

PROLOGUE



THE WHEELS OF A KID'S BICYCLE FLATTENS A LITTERED PAPER CUP. THE CAMERA PANS UP TO SHOW A YOUNG TEENAGER SPEEDING DOWN THE CRACKED PAVEMENT, LEANING FORWARD, LEGS PUSHING THROUGH THE EXHAUSTION.

HE MAY NOT HAVE THE FAMOUS STAMINA OF KIP KEENAN HE THINKS TO HIMSELF, BUT TO AVOID MISSING TONIGHT HE HAS THE HEART OF USACE.

IT MAKES A SHARP TURN ONTO A DRIVEWAY WHERE IN SEEMINGLY ONE MOTION THE KIDS DISMOUNTS, OPENS THE FRONT DOOR AND DUMPS THE SCHOOL BAG FROM OFF HIS BACK. HE BEGINS TO CHARGE UPSTAIRS BEFORE A GROWL FROM BELOW BRINGS HIM BACK DOWN.



'WHERE THE FUCK YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?'

THE BOY, NOW BACK AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS FREEZES FOR A MOMENT, FOR YEARS HE HAD NIGHTMARES OF HELL BOUNCER, BUT EVEN HE CAN'T CAUSE THIS TIGHT FEELING IN THE PIT OF HIS STOMACH.

HE INHALES BEFORE TAKING THE STEP INTO THE LOUNGE, THE FIGURE SLUMPED IN HIS USUAL RESTING PLACE DOESN'T MOVE, EYES ON THE BASEBALL.


'THERE'S WASHING UP LEFT FOR YOU. BUT DO IT QUIETLY, MY GAMES ON.'

'BUT PAPA, IT'S THE NIGHT. THE FIGHTS ARE ON. I'LL BE LATE.'

THE OLD MAN SNORTS.

'FORGET IT. THE SCHOOL CALLED. INTERRUPTED MY GAME THEY DID. DETENTION? YOUR LUCKY MY KNEES PLAYING UP OR I'LL BE OVER THERE TEACHING YOU A LESSON.'





THE KID WANTED TO EXPLAIN. HE WANTED TO SAY HOW THE BULLIES STARTED IT. THAT THEY THREW THE FIRST PUNCH. HE WAS ONLY STANDING UP FOR HIMSELF JUST LIKE ISLAND BOY APOLLO DID WHEN HE WAS BEING BULLIED. IT WASN'T HIS FAULT THAT HE GOT A LUCKY PUNCH. HE SMIRKED THINKING ABOUT HOW HIS TORMENTER WENT DOWN AS IF HE'D BEEN HIT BY ONE OF BRADFORD PEVERELL'S LEFT HOOKS.

BUT HE KNEW THAT WAS POINTLESS. HIS ONLY HOPE OF GETTING TO THE SHOW TONIGHT WAS TO STAY CALM, AND USE HIS WITS. THINK BILLY RUSSELL, THINK BILLY RUSSELL, HE TELLS HIMSELF.

'I'M SORRY PAPA. LET ME JUST GET CHANGED. DO YOU NEED ANOTHER BEER?'

'STOP INTERRUPTING THE GAME!! ...BUT YES.'

THE KID TRIES NOT TO DISTURB THE LION IN THE LOUNGE AS HE MAKES HIS WAY TO HIS ROOM.

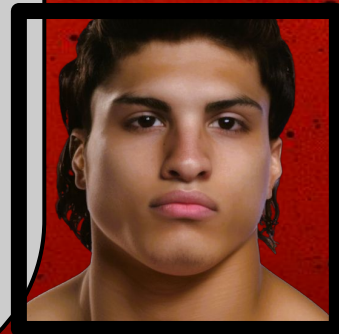




THE FLOOR IS MESSY, THE WALLS ARE CLUTTERED WITH PHOTOS AND MAGAZINE CLIP OUTS OF ALL OF HIS FAVOURITES ESPECIALLY MUTANT AND CARLOS GONZALEZ. IN PRIME POSITION ABOVE HIS BED IS HIS MOST CHERISHED POSSESSION, A POSTER OF SHAWN GONZALEZ THAT HE GOT SIGNED BY HIS SON, MARCO, WHO HAD JUST DEBUTED A MONTH PRIOR.



HE HATES THOSE 'GAMES', THEY'RE EXACTLY THAT. PHONEYS PRETENDING WHERE A BALL GOES HAS ANY IMPORTANCE. NOT LIKE THE FIGHTS, NOT LIKE FC-DUB. THAT HAS REAL STAKES. BLOOD, SWEAT AND TEARS. IT MATTERS. THAT'S WHY HE KNOWS WHATEVER COMES FROM HIS ACT OF DEFIANCE WILL BE WORTH IT.





HE QUICKLY CHANGES HIS TOP, SCANS THE ROOM FOR ANYTHING ELSE HE WOULD NEED, HE TAPS HIS POCKET REASSURINGLY, THE TICKET WAS IS THERE.

SO NOW HE LOOKS OVER TO HIS BEDROOM WINDOW. HE LIFTS IT OPEN AND PEERS DOWN 2 STOREYS BELOW. THIS PART OF THE PLAN WON'T BE EASY. BUT HE REMEMBERS HOW KID SAN JUAN JUMPED OFF A LADDER THAT MUST HAVE BEEN TWICE THIS HEIGHT.

BUT THERE'S NO TIME TO WASTE, NO ROOM FOR HESITATION. THE CAMERA IS ON THE BACK OF THE BOY AS HE TAKES HIS LEAP OF FAITH. THE SHOT REMAINS ON THE OPEN WINDOW BUT FAINTLY BELOW HURRIED FOOTSTEPS CAN BE HEARD LEAVING THE SCENE...

FCW: IT MATTERS!

