

"Cunts..."

I heard Wally mutter under his heavy breath. Even when silent Wally wasn't quiet. He was too fat. His breathing was like a whimper, his heart letting the rest of us know it wasn't long for this world. Wally was a professional wrestler, as "professional" as a wrestler can be. He was known as Wallace "The Wall" in the ring, though his friends -- and I use that term lightly -- called him Wally. It gave him an innocence he otherwise didn't have. He moved like an inchworm stuck in jello, but if he caught you, you'd feel it the next morning. He had tits like a Vegas showgirl and he carried with him the dubious honor of "never being pinned." Because of this some people called him "Champ," but Wally was never able to escape the feeling that it was sarcastic. Wally didn't feel like a champion. He felt like a misfit giant that became a wrestler because he couldn't become anything else.

I was a "journalist," and I hope my use of quotation marks communicates what little esteem in which I was held by my fellow journalists, and that includes fellows who like me were stuck in the decrepit sub-genre known as sport's journalism. I spent most of my time on the road, walking three-steps behind "athletes" that were the equivalent of washed-up B-movie actors after their latest stint in rehab. It was like following a traveling circus, but there was none of the whimsy and all of the freakshow. Wally was the Moby Dick of this world. Larger than life and the focus of hatred from the many men he left crippled, in and outside of the ring.

It was my job at the present moment, sitting alone in a hotel room with the panting monstrosity, to watch over him while he battled an opponent more determined than ever to pin him, his own fascination with drink. I was also supposed to interview him for my struggling little publication, but I doubted I could conjure up any questions to which I didn't already know the answers. Wally wasn't a man capable of concealing himself in anything other than spandex. While sitting before me in the hot little room that smelled of Wally's own heaving body, he still wore his leather spider web-like mask with a v-shaped mouth opening. It was a design clunky

enough to make him look psychotic to his colleagues and clever enough to allow him to suck on the hard brown glass nipple of a beer bottle at any given moment.

"Who are cunts, Wally?" I asked.

"Everyone." He said with snide disdain.

Misanthropy was the only tonic Wally could provide to the night's gloomy malaise. He had a special way of making things go from bad to worse. He's breathing persisted, sucking in big gulps of air. For long stretches of time that was all we could hear, the oxygen going into Wally's mouth and the carbon dioxide coming out. I didn't know what to say. All of my journalistic instincts were stopped by Wallace "The Wall," and they were stopped dead. The only thing that would break up the tepid silence was the rocky shifting of ice as the cubes inside Wally's knee packs melted. His legs had become a perpetual black and blue bruise, blood getting choked in the veins and pooling into shades of purple deeper than eggplant. I speculated that the smell wafting outward from Wally was less his poor hygiene and more the slow decay of his body. Was he already dead in parts that even Wally hadn't seen in years? I jotted this small musing down in my notepad which was held together with cheap coil, the end of which had drawn blood from the tip of my thumb on more than one occasion. I was hoping for one such prick at that particular moment, it would give me something other than Wally's breathing to focus on.

Then Wally stirred. His ice packs fell to the floor as he got to his feet. He looked too big for the room, as though the back of his neck was about to scrape against the ceiling while he walked toward the mini fridge. Beside Wally, "mini" was an appropriate description for the humming icebox. I kept imagining Wally in some sort of doll house, half expecting the floorboards to snap beneath his gargantuan size. They only squealed. He then took four or five miniature bottles of vodka from the fridge, removed the twistable caps, gripped the bottles in his palm and poured all of them into his mouth as though they were a single drink. A enormous mouth made for little spillage and I could feel the booze hit Wally's bloodstream.