driving my fist into it again. The ache in my ribs flared, but I didn't stop.

They wanted to send a message? Fine. I got the message loud and clear.

But they'd made one mistake.

They didn't finish the job.

I kept going, my fists slamming into the bag, the sound blending with the steady rhythm of my breathing. The anger was still there, but for the first time in weeks, it wasn't controlling me. I was controlling it.

When I finally stopped, my hands were shaking, my body drenched in sweat, but my head felt... clearer. The weight was still there, but it felt like I could carry it for a little while longer. I leaned against the bag, my chest heaving. This wasn't over—not by a long shot.

But tonight, I'd taken the first step.

As my breathing slowed, the ache in my fists started to creep in, but I welcomed it. It was proof I was still fighting, still standing.

I grabbed a towel from the rack and slung it over my shoulder, pacing the gym floor to keep my muscles from locking up. The emptiness of the place matched the quiet in my head—a rare moment where the noise wasn't deafening.

I thought about the past few weeks, the downward spiral I'd been in. The losses. The attack. The look on Sarah's face when she said I was falling apart. She wasn't wrong, but she didn't know what it felt like to carry this weight. To wake up every morning with the knowledge that no matter how hard I tried, it wasn't enough.

But tonight, for the first time in what felt like forever, I didn't feel like I was drowning. The anger was still there, simmering under the surface, but it wasn't pulling me under anymore.

I sat down on one of the benches, the towel in my hands, and stared at the floor. The scars on my knuckles were visible through the thin layer of sweat. I traced one of them with my thumb, a reminder of the wars I'd fought in the ring and the ones I'd fought with myself.

The Foundation thought they could break me. Maybe for a minute, they did. But they underestimated one thing.

They gave me something to focus on.

I wasn't fighting for a title anymore. That used to be enough, but not now. Now it was about something bigger. It was about respect. About reminding the Foundation—and myself—who the hell I am.

The thought sent a surge of adrenaline through me.

They wanted to send a message? Fine. But they weren't going to like the response.

I stood up, the towel dropping to the floor, and walked back to the heavy bag. My fists clenched at my sides, the anger bubbling up again, but this time I didn't fight it. I let it come, let it fuel me, but I didn't let it take over.

This wasn't just about hitting a bag anymore. This was about preparing for what came next. They'd crossed a line, and I wasn't going to let that slide. Not because I wanted revenge, but because I needed to prove something—to them, to Sarah, and to myself.

I grabbed the bag and steadied it, the muscles in my arms tightening. This wasn't over. Not by a long shot.

But for the first time in weeks, I felt like I had a direction.

I let my arms drop, breathing hard as sweat dripped down my back. My reflection caught my eye in the mirror across the room. The man staring back didn't look lost anymore. The doubt, the hesitation—it was gone.

I stood there for a long moment, clenching and unclenching my fists. The anger was still there, but this time, I wasn't drowning in it. I was using it.

They crossed a line. Now, I was going to show them what happens when you push a man too far.

“Wil, I hope you’re ready for what’s coming. Because after last week, you don’t get to act like this is just another match. You and your little crew made sure of that when you left me buried under a pile of steel. You wanted to send a message? You wanted to make a statement?

Congratulations. You got my attention.

But here’s where you screwed up. You thought that attack was the end of something, when in reality, it was the beginning. You thought I’d walk into Dogfight second-guessing myself, shaken, desperate to get even. But you don’t understand me at all. I don’t break, Wil. I don’t hesitate. And I don’t lose focus.

For weeks, I let frustration cloud my judgment. Every loss, every missed step, every doubt—I carried all of it like dead weight. But standing under that rubble last week, I finally saw things clearly. This isn’t about frustration anymore. It’s not even about revenge. It’s about setting things straight.

I’ve been in this business long enough to know exactly what you are. You hide behind the Foundation, treating this like some gang war, like numbers will keep you safe. But at Dogfight, there’s no one standing between us. Just you and me. And the only thing that matters is whether you can survive that kind of fight. Because I know I can.

See, I’m not coming to Düsseldorf to settle a grudge. I’m coming to remind you—and everyone else—who the hell I am. You didn’t put me down. You woke me up. And now, you get to deal with the consequences.

This isn’t going to be a war, Wil. It’s going to be an execution.”