

Kayfabe

"Pilot"

Written by

Kyle Gray

BLACK SCREEN:

The following words appear on the screen:

"America in the 1990s, professional wrestling is at its peak. The top televised wrestling corporation in the world right now is Ultimate Championship Wrestling (U.C.W.), becoming the UCW World Champion is the end goal for every professional wrestler on the planet..."

As the text fades, it is replaced by the following:

"kayfabe:
noun - informal
(in professional wrestling) the fact or convention of presenting staged performances as genuine or authentic"

FADE IN:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYM -EVENING

Two wrestlers in their early twenties clad in cheap tights and trunks respectively, competing in a battered wrestling ring in front of a crowd of maybe two hundred people at a push - mostly kids with their parents.

The two wrestlers JOSH RYMAN and JOE MCGREGOR - show through their conduct that they are better than this, but both pay their dues humbly, working reactions from the crowd as best they can.

After a high-octane sequence of moves, the crowd reasonably built up, the two guys work the finish: a well-sold slam and then an impressive flip from the top rope and the pin fall; one - two - three.

FREEZE-FRAME on the victor as the following text appears on screen:

"JOSH RYMAN"

Josh is English, around 6'1" and approximately 220 lbs (15 stone) of lean muscle. He looks broad and aesthetically trim, with his good looks and long blonde hair, he looks like a star.

JOSH (VO)

It's not like it is on T.V. At least not for a long time. It doesn't happen that way overnight, if it happens at all.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL GYM - LATER

The two wrestlers leave the building, go their separate ways. Each get into their respective shitty cars.

JOSH (VO)

It's not a business you get in to for the money.

CUT TO:

EXT. SEVEN-ELEVEN STORE - NIGHT

Joe leaves the store as the following text appears on the screen over his head as we FREEZE:

"JOE MCGREGOR"

JOE MCREGOR is Irish, around 6'3" and closer to 230 lbs (16 stone). He is broad and pale and bears a head shaved at the sides and the back of the neck but sporting long, ginger dreadlocks on top.

With his bag from the grocery store, he gets into his shitty car.

INT. JOE'S CAR - SAME

The back seats of his car are down and on top of them lies a crummy mattress and a stained duvet, a withered away pillow and a menagerie of empty food wrappers, beer cans and the like.

He drives off, finds a quiet place and pulls over.

JOSH (VO)

(off)

You have to love what you do. You have to love wrestling, you have to eat, sleep and breathe it. Because being a wrestler means out of twenty-four hours, you spend on average, twenty minutes wrestling; forty five if you're a top dog.

He climbs into the back of his car, lies on his belly on his makeshift bed, empties the contents of his bag, revealing his purchases of a loaf of bread, peanut butter, obviously the cheapest six pack of beer that they sell, and a bag of frozen peas.

The other twenty three hours? You're travelling, you're working out, you're travelling, you're eating, you're travelling, you're promoting, you're travelling, you're hustling, you sleep if you get time, if you don't, you go tired.

He takes off his shirt, throws the bag of frozen peas on his lower back, and with a dirty knife he obviously uses frequently, spreads his newly bought peanut butter onto a couple of slices of bread and eats tonight's dinner between alternating sips of his cruddy beer.

He finishes his beer and dinner, licks his fingers clean and hunkers down for the night.

JOSH (VO)

(off)

It's not like it is on T.V.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - SAME

We stay with Josh as he drives and the

OPENING CREDITS ROLL

DISSOLVE:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL. CAR PARK - EVENING

The car park of a run-down high school. Josh exits his car in the car park and heads to the equally as weathered-looking gym on the premises with a gym bag and an obvious sigh.

JOSH (VO)

You don't just jump into the big leagues, you have to work the independent circuit. You learn everything you need to know from the independent circuit. It's here that you learn, for the most part, wrestling is like music; good music isn't something you get into for the money. You get into music for the love of it, if you can pay your bills that way instead of in an office; great, but that's considered a bonus.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYM - LATER

Josh cuts a signature pose that looks like it belongs on your television at prime time, his body, hair and charisma look pure money...

PULL BACK to reveal the crowd he poses to...

The crowd tonight consists of parents and kids sitting on the bleachers. The bleachers bare more empty spaces than attendees.

JOSH (VO)

(off)

You get into the business because you love pro wrestling, you're a fan, you grew up watching it, you were entertained by it and not only do you want to be a part of it, you want to help make it better, to get more people to see the things you love in wrestling too. You get on to the independent circuit and you learn the difference between watching wrestling and being a wrestler and you learn the difference between wrestling and the business.

CUT TO:

INT. BINGO HALL - EVENING

Josh standing in a slightly more dignified venue with more adequate lighting and a bigger crowd. He bears his company's championship belt around his waist as he gestures to a young, green-looking contender standing in front of him in the ring in a "Who is this guy?" shrug.

JOSH (VO)

You learn about "booking". For example, you're an up and comer in the industry, you can't expect your first or even your tenth match to be against the hottest star in the company just like that, because there's no money in it. You have to work the crowd, build your character, your reputation, to be "over" with the crowd, otherwise it's a somebody versus a nobody and that's bad for business.

Josh lays out his rookie competitor in one fell swoop and then tosses him over the ropes and outside "his" ring as he holds

the title belt above his head and the crowd go visibly nuts for him.

PAN ON the crowd in the stands, they wield signs and pictures both for and of him respectively as they cheer on their favourite wrestler; the fans are so passionate as they scream and cheer for him, fans both young and old, male and female.

The thing about the independent circuit is the fans are different from those in the stands at the televised shows of the big leagues. The biggest and most hard-core wrestling fans come to the independent shows and they will have your back from day one if you earn their respect, because they love this business and they know what you sacrifice for them and for how little money and they believe you deserve to be as high up as you do and they can make it happen with you. You learn everything you need to know about professional wrestling by working the independents.

FREEZE-FRAME on the moderate crowd as we...

DISSOLVE:

INT. UCW ARENA - EVENING

A thousands-plus heaving crowd of fans spanning as far as the eye can see in an arena with expensive lighting and bearing signature marquees of "UCW" everywhere in sight.

JOSH (VO)
(off)

What's also going against you though is, you're putting your body on the line every night, you're going without sleep or proper food and working out when you're on the last dregs of your fuel tank and you still have to go out there and put on the best show of your life for however many or few turn up to the venue in question and you won't be getting paid even a quarter what the worst wrestlers are doing on

prime time TV for half the time and half the risk.

CUT TO:

INT. STRIP CLUB - PRESENT (NIGHT)

Josh walks into the dimly lit and grotty club, buys a beer at the bar and takes a seat at the back. A girl - JODIE - does her thing on the stage, totally nude.

The following text appears on the screen as we FREEZE:

"JODIEWESTON"

Jodie is around 5'6", slim and pretty with long, red hair and a young face. She continues to do her routine on stage.

JOSH (VO)

Stripping and wrestling are very similar professions. Both get made to look glamorous on T.V. Both are hard, long hours, putting on the best show you can for a handful of people with short attention spans when it's all you can do not to collapse from exhaustion - and that paycheck? Gas money, rent and if you're lucky you can eat.

Josh and her eyes meet, he gives her a wink, she struggles to suppress a smirk.

She finishes her bit and steps down from the stage, as she does, some creep tries to cop himself a feel. Josh is on his feet in an instant but is stopped by a shake of Jodie's head.

JODIE

(low tone)

Take your fuckin' hands off me.

The creep backs down. She leaves.

EXT. CAR PARK - MINUTES LATER

Jodie, now covered up, leaves hand in hand with Josh.

INT. CAR - MINUTES LATER

Josh drives, Jodie rides shotgun.

JODIE

How was your match? Did you win?

JOSH

Nah, I jobbed for Joe.

JODIE

Good match, though?

JOSH

It is what it is.

JODIE

I hear ya.

JOSH (VO)

The key to surviving the road is entertainment. There isn't a whole lot to do when you're driving for hours at a stretch. Sometimes you're lucky enough to have somebody with you, sometimes you're lucky enough to get along well with that somebody, if you are that lucky, make the most of it. Play games, make each other laugh, you've got a long way to go.

JOSH

Game?

JODIE

Sure!

JOSH

OK, what you wanna play?

JODIE
"Would You Rather"?

JOSH
Go for it.

JODIE
But you start.

JOSH
All right. I came prepared.

JODIE
Oh, you did, huh?

JOSH
Yep. All right, you ready?

JODIE
Bring it.

JOSH
Okay, would you rather...have sex in front of
your parents or your parents have sex in front
of you?

JODIE
Oh my God! How sick are you?

JOSH
I'm not pissing about tonight.

JODIE
Jesus. You couldn't start off on an easy one?

JOSH
Where's the fun in that?

JODIE
Oh man, I can't have sex in front of my
parents.

JOSH
So, your parents have sex in front of you,
then?

JODIE
Ahhh...yeah, whatever.

JOSH
Sick bitch.

JODIE
Fuck you! Man, I'm gonna make you pay.

JOSH
Bring it, woman!

JODIE
All right, you want a piece of me? Chew on this. Would you rather...drink my piss or eat my toenails?

JOSH
Oh, you sick puppy!

JODIE
Who's laughing now?

JOSH
Oh... How much piss and how many toenails?

JODIE
A cup of my piss, like your average paper cup. Or half a sandwich of my toenails?

JOSH
Half a sandwich?

JODIE
Yup.

JOSH
Well, the half a sandwich, obviously.

JODIE
You sure? I don't think you've thought this through.

JOSH
Oh, why?

JODIE

You can down the piss like a shot, right? Now, the sandwich...the softness of the bread - no butter, by the way - is gonna make the contrast of the nails that much more disgusting. The bread's gonna go down easy, but the nails are gonna scratch the roof of your mouth and get stuck in your throat-

JOSH

Oh, fuck you, the piss, then!

JODIE

You piss drinking psycho!

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

INT. BINGO HALL - NIGHT

Josh comes down to the ring with a shopping cart of objects to hurt and maim his opponent, the crowd are rowdy. One guy throws a paper cup of beer over him, Josh tries to ignore it. He enters the ring.

JOSH (VO)

Versatility is not to be underrated. Sometimes you're wrestling a little guy, sometimes you're wrestling a big guy, sometimes he's a high flyer, sometimes he's a monster, you've gotta be able to adapt. Adapt to the match as well as the wrestler, adapt to the crowd as well as those other things.

Josh's opponent is Joe, he comes to the ring swigging from a beer bottle.

You're wrestling in a high school gym in front of kids and maybe a hundred people? You don't wanna be telling the other guy to suck your

dick and then spit in his face. Here: you don't do that and the fans are liable to do it to you. Here? You do that to the ref at the start of the goddamn match.

Joe stops outside the ring, finishes in one gulp, belches and then smashes the bottle over his own head, bleeding instantly. The fans go apeshit.

TIME LAPSE:

Both wrestlers are painted red with blood, from their face down to their waists they are bloodied and cut. Josh is scooped up and slammed onto a board with a large mesh of BARBED WIRE attached to it.

The crowd are deafening.

Josh literally has to tear himself away from the barbs, the ring canvas is died red with his blood. Josh and Joe go back and forth a little more, viciously exchanging manoeuvres and vulgar insults before Josh gets the upper hand and manages to keep his opponent down.

Josh then goes over to the commentator's table with a can of GASOLINE and drenches the table in it. He whips out a lighter, the crowd are going absolutely batshit crazy, he sets the thing alight - it goes up with a satisfying *whoompf* - and he climbs back into the ring.

Josh scoops up Joe, places him onto the top turnbuckle, follows him up there. He points to the table for the benefit of the audience, letting them know his intentions, they respond with bloodthirsty approval.

Josh grapples Joe in a back body drop, which he follows him with, from the top turnbuckle inside the ring, outside and onto the flaming table.

The fall is fast and ugly, the landing is not pretty. The crash puts a knot in your stomach, both men's screams can be heard even over the psychotic crowd. Members of the technical team (who look like ex bouncers with drink problems and anger issues) douse the FLAMES on the table and the wrestlers with fire extinguishers.

Twitching and smoking, Josh managers to cover Joe for a pin.
The referee counts:

ONE!

TWO!!

THREE!!!

Josh wins. The ref raises Josh's arm in victory.

JOSH
(low, to ref)
Get a fucking doctor out here.

He gestures to the ring announcer—

RING ANNOUNCER
(into mic)
And your winner—

Josh snatches the microphone.

JOSH
(into mic)
(to ref) Gimme that shit! (to crowd) YOU WANT
BLOOD?!

The crowd react, they are very vocal.

I SAID, DO YOU WANT FUCKING BLOOD?!

They react even louder.

JOSH CONT'D
(into mic)
WELL YOU GOT IT! YOU KNOW WHY?

Some of the voracious crowd anticipate what is coming and react.

BECAUSE THIS IS X-B-FUCKING-W!!!

The crowd begin chanting.

CROWD
(chanting, in unison)
XBW! XBW! XBW! XBW!

CUT TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE AREA. SHOWERS - MOMENTS LATER

Josh, now stitched up, stands with his face up to the shower head, his blood being washed down the drain.

JOSH (VO)
How much would you wanna get paid for what we just did to each other? I bet you my soul it'd be more than eighty dollars, right? Most of what I got paid tonight'll go on gas. But I don't care.

Josh smiles goofily to himself.

Because if you could bottle this feeling right now...you'd make more money than Microsoft. And I feel sorry for everyone who will never know how this feels.

CUT TO:

TALKING HEAD SHOT of Josh.

JOSH

I remember when I was a kid and we had a seminar from the fire brigade. A senior fire officer pointed me out in front of the whole school and asked me if I'd ever smelt burning flesh. And I hadn't. Thirteen years later and not only have I smelt burning flesh, I've acquired myself quite a palette of burning charred skin; I've smelt that of my opponents and my enemies and compared the subtle differences between them: some are fragrances, some are stenches, some make me goddamn heave and some I could bottle and smell daily.

(beat)

They say that the taste of your own blood does something to you. And I agree. But I counter with this: have you ever sat with the stench of your own singed carcass for twelve hours in a twenty year old car with no air conditioning and windows that don't wind down? Well, I have. I don't have the bank accounts of the pretty boys in UCW, the awe of the impressionable children and the face that you put on a can of Pepsi.

ZOOM OUT to reveal...

INT. BASEMENT - MORNING

Josh stands against a cheap canvas with XBW spray painted on it in a dingy basement in an underprivileged household.

ANGLE ON: BOBBY MCGUINNESS - mid 40s, rotund, moustachioed and balding - we FREEZE as the following words appear on the screen:

"BOBBY MCGUINNESS"

Bobby sits, taking notes and making hand gestures in silent direction to Josh as Joe records on a camcorder on a rickety tripod, Jodie watches on and BOBBY'S MOTHER - late sixties, overweight - irons clothes in the corner.

JOSH CONT'D

I have the bank account of a gas station clerk, the respect only of other men who know how it feels to work on their eleventh concussion less than twelve hours after swallowing a pint of their own blood and cracking a rib, and the face you'd see on a *Wanted* poster.

(beat)

But this face. This face is the last thing you will see before you wake up in an emergency room. Because tonight...we go to war.

Bobby stands up and gives Josh a standing ovation.

JOSH (VO)

(off)

That's Bobby McGuinness, he owns XBW. XBW is 'Xtremely Brutal Wrestling'. For the longest time, the only big brand in pro wrestling that had any momentum was UCW - Ultimate Championship Wrestling. They were like the Motley Crue or the Bon Jovi of wrestling though, and then Bobby came in with his brand of alternative wrestling; we were like the Pearl Jam or Alice in Chains of wrestling, I mean, we had balls and we shook the business up.

BOBBY

Cut! That was great. You have presence that twenty years in the business can't teach.

JOSH

I can feel my head swelling.

ANGLE ON: Joe smiling as he watches his friend and his boss converse.

JOE

(to Josh)

Shame you can't feel your wallet swellin', huh?

This is the first time we hear him talk; he speaks in a thick, Irish accent.

BOBBY

(to Joe)

If you didn't have concussion I'd bitch-slap you.

BOBBY'S MOTHER

Robert McGuinness, watch your mouth.

BOBBY

Sorry, Ma.

BOBBY'S MOTHER

Would you kids like some coffee and pie?

JOSH (VO)

You've gotta be willing to do anything, that's not only how you progress in this business, by paying your dues, but that's how you grow. That's how you find out what works, sometimes you find a gimmick by accident, it's whatever gets you over with the fans, because unfortunately, athletic ability isn't enough, that's good enough for the amateurs, but this is the pros, if you can't get over with the fans, you're fucked. Fans have got to believe that anything can happen, if they don't, then what's their motivation to watch wrestling and not something else?

INT. ROACH MOTEL - MORNING

Josh and Jodie wake up to their alarm clock in their cheap-ass motel room.

JODIE

Dibs on the shower.

JOSH

Fuck's sake.

She gets up and goes to the bathroom. Josh goes to the kitchen, such as it is, and sets about making his egg whites, pancakes and coffee.

JODIE

Know how I like my eggs in the mornin'?

JOSH

Sure do.

She leans in from behind him and he kisses her. They sit and eat breakfast together.

What time's the show again?

JODIE

Seven.

JOSH

You wanna work out now or later?

JODIE

Better to do it now, we don't even know where there's a gym in this town. If we leave it too late, the gym might be closed.

JOSH

Brains and a sweet arse. I knew I didn't propose to you for nothing.

They finish breakfast.

CUT TO:

INT. GYM - SAME

Jodie and Josh, mid-workout. Leg Day for both, Josh blasting normal squats in the squat rack while Jodie performs overhead barbell squats with near perfect form.

Josh finishes his set, wipes sweat from his brow with a towel and goes over to Jodie, adjusts her posture slightly to make for better form and then spots her until failure when he takes the bar from her.

JOSH

I got ya. Shit, this is fucking heavy, Jode.

JODIE

That's why my ass is so sweet.

JOSH

(smiles)

Damn.

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL - LATER

Josh sits naked in a chair, shaving his legs while Jodie shaves his back.

JODIE

You're done back here.

JOSH

You got that annoying little cluster in the middle?

JODIE

Yup.

JOSH

Cheers, darling.

JODIE

Top my tan if I top yours?

JOSH

Sure. Then we better fuck off or we're gonna be late.

They don gloves and bust out the tubs of fake tan.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAR PARK. BINGO HALL - AFTERNOON

Jodie and Josh pull up in their car, get out and collect their bags from the trunk. As they set out to enter their venue for the night, they are swarmed by a group of fans.

SUPERFAN

Holy shit, Josh Ryman!

GROUPIE

We love you, Josh!

JODIE

(to Josh)

They know your real name?

JOSH

(low)

Shut up, I'm famous.

SUPERFAN

I was there, man, three weeks ago, your barbed wire match in Anaheim, that was so fucking badass!

JOSH

Thanks.

GIRL FAN

Can we please have your autograph?

JOSH

Sure.

SUPERFAN

Can I get a picture with you, bro?

JOSH

Yeah, sure.

GIRL FAN

(to Jodie)

Are you his girlfriend?

JODIE

I'm his fiancé.

GROUPIE

(to Jodie)

Are you a wrestler, too?

SUPERFAN

Are you kidding me? This is Jodie Weston!

Fucking Flame!

JODIE

(to Josh)

Holy shit, he knows me too?

SUPERFAN

Your finisher is the best finisher I've ever seen, not just in women's wrestling.

JODIE

Oh, thank you! Thanks a lot.

SUPERFAN

Man, you guys fucking rock!

WACKO FAN

(to Josh)

Dude, my girlfriend wants to fuck you so bad!

JOSH

Uhh, thanks...?

GROUPIE

(to Josh)

Can you sign my tits?

JOSH

Oh... um...

Josh looks to a scowling Jodie. She sighs and nods.

The girl undoes her jacket to reveal a T-shirt with Josh's face on it.

WACKO FAN

She made it herself, man!

JOSH

Awesome, man, looks killer.

GROUPIE

Just let me...

She tears off her top, revealing her bra-less body beneath.

JOSH

(embarrassed)

Oh!

Josh awkwardly sets about signing her breasts. He gets a few letters in before the girl jiggles her boobs and advances...

JODIE

Okay, that's enough.

Jodie drags him away.

JOSH

Thanks, guys! Enjoy the show!

SUPERFAN

You guys fucking rock!

JODIE

(to Josh, mocking)

"Enjoy the show!"

JOSH

Hey, they're our bread and butter. You gotta look after them, you piss 'em off, word gets around and we go fucking hungry.

JODIE

They're fucking freaks.

JOSH

Granted, but...

JODIE

Oh for god's sake, your head could not be any bigger right now, could it?

JOSH

I'm not gonna lie, I'm totally flattered. Not by the girl and her...

JODIE

Save it, if I wasn't there you'd have been all up in that shit-

JOSH

Stop! I'm marrying you for fuck's sake.

INT. BINGO HALL CORRIDOR - SAME

Jodie and Josh head to the locker room. Jodie is gradually calming down.

JODIE

It's great you're getting so popular, though. Really. I'm delighted for you, I really am.

He puts his arm around her, kisses her.

JOSH

Cheers, darling.

JODIE

You'll be headlining *WrestleMayhem* in no time.

JOSH
I dunno about that.

Joe comes tear-assing round the corner.

JOE
Holy shit, guys, have you heard?!

JOSH
Heard what?

JOE
Bobby's got a TV deal!

JOSH
No fucking way!

JOE
Way!

JODIE
What channel?

JOE
I dunno, I never heard of it before in melife,
it's some cable show—

JODIE
Hey, a show's a show!

JOSH
Exactly!

JODIE
When's it start?

JOE
Next week, he wants us to record promos for it
at his house tomorrow!

JOSH
Great!

JOE

Oh, Jodie, I dunno if you got Bobby's message,
but you're openin' match tonight.

CUT TO:

INT. MAIN HALL. RING - EVENING

Mid-way through their match; Jodie and her opponent exchange harsh SLAPS outside the ring by the fans' barricade, the fans gasp theatrical "ooohs" following each slap.

Jodie's opponent knocks her down and tries to escape through the crowd. Jodie gets back to her feet and hops over the barricade in pursuit.

Jodie catches up, lands a few blows on her opponent. She then grabs one of the fan's steel chairs, folds it up and hits her opponent in the gut with it. Her opponent doubles over. Jodie is about to SMASH the chair over her opponent's back, but she moves, the chair hits the concrete. Jodie drops the chair, shaking the PAIN from her wrists.

Her opponent wrestles Jodie to the floor - the fans are going nuts by the way - grabs Jodie in a headlock, still on the floor. ZOOM CLOSE enough to hear them talk low to each other and direct the match.

JODIE

(low)

Get back to the ring, but take the chair.

OPPONENT

(low)

I don't wanna take one to the back.

JODIE

(low)

No, I wanna take one to the head.

OPPONENT

(low)

To the head?

JODIE

(low)
Yup.

OPPONENT
(low)
You're sure?

JODIE
(low)
Yes!

They head back to the ring, Jodie's opponent with the chair as directed. At the barricade, Jodie starts offering resistance, lands some blows and throws her opponent over the barricade, tossing the chair after her.

Jodie stops before hopping over and takes a cup of beer from a fan and chugs it, tossing the cup back over her shoulder as she finishes. The crowd fucking eat this up.

Back in the ring, after a small series of grapples and reversals, Jodie gets her wish and is hit over the head with the chair. The fans react. The referee tends to Jodie.

REF
(low)
You alright, honey?

JODIE
(low)
Yeah. Tell her not to hit me like a fucking pussy on the next one.

The ref goes back over to her opponent and passes it on.

Jodie gets to her feet and blinks very blatantly and clearly twice, signalling: *hit me twice*.

Jodie is hit over the head with a steel chair, twice, both with SICKENING CRACKS, leaving a DENT in the chair.

While her opponent argues with the referee, Jodie CUTS HERSELF with a small RAZOR BLADE above her left eye. When she gets back to her feet, her face is BLEEDING fast and heavy.

After a few minutes of being beaten down by her opponent, Jodie begins getting the upper hand and has her opponent against the ropes, then launches herself in a cross-body blow at her, sending them both careening over the ropes and onto the floor outside the ring.

There, her opponent writhing in pain in a heap on the floor, Jodie produces a cheap wooden folding TABLE from underneath the ring and opens it up. She places her opponent on the table top and climbs back into the ring and onto the top turnbuckle.

There she poses for the fans and flips herself into a backwards somersault press onto her opponent, the table CRASHING into PIECES beneath them both. Then she covers her opponent in a pin fall for the three count. The audience go banana.

CUT TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE - MINUTES LATER

Jodie has herself stitched up by the company medic. Josh comes storming over.

JOSH

Are you okay?

She nods.

All right, as your fiancé: what the fuck are you playing at? Do you have any idea what it's like to watch you do that to yourself? I'm fucking shittin' kittens, man!

She gasps as she is stitched.

JOSH CONT'D

Now, as a wrestler: that was fucking great, you've got balls like fucking boulders, thatwas

amazing, you are fuckin' nails. People are gonna be talking about this for months. You're gonna revolutionise what it is to be a woman in this business.

Joe appears.

JOE

Sure you just seriously stole the whole fuckin' show, babe! I'm on next, seriously, I'm intimidated; how the hell am I supposed to follow that like?

CREW MEMBER

(off)

Joe, you're up!

JOE

Gotta go. Seriously, fuckin' mega out there tonight!

JODIE

Thanks, Joe.

Bobby enters, gesticulating wildly as he speaks with amusingly theatrical passion.

BOBBY

FUCK - A - DUCK! Take note, ladies and gentleman, that is how you build a match up, that is how you sell a match and that is how you conduct a match. You just changed what it means to be a female wrestler-

Jodie and Josh exchange glances, grinning.

You do that on our show next week, honey and you are the new face of XBW, I guarantee you. And, by the way, when you stole that guy's beer and chugged it? That was pure genius, that should be your signature. That is something

that only you could pull off that good. If a guy did that, it'd be "Ehh", but the fact that a woman did that and you didn't look as though you were trying or posing, you looked as though you were like "Fuck this, I wanna beer as I kick this bitch's ass". And that is fucking beautiful. You, sir (he points at Josh) marry this woman for the love of God!

JOSH

I am!

Jodie flashes her engagement ring at him.

BOBBY

Lucky bastard.

(beat)

I'm paying you too much, kid.

FADE TO BLACK

CUT TO:

INT. BOBBY'S MOTHER'S HOUSE. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Bobby talks with Joe, Josh and Jodie at his mother's table, eating the aforementioned coffee and pie.

JOSH (VO)

Like in any profession, it's just as much about politics as hard work. Me, Joe and Jodie reached a point with Bobby after paying our dues and helping him build his company from selling maybe fifty tickets a show to selling close to a thousand, with a cable TV show, that we can talk creative ideas with him. Sure, he doesn't always go with our ideas, but he respects our input enough to entertain it. Every wrestler has opinions and ideas on how to run the business, but not everyone gets listened to.

BOBBY

Really? I can't see that working in a million years.

JOSH

(to Bobby)

You know what Jodie said?

BOBBY

No.

JOSH

Tell him, Jode.

JODIE

I said, you'd never see that on UCW.

BOBBY

(dismissing)

Exactly!

JODIE

(reiterating)

Exactly!

BOBBY

I don't follow.

JODIE

You think you'd see a wrestler telling a referee to suck his dick and then break a bong over his head on UCW? No. And that's why people watch our show. Right? Because we're not UCW, we're fucking XBW!

BOBBY

(to Josh)

Did I tell you to marry this chick, sir?

JOSH

You did.

BOBBY

Marry her twice, kid. So, what are you thinking?

JOE

One of us, doesn't matter who, has her as an enforcer.

BOBBY

An enforcer? Pardon me, sir, but enlighten me, how is anyone going to take this seriously?

JOE

(to Bobby)

Hear us out, right? One of us turns heel, doesn't matter who.

BOBBY

Couldn't agree with you more. You're both at your peak in this company right now, that's the time to do it.

JOSH

Right? And we introduce her as our enforcer, we look like the biggest fucking coward ever, getting a woman to do our dirty work for us. It'll get so much heat. At first, but then it gets her over too, because, believe me, when you see her, and you see her wrestle, she's every bit as credible as us.

BOBBY

I wanna meet her and I wanna see her wrestle. Bring her to the gym, when can she make it down?

JOE

Fella, she lives half an hour away, she can drop by this afternoon.

BOBBY

The sooner, the better.

JODIE

(to Bobby)

I'll call her now, can I use your phone?

BOBBY

Sure, you know where it is.

Jodie leaves.

Josh, I want you to turn heel. No offence to you, Joe, I just think Josh's the logical choice as he's over with the fans but he's not your quintessential babyface, he's kind of an antihero right now, it's not too big a leap for him. That makes him believable, because fans shouldn't like him anyway, he will play dirty, he will cheat to win if he can get away with it. And he does get away with it, it's easy booking. It'd be a lot harder for you, kid. You with me?

Joe tries to hide it, but the hurt is there on his face.

JOE

Sure thing, Bobby. I hear ya.

CUT TO:

INT. XBW GYM - DAY

A hole in the wall gym, about as cheap and far from professional as you can get. The equipment is total old school and the place looks as though it's cleaned maybe a handful of times a year.

Wrestlers lift weights, use a couple of weathered punchbags, jump rope etcetera.

At the far end of the gym is a wrestling ring. Inside, Jodie wrestles with DEBBIE MANZA- a dark-haired, six foot monster of a woman. She looks like a bodybuilder, formidable, packing shocking mass for somebody with oestrogen.

FREEZE FRAME as the following appears on screen:

"DEBBIE MANZA"

Jodie continues to be tossed around like a ragdoll by Debbie as Bobby, Joe and Josh watch from outside the ring. Bobby watches very seriously, the cogs visibly turning within his cranium.

BOBBY

Okay, Jodie, you're out. Josh, you're in. Go.

Jodie and Josh swap places.

The female behemoth tosses Josh around with ease in the ring. Bobby finally shows he is impressed, so ensues raucous applause.

Bravo! Bravo! Young lady, you're hired, when can you start?

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Jodie, fast asleep spooning Josh in bed. Beeping from Josh's pager. With barely one eye open, he reaches for his pager from the motel room floor and holds it up to his face. He sighs, gets up and calls the number from the motel room phone.

JOSH (VO)

Things turn on a dime, you just have to always be ready.

JOSH

(into phone)

Holy shit!

JOSH (VO)

Right outta the blue, no rumours or heads up about it; UCW wanted me and Joe in for try-outs.

CUT TO:

EXT. UCW DEVELOPMENTAL - NOON

Establishing shot: big, expensive and intimidating looking building that bears the title "UCW DEVELOPMENTAL CENTRE" on its front.

JOSH (VO)

(off)

If you're a wrestler from anywhere around the world, your ultimate goal is UCW: Ultimate Championship Wrestling. Ultimate Championship Wrestling isn't just the biggest wrestling promotion in America, it's the biggest televised wrestling promotion in the world. Whoever you are, wherever you're from; if you're a wrestler, this is your ultimate goal, to make it in UCW.

INT. UCW DEVELOPMENTAL. BACKSTAGE - SAME

UCW talent scout HUGH CRANSTON consults Joe and Josh after their match. Bobby stands with the wrestlers.

FREEZE-FRAME as the following appears on the screen:

"HUGH CRANSTON"

Cranston is in his mid-fifties, with a beer gut, a bald patch and a face like a thirty-year old punch bag.

CRANSTON

(to Joe)

You get yourself some better attire that's more flattering to your physique and more mass on your upper chest and you've got your look complete. Right here, okay? You've got it. What do you weigh right now; 205? 210?

JOE

230.

CRANSTON

Okay. You wanna be looking closer to 250.

JOE

What about in the ring?

CRANSTON

In the ring you've got the moves covered, you just need to slow it down a little bit. And exaggerate more. You wanna make sure that what you're doing can't be missed. You wanna make sure the guy who's flicking through the paper on his couch at home doesn't miss what you're doing. You wanna make sure that the gal on the top row in the corner can see what you're doing as clearly as the guy in the front row right in the middle.

JOE

Okay. Thank you so much.

CRANSTON

You're welcome, kid. You'll be hearing from us.

He looks to Josh.

Okay, now to you, young man. You have that presence, alright? You can't teach that. You either have it or you don't. And you have it. You command to be watched even when you're not doing anything.

BOBBY

I tell him that all the time.

CRANSTON

You're right.

BOBBY

Thank you.

CRANSTON

(to Josh)

You got that great European strong-style that's nice to see. It can't all be brawling.

JOSH

Right.

CRANSTON

But how's your brawling? You confident with it?

JOSH

Sure.

BOBBY

You should see his hardcore matches, sir, this kid can take a serious bump.

CRANSTON

(to Josh)

I like the sound of that. How're your promos?

BOBBY

Impeccable.

CRANSTON

Kid?

JOSH

I feel good going against anybody.

CRANSTON

That is what we want here. Do you write or adlib?

JOSH

Both.

CRANSTON

Great. All right, well we'll study the tape and you'll be hearing from us.

JOSH

Thank you so much, sir, it's been a great privilege.

JOE

It's been an honour.

CRANSTON

Take care, guys.

Cranston leaves.

JOE

He didn't ask me about my promos.

BOBBY

You kids did outstanding.

JOSH

I can't believe we just met Hugh fucking Cranston!

JOE

The ring felt huge compared to ours.

JOSH

The mat has more give.

JOE

The ropes took a little getting used to.

(beat)

Do I really need to work on my upper chest?

JOSH

I wouldn't go that far, but it wouldn't hurt your look.

JOE

250, is he fucking serious? There's no way I can be 250 lean. 250 with a belly and a hell of a lot slower, maybe. But I can't get 250 clean. No way.

BOBBY

(to Joe)

Don't hit the juice, kid.

JOE

Who said anything about the juice?

BOBBY

I've seen this more times than you can imagine.
I'm tellin' ya. Don't hit the juice, kid.

JOSH

(to Bobby)

Do you think we'll get a call back?

BOBBY

Did that guy look like Ray Charles? Of course
you'll get a call back. You will be selling out
The Garden, kid.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

INT. XBW GYM. OFFICE -NEXT DAY

The XBW trainer BRENDAN - thirties, fit with gelled hair, in
workout clothes - talks with Joe.

JOE

(exasperated)

I don't get it, I train twice a day, for two
hours each time. I eat eight to ten small meals
a day, get around 4-5000 calories average, take
fat burners, ketones, mix bodybuilding with
powerlifting... I do the same regimens as Arnold
and Stallone, I've trained with the biggest
guys here an' I still don't look like that.
What the hell am I doin' wrong? There's nothin'
I haven't tried!

BRENDAN

I'll be honest with you, Joe. You're always
gonna look that way.

Joe sighs.

And that's a good thing. You look great-

JOE

I don't wanna look great, I wanna look fuckin' fantastic. Like a comic book hero.

BRENDAN

You've got about as big as a man can get—

JOE

My size is decent enough, but I can't get any bigger without storin' excess weight as well. How the fuck do these monsters pack this ridiculous size an' somehow stay shredded like? What are these fellas doin' to look like a gladiator that I'm not doin'?

BRENDAN

You think Stallone and Arnold and even Van Damme, Dolph Lundgren, any other guy you can think of making those shitty movies got their bodies clean?

JOE

I know Arnold took steroids but Stallone, Van Damme and the 300 pound gorillas I've trained with here don't take any o' that shit and besides we get piss-tested here—

BRENDAN

(laughing)

Joe, nobody admits to using the juice. Everybody knows when somebody's using but they still try to pass it off as natural.

JOE

Bullshit.

BRENDAN

I shit you not, man.

JOE

What the hell, Brendan?

BRENDAN

It's always been this way, man. Hate to break it to ya. You know how women feel now, right? When actresses have these impossible figures

and try to pass 'em off as real? Or when they still look invincible to gravity and look goddamn 20 years old when they're pushin' 50?

JOE

Yeah, I do. Okay? I feel inadequate.

BRENDAN

Please... You're, what, 220? Biceps are 16 inches? 40 inch chest and a 34 inch waist? Doesn't sound like a small fry to me, Joe.

JOE

Don't gimme that, Brendan. I don't look like I just climbed out of a fuckin' Marvel comic book.

BRENDAN

Look, if you're so frustrated, take the juice, man. Think you're the first to take that step? Steroids are as big a part of wrestling as they are bodybuilding. You can get on a cycle by the end of the day easy.

JOE

I don't wanna go down that road, man. I don't wanna have shrunken balls, no wood and a fucking triple heart bypass before I'm thirty. And I don't wanna go to criminals to get my fix like a fuckin' smack head.

BRENDAN

Then things stay the way they are. I don't know what to tell ya.

Joe stands up abruptly.

JOE

Bollocks, I'm goin'.

Immediately outside the office is the water machine, where Debbie is filling her water bottle. As Joe storms outside, she rushes to catch up with him.

INT. HALLWAY - SAME

DEBBIE

Joe! Wait up.

JOE

Sorry, Debbie, I'm not in the mood for talkin' right now.

DEBBIE

I can help.

JOE

With what?

DEBBIE

Your problem?

JOE

Is this fuckin' high school? You were eavesdroppin'?

DEBBIE

Sort of. I genuinely was filling my water bottle and the walls of Brendan's office are ridiculously thin. And I'm a nosey bitch, whaddyagonna do?

Joe stops.

JOE

This is the men's locker room. I'm goin' inside. Nice talkin' to you.

He leaves for the men's changing room and leaves her abruptly.

INT. MEN'S LOCKER ROOM - SAME

Debbie waltzes in. She is immediately confronted with the sight of a naked man, who is not at all impressed by being caught butt-naked.

MAN

Dude! So not cool!

JOE

Deb, what the hell, man?

DEBBIE

Nobody walks away from me while I'm talking, okay? You can drop your pants and take a shit and I'll still have my goddamn say.

JOE

(sighs)

All right. So talk.

DEBBIE

My boyfriend—

JOE

The Arsehole.

DEBBIE

I know you call him "The Arsehole".

JOE

I know he hits you Debbie. I see everything, right? I know his fuckin' type.

DEBBIE

Okay. You're right. And who's the bigger asshole? Him or me for stickin' around for 3 years?

(beat)

And I don't hold men who walk away from women when they're talking in much higher regard, alright?

JOE

You gonna be much longer?

DEBBIE

My boyfriend, also known as The Asshole, among his many good qualities, is also a dealer.

JOE

I assume you don't mean an antiques dealer.

DEBBIE

You assume correctly.

JOE

Why am I not surprised?

DEBBIE

He can get you the stuff to make you look the way you wanna look. Who do you think got me looking like this?

JOE

You too? On the juice?

DEBBIE

Joe, open your eyes, honey. I'm a woman, not a centaur, think a woman can look like this without serious juice?

JOE

I thought maybe... But you still have...I mean, the...

He gets awkward and gestures her breasts.

DEBBIE

These?

She grabs her breasts. He nods.

Touch 'em.

His eyes widen in shock.

DEBBIE CONT'D

It's cool. Touch 'em.

He hesitates. She grabs his hand and places it on her breasts.

See? They're harder than yours.

JOE

You had me fooled. Those're some good fun bags.

DEBBIE

Thanks, I guess. Listen, I've been on the juice for a long time now, I've taken a lot, trial and error, done it all, I can hook you up and guide you through it if you want. It's good to have someone there to talk you through things at first. I'll shoot it straight with you and you won't feel intimidated right? Cos I'm a girl.

JOE

I dunno, man...

DEBBIE

Come by my place now, Greg-

JOE

He even has an asshole name.

DEBBIE

Greg is there now, he's holding, okay? You're a friend, I guess, he'll give you friend prices and we'll get you looking like Bruce Banner.

Joe sighs.

JOE

(long pause)

Fuck it, what the hell...

DEBBIE

I'll wait outside.

She walks away.

JOE

Hey, Deb.

She stops.

Thank you.

She gives him a slow wink and leaves. He smiles to himself.

CUT TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYM - NIGHT

Midway through an XBW show, the same as any XBW show: gritty, violent, trashy...the only difference is there are CAMERAS here filming for the first episode.

In the ring, Jodie has her opponent on the mat. She climbs to the top turnbuckle, ready to jump off and use her body as a weapon against her opponent.

But the opponent gets up and she runs to meet Jodie at the turnbuckle. Jodie leaps over her opponent...

An ugly landing on her ankle, which gives way, as she aims to land on her feet; the ankle GIVES WAY and she COLLAPSES to the mat.

The referee comes over to check.

REF

(low)

Jodie, you all right?

JODIE

I'm hurt. Tell her go for the pin.

The ref passes the message on to her opponent.

JOSH (VO)

Injuries happen. They're a part of this business, same as any physically competitive activity. Injuries can happen at any time, doesn't matter whether everything's going right for you or you're not doing that hot, it's still a wrestler's worst nightmare. It means time off, and everything you've worked hard to build can be undone in an instant, because fans have short memories.

The referee counts one-two-three as Jodie's opponent covers her for the pin fall.

INT. BACKSTAGE - SAME

Jodie is attended to by a medic.

FOCUS ON DEBBIE as she watches on.

JOSH (VO)

Of course, this is a competitive business. Somebody with a name for themselves gets injured? It means an opportunity for the spotlight just opened up.

TIME LAPSE:

INT. BACKSTAGE - SAME

Josh with his arm around Jodie as she convulses in racking sobs. Debbie holds her hand in support, Joe shakes his head in dismay.

Bobby enters, running his palm over his head and sighing.

BOBBY
(to Jodie)

Ambulance is on its way. I'm so sorry, honey. There's bad luck and there's bad fuckin' luck. Jesus, first episode... At least it wasn't your neck, I guess.

Bobby's cellphone rings. He answers it.

BOBBY
(into phone)

Hello?

A change in demeanour.

Yeah? Really? Uh-huh. That's great. And, uh...the other...the other guy? Ah, geez. Okay, I understand. I will. Thank you. Bye.

He hangs up. Runs his palm over his dome again.

BOBBY CONT'D
Guys, that was the office at UCW. Josh, you got a call back.

The atmosphere is painfully awkward in terms of dynamics now...

Joe looks hopefully at Bobby. Bobby shakes his head, tears in his eyes.

I'm sorry, Joe...

If possible, the dynamics become even more painful now.

JOSH (VO)
Things in this business can change just like that.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

EXT. UCW HEADQUARTERS - MORNING

Establishing shot of UCW headquarters.

INT. UCW HEADQUARTERS. EXECUTIVE OFFICE - SAME

FREEZE-FRAME on an expensive suit-clad man in his fifties with a harsh face, broad shoulders and an old boxer's physique as the following text appears on the screen:

"PAT O'HANLON
CHAIRMAN OF ULTIMATE CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING"

PULL BACK to show Josh in a suit as he sits at a huge, expensive looking table on expensive looking office chairs, in discussion with Hugh Cranston, Pat and a long haired and bearded man with an old-school bodybuilder's physique, every inch the wrestling veteran.

The following words appear on screen as we FREEZE-FRAME:

"RANDY RHODES"

ANGLE ON Josh.

JOSH (VO)

They offered me a temporary contract. Like any job, a probationary period. A month's worth of dates, working dark matches. "Dark matches" meaning untelevised bouts opening for main shows, which was fine with me as I had only worked a couple of TV tapings and didn't wanna dive in headfirst in the big leagues.

(beat)

The money they offered already seemed like a dream and I knew it was nothing to anybody else, but when you've scraped by as long as I had, you were grateful just to have clean clothes and one decent meal a day.

PAT

(to Josh)

Angle wise, we're gonna just go off the crowd's reaction to you. You're not gonna be an obvious heel or an obvious face-

JOSH (VO)

In the industry, a wrestler is either a "babyface" - "face" for short - or a "heel". A face is a good guy, sportsmanlike, courteous, stand-up human being. A heel is a bad guy, he plays dirty, is cowardly, will cheat to win and insult the crowd as well as his opponent. Strictly speaking, it's a lot more fun to work as a heel, you have a lot more directions and angles to work that way, whereas if you're a face, you have the one theme and that's "be a good guy."

PAT CONT'D

We'll schedule you with the company's workhorses; you listen to them, follow their lead, but if you feel you need to take initiative in either a heel or face direction, then take that initiative. We will tell you if it works or if it doesn't. At the very beginning of your career with us you are a blank slate, that gives us a lot of freedom with where to go with you creatively.

CRANSTON

(to Josh)

We're obviously aware of your reputation and your work on the independent circuit, but we want your career with us not to be an extension of that, but a whole separate entity.

RHODES

(to Josh)

On that, I gotta say, the back body drop from the turnbuckle to the outside of the ring on to a burning table? I know what that takes. That's brutal. That's best for business.

JOSH

Thank you.

PAT

(to Josh)

So, the creative team will hash some ideas around over the next few weeks and we'll schedule another meeting and discuss with you what we've got. Until then, we'll be watching.

RHODES

(to Josh)

You just keep doin' what you're doin', kid.

CUT TO:

INT. JOSH'S CAR - EVENING

Josh sits in his car, his head in his hands behind the wheel, bracing himself.

JOSH (VO)

That night I had my last match with XBW. A date that had been scheduled for months, we didn't have contracts at XBW so I wasn't obligated to compete, but I felt it was the noble thing to do. I helped build the company, hell, I was the face of the company; I owed it, contract or none.

INT. VENUE. CORRIDOR - SAME

Josh comes down the hallway, nodding and waving to people he used to work for and with in the company. They return his interactions but half-heartedly and without warmth.

He turns the corner and spots Joe.

JOSH

Hey, Joe, I-

JOE

(curt)

Got a match, man.

Joe leaves, Josh reacts.

He carries on down the hallway until he runs into Bobby.

BOBBY

You didn't have to come.

JOSH

Please, it's the least I can do.

BOBBY

It's gonna be frosty, kid.

JOSH

How d'ya mean?

BOBBY

Our fans have been with us from the beginning, we may not be the big leagues yet but we've come a long way from nothing and the fans have been with us from the get go. They're proud of the company and its talent, happy to be *The Godfather III* against the *Godfather I and II*. You're the biggest star. You lead this movement, because that's what it is, a movement. And now you're jumping ship. You competed happily in *DC* and now you've slithered away to *Marvel*-

JOSH

Bobby, is this what the fans think or what you think?

BOBBY

I won't lie to you, sir, it hurts to have you leave, and I would be lying if I said it felt like you weren't just leaving the company, but leaving me as well. But I know you'd be stupid to stay here forever, you give your all and break your body for fucking peanuts and a drop in the ocean as far as audiences are concerned; you deserve to be paid well and perform in front of a worldwide audience. I'm sad for myself, but I'm happy for you, kid.

Both men have tears glistening in their eyes. They stand awkwardly.

JOSH

Thanks, Bobby.

Bobby holds his arms out, inviting an embrace.

BOBBY

C'mere.

Josh accepts the invitation and hugs his old boss.

I'm gonna miss you, kid.

JOSH

I'm gonna miss you too, Bobby. I wouldn't be where I am now if it weren't for you. I won't ever forget that.

BOBBY

How's Jodie?

CUT

TO:

INT. VENUE. BACKSTAGE - HALF AN HOUR LATER

Josh, clad in wrestling gear, waits in the backstage curtain area, waiting to be announced on the microphone. He is nervous.

JOSH (VO)

Bobby wasn't lying. The fans were pissed off at me for going. They took it personally, like I turned my back on them.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

(into microphone)

INSIDIOUS JOSH RYMAN!

INT. MAIN STAGE - SAME

Josh comes out to a deafening roar from the crowd. Boos, hisses, torrents of abuse, angry yells before they join in unison for a chant of...

CROWD IN UNISON

YOU SOLD OUT! YOU SOLD OUT! YOU SOLD OUT!

He stands there for a minute, overwhelmed by the deafening cacophony of jeers.

STEADICAM DOLLY around him 360 degrees as the wall of abuse only grows louder.

JOSH (VO)

I'm not in Kansas anymore.

CROWD IN UNISON

YOU SOLD OUT! YOU SOLD OUT! YOU SOLD OUT!

FADE TO BLACK

The crowd can still be heard chanting as the we roll

END CREDITS