

The image shows a red, textured rectangular logo with a black border. At the top, the word "ESPN" is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font, with "FILMS" in a smaller, white, sans-serif font directly below it. In the center, the words "30 FOR 30" are written in a large, white, serif font. The "30" on the left and right are flanked by horizontal lines, and the word "FOR" is underlined.

[We fade up from black on the unique introduction to all things that fall under the ESPN Films umbrella - an optometrist's machine, flipping through different lens types to reveal the scrambled and blurry letters readings "ESPN Films."

And then into the familiar three musical notes that lead the viewer into the documentary world of ESPN's acclaimed 30 For 30 series.

We fade from the introductory credits to a shot marked "AWA Saturday Night Wrestling - July 16th, 2016 - Madison Square Garden." The camera pans through the historic and iconic venue, showing rabid AWA fans packed to the gills in the Mecca of Sports of Entertainment waiting for the historic night ahead of them...

...and then to a shot of AWA ring announcer Rebecca Ortiz standing center ring, mic in hand.]

RO: It is now time for the MAIN EVENT of the evening! It is now time to crown the very first AWA Women's World Champion! It is now time for an annual event here in the AWA... IT'S TIME TO RUMBLE!

[The crowd ROARS in response as we get a few more crowd shots, this time of women in the crowd. First, a pair of teens waving a homemade banner honoring Julie Somers. Then a mom and her daughter sporting t-shirts saluting Ayako Fujiwara while the husband looks on with a grin. And finally, a pair of older women holding up a poster each - one reading "DA KID WILL REIGN!" and the other proclaiming "BOOM GOES THE CANNON!" We can hear Rebecca's voice as we see these shots...]

RO: Earlier tonight, twenty of the finest female competitors in our sport drew numbers at random.

[Cut to quick shots taken from throughout the match showing some of the competitors involved - veterans like Lori Wilson and Ricki Toughill... international superstars like Miyuki Ozaki and Kurayami... young rookies like Kayla "The Pistol" Cristol and Skylar Swift...]

RO: In just a few moments, the competitors who drew Numbers One and Two will make their way to the ring where they will compete. Every two minutes the next participant will enter the ring in order until all twenty competitors have entered.

[More competitors - familiar faces to AWA fans - like Charisma Knight, Julie Somers, Melissa Cannon...]

RO: The only way to be eliminated is to go OVER the top rope and have both feet touch the floor.

[Some quick shots of that happening - Julie Somers tossing Ricki Toughill over the top rope... Kurayami using two hands full of hair to toss Miyuki Ozaki to the floor... and Ayako Fujiwara using a massive fireman's carry to toss Kurayami in kind.]

RO: And when there is one woman left standing at the end of it all, that woman will go down in history as the very first AWA WOMEN'S WORLD CHAMPION!

[And we cut to the end of the match where we see Melissa Cannon down on the mat, her face etched in exhaustion and pain, writhing on the canvas as the Olympic gold medalist Ayako Fujiwara stands over her, throwing back her head to shout "KANPEKINAAAAAAA!" The voices of the legendary Gordon Myers and Bucky Wilde break through on the call.]

GM: She's calling for it! Calling for the Kanpekina!

BW: Okay... but why? Again, I think this is a mistake, Gordo. What good does a powerslam do her here? She needs to throw Cannon over the top rope, not pin her!

[Fujiwara, breathing deeply, leans down to haul a barely-moving Cannon off the mat. She leans over, moving into scoop slam position...

...where an absolutely frantic Melissa Cannon swings the point of her elbow down into the temple... and again... and again... and again!]

GM: Cannon's trying to fight her way out!

[Grabbing Fujiwara by the hair, Cannon swings her knee up to the head... and again... and again... and again...]

GM: KNEESTRIKES!

[And with Cannon pulling Fujiwara into a standing headscissors, she doesn't notice Lauryn Rage roll out to the apron, dragging herself up the ropes.]

GM: Where is Rage going?

BW: She's going up top, daddy!

GM: Why?! What's she going to do up there?!

BW: I have no idea!

[Cannon reaches down, snaring one of Fujiwara's arms...]

GM: She hooks one arm!

[The crowd roars as Cannon reaches down, snatching the other...]

GM: Melissa Cannon setting up for the Billion Dollar Bomb! But she's so tired! Can she do it? Can she get Fujiwara up?!

[Cannon tries to lift... but with a grunt, she sets Fujiwara back down.]

BW: No! She can't do it!

GM: She's gonna try it again!

[With a roar this time, Cannon attempts the lift a second time...

...but again is forced to put Fujiwara back down. This time, an exhausted Cannon slumps forward, her torso against Fujiwara's back!]

GM: Cannon can't even-

BW: RAAAAAAAAAGE!

[The crowd ROARS with surprise as Lauryn Rage leaps from her perch, tucking her legs up...

...and DRIVING her feet down onto the back of Cannon's head with a double stomp!]

GM: DOUBLE STOMP OFF THE TOP!!

[The two feet being driven into the back of Cannon's head drives her down but she immediately springs back up, staggering backwards as Fujiwara straightens up...

...and then ducks down, scooping Cannon up!]

GM: She's got her! She's got her!

[Fujiwara walks across the ring, pausing to readjust her grip near the ropes. She turns, dipping down low to put Cannon's head nearly touching the canvas before rapidly swinging back the other way, getting all her momentum twisting towards the ropes...

...which is when a crawling Lauryn Rage surges upwards, hooking her arms between the legs of Fujiwara...

...and FLIPS her over the top rope, sending both Fujiwara and Cannon toppling to the floor!]

BW: SHE DID IT! SHE DID IT!

"DING! DING! DING!"

GM: Oh my... I can't believe this!

BW: Oh, I can! I knew she could do it, Gordo! I knew she could do it!

[Lauryn Rage sinks to her knees, burying her face in the canvas as the ring announcer makes it official...]

RO: Your winner of the 2016 Rumble...

...and the very first AWA WOMEN'S WORRRRRRRRLD CHAMMMMPIONNNNNN...

[Deep breath.]

RO: LAURRRRRRRRRYNNNNNNNNN RAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAGE!

[Rage throws her arms in the air, jeers pouring down on her from the AWA faithful who are stunned by this result.]

BW: She outlasted 'em all, daddy!

[Cut to Rage stepping up on the middle rope, gesturing to herself, shouting at the fans as she holds the title belt up in the air!]

GM: Lauryn Rage is celebrating in front of these fans and-

[A loud burst is heard as white and gold streamers erupt from the upper reaches of the world's most famous arena, pouring down all over the crowd and the ring where the new champion is celebrating.]

GM: For all of us here in the AWA, we wish you a good night on this historic evening where Lauryn Rage has put herself in the history books as the very first AWA Women's World Champion!

[Closeup on Rage, shouting "I TOLD YA! I TOLD YA THE KID WOULD GET THE JOB DONE!" Rage stands on the ropes, slapping the face of the gold title belt with the white leather strap as confetti and streamers continue to fall as pyro bursts in the sky behind her...

...and as the footage slows to a crawl, slow motion highlighting Rage's celebration, we cut to a modern day shot of a smiling Lori Dane.]

LD: All the years of struggle... of thinking it would never happen, could never happen... all the garbage from years - decades before... the sexism, the harassment, the...

[She sighs.]

LD: After everything we've been through, to see where we are now, it's...

[Dane chuckles.]

LD: ...I don't even have the words for it. Look...

[She holds up her arm, running a finger across it.]

LD: Chills. Even now.

[She smiles.]

LD: That night in MSG? That was the moment it all became real... finally.

[We fade to a black with a shot of the 30 For 30 logo and the words "The Birth Of The AWA Women's Division" written underneath.

As we fade up on a well-lit room, we see former EMWC World Champion and current AWA co-owner and executive Todd Michaelson starting to sit down in a chair, leaning back as a production person goes to get him mic'd up. His wife - also a former EMWC champion and current AWA broadcaster - Lori Dane is taking a seat next to him as Todd speaks to the off-camera production staff.]

TM: So, what are we talking about today?

[A voice from off-camera - with an accompanying subtitle - replies - "The birth of the AWA Women's Division." Michaelson freezes, throwing a look at his smirking wife...]

TM: Alright, that's it for me!

[He feigns getting up when his grinning wife swats his arm playfully.]

LD: Sit down.

TM: You know, we used to get paid a lot of money for you to hit me like that.

[Michaelson sighs as he sits down, getting the mic put in place.]

TM: This is just begging for trouble. I'll be sleeping on the couch for a week.

[Laughter all around in the production area...]

...and we fade to a shot of former EMWC champion and current AWA competitor, Michelle Bailey, with the accompanying chyron taking a seat. She holds several notebooks, with the one on top labeled "2001".]

MB: So we get to see how far we've come, right? Because it's a lot to cover!

[She smiles playfully, brushing her hair behind her ear with her hand.]

MB: To truly get just how far we've come, though, and what it means to have to have this wildly talented, popular division just for us, though? I think you have to look back at what came before.

[She cringes.]

MB: Unfortunately.

[We cut to former AWA competitor Melissa Cannon in her talking head seat, dressed in a green and white Combat Corner t-shirt and black athletic pants.]

MC: There's just so much of the EMWC in the AWA's DNA, you know? From Todd and Lori... Steggy... Bobby... they were all there for the so-called glory days in the late 90s boom of this sport.

[She shrugs.]

MC: You just can't tell the story of women in the AWA without looking back to that era and seeing how the women were treated... not just in the E but throughout the entire industry... and understanding that for a lot of us, the glory days were anything but.

[We cut to a shot of Professional Wrestling Hall of Famer Stephanie Harper seated in what looks like a recliner, presumably at her house. Harper is dressed in a red women's polo shirt and blue jeans. Her light brown hair just touches her shoulders.]

SH: I didn't find a lot of options in which you had men's and women's wrestling both featured, and in a way that showed that the women could put on matches that were as exciting or entertaining as the ones that featured the men.

[Harper pauses.]

SH: There were a few promotions that presented women's wrestling with class.

[She pauses and takes a deep breath.]

SH: Unfortunately, there were other promotions which were more interested in presenting a product to fuel men's sexual desires.

[A voice from off-camera with an accompanying caption queries.]

"Do you think that they may have added to the perception many had about women's wrestling?"

[Harper nods.]

SH: I'm sure it did.

[We cut to Lauryn Rage.]

LR: It was really kind of potluck. I mean on one hand you had the UWF who treated the women pretty decently.

[We cut to a promotional photo of Nina Grimsson... and finally an action shot of Donna Tetreault - both with the accompanying chyron reading "Photography courtesy of Universal Wrestling Federation as Rage continues speaking.]

LR: You had Shootfire who had Marissa as their World Champion. But then you had a place like ACE that was a women's fed but the commentary team would talk about sexual acts all day. And ACE was run by a woman. But sex really sold back then.

[Lauryn shrugged.]

LR: You made your money and you played the good soldier. Hell, there were women's promotions that were straight up built on hating women. Drove my big sis out of the business. Hell, drove most of the female members of my family out of the business.

[We cut to another old still photo, showing former UWF Women's World Champion and current AWA competitor Laura Davis. After a moment, we cut to a modern day shot of the woman known as "The All-Around Athlete" seated in a chair in a studio. Davis is dressed in a navy blue pant suit with a white button-down shirt underneath the coat. Her brown hair is pulled back behind her head. She has an obvious smirk on her face as she looks into the camera.]

LD: Yeah, I started out in NEO-Pro. There were six of us at the time. I wasn't sure what to make of it at first, but the promoters wanted to take it seriously. It wasn't always like that.

[We then cut ahead, the camera taking another angle of Davis.]

LD: The UWF took it pretty seriously but very few other places did. Even the so-called biggest promotions on the planet didn't give us the time of day. Hell, some of the best women were better in the ring than the top men at times... but you'd never know it by the way they promoted us.

[Cut back to Bailey.]

MB: The stuff you'd hear about back then... what went on behind the scenes with the women...

[She looks very sad at the memories.]

MB: ...it was just awful, absolute horror stories. I'm sure people know what happened with me, but if you don't, I have my own documentary for that.

[The playful side of Bailey breaks through again as she beams at the mention of "The Lost Girl - Found"... but just for a moment.]

MB: For some of the women, it makes me sad that their stories won't get told, because they had it just as bad as I did back then. Some of them had it worse, actually.

[Cut to Laura Davis again, who has a more serious look on her face this time.]

LD: I was young – 23 years old at the time – but I learned quickly how to develop thick skin. I really had to watch out for myself because, with so few women on the NEO-Pro roster, there weren't enough to take a stand against any bad behavior from the men.

[A voice from off-camera makes a query, accompanied by chyron.]

"Were all the men engaging in bad behavior?"

LD: A few of them did treat the women with respect. But others...

[She frowns.]

LD: I really have nothing good to say about them.

[Cut to Lori Dane again, this time sitting alone, shaking her head as someone hands her a framed publicity photo of the then-"Luscious" Lori Dane holding the EMWC Women's Title in her ring gear.]

LD: There it is... the EMWC Women's Title.

[She chuckles.]

LD: Yeah, I held the title but for the life of you, could anyone remember who I beat for it? Or if I even defended it on TV? I was a house show gimmick. Someone they could trot out there to get whistled at and make the guys drop money for bikini 8X10s at intermission.

[She taps a finger on the framed photo's glass, shaking her head as we cut to an old piece of footage marked "EMWC HOUSE SHOW - NEW YORK CITY - 1996" where we see Lori in a very skimpy top and miniskirt posing for photos with fans. Lori's voiceover continues.]

LD: For every one of these, they sold at least a hundred of me in a bikini bottom with no top and the belt across my chest.

[The aforementioned poster is shown for a moment before we cut back to Lori, a hint of embarrassment on her face.]

LD: It wasn't right but... it's the way it was. If you wanted to be in the business at that time, you had to play that game.

[Cut to Todd Michaelson sitting on his own.]

TM: She hated it. All the sexual stuff on commentary. The gimmick of her sleeping with whatever character they thought needed the boost. She hated all of it... but it got her on TV at a time and place when nothing else would.

[Back to Cannon.]

MC: It was hard to watch. Most of the talented women's wrestlers in the 80s and 90s were in Japan. There were a handful here but for every Jessica Starbird, you had an "Erotic" Erin. For every Lori Dane, a Satin Sheets. The women in the States were being treated as a sideshow and everyone knew it. The Throbbing Mattress Kittens? Give me a [BLEEPING] break!

[Cannon looks disgusted as we cut to Ricki Toughill, sitting high up in the nosebleeds of an arena – the set for "AWA Saturday Night Wrestling" far in the background, still being set up. Ricki is in a plain black t-shirt with the sleeves cut off. Her hair is in a short combover, short enough that the interview can be dated to some point in late 2017.]

RT: Wrestling being so huge in the 90s, and me growing up with four brothers and no sisters... y'know, I'm in a working class Rust Belt city growing up... of course it was going to be on. And don't get me wrong: I was [BLEEPING] into it, man! But, hearing and seeing the way the gals were presented, and treated... Yeah, I'm 13, 14 years old, and my brothers are all hearing women talked about this way. They stopped picking on me when...

[She pats her fist into her palm a couple times.]

RT: ...I learned to take care of myself. But, yeah, it still makes me squirm and feel greasy that I indulged in it myself.

[Cut to former 90s competitor and Hall of Famer Medusa Rage sitting in a studio chair. Her thick dreadlocks curl wildly around the handsome angles of her face.]

MR: The 90s... we were riding a lightning bolt. There weren't that many of us so you'd see the same girls up and down the road. Sleep? Maybe at an airport. Home? Maybe thirty days out of the year. You made your money fast and you burnt out fast.

[Rage shrugs.]

MR: Maybe that's why there was a gap in the late 90s and then only a few places with Women's wrestling in the early 2000s. Back then you were all kinds of crazy to take on that schedule. And believe you me, I was that kind of crazy.

[Cut back to Ricki Toughill in the nosebleeds of an arena.]

RT: You think back to what women's wrestling was in the, uh... The Aughts, as they say. You had the "Angels and Amazons"... I wanna say sort of a... one-off festival celebration of women's wrestling, which I was lucky enough to be part of. But for a woman in wrestling... I tried to be a legit athlete, but... I was cannon fodder essentially.

[Cut to old footage of a young, auburn haired Erica Toughill in a plain maroon wrestling singlet being tossed around the ring by various opponents of both genders.]

RT: So the only way to distinguish yourself if you couldn't sell yourself on sex appeal is embrace the freakshow route. A girl I worked with in Chinook asked me if I wanted to come with her to this – what we would call a "death match promotion." And I said, "no, no, no! I don't wanna do that." And then she came back and said she made a thousand dollars just for swinging a chair around.

[Ricki replicates the aghast look on her face.]

RT: And I said that was more than I made in a month! Give me this guy's number! I need to make some money! So, if you don't have a home... It's a slippery slope.

[Back to Michaelson.]

TM: There were places you could work, sure. But places that anyone was watching? Other than the UWF?

[He shakes his head as we cut back to Dane.]

LD: It... hurt, you know? Sitting ringside and watching some of that stuff up close and personal. Women were just blatantly disrespected...

[She waves a hand.]

LD: You think about the Rages in Portland. Did Medusa get to work? Did Marissa Monet? Nope. Two of the most talented in the world and they got made valets and managers... but I guess they got lucky almost. They could've been Erin McCoys.

[We cut to footage marked "EMWC's Rumble In Sin City - March 14th, 1999" where we see former EMWC announcer Jon Keeton standing near wrestler Alex Rio where a Spin The Wheel wheel is spinning.]

JK: It looks like it's going to be...

[Jon Keeton rolls his eyes in disbelief as the wheel comes to a halt. An enthusiastic Alex Rio reads the result.]

AR: The match inside Erin McCoys' vagina! Alright!

[Back to Dane shaking her head.]

LD: I don't know if Erin's career ever really fully recovered from that. She didn't even have anything to do with it... wasn't involved at all... just someone in the back thought it was funny and...

[Dane looks furious.]

LD: ...sorry, just thinking about it again pisses me off. Then you had all the crap that got aimed at Nyx Dunne for being allowed to wrestle men in Michigan. She didn't get along with most people backstage but still... she didn't deserve that. Looking back, it just seems that if they couldn't make you a sexy valet to sell tits and ass... you were...

[Dane trails off as we get a shot of the Wrestling Watcher Weekly that has a bold headline reading "MCCOYS' VAGINA STINKS UP EMWC PPV!"

A still photo of Nyx Dunne with JW Hardin posted on a wall behind a smirking Eddie Van Gibson, Casey James, and Brian Lau that someone has drawn facial hair on Dunne with the hand-written caption "Men should wrestle men!"

And then footage from an EMWC event where announcer Lori Dane is taking a Burning Hammer from "Wild Thing" Kevin Slater.]

LD: ...buried.

[A screenshot promoting a blog written by Todd Michaelson with the quote "I don't trust anyone who bleeds for five days and doesn't die" appears on screen before we cut back to Todd who buries his face in his hands.]

TM: I'd love... absolutely LOVE... to say I didn't play a part in it... that I was the voice of reason backstage fighting the good fight but that'd be a lie. I was as bad as any of them... and I've spent years now trying to make up for it.

[Todd sighs.]

TM: You hear people trying to defend themselves arguing "I can only say I'm sorry so many times"... not me... not for this. Not for the kinds of things I said about Michelle and Lori and... Nyx and Erin and Satin Sheets and Piper Evans and...

[Michaelson shakes his head.]

TM: ...so, so many. I can't ever apologize enough.

[Michaelson lets loose a humorless laugh.]

TM: And I wish I could say that when the AWA opened up, I was on a mission to make everything right but...

[He shrugs, shaking his head.]

TM: ...that'd be a lie too.

[We cut to a two shot of Dane and Michaelson. A question from off-camera is heard.]

"Before we move on to the AWA... I gotta know. With all that going on, did you ever think about jumping ship? Heading to the UWF?"

[Dane pauses, a slight smile crossing her face.]

LD: Not for a second.

"Why?"

[She sighs.]

LD: I think... well, first... there were a lot of reasons.

[Todd interjects.]

TM: It was me, right? Tell them it was me.

[Lori chuckles, bumping her shoulder into her husband's.]

LD: A little bit. But really...

[She pauses, chewing her bottom lip.]

LD: ...it's hard for some people to understand what that "Wrestling War" mindset is like. We've seen some... skirmishes, let's say... over the last ten years but when you think back to the late 90s with the E and the Double Eye... or even a little later with the E and the UWF... it really was an "us against the world" mindset, you know? It's why people jumping ship was seen like... such a betrayal at times... a personal betrayal. I just couldn't do that to the people I loved.

[Michaelson grins.]

TM: Good answer.

LD: Plus, you never knew what would happen when you jumped, right? Some people got treated like megastars by their new employer and some people got buried six feet under almost immediately and their careers never recovered. Look at the list of IIWF World Champions who worked for Blue... and look at how many of them TRULY had success after jumping to the E... and I think you'll understand.

[Cut to Stephanie Harper. A question is called out from off-camera.]

"Would Lori Dane have been welcome in the UWF?"

[Harper tilts her head back, as if she's giving this some thought.]

SH: Personally, I would have welcomed her, because I made it a point to welcome anyone, as I was welcomed the first time I came to UWF in late 2000. But as far as others on the roster...

[She is quiet for a moment.]

SH: There was always the perception that other promotions had it out for UWF. That was especially the perception about the EMWC. And when you consider Lori was painted with the colors of the EMWC, even if she wasn't always happy with how she was utilized there.

[Harper presses a hand to her chin.]

SH: At that time, I'm not sure she would have.

[We cut to Marissa Monet, sitting at her dining room table, her long daughter, Adrianna sitting on her lap playing in her mother's big hair.]

MM: The UWF and the EMWC had some beef. If I were Lori Dane, I wouldn't have jumped ship. I believe she would have been humiliated. I've seen it happen before. Hell, it's happened to me. Wrestling promoters can be weird and vindictive. Sometimes they'll ruin a wrestler's career and cost themselves money just to prove a point.

[Marissa kisses her daughter's forehead.]

MM: Sometimes it's just better to quit than fight.

[Back to Lori Dane.]

LD: At some point, I think my dream of competing in the ring on a regular basis just kind of... died. I was happy to be a part of the business but it stung to know I wasn't doing what I really wanted to do. It's why it was so important to me to get Melissa back in the ring... and why it was so important to me to fight for all the women of this business to get a shot to live their dreams in the AWA.

[We fade to black... and slowly a piece of white text fades up that reads "The Launch Of The AWA."

As we fade back up, we find ourselves talking to one of the owners of the American Wrestling Alliance and longtime EMWC play-by-play announcer Jon Stegklet dressed in a suit and seated in what appears to be his office at the AWA's corporate headquarters.]

JS: To talk about the AWA's beginnings, you have to jump back a couple of years prior. The EMWC had closed... and to hear Blue tell it, it was never coming back. He was burned out. The roster was burned out. And frankly, when you ran as hard as we did with the style that we did, we had other issues too - sponsors, network

partners... it's one thing when you tell the world you're "Extreme"... it's another selling TV dinners and kids' vitamins to families when people are hitting each other with light tubes and bleeding from the opening match to the Main Event. We'd gone from a time where we had champions who could wrestle first and fight second - men like Gabriel Whitecross, Curtis Hansen, Kevin Slater... Tiger Claw and Joe Reed... guys like that... and now we were promoting someone like The Gremlin... who... look, no offense... but he was the epitome of someone who wouldn't know a wristlock from a wristwatch. His whole gimmick was smashing people with chairs and tables and cinderblocks. It was just a hard sell to Corporate America.

[Stegglet waves a dismissive hand.]

JS: So, the E closes up shop... a whole lot of people - in front of the camera and behind the scenes - are out of work and some of us who had squirreled away a little bit of money start thinking about the future... start thinking about trying something different.

[We cut to another AWA owner Bobby Taylor in a black sportscoat, blue jeans, and cowboy boots in another office.]

BT: At first, it was just me, Todd, and Steggs... sitting in a bar, daydreaming of what we'd do if we were in charge. It was big talk, big dreams.

[And then to Todd Michaelson.]

TM: We had the connections for sure... we knew what was possible... but the industry was a little bit torn up at that point. The business has always been cyclical and to say we were in a downturn when the E went under would be an understatement. The UWF was still running - of course - and a few others but... it was tough.

[Back to Taylor.]

BT: Everyone kinda went their own way for a while. Todd and Lori opened up their thing in LA. Steggs was just sitting at home taking some time off. I went back to Arizona to be a full-time Dad. And soon enough...

[Back to Stegglet who laughs.]

JS: "Never" became "hey, the E is coming back and we want you involved!" Blue had changed his mind to the shock of no one. But I think everyone was looking for a fresh take, to do things differently. We brought in Jason Dane - Lori's brother - to work commentary with Colt Patterson which meant that Todd, Lori, and I had other jobs with the new company... and it also gave us a direct pipeline to Blue's ear without an agenda. We helped influence the new style of the E... the... Wrestle Clean style. No more of the hardcore stuff. It was nice. It was refreshing.

[Back to Taylor.]

BT: A lot of people thought it was just a gimmick... that we'd send the hardcore away only to bring it back... and I think there were a lot of fans - some wrestlers too, I guess - who were really rooting for that. Not all of us but some.

[To Stegglet.]

JS: Yeah, there was a very vocal minority pushing hard for that. Courtade, Alex Martinez, Grem... that whole Kings of Wrestling group really wanted to see it back - that wasn't just a gimmick. It was tough to blame them. A lot of guys made a very good living doing things that way for a long time and this new focus on

wrestlers wrestling was a shock to the system. And they almost got their way... almost.

[To Michaelson.]

TM: To hear Blue tell it, the whole thing was a "be careful what you wish for." Blue says he didn't want to bring the E back... in fact, he pitched creating something new when the suits came calling but that's not what they wanted. And when he brought the E back, they were all on board with the new style... until the ratings weren't there.

[To Stegglet.]

JS: They say you can't go home again, right? I think that's what we learned the hard way. It was the E in name but... in spirit, it felt a little off... we felt it, the fans felt it, the whole thing was failing on the business side. Finally, the suits changed their minds - they were willing to take the heat but they wanted the ratings - they wanted the old E back. And Blue agreed to give it to them... until the plug was pulled on the whole thing... which I think was a blessing in disguise.

[To Taylor.]

BT: With the E gone and with Blue's blessing to move on with our lives, we started talking again and... well, eventually the concept of the AWA came to life.

[We cut to footage marked "February 20th, 2008 - Austin, Texas." We can see the setup of a standard Press Conference. A small podium has been set up in front of a black tarp and there are a handful of reporter-types milling around talking to photographers. After a few moments, a door opens off the side of the room and the man once known as the Outlaw of professional wrestling, Bobby Taylor, walks into the room. Much to the surprise of many who have known Taylor over his fifteen-year career, he's wearing a suit!]

BT: We're all here today to celebrate a new beginning in our industry. It's a new beginning for the fans of pro wrestling, the wrestlers themselves, and especially for me.

[The shot cuts to a closeup.]

BT: On a late night in Dallas a couple weeks ago, the American Wrestling Alliance was born.

[Taylor turns around as the big black tarp is yanked from the wall and a bright, shiny, glistening AWA logo is left behind. Taylor grins as the assembled reporters start shouting questions...

...and we cut to Bobby Taylor who is grinning big.]

BT: Outside of the day I was married and Wes being born, that's probably the proudest moment of my life.

[Cut to an also-smiling Jon Stegglet.]

JS: We had Bobby take the lead that day since he was probably the most well-known out of all of us but... yeah, we were all there. We were a team... a true partnership... and Bobby's right. It was a great day.

[Back to Michaelson.]

TM: It was a dream come true. A chance to do things our way. We were on top of the world.

[And finally, to Lori Dane.]

LD: Some of us were on top of the world. Not all of us.

[We cut to Melissa Cannon, an amused look on her face as a voice is heard from off-camera.]

"So, when the AWA was announced... you were involved from the beginning, right?"

[Cannon nods.]

MC: I was.

"In what capacity?"

MC: When the EMWC had re-opened, Todd and Lori were able to get me on board there...

"Oh really? I didn't know they had a Women's Division."

[Cannon laughs.]

MC: They didn't. Lori calling me to offer me a job in the new E was the biggest thrill of my life at the time... and then she told me it was to ring announce and my heart broke. I took the job because Lori convinced me it was both a foot in the door and a decent paycheck. But it made it hard to look in the mirror for a while. When the AWA opened and Todd and Lori were co-owners, I really thought I might get a chance to wrestle finally but... nope. Ring announcing. Again. And I sold my soul. Again. 'Cause a girl's gotta eat, right?

[She shakes her head as we cut to footage of Sarah Sharpe walking down the aisle alongside Dave Cooper and Eric Somers, the team of Rough N Ready. Then we see footage of her at ringside, then we cut to modern day Sharpe seated behind a desk. She has dark brown hair that comes just past her ears and is dressed in a black sweater and white pants. The chyron identifies her as "AWA Talent Relations executive/former AWA manager."]

SS: I was fine with being a manager and had no desire to wrestle. Don't get me wrong – I enjoyed my time as a wrestler but my shoulder was bothering me and, once I decided I was done, I was done. When Dave and Eric got back together as a tag team, I was happy to be their manager.

"But did you ever wonder if a Women's Division might be formed?"

SS: At the time, the AWA was just getting started, so I could understand that they would want to grow slowly. But if I ever wondered if there might be women's wrestling in the future...

[She tilts her head and is quiet for a moment.]

SS: ...if I said I wasn't wondering, I would be lying.

[We cut to Marissa Monet, with Adrianna Rage on her lap, laughing as she reminisces about the debut of AWA.]

MM: We were back and forth between Brooklyn and Halifax in those times. Shadoe had taken some time off and he got a call about a start up in Texas. The American

Wrestling Alliance. The first thing we asked was: "Is there a Women's Division?" The answer was no. The next question was: "Do you think there ever will be?" The answer was: "We'll see how it goes. Anything's possible."

[She kisses her daughter on the forehead.]

MM: It took a long time but here we are. And the wait was worth it. The AWA put a lot of time and energy into getting it right. This little regional start up in Texas that really offered nothing but an opportunity back in the day made themselves a juggernaut for both men and women.

[We cut back to Jon Stegglet. A question comes from off-camera.]

"Bottom line - if we'd asked you on Day One when and if we'd ever see an AWA Women's Division..."

[Stegglet looks uneasy, a slight smile on his face.]

JS: The odds are pretty slim sadly.

[He shakes his head as we cut to Lori Dane.]

LD: Ha! They told me repeatedly - "there's no room for women's wrestling in the AWA." It wasn't even up for debate really. I mean... I wasn't surprised.

[...Michelle Bailey...]

MB: Probably never.

[...Bobby Taylor...]

BT: Not gonna happen.

[...Todd Michaelson who shrugs...]

TM: Never. It just didn't seem likely. Me, Bobby, Steggs... even Blue... we had seen the issues that other places had trying to promote women's wrestling. Women in wrestling in general were in a pretty bad place at that point. Hell, my own wife couldn't get booked most places... Melissa was struggling to get anywhere.

[He shakes his head.]

TM: It just didn't seem like it was in the cards. If you had asked me then, I would've said "never."

[...to current AWA Women's World Champion Julie Somers...]

JS: I mean... never say never, right?

[We cut back to Todd Michaelson and Lori Dane in a two-shot. A voice calls from off-camera.]

"You know... uhh... we have some other footage from the day the AWA was announced too."

[Todd's brow furrows as Lori looks puzzled.]

LD: Huh? More than what aired?

"Yeah. A reporter's footage talking to some of you that day after the Press Conference ended."

[As the duo looks on, the shot fades to show some amateur-shot footage from the aforementioned Press Conference day. This is a closeup of Todd Michaelson as he talks and laughs with the assembled press.]

"Hey Todd! Todd! We've all seen the success the UWF's had with women's wrestling - I notice Bobby didn't mention it today. Any chance of an AWA Women's Division?"

[Michaelson shakes his head with a smirk.]

TM: Tommy, we just got INTO business and you're already trying to put us out? I don't care what Beeby says or does... women's wrestling in the US just doesn't draw a dime right now.

[The reporter persists.]

"So, no chance at all, huh?"

[Michaelson shrugs.]

TM: Hey, my wife would love to see it. I'd love to see it. We'd all love to see it. But it's gotta make business sense, right? This is a business, not a charity. We're not going to do it just to score points that we're doing the right thing. If it don't make dollars, it don't make sense, yeah?

[Michaelson turns to address another reporter as we fade to a shot showing that footage on an iPad to Michaelson and Dane.]

"Lori, any thoughts?"

[Dane sighs, leaning back in her chair.]

LD: I know it's good TV for me to rake him over the coals for that but... is he wrong? It IS a business... and if there's no demand for it, it DOESN'T make sense.

[Todd starts to speak but Lori extends a hand to cover his mouth.]

LD: But I WILL say that sometimes you have to CREATE demand... and if the female athletes out there don't have an opportunity to show what they can do, you're relying on someone else to create that demand. Fortunately - for a lot of women - the UWF was filling that role in North America.

[We cut back to Bobby Taylor.]

BT: Absolutely. I'd say if you were talking about women's wrestling outside of Japan in the 90s to... whenever they went down, I guess... the UWF was the place. They were essentially the only major place stateside that fully embraced women's wrestling and - from the outside at least - treated it as equal to their men's action.

[We cut back to a close-up shot of Stephanie Harper, who has her hands clasped in front of her chin, as if she wants to think about a response to a question.]

SH: There are those who didn't take what we did seriously. It was not just people who were in the UWF at one time or another, but others who never worked for UWF and saw women's wrestling as a waste of TV time.

[We cut to a promo shot of Harper, dressed in her wrestling attire and the UWF Women's title slung over her shoulder, then to footage later in the interview with Harper with the shot pulled back.]

SH: I don't think a lot of people paid close attention to what was actually happening in the Women's Division, in terms of the matches we were having or the types of characters who made up the roster. We had matches the fans loved, storylines that caught their attention and moments that stood out.

A lot of credit for that goes to Tara Marshall, who had been with the UWF since its inception and wanted to see a Women's Division thrive. I don't think she gets near enough of the credit she deserves for making that Women's Division happen and leading the way for that division to become what it became.

[We cut to the AWA Women's World champion, "The Spitfire" Julie Somers seated in a studio. She is dressed in a red T-shirt with the letters "LIVE THE DREAM" on it in white lettering and blue jeans with slits and tears in the legs. Her wavy brown hair hangs loose, past her shoulders.]

JS: My uncle was with the UWF for a brief period and he took me and my brother backstage for a couple of events. I was 12 years old at the time. I just remember being in awe, because here I am, and all these women I watched on TV were here and I'm getting a chance to visit with them.

[She gets a grin on her face at this point.]

JS: I remember going up to just about every woman who was there and asking them questions. And whether it was Tara Smith or Marissa Monet or Leanna Love or Nina Grimsson or Tara Marshall or Lisa Drake, they were all so nice to me, so patient and willing to answer any questions I had.

[We show a photo of a 12-year-old Julie Somers with Nina Grimsson. We cut back to Julie, who chuckles a bit.]

JS: They could have easily said "no, I don't want to talk to you," but none of them ever did. The more I talked to all these women, the more I knew I wanted to be a pro wrestler, too, and do the things that they did.

[We then cut back to Laura Davis.]

LD: In 2006, the UWF was revamping the roster. They had a few top names from what they call the golden era, plus wrestlers who hadn't gotten the spotlight as much, along with younger talent they wanted to feature. I was one of the women they signed.

[We cut to a photo of Laura Davis dressed in her red, white and blue track suit, standing in the corner of a wrestling ring, the UWF logo evident on the turnbuckles. Cut to a later part of the interview.]

LD: Before I came to UWF, I was part of promotions that were just getting started, whether they were starting women's divisions or were exclusively focused on women. In those cases, it was easier for you to get the chance to be at the top because nobody was established there yet. And if you had star power, promoters were quick to want to put you on top. In UWF, it was different – regardless of what star power you had, you had to prove yourself from day one and couldn't rely on reputation.

[She gets a slight smile and nods.]

LD: I took that as a challenge. I was going to go out and prove myself... prove that I was the one that could lead the UWF Women's Division into the next era.

[Cut to Michelle Bailey, reading from a notebook labeled "2005".]

MB: My contract in St. Louis was terminated, so I reached out to Toronto to see if there was any interest in me.

[Michelle closes the notebook, finishing the quote.]

MB: But there was none, for multiple reasons.

[She frowns.]

MB: I think we know what those were. I can read between the lines, not just about myself, but what grudges were still being held two years later.

[She shrugs.]

MB: But then again, they had already blown it with the best pound for pound wrestler on the planet, so I can't be too surprised.

[We cut to Salvatore Albano, looking excited to speak about a somewhat lost piece of pro wrestling.]

SA: In the mid-2000s, I don't think there was a better wrestler in the world than Misaki Ishikawa.

[Albano continues as footage of Misaki Ishikawa, standing stoically with a pink-strapped silver title belt around her waist, as streamers fly into the ring at Korakuen Hall.]

SA: If a promotion has to be created solely to showcase one wrestler, it's either an ego trip by the promoter, or that wrestler is just that good. Misaki Ishikawa was a case of the latter, and in Japan, after Devil Hoshino stepped away from full-time wrestling to run UNIVERSAL PUNCH!, all eyes were on Misaki Ishikawa and anyone she trained.

[A cut to current day Misaki Ishikawa, sitting at Shane Destiny's training school outside of Philadelphia, where she serves as the head trainer. She speaks in fluent English, affected by a slight received pronunciation British accent.]

MI: My family had been involved in various forms of combat for years, so it was natural for me to want to make it in America. I would hear stories from my grandmother about what it was like to wrestle around the world, and America seemed so... wonderful.

[Back to Albano.]

SA: Misaki's grandmother is actually Mary Rhodes, of the Rhodes family. She was a big star in the 1950s and 1960s, but settled down in Japan where she married into the Ishikawa family. Misaki's accent when she speaks in English is due to how Mary taught her to speak.

[Back to Misaki.]

MI: I was affiliated with a media conglomerate at the time, one who opened BATTLE*DREAM to feature me and my colleagues. That conglomerate originally reached out to the EMWC.

[Footage of Misaki Ishikawa wrestling on the final pay-per-view of the original EMWC, Redemption, runs over Misaki's calm speech.]

MI: That did not last long, as the EMWC closed shortly after. The conglomerate then focused on other avenues to get into America, and eventually allied with the UWF in 2004.

[We cut back to Misaki, now frowning.]

MI: Reona Yoshida, along with my sister Naomi and I, wrestled for the UWF, and it was not a very comfortable welcome.

[A producer can be heard off-camera.]

"What do you mean by 'not very comfortable'?"

[Misaki's frown deepens.]

MI: Being called an anime character. Having Sailor Moon and Pokémon references chanted at me. Not being treated like a wrestler, honestly. Like an object.

[Misaki shifts in her seat.]

MI: When the partnership ended, I was well satisfied to leave. I feel I was likely not missed. My students would occasionally ask me if they should go to America, and I did not want to crush their dreams of stardom and bright lights, but I was honest with them.

[Misaki nods her head.]

MI: Only one went. My top student. The most bold of them all.

[Misaki grins.]

MI: Miyuki.

[We cut to a luxurious office with the Osaka skyline visible in the background. Seated in a white leather chair is Professional Wrestling Hall of Famer and international star Miyuki Ozaki. As she speaks, subtitles appear at the bottom of the screen, translating her Japanese to English.]

MO: (The UWF had been recruiting me to join their Women's Division since I was a teenager. For years, I had received offers to come to North America, but I was always hesitant to do so. After all, women's professional wrestling in Japan was thriving and well respected. In comparison, women's professional wrestling in North America was...)

[She stops and gives a thumbs down, before sticking out her tongue and blowing a raspberry.]

MO: *Pbbbbbbt* It a real disaster! Death matches and mutilations! Who wanna do that!?

[After her outburst of English, Miyuki leans back in her chair, reverting back to her native tongue.]

MO: (But in 2009, the UWF was doing record business and I could no longer ignore their overtures. By then, my star was rising rapidly and there was no better place in the world to spread my renown than the UWF. When I finally did join, it wasn't long

before their Women's Division became the hottest division in all of professional wrestling. Sound familiar?)

[Miyuki chuckles to herself, as we cut to current AWA wrestler Ayako Fujiwara. She is seated in a lounge chair, with her arms crossed over her chest. We hear a voice off camera...]

"Ayako, not many people know this, but you were also in the UWF."

AF: I was. I was one of Miyuki's students and she took a handful of us with her to Toronto. She wanted us to gain experience and exposure to the bigger stages of professional wrestling.

[She frowns.]

AF: These days, I hear a lot of people reminiscing fondly about the UWF's Women's Division, but it wasn't without its flaws.

[Ayako shifts her in seat, a pensive look on her face.]

AF: I don't want to speak about Miyuki's experiences in the UWF, because that's her story to tell, but I can speak about my own. Just consider this: I was one year away from winning an Olympic gold medal and the UWF had me competing in beauty pageants and running around in skimpy swimsuits.

[A beat.]

AF: The UWF may have been the gold standard for women's professional wrestling in North America, but all that glittered was certainly not gold.

[We cut back to Miyuki.]

MO: (How was my experience in the UWF?)

[She tilts her head upward and cutely strokes her chin in thought.]

MO: (Well, I made a lot of friends. I created countless memories that I wouldn't give up the world for. And yeah, I even became famous beyond my wildest dreams! But let me just say this... I was in the UWF for three years and I was recognized as the "Female Professional Wrestler of the Year" three times.)

[She holds up three fingers.]

MO: (Do you want to guess how many title shots or pay-per-view matches the universally recognized best female wrestler in the world received in those three years?)

[Ozaki closes her hand and makes a fist.]

MO: (And that's all I have to say about that.)

[Cut back to Marissa Monet.]

MM: I got into the UWF fairly early because I saw they were doing Death In Darkness matches and you know Shadoc invented the concept. So they were doing Death in Darkness matches and they had a Women's Division. It seemed natural for me to be there. And it was in Canada so it was kind of easy to go to the head office.

[Marissa chews her lip.]

MM: Mike Beeby was running things and he was cool. I'm not sure about his yes men, though. They always had a lot of talent in their Women's Division. Maybe too much. In the UWF, you could do whatever you wanted most of the time, but you could also get lost in the shuffle really easily if you weren't careful. Most of the time you got that one big moment in the spotlight and then you got cycled out for the next.

[We cut back to Stephanie Harper.]

SH: I can speak from experience how difficult it was to get into the UWF. I got signed because Tara Smith and Arielle Starr spoke to Mike Beeby when I was having trouble finding a promotion that appealed to me and was on solid footing. If it wasn't for them, I'm not giving this interview, I'm certainly not being inducted into the Hall of Fame and there's a very real chance my son is not wrestling for AWA.

[She gives a quick nod.]

SH: However, those things don't happen if I hadn't gone out there, put on a good show and convinced those backstage that I belonged and was worthy of a prominent position.

"Were there any issues with cliques backstage?"

SH: I won't say there weren't, but I won't say they were unique to UWF. In that era, you were going to have cliques develop and inner circles form because that was the nature of the business. It was an era in which that competitive mindset, perhaps to a fault, prevails and it makes it difficult to break what some call the glass ceiling.

Now, I'm not going to lay blame on anyone who thought they didn't get a fair shake. But I can imagine that anyone who was used to UWF might have the same perception if they went to another promotion who ran things differently - not because what they did was wrong but because they had a different approach to the business, an approach that UWF mainstays may not have understood.

[We cut back to Laura Davis.]

LD: When I became the UWF Women's World Champion, I knew it was likely going to be me against Miyuki Ozaki for the title at some point. And I consider Miyuki to be a friend, but I will say this: You don't want to go too quickly to that match when there's a lot of money to be made.

Furthermore, a champion is only as good as the challengers that are out there. I thought we had things set up in which we could not only get to that big match between Miyuki and myself, but the path to get there would also build other women on the roster, meaning that whoever wins that big match has the challengers to deliver more matches in which there's more money to be made.

[We cut to a promotional shot of Davis dressed in her track suit and the UWF Women's Title around her waist, then to a later portion of the interview, with Davis shot at another angle and is being asked a question.]

"Would you say everything was going well overall in UWF at that point?"

LD: In terms of the quality of matches, I thought so. But were there other problems?

[She gets a frown on her face.]

LD: Well, for one thing, the schedule was a bit odd. Things were kind of going at a sluggish pace.

[We cut back to Stephanie Harper, being asked a question.]

"What can you tell us about UWF in its final years?"

SH: I had retired in 2006 and was only backstage at UWF a couple of times to visit people. I was focusing on my women's wrestling academy at the time. But I will say this: UWF had been in business for a long time. It was going on...

[She tilts her head back again.]

SH: They started in 1996, so it was 14, 15 years it had been running. And when you consider the people had been doing it for a long time and that they had gone through that so-called golden era, in which that competitive-to-a-fault environment might have taken its toll on a lot of people...

[She pauses, then nods her head.]

SH: Yeah, I'd say there would be burnout.

[And we cut back to Lori Dane.]

LD: The UWF was starting to fade.

[She smirks.]

LD: That might be a controversial thing to say... even all these years later... but the writing was on the wall for a lot of people in the industry. It was starting to fade and with it, it was going to drag women's wrestling in this country to the lowest point it had ever been.

[Dane shakes her head.]

LD: The UWF had been the place for women in this country... in North America... for YEARS. No one else had stepped up. No one else had challenged that role. And as it started to go down, I was afraid of every single woman in this part of the world getting dragged down with it.

[The former Women's World Champion sighs.]

LD: Something had to be done. I picked up the pressure. I was in meetings with the other owners absolutely begging... BEGGING... to give the women a shot. And I was STILL getting nowhere! I was a friggin' co-owner of the company and I still couldn't get it done for a long damn time. But when it changed...

[She raises her eyebrows... and we cut to Melissa Cannon.]

MC: It was hard for her, you know? The fighting with ownership. It put a strain on her relationship with all those guys... well, maybe not Todd but...

[Cannon smiles.]

MC: She went on the road a lot even when she didn't have to... just to keep me sane, I think. So I was in those bars with her after the shows... the gyms first thing in the morning... all the public appearances at card shows and Comic-Cons and all that stuff... and I'd see the interaction she'd have with people. She'd have little girls coming up to her saying they wanted to be an AWA wrestler someday. We'd go to

indy shows on our days off, check out the action, and then have all these women just looking for a chance to make it coming up to us and telling us their dreams and begging Lori to help them make it real.

[She grimaces.]

MC: It hurt her. Hell, it hurt me. Because while these girls were still fighting for their dreams, I had given up on mine. Lori had given up on hers too. We were the ones that people knew from TV... but only because we sold out.

[She goes quiet, staring down at the floor for a long moment...

...and then we cut to current AWA wrestlers Casey Cash and one-half of the Women's World Tag Team Champions Harley Hamilton sitting next to each other, when an off-screen voice addresses Casey.]

"You've been an AWA fan since you were 14, right Casey?"

[Casey nods vigorously.]

CC: Just before. Every year, for my birthday, my daddy would take me with him on business trips. I had a couple of big tests the week of my birthday in 2010, but the week before, he took me with him to Texas. He had a meeting with Texas Tech in Lubbock, then would come back and meet with Southern Methodist in Dallas, and the people at Southern Methodist said "we've got a wrestling show at the Moody Coliseum, come with us!"

[As Casey continues to talk, the opening to The Main Event from March 13, 2010 plays.]

CC: Daddy took me with him, and, well...

[The footage of Juan Vasquez holding up his newly-won National Title surrounded by other wrestlers from the locker room, having just defeated Stevie Scott, plays.]

CC: I got hooked the moment Juan Vasquez won.

[The producer speaks up from off camera.]

"I think you were actually on camera at one point. Take a look at this."

[The producer hands Casey an iPad, as Harley takes a look as well.]

CC: Oh! Yeah! That is me!

HH: Oh my gosh, look at you!

[We see the footage Casey and Harley are being shown, a slowed down shot of a 13-year-old Casey Cash, smiling broadly with braces on her teeth, wearing a Baltimore Orioles cap and an oversized Under Armour sweatshirt and the sleeve cuffs over her hands. She's waving at the camera as it pans past her. We hear the producer again.]

"You were only on screen for a half-second, so finding you was hard."

CC: But you can prove I was there!

HH: They should believe you anyway, your word that you were there is enough.

[The producer speaks up again.]

"What did you say to your father after the show was over?"

[Casey frowns.]

CC: I told him that I wanted to be a wrestler, and he said it just wasn't possible. He pointed out how many women wrestled on the show. We didn't know anything about wrestling, aside from what we just saw, and we saw exactly how many women wrestled.

[Harley frowns along with her E-Girl MAX teammate.]

CC: None. Just Melissa Cannon as a ring announcer. That was the only one I remember. So here's this brand new thing I loved, but I was told I could never do it.

[Harley sighs, as Casey shrugs.]

CC: My daddy was really, really wrong.

[And we cut to a black screen with a white title that reads "Let's Give It A Try..."]

...and just like that, we're back on Jon Stegglet.]

JS: We were starting to make some waves. 2008 was bumpy but we had some buzz. 2009 was even better as we started to have the profile - and the budget - to bring in some bigger names. 2010 was going along well too... and then some time during the summer, we did one of those management retreat things. We didn't have a ton of money yet but I think we sprung for a cabin in the mountains somewhere... basically locking all of us in a room for an extended weekend to make some plans for the year or so ahead. And Lori was... as tenacious as I think I've ever seen her.

[Cut to Todd Michaelson who grins.]

TM: She was determined... fiercely determined... but she still couldn't get enough support to get it through. She wanted to do one story... one deeply personal story to her... for her and Melissa.

[The smile fades.]

TM: She was so frustrated that no one would go along with it... that she did something I never thought she'd do.

[Back to Lori Dane with a satisfied smirk on her face.]

LD: I threatened to quit. Said I'd sell my share of the company to the highest bidder and go home... and go public with why I decided to do it.

[She shrugs.]

LD: Would I actually have done it? It would've killed me to but... yeah, I would have. I couldn't take it anymore and I knew that if we did it right... it would work and we'd never go back.

[Back to Stegglet who shakes his head.]

JS: She's family to us. We couldn't let that happen. Maybe it was emotional blackmail... or maybe it was just her way of letting us finally understand just how important it was to her. Either way, it worked. We gave the green light. One

angle. She had full creative control over it. But if it didn't work... that was it. End of discussion.

[Back to Melissa Cannon.]

MC: I'll never forget the look on her face when she told me about it. She wanted to take the real life scenario of me giving up on my dream and turn it into some damn fine television. I didn't even think twice. It meant I was going to get into the ring with my best friend with the whole world watching! Yes! Sign me the hell up!

[Cut back to Lori who is laughing.]

LD: So, there's a reason I've never worked in Creative - never WANTED to work in Creative anywhere before, I guess. By the time we'd reached a deal, it was late summer 2010. We were "on the road" to SuperClash II as the promotional materials say. And Jon and the guys said Melissa and I could have our match at SuperClash if we wanted to. But me in my infinitely boneheaded wisdom... I thought that was too quick. Too much of a rush to set it up. I only had one shot at it and I thought we needed more time to tell the story we wanted to tell. So, I turned down the opportunity to be the first women's match at SuperClash.

[She buries her face in her hands, shaking her head.]

LD: Oh, what a fool I was.

[We fade to footage marked "Saturday Night Wrestling - August 28th, 2010" where we see Lori Dane's brother - former EMWC and AWA announcer Jason Dane - running down the lineup for an upcoming AWA supercard.]

JD: We are just nine days away now, fans. Nine days away from the hottest event of the summer - Battle On The Bayou! September 6th in the Bayfront Center in New Orleans, Louisiana where we expect an all-time attendance record for the AWA to be in the house for what should be a historic night of action.

Let's run down the lineup one more time...

[We cut ahead in the segment as Dane is nearing the end of his rundown.]

JD: Plus, you heard the announcement earlier this week - a member of AWA management, Lori Dane-Michaelson will be in New Orleans with a very special message for a member of the AWA roster!

All of that plus much, much more!

Get your tickets now or make your plans to be with us LIVE on WKIK next weekend for the hottest event of the summer - it's Battle On The Bayou and you will NOT want to miss it!

[We fade from the footage to a shot of Lori holding an iPad watching it with a smile.]

LD: That was the start. Just a little teaser. Battle On The Bayou was going to be a huge show for the AWA... record-setting house... and I thought if we could kick off our angle with all those eyeballs on us, we'd be well on our way to achieving our goals.

[Cut to Melissa.]

MC: I... kinda let her do her thing for a lot of that. In hindsight, yeah... it probably wasn't the best idea to pass up a chance to do our match at SuperClash but...

[Cannon shrugs.]

MC: ...I was just a kid. I was going to let Lori lead us to where she thought we should go.

[We cut again to older AWA footage - this time coming from "Battle On The Bayou - September 6th, 2010." And this time, we've got a shot of Lori Dane watching it on an iPad on her lap.]

LD: The story was pretty simple. The AWA fans knew Melissa as a ring announcer... some of them knew she had trained to be a wrestler but it had been so long since then, we needed someone to establish to the audience what she'd given up to do the ring announcing gig. That's where I came in.

[Cut to the footage where we see young Melissa Cannon doing her "ring announcing gig" from center ring.]

MC: The following contest is a tag team match scheduled for one fall with a one hour time limit and will be conducted under NO DISQUALIFICATION RULES and is for the AWA NATIONAL TAG TEAM TITLES!

[The crowd is cheering but when Melissa starts to introduce the competitors, she's interrupted by Zamfir's "The Lonely Shepherd" - the entrance music for Lori Dane. After a moment, Lori Dane emerges onto the entrance platform in blue jeans and a black t-shirt with Todd Michaelson's face on it...

...and we cut to Lori and Todd in present day watching the footage.]

TM: Nice shirt.

LD: Showing you the love after the Southern Syndicate had kicked your ass a week or two before.

TM: Ah yeah. I remember now.

[From the iPad, we can hear the voice of Gordon Myers.]

GM: Hey! I totally forgot about this! We had heard last week that Lori Dane was going to be here tonight and that she had something very special to say to an AWA employee. And it looks like now is the moment.

[Lori shakes her head.]

LD: To this day, Gordon says the "I totally forgot about this" was a mistake on his part...

TM: And to this day, you think Blue or Masterson fed him the line to bury the segment.

[Dane clenches her jaw, nodding slightly as we cut back to the footage, showing a grinning Melissa handing the mic to Lori as she climbs into the ring.]

LD: Hello, New Orleans! I know a lot of people were surprised to see that I planned on making an in-ring appearance here tonight to address the crowd and to address a certain AWA employee.

[The footage skips ahead...]

LD: I've played a lot of roles in getting this company going and as I look around this building tonight and as I look around the AWA... I'm incredibly proud of what we've built from scratch! This is one of the greatest promotions on the planet without a doubt. There are so many fantastic superstars competing for the National Title. You look at the tag team division - it's arguably the hottest tag team division in all of wrestling. The sky's the limit right now for the AWA.

But there's one thing missing...

[Dane pauses dramatically...

...and then turns to point directly at Melissa Cannon.]

LD: You.

[We cut to a present day shot of Melissa Cannon watching the same footage with a smile.]

MC: Chills. I get chills even now watching this... and that...

[She gestures to her midsection.]

MC: ...that butterfly feeling, you know? I knew this was a big moment for me... for her... for us... and potentially a big moment for a whole lot of other women and girls around the business. We just had to do what we'd come to do.

[We cut back to BOTB Lori addressing her friend in the ring.]

LD: You see... these people... they may not know you, Melissa. But I do. I know you. And I know that this isn't how you pictured your life in this business.

Don't forget - I was there when you walked into that crappy old warehouse in Los Angeles and begged Todd to let you get in the ring and train to become a wrestler.

[Melissa nods, smiling at Lori.]

LD: And I was also there when I browbeat him into letting you do it.

[Melissa laughs, nodding again.]

LD: I saw you in that gym for months - breaking your body, busting your head open. The proverbial blood, sweat, and tears being spilled all over a dirty ring for a shot to do what you believed you were meant to do. I was there every step of the way, teaching you everything I knew about how to succeed as a woman in this business.

[We cut back to present day Melissa, wiping a tear from the corner of her eye.]

MC: It was all true. Every word of it. Lori Dane was... is... she's my friend... she's my teacher, my mentor... she's my savior... she's my idol... she's my... my hero.

[She wipes her eye again as we cut back to BOTB Lori.]

LD: Now, I see you falling into the same trap I did. I see you giving up on your dream because everyone's telling you there's no place for you in the ring here except behind the mic.

You're nothing but eye candy for these people, Melissa. They couldn't care less who was telling them that someone was coming to the ring... but they'd like you to look nice while doing it.

This isn't what you wanted for yourself, Melissa... and it's not what I wanted for you.

[Cut to present day Lori and Todd, the latter holding his wife's hand firmly as she looks emotional at the footage. We can still hear her words from the past as we see present day video.]

LD: I want you to compete! I want you to wrestle! And if the front office won't let you do it because they think these people don't want to see it?

Then we'll SHOW them that the people want to see it!

[A pretty decent sized cheer for that one. Lori pauses the footage.]

LD: Did you hear that? Right there! We had 'em! They wanted to see it! They wanted to see it and they were letting everyone know they wanted to see it.

[Lori nods confidently.]

LD: They were behind us...

[She smirks with a shrug.]

LD: ...and that meant it was time to yank the rug out from under them.

[Back to BOTB footage as Melissa takes the mic gingerly from her friend's hand.]

MC: Lori, I... I appreciate the offer, I truly do. But, I think... I think that chance has passed me by.

[Lori stares at Melissa with disbelief on her face... and then stands up off the ropes, grabbing the mic again.]

LD: I see. Well... if that's the way it has to be...

[Lori suddenly lunges forward, SMASHING the mic into the skull of her student, knocking her flat!]

GM: OHH! What the-?!

[Dane glares down at Melissa whose hands are up around her head. Dane delivers a hard kick to the ribs of Melissa Cannon.]

"TURN ME DOWN?!"

[Another kick to the ribs.]

"IT'S PASSED YOU BY?!"

[A third kick to the ribs.]

"I'LL SHOW YOU HOW TO BE A WRESTLER!"

[Dane dives atop the downed Cannon, delivering blow after blow to the head. She grabs Melissa by the hair, bashing the back of her head into the canvas time and time again...

...and we cut to a smiling present day Lori Dane, still watching as we can hear the old audio.]

GM: I can't- can you believe that, Bucky?

BW: I definitely didn't see that one coming.

[Todd reaches over to rub his wife's back as she holds up a finger.]

GM: Melissa's down. We're going to need some help to get her up. I can't believe Lori Dane just did that to her. And why? Because Melissa didn't want to wrestle anymore? The AWA doesn't even HAVE a Women's Division!

BW: I think that was the idea, Gordo.

[Lori stabs the finger into the air before pausing the video.]

LD: I fed them that line before the show. I wanted to plant the seeds in the audience's mind that this was more than just a one off story... this was - potentially at least - the start of the AWA Women's Division.

[We cut back to Julie Somers.]

JS: My uncle was in AWA at the time, so I was watching the shows whenever I could. And when I saw what happened between Lori and Melissa. I have to admit, I was pretty intrigued... like maybe this was the start of something big.

[We cut again - this time to a new face to the show, current AWA competitor Kayla "The Pistol" Cristol.]

KC: Back around that time, my family was bouncin' around the South quite a bit and we did our fair share of time in Texas. I was a big wrestling fan as a kid and it was hard not to notice what the AWA was becomin' - even back then. So, yeah... I saw the early stuff with Lori and Melissa and... for a kid growing up watchin' the shows and dreamin' of pro wrestling and tellin' folks it was what I wanted to do with my life... yeah, it was a big deal to see them on TV doin' stuff. What's the sayin'? "Representation matters." Yeah, I guess it does. I was real hopeful it was just the start of something bigger... something that might last.

[Cut from Cristol back to Melissa Cannon who looks thoughtfully at the camera.]

MC: We were in an interesting spot. With SuperClash coming soon but us NOT on the show, that meant that we were going to end up having our match - whenever it happened - sometime after the end of the year. Which meant that we had to stall.

[She laughs.]

MC: Or in industry terms... we'd need to "slow burn" this thing.

[Cut back to Lori Dane.]

LD: We'd started off hot if you ask me... there was a lot of buzz, a lot of interest... and yeah, now we had to keep it up... for a while... probably too long of a while in hindsight. So, we kept going...

[We cut to footage marked "Saturday Night Wrestling - September 18th, 2010" where we see Lori Dane in the ring speaking...]

LD: I'm here to talk to one person - and that person is YOU - Melissa Cannon!

[The camera abruptly cuts to the ringside area where Melissa Cannon is sitting at the timekeeper's table. She looks not-at-all-surprised.]

LD: That's right. Melissa, get yourself in that ring so I can see you.

[A disappointed-looking Melissa steps into the ring, mic in hand.]

LD: I'm glad to see you back at...

[Dane disdainfully chooses her next word.]

LD: ..."work." Apparently our little conversation back in New Orleans didn't sink in one bit, did it? We talk about you getting back into the ring. We talk about you doing what you love to do. And here you are... back as eye candy to these people.

[A cheer for the "eye candy!"]

LD: You disgust me, Melissa. You embarrass me. And you embarrass yourself.

[Cut back to modern day Lori.]

LD: ...and going...

[Cut to footage marked "Saturday Night Wrestling - October 2nd, 2010" where we see Lori confronting Melissa in the ring again.]

LD: When you came to that filthy garage in Los Angeles and told me how you wanted to wrestle, you told me I was one of your heroes in this business.

Was that a lie, Melissa?

[Cannon shakes her head in denial.]

LD: Because if that was the truth, than you know that I don't take well to being ignored.

[The crowd buzzes at the implied threat.]

LD: Fine. You want to try to ignore me? I'm going to make it impossible for you.

In two weeks, I'm coming to the Crockett Coliseum...

...and I'm coming dressed to wrestle.

[Cut back to present day Lori who sighs.]

LD: Hindsight is 20/20, right? We were still over a month out from SuperClash. We could've done something there... set up the match for SuperClash but...

[She shakes her head as we cut to footage marked "Saturday Night Wrestling - October 16th, 2010" where we see Lori and Melissa in the ring... again.]

LD: Your time is up, Melissa. What's your answer?

[Lori offers the mic to her former student who slowly takes it and begins to speak.]

MC: Lori, I really appreciate everything you've done for me - back in Los Angeles and here in Dallas. I appreciate you going to bat for me every place you've worked since we met.

But my answer is still no. I will not wrestle you.

[Lori looks down, shaking her head as she takes the mic back.]

LD: I was afraid of that.

"SLAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAP!"

[Dane lashes out with an open hand slap, right across the face of Melissa Cannon, causing Cannon's head to snap back to the side as the crowd groans with sympathy.]

LD: I promised you that. I told you it would happen if you said no.

Now... you get one chance to change your mind.

Because next time? It won't be just a slap.

[Dane smirks.]

LD: See you in two weeks.

[Cut back to present day Melissa Cannon.]

MC: I wish I had stepped up and said something. We were building this up... and the crowd was still with us... even if management wasn't.

[Cut to present day Lori.]

LD: The night of the slap... I had gotten pulled aside and said we didn't have time for it... which was the same thing I was told two weeks before. WKIK had us under pretty strong time constraints... and we were running over every week already. They told me that if a segment had to be cut, it was going to be ours since everything else was pointing at SuperClash. So, by choosing not to be on SuperClash, I was really starting to see the downside to that decision. And as November rolled around, I realized we had a really big problem.

[We cut to Todd Michaelson.]

TM: SuperClash is the Season Finale, right? It's the event that all our work all year long leads up to. Feuds come to an end, stories reach their conclusion... occasionally it's where something new starts... but it's incredibly rare for a story to run to SuperClash and then keep going right after. Incredibly rare... and incredibly hard especially since we started taking our annual "off-season" break after SuperClash.

[Cut to Jon Stegglet.]

JS: When the AWA first opened, SuperClash wasn't a thing yet... we'd run Thanksgiving... we'd run Black Friday... we'd even run Christmas... it was a hard schedule and it wasn't winning us any favors with the locker room. It also was making it hard to sell to free agents. So, we made a decision to change our schedule to give everyone - ourselves included - a couple of months to catch a breather after SuperClash. Rest up, heal up... every other sport has an off-season - why not us?

[And then back to Michaelson.]

TM: But unfortunately, that meant that for Lori and Melissa... if they were going to try to work this extended thing... they needed something to keep the interest for all that time off.

[Back to Dane.]

LD: We needed something drastic... and I took a suggestion that I probably shouldn't have.

[We cut to footage marked "Saturday Night Wrestling - October 30th, 2010" where we see Melissa Cannon in the ring doing her ring announcing duties.]

MC: The following contest is scheduled for one fall with a ten minute time limit and is the final quarterfinal match in the tournament to crown the first Longhorn Heritage Champion. Introducing first...

[We cut ahead in the footage where we see AWA competitor Nenshou and his manager Percy Childes inside the ring.]

MC: And his oppon-

[But before Melissa can finish, a voice calls out over the PA.]

"Your time is up, Melissa."

[The camera cuts to the head of the aisle where Lori Dane is standing, dressed for a fight with a mic in her hand.]

LD: I told you that you had two weeks to change your mind. You either accept your destiny and get back into the hunt as a professional wrestler...

...or I MAKE you accept it!

[Melissa shakes her head.]

MC: Look, Lori... I'm getting a little tired of this. I appreciate everything you've done for me over the years but it's not happening. I'm NOT getting back in the ring as a wrestler. It's just not going to happen so can you drop it?

[Lori arches an eyebrow at the response.]

LD: I knew you still had some fire in you. Let's find out how much. You see, I expected that answer. I was disappointed it was coming but I knew I'd hear it.

So, I came prepared... Gentlemen, if you please...

[Melissa looks puzzled...

...and then horrified as Nenshou rushes her, grabbing her by the back of the hair and yanking her head back.]

GM: WHAT THE-?!

[A screaming Melissa begs for help as Nenshou immobilizes her...

...and SPEWS a vile looking green mist DIRECTLY into her eyes!]

GM: AHHHHHH!

[The crowd explodes in shock as Cannon drops to the mat, screaming in pain as she rolls back and forth, trying to wipe the mist from her eyes.]

GM: She's been- we need help out here! What the hell has Nenshou done?!

BW: And the best part is that Lori Dane put him up to it! Who the heck saw that one coming?

[And with Melissa screaming in pain on the mat, we cut to a present day shot of Melissa looking at the footage on the iPad, shaking her head.]

MC: Look, it made for dramatic TV, I guess... but I think I got into that thing with Lori expecting that it was going to be us... just us. I thought it cheapened the whole thing that we had to be a sideshow for something going on with the men... no disrespect to Nenshou or Percy or Supernova but... it wasn't what I wanted.

[Back to present day Lori.]

LD: There was logic behind it. It put her out. Put lots of heat on me. Gave us a reason to pick things up in the winter. But... it felt off. I think our story took a big hit that night. And even if it didn't, now... we had to wait.

[Cut to Melissa.]

MC: I wasn't back on TV until the middle of February. That's about three and a half months off. And it wasn't like we were running TV during that time to do anything to keep me in everyone's minds. You know... back in the day, a lot of TV shows ran like that, yeah? You always heard about Dallas and Who Shot JR. The cliffhanger in May or whatever and the payoff in the fall. But wrestling wasn't like that... had never really been like that. It was going to be hard to bring it back and we all knew it.

[Cut to Lori who looks crestfallen.]

LD: By the time we got back, fan interest in it had cratered. Short attention spans and all. We tried to pick it up hot right away...

[Cut to footage marked "Saturday Night Wrestling - February 13th, 2011" where we see Melissa healed up and back in the ring doing ring introductions with Juan Vasquez standing in the ring holding the National Title.]

MC: And his opponent...

[Suddenly, a voice shouts out from the darkness at the edge of the ramp.]

"Did you really think it'd be that easy, Melissa?"

[The spotlight hits to reveal Lori Dane at the top of the aisle to a shower of jeers from the AWA faithful.]

GM: What in the... what is SHE doing out here? We've got a match! We don't have time for-

BW: That's exactly her point, Gordo! There's never enough time for women in the AWA! There's never enough time for women's WRESTLING anywhere in this business!

[We cut to present day Lori smiling at the iPad she's watching the footage on...]

LD: Bucky was always rooting for us. From the very beginning.

[...and then back to the footage itself as Dane enters the ring.]

LD: Now, we have some unfinished business to take care of in my book. You have a choice to make... you have to-

[The crowd ERUPTS as Melissa throws down the mic, taking Dane off her feet with a double leg tackle. She lands two heavy blows to the face before wrapping her hands around Dane's throat to the roars of the crowd!]

GM: SHE'S GOING AFTER DANE!! SHE'S GOING AFTER DANE!!

[Lori tries to fight back, flailing her arms back and forth, finally getting loose as she rolls to the floor. She takes a knee on the floor as Juan Vasquez and Marty Meekly hold Melissa back by the arms, both men grinning. Dane lifts a hand, running the back of her hand under her nose and coming up with a trickle of blood.]

GM: Melissa Cannon just busted up Lori Dane's nose! She drew first blood right here tonight in Dallas, Texas!

BW: I can't believe it! How DARE she?

GM: What?! Are you serious?!

BW: That's her teacher! Lori Dane did EVERYTHING to help Melissa Cannon get her foot into this business! How dare she go after her like that?!

[A smirking Lori Dane nods her head, slowly backing down the aisle as she watches Vasquez and Meekly restrain her attacker..]

...and we cut back to present day Melissa Cannon.]

MC: And just like that, I thought we had 'em again. Did you hear the crowd react when I went after her? And to be in there with Juan? I thought we were on our way.

[Cut to Lori.]

LD: Yeah, the fans went wild that night... but it was just a few days later that I got the bad news. The rest of ownership wanted to pull the plug. They just didn't think it was working. I was... heartbroken.

[She sits quiet for a moment, reaching up to swipe at her eye.]

LD: They at least let us have the match. At least we got that.

[Cut to footage marked "The Main Event - March 26th, 2011" where former AWA ring announcer Phil Watson is standing...]

PW: The following contest is scheduled for one fall with a fifteen minute time limit and is the FIRST EVER Women's match in AWA history!

[The crowd ROARS for that announcement...]

...and we cut ahead, showing brief highlights of both Melissa Cannon and Lori Dane entering the ring for the historic battle ahead.

As Cannon comes through the curtain, she sprints down the ramp towards the ring where the Queen of Extreme comes out to face her. The footage is spliced up into highlights with occasional commentary breaking through.]

GM: We've got a fight on the ramp! Melissa Cannon said it was gonna be a fight and she apparently meant it, Bucky!

BW: The first women's match in AWA history is underway and these two are tearing right into each other!

[Cut ahead to Cannon smashing her mentor's face into the top turnbuckle, before spinning her around in the corner, smashing a forearm into her jaw, sending Lori Dane down to a knee...

...and we cut to present day footage of Lori Dane watching the match on an iPad.]

LD: She was so fired up... we both were... I think she loosened some dental work on me that night.

[Dane chuckles as we cut back to footage of the match.]

GM: Another hard shot! Melissa Cannon is not holding back on her former friend and mentor!

BW: She can't afford to because you know darn well that Lori won't.

[With Dane down to a knee, Cannon grabs her by the hair and SMASHES her knee into Dane's face, knocking her flat on her back on the canvas in the corner.]

GM: Good grief! Melissa Cannon is bringing the pain here on The Main Event!

[We cut ahead into the match where Cannon is racing into the cornered Dane who leans back, swinging her feet up into her student's face...

...and then throws her sloppily over the top rope in something resembling half a backdrop and half a Northern Lights suplex, sending Cannon bouncing off the thin mats covering the Crockett Coliseum floor.]

GM: And here we go, Bucky. You called that she might take it to the floor and that's exactly what Lori Dane is doing right now... ohhh! Hard kick to the ribs by Dane! And another one!

[Cannon rolls to her stomach, trying to avoid the offensive assault of her former mentor who sits down on Cannon's back, grabbing her long brown hair and yanking back on it.]

GM: Oh, come on! There's no call for this!

[The crowd jeers Dane as she continues to pull on the hair, stretching Cannon back in a camel clutch-type position, causing Cannon to cry out in pain...

...and we cut ahead into the match, showing Dane using an Irish whip to send Cannon crashing into the ringside barricade.]

GM: SPINEFIRST TO THE STEEL! INTO THE BARRICADE GOES MELISSA CANNON!! And Bucky, I've gotta ask you - when you first met Melissa Cannon, that lovely young lady, did you EVER think we would see her in a position like this?

BW: I really didn't. I knew she had trained to be a wrestler - we all knew that - but those days seemed behind her. She seemed happy in her role with the company and had no interest in trying to wrestle anymore.

GM: You're exactly right but Lori Dane had no interest in letting that happen! Lori Dane, maybe trying to live through Melissa Cannon, kept trying and trying to get her to compete... eventually trying to physically provoke her... and that's what brings us here tonight to the first women's match in AWA history!

[We cut to present day Melissa Cannon watching the action unfold on the iPad with a smile.]

MC: It was such a special night. I remember it all like it was yesterday. I was on top of the world.

[We cut to present day Lori, a voice ringing out from off-camera.]

"Is it true you hadn't told her the story was over?"

[Lori chews on her bottom lip a moment before nodding sadly.]

LD: I couldn't. She was so excited... we both were... I just wanted her to have this night... this moment... before we got thrown back into the reality of it all.

[We cut back to the match footage, now showing Dane using a Shining Wizard on Cannon, flattening her for a two count.]

GM: These fans are solidly behind Melissa Cannon as she tries to avoid defeat at the hands of her former mentor. Lori Dane is trying to put Cannon down, trying to put her down for a three count but she has been unable to do so at this point in the match.

[An irate Dane pushes up to her knees, slamming an open hand into the mat as she glares at the official.]

GM: Lori Dane is a bit hot under the collar here as we approach the five minute mark in this matchup. You know Dane thought this was going to be an easy match and that Cannon would be done for by now but Melissa Cannon continues to fight back. She's not going down without one heck of a fight.

[We cut deeper into the match where we see Cannon unleashing a series of forearm strikes... then a kneestrike... and then a low dropkick putting Dane down...]

BW: She came to the building tonight ready for a fight and that's exactly what she's getting! That's what they're both getting! Melissa Cannon and Lori Dane are making history tonight and they're throwing down hard to do it, daddy!

[We cut deeper into the match where a charging Cannon whiffs on her attack, smashing chestfirst into the corner. Dane grabs her by the hair, swinging her around into a standing headscissors as she reaches down for both arms...]

GM: Whoa! Whoa! Dane's calling for the Billion Dollar Bomb!

[Feeling the move in place, Cannon rushes forward, smashing Dane's back into the buckles.]

GM: Big counter by Melissa Cannon! She avoided the Billion Dollar Bomb!

[With Dane stunned in the corner, Cannon hoists her up, sitting her down on the top turnbuckle.]

GM: Cannon put her down up top! And now she's climbing up!

[Cannon steps up to the second rope, pausing to slam home a few forearms into the jaw of Dane before hooking a front facelock, slinging Dane's arm over her neck.]

GM: Dane's got Cannon hooked up top - she's going for a superplex off the top!

[We cut a little deeper into the match where Dane goes to the eyes on Cannon, shoving her off the top before stepping up and leaping off, tucking her arms and legs in a senton backsplash!]

GM: DANE DROP!

BW: A sky high senton splash off the top!

[Dane rolls off Cannon on impact, reaching back to clutch her lower back...

...and we cut to a grimacing present day Lori Dane.]

LD: Hurts my back again just looking at it.

[We cut to present day chuckling Melissa Cannon.]

MC: I was shaking off ring rust as quickly as I could... it had been years since I had been in the ring at that point. But you gotta give Lori credit. Doing stuff like that after how long it had been since SHE was in the ring? Incredible. I love her so much for doing that for me.

[We cut back to the footage with both women down, the crowd cheering them back to their feet to continue...]

GM: Listen to these fans! They want to see the first women's match in AWA history continue! They want to see Cannon get up and keep the fight going! They want to see both of these women get up and keep throwing down!

[We cut again, going deeper into the match where a heavy-breathing Cannon is mounting the middle rope, sitting down on the top turnbuckle before slapping her arm...]

GM: She's calling for Melissa's Cannon! She told me to watch for this - a flying clothesline off the middle rope! That's what she wants to use right here.

BW: But if you know about it, Lori Dane may as well!

[Lori Dane rolls over, pushing herself up to her knees. She shakes her head back and forth, trying to clear the cobwebs as she shoves herself back up to her feet...]

GM: Dane's up!

[Cannon pauses a moment, waiting for her mentor to turn... and then hurls herself off the top, arm outstretched!]

GM: CANNO-

BW: CAUGHT!

[The crowd gasps as the veteran Dane slightly turns her body, catching the diving Melissa Cannon across her shoulders...]

GM: DANE DRIVER! SHE'S GOING FOR THE DANE DRIV-

[But before the Death Valley Driver can come into reality, Melissa Cannon scissors her mentor's arms with her own arms and legs, wriggling and fighting... and toppling Dane down onto her shoulders!]

GM: CRUCIFIX!! CRUCIFIX!!! ONE!!! TWO!!! THRE-

[Dane kicks out a heartbeat before a three count but Cannon hangs on to the crucifix, rolling through into a position with Dane on her stomach and Cannon hanging onto both limbs before SLAMMING the point of her elbow into the side of Dane's head!]

GM: Ohh! Elbow shot!

BW: Dane's arms are trapped! She can't defend herself!

[The crowd roars as Dane rains down elbow after elbow to the exposed skull of her former teacher.]

GM: Dane's in serious trouble here, Bucky! Lori Dane's trapped and-

[Switching her position, Cannon slides down enough to hook Dane's right arm behind Melissa's left while keeping her legs wrapped around Dane's left arm, arching her back to pull the two arms towards each other!]

GM: Oh my stars! My stars, what in the world is that?!

BW: It's some kind of an armbar, daddy! Look at the torque! Look at the pressure on the arms!

[Dane's screams fill the air as the AWA fans roar their approval for the innovative submission hold.]

GM: Cannon's hanging on for dear life, screaming at her mentor to give it up!

[The screams of Cannon mix with Dane, creating a cacophony inside the ring when suddenly the referee leaps to his feet, spinning to call for the bell.]

"DING! DING! DING!"

GM: SHE DID IT!! SHE DID IT!! SHE DID IT!!

[The crowd ERUPTS in cheers as Cannon releases the hold, allowing Dane to slump facefirst back down to the canvas. The triumphant Cannon rolls to her back, her chest heaving rapidly as she struggles to pull air into her body. The referee lifts her hand, pointing to her as she forces herself to a seated position.]

PW: Here is your winner... MELISSAAAAAAA CANNNNONNNNNN!

[With the aid of the referee, Melissa Cannon gets dragged up to her feet. She stumbles over to the corner, falling back against the buckles. Barely able to stand, she slowly lifts an arm to salute the cheering fans.]

GM: What a moment for Melissa Cannon! The first ever women's match in AWA history and Melissa Cannon just made her former mentor submit to that double armbar hold! And these fans are letting her know just how much they appreciate it.

[We cut to present day Melissa, still able to hear the audio from the footage as she smiles sadly. She too swipes at her eyes as the crowd continues to roar.]

MC: What a moment... you got that right, Gordon.

[We cut back to the footage where we see Cannon on her feet, barely able to stand as Lori Dane gets up with the aid of the official, leaning heavily against the ropes as she stares at her former student... and slowly extends her hand...

...and we cut to present day Lori, tears rolling down both cheeks now.]

LD: Ugh! I'm such a sap.

[She dabs at her eyes with a tissue as we cut back to see Cannon and Dane shake hands... and then embrace.]

GM: What a moment! Teacher and student are together again!

[The two women stand against the ropes, speaking unheard words to one another as they celebrate their match...]

...and we cut to present day Lori.]

LD: And if it had ended right there, it'd be the perfect memory. But...

[We cut back to the footage - a disgusted look on Lori's face.]

GM: What is HE doing out here?

[The camera quickly cuts to reveal James Monosso, dressed for his match, stumbling from the backstage area. He looks around puzzled at the crowd, almost as if he has no idea where he is...]

...and we cut ahead to where he's now in the ring, having disposed of the official. The audio dips down a bit as we can hear present day Lori speaking over it.]

LD: They said that if our story was ending... they thought they could at least use it to...

[She trails off as we see Cannon and Dane split apart from one another at the sight of him, both women looking nervous...]

LD: I have no issues with James at all but-

[Lori is cut off as the footage shows Monosso grabbing Melissa Cannon by the throat. You can hear a heavy sigh escape Dane as we can also slightly hear the crowd jeering Monosso's actions. A protesting Dane steps forward on the footage, only to end up with a hand around her throat as well.]

LD: This... this is what people were going to remember. They-

[We see Monosso force the women to their knees, still being choked by the madman.]

LD: I really don't want to see anymore of this. I'm sorry.

[The footage cuts and we go back to present day Lori, angrily slapping the iPad down on the table nearby.]

LD: I'm... sorry. That one stung more than I thought it would.

[Cut to present day Cannon.]

MC: I understood... not that night, not at the moment since I didn't know we were done but later on, I understood. A way to put heat on Monosso, let Todd make the save... good... fine... whatever.

[She throws a dismissive wave.]

MC: But on that night, I was so mad. Such a special night for me and Lori... such a great moment... and...

[Cannon bitterly shakes her head.]

MC: I bet this... right now... is the first time a lot of AWA fans are even seeing this match. Everything got lost in the Monosso thing... this whole match... everything we were so proud of just...

[Cannon sighs.]

MC: They just threw it all away.

[We cut back to Stephanie Harper, who now has an iPad in her hands. The chyron reads "Stephanie Harper is watching footage of the AWA's first attempt at a Women's Division for the first time."]

SH: All right, I really liked the way this starts. I love how Lori Dane is showing some fire and I can buy that Melissa Cannon might be reluctant.

[We cut ahead a few minutes and, now, Harper is shaking her head.]

SH: OK, why are we involving Nenshou in this? This should be between Lori and Melissa and...

[She pauses and looks closer at the iPad.]

SH: And we just roll Melissa out of the ring and go right to the match?

[Harper now puts a hand to her forehead, rubs her temple and sighs.

We cut ahead a few minutes and Harper nods her head.]

SH: OK, Melissa has finally fought back, but what took so long?

[We cut ahead a few more minutes and Harper seems intrigued.]

SH: I will say I liked the match and how they built it. [Pauses] And now they are hugging and making up... OK, I could see that and...

[Her voice trails off and now she stares at the iPad for a while.]

SH: So they do this match to set up James Monosso attacking and Todd Michaelson here to save the day?

[She puts a hand over her eyes and sighs deeply. After a moment, she pulls her hand away.]

SH: I make it a point not to tear anyone down because I don't think that's productive. But...

[She takes a breath.]

SH: I don't know whose idea that was, but it was a bad one.

[There's a voice off-camera.]

"They had told Lori things weren't working and they were scrapping it."

SH: Oh, I see.

[Harper shakes her head.]

SH: I do feel bad for Lori and Melissa, putting on a match the fans loved, only to get the rug pulled out from underneath.

[Cut to Michelle Bailey, who is offered an iPad. She holds up her hand.]

MB: No thanks.

"You don't want to see it?"

[Michelle shakes her head.]

MB: I heard about it, both when it happened and a few times afterwards. I tend not to watch things that I know will make me upset.

[Michelle sighs.]

MB: I know I wrestled men throughout the first part of my career, but we can be something other than a tool to make men look better. And from what I've been told, this is just a tool to make men look better.

[There is an awkward silence, which Michelle breaks with a sheepish smile.]

MB: So I don't want to watch it.

"Fair enough."

[We cut to Harley Hamilton and Casey Cash as they finish watching the match on an iPad. Harley puts down the iPad, looking agitated.]

HH: What the hell was that!? I'm honestly upset!

CC: I thought the match was great.

HH: Yeah, but then they ruined everything with all that garbage that happened after the match! It was the first women's match in AWA history and they couldn't even get a moment in the spotlight to themselves, before they immediately send out this big, dumb oaf of a man and...

[Harley lets out a heavy sigh, defeated.]

HH: I can't believe the whole thing was just a set-up to put over a bunch of men.

CC: Right? I couldn't believe it, either.

HH: What a bunch of crap!

[Harley stops herself and takes a deep breath to calm herself down.]

HH: Sorry, this is actually the first time I've ever seen this. I didn't grow up a huge wrestling fan, so a lot of these matches are brand new to me. And to see how Lori Dane and Melissa Cannon went out there and wrestled their hearts out, just to get treated like that? It's just... infuriating.

CC: It's okay.

[Casey places a comforting hand on Harley's shoulder as we then cut to Sarah Sharpe.]

SS: The point where I thought it went wrong was when Nenshou sprays mist into Melissa's eyes, and what do we do next? We just have the referee roll Melissa out of the ring and go right to the match.

[She leans back and folds her arms.]

SS: You just sent the message that this is no longer important.

"Did you mention that to anyone at the time?"

SS: I had switched from being a manager to a talent scout for AWA, so I wasn't part of the creative process. Now, maybe I should have spoken up but, at the time, I was focused on my new duties and wasn't thinking as much about the creative side of things.

[We then cut to a close-up shot of Sarah.]

SS: Hindsight is always 20/20 but maybe I should have backed Lori up. I don't know if it would have made a difference but she would at least know someone was on her side.

[We cut back to Lori.]

LD: I failed. As much as I liked the story... as much as I loved the match... it didn't do what we needed it to do. I failed.

[Cut to Melissa.]

MC: She blamed herself. She took it really hard too.

[She sighs.]

MC: We both did. She broke the news to me the next day... and...

[She winces.]

MC: ...I did NOT take it well.

[Cut to Dane who throws up her hands.]

LD: They told us we were both being taken off TV. For me? I got it. If there wasn't going to be a continuation of our story, then I didn't need to be - hell, I didn't WANT to be on TV. But Melissa? I didn't get that at all.

[Cut to Melissa.]

MC: They told me I wasn't needed on TV... and when I asked for how long, they said indefinitely. Indefinitely?! But for some reason, they still wanted me to come to the shows.

[She shrugs.]

MC: I was pissed. And I let them know that.

[Cut to Jon Stegglet.]

JS: I don't remember the exact words but it was something like "if you don't need me ON TV, you don't need me AT TV... I'm going home." And she did. She went

home and said to call her when we wanted her to go back to work. So, she sat at home...

[Stegglet winces.]

JS: ...for six months.

[Cut to Cannon.]

MC: Six months. Six friggin' months they sidelined me. I'd say it was a punishment if I could figure out what the hell I was being punished for.

[Back to Dane.]

LD: It was like everything we'd done... everything we'd worked so hard for just... went away. And it really didn't seem like anyone but the two of us cared. It was probably the most disappointing period of my career.

[Back to Cannon.]

MC: And then I got the call. Would I come back for Homecoming? They had this idea of billing me as the "first lady of the AWA." I just assumed that it was back to ring announcing but... they had a different idea.

[Cut to Todd Michaelson.]

TM: We had been approached by someone who you would probably consider a pretty big name in women's wrestling at the time.

[Cut to Dane who looks disgusted.]

LD: Holly f'n Hotbody.

[Cut to Lauryn Rage, slapping her knee as she is in the throes of laughter.]

LR: Holly Hotbody? OH HELL NAH! Who booked that?

[She gets serious.]

LR: That wasn't the right fit for what the AWA wanted to present. You could have hired Marissa, Medusa, even Dalbello for that spot and done better. They needed a wrestler... no frills, no gimmicks, just go out and put on a wrestling match. Hotbody was all frills. You hired a go-go dancer to lead the church choir and you wonder why it didn't work?

[Cut to Marissa Monet.]

MM: The Hotbody era had its moment. We went from wrestling like warriors to more cheesecake stuff in the late 90s and 2000s. Sex sold.

[She shrugs.]

MM: So women's wrestlers glammed up and showed more skin than ever. Holly Hotbody was the cream of the crop in that environment. But you can't take that act to a conservative wrestling first company like the AWA. It was a terrible mismatch. You had someone like Lori Dane... like Melissa Cannon... trying to launch a revolution and she was competing against a wrestler who imitated "Sex And The City."

The only way it could have worked was if Cannon or Dane crushed Hotbody in ten seconds to make a statement.

[We cut back to Melissa Cannon.]

MC: I was already at the building before they pitched the idea to me... I'm sure someone assumed that if they told me over the phone, I would've stayed home.

[A voice calls out from off-camera.]

"Would you have?"

[Cannon grins, shaking her head.]

MC: I don't really know. I wanted to wrestle so badly... I might've just taken any shot at it... no matter who it was.

[She bites her bottom lip.]

MC: It put a little bit of a strain on my friendship with Lori though. She thought it was the wrong direction and she was vocal about it... real vocal. She was mad at the office for putting the deal together... and I think she was just as mad at me for not turning it down cold.

[Back to Dane who sighs before speaking.]

LD: I was pissed. No doubt. We went from me and Melissa... hard-hitting... athletic... personal issue... and then the next time we decide to have women's wrestling on TV, we trot out someone who was more comfortable in a bra and panties match than an actual wrestling match, you know? And yeah, I was concerned that they were going to completely undo everything we'd worked so hard for.

[A voice from off-camera.]

"And Melissa - were you mad at her too like she thinks?"

[Dane grimaces.]

LD: Yeah. Yeah, I probably was.

[We cut to AWA Women's World Champion Julie Somers.]

JS: I knew Holly Hotbody from my time in MBC. Now, I loved my time in MBC but MBC was a different style of promotion that was known for going over the top. Case in point, my brother and I wrestled as a tag team under masks.

[She grins at that remark.]

JS: But the thing is, what my brother and I did in MBC, we could never get away with that in AWA, Women's Division or not. AWA was a back-to-the-basics approach and still is in many ways. My uncle Eric did some over-the-top stuff in his career, but when he came to AWA, he had to adjust his approach. He understood that, when you work for different promotions, you sometimes have to change your style or your character.

[Her smile is gone and she has a more serious look on her face.]

JS: That didn't happen with Holly Hotbody... and that was just the start of the problems.

[We then cut to Sarah Sharpe, who is shaking her head.]

SS: Terrible fit. Nothing personal against Holly, but she was a terrible fit for the AWA.

[She gestures with her hand as she speaks.]

SS: You had Lori Dane wanting to present a more serious approach to women's wrestling, despite how she was marketed back in the EMWC, and you had Melissa Cannon wanting the same thing. And by bringing in Holly Hotbody, you immediately went back to the perceptions that many people had about women's wrestling back in the so-called golden era.

[We cut to footage marked "Saturday Night Wrestling - September 17th, 2011" where we see Melissa Cannon in the ring performing her ring announcing duties.]

MC: The following contest is scheduled for one fall with a thirty minute time limit. Introduc-

[A voice calls out, interrupting Melissa's announcement.]

"Wait a second! Just hold up!"

[There's a confused buzz as all eyes turn to the entrance ramp, the direction of the sudden interruption. A busty bombshell of a woman steps from behind the curtains, a sneer etched on beautiful features. She's clad in a slinky, black halter top and form-fitting jeans, completing the look with heels. Her auburn hair falls straight down her back, bangs resting above her eyes and a microphone in her hand. To fans of UWF/MBC, she is known as...]

GM: "The Seductress" Holly Hotbody?! The last I knew, she was working up in Canada! What is SHE doing here?!

[Apparently to confront Melissa, if the venomous look she's shooting the announcer is any indication. Holly walks down the length of the ramp, ignoring the outstretched hands of the fans as her gaze never leaves the ring.]

HH: This whole thing _can't_ be real. See, a few months ago, the place I used to run, MBC, closed their doors. So, I came down to Dallas to let the AWA know that I was all set and ready to finally class this place up with a proper Women's Division. So, I'm sitting and waiting, biding my time to hear a yay or nay.

[She makes a face as she enters the ring through the top and middle ropes. She make her way over to Melissa, eying her up and down.]

HH: And, as I am, I see _you_ out here, celebrating your little return to announcing as if any of us here still gives a damn!

[Holly places her free hand on her hip, smirking at Melissa.]

HH: News flash, honey. Your days of being remotely relevant around here are over. See, while you've been off wherever with whoever, there have been some slight changes. There's a new breed of woman in the AWA, one who doesn't just look good but can kick your butt while doing it.

[We cut further ahead in the segment.]

MC: Holly Hotbody, we've never met... we don't know each other... our paths have never crossed. But I can tell you with certainty that I've had MUCH better women than you get in my face and threaten me...

[Melissa steps forward with that, getting right in the face of Hotbody to the cheers of the crowd. Holly Hotbody takes a few steps back, an incredulous look flashing across her face...]

...and we cut ahead again as Cannon lands a hard slap across the face, knocking Hotbody down on her rear end as the crowd ROARS! She angrily rolls out to the floor, slamming her hands down on the canvas and shouting up at Cannon who simply smiles in response, waving for Hotbody to get back in the ring.]

GM: Melissa Cannon is NOT backing down from a fight here tonight, fans! If Holly Hotbody wants a piece of Melissa Cannon, she'll give her all she can handle right here at Homecoming!

[A fuming Hotbody backs down the ramp, shouting "This isn't over!" as she heads towards the locker room, Cannon still itching for a fight as we cut back to the present day Melissa.]

MC: I was told we were looking for a singles match... the first women's singles match in Saturday Night Wrestling history. Pretty cool, right? So, at least SOMETHING good would come out of the whole thing.

[We cut to footage marked "Saturday Night Wrestling - October 29th, 2011" where we see a pair of white, platform boots. The camera slowly pans up, catching a flash of tanned, shapely legs and white hot pants. Next, we see a taut, toned midsection, before the camera continues upwards, lingering on ample cleavage, barely contained in a white, cropped tank.]

Voice: Up, buddy!

[Upon command, the camera moves up, revealing the smirking visage of Holly Hotbody, her auburn hair falling straight down her back...]

...and we cut to present day Lori Dane.]

LD: That's how she wanted to be presented... and someone had no problem with it.

[She shrugs.]

LD: I had a problem with it. A big one. And I let it be heard every damn week she was on our TV. When they told me about the plans to do a singles match on SNW... I was happy for Melissa but I was sick to my stomach that Holly Hotbody was going to forever be in the history books with that honor next to her name.

[The Queen of Extreme shakes her head.]

LD: Still makes me sick.

[We cut back to footage from that show.]

PW: The following contest is set for one fall with a twenty minute time limit and is the first women's match in Saturday Night Wrestling history! Introducing first...

[The sounds of "Milkshake" by Kelis rings out over the PA system, drawing a mixed reaction from the crowd.]

PW: From Malibu, California...

HOLLLLLLLLLLYYYYYY HOOOOOTBOOOODYYYYY!

[Cue the wolfwhistles as Hotbody steps from behind the curtains. Holly wears a low-cut, cropped, white tank top, barely containing her ample cleavage...

...and then to moments later where we see Melissa Cannon making her entrance to big cheers, glaring down the aisle in mid-thigh black trunks and a silver MMA style top. She points a threatening finger down the aisle at Hotbody.

And then back to present day Dane.]

LD: And then... then they pulled...

[She buries her face in her hands.]

LD: I can't. Cut it please.

[We cut back to the action from that night where we see Cannon in the ring as Hotbody starts frantically waving her arms...

...and someone suddenly hurdles over the barricade, throwing a right hand to the jaw of a security guard who tries to intervene, stunning him enough for her to dive headfirst under the bottom rope, springing to her feet and drilling Cannon with a double axehandle to the back of the head!]

GM: Who the heck is that?! Someone has just come out of the crowd and is going after Melissa Cannon!

BW: I don't know who that is! I don't recognize her!

[The brown-haired athletic-looking woman dressed in blue jeans, a black top, and tennis shoes wastes no time in putting the boots into the ribs of the downed Cannon as a grinning Hotbody looks on in joy, applauding the attacker's every move.]

GM: I don't know who this is either but she's really doing a number on Melissa Cannon. She got the edge with the sneak attack and now she's all over Cannon!

[We cut a little deeper into the segment as Hotbody SPIKES Cannon with a double arm DDT, her and her ally working over the AWA's ring announcer...

...when suddenly the crowd ERUPTS into cheers!]

GM: LORI DANE!! LORI DANE!!

[The Queen of Extreme comes tearing down the ramp, a steel chair clutched in hands.]

GM: Dane's comin' and she's bringing the hardware!

[The sight of Lori Dane with a chair in her hands is enough to send Holly Hotbody and her accomplice out of the ring as Dane steps through the ropes, angrily taking a wild swing with the weapon. She shouts something in Hotbody's direction as she stands over her former student, protecting her from further harm...

...and we cut back to recent footage of AWA executive Sarah Sharpe.]

SS: Now, I can understand the idea of presenting Holly as the example of that old school perception of women's wrestling while Melissa is presented as the new way

of thinking about women's wrestling, then doing a singles match. But then they decided to do a tag team match with Lori Dane paired with Melissa and, now, you have to deliver on who is the right partner for Holly.

[She cocks her head and has a look that suggests things weren't good.]

SS: Once again, there was a bad decision made.

...and we cut back to present day Melissa Cannon.]

MC: Lori had made so many waves, word had started to trickle out online about the problems behind the scenes that Hotbody was having... and I don't know how they convinced her but somehow they got Lori to buy into the idea that if there was a tag match instead - me and her against Hotbody and someone of her choice - that the interest would spike.

[Cannon shrugs... as we cut to modern footage of Lori and a question is called from off-camera.]

"How DID they convince you to do the match?"

[Dane laughs.]

LD: I honestly can't remember... but as we've established, I'm a pretty loyal person so I'm sure it was out of loyalty to Melissa... maybe just even out of loyalty to the company. I guess someone in Creative thought getting me involved in the story would help boost the sagging interest.

[She shakes her head before we cut back to Cannon.]

MC: It didn't... but at least I didn't have to go through it alone. And hey, this time? We were smart enough to take the slot at SuperClash when it was offered.

[We cut to a woman with shoulder-length brown hair with blonde streaks. She is dressed in a white blouse and blue jeans. The chyron identifies her as "Melanie Brown, pro wrestler." She's leaning up against a wrestling ring apron and has her arms folded.]

MB: I had trained with Stephanie Harper, had made a couple of appearances at Angels and Amazons and was working independents. I was looking for my big break.

[We can see her tap a finger against her arm, like she's thinking about what to say.]

MB: I got approached by somebody - and I'm not going to mention names - but this person said they had an opportunity for me to wrestle for AWA and work with a big name in women's wrestling.

[She bites her lip.]

MB: I guess you could say I was naive, but when there's hardly any opportunities outside of the independents, what are you gonna do?

[We then cut to Stephanie Harper in a close-up shot.]

SH: Melanie Brown was one of my best students. I thought so much of her that I had her compete in the Rumble match at Angels and Amazons, so she could get not only some experience, but a chance to be noticed by promoters and maybe that would lead to something for her.

[We cut to a later part of the interview, the shot of Harper pulled back.]

SH: I did not talk to her about AWA. I make it a point to my students that I will give you advice, but ultimately, you have to make your own decisions about what you want to do.

[Brief pause.]

SH: And you have to learn from those decisions.

[Cut back to Melanie Brown.]

MB: I remember coming to that taping and I was really wanting to make a good impression.

[She bites her lip again, then holds up her hand.]

MB: I want to be clear that I don't blame Lori or Melissa for anything, but at the time...

[She presses her hand to her chin and bows her head for a moment.]

MB: I just sensed a lot of bad vibes.

[We fade to a black screen that quickly gets a graphic that reads:

"Holly Hotbody declined to be interviewed for this program."

And we fade to footage marked "SuperClash IV - November 24th, 2011." It's footage of Mark Steglet running down the lineup for the last minute buyers...

...and with an on-screen graphic promoting the show, it's clear to see that the women's match is nowhere on the graphic.

We cut to present day Melissa Cannon.]

MC: Well, at least we were on the show, right? But yeah, the first women's match in SuperClash history and... no hype... no promotion... no media appearances. It was stuck in the middle of the show and when they went to the ring for it, it could've been literally any match on any undercard anywhere in the world. It didn't matter to the people it needed to matter to... not one bit.

[Cut to Lori Dane.]

LD: It was hard to blame them really. The match... the story... it was DOA. Melissa and I... and I'm sure Holly and Melanie in their own way... were going to go out there and give it our all but...

[She shakes her head.]

LD: ...no one cared.

[Cut to Casey Cash, this time sitting by herself. We hear a producer speak off-camera.]

"As an AWA fan at the time, how did that make you feel?"

[Casey thinks, then shakes her head.]

CC: By that time, I had started watching women's wrestling from Japan - heck, my daddy took me to Japan for summer vacation - and it was a completely different world. Holly Hotbody was cute and all, but it just wasn't something I wanted to watch, or something I felt was a valid way for me to wrestle.

[A deep frown comes over the face of the "Charm City Cutie".]

CC: People can get sex on dozens of other channels. Women could be seen as athletes, if they just were treated as such. That's not the vibe I got from that match, like, at all.

[We cut to Jon Stegglet.]

JS: This is an argument that Lori and I have had many times over the years. Was the match DOA because we didn't give it enough promotion? Or did we not give it enough promotion because the match was DOA? I felt bad for all four of them. I really did. I knew how badly they wanted it - especially Lori and Melissa - I knew they wanted it to work and I knew they had visions of it being a springboard to the launch of something bigger but...

[Stegglet shakes his head with a sad sigh...

...and we go back to footage from SuperClash as Holly Hotbody is walking down the aisle.]

GM: Holly Hotbody has competed all over the world. She's wrestled some of the best such as Andrea Chandler, Tiffany Lane, Medusa Rage to name a few. She is future Hall of Fame material for sure with her resume of accomplishments.

BW: I'd say Holly Hotbody is the PREMIERE women's wrestler today, Gordo.

GM: That's a hard point to argue, Bucky.

[And we cut back to present day Lori Dane who rolls her eyes HARD.]

LD: Look, Gordon and Bucky had a job to do too... I get it - I've been in that spot on commentary having to put over whatever crap the office was shoveling... but come on... really?

[She sighs with disgust.]

LD: The match was... fine, I guess. It was whatever.

[Cut to Melissa.]

MC: She's being nice, I think. It was a letdown to everyone. You guys asked me to pick out some highlights to show... and it wasn't even worth showing. We have this historic match - the first women's match in SuperClash history and...

[Cannon points to the camera as we cut to SuperClash "highlights" where Dane escapes a bodyslam attempt, landing on her feet behind Hotbody as she grabs her around the waist, pushing her forward into the ropes, rolling back into a reverse cradle...]

BW: Holly Hotbody reverses the cradle!

GM: She has a handful of tights!

BW: I don't see nothin'!

[Marty Meekly misses the handful of tights and dives into position. Melissa Cannon tries to slide into the ring, but gets stopped by Melanie Brown. Marty's hand hits the mat once, twice, and three times and the crowd erupts into jeers!]

GM: Holly Hotbody STOLE this match from Melissa Cannon and Lori Dane!

[Cut to the first AWA Women's World Champion Lauryn Rage.]

LR: Okay... so you have Lori Dane and Melissa Cannon trying to spearhead a revolution in a no frills straight-laced promotion to prove that women could wrestle the same style as men and the you have them against Holly Hotbody and... who? Melanie Brown. Oh nah. Come on, people! What did you just cover your eyes and pull a name from a hat?

[Rage smirks.]

LR: If I were Lori Dane, I'd be checking to see who in the office really hated her because they damn sure were trying to kill her dream.

[We cut to another current member of the Women's Division - the "Afro Punk" Victoria June. She's being interviewed backstage at some arena as she sits on some crates, playing drums with her hands.]

VJ: It was cool to get some women on a SuperClash. Ah loved seein' that, but you know it was kinda like Luke Skywalker and Ben Kenobi facin' off against Greedo and Snoopy. Just sounds weird, right? Well, try Lori Dane and Melissa Cannon versus Holly Hotbody and Melanie Brown. That's what ah'm talkin' about. And what makes it real crazy? Greedo and Snoopy won! Like... whut?

[June stares incredulously into the camera, her jaw hanging open for three beats before she bursts out into laughter and we cut back to Melissa.]

MC: I hold no grudges with Melanie. It was NOT her fault to be put into that spot... but I don't think she was ready for it... and I KNOW she didn't have the name value we needed to really boost the eyeballs on that.

[Cut to Lori.]

LD: I hear they tried to get someone big to team with Hotbody but... it wasn't happening.

[We cut back to Sarah Sharpe.]

SS: They were asking somebody who had potential, but had no name recognition, to be in a position in which she could never live up to expectations.

[A pause, perhaps for effect.]

SS: That's not Melanie's fault. The fault lies with whoever thought this was a good idea - just as the fault lies in other instances, not with the women involved, but with whoever thought certain ideas rolled out were good ideas.

[She glances away for a moment.]

SS: I have loved working for AWA since the day I arrived, but there's no way to sugarcoat it - the front office was screwing everything up on this one.

[Cut back to Melanie Brown.]

MB: I get it, OK? I couldn't live up to the hype. People can say what they want about me and I understand why. None of this is on Lori or Melissa. But the main thing I wanted was to be treated with respect. And certain people in AWA - again, not going to name names - they told me all these things, and the next thing you know, I'm told I'm no longer needed.

[She is quiet for a moment.]

MB: I was so mad.

[She is quiet again.]

MB: I called Stephanie and then I...

[She puts a hand over her face and grimaces.]

MB: I took it out on her.

[She takes a breath, then wipes her eye.]

MB: I should never have done that.

[We cut to Stephanie Harper.]

SH: She was rather unpleasant with me that day.

"What did she have to say to you?"

[Harper holds up her hand.]

SH: I'm not going to talk about that. I will say that she called me back a couple of days later, apologized and said she knew it wasn't my fault. I still think highly of her - and that's the thing. It's hard to hear about women who you believe in who think they have an opportunity and things fall apart. I've experienced that several times in wrestling, but as I told her, you've got to learn from what happens and be ready when the next opportunity comes.

[Cut back to Brown.]

MB: I went back to the independents for a while and, eventually, I got an opportunity here in Japan. It's allowed me to get a fresh start.

"Have you ever talked to anyone in AWA since 2011?"

MB: I had a tryout match a couple years ago, got to talk to Lori and Melissa and clear the air. But I'm always going to have my name stuck with one of the more infamous incidents in AWA and, even after they got an actual Women's Division going, that incident was still on my mind and I realized that I needed to go somewhere else.

[She then gestures with her hands to her surroundings.]

MB: Like I said, I'm here in Japan and enjoying it. Nobody needs to feel sorry for me.

[We cut back to Jon Stegglet.]

JS: Where is Holly Hotbody? I don't know actually. There's been some talk over the years of having her come in to do this or that but it never really made sense or had the right timing so...

[He shrugs. Now to Michelle Bailey.]

MB: I actually like Holly Hotbody, my path has crossed with hers several times and she's always been a sweetheart, but...

[She sighs.]

MB: That wasn't a good fit for how women's wrestling needed to be presented. It was just a copy of what almost everyone else was doing. The AWA wasn't breaking new ground, so it makes sense for it to have faded into nothing.

[We cut back to Julie Somers.]

JS: I never really understood what they were doing with their first attempts at women's wrestling. I mean, I thought some of what they did was pretty good, but other things they did... it was like...

[She purses her lips...]

JS: Like one step forward, then it's not a step back – it's somebody shoving them back, then acting surprised that they stumbled.

[...then cut to Ricki Toughill, full of withering sarcasm.]

RT: Oh yeah, you can see why they went with Holly Hotbody. I asked once about joining the AWA and they said I wasn't marketable. So I went and won the Empress Cup out of spite.

[And to Misaki Ishikawa, who offers only one word through a glared expression.]

MI: Garbage.

[We hold on Misaki's expression for a few moments before cutting back to Casey Cash.]

CC: When I first got interviewed about coming to the AWA, I was asked why my favorite wrestlers growing up were Juan Vasquez and Ryan Martinez and, well... tell me when a woman was ever treated as even a quarter of their level and I probably would have loved her too. She just didn't exist.

[We cut to Laura Davis.]

LD: I had caught a couple of early AWA shows and liked the presentation of the product. But I was focused on UWF, so I didn't see what they were doing in AWA with their attempts at women's wrestling.

[She wrinkles her nose and frowns.]

LD: Though I did hear about them doing something with Holly Hotbody and I knew I wanted nothing to do with that.

"What if they had approached you about doing something with AWA?"

[Davis narrows her gaze, like she's puzzled.]

LD: Doing what?

"They had Holly Hotbody challenge Melissa Cannon. What if they had you challenge Melissa instead?"

[She raises her eyebrows.]

LD: All right then, that...

[Her voice trails off and she nods.]

LD: That is a good question.

[She presses a hand to her chin, as if in deep thought.]

LD: I didn't know Melissa at the time, but you might have been able to persuade me of the idea. But you would have to come to me, not the other way around. And that's because, by this point, I had established myself as a top women's wrestler and had a good thing going in the UWF, so they would have to come to me and sell me on it.

[She gives a slight shrug.]

LD: And there were already several UWF wrestlers who worked in the AWA, so it's not like it would have been an issue for me. But nobody ever came to me with the idea.

[She shakes her head.]

LD: Missed opportunity, I guess.

[We cut back to Melissa Cannon.]

MC: A day or two after the show, we got the call - the whole thing was over. Done. Hotbody has signed... I guess a short term deal just to get through SuperClash and if things worked out, they'd look at extending it. It definitely did not work so the hammer came down and any hopes of a division were as dead as they had ever been.

[Cut to Lori Dane.]

LD: What a horrible... terrible... awful night. I don't even remember the rest of the show. Todd found me in an empty locker room at the end of the night just...

[Her mood darkens as she looks down.]

LD: ...it was so depressing. I knew that was the end of women's wrestling in the AWA for a while... and at that moment, I'm not sure I even cared.

[We fade to black. After a moment, a graphic appears.]

"Following the events of SuperClash, Melissa Cannon would not appear on AWA television for nearly two years. For Lori Dane, it would be even longer."

[The graphic fades as we go back to present day Melissa.]

MC: It was... a hard decision... the hardest decision of my life actually. I walked into Jon Stegglet's office a few days after SuperClash and... well, look... let's get something clear first. I wasn't under contract. In fact, I NEVER signed an AWA contract during all of that. I was on a handshake deal from Day One to ring announce. When I started wrestling on occasion, they kicked in a few more bills into my pay envelope but at no point did I sign a contract. So, when Jon said they wanted to take me off TV again... I felt like I was being punished for something that wasn't my fault... and I told him that.

[Cut to Jon Stegglet.]

JS: She wasn't happy with being taken off TV again. Look, I get it... I understood then and I understand now. But nobody was happy with how the Hotbody thing went down and I didn't want a reminder of it on TV for a while. She... lost her temper, I guess.

[Back to Cannon.]

MC: Yeah, I blew my top a little... said some stuff I probably shouldn't have - big shock there, huh? And I told him I quit. I walked out of his office and... that was it... for a long time I didn't hear from anyone associated with the company other than Todd and Lori and... that was tough too.

[We cut to Todd Michaelson.]

TM: I was disappointed when she left but I certainly understood it. She wanted to wrestle and we weren't going to give her that opportunity on a regular basis so she decided she needed to look for some place that would.

[He sighs.]

TM: Lori, on the other hand...

[We cut to Lori Dane.]

LD: Melissa leaving was tough... I was already in a bad place when that happened... and she called me to tell me about it after the fact. And... yeah, I let her have it. Looking back, I can't even tell you why because I assumed we'd never get a chance again... I think I was just sad that my friend was leaving. Hell, maybe I was even a little jealous.

[Cut to Cannon who looks visibly emotional.]

MC: Hardest phone call of my life. She was so heartbroken already over everything that had happened... and then I piled on top of it by leaving. I knew she'd be upset but... it was bad. It was a really bad conversation... and we both said things that we couldn't easily take back.

[She shakes her head.]

MC: So... I was all alone out there in the crazy world of wrestling.

[A voice queries from off-camera.]

"Did you try to go to the UWF?"

[Cannon chuckles.]

MC: Of course I did. I wanted to stay in the States and that was really my only option... but I think the writing was on the wall for them. They were starting to slip a little... cancelling shows... missing promoted dates... and they said they were... what was the term they used... ah, yeah... a "hiring freeze."

[She shrugs.]

MC: So, I went to Japan.

[We get a series of photographs displayed of Melissa competing in Japan... a locker room shot standing by Miyuki Ozaki and a very young Kurayami... Melissa sitting ringside in an empty gym with a group of young wrestling students...]

MC: It was... heaven.

[Cut to a grinning Melissa.]

MC: They let me wrestle every night. They took me seriously. And nobody stuck a stack of index cards in my hands and told me to make sure I got the announced weights right. It was everything I had ever hoped for. Yeah, the language barrier made it tough but... I loved every second of it.

[Cut back to Lori.]

LD: We weren't talking at the time... but I knew she was doing well for herself. We had mutual friends who made sure I knew she was okay. At first, I told everyone - I told myself that I didn't care anymore... but deep down, I cared. I think I was actually jealous for a while... but eventually I was happy for her. It's all I ever wanted for her, you know?

"And you? What were you doing?"

[Dane smirks.]

LD: I hung around the office for a while - marketing, appearances, paperwork, whatever I could do to stay busy... and eventually, I walked away from it all. Technically, it was a leave of absence but I think in my heart I planned on being done with professional wrestling.

"For good?"

LD: For good, yeah.

[She nods emphatically.]

"What changed?"

[Lori smiles, shaking her head.]

LD: "It's a girl!"

[Cut to an old photo of a young Lori Dane standing in a living room, looking down with a smile on a young girl tearing open gift wrap with another woman a little older than Lori looking on.]

LD: The story we've told on TV is true for the most part. When I was young, I got pregnant...

[She holds up a hand.]

LD: ...no, this isn't where I break some kind of scoop as to who the father is. Let's say he was in the business... he...

[She looks ashamed.]

LD: He had a family. A career. I'm not proud of it but... it happened and I didn't want to torpedo everything for him... and I still don't!

I know who he is... Todd knows who he is... and Sandra knows who he is. That's the only people who ever need to know if you ask me. Anyways... I was early in my career too and knew there was no way I could be a Mom and try to make it in this business at that age. So, I gave my baby up for adoption.

[She wipes a tear from her eye.]

LD: I... there was a friend of mine... family friend... someone I've known forever who was having trouble conceiving with her husband. And they offered to adopt my baby.

[Dane nods.]

LD: It was the right thing to do. Obviously, it was an open adoption... and we all knew and loved each other so... as hard as it was to do, I actually got to be a part of Sandra's life as she grew up. I got to be there for birthdays and holidays sometimes and... it was hard but... I wouldn't trade it for anything. As she got older, she got curious - she knew she was adopted and finally, we decided to tell her that her "Aunt Lori" was... more than that. We already had a relationship and... yeah, there were some bumpy parts but... we got there.

[She smiles.]

LD: She was a wrestling fan, growing up watching Aunt Lori on TV... and... well, she kinda fell into that world. She decided she wanted to be a wrestler and... during that time period, I helped train her a little.

[We cut to old footage marked "M-DOJO - 2011" where a skinny Sandra Hayes is taking a backdrop awkwardly. Lori's present day voice is heard over the footage.]

LD: She... wasn't very good at it. She had the passion but not the physical tools. But she so badly wanted to be a part of the business, she looked for other ways in - commentary...

[We cut to old footage marked "AWA Announcer Tryout - Sandra Hayes" where she is shown holding a microphone, grinning nervously.]

LD: ...and eventually, managing...

[More old footage, this time from her AWA debut alongside Terry Shane.]

LD: ...and when her boyfriend got the call to the big leagues, she came along with him. She had star potential - everyone could see it - something about that manager role just worked for her.

[Back to a present day shot of Lori.]

LD: Knowing how women got treated in locker rooms... even at that point... I knew I couldn't just keep away and leave her to the sharks. So, I started making the towns again, trying to help guide her... but I refused to go on TV for a long, long time.

[Cut to footage marked "Saturday Night Wrestling - July 19th, 2014" where we see a segment with several individuals in and around the ring, known by many as the "Ownership Vote" in determining the next AWA President. Jon Stegglet is present and speaking as we hear audio.]

JS: Ladies and gentlemen... the next... and NEW President of the American Wrestling Alliance is-

[But before Stegglet can drop the name, the sounds of Ennio Morricone's "Ecstasy Of Gold" begins to play over the PA system. Stegglet's face twists in surprise as he turns towards the entrance.]

GM: That's the music for Todd Michaelson! Is he here? Has he come to cast his own vote?

[A few moments pass, the crowd buzzing in anticipation until...

...someone quite different than expected walks into view.]

GM: It's Lori Dane! Lori Dane-Michaelson! Whatever you want to call her, she's here in Oklahoma City!

BW: Why?! What business does she have out here?

GM: Hey, she owns part of the company as well! She's given her proxy to Todd Michaelson in the past since she left the business but she's here now! This might just change everything! She's got thirty percent of her own that she can vote if she chooses.

[Lori Dane-Michaelson is dressed very formal for her, a black power suit with a dark charcoal grey top underneath. She has a stoic expression on her face as she makes her way towards the interview platform, stepping up onto it. Embraces with Jon Stegglet and Bobby Taylor follow. Jon can be heard asking "What are you doing here?" off-mic as the music fades.]

MS: Wow! Lori Dane! We certainly didn't expect this tonight. What on Earth are you doing here?

[Lori raises her head, arching an eyebrow.]

LD: There was a call for ownership to show up here tonight and last time I checked, I'm STILL an owner of this company.

[Big cheer!]

MS: Fair enough. Presumably you're here to cast your vote.

LD: I'm here to do more than that...

[She reaches into her jacket pocket, producing a sheet of paper of her own.]

LD: This document - signed and dated two days ago and notarized in Mexico - states that I am now the proxy holder for my husband, Todd Michaelson.

[The crowd reacts in surprise as Jon Stegglet looks down at the document in his hands which is now apparently worthless.]

LD: Which means that I've come here tonight to cast sixty percent of the vote... and to choose the new President of the AWA.

[Another shocked reaction as Lori Dane looks at Bobby Taylor and Jon Stegglet.]

JS: Lori, I don't-

LD: Jon, we've known each other a long time. Please don't make this harder than it is.

JS: Wait a second... what are you-?

[Lori turns towards the ring.]

LD: I can't believe I'm about to say this but... I feel like I have no choice.

JS: Lori, please...

[Dane throws a look at him to silence him.]

LD: Ladies and gentlemen... with our sixty percent of the vote, I hereby announce to the world that the NEW President of the American Wrestling Alliance is...

[Dramatic pause.]

LD: ...Percy Childes.

[Childes throws his arms up in triumph as the crowd EXPLODES in boos. Jim Watkins and Stevie Scott are both staring at Childes in shock as Lori Dane dips her head, looking down at the floor, shaking her head back in forth in disbelief at what she's just done...

...and we cut deeper into the segment where the new AWA President, Percy Childes, is standing with a mic in hand.]

PC: The third member of the Wise Men... and the one who made all of this possible...

[The Collector of Oddities drops down to a knee, swinging the crystal-topped cane towards the entrance dramatically, waiting and watching along with the rest of the wrestling world...

And then...

...Static.]

GM: Oh my god.

BW: What?! Is it true?!

[The crowd's buzzing grows louder, the anticipation whipped to a fevered pitch now as all eyes are on the entrance, straining to see who emerges from beyond the curtain.]

GM: You've gotta be kidding me. It can't be. It simply can't-

BW: IT IS!

[The Oklahoma fans ERUPT in jeers as Miss Sandra Hayes sashays through the curtain, the biggest crap-eating grin that you can ever imagine possible plastered on her face. She hasn't changed her clothes since we saw her earlier in the night but she is carrying herself with a whole new sense of importance... a new sense of power.]

GM: Miss Sandra Hayes is... she's the third Wise Man?!

BW: I guess the appropriate term is Wise Woman, Gordo!

GM: But I don't understand. Percy Childes said that she... that she's the one who made all of this possible! He said that she's the reason that he's now the President of this company! I don't get it.

[Hayes walks down the aisle, a power walk if there ever has been one. She reaches the ring quickly, flanked by Aaron Anderson and Lenny Strong. She ducks through the ropes, striding across to shake hands with a beaming Percy Chiles who hands the mic to her with a flourish.]

BW: I think we might be about to get some answers, Gordo.

[Hayes smirks at the jeering crowd as she lightly taps the mic against her open palm.]

MSH: I'm sure you have a lot of questions... questions that tonight is not the right time to answer. But on a night like this where my good friend, Percy Chiles, has been named the new President of the American Wrestling Alliance...

[HUUUUUGE JEERS!]

MSH: On a night like this where yours truly has been unveiled as one-third of the most powerful unit of individuals to ever exist in the world of professional wrestling...

[More jeers pour down on Miss Hayes.]

MSH: On this night, I have someone that I need to thank. The REAL person who made all of this possible.

[Hayes turns her eyes towards the interview area, beaming widely.]

MSH: To Lori Dane... our benefactor on this night, there's only one thing left to be said...

[Hayes waits, baiting the hook as everyone quiets down to hear.]

MSH: Thanks...

[The most dramatic of pauses is left, Hayes' grin somehow becoming even wider.]

MSH: ...Mom.

[Yep. That sound you just heard was the roof blowing off the State Fair Arena as every single body in the building collectively gasped.]

GM: Wha... what did she say?!

BW: That... is that true, Gordo?

GM: I have no-

[The very smart technical director cuts to a closeup of Lori Dane who looks at the ring, eyes slightly starting to tear up in the corners. She gives the slightest, the most subtle, of nods before we cut back to the smiling Sandra Hayes.]

GM: My god... I think it's true, Bucky.

BW: Look at her face! Look at Lori Dane's face! It HAS to be true!

GM: Sandra Hayes is... she's Lori Dane's DAUGHTER?!

[And we cut back to present day where the AWA manager known as Miss Sandra Hayes is sitting next to her mother, Lori Dane.]

MSH: Now THAT'S some good TV!

[Dane chuckles, shaking her head.]

LD: Sooooo, anyways... I was back on TV...

MSH: But more importantly, you were back with the company in full. The office was so happy that you agreed to do this story that you had a chance to get what you've always wanted...

LD: But I wasn't alone in that.

[We cut back to Sarah Sharpe, her arms folded.]

SS: After Melissa left and Lori decided she needed some time off, I was the only woman left in the front office. That's a hard position to be in – especially when I knew there were so many talented women out there who could have a lot to offer to AWA.

But at least the UWF was still around, right?

[She cocks her head and gives a half shrug, as if to indicate it's not good news.]

Cut to Laura Davis, a frown on her face.]

LD: It was about late 2012, I believe. I knew something was going on, but what exactly happened, I don't know.

[She is quiet for a moment.]

LD: But I did hear some rumors backstage.

[The shot cuts to Miyuki Ozaki.]

MO: (I heard it was financial difficulties.)

[She frowns.]

MO: (It sounds silly to say that when I said the UWF was doing record business during my time there, but years before I was ever part of the company, there was a huge riot on a show in... Miami? I believe it's quite an infamous event. From my understanding, it got way out of control and unfortunately, many fans ended up getting hurt as a result.)

[She looks away and sighs.]

MO: (I was told that between the lawsuits and the fallout with corporate sponsors from that incident, the company was put into a financial hole it could never quite recover from, even as we were doing big numbers years later. It's really unfortunate; until the very day it closed its doors, we were still selling out every show.)

[Cut to Marissa Monet.]

MM: Everybody remember the financial crisis of 2008? A lot of wrestling promotions were wiped out during that time. I heard the UWF had taken on a lot of debt and loans during that time to keep paying salaries. You know what the contracts were like. Wrestlers were getting multimillion dollar contracts for basically one day a week of television. I don't care what your numbers were that

wasn't a sustainable model. It's a shame. We all did really well on that UWF money.

[Marissa looks around her beautiful kitchen.]

MM: Too well.

[We cut to Stephanie Harper.]

SH: I don't know what happened in the UWF's final years, but I do know something that happened around the time I retired that corporate sponsors did not like.

[She takes a deep breath.]

SH: They did a backstage segment in which one wrestler attacked another, but he was drunk and smoking, then fell down on the other wrestler and set him on fire.

[Harper winces, then she opens her mouth like she wants to say something. But she stops, takes a breath, then continues after a moment.]

SH: And it was no secret that the advertisers were not happy, with some pulling out for good.

[She is quiet, then nods.]

SH: Between what might have been a loss of revenue and what I assume was people getting burned out, I guess the writing was on the wall.

[Cut back to Davis.]

LD: Disappointing is the word that comes to mind. I thought we had a good thing going in the Women's Division and, then, we find out there's not going to be any more UWF shows.

[She shakes her head.]

LD: And I looked around everywhere in the United States but there was nothing out there that appealed to me. There were some new promotions starting up but none of them offered women's wrestling. And those that did, I could tell it wasn't the right fit.

"What did you do next?"

LD: I called Misaki Ishikawa. I had been fortunate to get a stint with BATTLE*DREAM and I asked her about where I might find work in Japan. She got me in contact with somebody, put in a good word for me, and I was off to Japan to continue my wrestling career.

[A brief pause.]

LD: I thought I would never wrestle in the United States again.

[Cut to Misaki Ishikawa, with a shrug.]

MI: Yes, I helped Laura Davis. I helped quite a few people. I had tried to break into the United States for years and realized it was a failure to even try, so I offered any American who could cut it a chance to go to Japan. Some failed, some succeeded, but it would be a place where they could be taken seriously for their skill. They would be paid well, and appreciated, which is a hell of a lot further than they'd get in their own country.

[Misaki sighs.]

MI: I wish it wasn't necessary, but at the time, it was.

[Cut to Ricki Toughill, looking quite pensive.]

RT: I was building momentum in this oddball promotion called "Shootfire," and I wasn't feeling all that great health-wise, physically or emotionally, I was really out of shape, I ballooned up to almost 190 pounds... but I was pushing through because I had my first World Title match. And... the promotion shut down the day before my big title match. So I took the first big money booking I could get, which was in Japan. I get there, really jet-lagged, really feeling [BLEEP]-y.

[She sniffs hard, her watering eyes looking down.]

RT: I hit... the ring apron at the wrong angle... and break my back.

[Toughill stifles a sob.]

RT: It's a really [BLEEPING] long flight in economy from Japan back to the States with a broken back. And all I can do is think that's there no promotion there that I can go to... there's no home for me... I went to some pretty dark places on that flight home I gotta admit. I'm not even thirty years old...

[Toughill sniffles again, the memory still burned in her mind.]

RT: ...and I'm thinking, 'my life is over.'

[We then cut back to Julie Somers as she is being asked a question.]

"What opportunities were out there for women's wrestling once UWF and MBC were closed?"

[Somers is quiet for a moment.]

JS: Honestly, there weren't that many. None of the major promotions in the States had a Women's Division.

[She sighs.]

JS: I'm just getting started in my career and, now, I couldn't find anywhere to wrestle on a big stage.

"Did you ever think the AWA would ever have a Women's Division?"

[Somers purses her lips for a moment.]

JS: I mean, never say never, right?

[She shrugs.]

JS: Yeah, jump ahead a few years, but...

[She takes a breath and nods.]

JS: Yeah, at the time, I did wonder if it would ever happen.

[We cut back to Miyuki Ozaki.]

MO: (When the UWF closed its doors, I know many of my colleagues felt like the ground had just been pulled out from under them, but my situation had a simple solution – return home to Japan, where the opportunities for me would have been endless.)

[A beat.]

MO: (I didn't go back to Japan.)

[She smiles slightly.]

MO: (It would have been too simple. Too easy. Too neat. Japan would always be there for me, but I felt like I had unfinished business in the United States... and to my surprise, apparently the United States had unfinished business with me.)

[She pauses, her expression contemplative.]

MO: (The end of the UWF meant that there was no major American promotion with a Women's Division, but that did not mean it was the end of women's wrestling in America. I had become a star in the UWF and now there was a demand... for me. The promoters, the fans... they all wanted to see me.)

[She places her hands over her heart and lets the English flow from her lips.]

MO: They liked me! They really liked me!

[There's a big grin on her face, as the pride sweeps through her.]

MO: (But it also made me realize something else: the people in America were hungry for women's wrestling. Despite what anyone else might say, I saw it first hand. They were ready for someone to take the UWF's place. But they didn't want the watered down type of women's wrestling from eras gone by – they wanted high end wrestling and matches. They didn't want to just see eye candy – they wanted to see legitimate stars. And, for that year at least, I could be that star.)

[She closes her eyes, reliving the memories in her mind.]

MO: (It was an incredible experience. The crowds, the energy - they treated me like royalty. But... after a while, I realized something was missing: I missed the competition. I missed being in matches with high stakes and high consequences. I missed the thrill of being in the ring with wrestlers who could push me to my limits, wrestlers who could take me to new heights as a wrestler.)

[Her gaze shifts as she recalls her decision.]

MO: (So after a year, I returned to Japan. But I left with the knowledge that women's wrestling could work in America. Not just as a side attraction, but as a legitimate draw. I didn't know how or when, but I knew that one day, someone would take that knowledge and build something real.)

[A knowing smirk forms on her face.]

MO: (I just hoped I would be around to see it.)

[Cut to Lauryn Rage.]

LR: I was working an Atlantic City promotion called Atlantic City Entertainment with my sister, Dalbello, and Sierra Browne. I can't tell you how glad I was that our sister, Mantha, was a genius and had us all put our money over the years to be put into a central pie and we each got a piece. All the big paydays of the past? We

were pretty much living off that. I was performing in a hotel ballroom. Dalbello would be talking about how she was used to crowds of eighteen thousand people. She retired a year or so after UWF and MBC closed. It just wasn't worth it.

[Rage shrugs.]

LR: I was really left on my own - the only Rage sister still working and there was nowhere to really go. I didn't want to go to Japan so I was kicking around in Canada in my sister's promotion. It was basically staying in shape.

It was really depressing. An entire industry pretty much disappeared. Women's wrestling in North America? Gone. Gone.

I didn't think I'd ever see an arena crowd in my career again.

[She grins.]

LR: Thank God I was wrong.

[We cut back to Sarah Sharpe, the camera pulled away.]

SS: At that point, you had a couple more promotions starting up. There was Phoenix Valley, which had some promise, but no Women's Division. There was a group called Fighting Spirit, but no Women's Division at that time. And here we are, having tried and failed to get women's wrestling going, Melissa is gone, Lori is gone, and I'm out there, scouting talent and asking myself why I'm having to say to several women that, no, the AWA had no plans for a Women's Division.

[We cut to a close-up shot of Sharpe.]

SS: I will say that I had a good relationship with Todd Michaelson. I had identified talent who contributed a lot to AWA, even some who became top stars in the company. And in a way, he helped me realize the role in which I could contribute.

[Cut to Michaelson.]

TM: Sarah had come into the company managing Rough N' Ready... and when the time came for her to step aside from an on-camera role, she had inquired if there was maybe a spot in the office for her. She was willing to learn... willing to take any role available if it meant she could stay involved in the business. People liked her... when she spoke, she spoke with passion... with authenticity... and in this business, sometimes it can be rare to find people who don't just tell you what you want to hear.

[Michaelson chuckles.]

TM: Eventually, she landed in Talent Relations... in fact, she was the one who brought Supernova to our attention... so she immediately paid off. Over the years, she's stayed in that role as basically a Talent Scout... and her track record speaks for itself.

[Cut back to Sharpe.]

SS: I thought I had won enough respect at that point that maybe I could sell him on trying to get a Women's Division going, particularly now that none of the notable promotions offered it. So I mentioned to him about all this talent I saw out there in the independents. I told him it might be time to reconsider.

[Cut back to Michaelson.]

TM: It was a tough sell... but she started at the right place. If anyone was going to have a sympathetic ear in ownership, it was probably going to be me. Lori was still out of the picture... Melissa was off in Japan living her dream... honestly, I missed them both and the idea of a Women's Division... it might've been a little bit self-serving to consider it again. But yeah, we knew it would be a hard one to get through ownership after what happened with the whole Hotbody thing. It really left a bad taste in a lot of people's mouths and... honestly, if the whole thing seemed like a longshot when we first tried it... it was REALLY a longshot now.

[Cut back to Sharpe.]

SS: He wasn't the only one who heard the pitch from me. But time and again, I hear the same words... "it's not going to happen, let it go."

[She leans back in her chair, folding her arms.]

SS: I was getting a little frustrated at that point. I was beginning to understand what Lori had gone through.

"Did you give any thought to quitting AWA?"

SS: [shaking her head] Never – and it wasn't because my husband was working here. I am an AWA original and I really loved this company. Back when I stopped being a manager, I told everyone I didn't want to leave the AWA and asked if I could help in another capacity. They offered to have me work as a talent scout and, over time, I became a key part of talent relations.

[Cut back to Michaelson who chuckles.]

TM: She was persistent - that's for sure. A lot like my wife in that way. Every week, I'd see her in someone's office trying to convince them. Jon... Bobby... anyone who'd listen and even that wasn't a requirement sometimes. She would even go to the top male talent and pitch it to them - I saw her talking with Juan and Stevie once and I know they went to Jon the next day so...

[He smiles as we cut back to Sharpe.]

SS: There was a point that I didn't bring the subject up for a while, though I didn't like keeping quiet... and then Lori Dane returned to the company. When she did, I asked her if we could sit down and talk.

[Cut to Dane.]

LD: When I agreed to come back, I knew I wanted to talk to her. Todd had let me know that she was carrying the torch for us while Melissa and I were out of the picture. While I was gone, I didn't really care... it was a fool's errand and if she wanted to try it, it was her time to waste - not mine.

[She grins.]

LD: Maybe I had that one a little bit off the mark.

[Cut back to Sharpe.]

SS: The first thing I told her was that I wished I had come to her sooner, but she was right about the need for a Women's Division... and I wanted to help her.

[Cut back to Dane.]

LD: I appreciated the offer... and the passion... but I'd been there. Melissa and I BOTH had been there and we'd failed so many times at getting there. But there was one thing different now... with the UWF out of the picture, there was a giant gaping hole in the wrestling scene. In fact, the office was so glad I was back, I was able to use a little of those good vibes and get marketing to run some research for me. When it came back, it was clear... North American wrestling fans WANTED women's wrestling back on their TVs.

[She beams.]

LD: I'll tell you... it was like a lightning bolt hitting me when I saw that. If I could take that research... and if Sarah and I could find the right time and place to present it to Todd, Jon, Bobby, and the rest... maybe...

[She winks at the camera.]

LD: Just maybe.

[Cut back to Sharpe.]

SS: Around this time, the Wise Men storyline was in full swing, so Lori and I agreed it was probably not the right time. But we agreed that we would keep talking about ideas, so when the time was right, we could make that pitch.

[Cut back to Melissa Cannon.]

MC: I can't put an exact date on it... but one night after a particularly rough match in Osaka, they told me I had a visitor. It was Lori.

[Cannon smiles softly.]

MC: She'd made a special - and unannounced - trip to Japan and came to see me.

[Back to Dane.]

LD: While I was waiting to go back on TV for the whole Wise Men thing, the office had asked if there was anything I wanted to do behind the scenes... basically gave me a blank check to pick my role. I offered to go to Japan.

[She chuckles.]

LD: Don't tell Steggy. The cover story was that I was going there with Todd to shore up relations we had over there... maybe build some others... even do some scouting. But I had an ulterior motive for sure. I wanted to apologize to Melissa.

[Back to Cannon.]

MC: We went to an izakaya - had some food, a lot of drinks, and hashed things out. She offered me a job that night... but I turned her down. She told me she was thinking of pushing for the Women's Division again and wanted me to be a part of it... but I'd been down that road and been burned by it. I was happy in Japan... homesick, sure... but I was finally doing what I'd wanted to do since I was a little girl. I couldn't step away from that without a concrete reason.

[She grimaces.]

MC: Two weeks later, I hurt my knee in a match... was going to be out of action for a few months. In Japan, there's not a whole lot of opportunity to make money if you can't work and... well, like I said before, a girl's gotta eat. I told Lori what happened and within five minutes, I had an offer to come home. It was an

announcing job... but interviews backstage... and hosting the SuperClash Control Center, that kind of thing. It wasn't wrestling but it was a gig and at least it wasn't ring announcing. I took the job, signed a short-term deal so that I could go back to Japan when I healed up, and went home. I'll always be grateful she was there for me when I needed her the most.

[Back to Dane.]

LD: Of course I was. She's my friend... she's like a daughter to me. There's not a lot that I wouldn't do for her, you know?

[Cut to Jon Stegglet.]

JS: The pieces were falling into place all around me and... I'm not sure I even realized it yet. Lori and Sarah Sharpe had cornered me at some show and laid all this market research on me. They had proof - hard evidence - that the people wanted women's wrestling. I was hesitant... how could I not be... but I wasn't totally opposed to the idea. I knew how much it meant to Lori... and she's one of my best friends so I wanted it for her too. Sarah said she had an idea.

[We cut back to Sharpe.]

SS: What I presented wasn't just my ideas, because Lori had ideas as well. But I said it was good to have Melissa back because, as an AWA original who the fans love, she has to play a role in this. The second thing I mentioned was that we needed more than just Melissa. We needed more women in visible positions with the company, but these women needed to have training in wrestling.

[Cut back to Stegglet.]

JS: I thought it was a win-win situation. We were looking to hire some more managers at the time anyways so... hire some female wrestlers as managers. If the plan works out and we can use them to wrestle, fantastic... if it doesn't, we still have them in their spot as managers. And with Sandra here as well, having other women who could be pitted against her in managerial spots made a lot of sense.

[Cut to Sandra Hayes.]

MSH: Lori came and told me the plan... and yes, I call her "Lori" unless I'm on TV trying to be a giant pain in the you-know-what... they were going to hire some women to be managers... valets, whatever you want to call it. And if they got the chance, they were going to use the same women to wrestle. It was exciting! I figured I'd never get to be a part of it but... I was excited FOR them... and I was excited for my mom. Melissa was a good friend so I was happy for her too...

[Cut to Melissa Cannon.]

MC: I was told not to get my hopes up.

[She laughs.]

MC: Too late for that. Those few months starting off 2015... they had to start giving the women more than a tiny closet in the back to dress in! It was a huge accomplishment!

[Back to Sarah Sharpe who pauses for a moment.]

SS: Selling it on Jon was the easy part, but selling it on other women proved more difficult than I thought. There were women I talked to who had their doubts and I couldn't get a commitment.... then I started to wonder if this was going to work.

[She then gets a smile on her face.]

SS: Then I got a call from Howie Somers.

[We then cut to Howie Somers seated in a chair in a studio. He is dressed in a navy blue polo shirt and gray slacks.]

HS: My uncle Eric told me that AWA was looking for tag teams. I knew Sarah and I gave her a call, hoping she could put in a good word for me.

[Cut back to Sharpe.]

SS: He mentioned Daniel Harper as a partner and I thought... that's Stephanie Harper's son. But I put that thought aside, because there was something else I knew about Howie and I asked him about it.

[Cut to Howie.]

HS: She asked me about my sister Julie. She said she might have a job for her.

[And then to Julie.]

JS: I had still been watching AWA but didn't see any sign of a Women's Division forming. That's why Howie was the one who called, because I thought this was his opportunity, not mine.

[She says this in a somber tone, but then she perks up.]

JS: But then Howie gives me his cell phone and says, "Julie, Sarah wants to talk to you."

[Cut to Sharpe.]

SS: I explained to Julie that she could come into AWA as a manager to start. She said, "Sarah, I'm a wrestler, not a manager."

[Sharpe grins.]

SS: I said, "Julie, there are people who can explain more, but I'm telling you, this is your foot in the door. This is your opportunity."

[And back to Julie, a grin on her face.]

JS: When I was 16, my brother and I were always bugging Sarah about training us how to wrestle – and Howie will say it was mostly me, but Howie knows he wanted it as much as I did. She eventually gave in, but when I went through my training with her, she always made it clear when I needed to listen or do better.

[She chuckles a bit.]

JS: When I heard Sarah's response to my statement about not being a manager, I knew I better take her up on her offer.

[Cut back to Sharpe.]

SS: After that call, when I talked to Lori and Todd, I had a hard time containing my excitement.

[Cut to Lori Dane and Todd Michaelson side by side who smile at the memory.]

TM: She said "I had a hard time containing my excitement" - yeah... I'd say that's an understatement.

LD: I think the exact words were "oh my god, oh my god, oh my god... you guys HAVE to talk to Julie Somers. She could be EXACTLY who we're looking for."

[Lori grins.]

LD: She was right.

[Cut back to Sarah.]

SS: I tried not to oversell... there was a conflict of interest because I trained Howie and Julie and...

[She pauses for a minute, almost like she's trying to keep her composure.]

SS: I have two sons, both grown now, but I never had a daughter. Julie may as well be my daughter. But... either way, I told them... "talk to her and you're going to find out how much Julie loves the business."

[Cut back to Todd and Lori.]

TM: Howie and Daniel were pretty much a lock to come in at that point. We all knew Howie from the days when his uncle was a big part of the tag division... and turning down Stephanie Harper's kid seemed like a decision you'd regret when he became a big star somewhere else so... but then there was Julie.

LD: You still weren't sure this idea would work.

[Todd nods.]

TM: I just didn't want to see your heart broken again. We were all talking about how we could hire them to be a manager and then "let's see if we can have them wrestle later" but that wasn't what was in your head... I know it. It wasn't what Sarah was REALLY thinking either no matter how she was selling it to the office. You two thought you'd cracked the code... that if you hired women, we'd finally relent and let 'em wrestle. Melissa had agreed to stick around while she recovered... Julie agreed to come in and manage with the hopes of doing more... admit it. You thought you were there.

[Dane sighs.]

LD: Okay! Yes! Of course I did!

[She throws up her hands.]

LD: Maybe I'm just a sucker... I don't know.

TM: You're a dreamer, kiddo... one of the many reasons I love you.

[Awww. Lori and Todd share a moment before we cut to Jon Stegglet.]

JS: Yes, Lori and Sarah talked a good game and gave a good pitch... but I knew what they were expecting. And I was just hoping it all worked out this time... finally.

[Cut to footage marked "Saturday Night Wrestling - February 21, 2015" where we see Sarah Sharpe standing next to Mark Stegglet.]

MS: Sarah, let's talk for a moment about what you have been doing in the AWA for some time... you've been responsible for a number of wrestlers who have made their way to the AWA. What has it been like spending your time with Talent Relations?

SS: Mark, it's a job that involves a lot of work because the AWA has built a reputation for having the best talent in the business. Now, I don't really like to talk about the wrestlers who I have scouted and brought here, because I'd rather let the wrestlers do the talking about what they can do. But tonight, I've made an exception for the latest wrestlers I have helped bring to this company.

MS: Well, what can you tell us about these new wrestlers?

SS: They hold a special place in my heart, because I, along with a few others, helped train them when they said they wanted to wrestle. They've already gained experience in another wrestling promotion, and then they were spending time on the independent circuit, when I contacted them and told them there were new opportunities here in AWA. So I was allowed to formally introduce these individuals, and they are here tonight.

MS: So who are they, Miss Sharpe?

SS: It's my pleasure to introduce to the AWA fans... Howie and Julie Somers!

[There is a polite reception as two young individuals make their way to the podium. The two acknowledge the fans as they reach the podium, where Howie shakes hands with Sarah and Julie gives her a hug...

...and we cut a little further into the interview.]

MS: Julie, there isn't even a Women's Division here!

[Julie's expression shifts... just slightly... barely noticeable.]

JS: Mark, I'm not gonna deny that I'm a little disappointed that the AWA hasn't gotten a Women's Division going in its near seven years of existence... and if the AWA ever did decide to get one going, I'd be one of the first to sign up!

[Cut to present day Julie Somers. She has an iPad in her lap that has just showed her the same footage we saw.]

JS: I didn't know exactly what I wanted to say at first, but I had some ideas. Then Mark brings up how there's no Women's Division and...

[She starts to giggle.]

JS: I later asked Mark about that and he just smiled and said, "Oh, I'm just doing my job."

[She gets a big grin on her face.]

JS: I then thought either Lori or Sarah had him ask that question and, when I confronted them, they each said they didn't – but I didn't believe them.

[She laughs for a bit.]

JS: Then I talked to Mark again and he said, "Julie, it was my idea." He then told me he really wanted to see that Women's Division happen and I should get to say something about it.

[She brushes away a strand of loose hair.]

JS: But as far as this promo goes, I don't think it was my best work. I was just trying to put over Howie and Daniel... and I know they've told me that they realized they hadn't put their best foot forward. We all agreed we could have done better.

[She nods her head.]

JS: I didn't know what to expect at that point, other than I was putting my trust in Sarah... and in Lori, who I really liked and sensed she wanted so much more for me.

[Cut to Lori.]

LD: I didn't know Julie at all when she came on board but from that very first conversation, you could sense she was something special. She had a great mind for the business... a willingness to listen and learn... a passion and enthusiasm for everything she was asked to do. I knew that if I could get her in the ring to wrestle, she could be a star for us. But she sure couldn't do it alone.

[Lori arches an eyebrow as we cut back to Sharpe.]

SS: Having gotten through to Julie, I was more motivated than ever to find more talent. I took some time to look – and then came the first time I saw Charisma Knight.

[The camera cuts to a nice chair in front of a bookcase that's loaded with wrestling VHS tapes and DVD's, and sitting in the chair is Charisma Knight, with the chyron "Charisma Knight, former AWA star."]

CK: I have loved wrestling since I was a little girl but as everyone on this has probably talked about, it was pretty DIRE in the US. Not having the family connections and no schools really taking on women, especially with all the issues the UWF was having. So, I ended up in Mexico.

[We cut to a still photo of a young Knight competing in Mexico.]

CK: Yeah, I know I never exactly screamed Luchadora, but what goes on in Mexico is another documentary. But you can always ask Ricki, or Marissa, or Melissa, Julie, or anyone who's wrestling now... if you wanted to wrestle seriously, the options were few and far between. You had to double up with managing, and for me, Japan wasn't an option, but that's a story for TV... eventually.

[We cut back to Sarah Sharpe.]

SS: Charisma Knight had been in the business for a few years. I watched her from afar at first, in the ring and observed how she was backstage. She was one of the most professional women backstage.

[And back to Charisma.]

CK: In Mexico... if you weren't a flyer, you needed to be a physical bad guy, and that's where I ended up excelling. It was an easy transition to do the same thing when I got back to the US doing whatever indy would book me. It was even indies in Mexico. SWLL had its own issues and was, "full up on foreign rudos," as I was told. And getting noticed in the US, especially as a woman, I needed to crank up the personality to 11.

[Cut to Sarah.]

SS: In the ring, she had a physical style and I could tell she didn't hold back against anyone. She also had this presence about her, a personality that made you pay attention to what she had to say. So after a show, I approached her.

[And back to Charisma.]

CK: "Hi Charisma, I'm Sarah..." Yeah, you suddenly had me talking to one of the top talent scouts for the AWA.

On one hand, this is the person that could get me a job at what was becoming THE place in the US. On the other hand, I've been following the product as the saying goes.

[Charisma grins.]

CK: I think my response was "This is my first time here, I don't know anyone well enough to introduce you to." She told me she was actually looking for ME. Took everything in my power to not respond "I ain't working Holly Hotbody". Glad I didn't. It ended up working out.

[Cut back to a chuckling Sarah.]

SS: At first, yes, I could tell she was skeptical. But we got to talking more and, before I knew it, we had spent nearly an hour just having a conversation.

[She nods.]

SS: I knew we had to bring her to the AWA.

[Back to Charisma.]

CK: It was one of those things. I had seen the first two attempts to boot up a division. I saw how those went. Sarah told me how she was playing it this time. Melissa had a job. The step was getting Julie and I in as managers and we'll go from there.

They had a team with presence but couldn't talk to save their lives, so they needed a talker.

[We cut to a promo shot of Charisma with the Hell Hounds... and then back to a shrugging Charisma.]

CK: It got me in the door. Then she told me, "You know how to be the bad guy, just do what you do for the Hounds, but just prod enough during interviews to start laying the foundation."

[Cut to footage marked "Duel On The Diamond - April 9th, 2015" where we find Melissa Cannon serving as an interviewer alongside an equal sized woman, wearing a black blouse buttoned up, with jet black hair with red streaking highlights, and a visible nose piercing. She stands, arms crossed, while Melissa starts off the interview]

MC: Thanks guys, I'm standing next to the newest manager in the AWA, Charisma Knight, who asked for this interview time here today. Now Charisma, are you looking for a charge here in AWA, or do you already have someone in mind?

[Charisma looks slightly annoyed at Melissa, before beginning]

CK: Sadly, I'm here as a manager. I'd love to change that, but, baby steps. I'm sure you could sympathize, Melissa. But then again, you might just be happy to stand around with a microphone.

[Cannon grimaces at that blatant verbal jab.]

CK: I however, am not. But since I wasn't born a man, I have to work with what I'm given. It's a shame the greatest student of the game the sport has ever seen can't compete on the sport's biggest stage in the AWA, but I can do the next best thing for now, and that is, take a charge to the pinnacle.

And that's what I'm here to do.

[We cut away from the old footage back to present day Lori Dane.]

LD: One of the questions I get asked a lot these days is... why those three? Why Julie, Charisma, and Melissa instead of more established names like... I don't know... Stephanie Harper... Laura Davis... Michelle Bailey...

[She pauses.]

LD: And it was nothing against those women for sure. I have a solid relationship with Stephanie and Laura... my love for Michelle goes back to our EMWC days... but I think when Sarah and I sat down to look at it, we needed a certain mindset. We needed women who had to be okay not being the featured attraction... who were okay with the uncertainty of the situation they were coming into... let's face it, a Stephanie Harper isn't coming to the AWA to manage someone and HOPE she gets to wrestle. It's just not happening. So, younger... hungry... developing talent was the way to go for sure.

[Cut back to Sarah Sharpe.]

SS: We had Melissa Cannon, the AWA original who had proven she could get fans to rally behind her but needed the right situation to demonstrate what she could really offer to the promotion. We had Charisma Knight, the consummate veteran who had been around the business for some time, had a lot to offer but hadn't yet gotten the exposure on a larger scale. And we had Julie Somers, eager, wanting to learn and had this aura about her that could bring in more fans but needed somebody higher up to see it and capitalize.

[She nods and smiles.]

SS: We had the building blocks in place. Would it have helped to have more talent? Sure, but the starting point needed to be somebody like Melissa, who AWA fans knew well, and women like Charisma and Julie, who were looking for their big break.

[We see Michelle Bailey, with her head tilted quizzically.]

MB: I had retired right at the start of 2011 and was moving on to the next chapter of my life. People sort of drifted away from me after that. It's the old "out of sight, out of mind" mentality. Lori would call me every few weeks or so, but we never talked about wrestling. I think she knew that I was trying to start my next chapter.

[She thinks for a moment.]

MB: If it was February of 2015, I was two and a half years into learning my work as a therapist and really trying to establish a foothold then. Lori knew what I was doing medically to feel more like myself, but I don't think I would have been an ideal candidate to have come back anyway. My mind was so far removed from

wrestling that even if everyone knew I was transitioning, and even if everyone accepted me as I was...

[She shrugs.]

MB: It wouldn't have ever been a possibility. Lori kinda hinted at it when we talked, and I'd hear from Juan about the changes, but I was so focused on being a social worker and my clients that it didn't really click with me. That's not to say a seed wasn't planted.

[She grins.]

MB: But it just wasn't the right time for me. Story of my life, really.

[Cut to Stephanie Harper.]

SH: There were only a couple of times I had spoken to anyone in AWA for the first few years. One, which I guess you might not count, is when Chris Blue called in 2013 to let me know about my induction into the Hall of Fame - for which I am forever grateful. And, then, during the Hall of Fame induction ceremony, I did get to visit with Lori... but we didn't talk about AWA.

[A brief pause.]

SH: And maybe that's because of what was happening in AWA at the time, which I didn't know about then but do now.

"When was the next time you spoke to AWA officials?"

SH: It was around the time my son signed in 2015. Todd Michaelson called me and wanted to know more about his background and who trained him, because he didn't know most of the people who trained Daniel. And Todd did say to me that they always had the door open for Hall of Fame members to be part of AWA, which I appreciated. But at the time, I turned him down.

"Why was that?"

SH: First of all, I didn't want to be there while my son was getting himself established. I wanted him to show everyone he could make it on his own and not have his mother there all the time, as if she's looking out for him. Second, if I was going to be involved in any capacity, it was going to be to help get a woman over. I was at the point in my life in which, if I came back, I would be there to endorse the next generation of women's talent.

[A brief pause.]

SH: And a third reason was, since I retired, I had gotten married and had a daughter. When my son was growing up, I tried to be there for him as much as I could but, because of my wrestling schedule, I did miss out on some time with him. I wanted to devote time to my daughter - along with my women's wrestling academy.

[A small smile then forms on her face.]

SH: But I was watching AWA now, because I wanted to see how my son was doing - and I was curious to see what they might have in store for the women who were there.

[Cut back to Lori.]

LD: It was a car ride on one of those back roads in the South. The girls decided to all ride together for a change so it was me, Julie, Charisma, and Melissa... and I think Sarah was actually driving the van. There were more than a few drinks involved and someone - I think it was Charisma - just asked.

"When are we doing this?"

[Dane grins at the memory.]

LD: Sarah and I tried to dodge the question. It was the spring of 2015... late spring... and we hadn't gotten a green light to do anything at all yet. We were still teasing it... still trying to find ways to work "Women's Division" into conversations on and off camera to try and build up fan support and demand. And then Sarah said...

[Cut to Sarah Sharpe who smiles.]

SS: "The three of you are so good - if we could get one of you in the ring with a big name with enough time and in front of the right crowd, I think the rest would fall like dominoes."

It was like I'd kicked over a hornet's nest.

[Back to Dane.]

LD: Everyone had their ideas. Julie thought she might be able to get Stephanie Harper to do something if Daniel asked... Charisma mentioned Ricki Toughill or Medusa Rage...

But none of it seemed quite right. It got real quiet... for a long time... and then...

[Cut to Melissa.]

MC: "What about me and Miyuki in the Tokyo Dome?"

[Cut back to Dane who shakes her head.]

LD: It was... perfect. Around that time, we were locked in for another Rising Sun Showdown event with Tiger Paw Pro for July and the office had started kicking around ideas for it. There was talk about doing a big thing with the Dead Man's Party which was a stable in Japan that had huge crossover appeal. They were selling shirts with their logo on it in the US in places like Hot Topic and that kind of thing. You'd see them on kids at our shows... even just walking the streets in the towns we were running. As it turns out, Miyuki Ozaki was part of that stable...

[We cut briefly to Sarah Sharpe.]

SS: Really, it had to come from Melissa. Rather than her just taking direction, it should be her making the suggestion. But I remember saying, "Melissa, you made the pitch to us. Now you make the pitch to Miyuki."

[Cut to Melissa.]

MC: "Make the pitch" to the Empress of Joshi? Are you [BLEEPING] kidding me?!

[Cannon laughs.]

MC: Okay... I'm sure there are going to be a fair share of "big reveals" on this show but here's one for you... you ready?

[Melissa leans forward towards the camera, her voice moving to a stage whisper.]

MC: It was Miyuki's idea!

[She sits back in the chair laughing, clapping her hands together.]

MC: So, the December before all this, I got invited to come to the Empress Cup... Lori and I both did actually, Sarah too. We went as a little AWA entourage to go see some matches, talk to some executives... well, that was Lori and Sarah's job... and really just hang out. I think Lori and Sarah saw it as a scouting trip too but I didn't know that.

Look, I know Miyuki a little. When I worked in Japan when I was away from the AWA, we were in some of the same places. I wouldn't say friends but... friendly? Maybe?

[Cannon smiles.]

MC: Anyways, when she found out I was in town, she sent over tickets to the big show. I was SO excited. Lori and Sarah tagged along. The show was great, of course, and afterwards, we went backstage to hang out a little. Sarah and Lori got tied up in a conversation with a sponsor... and I get this hard yank on my hair, pulling me into a locker room. It was Miyuki.

[Cut to Miyuki, reminiscing.]

MO: (Melissa didn't even see it coming. She was wandering around like a lost puppy, and I couldn't resist. She looked so out of place. She was too polite, you know? Too polite for a professional wrestler, anyway!)

[She chuckles.]

MO: (I dragged her into the locker room, and I could tell she was nervous. So I told her, "You're in town, and you think you're leaving without talking to me? No, that's not happening." [Laughs] I think I might've scared her a little.)

[Cut back to Melissa, laughing at the memory.]

MC: Yeah, she pulled me into that room by the ponytail. I had no idea what was going on, but it was Miyuki, so I wasn't going to argue! She had that sort of presence, you know?

[Cut to Miyuki, with a thoughtful expression.]

MO: (I wasn't particularly close to Melissa at the time. We'd crossed paths a few times, but we had never hung out or even been in a match together. But... I knew about her struggle. I knew about the difficulties she had getting a Women's Division started in the AWA.)

[She pauses, narrowing her eyes.]

MO: (And that made her... interesting to me.)

[Cut back to Melissa.]

MC: And when I was just about to leave, she asked how things were going in the AWA... when I was coming back... and if the AWA was ever going to get a Women's Division off the ground. Honestly, maybe she was looking for a job? I have no idea... but I told her "I don't know if the AWA will EVER have a Women's Division but if we do, you'd be the first person I'd love to see in it."

[Cut to Miyuki.]

MO: (And I said, "If the AWA ever gets one, I'll make sure you'd be my first opponent. If we're going to make history, let's go make it as big as possible.")

[She leans back into her chair, amused at the memory.]

MO: (She looked at me like I was insane, but I could see the wheels spinning in her head. If Melissa and the AWA really wanted it, I'd give them a match they'd remember for the rest of their lives.)

[Cut back to Melissa.]

MC: So, fast forward several months and when we're having this discussion in that van, that conversation popped into my head. And it just spilled out of my mouth before I even knew what I was saying... and then when the girls bought in, I was in a kind of panic... and when they wanted me to call her and lock it in, I was in a FULL BLOWN panic. 'Cause Miyuki... look, we all know she's a little eccentric, right? I didn't know if she'd be flattered that we wanted to launch a damn division off her back or if she'd be pissed they sent an announcer to make the pitch instead of an executive with a Brinks truck.

[She grins.]

MC: But I wanted the match. Now that we'd talked about it, I WANTED the match... I NEEDED the match... and they had convinced me that if we got the match, I could help build a damn division from it.

[We cut to Todd Michaelson.]

TM: There was a trip to Japan planned for shortly after this famous conversation - seriously, this is the stuff of urban legend at this point - I think half the women in wrestling tell it as "the night the AWA Women's Division was born." I think it's more like it was the night it was "conceived"... but I digress. I was going over with some other execs to hammer out some of the details for Rising Sun Showdown... sometimes that stuff is easier to do in person and I think some of the folks on the other side saw it as a respect thing for us to make the trip.

[Todd shrugs.]

TM: We're putting together the plan for this trip and Lori calls me and asks if she can give up her spot on the trip to Melissa. I had no clue why. I hadn't been let in on this little van trip's details yet. She wouldn't tell me everything but she said it'd be a good experience for Melissa for when she decides to work in the office someday. Lori was really needed more at home during that time anyways so I said yes.

When we got in the air, Melissa told me the story.

[Cut to a smirking Melissa.]

MC: I told him "I'm going to pitch Miyuki Ozaki versus Melissa Cannon in the Tokyo Dome."

Lori's lucky he didn't keel over from shock on the spot.

[She laughs as we cut to Todd.]

TM: Shocked would be an understatement. I... uhh... okay, look... Melissa trained with Lori and I... we both hold her in such high esteem and have such great affection for her... and we knew she was capable in the ring. Solid, you know. I had seen some of her Japan matches on tape and... she had gotten better, she was making good progress. But her ring time was so limited in those early years which can be so important to a wrestler's development...

[He shakes his head.]

TM: I thought she might be punching above her weight class, you know? First off, she didn't have the name value for me to think... Miyuki was a star! She was a big name all over the world. At that time, she was probably Number One in terms of women's wrestling name value. I was afraid that she'd be insulted by being asked to wrestle someone not at that star level and... honestly, I was afraid for Melissa how'd she feel if Miyuki laughed in her face. She told me the story with the whole Empress Cup thing and I... I just kept thinking "she might not even remember that and you're traveling halfway across the world to ambush her with this idea!"

[Back to Melissa.]

MC: The one thing you can always count on with Todd Michaelson is honesty. He told me what he was thinking... and yeah, by the end of that flight, I was scared [BLEEP]less too. What if she didn't remember? What if it was a joke? The "if you ever make it my way, you've got a place to stay" that no one really ever means. But I was also determined. If I was going to get turned down, I wanted it to be face to face so Miyuki could see the fire in my eyes. After we landed, Todd and the gang went to the hotel to check in... I went straight to see Miyuki.

[Cut to Miyuki, a playful grin on her face.]

MO: (Oh, Melissa... she was so nervous.)

[Cut to Melissa who smirks.]

MC: I was cool as a cucumber.

[Back to Miyuki.]

MO: (I knew exactly why she was coming to see me; no one "just happened" to be in Tokyo. It's not exactly within walking distance, right? So she walks in very serious, like she's about to negotiate a hostage release with me. And I could tell she had been thinking about this for a long time – I could see it in her eyes. So there she is, standing in front of me, and without any build-up whatsoever, she says...)

[Miyuki clears her throat and does her best Melissa impersonation... in shockingly flawless English.]

MO: "Miyuki, I want to have a match with you at the Tokyo Dome!"

[We cut back to Melissa, laughing.]

MC: Alright, maybe I was a LITTLE nervous. Hello? I'm pitching a match in the Tokyo Dome to Miyuki Ozaki!

[Back to Miyuki, smiling big.]

MO: (I didn't say a single word. I'm just sitting there, staring at her.)

[Cut back to Melissa, looking flustered.]

MC: And Miyuki's just sitting there... staring at me. Not a single word. I'm dying, I'm thinking, "Is she even listening?"

[Back to Miyuki.]

MO: (I was listening, but I was having fun with her. I had to make her sweat a little, right? I wasn't going to just roll over and say "Yes" immediately.)

[Cut to Melissa.]

MC: I was going on and on, throwing all these compliments at her, thinking she forgot about our conversation all those months ago, and I'm just thinking, "Please, just say yes, Miyuki, please!"

[Cut back to Miyuki.]

MO: (And I'm still sitting there, just staring at her. After a while, I just lean in a little closer, and I go, [deadpan] "What's in it for me?")

[She bursts into laughter, shaking her head.]

MO: (You should have seen the look on her face. I thought she was going to have a panic attack.)

[Cut to Melissa, significantly less amused.]

MC: I thought I was going to have a panic attack!

[She takes a deep breath, recounting the memory.]

MC: "What's in it for me?" I swear, my heart stopped. I didn't know if she remembered what she said to me months ago, or if she thought I was pitching this out of nowhere, but I'm dying inside, thinking, "She must think I'm insane." And it was in that moment that I realized what a dumb kid I was being... I wasn't ready for a negotiation! Only two members of management even knew I was doing this - it wasn't even approved by everyone! I had no idea how much money she'd make or if...

[She shrugs.]

MC: ...if there was ANYTHING in it for her at all.

[Melissa shakes her head as we cut back to Miyuki, grinning.]

MO: (And then finally, after putting her through all that, I just looked at her and said, "Yes.")

[Her tone grows more serious.]

MO: (But I made her promise one thing: She would be ready. Because if we were doing this, we were going to be making history. And I wouldn't be holding back.)

[Cut to Melissa, looking relieved but still animated.]

MC: I'm telling you, I was seconds away from passing out from relief! This wasn't just a match, it was THE match. But hearing her say that - "I'm not holding back" - oh man, I was like, "Okay, okay, this is real. She's really going to bring everything she has, and I need to hold up my end of the bargain."

[Melissa leans forward, her expression growing a bit more thoughtful.]

MC: I had no idea what I was really in for, but hearing her say that made me realize - this wasn't just a match. This was her way of saying, "I'm going to test everything you've got." And I couldn't back down from that. I had to prove I deserved to be sharing that ring with her. Everything we had been working for was riding on this.

[Cut to Todd chuckling.]

TM: She did it. She pulled it off. We called Jon together from the hotel and he was as floored as I was. This was big... and everyone involved knew it. Everyone.

[We fade to footage marked "Saturday Night Wrestling - June 6th, 2015" where we see an establishing shot of the Sprint Center just before the wailing intro to Melissa Aud der Maur's "Followed the Waves" begins to play over the PA system as we see a bleach-blond Japanese woman with a bored expression on her pretty little face emerging from the entrance. But this isn't just any ordinary woman. With heavy eyeliner, glittery fingernails, bright blue-colored contact lenses and a short-sleeved Rilakkuma bear hoodie over her babydoll "Dead Man's Party" tshirt, this flashy-looking cutie pie is the universally recognized Empress of Joshi Puroresu... Miyuki Ozaki.]

GM: What in the world!? Who is that young woman?

BW: Don't you recognize who that is, Gordo?

GM: I'm afraid I don't, Bucky.

BW: And you call yourself the voice of professional wrestling!? That's Miyuki Ozaki! We saw her with November's old group, ACHILLES! She's been dominatin' women's professional wrestling for years! She's been named Female Wrestler of the Year so many times, they've practically named the award after her!

GM: But why is she here?

[We cut a little deeper into the segment, a devious little grin on her face.]

MO: I desire a challenge!

A woman brave enough to face me at Rising Sun Showdown! Yes, Miyuki-chan wishes to face you on the field of combat! A sacrificial lamb to demonstrate Miyuki-chan's undeniable superiority!

All I require is a brave heart, a sturdy body fit to withstand punishment long enough for me to enjoy our time in battle before your inevitable defeat, and a fighting spirit that does not fear the end result of standing at the gateways of the afterlife!

[Miyuki tilts her head slightly to the side, batting her eyelashes at the camera.]

Miyuki: These terms are acceptable, yes?

[She tilts her head to the other side.]

Miyuki: ...No?

[She then laughs, once making a dismissive wave of her hand.]

Miyuki: Oh who am I kidding? You cowardly yankee women would never accept this impossible challenge!

[A big smile forms on Miyuki's face, as she places her hand over her mouth and throws her head back, laughing madly like an evil anime villainess...

...and we fade back up to a smiling Kayla Cristol, watching the scene unfold on an iPad in her lap.]

KC: Wow. It's been a long time since I've seen this and... "Wow" is probably what I said back then too. Miyuki showing up was a big deal. Gordon acting like he didn't know who she was was kind of an odd choice but... I knew it was a big deal. What it meant long-term, I don't know if anyone knew that but I was REAL excited to see what happened next.

[Cut to Laura Davis, that seemingly ever-present smirk on her face.]

LD: I remember talking to Miyuki, when she told me that she was going to be on AWA Saturday Night Wrestling. She told me I'd better watch it – and I've learned enough about Miyuki to know when she is serious about something, and the way she said it, I knew I'd better do what she said.

[She chuckles a bit.]

LD: I watched the show - again, I liked the presentation of the product. Then I see Miyuki come out and deliver a promo like only she can. I'll have to admit...

[A pause, then her smirk becomes a genuine smile.]

LD: I was intrigued.

[Cut to Betty Chang and Charity Rockwell, seated next to each other. Betty is a bundle of energy.]

BC: That was soooooo cool!

CR: I remember watching it. I couldn't believe it. It had been years since Miyuki Ozaki had been in America.

BC: I'd been a huge fan of Miyuki for years - and it wasn't just because of her wrestling. Her style, the way she acts, that confidence, her sense of fashion... I still try to dress like her sometimes, you know?

CR: Aren't you dressed like her now?

BC: I am! But to actually see her in the AWA? Demanding a match? I couldn't have been more excited!

[Cut to Olympic gold medalist and current AWA superstar Ayako Fujiwara.]

AF: "Who is that young woman?"

[Ayako laughs.]

AF: Are you joking? I couldn't believe Gordon Myers said that. At that time, and I'm not exaggerating, Miyuki may have been the biggest wrestler in Japan, man or woman. Did Rock Hayashi have an animated series? Did Kenta Kitazawa have a chart-topping love ballad? No... but Miyuki did.

[She smiles.]

AF: And the moment I saw her show up in that AWA ring, I knew she was going to do something big. It's the ONLY way she knows how to do things.

[Cut to Michelle Bailey, watching the footage.]

MB: I got to see Miyuki grow from rookie to a cultural phenomenon. It was weird when I landed in Japan in 2009, 2010 and saw this girl that used to follow me around when she was a teenager all over billboards and in magazine ads, but I was overwhelmed with pride for how successful she had become. I remember how she called me in 2013, because she always liked to check on me, and she said "Michi-chan, I sold out the Kyocera Dome for one match!"

[The producer chimes in.]

"How large is that building?"

[Michelle thinks.]

MB: I think it's at least 50,000 for wrestling? Don't quote me on that.

[Michelle sighs.]

MB: Let me put it this way, nobody would say "who's that guy" if Ryan Martinez showed up. I'm sure Gordon didn't mean it that way, but it's very disrespectful to the level of star she was, and still is to this day.

[Cut to Charisma.]

CK: "Who's that young woman?" That might've been the only time that ever wanted to reach through a TV and strangle someone.

[Cut to Lori.]

LD: It felt like all the momentum was going in the right direction for once, you know?

"Kayla Cristol said it was an odd choice for Gordon to act like he didn't know who she was."

[Lori grins.]

LD: She's not wrong. Gordon was just doing what he was told, I'm sure... but it was another time when the announcers - and the office - undersold something the women were doing without a clear reason why. Like... maybe someone was hedging their bets in case this one fell short of expectations too?

[Cut to Melissa.]

MC: This one wasn't falling short though. I was determined to do what needed to be done. I saw more of the Combat Corner for the next month than I saw of my own home. Dawn to late night I was in there busting my ass to make sure that I was ready for Miyuki. All the credit in the world to Todd and Lori... to Sarah... to Marcus Broussard... to Julie and Charisma... it was a team effort to get ready for that match and everyone was there for it because we all knew what the stakes were.

[Cannon pauses, thinking for a moment.]

MC: We knew that Miyuki's name alone would sell her part of this match... but now I had to deliver on selling my part...

[She smirks.]

MC: ...and I knew Miyuki would be watching so I HAD to deliver.

[We fade to footage marked "AWA All-Star Showdown - July 4th, 2015" where we find Melissa standing in front of a generic AWA backdrop, a smile plastered on her face as she starts to speak.]

MC: It's been an exciting night of action here at the War Memorial Stadium here in Hawaii but two weeks from tonight, that excitement goes to a whole other level when the American Wrestling Alliance and Tiger Paw Pro join forces for the second time for a major event in the Tokyo Dome called Rising Sun Showdown II available LIVE worldwide on iPPV and via tape delay on Fox Sports X here in the States.

[Melissa kinda trails off, looking down... and back up.]

MC: The show is full of...

[She pauses again, looking down at the floor.]

MC: You know...

[Melissa looks up at the camera.]

MC: In 2004, I was a kid... just a kid. But I had a very clear vision in my head. I won't call it a dream because that doesn't feel right. It was a vision. Clear as day. I could close my eyes and see it like it was actually happening. I could...

[She closes her eyes.]

MC: I was there. I was in a wrestling ring. I was... a professional wrestler.

[She slowly opens her eyes, a smile creeping across her face.]

MC: I lived in Los Angeles which wasn't a hotbed for wrestling after the Empire closed down the first time. It was a wasteland really. But then... a friend of a friend of a friend told me that Todd Michaelson was opening a wrestling school.

I rode a bus down to an abandoned warehouse... walked in the door...

[She chuckles.]

MC: It was glorious. I can still smell it...

[She inhales.]

MC: It shouldn't have smelled that good... wouldn't to a sane person but I had it in my system. I had it my brain... my heart. I wanted to be a pro wrestler.

Todd Michaelson said no the first time. Said he didn't have the heart to train an 18 year old girl for a business that just couldn't find a way to make room for women.

I was heartbroken. I cried for hours that night.

[Melissa looks down again.]

MC: But I came back the next day... and the day after... and the day after. Todd kept saying no. But one day, I walked in the door and there was someone else waiting for me.

Lori Dane.

[Jeers go up from inside the stadium. Melissa nods.]

MC: She's not my favorite person these days either. But Todd had told her about me and she came to talk to me herself. She told me what life was like as a woman in this business. She told me how she was a former Women's Champion but ended up being famous for making dirty jokes as a color commentator.

She pointed out how few spots there were for women wrestlers. She told me that if I walked that road, it would be hard... it would be tough... and it would be painful.

[Melissa looks right into the camera with a tight-lipped smile.]

MC: She wasn't wrong. But I didn't care... and they took me in. I trained in that school for hours upon hours, days upon days, weeks upon weeks, and months upon months. I wanted to be a pro wrestler. And when I got out of school, ready to go?

There was no room for me. Not even in Todd's own company.

[Cannon shrugs.]

MC: He gave me a gig ring announcing because he knew I loved the business and would do just about anything to be a part of it. So, I took the job.

And when the EMWC re-opened... I went there and did the same thing.

And when the AWA opened... I went there and did the same thing.

[Cannon grimaces.]

MC: There was glimmers of something along the way... some suit with a pie in the sky idea of a Women's Division. But nothing... nothing lasted. My vision became muddy. I couldn't see a world where I'd be a pro wrestler anymore... but an announcer... an interviewer... whatever they'd let me do to stay in the business.

[Melissa reaches up, removing the jacket over her torso, dropping it on the ground to reveal a black tanktop with bare arms... muscular, toned arms that show more than just an interviewer's physique.]

MC: And then... something happened.

Then the Queen of Joshi showed up... on MY show... and told the world that there wasn't a woman in the United States willing to face her. And I stood by and said, "Julie Somers will prove her wrong. Charisma Knight will prove her wrong. Someone... somewhere... will prove her wrong."

But she wasn't proved wrong. _I_ was proved wrong.

They stayed silent and she gloated about it.

[Melissa clenches her jaw, shaking her head.]

MC: Two weeks ago, Lori showed up... and she sat me down... and she made me listen. She told me that time is fading for me. That every vision has a shelf life and that mine is ticking away one second at a time. She told me she had a vision too... and her vision was that I'd put on those boots again... that I'd step into a wrestling ring again...

[She stares into the camera.]

MC: That I'd show Ozaki... and the suits in the AWA front office... that women deserve this opportunity. That there's women like me all over the world looking for a chance... looking for their moment... looking for their time.

Their time... is now.

And my time... is two weeks from tonight in Tokyo.

[She lifts the microphone, holding it front of the camera.]

MC: I quit.

[Cannon drops the mic, walking out of view as the camera holds on an empty screen...

...and we fade to present day Melissa holding an iPad, a tear streaking down her cheek as she watches. She clears her throat before looking at the camera.]

MC: Probably the greatest promo of my life.

[Cut to Lori.]

LD: DEFINITELY the greatest promo of her life... I get chills thinking about it. It was more than a promo - it was a mission statement. It was taking us past the point of no return. It was a clear message to everyone watching that this match with Miyuki was more than a match... more than personal conflict... the stakes were as high as you can count... if we could pull this off in the Tokyo Dome, there'd be no stopping us in finally... FINALLY... reaching our goal.

[Cut to Julie Somers.]

JS: I remember watching that promo and, after Melissa was finished, the first thing I did was pump my fist and shout "yes!"

[As she says this, she pumps her fist.]

JS: Of course, the next thing I did was I went to find Melissa, then I gave her a big hug and told her how that was the most awesome thing ever.

[She laughs.]

JS: I was so excited for her! How could you not be?

[Cut to Charisma]

CK: I swear you could hear Julie halfway across the arena after that promo. I sat staring at the at monitor after just thinking "This is it, we're finally doing it!"

[Cut to Victoria June.]

VJ: Ah was wrestlin' in Toronto them times for Mantha Rage and boss lady told me to come watch. Cuz that's how you cut a promo. Mah homework was to study everything that was happenin' down in Texas cuz Mantha was tellin' me she was gonna move Heaven and Hell to get me there if they launched a Women's Division and ah needed to be sharp.

[Cut to Ricki Toughill.]

RT: I had just started wrestling again here and there. Trying to get my legs in the ring again... see if my back could take it... and I hear this... and...

[A rare, mirthful grin with a couple of broken teeth crosses her face.]

RT: I'm not taking no for an answer this time. I say to myself, "I'm done with this blood and exploitation sexist garbage. I. Want. In.

[Back to Melissa.]

MC: The match was set. The world was watching.

[She exhales heavily.]

MC: Now, I just needed to do my part in the ring.

[We fade to a shot of the exterior of the Tokyo Dome with a graphic reading "Rising Sun Showdown 2 - July 18th, 2015" before we fade to the interior of the stadium.

The lights drop down to black, causing an “oooooh” from the Japanese crowd. They stay there for a few moments before the quiet panflute introduction of Zamfir’s “The Lonely Shepherd” begins to play over the PA system. A pale yellow lighting fills the Dome, covering the crowd... the ring... and, of course, the entryway.

From the gap in the elevated platform, a figure is slowly raised from the depths of darkness. She is covered in a black cloak, kneeling on the platform, her right hand gripping what appears to be a sword in its sheath. Her brown hair is tied back in a tight braid but her head is bowed, perhaps in prayer, as she is slowly raised into view.

Megumi Sato's trademark voice rings out over the PA.]

"CANNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNONNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNN!
MEEEEEEEEEEEEEELISSSSSSSSSAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!"

[Melissa Cannon rises off her knee, throwing off the black cloak to reveal she's dressed much as her mentor, Lori Dane, did in her latter years in the wrestling ring. Cannon is in a yellow jumpsuit... not skin-tight vinyl as her predecessor wore but rather a cloth fabric, hanging loose from her body. Her upper body is covered in a similar yellow fabric, cut slightly into a v-neck. She raises the sheathed sword over her head, giving off a shout as the music switches to "Battle Without Honor Or Humanity."

She marches down the aisle to a polite reaction from the Japanese crowd, walking with determined purpose as she heads towards the ring where her greatest dream... or worst nightmare... awaits her.

The voice of Jason Dane is heard.]

JD: Melissa Cannon has not stepped foot in a professional wrestling ring since SuperClash 3 when she teamed with Lori Dane against Melanie Brown and Holly Hotbody - the last time there were rumors of an AWA Women's Division coming to pass. Tonight, Melissa Cannon hopes to show the suits back in Texas that SHE belongs in an AWA ring as do the many other female competitors in this sport who deserve the same opportunity.

[And we cut ahead as the lights in the Tokyo Dome go out, as the wailing opening to "Followed the Waves" by Melissa Auf Der Maur begins to play over the PA system. Smoke fills the entrance way, as several Japanese girls emerge from behind the curtains, each dressed in the costume of 18th century French

aristocracy. They gather around the opening of the v-shaped split in the stage, where something begins to rise from beneath the smoke...

"ОHHHHH!!!"

...and we see, standing atop a giant animatronic golden metallic lion, dressed in the very image of Marie Antoinette, is the Empress of Joshi Puroresu herself, Miyuki Ozaki! She wears a black and gold royal masquerade gown, a white powered wig...and the most adorable smirk on her face. She surveys her kingdom, before snapping open a paper fan, as each of the girls kneel before her. Miyuki looks around at the scene before her and throws her head back, covering her mouth with her fan and laughs haughtily.]

"OZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZAAAAAAAKKKKKKKKKKIIIIIIIII!!!
MIYYYYYYYUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUKKKKKKKKKKIIIIIIIII!!!!!!"

[The voice of Bucky Wilde is heard.]

BW: I heard that type of ring entrance has bankrupted more than a few promotions that signed Miyuki Ozaki whose contract riders are legendary, Dane.

JD: Ozaki has a history in the States but here in Japan, she's practically a star on the level of someone like a Kim Kardashian would be in the United States, Bucky.

BW: She's got endorsement deals, a record deal, even her own animated series! And she's been directly responsible for two of the most dominant factions in Tiger Paw Pro history in ACHILLES and the Dead Man's Party.

[We cut to Miyuki in the present day, giggling.]

MO: (Everyone always asks me, "Why the animatronic lion?" Well, I really wanted to present myself as this overwhelming mountain that would be almost impossible for Melissa to conquer. I guess I did too good of job; Prince Izumi still hasn't quite forgiven me for the cost of that entrance.)

[We cut ahead to where streamers are being cleared from the ring as referee Ricky Longfellow is giving final instructions before...]

"CLANK!"

[At the sound of the very Japanese bell, Cannon comes barreling across the ring, leaping into the air, landing a stiff forearm on the ear of Ozaki, knocking her back into the buckles. The crowd buzzes at the early attack as Cannon clenches her jaw and goes on the attack, blitzing Ozaki with a series of forearm smashes to the ear!]

JD: Cannon fire in the open moments of this one, taking the fight to Miyuki Ozaki!

[The feisty former ring announcer is ignoring the protests of the official as she lands a series of elbowstrikes to the side of the head in the corner, forcing Ozaki down to a knee as the crowd buzzes with concern for their hero.

At the referee's four count, Melissa backs off, raising her arms as Ozaki uses the ropes to pull herself to her feet.]

JD: Cannon moving back in and-

"SLAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAP!"

"OOHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

[A brutal open-handed slap to the ear snaps Melissa's head around before she falls down to her knees, grabbing at the side of her head...]

...and we cut to present day Melissa wincing, rubbing her ear as she watches the match action unfold on an iPad in her lap.]

MC: Couldn't hear out of that ear for a week. It was Miyuki's way of letting me know this wasn't going to be an ordinary night at the office and that I'd better bring my game like I never had before if I wanted to... forget about win... survive!

[She chuckles as we cut to Miyuki...]

MO: (Melissa came out attacking me like she had something to prove. And I think we both knew she did. I let her come at me and felt every one of those shots. You know, people think you have to block every punch, every hit, but... sometimes it's important to feel it. To measure it. To see just how much someone's got in them.)

[She raises her hand slowly, as if mimicking the moment of the slap.]

MO: (And then, that slap – that little love tap... it was my way of reminding her, and everyone watching, that this wasn't going to be like any normal wrestling match. I wasn't trying to crush her instantly, but I wanted her to feel that she was in a different kind of fight than she had ever had before. That every hit, every hold and every move, was going to test the very limits of her body and spirit.)

[She pauses, then smiles with a touch of pride.]

MO: (Sometimes, to show the world what we can do, we have to push people beyond their limits.)

[She laughs softly and shrugs... and we fade back to action in the Tokyo Dome where Ozaki has knocked Cannon to the floor with a series of stomps to the ribs. Ozaki covers her mouth as she giggles, stepping out onto the apron where she gives the fans a beauty pageant wave to cheers.]

JD: I can't quite understand why these people love Miyuki Ozaki so much, Bucky.

BW: She's the best in the world at what she does. How can you NOT love her?

JD: But the arrogance... the attitude... the very obvious impression that she believes she's better than anyone else she comes in contact with. For crying out loud, she rode an animatronic LION to the ring tonight!

BW: She's won titles everywhere she goes. She's the former Female Wrestler of the Year for 2010, '11, '12, '13... need I go on?

JD: There is no doubting her resume, Bucky... it's her attitude that is lacking in my opinion.

[Ozaki takes aim at Cannon as she pushes up off the floor, climbing to her feet as Ozaki takes a dash...]

JD: Big kick!

[...but Cannon spins out, causing Ozaki to whiff on the running kick. Cannon pulls herself up on the apron as Ozaki turns around. She goes to throw another kick to the ribs but Cannon blocks it, returning fire with two short forearms to the side of the head!]

JD: We've got a battle out on the apron and that's not a place that either of these women want to be!

[Cannon turns her body slightly, lashing out with a knife edge chop across the chest!]

"WHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAP!"

[Three more chops follow, leaving Ozaki reeling, clutching at her own chest as Cannon backs off, pumping her right arm to a scattering of cheers.]

JD: Melissa Cannon's setting up for something out on the apron...

[She rushes down the apron, cocking the arm back...

...but Ozaki ducks down, lifting Cannon like for a backdrop but simply turns, setting her down on her feet inside the ring before Ozaki uses the top rope to swing her legs up, catching Cannon on the ear with a kick!]

JD: Ohh! Ozaki caught her!

[With Cannon reeling, Ozaki grabs the top rope, leaping up, springing off the top...]

JD: DROPKICK!

[...and DRIVES both feet between the shoulderblades of the stunned American, sending her sailing across the ring where she crashes chestfirst to the mat!]

BW: Look, Dane... I know that you and Cannon are close but we're not even five minutes into this and she looks totally overmatched.

JD: I know she does, Bucky, but like she said... this is why they wrestle the matches.

[And we cut further into the match where Cannon leans over, pulling Ozaki off the mat by the back of the leotard, yanking her into a rear waistlock...

...but Ozaki has other ideas, swinging her head back into Cannon's!]

JD: Oh! Ozaki counters the suplex attempt...

[Ozaki swings around, throwing a roundhouse kick aimed at the ear of Cannon...

...who ducks down, only to get her legs swept out from under her as Ozaki keeps on spinning, lashing out with her off leg as she drops down!]

JD: Nice legsweep by Ozaki!

[Ozaki raises her leg, looking for an axe kick style stomp. She swings her leg down but Cannon rolls to the side, avoiding the blow. Cannon rolls back, grabbing the leg and yanking it out from under Ozaki, surging forward with a single leg takedown, transitioning with ease into an MMA style mount!]

JD: And Cannon counters it back the other way, taking Ozaki off her feet and-

[The crowd reacts as Cannon rears back, throwing a forearm to the jaw... and another... and another...]

JD: Melissa Cannon is opening fire on Ozaki, taking control from the mounted position! Ozaki may be in trouble here for the first time in this contest!

[...and we cut again, going deeper into the match where Ozaki whips Cannon into the corner before sprinting into the adjacent corner, leaping up to the second rope before stepping to the top. She gets a running start, going about three steps down the length of the top rope...]

JD: SHE'S RUNNING THE TOP ROPE!

[...and leaps off, clearing the rest of the distance and DRIVING both feet into the skull of Cannon! The crowd loudly applauds the show of agility as Ozaki takes a bow, grinning at the reaction.]

JD: A death-defying move out of Miyuki Ozaki and Melissa Cannon appears to be on Dream Street at this point in the contest.

BW: You think Cannon's regretting taking this match yet, Dane?

JD: Not a chance.

BW: No? She's getting her tail kicked.

JD: She could've lost in three minutes and Melissa would be overjoyed that she stepped into the Tokyo Dome, competed against the best woman's wrestler in the world, and lived her dream here tonight. Win or lose, she made history.

[We cut back to present day Melissa, a smile on her face.]

MC: In one way, that's true. For me, personally... as a wrestler... I'd done what I came to do. I got in the ring in the Tokyo Dome with the greatest women's wrestler on the planet. I had already won.

But as a woman who had bigger dreams not just for me but for every other woman at home - Julie, Charisma... the ones still to come - we weren't done yet. Not by a longshot.

[And back to the Tokyo Dome where Ozaki steps up to the second rope, planting a foot on the top rope... but Cannon charges in, leaping up to land a forearm to the side of the head before wrapping her arms around Ozaki's torso...]

JD: Hold on here! It looks like Cannon's got something big in mind here!

BW: If she's gonna do it, do it! Don't stand there and think about it!

[Ozaki slams her head into the side of Cannon's a few times, stunning the former Todd Michaelson student. She swings her arms together, clapping them on the ears of Cannon!]

JD: Bellringer by Ozaki, trying to fight her way free!

[Cannon's grip loosens, allowing Ozaki to yank her right arm free...

...and with an angry shout, she uncorks another slap to the ear!]

JD: OHH!

[The blow sends Cannon falling backwards, crashing down on the mat as Ozaki steadies herself up top, giving another shout - this time in Japanese, drawing a cheer from the crowd before she leaps into the air...]

JD: FROG SPLASH!

[...and CRASHES down across a prone Cannon, bouncing off her opponent before scrambling to apply a lateral press, reaching back for a leg.]

JD: ONE! TWO!! TH-

[Cannon's shoulder flies off the mat, breaking the pin attempt!]

JD: No, no! Not enough to get the three and Ozaki, quite frankly, looks surprised by that development.

[Ozaki slaps her hands together three times quickly in the referee's direction who shakes his head, holding up two fingers in response.]

JD: Ozaki thought it was three and she's giving Ricky Longfellow a hard time right about now but Melissa Cannon was out in time and continues to hang on, living to keep the fight going.

[We cut again, going deeper still into this battle where we find Cannon and Ozaki battling out on the ring apron, the Japanese superstar pulling Cannon into a rear waistlock...]

JD: Ozaki's going for the German!

[Cannon loops her left arm over the top rope, hanging on for dear life as Ozaki tries to lift her into the air...]

JD: Cannon's fighting it!

[Ozaki grits her teeth, trying to get Cannon up off the mat again but Cannon shakes her head, swinging her right arm over to grab the left wrist, blocking the lift with all she's got!]

JD: She knows that if Ozaki hits this, it might be all over so Cannon's fighting as if her life depends on it!

BW: It might! That ain't an easy place to land, Dane. That's the hardest part of the ring out there!

[Breaking the waistlock attempt, Ozaki slams her forearm repeatedly down on the back of the head and neck!]

JD: Ozaki opens fire! Hammering away on Cannon, trying to soften her up...

[Cannon uses her grip on the ropes to twist herself around to face Ozaki who throws a kick at the left ribs...

...that Cannon catches under her left arm, pausing for a moment as Ozaki shakes her head, begging for mercy...]

JD: Cannon caught the kick and-

[Suddenly, the American torques her body, twisting the leg of Ozaki at the same time, tearing her off the apron, hurling her down to the floor below as the crowd reacts!]

JD: DRAGON SCREW LEGWHIP OFF THE APRON TO THE FLOOR!

[And we cut ahead deeper into the match again - this time showing some quick highlights of Melissa targeting the knee of Ozaki...

A shinbreaker out on the floor, causing Ozaki to cry out in pain as she falls across the ring apron...

A brutal leg kick that sweeps Ozaki's leg out from under her, knocking her down onto the back of her head...

A low dropkick that causes Ozaki to front flip before crashing down again...

...and then finally Melissa applying a half Boston Crab, wrenching back on the leg.]

BW: This is one of the signature holds of Ozaki, Dane.

JD: It certainly is although Ozaki prefers to use the rolling half Crab - a move she calls the Rainbow Bridge. But this one is just as effective if the screams of pain out of Ozaki are any indication.

[Ozaki claws at the canvas as Cannon leans back, trying to rip the knee out of joint, shouting at Longfellow to check for a submission.]

JD: Melissa Cannon's trying to get a submission victory over the greatest women's wrestler in the world in the middle of the Tokyo Dome and if she can do it, what a coup that would be for her, fans!

[Longfellow is down on his knees, informing Cannon that Ozaki won't submit as the Japanese megastar attempts to drag herself towards the ropes that will force the referee to break the hold.]

JD: Miyuki Ozaki is just out of reach of the ropes, desperately searching for a way out of this punishing submission hold!

[Ozaki strains and stretches, finally wrapping her hand around the bottom rope as the fans applaud... most of them. Cannon collapses forward to all fours, breathing heavily as Ozaki uses the bottom rope to drag herself under the ropes to the floor..

Cannon climbs up, her chest still heaving as she throws a glance around, spotting Ozaki on the floor...

...and with a shout, the American breaks towards the ropes, rebounding back across towards the rising Ozaki...]

JD: TOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOP-

[The crowd ROARS as Ozaki sidesteps, snapping off a high kick with the good leg, catching Cannon FLUSH between the eyes as Cannon sails between the top and middle ropes in mid-dive attempt!]

BW: HOLY- DID YOU _SEE_ THAT, DANE?!

JD: INCREDIBLE COUNTER BY OZAKI!

[And with fire in her eyes, the Japanese megastar pulls herself up on the apron, positioning herself with her left leg closest to the ropes. With Cannon hanging over the middle rope helplessly, Ozaki grabs her by the hair, swinging her left leg up into the face...

The crowd cheers as Ozaki slams a half dozen kicks into the forehead of Cannon before backing off, getting a limping start, and slamming her boot into the ear of Cannon, sending her falling backwards and down to the mat!]

JD: Ozaki unleashes hell with a series of brutal kicks and just like that, she turns this thing around and back in her favor!

BW: That's why she's the best in the world, Dane.

[Ozaki steps through the ropes in pursuit of Cannon, dragging her off the mat by the back of the pants. She steadies her before giving off a shout, going into a backspin...]

JD: GOODNIGHT, SWEET PRINCESS!

[...but Cannon ducks under the stiff spinning backfist, popping back up to prevent Ozaki from spinning past her, hooking a handful of hair, throwing an elbowstrike to the ear!]

JD: ELBOW! TWO! THREE! FOUR!

[The crowd starts to cheer the fiery attitude of Melissa Cannon as she throws a half dozen elbowstrikes to the temple before Ozaki shoves her back, going into another spin...]

JD: AGAIN!

[...but this time, Cannon ducks it, twists around and delivers a spinning backfist of her own, knocking Ozaki flat!]

JD: BACKFIST! BACKFIST!

[Cannon dives across the prone Ozaki, tightly hooking both legs!]

JD: ONE!! TWO!! TH-

[The shoulder of the Japanese megastar comes FLYING off the mat, causing the majority of the Tokyo Dome crowd to roar with excitement.

But slowly. Slowly but surely, a groundswell of support for the American who will not go away quietly starts to grow in the Tokyo Dome...

...and we cut to present day Melissa.]

MC: It was... surprising to say the least. Miyuki was a MASSIVE star there in Japan. I expected to be treated like the worst thing these people had ever seen and... slowly, I was starting to earn their respect. There were cheers? Incredible.

[She grins, shaking her head as we cut to present day Miyuki...]

MO: (When I walked into the Tokyo Dome that night, I knew exactly what the crowd was expecting. They were there for me - I was the big star in Japan. I had been at the top for so long... I was the household name. The expectation was that I would crush her. No one really knew who Melissa Cannon was at that time... she was the ultimate underdog.)

[She smiles slightly, shaking her head as though still in disbelief.]

MO: (The crowd was quiet for her at first. Apprehensive. They weren't sure what to think of her. But there was something happening inside that ring that no one could deny.)

[She leans forward.]

MO: (That crowd? They respect one thing above all else: Courage.)

[A beat. Before Miyuki clarifies in English.]

MO: Fighting spirit.

[She grins.]

MO: (It doesn't matter how big or small you are, how experienced or green – if you show heart, if you fight with everything you've got, they'll recognize it. And Melissa? That night, she embodied it with every ounce of her being.)

[She smiles with a touch of pride.]

MO: (She wasn't backing down. She kept coming at me, no matter how much I punished her. And little by little, you could feel the shift in the air. The crowd started to understand that they were witnessing something special. They could see she was fighting for more than just victory; she was fighting for respect. And that night, Melissa did just that. She earned their respect.)

[And we cut back to the Tokyo Dome where Cannon is delivering forearms against the ropes before whipping Ozaki across the ring. Cannon sets for a backdrop but Ozaki baseball slides through the legs, popping up to attempt a reverse rana but Cannon's ready to counter the counter, ducking down to shove Ozaki off her shoulders to her feet in front of Cannon who is on all fours...

...which is when Ozaki rolls the dice, snapping off a standing moonsault, driving her knees down into Cannon's back, causing both competitors to hit the mat screaming in pain.]

JD: Wow! Ozaki and Cannon with a fantastic exchange right there and Ozaki made a mistake! She's been known to be kind of a gloryhog... the kind of person who won't think about the damage to herself if it means making the highlight reel.

BW: We've known quite a few people who fit that description, Dane.

JD: We certainly have and I believe that's what we just saw right there. She didn't even hesitate to throw that moonsault kneedrop in there despite the damage done to her knee already by Melissa Cannon in this match.

[Ozaki rolls to the ropes, grimacing in pain as the referee kneels down next to her to make sure she can continue. The Empress of Joshi angrily shoves him away, barking at him in Japanese as she rolls to the floor, clutching her knee in pain as she falls to a knee.

Slowly, the Tokyo Dome crowd starts to clap and stomp in rhythm, trying to inspire their favorite of choice - still largely Miyuki - to their feet to continue the fight.]

JD: These fans are rocking here in Tokyo... and as many of them are still on the side of Miyuki Ozaki, the Empress of Joshi, you have to believe that many are starting to appreciate the heart, the determination, the fighting spirit of Melissa Cannon!

[Cannon is dazed as she hauls herself to her feet, spots Ozaki on the floor, and breaks into a dash, bouncing off the ropes to build speed...

...and HURLS herself between the ropes again, this time jamming an elbow into the jaw of the rising Ozaki, sending both women down onto the barely-padded floor sprawled out!]

JD: SHE TAKES OUT OZAKI ON THE FLOOR!

[The crowd is ROARING at this point, cheering the daredevil dive by the crazy American who will not stay down.]

JD: We're closing in on twenty minutes of action here in the world-famous Tokyo Dome and if you watch these two compete and then have the unmitigated gall to stand up and say that athletes - that professional wrestlers - like these two women don't deserve to be a spotlighted part of this business, then I name you a liar!

[We cut back to present day Melissa.]

MC: I love him so much. Jason Dane is one of my best friends in this business and the fact that he's not employed by a major promotion in 2018 is a damn tragedy. He added so much to every match he called - in the E, in PWR, and in the AWA. You go back and watch that show... listen to his words... he was doing EVERY... DAMN... THING he could to get people to buy into not just us... not just the match... but women's wrestling.

[We can hear the words of Jason Dane as present day Melissa grins.]

JD: Cannon puts Ozaki back in but can she find a way, fans? Can she find a way to put Miyuki Ozaki, the queen of women's professional wrestling, down for a three count and cement her claim to belong in this sport? After so many years of Melissa Cannon clawing and scratching, doing whatever was asked of her to say in this business, she finally has the opportunity to fulfill her lifelong dream and be a wrestler. Not a manager, not a valet, not a ring announcer or a backstage interviewer... but a professional wrestler!

[And we cut back to footage from the Tokyo Dome where we see Cannon driving a boot into the midsection of Ozaki, yanking her into a standing headscissors, causing a ripple of excitement to wash over the Tokyo Dome crowd...]

JD: Wait a second!

[Cannon reaches down, hooking one arm...]

JD: It's the one move that EVERY student of Todd Michaelson's walks away knowing!

[...and then the other!]

JD: Cannon's got it locked! She's got the arms hooked!

[Going back to her days in a filthy old warehouse in Los Angeles called the M*DOJO, Cannon lifts Ozaki off the mat, flipping her over in the air..

...and sits out in a powerbomb!]

JD: BILLION DOLLAR BOMB CONNECTS!

[She stays in position, almost in a sunset flip as the referee dives to count.]

JD: ONE!! TWO!!! THREEEEEEEEEEE-

BW: NO! NO! SHOULDER UP!

[The crowd ERUPTS for the near fall as Cannon falls back to the canvas, laying on her back, sucking wind into her body as she pulls her arms up over her face!]

JD: My goodness, how close was that, fans?! Melissa Cannon was a half count-

BW: Less!

JD: Yes, maybe less even... away from scoring a three count... the biggest three count of her life! The Billion Dollar Bomb was ALMOST enough to get the three count but not quite!

[Cannon rolls to all fours, slamming a balled-up fist into the canvas as she shoves to her feet...

...and we cut to another series of quick highlights...

Ozaki countering a fireman's carry attempt with a knee to the head before leaping up to SPIKE Cannon with a reverse rana that ends with Cannon spilling to the outside...

The Empress of Joshi making highlight reels around the world with a springboard shooting star press from the inside to the floor, wiping out Cannon on the outside...

The voice of Jason Dane breaks through.]

JD: Both women are down! Both women are exhausted! And both women have given it their all here tonight to show the world that women's wrestling has not died! It has not gone quietly into the night! It is alive and well here in the Tokyo Dome tonight!

[And back to highlights, the two competitors battling on the top rope, fighting for an edge where Ozaki tries to get into position for a middle rope reverse rana...

...but Cannon shoves her off, sending her backflipping off the shoulder, landing down on her knees as Cannon, who is still facing the crowd, throws a quick glance backwards before blindly leaping off, landing on the shoulders...

...and hits her own reverse rana on Ozaki!]

JD: REVERSE RANA ON OZAKI!

[With Ozaki down on the mat, Cannon scrambles into a pin attempt!]

JD: ONE!! TWO!! THREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE...

[The crowd ROARS again as Ozaki's shoulder comes flying off the canvas, breaking the count!]

JD: SHE KICKED OUT! MY GOODNESS, OZAKI KICKS OUT BEFORE THREE!

[Cannon rolls off to all fours, burying her face in her arms on the canvas.]

JD: Melissa Cannon thought she had her there! She thought she definitely had Ozaki right there with the reverse rana and can you blame her? She DROVE Ozaki's head down into the canvas but Ozaki is... man, she's incredible, Bucky.

BW: She's incredible and she just might be unbeatable!

[Cannon is still shaking her head as she leans down, grabbing two hands full of Ozaki's bleached blonde hair, dragging her off the mat...

...and Ozaki steps into a short-ranged lariat that flattens Cannon!]

JD: WHOA! LARIAT OUT OF NOWHERE! Miyuki uses that in tribute to her former tag team partner, Kyoko Yoshioka, and it may have just won this match for her!

[But this time, Ozaki doesn't even attempt the cover, pointing towards the corner...]

JD: You've gotta be kidding me!

BW: How do you not cover there? I think that might be a mistake, Dane.

JD: I think you're right! She DRILLED Melissa with that lariat but for some reason, Ozaki opted not to cover for the three count! I don't understand that decision but with Cannon down on the mat, it looks like Ozaki's going up top... she's looking for the Beauty Queen Crush again!

BW: The last time she did this, Cannon cut her off but I don't think she's getting up this time, Dane.

[And as such, Miyuki Ozaki takes her sweet time scaling the ropes, stepping to the top, raising her arms straight into the sky...]

...and leaps into the air, twisting around quickly...]

JD: BEAUTY QUEEN CRUSH!

[The 450 splash CRUSHES Cannon underneath Miyuki Ozaki, driving all of her weight down onto the ribcage of her American opponent!]

JD: ONE!! TWO!! THRE-

[The crowd ERUPTS as Melissa Cannon bridges up and out from under Ozaki, getting to her feet to a huge reaction!]

JD: SHE BRIDGES OUT! SHE BRIDGES OUT!

[Cannon is on her feet, barely able to stand, stumbling to catch her balance as Ozaki climbs to her feet, fury in her eyes. She reaches out for Cannon's shoulder, swinging her around...]

"SLAAAAAAAAAAAAAAP!"

[...and Cannon catches her across the face with a slap as she spins towards her!]

JD: Oh!

[Ozaki recoils, grabbing at her cheek before stepping up and returning fire!]

"SLAAAAAAAAAAAAAAP!"

JD: Ozaki returns fire!

[The two women lean forward, pressing their foreheads against one another, focus and determination on their faces as the crowd roars with enthusiasm for the showdown...]

...which breaks out into a war!]

"SLAAAAAAAAAAAAAAP!"

JD: Slap by Ozaki!

[Cannon returns fire with a forearm smash to the jaw!]

JD: Cannon fires back!

[Ozaki steps forward, her hands whirling like fans, slapping once across the left cheek and then around the right cheek...]

JD: Ozaki!

[Cannon grabs the hair of Ozaki, bending her over and throwing three stiff European uppercuts!]

JD: Cannon!

[Ozaki slaps the hand away, rushing forward with a sea of slaps that can't even be distinguished, landing on the face... the ears... the jaw... anything she can hit. Cannon ducks her head, trying to cover up, desperately trying to protect herself...

...and Cannon slaps the hand away, grabbing the blonde hair!]

JD: ELBOW! ELBOW! ELBOW!

[The crowd is roaring for Cannon's flurry of elbowstrikes to the jaw, repeatedly snapping Ozaki's head back!]

JD: THESE TWO ARE BEATING THE HELL OUT OF EACH OTHER IN THE MIDDLE OF THE TOKYO DOME!

[Ozaki yanks herself free from Cannon's grasp on her hair, reaching out to grab Cannon's hair herself. She rears her head back so far that she raises her leg into the air, screeching with rage before throwing everything into it with one concussive skull cracking blow!]

JD: HEADBUTT! MY GOD, WHAT A HEADBUTT!

[With Cannon essentially out on her feet, Ozaki spins around, swinging a balled-up fist towards a dazed Cannon...]

JD: GOOD NIGHT, SWEET PRINCESS!

[...and BLASTS Cannon across the face with a vicious spinning backfist! Ozaki catches Cannon before she can fall, holding her by the hair as she leans back, raising her leg off the mat, screeching as she delivers a second skull-splitting headbutt!]

JD: ANOTHER HEADBUTT!

[And with Cannon barely able to stand, Ozaki lifts Cannon off the mat, slinging her over her shoulder for what looks like a running powerslam, elevating Cannon's head with her free arm, doing a turn so the crowd can see her...

...and sits down, DRIVING Cannon's neck into the canvas!]

JD: WONNNNNNDERRRRRLAAAAAANNNNNND!

[Ozaki rolls over, hooking a leg, looking dead into the camera as the referee drops down to count.]

JD: ONE!! TWO!! THREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!

[Ozaki rolls off the downed Cannon, shoving her leg aside, as she comes to her knees. Ozaki grabs at the side of her jaw, looking down at the defeated Cannon with a nod.]

JD: The world's greatest female wrestler, Miyuki Ozaki, is victorious here in the Tokyo Dome as many assumed she would be... but you have to be impressed by the effort of Melissa Cannon here tonight, Bucky.

BW: Absolutely, Dane. She gave it everything she had. The fight of a lifetime for her... but she just didn't have enough in the tank to put down the Empress of Joshi.

JD: Ozaki gets her hand raised by the official, still one of the most popular competitors in the building.

[Ozaki lowers her arm, grabbing at her jaw again as she approaches the downed Cannon.]

JD: Uh oh. This one might not be over, Bucky.

BW: Cannon's out, Dane. She got laid out. Two headbutts, the spinning backfist, that driver right down on her neck. An incredible flurry of offense that would've finished off ANY competitor.

JD: But if Ozaki decides she wants more, no one can stop her!

[Ozaki stands over Cannon, perhaps deciding on her next move...

...and then gives the slightest of bows towards Cannon before turning away, stepping through the ropes to the exit the ring.]

JD: And how about that, Bucky?

BW: You'd know better than I would, Dane, but... was that respect?

JD: I believe it was, Bucky. I believe it was.

[And with that, we fade back to present day Melissa who is obviously emotional watching the end of the footage...]

MC: Greatest moment of my career. Period. I don't know if anything could be any better than that. Ever.

[Cut to Miyuki.]

MO: (Match of the night. Match of the year. Match of the century!)

[She laughs maniacally as we cut to Victoria June who is holding an iPad, having just rewatched the match.]

VJ: What's that they say down in Texas? Chills, bawh. For me it was like a lightbulb went off in mah head. Ah realized what more wrestlin' could be. It was amazin'. Ah watched that match like four times in a row on rewind. Ah told Mantha ah now understood all her criticisms and coachin' and damn did ah have to really bust my ass. Ah didn't think there could be anything like that in women's wrestling.

[We cut to Laura Davis, who has an iPad in her hands. She's nodding as she watches the action.]

LD: Few people know this, but I was backstage at Rising Sun Showdown 2.

"Were you there to talk to anyone with AWA?"

LD: [shakes her head] No, I was there to support Miyuki, because I always liked her matches... and I really liked wrestling her. I had to be there to see what she did.

[She stops for a minute and points to the iPad.]

LD: Now that was a great counter. I loved that one.

[She looks up from the iPad for a moment.]

LD: Also, I met Melissa for the first time when she was in Japan. It was good to get to know her. I watched her work and I wondered why people in the States hadn't taken her seriously. She can go the distance with anyone.

[Now Davis glances at the iPad and grimaces a bit.]

LD: Oh my, that one had to hurt.

[She watches the iPad for a bit, then glances back up.]

LD: I don't really like to talk to someone else while I'm watching a match, because I want to keep my attention on that match – especially when it's a match like this.

[We cut out at this point, then to Davis as she's seated in the studio chair, no longer with the iPad.]

LD: After that match, the first person I talked to was Melissa. I told her how impressed I was with her work and then I said to her, "If they don't get a Women's Division going in AWA after this match, they're foolish. But I hope they show they're not."

"You were still a skeptic at this point?"

LD: [quickly nodding] Yes, I was... not because of anything Melissa or Miyuki failed to do, because they went above and beyond. It had more to do with whether or not those in charge of AWA would realize what they had here.

[Cut back to Melissa.]

MC: As the smoke cleared from Rising Sun Showdown, the response was... incredible.

[Cut to Lori Dane.]

LD: Rave reviews for the match online... in the press... the fans... everyone loved it... and as we'd hoped, the pressure was on. There were Internet campaigns... letters pouring into the offices... the desire for a Women's Division was real... and it was overwhelming.

[Cut to Jon Stegglet who smiles.]

JS: She was right. Lori... Sarah... Melissa, they'd done it. The people were speaking and speaking LOUDLY...

[Stegglet winces.]

JS: ...but we weren't there yet.

[Cut to Lori who facepalms.]

LD: "We want to make sure the interest isn't just because of the match and will fade as we get further away from it." I couldn't believe my damn ears. It was one of the most heated conversations I've ever had with Jon but he was standing firm. We needed a little more proof before they'd take the leap. And so...

[She smiles.]

LD: ...SuperClash.

[Cut back to Melissa.]

MC: You want more? We're gonna give you more. But this time, we're going to do it without Miyuki.

[Cut to Todd Michaelson.]

TM: A lot of people have asked why we didn't lock Miyuki down right there. Put her under contract, bring her in, run it back with Melissa, and launch the division right then and there. Honestly, the price tag was too high.

[Cut to Miyuki.]

MO: (After the match with Melissa Cannon, there was a lot of talk about what might come next. To see if it was possible to bring me to America full time. But here's the thing: I had already built something in Japan. I wasn't just a wrestler; I was a businesswoman. I had my own promotions, my own dojos, and investments in several other businesses. I wasn't just responsible for my career, but for an entire empire. The idea of leaving that behind wasn't easy, and it wasn't just about signing a contract. It was about asking me to take everything I had in Japan, everything I built, and putting it in the hands of someone else.)

[She leans forward slightly, her voice becoming more serious.]

MO: (To ask me to sign with the AWA wasn't just about me going to America to wrestle. It would have been about building something just as significant as what I had back home - creating an empire that would require a massive commitment. The AWA would need to invest heavily, not just in me, but in the entire infrastructure that would allow for a Women's Division of that caliber to thrive. And at the time? They couldn't make that kind of commitment. I understand why, and honestly, I have no hard feelings about it.)

[She smiles softly, her expression warm as we cut back to Todd.]

TM: We couldn't afford it... yet... for a division that we didn't have... yet. Maybe someday.

[Cut to a frowning Misaki Ishikawa.]

MI: Did they think she was asking for dollars? I had promoters think that when I quoted them yen.

[Cut to Michelle Bailey, with a slight smile.]

MB: The important thing to remember is that business is very big in Japan, and Miyuki is the biggest star there, no matter the gender. It takes a lot to make her consider leaving on a permanent basis. Even part-time would be difficult, because you have to replace the income she'd be losing if she left Japan, and that income is substantial.

[She folds her arms over her chest, the smile turning into a frown.]

MB: I think there's a lot of value in remembering just what we're talking about. If you want to make a business venture successful, you need to put some money into it. I would see wrestlers while I was working in Japan who thought I was there because of the same situation they were in... that you can make way more money in Japan than you could in the United States. 26 weeks of bookings for one and a half times of what you can make to work year-round in America is hard to turn down, and that was for guys like Mike Waldrop.

[A sigh.]

MB: So you can imagine how much you'd be asking for Miyuki, who was a hundred times the star, would be asked to turn down just to come to America, where she already had a pretty difficult experience. I wonder how much the talk would have been if it was a new promotion trying to land an Alex Martinez, or a Juan Vasquez. The purse strings tend to loosen quicker, and that's because nobody's ever taken the time to show that women are a big deal. You can make that money back much quicker if you treat it as something other than a sideshow, and the audience knows that it needs to pay attention.

[Cut once more to Misaki Ishikawa, a thoughtful expression on her face.]

MI: When I train someone, I want them to surpass me. I want them to be better than I ever dreamed. When I trained Miyuki, I instilled in her the same mindset.

[Misaki motions to the wall behind her, with framed 8x10s of her students.]

MI: These people became my children, and you want your children to be better than you were.

[A nod.]

MI: I am often asked why I didn't ask for my chance to return, now that America was more viable than ever, but...

[Misaki shakes her head.]

MI: I didn't need to. Miyuki surpassed me in Japan. My goal is to create someone just as capable in America. Miyuki and I share Kimmy Bailey in our lineage, and Casey Cash is one of my children.

[Misaki smiles, an unfamiliar look for her.]

MI: I share in whatever greatness they achieve simply in the knowledge that they took what I taught them, and used it to scale mountains some thought unclimbable.

[Cut back to Miyuki.]

MO: (If anything, I'm proud to have been the spark that ignited everything. If my match with Melissa helped light that fire in America that resurrected women's wrestling, then I'm content with that. Sometimes, you don't need to be the one to finish the job - you just need to be the one that sets things in motion.)

[She gestures with a subtle nod.]

MO: (Some of my students - women I trained - are now wrestling for the AWA. Ayako Fujiwara. Harley Hamilton. Kimmy Bailey. They're part of that resurgence, and that's something I can be proud of.)

[She leans back slightly in her chair, with a look of satisfaction on her face.]

MO: (So, no regrets. In the end, women's wrestling in America didn't just need a big star to show up; it needed a foundation to stand on. And that's something I helped build.)

[Cut back to Todd Michaelson.]

TM: Maybe it was short-sighted, I don't know... but I know we weren't getting the green light to sign a major - and yes, EXPENSIVE - female free agent. Not yet. So, we had to go with some largely unknown talent and see what we could do with them in getting this division off the ground.

[We cut to Julie Somers, who is biting her lip, as if she's not sure she should be saying what she's about to say.]

JS: By this point, I had heard the talk backstage about Howie and Daniel not clicking as a team. Like... the people seemed to like them but do they really want to get behind them? And this talk was about how I was drawing attention away and...

[She is quiet for a moment, then sighs.]

JS: There were times I thought it was my fault that Howie and Daniel weren't catching on.

[We then cut to Daniel Harper, who is seated in a studio chair. He is dressed in a white polo shirt with the AWA logo on it and blue jeans.]

DH: It was never Julie's fault. I was barely six months into my AWA stint and Howie was still doing that "yes sir, yes sir" bit that wasn't catching on at all. The two of us had work to do if we were going to stick.

But for Julie, that wasn't an issue. My mother told me that, when I got into the wrestling business, I was going to hear talk about how certain wrestlers have just got it. And that's how it is with Julie - she's just got it.

[He nods his head.]

DH: I just told Julie, "I don't know everything there is to know about wrestling, but I know this: Your time is going to come. It's not about if, it's about when - be ready for it."

[Cut back to Somers.]

JS: I had watched RSS2 with Howie and Daniel. I was so impressed with what Melissa and Miyuki did, plus I had watched Melissa's promo when she accepted the challenge. She had set the bar so high for Charisma and I.

[She tilts her head, as if she's thinking.]

JS: I was wondering how I'm going to top that, whether it's in the ring or on the mic. I was feeling a lot of pressure - I may not have shown it, but I was. I'm just grateful that my brother and Daniel were telling me not to worry, that I would be fine.

[We cut back to Melissa.]

MC: So, we knew we needed something to capitalize on the match with Miyuki and all the buzz from it. We needed something to keep the talk going about a Women's Division... and then we needed something to get us a high profile spot at SuperClash to keep the momentum going.

[Cut to Lori.]

LD: If we could keep it going to SuperClash... if we could hit big at SuperClash... if we could keep interest strong during the break...

[Dane nods excitedly.]

LD: It was there. It was so close I could FEEL it. We were almost there... but we needed just a little bit more.

[Cut to footage marked "Saturday Night Wrestling - August 1st, 2015" where the audience is in the midst of a (mostly) standing ovation. There are cheers ringing out from all over the building.

The target of this overwhelming praise?

Melissa Cannon who looks shocked and embarrassed all at once. She stands in a pair of black jeans and a white Combat Corner tanktop. Cannon smiles at the crowd's reaction, mouthing "thank you" to them.]

GM: Fans, what a moment this is. During the break, Melissa Cannon came out here to address the fans and... wow, what a reaction she has received from these fans here in San Francisco on the heels of an incredible showdown in Japan with the woman who many believe is the best women's wrestler in the world today, Miyuki Ozaki.

BW: They're on their feet in San Francisco, daddy!

[Cannon slowly raises the mic.]

MC: Thank you. All of you.

[More cheers. Melissa is beaming as she lowers the mic, accepting the cheers with a nod before continuing.]

MC: Two weeks ago was the biggest night of my life. You know, being in the business as long as I have, I've heard a lot of people say that before. A lot of times they said it into a mic that I was holding for them. And I often wondered how many of them actually meant it or if it was just a good way to put a few extra butts in the seats.

[She looks down at the mat, nodding her head.]

MC: You can believe me when I tell you that I mean it with every bit of myself.

[Big cheer!]

MC: Facing the greatest women's wrestler in the world - and you will get no argument from me, she IS the greatest women's wrestler in the world... facing her was a dream come true. And quite frankly, it was a dream that I never thought I'd get to fulfill.

There's a list as long as my leg of people that deserve to be thanked for giving me that chance. From the early days training with Todd and Lori and Juvenil... to just a

few weeks ago with the office putting their faith in me to deliver on one of the biggest nights of the year.

But that list isn't long enough. And it's nowhere near complete. Because while I was sitting at home as a little girl, dreaming of being a pro wrestler, there were women inside this squared circle actually doing it. Women like Jessica Starbird and Medusa Rage. When I was holding a mic and had given up on my dreams, there were women still fighting for theirs with every breath in their bodies. Women like Andrea Chandler, Stephanie Harper, and Tara Smith.

[Cannon nods at the cheering crowd.]

MC: And yes, even Miyuki Ozaki.

[Another big cheer!]

MC: But for every Miyuki Ozaki, there was a Diana Dawson who trained down in Phoenix and wrestled in every armory and Community Center in the state, looking for her break. There was a Janet Ortega who wrestled under a mask, pretending to be a man so that she could actually compete in there even though she was outsized in every match she went into. There were girls like Susan Powers... like Lianne Walker... like Trinette Jackson... like Bobbie Alexander...

All of them great. All of them hard workers. All of them deserving to live their dreams just like I got to two weeks ago.

[She shakes her head.]

MC: But they haven't gotten their chance and in some cases, will NEVER get their chance because people like me... people who had a job in the big time... people who had some influence in the office didn't use that influence to make it happen for them.

I could've fought. I could've begged. I could've made demands just like I saw Lori Dane do so many times. But I didn't... because if she couldn't do it, what chance did I have?

I stand before you humbled by your applause for what I did two weeks ago... but ashamed at what I've done for the past twelve years when I let those girls down.

They deserved their chance.

[Cannon paces a bit around the ring now.]

MC: Just like there's a girl sitting in a living room in some Southern California suburb right now thinking that what I'm saying makes a lot of sense. Like a girl in Toronto wondering if she missed her shot when Mike Beeby - the only promoter who gave a damn about us - walked away. Like a girl in Mexico... in Seattle... in South Laredo... in Baltimore... in Chicago... in Tokyo... in London...

They all want their shot...

[She leans over the ropes, pointing to a young girl and her mother sitting ringside.]

MC: They want their shot.

[She walks to the other side of the ring, pointing to a group of teenage girls.]

MC: They want their shot!

[She walks to a third side, pointing to more women.]

MC: They want THEIR shot!

[She stops in the center of the ring, looking back up the aisle towards the locker room.]

MC: And I want to give it to them. So, for those in the back with the authority to make it happen, listen to me... listen closely...

This time, I don't intend to go quietly into the night. This time, I'm taking a stand.

[Melissa takes a deep breath, knowing she may be signing her own pink slip with every word... but speaks a handful more anyways.]

MC: This time, I'm DEMANDING that the American Wrestling Alliance start up a Women's Division!

[There's a pretty big cheer from the crowd - still not the full support of the entire crowd - but big enough to bring a smile to Melissa's face. She nods at the reaction before kneeling down. She lowers the mic to the canvas, setting it down softly, and then runs her hand across the mat, caressing it before slowly climbing to her feet and exiting the ring.]

GM: Wow! A powerful statement on the part of Melissa Cannon who says that the women of the wrestling world deserve the chance to make their dreams come true too!

BW: That's a hard one to argue against, Gordo.

GM: It absolutely is. Melissa Cannon and Miyuki Ozaki tore the house down inside the Tokyo Dome at Rising Sun Showdown 2 and you would be hard-pressed, I believe, to find a fan who did not believe they - and the hard-working women just like them all over the world - deserve the opportunity to live their dreams.

[We cut back to present day Melissa.]

MC: Hell, maybe THAT was the best promo of my career!

[She laughs.]

MC: It was a declaration of war in some ways, yeah? It was the women of the AWA... of the entire sport... standing up and declaring that this time, we weren't going away without a fight. Holly Hotbody might've taken the easy way out after SuperClash... Lori and I might've walked away from the fight.

But not this time. This time, we were there to fight for the people who were cheering for us... and hell, we were there to convince the people who weren't...

[She smirks.]

MC: ...yet. And let's be real - we still had them! We had the naysayers on the Internet saying "nobody cares about women's wrestling!" Or channeling their inner Jimmy Dugan and saying "women are who you sleep with after the matches, not who you watch in the ring."

We had them in the locker room! Guys who were worried about their spot. Guys who were worried that we were a flash in the pan, that we'd ruin the business, and that would mean smaller paychecks for everyone. Guys who had been in Toronto

working for Beeby and loved to tell anyone who'd listen that the women were the reason he ran out of money.

We had them in the office! People who would analyze the minute by minute ratings to find the slightest evidence that we'd tanked the ratings for our quarter hour on the show. People who wanted to make sure that people understood the finances would change with a whole new division to foot the bill for.

[Cut to Todd.]

TM: Lori says she thought it was close... and it was. But there were still strong forces fighting against them. The fairytale version of this story is Melissa wrestled Miyuki and everything went swimmingly after that.

[Todd shakes his head.]

TM: That's not the truth. Every day... every show... every segment was a battle to keep the momentum going.

[Cut to Lori.]

LD: We'd go to the office and say "this is what we want to do this week" and get told "we were thinking something different." We'd get to the arena and find out segments had been shortened or cut for time. Yeah... it was a fight. Melissa did the big promo at the beginning of August and you could look at the calendar and count down the days to SuperClash. That was the bullseye. We needed to get there and get there strong.

[We cut to footage marked "Saturday Night Wrestling - August 15th, 2015" where we're taking a look at the Portland crowd...]

GM: Welcome back to Saturday Night Wrestling here LIVE on The X! It's been an exciting night so far, Bucky, and we've still got a long way to go but right now we've-

[At this point, a lone individual walks down the rampway and toward the ring. Said individual is the manager of Next Gen, Julie Somers. She is dressed in a red blouse and blue jeans.]

GM: Hold on, everyone... what is Julie Somers doing down here?

BW: She's not even out here with the team she manages. What's going on?

[Julie steps between the ropes, motioning toward the ringside table, indicating she wants a microphone. She walks toward the center of the ring, raising the mic.]

JS: Ever since I came to the AWA, I talked about how I understood that I might not get the chance to do what I love the most, but maybe some day, it would happen.

But I'm here to say that I've waited for that chance long enough.

[A nod.]

JS: Two weeks ago, Melissa Cannon talked about a lot of great wrestlers who paved the way for women's wrestling. Names that I know all too well, because in many of those cases, I didn't just watch them on TV. I got to see them up close.

You see, I spent several years backstage at so many wrestling shows, where I walked around backstage with my brother, in the presence of so many of the top

names in wrestling. And I got to meet, in person, some of the best female athletes this business has ever seen.

I talked for hours with Nina Grimsson and was amazed at how much she had learned. I picked the mind of Sierra Browne several times and couldn't believe how much she had to share. I can remember asking so many questions of Tara Marshall and Leanna Love and how they were always patient, because they could tell I wanted to learn from them.

And then there was Stephanie Harper... she didn't just give me advice. When I knew I wanted to step into that ring and do what those all-time greats of women's wrestling did, she trained me, taught me what the world of wrestling was all about.

[We cut deeper into the promo.]

JS: I'm making one thing absolutely clear, that I don't just want to be standing at ringside, watching my brother and friend wrestle.

I want to be inside that ring, doing what I love.

So I'm out here, just as Melissa Cannon was two weeks ago, telling Landon O'Neill and everyone else in that front office, that the moment's past due, and it's time to bring women's wrestling here to the AWA!

[The crowd is receptive to the idea, cheering loudly as we cut to present day Julie Somers who has just rewatched the footage on an iPad.]

JS: I did such a better job with a promo this time. I remember talking to Lori and she just told me to speak from the heart. Then I started thinking about all the women who I talked to when I was just 12 years old, all the women who answered my questions, all the women I watched on TV, whose matches I loved, and I just had to say something about that.

[She brushes back a loose strand of hair, then gestures to the iPad.]

JS: I look back on this now and I noticed how the fans are reacting – you can tell that there's a lot of people there who liked the idea of a Women's Division. But at the time, I wondered how much of that was they were cheering the idea or they were...

[Her voice trails off and she grins.]

JS: I guess I'll bring up what Lori said afterward, how she said "no, Julie, it's not just the idea they like, they like you, too." But what I wanted to find out is, if they do like me, then they want to see me get in the ring and wrestle, right?

[Her grin becomes a simple smile, though her eyes suggest there's a bit of disappointment.]

JS: Then they decided to make the fans wait a bit longer.

[We cut to a practically giddy Kayla Cristol.]

KC: It was SO exciting! By this time, I was already working some of the independent shows in the South... I'd run across Sarah Sharpe a few times and she'd told me to keep in touch and keep working. Having Melissa in a featured role was great... but seeing Julie get her shot here? I don't want to say that I had my hopes up but...

[She squeals with a giggle as we cut to Lori Dane.]

LD: They gave us a spot on the Vegas show... which was cool because it always seems like a big night when the AWA is in Vegas. It was Melissa doing the Open Challenge gimmick and people online were locked in on the idea of Melissa versus Julie after the dueling promos but...

[Dane grins as we cut to footage marked "Saturday Night Wrestling - August 29th" where we can see the fans of Las Vegas as Gordon speaks.]

GM: Welcome back to Saturday Night Wrestling here on The X and Las Vegas is about to get a real treat as Melissa Cannon has declared an Open Challenge to take place right inside this very ring here tonight. She came out to the ring during the break and now she's waiting to see who will-

[Suddenly, the crowd begins to cheer. Cannon turns towards the aisle, looking down at it... and cracks a smile at the sight of Julie Somers, dressed in a red halter top with matching Spandex shorts that come just above her knees, red kneepads and white wrestling boots.]

GM: It's Julie Somers! Julie Somers is accepting the challenge!

[Somers observes the cheering fans, points to Melissa, and starts walking down the aisle, slapping hands with a few of the fans stretching over the barricade.]

GM: Well, I think many of us suspected that it might be Julie Somers accepting the challenge here tonight when she didn't accompany her friends in Next Gen to the ring and-

[But as Somers heads towards the ring, another figure comes storming into view...]

GM: Wait a second! From behind!

[The crowd jeers as Somers gets struck across the back of the head, pitching forward and falling down on the carpeted asphalt!]

GM: That's Charisma Knight! What the heck is SHE doing?!

[A sneering Knight pulls Somers off the floor by the hair, shouting into her face...

...and then FLINGS her into the steel barricade lining either side of the entrance aisle!]

"CLAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAANG!"

"OHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

[Melissa Cannon looks to go help Julie Somers but referee Eddie Vincent steps in her path, shaking his head. She protests, pointing out the attack as Knight pulls Somers up again, dragging her down the aisle towards the ring...]

GM: Charisma Knight came out of nowhere and she's assaulted Julie Somers before Somers could even get to the-

"CLAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAANG!"

"OHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

GM: HEADFIRST TO THE POST!

[Somers collapses in a heap, AWA officials rushing to her side as Knight stands over her, looking down menacingly at her. With a satisfied nod, she backs away from the

downed Somers and, locking eyes with Cannon, circles the ring, heading toward the timekeeper's area.]

GM: An absolutely vile and vicious assault on Julie Somers by Charisma Knight! What does that accomplish, Bucky?! What does this woman even want out here?!

BW: What does she want? Are you even paying attention? Can't you see she's in her wrestling gear?! I'd say it's pretty damn clear what Charisma Knight wants right about now, daddy!

[Snatching the mic off the timekeeper's table, Knight breaks her staredown with a fuming Cannon to throw a glance towards Julie Somers who is being helped to her feet and down the aisle by AWA medical team members.]

CK: Sorry Julie, this wasn't personal between me and you... just business.

[She turns her attention back to Melissa Cannon, walking around the ringside area.]

CK: Now, as for us... it's VERY personal.

[The crowd jeers Knight as she pauses near the corner, locking eyes with Cannon again.]

CK: As much as Julie may deserve this opportunity to showcase herself in a match on a very special Saturday Night Wrestling, I call into question just how much you, Melissa, deserve it.

[Cannon shouts at Knight, inviting her into the ring to find out how much she deserves it. Knight ignores her and continues speaking.]

CK: You... the Golden Girl of AWA, the girl that has the Office's ear. The girl who has taken it upon herself to be front and center of everything.

[The boos continue to pour down for the picture Knight's trying to paint.]

CK: You see, Cannon, I don't think you deserve to be the centerpiece here. Because you... your mere presence out here is stealing a spot from people like me or even Somers there who were more deserving of the match at Rising Sun Showdown against Ozaki - a match I've waited YEARS to have.

We paid our dues. We drove the roads, slept in cars, worked in VFW halls for nothing but gas money, while you hung around here as an announcer. You didn't have it hard, yet here you are, taking the spotlight because you're the favorite of the Michaelsons. Like you're the daughter they always wanted.

[She starts climbing the steps.]

CK: Right now, there's people out there wondering why I didn't step up and accept the challenge for Tokyo if I felt that way. Maybe even you're asking that question. You want the answer? It's because since Day One when I walked in here, when I asked, it was "sorry kid, no interest in a division."

No interest in a division. So you can understand that when that witch Ozaki showed up, spouting off a challenge... I didn't want to get my hopes up. I didn't want to get my hopes up that finally, FINALLY after 5 years of clawing and fighting and doing whatever I could to get that witch in the ring after she took away my career in Japan that it could actually happen.

[Knight shakes her head with disgust.]

CK: And there you were, snatching that spot out from under me... and then acting like you're some kind of hero because she bowed to you afterward. I know Ozaki... I know her better than you ever will and believe me when I say, it wasn't respect.

It was acknowledgment that she took you lightly and you made her break a sweat.

[She nods as Cannon shouts off-mic at her again.]

CK: You stand out here, talking about the girls who want to be here... who want to compete and how you want to fight to get that opportunity for them. You're no hero, Cannon. I've got you pegged. All this pandering you do, all this fighting for the little girl, all this acting like you're the female Ryan Martinez, it's all a show. Because deep down, you're just a glory hog that has a very good backstage connection.

[Knight pauses, the boos pouring down.]

GM: Charisma Knight with some harsh accusations towards Melissa Cannon.

BW: Harsh, huh? I guess the truth is always "harsh."

[Knight steps through the ropes, continuing to speak.]

CK: Your Open Challenge is a sham... just like you. And I could've came out here tonight and taken you out instead. I could've done that and let Somers have her shot at putting me down for a three count but I didn't do that... and I didn't do that because I needed to make a statement. Because I need to expose you for the fraud you are, Cannon.

You're out of your league. You got lucky in Japan but lightning isn't going to strike twice. You got-

[Melissa's obviously heard enough, charging across the ring, leaping into the air and smashing a forearm into the jaw of the still-talking Knight.]

GM: OH!

[Referee Eddie Vincent signals for the bell to start the match!]

"DING! DING! DING!"

GM: We're off and running here in Las Vegas! Look at Melissa Cannon go!

[Forearm after forearm lands on the big mouth of Charisma Knight, battering her back against the turnbuckles as Cannon lets loose her anger over what Knight just did to Julie Somers...

...and we cut to present day Charisma Knight.]

CK: Sarah came up to me before I stepped out there and said "Now it's your turn, be the bad guy you can be."

Wrestling needs the bad guys for the good guys to fight - it's my job, it's what I do.

Melissa hit it out of the park TWICE. Julie nailed it the show before. If this was going to work, if we were going to drag the fans into this, they needed someone to boo. I HAD to hit a home run.

[She shrugs.]

CK: So, yeah, I got a little harsh and insider-y, more than I care to. But if this was going to work, I needed to. I channeled every bit of rage, anger... Every time I was turned down, every night I had to sleep in a car with a busted heater in a shady part of town, and just let it all out for that. And it worked, the crowd was rabid to see Melissa kick my ass after that.

Then it happened.

I was WRESTLING, in a huge arena, on live TV, and that is a thrill that no one can ever take away from me. If I died tomorrow, that was the greatest day of my life.

[And we cut from present day to footage from the end of the match where Knight grabs the downed Cannon's leg...]

GM: She's calling for the Figure Four! She's trying to finish Melissa Cannon off right here and now!

[Knight leans down, grabbing the leg. She twists the arm around in the spinning toehold, reaching down for the other leg...]

GM: Knight's going for it... she's almost got it!

[But as she reaches down for the other leg, Cannon swings it up, catching Knight RIGHT between the eyes with her foot!]

"OHHHHH!"

[Knight's eyes go glassy from the blow, slumping forward as Cannon reaches up, using a handful of hair to pull herself to her feet, yanking Knight into a standing headscissors...]

GM: Cannon hooks her! She grabs one arm! She grabs the other!

[Clenching her teeth, Cannon lifts Knight up off the canvas, flipping her over...

...and her leg gives out in mid-maneuver, causing her to drop Knight down to her back instead of sitting out in the powerbomb!]

GM: BILLION DOLLAR BOMB!

[With Knight flat on her back, Cannon grabs the legs, flipping over into a double leg cradle, lifting her injured leg into the air while attempting the pin...]

GM: ONE!! TWO!! SHE GOT HER!!

"DING! DING! DING!"

[Cannon collapses out of the cradle as the bell sounds, rolling to her side and grabbing at her injured knee as Phil Watson makes it official.]

PW: Here is your winner... MELISSA CANNNNNNNONNNNN!

[With the aid of referee Eddie Vincent, Melissa Cannon climbs to her feet, wincing as she tries to put weight on the leg. She throws an arm into the air, raised up by Vincent who points at her...

...and we cut ahead a few moments, a hobbling Cannon falling into the ropes, raising her arm to salute the fans again...

...which is when Charisma Knight throws her shoulder into the back of the knee, clipping the legs out from behind.]

GM: OH, COME ON! CHEAP SHOT BY KNIGHT!

[Charisma Knight sneers at the jeering crowd before viciously stomping the knee of Cannon, trying to do even more damage.]

GM: The match is over and this sore loser just can't stand it!

[Knight grabs Cannon by the foot, dragging her out to the middle of the ring...]

BW: And now she's REALLY gonna lock in that Figure Four, Gordo!

[Knight spins the leg, wrapping it up in a spinning toehold...

...and the crowd ERUPTS in cheers!]

GM: SOMERS! IT'S JULIE SOMERS!

[The fan favorite, a heavy white bandage wrapped around her head, makes her way down the aisle, sliding into the ring as Knight spots her coming and opts to bail out to the floor!]

GM: Oh, and of course, Charisma Knight wants no part of Julie Somers when Somers sees her coming!

[Somers angrily shouts for Knight to get back into the ring but Knight has other ideas, backing down the aisle and leaving Somers to stand over Cannon's downed form, kneeling to check on her as the referee waves for a pair of medical team members to join them.]

GM: We're going to get some help in there - thank the maker for Julie Somers' good timing to save Melissa Cannon from any further trouble - we're going to get some help for Cannon and... fans, we'll be right back.

[And we cut from the match footage to present day Melissa Cannon.]

MC: The plot thickens, right? So, now we had issues between me and Charisma... between Charisma and Julie... and a lingering rivalry between myself and Julie to address.

[Cut to Lori Dane.]

LD: The office couldn't decide what they wanted at SuperClash... so we wanted to make sure they saw ALL the options. And as the pages fell off that calendar, we rolled into September...

[Dane shakes her head.]

LD: ...and things started to feel a little familiar.

[Back to Cannon.]

MC: Back then, Homecoming was one of the biggest shows of the year for the AWA and just a week or so after the big Vegas match... nothing. I wasn't on the show. Charisma wasn't on the show. Julie got a promo in but on one of the biggest shows since Tokyo, there wasn't a single women's match booked.

[A voice from off-camera is heard.]

"Did anyone explain why?"

[Cannon shakes her head.]

MC: I'm not sure anyone could.

And then I got left off the next show too while Julie and Charisma were on opposite sides of the first mixed tag in AWA history.

[We get a quick series of still photos from that event - Knight teaming with the Wilde Bunch while Somers teams with Next Gen.]

MC: I'd be lying if I said I wasn't hurt... upset... maybe even jealous. I was the one who staked out our spot and now it seemed like I'd been pushed aside for Julie and Charisma.

[Cut to Charisma]

CK: I felt horrible for Melissa getting backseated, like, we probably should've found a fourth before rolling so someone wasn't odd man outed. And then after Vegas, all three of us left off Homecoming... then the Mixed Tag - a friggin MIXED TAG? It felt like ten steps back, even if we were doing another "First in History"

[We cut to Somers.]

JS: When I came to Homecoming, I was wondering what we were going to do to follow up and they told me they didn't have anything planned.

[She then gives a look of disbelief.]

JS: That was my reaction to that. I then made a pitch to a couple of people about how you can't just ignore what happened, so they finally said I could cut a promo and we'll figure a match out for you on the next show... and for all I know, it was more about finding something for Next Gen to do. No offense to Howie and Daniel, of course.

[She folds her arms.]

JS: But, yeah, I can understand Melissa wanting to have at least something at Homecoming - Charisma, too. Yet all I can think about is what I told Sarah about how I'm a wrestler, not a manager, and while I've got a foot in the door, we're more than a month into this thing and I haven't even had a match yet.

"Do you believe that mixed tag came at Melissa's expense?"

[Julie sighs.]

JS: Melissa is like the sister I never had, but sisters aren't always going to see eye to eye, right? I mean, it's like that with me and my brother.

[Back to Lori Dane.]

LD: I know Melissa was upset about it but... the way I saw it, it was the office's way to make sure that the interest in the potential division extended to other talent too. If it was just Melissa, that's too many eggs in one basket, right? But she was upset... and it didn't get any better.

[Cut to footage marked "Saturday Night Wrestling - October 3rd, 2015" where we see Charisma and Julie on opposite sides of the ring from another again followed by a quick set of highlights from their singles match...

Knight attacking with a soccer-style kick to the ribs before the bell...

Knight whipping Somers into the barricade at ringside...

Somers' kneecap being SLAMMED into the ring apron as Knight starts to attack the legs to weaken them for the figure four leglock...

Somers coming off the middle rope with a flying dropkick...

The Spitfire channeling her inner White Knight with a series of knife edge chops in the corner...

A figure four attempt turned into a small package for a near fall...

Knight holding the injured leg under her arm, causing Somers to hop one-footed on the mat... before springing up to land a kneestrike on the chin, staggering Knight and leaving her vulnerable as Somers leaps up again, dragging her into a rana for another near fall...

Somers attempting a moonsault but having her legs shoved out from under her, crashing into a seated position where she bounces off, flipping down to the mat in a rough fall...

Knight going back to the figure four, torturing the injured leg of Somers who searches for an escape... but ultimately falls short and is forced to submit to the vicious Knight.

And we cut to present day Charisma.]

CK: We had to keep the momentum up. Every time we went out there we had to work harder than anyone else on the show. I know Julie was so damn happy after that match to finally get one under her belt. I just wanted to make sure that we didn't lay an egg.

[Cut to Julie.]

JS: I just wanted to show the fans what I could do out there. I wanted to find out how much they believed in me, how much they would get behind me. And I understood we weren't going to get a lot of time, but just to have the chance to go out and do what I love.

[She lets loose a breath.]

JS: It was such a relief. I had waited too long for that.

[Cut to more footage from that night where Melissa Cannon charges in to break up Knight keeping the figure four locked in after the bell...

...and then to a post-match promo segment with Cannon and Somers.]

JS: While I may not have gotten it done tonight, I can promise you there will be another day when I'll get my hands on Charisma Knight.

GM: She's an incredibly tough competitor... but also a very ruthless competitor as we saw when she kept the figure four locked in after the match. In fact, you could have been seriously injured if it hadn't been for Melissa Cannon showing up out

here when she did.

JS: Gordon, I can't tell you how grateful I am that Melissa got here when she did. It could have been a lot worse for me if she hadn't come out here.

[She glances at Melissa.]

JS: So thanks for standing by my side and I look forward to the day when you I can meet in this ring.

GM: Melissa, I didn't even know you were in the building tonight. We haven't seen you since Las Vegas when you defeated Charisma Knight in one-on-one action.

[Melissa nods.]

MC: I took some time off to let a few nagging injuries heal - the remnants of not wrestling for a long time and then suddenly throwing yourself back into the mix, I guess.

GM: Indeed... but my sources say you were also busy with something else as of late.

[Cannon smiles at the veteran announcer.]

MC: The real reason I'm here is that ever since I saw the passion that Julie Somers has for this business inside this ring... and yes, the passion that Charisma Knight has for it as well... I knew that I had a mission to undertake.

I've been hard at work on that mission since Vegas, Gordon... sitting in meeting after meeting in New York... in Dallas... wherever there was somebody in the AWA front office that I could talk to, I was there.

My mission was simple. I wanted the AWA front office to guarantee that a women's match would take place... at SUPERCLASH VII IN HOUSTON, TEXAS!

[Big cheer from the Memphis crowd!]

GM: And since you're here, I'm guessing...?

[Melissa nods, smiling.]

MC: That's right. Mission... accomplished!

[Another big cheer rings out!]

MC: President O'Neill guaranteed me a slot for the women to compete at the biggest show of the year - maybe the biggest show in AWA history.

[Gordon arches an eyebrow.]

GM: I sense a "but", Melissa.

[Cannon grimaces.]

MC: Unfortunately. They would only agree to sanction a one-on-one matchup. There's room for women to compete at SuperClash this year... but only for two of us.

[Cannon's gaze slowly drifts to Julie Somers who again tries to put weight on her banged-up knee, returning the stare...]

...when suddenly Charisma Knight comes storming back down the aisle, rolling into the ring, shouting at both competitors off-mic!]

GM: Ladies... ladies, please! Let's exercise some control please!

[Cannon and Somers are trading words with Knight... and then suddenly with each other too, arguing about who should compete at SuperClash in Houston as we fade back to present day Lori Dane.]

LD: So, there it was. Melissa came out to deliver the news we'd gotten from the office earlier that week. The good news was that we'd get a match at SuperClash... the first women's singles match in SuperClash history. The bad news is that it meant someone had to be left out. The question at that point was - who?

[Cut to Jon Stegglet.]

JS: They all deserved to be there... they all had their argument as to why they should be there.

[We then cut to Julie Somers.]

JS: Of course I believed we should all be on SuperClash. I think all three of us were trying to figure out how to deal with people who didn't seem to have our best interests in mind. But now my confidence is getting stronger, as I see how people are reacting when I'm out there, and now it's just going to be one women's singles match at SuperClash?

[She folds her arms.]

JS: I couldn't stop thinking about the chance to be on SuperClash - and I'm not the type of person who is going to say "this person doesn't deserve this, I deserve it more than they do." I'm the type of person that, when I've made up my mind, I have the mindset that I want it... then I'm going to show them how much I want it.

[She nods.]

JS: I was all about showing who wanted it more. And I told people that all the time - that I'm going to show you who wants it more, by giving it that much more in a match, by giving it that much more in a promo. Whatever it is, I'm going to give it everything and more and I'm going to show you why I want it so bad. It was never personal.

[She is quiet for a moment.]

JS: But, yeah, it would have been nice to have all three of us wrestling at SuperClash.

[We cut to Charisma]

CK: It was bittersweet. We don't start without Melissa pushing for years the way she did. But if you told me in 2014 that by November of 2015, I'd be working SuperClash in Minute Maid Park, I'd call you a liar.

It was there - all of us wanted it.

[Charisma shakes her head.]

CK: Looking back, it seemed like one last ditch effort to sink us. Three people, two slots - turn us from a united front into fighting with one another to get that moment.

At the time, yeah, I started feeling like "Well, Melissa had her shot twice. Thanks for opening the door, but it's mine and Julie's turn now." Not my proudest moment. But... yeah.

[Cut to Lori Dane.]

LD: It was a hard decision to make. Melissa was...

[Dane pauses, looking away a moment.]

LD: We're not there... we're not HERE today talking about all of this... without her. She was the face of women's wrestling for the AWA at that time and... to even consider not having her in the first women's singles match in SuperClash history seemed...

[She trails off, shaking her head as we cut to Todd Michaelson.]

TM: It was wrong. I love Julie... I respect Charisma a ton too... but it was wrong. I'll stand by that to this day but when you've got multiple chefs in the kitchen, sometimes it's not my turn to pick the Soup of the Day, you know?

[We cut to Jon Stegglet.]

JS: It was tough. We all love Melissa - then and now... but I wanted to see more. I had Lori, Todd, Sarah... all telling me non-stop that I just didn't understand how big this Women's Division could be. That we'd be cracking into a whole new market, bringing a new audience to our shows. That we'd be THE place to watch women's wrestling anywhere in the world outside of Japan... all we had to do was put the money, the effort, and the time in. And I was starting to believe them. What Miyuki and Melissa did opened a whole lot of eyes in the company... in the whole industry... and I knew they could do it again.

[Stegglet shakes his head.]

JS: But it wasn't enough! I knew Melissa could do it! But Sarah went out and she signed Julie Somers. She signed Charisma Knight. She signed Kayla Cristol and Ricki Toughill. We had all this talent we had on the books now... and I needed to know that THEY could do it too. Because if they couldn't... we had a problem.

[Cut to Melissa Cannon who is obviously emotional on this topic.]

MC: I... it's a hard thing for me to talk about. I thought... I still do... I believed that I earned that honor. And please... don't take this as disrespect for Julie or Charisma or anyone else... but I believed that I deserved to be in that spot, carrying the banner for the Women's Division that I'd fought so hard for. This was the moment. This was the night that we could lock it down once and for all. I believed that if SuperClash was a success for the women, we'd get what we wanted and we'd never look back.

[Cannon sighs.]

MC: I wanted the match. I wanted the pressure on my back. I... again, no disrespect at all but I didn't know Julie that well... I didn't know Charisma that well... and I trusted Lori and Sarah in their decisions but... I didn't want the pressure of this division living or dying to be in anyone's hands but mine. Hey, I'm a SoCal girl - I've got that Mamba Mentality in me. When the game is on the line, I want the

ball. I want to take the shot. But when the clock was ticking down in Game 7 with the Celtics, they put me on the bench and put the ball in someone else's hands.

[A voice calls from off-camera.]

"But you did get to be involved at SuperClash..."

[Melissa grimaces.]

MC: Yeah. The runner-up prize.

[Cut to Lori.]

LD: They asked her to be the special guest referee for Shadoe Rage versus Supernova. She did it. She wasn't happy about it but she wanted to be a team player. So, she did it... and she did a good job with it.

[Dane shrugs.]

LD: But it wasn't what she wanted.

[Cut to Sarah Sharpe.]

SS: As we were approaching SuperClash VII, I saw the momentum building and realized we better add more talent if we finally get the approval to move forward.

[She folds her hands in front of her and smiles as she remembers.]

SS: I had been approached several times by a young lady by the name of Kayla Cristol, who really wanted to wrestle and asked if she could get a tryout.

[Cut to a grinning Kayla Cristol.]

KC: You don't take no for an answer. Not when what you want is sitting there right in front of you and they just don't know yet what you can do for them. I mean, the AWA was going to be big time. So I kept calling every week. They kept trying to say they didn't have anything. I said I'd call back next week and keep calling til they changed their number or gave me a tryout.

[And back to Sarah.]

SS: I finally got management to agree to let this young lady have that tryout, but we already had the storyline with our current three.

[She gets a knowing smile on her face.]

SS: But I had been talking to another woman - and this woman was one of several whose star was on the rise around the time multiple promotions with women's wrestling closed. I knew she would be a great addition.

[She nods and pauses for effect.]

SS: That was Ricki Toughill.

[Cut to Ricki in the nosebleeds.]

RT: I went into it knowing everything was probationary and contingent, and aware that I was a cult favorite at best. Kayla, I figured would be the big star with the Texas connection and the way she carried herself...

[Brief cutaway to Kerry Kendrick being shadowed by a figure in an orange hoodie, sunglasses and bandana, a baseball bat over her shoulder.]

RT: That's why I paired up with Kerry Kendrick initially. I knew there might not be job security if I didn't do well at the tryout. But when I hit the ring, I felt... free. Like I could finally get away from being just a death match wrestler for the insecure vampires and I could finally be the wrestler I always dreamed I could be.

[Cut to a few still photos from Ricki Toughill's AWA debut against Kayla Cristol.]

RT: And afterward, when I hear the online reaction... "hey, why isn't Erica Toughill debuting with more fanfare..." I was [BLEEPING] sobbing, I was so happy when I read those comments. I thought people forgot about me and I was past tense!

[Cut back to Sarah.]

SS: Then there are two who were backstage at SuperClash VII but we held off on their debuts...

[She stops, then holds up her hand.]

SS: I would like to take credit here, but I can't – because Shadoe Rage is one of the biggest supporters of women's wrestling and goes out of his way to make sure women know when he likes their matches and will always help behind the scenes.

[A smile at that remark.]

SS: At any rate, he came up to me a few weeks before SuperClash and said to me, "You need to talk to my sister about this." I said "which one?" and he said in that raspy voice of his ... "All of them."

[Cut to Shadoe Rage. The dreadlocked warrior is dressed casually, hair tied up in a scarf, big catseye sunglasses and a skin-tight cut off sleeveless fuchsia T-shirt.]

SR: My whole career was built on women's wrestling. Think back to all my managers... Ms. Elena, Pizzazz, Marissa... they were all the main parts of my act.

Mary MacLeod Bethune said: "The true measure of race must be measured by the caliber of its womanhood."

Rudyard Kipling said: "The female of the species is more dangerous than the male."

I believe in those things fundamentally.

[Cut to a still photo of Shadoe Rage standing with his brother Derek and Pizzazz during their IIWF days.]

SR: If you remember the Prophets of Rage, it would be Pizzazz, Medusa, Marissa who would finish the matches and then we would pick the bones. People knocked us all the time but there was a point to it. We were showcasing our women as much as possible because they had the talent, they had the personality and they had "it."

[Rage punches into his open hand, punctuating his words.]

SR: So when the steam was being picked up by the AWA to actually get women in the ring there was no way the Rages couldn't be represented. So I had to make sure that Sharpe called Mantha. Mantha had some talent up in Toronto that needed the break. I felt obligated to make sure they weren't overlooked.

[Cut to Victoria June.]

VJ: Shadoe was actually askin' for me. Mantha wanted them to take me. She wanted to link Age of Rage wrestling with the AWA. She had a host of talent but ah was her ace. And the AWA was like "No." Ah was so crushed.

[Cut to Lauryn Rage.]

LR: So Mantha turned to me. She said I needed to kick in the door for Age of Rage. The Rage name still had some cache in the AWA and they weren't sold on Victoria June for whatever reason. So I became the spearpoint. And I was going to be the Trojan Horse. Sure, you let me in, but a whole lot of others were coming behind me, ya dig?

[Lauryn smirks, shaking her head.]

LR: This wasn't going on without us.

[Cut to Sharpe]

SS: The other woman who came backstage is somebody I knew from way back but wasn't somebody who others may have been familiar with or remembered. But I wanted somebody who had been around the business for a long time and who was unselfish, willing to help elevate others on the roster.

[She now chuckles.]

SS: Again, I can't take all the credit, but when it came to adding Lori Wilson, the one who said we had to do it was Todd Michaelson.

[We now cut to "Lady Lightning" Lori Wilson, who is seated in a chair in front of a wrestling ring at Combat Corner Wrestling, as evidenced by the CCW logo on the apron. She is dressed in a CCW T-shirt and black shorts.]

LW: I was backstage at Minute Maid Park and was pretty impressed with what I saw. I met a number of AWA officials – and that includes Lori Dane, who told me that we already had one Lori working here and we don't need another.

[She pauses and a smile forms.]

LW: I don't know whether she was kidding or not.

[The smile becomes a grin, then she continues.]

LW: Anyway, I think it was Tommy Fierro who asked if I could watch the women's match and offer observations. I asked if I could be in the production area and they allowed me there. And while I'm watching the matches, I had these observations in my head and, then, I just started saying them out loud. Others were doing the same, but when I started, nobody told me to be quiet.

[She pauses for a moment.]

LW: Then I was asked to visit with Charisma, Julie and Melissa and talk to them about what they did and I did that – and that was when Todd came up to me, mentioned that he listened to everything I had to say about the matches. He said, "I want you to be part of this company."

[Cut to Todd Michaelson.]

TM: Honestly, I didn't know her very well at all. Sarah had shown me tapes but as far as I knew, she was just coming in as talent.

[Michaelson shrugs.]

TM: It took all of about five minutes sitting in Chimpanzee with her to know that was just the tip of the iceberg with her. Sure, she could come in as talent but I wanted her in a different role - almost a player/coach for however long she wanted to keep wrestling but I already had my eye on her as a trainer for the Combat Corner.

[Cut back to Wilson.]

LW: At the time I was brought to AWA, I was what you might call semi-retired, wrestling once in a while but doing a lot of commentary for independent promotions. I had a great career, maybe not with the notoriety that other women had, but a great career nonetheless, and I understood I was going to be in AWA to build up other talent and I was fine with that. It's important to build up new talent.

[She glances at her surroundings.]

LW: Little did I know what that would become.

[She gets a mischievous grin on her face and then points a finger at the camera.]

LW: And Lori Dane, yes, I showed there is room for more than one Lori in this company.

[She then laughs as we cut to Sarah Sharpe.]

SS: In the weeks before SuperClash, it was hard to limit who we brought in because I had seen so much talent out there on the market but because we still hadn't made the final sale on the Women's Division, we had to hold back a little.

But we now had two women in Ricki and Lauryn, whose stars were on the rise at the time the UWF and others shut down but could add name value, because they had gained a large following from those who knew women's wrestling well. We also had a young woman in Kayla with so much potential and a veteran who understood it was time to help others realize their potential, whether they were still new to the business or just needed their opportunity.

[She pauses for a moment.]

SS: My fingers were crossed when it came to SuperClash, because if Julie and Charisma pulled it off, we just might get that door wide open for other women who were waiting for their opportunity.

[Cut to Jon Stegglet.]

JS: SuperClash is the biggest night of the year for us... and I don't think it's an exaggeration to say it was the biggest night in the careers of Julie Somers and Charisma Knight. The pressure was on... they knew it was on... and they knew they had to deliver.

[Cut to Lori.]

LD: And all the rest of us could do was just... watch.

[We cut to footage marked "SuperClash VII - November 26th, 2015" as we fade up on a panning shot of Minute Maid Park in Houston, Texas while we heard Gordon and Bucky running down the night's lineup...]

GM: Wright got exactly what he wanted when he set up that one. Plus, we've got three other titles on the line! The Legends Royale! The Women's Match! The Street Fight!

[Cut to present day Melissa.]

MC: "The Women's Match." It's almost like some people didn't recognize the stakes at all.

[We cut to present day Gordon Myers, just as you'd remember him from his final days in the play-by-play chair.]

"There has been a lot of criticism throughout the filming of this of the way you presented some of the matches and the action surrounding the Women's Division."

[Gordon has a very serious expression on his face now.]

GM: Such as?

"The way you acted as if you didn't know who Miyuki Ozaki was, for instance."

[Gordon chuckles.]

GM: I didn't.

[He holds up his hand.]

GM: I honestly, truly didn't. Miyuki Ozaki had two strikes going against her. For one, I've always been someone very focused on the promotion in front of me. I didn't follow a lot of other companies and any time I had to put someone over as a big star that came from somewhere else, it was because I was told to. If I didn't treat her the way people believe she should be treated, it's because I didn't get those instructions.

"You didn't follow international promotions at all?"

[Gordon shakes his head.]

GM: Not really, no. A few things here and there when people would put it in front of me.

[Gordon laughs.]

GM: There's a reason I didn't get to work most of the international shows and it's not just that I hated the long plane flights.

"So, it had nothing to do with trying to downplay the potential Women's Division?"

[Gordon shakes his head.]

GM: Look, I come from a period in this business where almost no women - ZERO - were getting an opportunity so I loved seeing them get their chance as much as anyone. That said, there may have been times when I was asked to say a specific line... or not play up a certain thing... over the years. If that had a negative impact on what they were trying to accomplish, it certainly wasn't my intention... and I

certainly apologize. I've made my share of mistakes over the years but I always gave it my all to enhance the product and entertain the fans.

[And we cut back to footage from SuperClash where we see Julie Somers standing with Sweet Lou Blackwell shortly before her history-making match...]

JS: Wrestling is what I live for. This is what I grew up around. This is what I knew I wanted to do for a career. This is my dream, my passion, my livelihood. And in my heart I carry every bit of advice I got, every kind word I received from those before me about what it takes to be the best.

Charisma Knight, when I step into that ring to face you, I'm going to have the motivation of every Hall of Famer, every top women's wrestler I've met, to lead to only one thing.

And that's me kicking your ass!

[And then to footage of Charisma Knight with Mark Stegglet.]

CK: For almost twenty years, since I first realized as a kid that I could wrestle someday, I've been waiting for this moment. I've been waiting for my time, to step through that curtain, to walk down that aisle, to head into that ring, at the biggest wrestling event of the year, in front of the biggest crowd live and on Television. Tonight is the night. And no one is going to spoil it, not Melissa Cannon, and not you, Julie Somers.

[Cut to later in her promo.]

CK: Ten years. Ten years to be taken seriously. Ten years working to keep my pride intact. Ten years of having a standard that I wouldn't compromise. Ten years of not lowering myself to work in exploitive promotions. Ten years of clawing and dragging, of having my options limited because of politics.

I have finally arrived at my first goal - wrestling at SuperClash.

[Cut to modern day Charisma watching her promo on an iPad in her hands with a smirk on her face.]

CK: I remember getting to Minute Maid that morning, walking around backstage. I didn't sleep the night before, my stomach was a bundle of nerves. No matter what I tried to calm myself down, it didn't work. It got worse - because walking around backstage, I wasn't seeing just Julie and Melissa. I was also seeing Ricki, and Lauren, and Kayla.

Hell, I saw Lori Friggin' Wilson walking around backstage and it was hitting me just how big this was. How much of a chance Lori Dane and Sarah were taking on Julie and I delivering on the largest stage either of us have ever been on.

[She chuckles.]

CK: Weekend of SuperClash VI, I watched on a torrent three days later because the motel in Paramus I was staying in didn't have PPV, and now I'm a featured match?

I think I can best describe the feeling as being directly in the middle of absolute bliss and the most existential dread one can experience without their life being in danger.

[We cut to another panning shot of the SuperClash crowd as we can hear Gordon's voice once again.]

GM: While there's technically no title on the line in this one, Bucky, you might very well say there is. For months now - or longer to hear her tell it - Melissa Cannon has been at the forefront of this battle with AWA management to finally - at long last - bring a Women's Division to the company. Part of that battle yielded this - an opportunity for two female competitors to hit the biggest stage in the world and show us all what they can do. Julie Somers and Charisma Knight have a lot of weight on their shoulders here tonight, Bucky.

BW: Absolutely. The future of the Women's Division - if one is to exist - is right on them. They need to come out here and prove they can compete on the same level as everyone else. They want a division? They want a championship? Tonight's the night to show what they've got.

[We cut to present day Julie Somers.]

JS: Yeah, that was the last thing I heard over the monitor before they cued our entrances. If I wasn't already worried about throwing up at that point, I sure was after that. And then they showed Miyuki!

[We cut back to the SuperClash footage where we see someone sitting in the front row. The competitor that many have called the greatest female wrestler in the world - Miyuki Ozaki.]

GM: Miyuki Ozaki, currently a free agent in the wrestling world although she spends much of her time these days in Japan, is sitting in the front row and you can get she's here for one reason. She wants to see as much as the rest of us do if these two have what it takes to bring women's wrestling back to the mainstream here in the United States.

BW: Boy, does that ever have the potential to get in the heads of Somers and Knight here tonight, Gordo.

GM: It certainly does. But they've gotta put that out of their heads. They have to put aside all the pressure, all the distractions, all the rumors about who might be coming in... and they need to focus on the match at hand. Because these are two top flight competitors and one slip-up can mean the difference between the thrills of victory and the agony of defeat. Who will come out on top? Let's go to the ring and find out!

[Cut to Miyuki Ozaki.]

MO: (My match with Melissa Cannon had opened a lot of eyes. It was the match that lit a fire, and the AWA started talking about a Women's Division. So when the AWA invited me to SuperClash, it was clear to me that they wanted my presence there to legitimize their vision.)

[She smiles.]

MO: (I was not signed to the AWA, but I understood the symbolism of being there. I wasn't just a wrestler to them; I was the face of Joshi Puroresu, the woman who'd made the Empress Cup a global name and the one who had helped show them that women could be more than a sideshow. They were building something new and it was like they were asking for my blessing.)

[Cut back to Somers.]

JS: I did know that Miyuki Ozaki was at SuperClash, because I met her backstage, but what I didn't know was that she was going to be in the front row for the women's match. So I get to ringside, see Miyuki out of the corner of my eye, and I know how I'm going to react to Charisma once I get into the ring, but how do I

react to Miyuki? I just thought to myself – let's not overdo it. I'm just going to give a quick glance at Miyuki, but otherwise, my attention is on Charisma.

[We cut back to SuperClash footage as the action begins with a quick series of highlights...

Knight bullying Somers back against the ropes before breaking with a pat on Somers' head and then bailing backwards, ducking through the ropes as Somers looks ready to rip her head off...

Knight sauntering out to mid-ring, opening her mouth to say something to the Spitfire who POPS her in the jaw with a forearm smash... and then follows with a few more, driving Knight back into the ropes...

A leaping clothesline off the ropes by Somers...

A dropkick to the chin by Somers that sends Knight falling back into the corner where Somers returns the favor with a "friendly" pat on Knight's head...

...and we cut to present day Charisma Knight watching the highlights on an iPad.]

CK: I still get those butterflies in my stomach watching this now. All those people in the stadium, all those people watching at home...

[She shakes her head as we cut to Julie Somers.]

JS: I was just hoping I can live up to the expectations. That's especially because you had other women who had just signed, like Ricki, Lauryn, Kayla and Lori, who all had the expectation that Charisma and I can deliver... and then Melissa, not wrestling on the show, and I know how much she wanted that, but now, I imagine she had that same expectation for Charisma and I.

[She nods her head.]

JS: I had to show everyone not only that I could meet that expectation, but exceed it.

[Cut to Melissa.]

MC: Yeah, of course I was watching. It may have torn a hole in my gut to not be out there but it wasn't going to keep me from cheering the girls on. There was more at stake that night than my ego and I needed to make sure they got the job done.

[And back to SuperClash action where Knight is unleashing kicks to the body, leaving Somers in trouble hanging onto the top rope to stay on her feet before shoving past the referee, moving back in...

...but Somers tucks her arms over the top rope, leaning back to flip over the ropes, landing on her feet on the apron!]

GM: Whoa!

[Knight is caught by surprise for a moment but then surges forward just as Somers tugs on the top rope, yanking herself into a forearm shot to the jaw!]

GM: Ohh! Somers caught her coming in!

[The Cleveland, Ohio native staggers back...

...and then rushes forward, ducking down to try and drive her shoulder into Somers' midsection...]

GM: Somers spins away and-

[She SLAMS her knee up into the jaw of Knight, stunning the rulebreaker as she hangs over the middle rope. Somers backs off, turning to the fans with a "COME ON!" before charging back in, leaping into the air...

...and DRIVING both of her feet into the temple of Charisma Knight in a dropkick! Somers lands seated on the apron as Knight staggers backwards, falling down to a knee as Somers grabs the top rope with both hands...]

GM: Julie Somers is bringing the quick-paced offense early in this one, trying to knock Charisma Knight off her game...

[Somers gives a shout as she slingshots over the top in a somersault, landing with her legs on the shoulders of the rising Knight...

...and then yanks the top rope, pulling Knight towards the ropes where she flips her over the ropes and down to the floor with a rana while Somers lands standing on the apron!]

"OHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

GM: What a move out of Somers! That one sends Knight down to the floor and while Knight may be a dirty player, I don't think she wants to be outside the ring with the high flyer, Bucky!

BW: Julie Somers is using that speed... that quickness... to great advantage so far and she's got Charisma Knight reeling in the early moments of this one!

[Somers, still standing on the apron, turns her back on Knight, looking out to the cheering crowd with a "YEAAAH!" As Knight starts to stir on the floor, Somers leaps into the air, springing off the middle rope, twisting around in a crossbody that wipes out Knight on the floor!]

"OHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

GM: MORE HIGH RISK OFFENSE OUT OF THE SPITFIRE!

[Somers crawls off the mat, pumping a fist as she approaches the front row of fans, pausing to high five a few of her followers...

...and we cut to present day Julie Somers watching the action unfold on the iPad.]

JS: I'm just pulling out whatever moves I can think of to tell the story about how I have to keep Charisma off balance, because once she gets me down on the mat, she has the advantage. And I was doing all these high-flying moves – I was just in awe of that style of wrestling when I was growing up. When I learned wrestling for the first time, I just had to learn moves like that.

[She grins for a moment.]

JS: And, yeah, I did play up to the fans a lot, which was something that I maybe did too much in this match. I just loved getting the fans into the action. But I remember how Juan Vasquez told me that you don't always have to gesture to the fans to get them into it, because the moves you do and how they build the story, that's how you really get them into a match.

[And back to SuperClash action where Somers is back in the ring, attacking Knight who is pushed up against the turnbuckles...]

"WHAAAAAAAAAAAAAP!"

"WHAAAAAAAAAAAAAP!"

"WHAAAAAAAAAAAAAP!"

"WHAAAAAAAAAAAAAP!"

"WHAAAAAAAAAAAAAP!"

[With a fist pump, Somers grabs Knight by the arm...]

GM: Irish whi- reversed by Knight!

[As Somers races across the ring, she leaps up to the second rope. Knight comes in after her but drops down as Somers does a head fake...]

GM: Oh! Knight bit on the head fake, drops down to the mat...

[...and as she gets up, Somers leaps off the second rope with another flying rana takedown, flipping Knight over and down to the mat!]

GM: OH MY! SOMERS CATCHES HER AGAIN!

[Knight rolls under the ropes to the "safety" of the ring apron, pushing up to a knee as Somers claps her hands together over her head a few times, getting the fans on their feet as she dashes to the far ropes, rebounding back...]

GM: Somers charging in!

[The Spitfire swings her leg up, looking to kick Knight off the apron to the floor...]

...but Knight steps to the side slightly, catching the leg under her arm as Somers tries for the kick...]

GM: Oh! Knight avoids it! She's got the leg and-

"OHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

[Knight DROPS off the apron, snapping the back of Somers' knee down on the middle rope!]

GM: Good grief! What a counter by Knight!

BW: That could rip a knee... hyper-extend it... tear something...

[Down on the floor, Knight grabs the foot, pulling down on the leg as Somers struggles to free herself, still trapped around the second rope.]

GM: And this is what Knight was waiting for! You knew that at some point, she wanted to target the knee and she got her window of opportunity right there. She's going to go after that knee and set up the figure four leglock!

BW: She's beaten Somers with the figure four once!

GM: And Somers has COUNTERED the figure four once to beat Knight! It's all even between these two!

[Cut to present day Julie Somers.]

JS: They say you are only as good as your dance partner. I was lucky to have a great opponent in Charisma. We knew exactly the story we wanted to tell – she’s the wily veteran who knows every hold in the book and I’m the energetic high flyer who wants to take chances. It was just the perfect combination of styles.

[Cut to Charisma]

CK: Julie and I were the perfect pairing for this. She could fly, I was great at being the base for a flyer, so we clicked in every way for this. It helps that it wasn’t the first time we were in the ring together. But, we had time and something to prove, and just complimented each other in how we strung things along from one point to the next.

[And back to SuperClash action where Knight drags Somers across the ringside area towards the barricade...]

GM: Where is she going, Bucky?

BW: Oh, I think I know EXACTLY where she’s going.

[Knight shoves Somers back into the railing, tucking her arms behind it...

...and then points menacingly at Miyuki Ozaki in the front row before winding up...]

“WHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAP!”

GM: Big overhand chop by Charisma Knight!

[She pauses, glaring at Ozaki, looking for a reaction and getting none...

...so she hits Somers harder!]

“WHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAP!”

[Knight looks at Ozaki again who feigns a yawn...

...and we cut to present day Miyuki Ozaki.]

“Would you like to comment on Charisma Knight?”

MO: (Charisma and I... we’d crossed paths in Japan and it was not a pleasant experience. But I wasn’t going to let personal history affect what was going on in the ring. My focus was on the match and what it meant for the future of women’s wrestling. That’s what mattered. Charisma’s a talented performer and she showed that at SuperClash.)

[Cut to Charisma]

CK: That’s for a different documentary. We have issues and I’ll leave it at that.

[And back to SuperClash action where Knight drives Somers’ kneecap into the canvas before turning to look at the jeering crowd, extending her arms and waving for more...

...and then deeper into the match where we see Knight use a shinbreaker on Somers, holding onto the leg and going right into a dragon screw legwhip on the Spitfire!]

“OHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!”

GM: Good grief! That legwhip looks absolutely terrible!

[With Somers on her back holding her leg, Knight grabs the foot, giving it a yank...]

GM: She's going for the figure four!

[Knight spins around the leg...

...but Somers is ready for her, planting her foot on the butt and **SHOVES** Knight through the ropes and out to the floor!]

GM: OHH! WHAT A COUNTER BY SOMERS!!

[Knight crashes down on the floor hard, grabbing at her own knee as she hits the barely-padded infield dirt.]

GM: Knight is grabbing her leg! She may have tweaked her own knee going through the ropes like that!

[In the ring, Somers slowly gets to her feet, hobbling over towards the ropes, taking a look at Knight. She steps out to the apron, wincing as she backs to the ringpost...

...and giving a shout, she gets a short two-step run before leaping off, snaring the rising Knight's head between her legs, and snaps her over in a swinging rana to a big cheer!]

GM: ANOTHER HEADSCISSORS - THIS ONE OFF THE APRON - BY SOMERS!

[The crowd is roaring for the move as both women are laid out on the floor.]

GM: Somers sucked up the pain shooting through her knee to deliver that move and to buy herself some time! Knight's attempt at the figure four was countered but you better believe that won't be her only attempt at it.

BW: Absolutely not. That's her weapon of choice and if she locks it in, I'm betting we've got ourselves a winner, Gordo.

[We cut again, moving still deeper into this historic battle where we find Knight tossing Somers into the corner before smashing into her with a short running avalanche. She grabs the wrist, sending her across the ring...

As Somers nears the corner, she somehow manages to step up to the second rope on her bad knee, avoiding the crash into the buckles. Knight comes stomping across as Somers throws a head fake back, causing Knight to bottom out...]

GM: Somers caught her with the fake again... turns around...

[But Knight is quick to her feet - perhaps too quick - as Somers leaps off...]

GM: HEADSCISS-

"OHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

[The crowd's reaction comes as a ready Knight catches her on the way down, **DRIVING** her into the canvas with a powerbomb! She leans into the legs, applying a double leg jackknife cradle as the referee dives to the canvas!]

GM: ONE!!! TWO!!! THREEEEEEEE-

"OHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

BW: WHAT?!

GM: SHOULDER UP! SHOULDER UP! SHE GOT THE SHOULDER UP!

[Knight slams her fist repeatedly down into the canvas, glaring at the official who holds up two fingers.]

GM: Knight thought she had her and quite frankly, I did too! But Julie Somers is showing an incredible amount of heart and guts! She refuses to stay down.

[Cut to present day Julie Somers.]

JS: Everything I do in that ring, it's all about showing how much heart, how much desire I have to keep going. And every time I hear the fans cheer like that, it just drives me more. I really wanted to show the fans they had every reason to believe in me.

[A pause, perhaps for effect.]

JS: And to give everyone else in the back reason to believe in me, too.

[And back to SuperClash action where Knight's holding onto the leg, looking for another dragon screw...]

"WHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAP!"

"OHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

GM: HEAD KICK! LEAPING HEAD KICK!

[The enzuigiri connects SOLIDLY with the back of Knight's head, leaving her flat on her back on the canvas as Somers crawls, throwing an arm over Knight's heaving chest!]

GM: ONE!! TWO!! THRE-

"OHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

GM: KICKOUT! KICKOUT AT TWO! MY STARS!

[Somers rolls to her back, hands up over her face as the crowd roars with disappointment.]

GM: Somers got the head kick! Somers got the near fall! But at this point, you have to wonder - what in the world does Julie Somers have left, Bucky?

BW: Nothing! That was it! That was her Hail Mary! Charisma just needs to get back up, lock in that figure four, and collect the winner's share of the purse, daddy!

GM: You could be right as both women are down after that kick to the back of the head... neither one looks like they're in any condition to keep this thing going but they've got to! They've gotta keep going!

[Cut to present day Lori Dane.]

LD: I was on the edge of my seat. My anxiety had anxiety. Everything was going perfect... better than I had even hoped for... now we just needed to cross the finish line.

[Cut to Cannon.]

MC: The ending is everything sometimes, right? Whether it's a movie or a TV series or a wrestling show, everything can be fantastic but if it had a bad finish, sometimes it spoils everything that came before it. That's what they needed - we all needed - to avoid here.

[And back to SuperClash VII action where Somers is on her feet with the aid of the ropes, hanging on to them for support...

...and Knight violently kicks the back of Somers' knee, flipping her legs up into the air and dumping Somers down on the back of her head and neck!]

GM: OHH!

BW: Hah! That'll cut off whatever grand idea Somers had! She's done for! She'd better face reality because she just got one heck of a reality check from Charisma Knight!

[Knight sneers down at Somers as she grabs a handful of hair, hauling her up to her feet. She pulls her in, folding the leg up under her...]

GM: Knight's going for the shinbreaker again...

[She lifts Somers up, dropping her shinfirst down across the bent knee...]

GM: Shinbreaker...

[The momentum carries Somers back up where Knight typically uses the belly-to-back suplex...

...but there's a bit too much momentum as Somers slips out of Knight's grasp, hooking her legs around Knight's head...]

GM: WHAT THE-?!

[...and flips backwards, snapping Knight over into a rana as Somers reaches back to hook both of Knight's struggling legs!]

GM: CRADLE! SHE'S GOT THE LEGS!

[The referee dives to the mat!]

GM: ONE!! TWO!! THREEEEEEEEEEEE!!!

"DING! DING! DING!"

[Knight kicks her way free a moment too late as the bell sounds. Somers pushes up to her knees, arms raised in the air as Knight holds up two fingers to the referee who shakes his head, showing three fingers in response.]

GM: Somers wins! Somers wins! Somers wins!

[The crowd is ROARING for the Spitfire as the official helps her to her feet, lifting one of her arms up into the air!]

GM: Julie Somers gets the one-two-three right in the center of the ring! On a banged up knee and with all the odds against her, she gets the win and-

[Somers hobbles to the corner, stepping up gingerly to the second rope, pumping her fists to the raucous crowd...]

...and we fade to Ricki Toughill who smiles, reminiscing as she thinks back on the match.]

RT: I'd never seen Julie wrestle until the big stage, and Charisma I'd only seen a couple of times. I figured... I did my part during STS, and then I see Lauryn backstage. And we start gabbin' like it's old times. But when that match came on it's like...

[She snaps her fingers.]

RT: ...the backstage went silent. It didn't feel like an exhibition - it was the real thing. And I look over, and... when Lauryn is watching silently, you know [BLEEP] is real. These two are setting the benchmark, so we better get real familiar with Charisma and Spitfire.

[Cut to Julie.]

JS: Somebody asked me at the time if Charisma and I topped what Melissa and Miyuki did earlier in the year. I would say that, no, Melissa and Miyuki easily had the best women's match that year. That was such a high bar to clear. But Charisma and I went out and told a story. You look at how the fans reacted to it and that tells you everything you need to know.

[Cut to Victoria June watching the match on an iPad.]

VJ: Hell yeah! That match rocked! That's what ah'm talking about! Julie was right... she proved she was the Wonder Woman. She and Charisma did the damn thing that night. It's like they were mind-melded or something. They just kept upping the stakes then lettin' it breathe. Uppin' the stakes then lettin' it breathe. Charisma showed just how deadly she could be in that ring and Julie was plucky and determined. Her leg looked finished but she kept finding ways to counter Charisma's big moves and outlasted and outsmarted her. They delivered on that big stage.

[Cut to Miyuki.]

MO: (Charisma had this fire; Julie was relentless. They weren't just wrestling - they were proving that women belonged in the spotlight. The crowd was on their feet, screaming, chanting... and I felt it in my chest - the same rush I get whenever I'm in the ring. That night, I knew AWA's Women's Division was real.)

[And one more cut back to SuperClash action.]

GM: The fans are going crazy! They've really taken to this young lady and what a win for her here in Houston!

[Cut back to Somers who looks down into the camera, pointing into it...]

"I've proven enough... we've all proven enough. Landon O'Neill... a Women's Division... a women's championship... make it happen!"

[Somers lowers herself down to the mat slowly, bouncing on one foot as Charisma Knight angrily exits the ring. The Spitfire raises her arms again.]

GM: Well... you heard her, Mr. President. I'd say the ball is in your court, sir.

[The camera holds on a joyous and weary Somers, arms over her head...]

...and then back to present day Lori Dane who smiles.]

LD: You said it, Spitfire.

[Cut to a nodding Melissa Cannon.]

MC: I was over the moon. I think I still owe a fine for a locker I beat the hell out of because I was so pumped up. They did it... they did it... and there wasn't a woman in that building that night who didn't believe we'd done what we came to do. Now all that was left...

[Back to Dane.]

LD: We needed to make it official.

[We cut to Jon Stegglet.]

JS: We had our usual post-SuperClash off-season. And... yeah, it was THE topic of discussion going into the break. Not just with Lori and Sarah this time. All of ownership came together and... well, it was plainly obvious, I think...

These women had earned their moment. Julie, Charisma, Melissa... Miyuki... Lori and Sarah behind the scenes... so many more to come.

[Stegglet grins... and we cut to Melissa.]

MC: Nobody told me anything after SuperClash. We got our handshakes. We got our "good jobs" but it wasn't like anyone was poppin' bottles backstage because we got the green light. I didn't push... this time. Lori and Sarah convinced me it was better to let the moment breathe. We'd hit a home run... Julie and Charisma had done exactly what needed to be done... the fans in the building were on fire, the fans online were on fire. The support was there...

[Cannon grins.]

MC: ...and if that wasn't enough, Miyuki came to me backstage afterwards and extended a special invitation...

[Cut to Miyuki Ozaki, smiling with pride.]

MO: The Empress Cup... that's my baby.

[She laughs as we go back to Japanese with the subtitles.]

MO: (When I first came up with the idea in 2007, I didn't think it would become what it is today. It started as something small, just a regional tournament in Japan to give women's wrestling a spotlight, a chance to show what we could really do. I wanted to create something that would give us a platform, not just to wrestle, but to celebrate who we are as athletes, as women.)

[She motions with her hands animatedly, as if a huge explosion has gone off.]

MO: (But it didn't stay small for long. What started as a one-time thing, blossomed into something much bigger. We now have women from all over the world competing in the Empress Cup. It's an honor, really, to be invited. Because it's not just about skill - though that's important. It's about potential. When you get an invite to the Empress Cup, it means that the wrestling world sees something in you. You've made an impact. You've shown you can hang with the best, and there are expectations. Big ones. You're not just showing up to wrestle... you're showing up

because the eyes of the world are on you. You're here to prove you belong, and you're here to leave your mark.)

[She pauses, her expression becoming serious.]

MO: (That's why when I wrestled Melissa... I knew right away. There was no question. She had the ability to be a future star in this industry. Her heart, her intensity, her drive... it was all there. And that match? It wasn't just about that one performance. It was about potential. She made it clear that she could rise to the top.

So when I offered her that invitation, it wasn't just because of that match. I knew she had the fire to go all the way. And when you're in the Empress Cup, it's not just a tournament. It's about the history we've built and the legacy that follows. The women who have competed in it - who have won it - are some of the biggest names in the business.

When you receive an invitation, it's your chance to make your own history.)

[Cut to Melissa.]

MC: It was... special. It was something I had dreamed of. So, I got the green light from management... honestly, I think it helped our cause that Miyuki thought we were worth spotlighting in the Cup. It added more legitimacy to the women of the AWA and well... it sure as hell didn't hurt when your girl came home with the Cup, baby!

[Cut to a still photo of a grinning and bloodied Cannon holding the Cup overhead after her victory in December of 2015...

...and back to Lori Dane.]

LD: Of course I was there! Another one of my proudest moments watching her achieve that. The fans remembered her from Rising Sun Showdown and showed her the love. Miyuki treated her like a megastar. It was the perfect Christmas gift... or so I thought.

[Cut to Todd Michaelson who laughs.]

TM: We had gotten back to the hotel after Melissa won the Empress Cup... it was... I'd say late but it was probably early the next day after all that celebrating. Lori and I were both badly in need of a half day's sleep and we had a message waiting for us. It was Jon and he wanted us to call the office the first chance we got.

[Cut back to a smiling Jon Stegglet.]

JS: I wanted to wait to tell her in person... but I got too excited. She's one of my best friends, you know. My partner. This was her dream and...

[Stegglet gets a little emotional, dabbing at his eye as we cut back to Lori.]

LD: We called the office, drunk as skunks, and Jon just started laughing when he realized just how much Japanese whiskey and sake we'd poured down our throats with Melissa and her friends in Japan. But even though the hangover kicked my ass the next day... I'll never forget what he said.

"Lori... you're one of my best friends in this world and..."

[Cut to Jon Stegglet.]

JS: "It makes me happy beyond words to be able to call you tonight and tell you..."

[Back to Lori, tears in her eyes as Todd smiles, draping an arm around her shoulders.]

LD: "...that when the AWA is back in February, you've got your dream. The AWA Women's Division is a go. I'm so happy for you... I love you so much. Congratulations."

[Lori breaks down, tears running down her cheeks as Todd pats her on the back.]

TM: Pretty good re-enactment actually. A lot less alcohol but similar emotions. She was... you okay?

[Lori nods, still crying.]

TM: She was... these are happy tears... just like they were in Tokyo. This was everything to her. She fought for it for so long... in different promotions... for years. She finally got what she wanted... what she'd dreamed of.

[Todd reaches out, embracing his wife for a lovely moment as she continues to cry...

...and we cut to Melissa Cannon.]

MC: I wish my story was as good as theirs. They got me to my room before they went to theirs... of course, Mom and Dad wouldn't let me stagger around Tokyo on my own. But I passed out cold. I woke up hours later in my bed hugging the Empress Cup... and with about 500 text messages and voicemails from Lori. I was scared to death at first. I thought something had happened.

[She smiles.]

MC: Well, something did. The best thing ever.

[We cut to Sarah Sharpe.]

SS: I was working in my office when Jon Stegglet asked me to visit with him. And then he told me the news that the Women's Division was going to happen.

[She pauses and takes a breath.]

SS: My heart skipped a beat... and the first thing I'm saying is "does Lori Dane know?" And he said, "Yes, she's the first person I called." I was definitely overwhelmed at that point, but after I thanked Jon, I went back to my office and I sent out a text to every woman who had signed with AWA about the news.

[Cut to Julie Somers.]

JS: I had been invited to the Empress Cup, so I was in Japan when I got the news from Lori. I had gone to bed and I'm usually a sound sleeper, but I wake up and my phone is ringing. I finally pick it up and it's Lori telling me the Women's Division is happening in AWA.

[She stops for a minute, then she wipes her eye.]

JS: I'm still kind of half asleep, so I asked her "what did you say" and she told me again and then... that's when it hit me.

[Tears trickle down her cheek but she's smiling.]

JS: Best news I heard that day.

[Cut to Lauryn Rage.]

LR: Like I said, I was the Trojan Horse. When I got the call from Mantha, she just said: "Remember you got all us behind you." Then I called Shadoe and we started talking about the lay of the land and how to stand out amongst all these statuesque wrestlers. They were all taller than me. But Shadoe told me that the trick was to bring that personality, ya dig. Just be the real one that I was. That annoying little sister energy I had. And I did that. Hell, I'm doing that.

But the big news was the women had a national stage in America again. That was BIG, ya dig.

[Cut to Kayla Cristol. She is showing her forearm.]

KC: Goosebumps. The Pistol was going to Dallas and the Women's Division was finally here. That was a life-changing phone call, I tell ya what. They wanted to know how soon I could report. I was already in the car by the time they said the division was a go.

[Cut to Lori Wilson.]

LW: I was excited about the news, but more for the other women than myself. I just kept thinking about how all these women will get a chance to be part of one of the biggest stages, if not the biggest stage, in all of wrestling. I had my time in the spotlight, but as I talked to each of these women when I was at SuperClash, I was really hoping they'd get their time – and now they all had that chance.

[Cut to Knight.]

CK: It was affirming. This is what we were aiming for. This was the result of the work. The work Julie, Melissa, and myself did on screen... the work Lori and Sarah did backstage... we did it. Not only did we get the SuperClash match done, but now... now we had the Division. For the first time since UWF closed, now women have a real top level to get to in the US.

[Cut to Ricki Toughill.]

RT: I was... taking independent bookings from *sigh* another death match promotion in Pittsburgh around that time, and... messy "Poor Ricki" was not in the best place again, because I felt like I was falling into the same trap of taking bookings wherever anyone would have me. And getting mad at myself for falling for it again.

[She grins slightly, crooked teeth on display.]

RT: And then I get the text, it's a go. AWA Women's Division, and I'm one of the Original Six. It's the middle of winter and I step out into the venue's parking lot, and I imagine a conversation with me in 2004 when I was living in my Pontiac. "You did it," I say to her. "Let's go."

[Cut back to Sharpe.]

SS: But I was especially happy for Lori Dane. Yes, I helped along the way, but this was her idea. This was what she wanted. Without Lori Dane being the driving force, this doesn't happen... and I told Lori that when I called her. If she had been in the office at that moment, I would have pulled her in for the biggest hug she would have ever gotten from me.

[Cut back to Jon Stegglet.]

JS: So, behind the scenes it was official... and now we needed to make it official on camera too. There was no sense in wasting any time. The Season Premiere was headed our way in February and we wanted to launch it right there. There was a bit of a debate on how to do it though.

[Cut to Lori.]

LD: I wanted to have them all appear on camera - all the girls in the ring together to get the news in front of the crowd. Didn't happen obviously but I thought it was a good message to send that it took more than one person to get the job done. Actually, it was Melissa who fought for how it went down.

[Cut to Melissa.]

MC: It was... an emotional night. I'm sure we all wanted to be involved in some way but to me, it just felt right for it to be Julie. She was the winner on the night that put us over the top... yeah, Lori, Sarah, and I had been fighting behind the scenes for a long time but... Julie deserved it.

[We cut to Julie Somers, who looks overwhelmed at the moment.]

JS: I didn't see that one coming.

[Deep breath.]

JS: I never thought I was going to be the one on camera when they made the announcement. I pushed back at first - I was saying "no, it can't be just me." And then it was Melissa who called me and told me that I was the one who sealed the deal and it should be me who gets to be there when the public announcement is made.

[Back to Melissa.]

MC: I suppose if I'm being honest - I might have had an ulterior motive.

[A voice from off-camera.]

"What's that?"

[Melissa shrugs.]

MC: This sport isn't easy... and it's not meant for the long term. You only have to look back to the late 90s and see all those superstars who are almost completely out of the game at this point... some of 'em aren't with us at all anymore. When I got into this business in 2004, I was an 18 year old kid who had only seen it done on TV and off the sofa in my parents' living room.

[She grins.]

MC: By 2016, I'm 30 years old... which isn't old by any stretch of the imagination but for a woman in this business? It's damn near ancient to some people. So... while I wouldn't say I had one eye on life after wrestling, I knew it was more likely to be someone else leading this division into the future than it was to be me. So, I picked the person I thought would be that franchise player... that standard bearer... and I said, "give the ball to her."

[She shrugs again, smirking.]

MC: I think I did alright with my pick.

[And back to Julie as she is asked a question.]

"Melissa said she picked you because she saw you as the franchise player for the Women's Division. What are your thoughts about that?"

[Julie seems surprised by the question.]

JS: Melissa said what now?

"She said she picked you because she saw you as the franchise player."

JS: Oh my gosh.

[She covers her mouth with her hands and bows her head down. When she pulls it back up, we can see the tears rolling down her cheeks, but a smile on her face.]

JS: She got me...

[Julie wipes her eyes, then takes a deep breath.]

JS: In that "I Am AWA" promo, I say I'm the heart and soul of the women's division, but that was just a line they gave me to say. The thing is, I'm only as good as the people around me... and I am so lucky to be surrounded by some of the best women in the world today.

[She takes another deep breath.]

JS: But to be recognized by Melissa, or anyone else, as the franchise player of the AWA Women's Division...

[She wipes her eye again.]

JS: I guess I must be doing something right.

[We cut to footage marked "Saturday Night Wrestling - February 13th, 2016" where we see Julie Somers doing an interview backstage with Mark Stegglet.]

JS: I am prepared to issue a challenge to Melissa Cannon herself, to give all the AWA fans the great match they deserve to see and...

[Julie's words trail off as Emerson Gellar walks into view, smiling at the female competitor.]

MS: Mr. Gellar... I wasn't aware-

[Gellar raises his hands.]

EG: I know, I know. And I apologize to you, Miss Somers, for interrupting your interview time but I had something to say and I thought you'd like to hear it.

[Somers nods.]

EG: For several months now, there has been a consistent call from the fans of the AWA... as well as many in the locker room... to bring women's wrestling back to the prominence that it once held in this business. We look around at a rapidly-changing world - a world with the Williams sisters in tennis... with the US Women's Soccer team... with the WNBA... with women's gymnastics and even with our friends in the

Global Fighting Championship and their Women's Division. Women are everywhere and are competing at a level as good - if not better - than the men.

And nowhere is that more true than right here in the AWA.

[Somers smiles, nodding in thanks.]

EG: Women's wrestling has its spot... I'm sorry... it has EARNED its spot here in the AWA thanks to you... and Melissa Cannon... and Erica Toughill... and yes, even Charisma Knight.

And with that in mind, your wait is over, Miss Somers.

As of right now, the American Wrestling Alliance PROUDLY offers up a Women's Division to compete in.

[Big cheer from inside the arena. Gellar smiles upon hearing it.]

EG: And I think they approve.

[Gellar starts to leave when Stegglet calls out.]

MS: Mr. Gellar... that answers one question... but what about the call for a Women's Championship?

[Gellar smiles.]

EG: That day will come, Mr. Stegglet... but until then, congratulations Miss Somers... to you and to the rest of the women who worked so hard to make this happen.

[Emerson shakes hands with Julie Somers before he walks off the set as Mark turns to Julie.]

MS: Well, there you have it, Julie. It's official... a full-time Women's Division and a title belt, just as you asked for after your match with Charisma Knight! What do you have to say about that?

[Julie has a huge smile on her face, her eyes glowing with excitement.]

JS: Mark, this is the best news I've heard all day! I'm glad the AWA has finally recognized that the women will get their due, their chance to keep proving to the fans that we deserve our moment to shine! And I can promise you one thing: I'm aiming to be the first-ever Women's Champion the AWA has! I can't wait to get back in that ring and prove myself again!

[We fade from the recorded footage back to present day Julie.]

JS: Best news I heard all day - I just said that to you a few minutes ago. You know, I'm glad I heard the news weeks before the show, because I would have had the hardest time keeping my composure if that had been the first time I heard the news.

[She gives a nod.]

JS: Now the question was... how much longer until they announce when they have a Women's World Title?

[Cut to Melissa.]

MC: Of course, the more things changed, the more they stayed the same. Even on a night when we get the Division officially announced, Charisma had mic time... Julie had mic time... I had mic time... but not a single one of us had ring time.

[Melissa shakes her head as we cut to Lori Dane.]

LD: I think it was a good thing actually. The girls were all so relieved when they got the news about the Division - it was a good thing to show them that our fight wasn't over yet. Just getting a division was one thing... but it wasn't the top of the mountain. This show is documenting "The Birth of the AWA Women's Division" - but that division wasn't truly born yet. It was official... but it takes more than six girls and a press release to make this division what we wanted it to be.

[A bemused voice calls from off-camera.]

"So, there's more story to be told?"

[Lori grins.]

LD: Just a little bit... I promise.

[We cut to footage marked "Saturday Night Wrestling - February 27th, 2016" where we see Phil Watson standing center ring.

PW: The following contest is set for one fall, with a ten-minute time limit, and is an AWA Women's Division match.

[And we cut to a grinning present day Lori Dane as we hear a question from off-camera.]

"You asked us to include that footage specifically - why?"

[Lori chuckles.]

LD: It's the first time a match is introduced as being part of the Women's Division.

[We cut back to the footage where we can hear the sound of an ominous orchestral synths; cut to a sullen presence appearing in the entry way.]

GM: Women's Division time, fans. And this time, we're going to see the most experienced lady under contract with the AWA... and yet, she's the one we seem to know the least about.

[As "Everybody Knows" by Leonard Cohen kicks in, Erica "Ricki" Toughill makes her way down the aisle, wearing an orange hoodie, backwards ball cap, a wooden baseball bat slung over her shoulder. She pays very little attention to the fans and focuses on the ring, snapping a wad of pink bubble gum the whole time...

...and we cut back to present day Ricki.]

RT: I know I'm gonna catch some flack for saying this but... Even today, there is a conception of what a woman in a wrestling ring looks like. I'm not saying there's anything wrong with it, but... there's a lot of the wet-look spandex and sequins... a lot of glittery make-up. And you think, they're smaller, so you're going to see more acrobatics. And that's just pro wrestling and there's nothing wrong with it.

But it says a lot that for the first ranking match in 2016, they chose a pudgy gal from Upstate New York with a greasy sidecut and tattoos.

[She chuckles self-deprecatingly.]

RT: They picked this pasty street fighter who used to assistant manage a Dunkin Donuts in college. I mean... what more of a vote of confidence in me do you need?

[Cut to Melissa.]

MC: Now, this was more like it... the Women's Division is official and we're starting things off hot. Ricki's on the show! Julie's got a match! Charisma's got a match! Lori Wilson had mic time! I was on the show - and for once, the men were being used to enhance US!

[Cut to Shadoe Rage. He shakes his head, laughing as he recalls the events in question.]

SR: Yeah, that was a nice piece of business. It had a logical story behind it. But it seemed crazy, too. Like yeah, but no, but maybe? Could they? Would they put Shadoe Rage against Melissa Cannon?

[Rage's eyes pop and suddenly the beautiful madman is turned up to 11, his wild hazel eyes intense behind his sunglasses.]

SR: People know I'm crazy. So nobody had any problems believing there was going to be an intergender match. Hell, if the front office would have allowed it, I'd have done it for the Women's Division, too. I picked Melissa Cannon to be the guest referee in my title match at SuperClash for a reason. I will always support women's wrestling.

Women's wrestling made me. My sisters were in that ring, supporting the family day and night. There was no way I was not going to be part of that. There was no way I wasn't going to be part of the movement when the AWA finally caught up.

So yeah, you have the insane Shadoe Rage looking for revenge against Melissa Cannon for costing him his greatest prize next to Marissa Monet... MY WORLD TELEVISION TITLE. You could see the fans sitting on the edge of their seats. They were all BUT HE COULDN'T. BUT HE IS. BUT HE SHOULDN'T. BUT HE IS. THEY CAN'T. BUT THEY ARE? HOW ARE THEY GOING TO GET OUT OF THIS? IS THIS WILDMAN GOING TO FIGHT MELISSA CANNON? We had that tension... AND GO!

[And we cut to another segment from that show where Rage is glaring across the ring at Cannon...]

SR: Prepare to die... in darkness.

[The arena plunges into black.]

GM: What's happening? Where are the lights?

BW: I hate when this happens!

[When the lights come back up, Melissa Cannon is squared off in front of a sadistically grinning Shadoe Rage. But behind her is a woman dressed in gold and pink with hot pink hair.

She is also wielding a chair.]

GM: LOOK OU-

"WHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAACK!"
"OHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!"

[The woman's chairshot sends Melissa crumbling to the ground at Shadoe Rage's feet. The hooded warrior smiles as the pink-haired woman flings the chair aside before she leaps into the air and drops an ample posterior onto the small of Melissa's back.]

GM: Who in the world...?!

BW: I know who that is!

[The woman isn't finished there. She wraps a hand under Melissa's left arm, securing the back of her head. Her right hand wraps under and around Melissa's throat. She completes the kata ha jime hold and then wrenches back, bridging and torquing Melissa's spine and choking her in the kata ha jime! The crowd screams in horror.]

GM: GOOD LORD! STOP THIS! STOP THIS!

BW: Gordo! That's Lauryn Rage! That's Shadoe Rage's baby sister!

GM: I don't care who she is! Make this stop!

[It doesn't stop. Lauryn Rage keeps wrenching on the hold and Melissa Cannon keeps gasping for air and trying to fight, but there's nowhere to go and no way to escape. Lauryn screams as she applies more pressure.]

GM: And Shadoe Rage is just watching this carnage.

BW: Watching? He orchestrated the whole thing!

[Melissa gags and chokes and slowly she goes limp. Lauryn keeps the hold applied as Melissa slumps in her grasp. Shadoe Rage takes a step forward. He kneels before the unconscious Cannon.]

SR: Melissa... can you hear me? Melissa? Can you hear me? If you don't answer me, I'll have to call off our match. Melissa? Melissa?

[When she doesn't respond Rage stands up, looking towards the timekeeper's table. He waves his hand in front of his throat, signaling to ring the bell. The timekeeper refuses at first but a second glare and order from Rage changes his mind.]

"DING! DING! DING!"

[Lauryn Rage releases the hold. Melissa flops face down onto the canvas, immobile. Lauryn reaches into the chest of her unitard and pulls out a cellphone. She poses over her unconscious victim and starts clicking selfies as she makes faces into the camera and fixes her hair.]

GM: Disgusting. This is absolutely disgusting, Bucky.

[And we fade from the recorded footage to present day Lauryn Rage.]

LR: BOO YA! DA KID is in the house!

[She cackles that staccato laugh we haven't heard in a while.]

LR: I had to come down with the ring crew in disguise and hide under the ring. Then I had to change out and wait. God, I was so scared I'd have to pee under there. Waiting under the ring is gross. But what a beautiful story we told, ya dig?

Here you have Shadove Rage getting his revenge on Melissa Cannon for what he called a betrayal. But the AWA couldn't have a man fight a woman... not yet. Probably not ever. So who better than his sister to make things right. BOOM! You have me with an explosive debut and you have a nifty little bow on the Shadove-Melissa revenge story. I loved that bit with him repeating her words to him from SuperClash while I had her in the Constrictor.

And shout out to Gordon Myers for giving me the Miyuki treatment. Huh? Who is that? The damn next one! I loved that moment so much. No gentle intros. Just BAM! Here I am all up in your face and you damn sure hated me right off the bat. We accomplished a lot in that little interaction. Gosh, I kinda miss those wigs.

[Cut to Shadove Rage.]

SR: GOTCHA! There was nothing I loved more than to break my sister into the big time.

[Cut to Lori Dane.]

LD: I was on top of the world. So much great talent all showcased in the same night... and it was just the beginning.

[Cut to Jon Stegglet.]

JS: Never one to settle for what she's got, Lori immediately started talking to Sarah Sharpe about the next wave of talent... and then of course, they came to me looking for money.

[Back to Dane.]

LD: You can't have a division with six wrestlers. We needed more. Sarah knew more that would be ideal for us... and now that we'd said a title was coming, the girls all wanted to know when. But with six wrestlers, you can't even get a quality tournament going. I knew we needed a little bit more... it was February then... I wanted to see if we could crown a champion by summer. We had to keep fighting... keep the momentum going... and earn those contracts the office was going to have to pay for. So, the first thing we had to get to was Memorial Day Mayhem... and to get there, I had to convince Jon that we needed to spend some cash.

[Back to Stegglet who smirks.]

JS: She made the argument that if we decided to start a tournament the next day, we wouldn't want to have to fill it with women that people had never heard of just to get to eight. So, she wanted eight.

[Cut to Sarah Sharpe.]

SS: When we'd brought Lauryn on board, she had pushed hard for a couple of other girls from the Age of Rage. They were bigger than some of the girls we had... big, tough, aggressive. Lauryn thought they'd make good muscle for her and I agreed.

[We cut to a still photo of a young Lauryn Rage flanked by the Serpentes before we cut to Todd Michaelson.]

TM: When we were signing Lauryn, I'd spent a few days up at the Age of Rage facilities with Sarah and Lori, working up some profiles for all their talent - figuring out who we might want right away, who we'd keep an eye on, etc. These two really stood out to us from the get-go and we figured if we got the chance, they'd be good to bring in.

[Cut back to Lori.]

LD: So, we had the Serpentine who we immediately wanted to put to use in the Lauryn/Melissa story... but I had my eye on a big fish.

[Back to Stegglet who sighs.]

JS: She wanted to sign Miyuki. She said it would show the wrestling world we really meant business with this new division and that we were willing to spend the money to prove it.

[Cut to Lori.]

LD: I thought it would be a huge signing for us... a big step forward for the division... but the office was obviously wary. It was a huge financial commitment for us... and Miyuki didn't exactly seem thrilled with the idea of coming in before so we didn't even know if she was interested.

[Cut to Melissa.]

MC: So, I was put back on a plane with Lori and Sarah to go to talk to Miyuki... to feel her out... to see if she had changed her mind at all about coming back to the States full time. And if not, we were told not to come back until we'd signed a major female talent from Japan to install in this new division.

[Cut to Miyuki.]

MO: (The AWA was serious about their Women's Division and they were ready to prove it. They came to me again and it was flattering, but my business commitments in Japan still made a full-time move to America unrealistic. I'd seen their vision at SuperClash and I knew they were on the right path, but I couldn't be their centerpiece.)

[Cut to footage of Miyuki in a meeting with AWA representatives. The camera pans to a younger Ayako Fujiwara, standing nearby.]

MO: (When I told them no, I didn't leave them empty-handed. I introduced them to Ayako Fujiwara - my student, an Olympic Gold medalist, and the only two-time Empress Cup winner. Ayako was the future. She had the skill, the discipline, and the heart to carry their division. I knew she'd represent us proudly.)

[Cut to modern day Ayako.]

AF: When Miyuki introduced me to the AWA representatives, I was honored. They were enthusiastic, very focused on building their Women's Division into the best it could be. I told them I was prepared to work hard and to bring my best. I knew what I could do in the ring. It wasn't arrogance - just trust in my abilities. I was grateful for the opportunity, but my focus was on proving myself, not chasing celebrity or stardom.

[Cut back to Miyuki.]

MO: (Signing Ayako was the right call. She brought the legitimacy that the AWA wanted, but more than that, she was ready to build something new. Watching her step out on her own and into that role made me proud - not just as her teacher, but as someone who's fought for women's wrestling to be respected.)

[She smiles.]

MO: (The AWA got the star they wanted and I was able to stay where I was needed - in Japan, building up women's wrestling and shaping the future. That's how we grow this sport: by passing the torch, even when it's hard.)

[We cut to footage first shown on the March 12th, 2016 episode of Saturday Night Wrestling. The shot is of AWA executive Emerson Gellar standing behind a podium, in front of a wall with an AWA logo, addressing a throng of reporters and other members of the press.]

EG: When I first accepted this job, I made a promise to myself that I would bring the greatest athletes and wrestlers the world had to offer to compete in the AWA...I would scour the Earth for the best...and I've come all the way to Japan to get one of the very best.

[Gellar's smile grows.]

EG: This young lady is one of the very top names in all of combat sports. She has been a champion wrestler at every level...a two-time winner of the Empress Cup, the current and reigning champion of Lady's Victory Pro Wrestling and a GOLD medalist in the 2012 Olympic Games! She has been a dominant force in Japanese wrestling from the moment she decided to compete inside the squared circle and I can proudly say she is bringing her talents stateside to the AWA.

[There's some buzz in the crowd as they begin to realize who Gellar has signed.]

EG: Right now, I want to officially announce the newest member of the AWA roster...

...Ayako Fujiwara!

[The camera then swings to the right of Gellar, where we see a young Japanese woman emerging from the side entrance. She is dressed in a knee-length, formal black dress with a layered skirt and almost shrinks away in embarrassment when the camera flashbulbs go off all around her. But she is no demure flower. She is powerfully built with broad shoulders, thickly muscled arms and tree trunk thighs with a head of wavy, metallic unicorn purple, pink and blue ombré hair that cascades down to her shoulders.

This is Ayako Fujiwara.

She steps up onto the podium with Gellar and takes his hand, bowing deeply to him before turning to the cameras and smiling brightly for a well-timed photo op. Gellar then directs Ayako to the document in front of her.]

EG: Now then, Ayako, if you'll sign right here, you'll officially be a part of the AWA family.

[Ayako takes the pen from Gellar's hand and signs the document as flashbulbs once again go off all around her...

...and we cut to modern day Lori Dane.]

LD: With Ayako locked in as well, we locked in our plans for Memorial Day Mayhem. The superteam of Julie and Melissa against the Serpentes and Charisma against the debuting Ayako. I thought it was a great presentation planned for us and all we had to do was build it right.

But what I didn't know is that Jon had a swerve in store for all of us.

[Cut to Jon Stegglet.]

JS: It was sometime in March... maybe April... when we were having an owners meeting, going over all the business stuff that we needed to discuss. And someone brought up the Rumble. Now, the Rumble has traditionally been a Memorial Day Mayhem thing for us. But every once in a while, it's slipped to another date for different reasons. We were discussing if we should put it on MDM... and I think it was Bobby who said...

[Cut to Bobby Taylor.]

BT: Why not give it to the women?

[Taylor shrugs as we cut back to a smirking Lori Dane.]

LD: It was... surprising, for sure.

[A voice calls from off-camera.]

"Why was it surprising?"

[Lori winces as we cut back to Taylor.]

BT: Because I was one of the biggest opponents to the Women's Division idea. It was nothing personal. It wasn't sexism... some people will say I'm wrong about that one but... it was business. I thought it didn't make good business sense every single time we did it... until Japan. When I saw Melissa and Miyuki tear the house down, it turned me around on the idea... and while I still made sure we were doing things for business reasons, I was now a supporter of the idea as long as it was done right.

"And now it was being done right?"

[Taylor shrugs.]

BT: There's always room for improvement, right? But to me, we'd teased the division, we'd started the division... but a division without a champion is hollow. So, I thought what better way to show the world we mean business than to give the women one of our signature annual events and make it all about them.

[Cut back to Lori.]

LD: Once I shook off the shock, I immediately said yes. The rest of the group hammered out some details - Madison Square Garden, are you [BLEEPING] kidding me?! And it was locked down in place.

[She chuckles.]

LD: And then when we took our break, I pulled Todd aside and said "what the hell did I just do?!"

[Cut to Todd.]

TM: It wasn't a fear that the women couldn't perform under that type of spotlight... it was a numbers game. We were still heavily limiting the budget for the Women's Division until it had gained a foothold. Now we found ourselves in a spot where we needed THIRTY women and we needed them quickly. We were going to crown the champion in July... it was the end of March... maybe early April.

[Cut to Lori.]

LD: Where the hell was I going to find that much quality talent, get them introduced, build them up as legit contenders, and convince the office to pay for it?

[Dane shakes her head.]

LD: I was scared. I was legitimately scared that I might've just made a huge mistake that would damage everything we'd all worked so damn hard for.

[She chuckles.]

LD: I told you there was a little bit more to this story.

[Cut to footage marked "Memorial Day Mayhem - May 30th, 2016" where we come up into the ring where ring announcer Phil Watson is standing with AWA Director of Operations Emerson Gellar who is speaking.]

EG: It's been a tremendous night of action already so far here on the biggest stage of the summer and it's only going to get better. Now, traditionally, Memorial Day Mayhem is the kickoff for the summer season here in the AWA which has always been one of the hottest times of year! And this year promises to be the hottest one yet with our upcoming first-ever tour of Canada... with the Battle of Boston coming up on 4th of July weekend... and with our big European tour coming up after that. But right here tonight, I'm going to announce another big event being added to the AWA summer schedule.

[The crowd buzzes with anticipation.]

EG: A little less than a year ago, one of the all-time greats in the world of women's wrestling came to us and said she wanted to be a part of the Rising Sun Showdown in Japan, taking on an AWA competitor. We told her we had no such thing... there was no Women's Division in the AWA but we allowed her to make the challenge and told her if someone accepted, we'd sanction it. Well, someone accepted... and that someone was victorious earlier tonight alongside Julie Somers in a tag team match. Of course, I'm referring to Melissa Cannon.

And in the months that followed, we saw Cannon and Somers and Charisma Knight battle all over the country representing the AWA, fighting to make their dream a reality. And shortly after SuperClash, it was made official - the AWA Women's Division was born.

[Big cheer! Gellar nods in agreement.]

EG: Since that time, we've been reaching out to some of the greatest female competitors that our sport has to offer... women like Lauryn Rage... like Lori Wilson and Kayla Cristol... like Erica Toughill... and like the woman who will be debuting here in just a few short moments, Ayako Fujiwara!

[Another big cheer - this time for the debut yet to come.]

EG: With so many talented females on the roster, it became only a matter of time before we announced the brand new Women's World Championship. And tonight, I'm here to announce when and how we will crown the first to wear that gold.

[Dramatic pause as the fans cheer.]

EG: The date is Saturday night, July 16th... and the place is the World's Most Famous Arena... MADISON SQUARE GARDEN! For the first time since SuperClash V, we're going back to the Garden and on that night, we will crown the very first Women's World Champion.

But how we're going to do it was a dilemma on its own. We discussed so many different options and considered so many different methods. But in the end, we decided that if we're going to make history... let's make history...

So, for the very first time, one of the AWA's staple attractions every year will belong to the women of the AWA...

[Another dramatic pause.]

EG: Because on Saturday, July 16th on Saturday Night Wrestling, we will be featuring the annual RUMBLE to crown the very first champion!

[HUUUUUGE CHEER!]

EG: We will be bringing in competitors from all over the globe for this match and I can't wait for you all to see it. We're going to have a lot more information in the coming weeks.

GM: Wow! Huge news from Emerson Gellar! July 16th on Saturday Night Wrestling LIVE on The X from New York City... from Madison Square Garden... the Rumble is back but this year, it's going to be the match that crowns the very first Women's World Champion! Incredible!

[We fade back to a present day shot of Lori.]

LD: Now it was official... and now... it was a foot race.

[Cut to Sarah Sharpe.]

SS: I pulled out all my files. Every woman I had scouted in person, watched video of, even heard about online... and we made a giant list of options. Todd, Lori, and myself sat down over a weekend of live arena events and we start narrowing down the field. We knew we wanted our core competitors... we knew we wanted our top stars... but we also wanted potential future superstars... we wanted the legends and surprises that Rumbles have become known for.

[Cut back to Lori.]

LD: It was a balancing act. Find the big names, find the future stars, and don't break the budget to do it. And as we started to put it all together... we had a problem.

[Cut to Todd Michaelson who shrugs.]

TM: There just wasn't enough.

[Cut to Lori who facepalms.]

LD: The lack of women's wrestling in North America after the UWF went down had some unintended consequences. There just wasn't a ton of TV ready talent out there that was available. There were more options in Japan but... that wasn't the most budget friendly of moves. The people who WERE in the UWF were out there but... a lot of them wanted a big payday to come in.

[Dane shakes her head.]

LD: The longer we went over the names and the list... the more it became apparent, there was just no way to get to thirty names. Not yet. So, I had to have the conversation I was dreading with the rest of the owners.

[Cut to Stegglet.]

JS: She said they couldn't put together a Rumble with the quality of competitors that the AWA fans would be looking for with thirty people.

[Cut to Taylor.]

BT: It was a big blow. Disappointing for a lot of us for sure. We called in Sarah to sit with us, went through all the names again, looked at the budget numbers and...

[He shrugs.]

BT: She was right. It just couldn't be done the way we'd want to do it.

[Cut to Stegglet.]

JS: Sure, we could fill out the other ten names with some women who didn't quite have the right experience or seasoning... maybe some names fresh out of training... but we knew this had to be a home run out of the gate... and the more we discussed it, the more we came to a consensus.

[Back to Todd.]

TM: It was better to have twenty high quality wrestlers in the Rumble than push for thirty and end up blowing the whole thing.

[Back to a grinning Dane.]

LD: That wasn't so bad, right? Eh... it stung for sure. I was disappointed... a little embarrassed... and honestly, I felt a little guilty that the world of women's wrestling - on this side of the world at least - was in such a bad state. So, Sarah got the green light to bring a handful of these girls to the Combat Corner to start to get them ready for prime time... and I got the green light for our list of twenty... and we were off and running. But it was a quick run because before I knew it, the big night had arrived...

[Cut to footage marked "Saturday Night Wrestling - July 16th, 2016" as we get an exterior shot of the Mecca of Sports - Madison Square Garden before we cut to a present day shot of Lauryn Rage.]

LR: The MECCA? You don't get a bigger platform. You don't get a more storied venue. The AWA was making sure all eyes were on us. And NYC is Da Kid's second home.

[She rolls out her tongue, laughing that staccato laugh.]

LR: That night was everything for me and the girls.

[We cut to Julie Somers.]

JS: I think we all have our favorite venues in which to perform. But when it comes to Madison Square Garden... that's the premier venue. You hear so many athletes and entertainers talk about how they want to have that special night at the Garden, and now the women of the AWA are getting that special night... and we're the main event!

[Cut to Melissa.]

MC: IT'S THE GARDEN! How can you not get excited?

[Cut to Lori.]

LD: It's always a special night when you're working the Garden... but really, it just added an extra level of anxiety for me. The lights are bright in New York City and they were all on us that night. It had to be perfect.

[Cut to Lauryn Rage.]

LR: You got nearly twenty thousand fans who aren't just fans. They are superfans in the media capital of the world! You know what I'm saying? They don't miss a thing and they're on you heavy if things ain't right. That night everybody was elated but we knew it could all go bad...

[She snaps her fingers.]

LR: ...like that, too. It didn't matter how many years you had in the business, you were under pressure that night. Everybody was doing their thing trying to get in the zone.

[Cut to Melissa Cannon.]

MC: I threw up... three times, I think... that day. The anxiety was just so high. Like... by this point, we'd had big nights. The Tokyo Dome ring a bell? SuperClash? But this time... this was it. I think to most of us, this was the culmination of everything we'd worked so hard for and it...

[She bites her lower lip.]

MC: ...it just had to go perfect.

[Cut to Ayako.]

AF: The night of the first Women's Rumble... the air was heavy. You could feel the weight of it - every woman backstage knew this was our chance to make history, to crown the first AWA Women's Champion. The pressure was immense, not just to win, but to prove we belonged. Backstage, there was tension - egos clashing, nerves fraying. Some were pacing, others shadowboxing, whispering strategies. I stayed calm, focused on my breath, like in my Olympic days.

[She smiles.]

AF: But the energy in the arena? Electric. The fans were starving for this, chanting before we even stepped out. It felt like the whole wrestling world was watching, waiting to see if we'd deliver.

[Cut to Victoria June]

VJ: Y'all better remember ah made my debut at the Rumble. And the AWA wasn't sold on me at all. Ah could make a big splash or ah could flop on the biggest stage of 'em all. Ah mean, ah knew some folks in New York knew me but ah had no idea if ah was ready for twenty thousand fans instead of five.

[June fans herself.]

VJ: You best believe ah was fightin back tears. Ah was so scared. And Lauryn and Medusa were the only people ah knew. But they were doin their own thing. So ah was alone backstage just trying to hold it all together. Ah couldn't even go to the Chimpanzee area backstage to watch matches. Ah might have collapsed under the pressure.

[Back to Julie.]

JS: I think the biggest pressure of a Rumble event is you're really working on the fly. It all comes down to the order of entry, who's in the ring at a given moment and what you're going to do in a situation. And on top of that, you have some surprises planned... and you don't know who they are! I mean, all the unannounced entrants... I had no idea any of them were going to be there!

[We cut back to Lori.]

LD: All the excitement... all the pressure and tension... but it was there. You remember the old Muppets Show theme?

#It's time to play the music... it's time to light the lights... it's time to get things started.#

[She nods.]

LD: After years of waiting and preparation and anticipation and...

[She sighs deeply, smiling at the end of the exhale.]

LD: ...it was finally here. Everyone had their marching orders... now we just had to do what we'd finally been given the opportunity to do.

[Cut to Melissa Cannon.]

MC: I gotta give Jon and Todd and Bobby and the rest of the office credit here. They really spared no expense. Running in New York City at the Garden isn't exactly cheap to begin with but as far as I know, they didn't say no to a single name that got pitched for this match. We had all of our girls - the core AWA talent - represented but the outsiders and legends they brought in...

[She shakes her head.]

MC: I never would've expected it. It was a dream come true.

[We cut to footage from that night where we see Gordon and Bucky at ringside.]

GM: We've been saying it all night... for weeks now actually... but this moment truly is history in the making. In the history books of the AWA, they will put down this moment as the one where the American Wrestling Alliance officially went all-in on the idea of women's wrestling.

BW: Absolutely. Gordo, it was a long road to get here... not just for the women in this match but for the company itself. You look back at the false starts with competitors like Holly Hotbody and Lori Dane and... well, it was through sheer will of the women involved that we're here today. They kept forcing the issue and fighting for their spots and... eventually the fans came around and put pressure of their own on AWA management and here we are.

GM: A moment that many thought we'd never see. Just a few years ago, AWA fans were polled on their interest in a Women's Division and over 60 percent said they had absolutely no interest at all. With this Madison Square Garden crowd sold out and waiting for this match, I'd imagine that number would be far different today, Bucky.

BW: Enough hype, Gordo! We've been waiting long enough! Let's do this!

[Cut to modern day Lori Dane.]

LD: Let's do this.

[To Melissa Cannon.]

MC: Damn straight.

[And back to footage from Madison Square Garden where we've got Rebecca Ortiz center ring.]

RO: It is now time for the MAIN EVENT of the evening!

It is now time to crown the very first AWA Women's World Champion!

It is now time for an annual event here in the AWA...

IT'S TIME TO RUMBLE!

[HUUUUUUGE CHEER!]

RO: Earlier tonight, twenty of the finest female competitors in our sport drew numbers at random. In just a few moments, the competitors who drew Numbers One and Two will make their way to the ring where they will compete. Every two minutes the next participant will enter the ring in order until all twenty competitors have entered. The only way to be eliminated is to go OVER the top rope and have both feet touch the floor.

And when there is one woman left standing at the end of it all, that woman will go down in history as the very first AWA WOMEN'S WORLD CHAMPION!

And now... the competitor who drew #1!

[The lights drop down to black, causing an "oooooh" from the Japanese crowd. They stay there for a few moments before the quiet panflute introduction of Zamfir's "The Lonely Shepherd" begins to play over the PA system. A pale yellow lighting fills Madison Square Garden, covering the crowd... the ring... and, of course, the entryway.]

RO: MELISSA CANNNNNNNONNNNNNN!

[After a few moments, the Origin of the AWA Women's Division walks into view. She is standing in her signature yellow jumpsuit, brown hair tied back in a tight braid. Cannon stands for a moment, head bowed as the crowd cheers her entrance...

...and as she lets loose a loud shout, the music switches to "Battle Without Honor Or Humanity."

We cut back to modern day Melissa.]

MC: I said I threw up three times. Right before she called my name, I hit the trash can by Chimpanzee.

[A voice from off-camera.]

"You were that nervous?"

[Melissa grins.]

MC: I wouldn't call it nerves really. Pressure. Anxiety. Excitement. It was a lot of weight to carry. I was ready, for sure... but I was also aware of that I had all eyes on me.

[Back to footage from the Rumble.]

GM: Well, I suppose it's only fitting, Bucky. Melissa Cannon is the one who got this whole thing started when she stepped up, abandoning her role as an announcer, to accept the challenge laid down by the woman who many consider the greatest women's wrestler in the world, Miyuki Ozaki. It was that match and the battles with Charisma Knight and Julie Somers that followed that convinced the AWA front office that there was fan interest in a Women's Division...

BW: And more importantly, that there was money in it.

[She marches down the aisle to a big reaction from the New York crowd, walking with determined purpose as she heads towards the ring for the biggest match of her life.]

GM: Melissa Cannon came here to Madison Square Garden tonight to fulfill a lifelong dream of being a champion and with fans all over the world supporting her, she hopes to do exactly that.

[We cut ahead and with Melissa standing against the ropes, we hear Rebecca.]

RO: And now, the competitor who drew #2...

GM: Who's it gonna be?

[The lights in Madison Square Garden drop to black as the wailing opening to "Followed The Waves" by Melissa Auf Der Maur begins to play over the PA system.]

GM: Oh... my... stars.

[Smoke fills the entrance way and within moments, the Empress of Joshi Puroresu herself, Miyuki Ozaki, walks into view. She smiles at the ring, waving a hand at Melissa Cannon who looks agitated at this turn of events.]

GM: And if it was fitting for Melissa Cannon to be the first one in there since - in many ways - she's responsible for much of this... then it's also fitting for Miyuki Ozaki to be the second one in since it was her Open Challenge back at Rising Sun Showdown 2 that kicked over the first domino!

[Ortiz continues.]

RO: THE EMPRESS OF JOSHIIIIIIII... MIIIIYUUUUKIIII OOOOOZAAAAAKIIIIII!

[We cut to present day Miyuki.]

MO:(I still wasn't signed to the AWA, but they wanted me to be in that match... a big name to draw eyes to their new division. In the weeks leading up, I leaned into it. I wanted to stir things up, get the fans talking.)

[She pauses, smirking.]

MO: (Spraying blue mist in Melissa Cannon's face? That got their attention. I knew it'd make our history in the ring burn even hotter.)

[Cut to archival footage of Miyuki sneaking up behind Melissa Cannon and spraying her in the face with blue mist, instantly knocking her unconscious.]

MO: (When I drew number 2 for the Rumble, facing Melissa at number 1, I knew it was fate. We'd torn the house down before, and now we were starting this historic match - first two in, setting the tone for everyone else.)

[Ozaki, much to her own regret no doubt, is already in her ring gear, having foregone any kind of elaborate entrance. She walks down the aisle, waving to some fans, blowing kisses to others as Melissa Cannon fumes inside the ring. Ozaki gets closer, turning her back to the ring in a full 360 spin, soaking up the reaction of the crowd which is mostly split.]

GM: Miyuki Ozaki and Melissa Cannon are the first two in the ring for this Women's Rumble and the first two in in the quest to become the Women's World Champion. Ozaki is considered by many to be the best in the-

[Without warning, Cannon breaks into a full sprint...

...and HURLS herself between the ropes, jamming her elbow into the jaw of Ozaki, knocking her for a loop and sending her sprawling backwards to the barely-padded floor!]

"OHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

[Cut to a grinning modern day Melissa.]

MC: Remember the movie Bull Durham? Todd loves that movie. I saw it so many times when I was a dumb 18 year old kid training in that sweatbox in SoCal. But every time we watched it, Todd said that I reminded him a little of Nuke LaLoosh in that movie. The big, dumb kid... that's got tons of potential but doesn't quite know what to do with it yet. So, much like Nuke... that was me announcing my presence with authority.

[Cut to Miyuki, wincing at the memory.]

MO: (Melissa came at me with everything she had. Every strike felt personal and every grapple felt like a grudge. The crowd was roaring before the third entrant even hit the ring. I loved it!)

[We cut back to footage from MSG as the crowd ROARS as Cannon pummels Ozaki with forearm shots...

...and we get a series of highlights from the opening moments.

Ozaki burying a spinning back kick into the ribs of Cannon...

Cannon using forearm strikes to batter Ozaki across the ring...

A skull-busting headbutt from the Empress that drives Cannon down to her knees...

...and with time ticking down on the clock, Cannon rolling Ozaki up into her own Rainbow Bridge submission hold!

We cut back to present day Melissa.]

MC: Heh. In a way, the stuff with Miyuki and I was... kinda the spark for this latest effort to get the division going so I thought it was only fitting for this night that we were hoping would cement the deal to start with us too.

[And back to footage from the Rumble as we can hear the crowd counting down to the arrival of number three...]

GM: Here we go... who drew #3?!

[A few moments pass before the sounds of "The Cyborg Fights" by YellowExxhy rings out over the PA system!]

GM: Uh oh!

BW: Good luck, Cannon! Your night is just about over!

[The crowd responds with a lot of cheers but a few boos as the former Olympic gold medalist, Ayako Fujiwara, jogs into view.]

GM: The Olympian, Ayako Fujiwara, is the third one in!

[We cut back to modern day Ayako.]

AF: When I entered the ring, the energy was already electric. Stepping into that ring, I felt the weight of the moment. Miyuki and Melissa were already at war. The crowd was deafening, feeding off their intensity. I had to match that. I wasn't there to outshine them; I was there to prove I belonged.

[Cut back to the Rumble where Ayako's gotten inside the ring and is now staring down Melissa Cannon to the enjoyment of the crowd.]

GM: And now THIS is quite the showdown.

[The crowd is roaring at the idea of Cannon and Fujiwara going to battle as Cannon slowly walks towards Fujiwara, keeping her eyes locked on her.]

GM: The fans in MSG are on their feet, waiting to see what happens when Melissa Cannon and Ayako Fujiwara go to war!

[Cannon inches closer, nodding her head, wiggling her fingers with anticipation as she gets closer... and closer...]

...and then Miyuki Ozaki swoops in from behind, hitting a running forearm to the back of the head, knocking Cannon towards Fujiwara who clasps her around the torso...]

GM: Wait a second!

[Fujiwara hoists Cannon into the air, twisting her body, and driving Cannon down to the canvas underneath her with a belly-to-belly suplex!]

GM: Ohh my!

BW: I thought for sure she was looking for one of those overhead belly-to-bellies to toss Cannon to the floor!

GM: You're not the only one, Bucky.

[Cut back to present day Melissa.]

MC: The odds were already against me coming in at number one... but being stuck in there with two of the most dangerous women in wrestling who were allies? I was in for a rough night at the office.

[And we cut back to Rumble footage where we find the crowd ROARING as Fujiwara finds herself face to face with her trainer, Miyuki Ozaki.]

Ozaki smiles at Fujiwara, batting her eyelashes at her former pupil. Fujiwara extends her hand, offering a show of sportsmanship to her teacher.]

GM: Fujiwara looks like she wants to make sure that whatever happens tonight, the relationship between these two lives on...

[Ozaki looks down at the hand, slowly raising her own...]

GM: And it looks like we're about to get that handshake - believe it or not...

[But as soon as Ozaki locks hands with Fujiwara, she twists herself over, dropping down in a one-handed handstand, swinging a leg up to catch a surprised Fujiwara on the side of the head!]

GM: Oh! What the heck was that?!

[Fujiwara stumbles backward, grabbing at her ear as Ozaki slides in behind her, wrapping her arms around her student's waist in a rear waistlock...]

GM: Waistlock!

[But as Ozaki sets to deliver a German Suplex, Ayako Fujiwara suddenly straightens up, a defiant expression on her face...]

GM: Ozaki's going for the German but I think Fujiwara has other ideas!

[Ozaki attempts to snatch Fujiwara off the mat a second time...]

...but Fujiwara simply holds her ground, shaking her head this time.]

BW: Third time's a charm?

[But as Ozaki goes for a third try, Fujiwara executes a standing switch, ending up behind her trainer with her arms wrapped around her waist...]

GM: Uh oh! Fujiwara's got her this time!

[...and to a tremendous ROAR from the New York City crowd, Fujiwara easily lifts Ozaki off the canvas, throwing her down on the back of her head and neck with a violent spine-shaking suplex!]

"OHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

GM: MISS GERMANY IS IN... THE... HOOOOOUUUUUUSE!

[Fujiwara kips up to her feet, looking down at her fallen trainer who writhes in pain on the canvas...]

...and we cut to present day footage.]

AF: Miyuki had been pushing everyone's buttons leading up to the Rumble. That kick to my head woke me up. I wasn't angry - just focused. When she went for the suplex, I knew I had to act. Switching behind her, landing that German... it was

instinct, but also proof. To her, to the crowd, to myself - I belonged there. Wrestling her in that moment, it was an honor, but I had to show I was her equal.

[Cut to Miyuki, frowning at the memory.]

MO: Cheeky brat!

[And we cut back to Rumble footage from MSG as we can hear the crowd counting down once more...]

“HEY HO, LET’S GO! HEY HO, LET’S GO!”

[The Ramones’ “Blitzkrieg Bop” brings it’s raucous energy over Madison Square Garden as the fans give a polite response Victoria June dances out onto the stage, moshing and headbanging around for a bit before she bounds to the ring.]

GM: Victoria June, the Canadian newcomer is the fourth one in the Rumble!

[Cut to present day Victoria June. She is fanning her face as she watches the footage.]

VJ: Oh my god! Look at me clunking around. Ah didn’t know what to do or how fast to get to the ring. All ah could see was lights and blank faces. Ah was so terrified. MSG? Everything Mantha did for me had come true. Everything Lauryn and Shadoe did for me had come true. There ah am lookin like a wild woman!

[Cut back to Rumble footage where we see June banging her head, throwing up the horns before jumping into the ring...]

GM: In she comes... and she’s going right after Ayako Fujiwara!

[A running back elbow up under the chin catches Fujiwara off-guard!]

GM: Oh!

[A flurry of rights and lefts has the Olympian covering up, stumbling backwards...

...and June swings to the side, running to the ropes, bouncing off, and changing direction to run right at Melissa Cannon, leaping into the air, taking her down with a Fierro Press!]

GM: June’s hitting anything that moves!

[With June smashing the back of Cannon’s head into the mat...

...we cut to present day footage of Lori Dane.]

LD: The crowd was SO hot - they loved Victoria June from the moment they saw her! She was standing up to Ayako and Melissa... she almost threw Miyuki out! The Afro Punk had arrived in even in those early moments, you could see the level of support that we’ve gotten used to when she comes into an arena.

[Cut to June.]

VJ: Ah could hear them cheering. And it took a while for it to register it was for me. Ah couldn’t believe it. The crowd got me hired and ah love that they still support me today. Crazy considering how close it all was to not happenin’.

[Cut back to Dane.]

LD: Not everyone who was in that Rumble turned out to be some huge success story though.

[Cut to the fifth person in the match - the massive form of Lucie Richter - as we hear Sarah Sharpe on voiceover.]

SS: Lucie Richter was MADE to be in a match like this. Five foot eight, 284 pounds... an Olympic level powerlifter. She trained with the Coltons so we knew she could go inside the ring... but by the time we got our hands on her, she was just shy of 40 years old and I felt like - mentally, she'd already checked out of the business and was on to her post-wrestling career.

[We cut to Sharpe who shrugs.]

SS: Can't win 'em all.

[We cut back to Rumble footage where the countdown is coming down...

...and the boos pour out from the AWA faithful at the sight of one-half of the Serpentes, Mamba, jogging down the aisle to the sounds of "Money, Power, Respect" by the LOX.]

GM: Well, if anyone wants to take a shot at standing toe-to-toe with Lucie Richeter, it might be the six foot two inch, 200 pound Mamba, Bucky!

BW: It might. She's still giving up almost a hundred pounds but what she lacks in weight, she makes up in intensity.

[Mamba gets to the ring quickly, diving under the bottom rope, and popping up right in Lucie Richter's path. Richter stands her ground, holding the struggling and squealing Ozaki as Mamba gestures at herself, slapping her chest.]

"BRING YO' FAT ASS TO ME!"

[Cut to present day Lauryn Rage cackling madly.]

LR: Go on, Roch! Y'all don't know but the Mamba is really like that. She from Rahway, New Jersey, where they shot "Scared Straight." Wild! She and Copperhead were going to stand out in that moment!

[Cut back to the Rumble footage where we see Mamba throwing heavy arms at the jaw of Lucie Richter while Cannon and Fujiwara attempt to muscle out Victoria June and we can hear our announcers on the call.]

GM: The action continues throughout the ring. You can't win a Rumble this early, Bucky, but you certainly can lose it.

BW: Absolutely. Any one of these six women can be tossed over the top rope at any given time so you gotta keep your head on a swivel. I'd also suggest staying the heck away from the ropes.

GM: You can't eliminate anyone if you stay away from the ropes, Bucky.

BW: No, but you don't get extra credit for eliminating people. The goal is to survive and if you only eliminate one person in the match, it doesn't matter as long as it's the last one left besides you.

[As the action continues on screen, we hear a countdown.]

"THREE!"

"TWO!"
"ONE!"

BZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZT!

["I'm About To Break You" by New Year's Day starts to play over the PA system. The crowd reacts with a shower of boos as Charisma Knight comes through the curtain.]

GM: Charisma Knight is #7!

[Knight shouts at a fan in the crowd, standing with her stringy faded blonde hair with the brown roots peeking through. She's not wearing her ring jacket, revealing her matching flame emblazoned black, red, and orange gear, consisting of kick pads over wrestling shoes, upper thigh length tights, and a closed off modest halter length tank top.]

GM: Knight heading down the aisle... and taking the time to berate half the fans in Madison Square Garden it seems.

[Cut to modern day Knight]

CK: It was intense, the match for the World Title, something to work to, and we're in MSG. I knew what was going on in my head... yeah, I was having my own issues that had been hanging around since Memorial Day Mayhem that year, but I was still going to go out there and put everything I could into it.

[As we go back to Rumble footage, we see Charisma still on the outside, slowly making her way around the ring as she trades words with the ringside fans...]

...and then as she rounds the ringpost, she suddenly scrambles up on the apron, grabbing two hands full of Victoria June's afro...]

GM: KNIGHT'S GOT HER! SHE-

[And with a mighty tug, Knight yanks June over the top rope, flinging her down to the barely-padded floor with a thud to jeers from the fans!]

GM: And Victoria June is the first woman eliminated in the 2016 Rumble! She's gone! She's eliminated from this match!

[Knight smirks as she drops back off the apron, getting some angry shouts from the fans in the front row. She taunts them as she continues to walk around the ringside area, ignoring the angry shouts from Victoria June as a pair of AWA officials order her back to the locker room.]

GM: Knight scores the first elimination of the match and she hasn't even gotten inside the ring yet!

[Cut to Victoria June watching the footage with a crestfallen expression.]

VJ: It was a good time not a long time. Ah made history that night ah guess but ah cried coming back through the curtain. Ah thought it was over after that night. Ah thought ah'd forever be an obscure piece of AWA history. 'Who was the first elimination in the AWA's Women's Rumble?' 'That weird chick with the afro?' 'Yup!'

[We get a quick blast of highlights from the next portion of the match...]

A Miyuki Ozaki baseball slide dropkick on Knight, sending her toppling end over end across the ringside area to save Melissa Cannon from elimination.

Cannon catching Knight with a kneelift as she finally enters the ring, snapping her head back.

A grinning and winking Ozaki teaming up with the woman she faced in the Tokyo Dome to use a double hiptoss to flip Knight over onto the canvas.

A double dropkick to the knees that sends Knight flopping to the mat.

And finally, a kneeling Knight getting ROCKED by a Melissa Cannon roundhouse kick to the head before the countdown starts up again.]

"THREE!"

"TWO!"

"ONE!"

BZZZZZZZZZZZZZZT!

GM: And here comes the Lightning Lady! Lori Wilson is the eighth entry in the 2016 Rumble! Almost halfway there!

[Wilson comes jogging down the aisle, a smile on her face as she rolls under the ropes into the ring...

We then cut to present day Wilson.]

LW: First of all, they forgot to play my entrance music, so I didn't come out with much fanfare.

[She chuckles.]

LW: Seriously, it was exciting to be part of the first women's Rumble match in AWA history. To be part of something like that was incredible, especially at Madison Square Garden. A match like the Rumble, there's just so much going on, so much energy and excitement from the fans, you just feed off that and want to make the biggest impression you can.

"Were you feeling any nerves that day?"

LW: There's always going to be nerves, even if you've been in this business for a long time like I have. But when you're in a match like the Rumble, where you have to wait until it's your turn, those nerves can get more intense.

[She grins.]

LW: Even when you're in there early, the waiting is the hardest part.

[As we cut back to footage from the Rumble, we see Copperhead entering the ring and immediately coming to the aid of her partner. There's a brief barrage of highlights of the Serpentes working over Lucie Richter and nearly scoring an elimination before Richter takes them both down...]

"THREE!"

"TWO!"

"ONE!"

BZZZZZZZZZZZZZZT!

[The tenth entry into the Rumble draws big jeers as she jogs down the aisle, looking out at the ring...

...and then breaks into BAMF walk, chomping her gum all the while.]

GM: Erica Toughill is #10! She's the halfway point in this one!

BW: And can you believe that we're halfway through this match yet only one person - Victoria June - has been eliminated so far?

[Cut to present day Ricki.]

RT: When the day of the Rumble came, I was still kind of in a bad place. The Battle of Boston - they put me in a prom dress, and... I felt so humiliated and ugly... like... I felt the world was laughing at me. Kendrick had just won the TV title, and I felt there was a lot of pressure on me to not be overshadowed. And there were thousands of people in that crowd- it's Madison Square Garden for [BLEEP] sake - and I just started thought spiraling as I was waiting for my number, thinking... "how am I gonna screw this up?"

[And as we go back to that night in MSG, we see Toughill shocking the Canadian super heavyweight Richter by stepping up on the middle rope and snatching a front facelock before she's even stepped into the match...]

BW: What's with these women trying to get eliminations before they even get in the ring?!

GM: Toughill's got her hooked in that guillotine choke, trying to... Bucky, I think she's trying to pull her out over the top rope!

BW: I think you're right! Toughill's giving up a lot of size here but there's no love lost between her and Lucie Richter - that's for sure. We saw that footage on Power Hour of Richter just absolutely destroying her as a rookie and you better believe Toughill's been waiting a long time for this moment.

[Toughill's like a bulldog, cranking on the hold as Richter throws weak punches to the ribcage...

...and the crowd begins to buzz as Ayako Fujiwara swoops in behind Richter, ducking down...]

GM: What in the... what is she doing?!

[Fujiwara gets herself in the right position and raises up, settling underneath Richter so that Richter's thighs are on Fujiwara's shoulders!]

BW: It's gonna be the mother of all squats, daddy!

[Fujiwara grits her teeth, giving a loud shout as she lifts up, hoisting Richter off the buckles as Toughill continues to pull her towards the ropes...]

GM: Fujiwara with some unbelievable power and-

[...and Richter goes tumbling over the ropes, falling to the floor as Toughill grabs the ropes, clinging to them to stay on the apron as the super heavyweight bounces off the floor!]

GM: RICHTER'S GONE! LUCIE RICHTER IS ELIMINATED!

[The crowd roars for the impressive elimination...

[...before we cut to Ricki in 2017.]

RT: To give Lucie credit, she knew she didn't have much of a chance to go long in this match. She told me that she was a different person... different from the one who broke my ribs in one of my first professional matches and... took liberties with me... and we settled our differences. But... I said to her, "in that ring, I have something that has been burning a hole in the back of my mind for over a decade." And I think she understood where I was coming from. And... from that moment on, it just clicked for me. "Girl, you've been here before... You won Angels & Amazons from out of nowhere... you can do this."

[...and as we go back to Rumble action, Fujiwara offers a high five of congratulations to Toughill, before grabbed by the hair and yanked over the top rope!]

GM: FUJIWARA IS- no! No! She hangs on! She's on the apron!

BW: Yeah, but she's on the apron with Toughill which means she's on the verge of getting eliminated, daddy!

[Cut to Ricki snickering smugly.]

RT: Some girls are good Christians who stencil "LIVE LAUGH LOVE" on their living room wall. I'm a hot mess who starts bar fights.

[We cut ahead a little further as we go back to the Rumble, showing some brief shots of Toughill and Fujiwara trading blows on the apron before Miyuki Ozaki scores with a running dropkick that knocks Toughill to the outside...

...and then a little further where Toughill throws Ozaki into the barricade on the floor before Fujiwara takes Ricki down with a running crossbody off the apron!

And we cut back to modern day Ricki.]

RT: Miyuki and I... we always had a bit of touchy relationship, so if I can take the chance to have a little private one-on-one on the floor, where I'm queen - then I'm gonna take it.

[Cut to modern day Lori Dane.]

LD: It wouldn't be a Rumble without some surprises sprinkled in... so we brought in Tommy Jackson...

[Cut to a shot of Jackson entering the ring at #11 while Dane continues speaking.]

LD: It was exciting to have so many people wanting to be a part of the match... of the division. To this day, I still get excited when I hear about someone reaching out and expressing interest. We went from nothing to something people are DYING to be a part of.

[Cut back to footage of Dane, shaking her head with a smile.]

LD: It's truly incredible.

[Back to the ring where a countdown is going.]

"THREE!"

"TWO!"

"ONE!"

BZZZZZZZZZZZZZZT!

[The fans cheer as Kayla "Pistol" Cristol comes jogging from the locker room area. She gets halfway down the aisle, lets loose a loud war whoop, and sprints the rest of the way down.]

GM: Here comes Kayla Cristol! The Pistol making her return from injury right here tonight and-

[As Cristol dives under the bottom rope, she makes a beeline for Erica Toughill, jumping on her back from behind, swinging her fist around to bash Toughill in the face over and over as the fans go wild!]

GM: And she's all over the woman who put her on the shelf to begin with!

[Cut to modern day Kayla Cristol.]

KC: Heh... I might've caught Ricki good with some of those. I was so fired up. It's the Rumble! It's Madison Square Garden! The people were so excited and that's just contagious, y'all. Just thinkin' about it makes me want to jump into the ring right now.

[The practically giddy Cristol's expression changes as she frowns.]

KC: I was much less excited when the next person came out though.

[We fade back to Rumble footage.]

"THREE!"

"TWO!"

"ONE!"

BZZZZZZZZZZZZZZT!

[The heavy metal sounds of "Demonizer" by Judas Priest rings out over the PA system to an EXPLOSIVE ROAR from the more knowledgeable fans in the building!]

BW: OH... MY... GOD!

[The action in the ring comes to a virtual halt as the curtain parts to reveal a monster of a woman.]

GM: Bucky, I... is that who I think it is?!

[Cut to modern day Gordon with an amused grin...]

GM: That one they told me who she was. I promise.

[...and back to the Rumble footage.]

BW: THE BLOODY SHE-WOLF OF TOKYO! THE LADY OF PAIN HERSELF! THE WINNER OF THE INAUGURAL EMPRESS CUP... BANNED FROM ALL OTHER EMPRESS CUPS AFTERWARDS! THE CURRENT LVPW CHAMPION!

GM: It is! It's The Darkness herself... KURAYAMI IS HERE IN MADISON SQUARE GARDEN!

[And as Kurayami's presence becomes known to the others in the ring, you can see a flash of fear in the eyes of Miyuki Ozaki. Kurayami nods her head, storming down the aisle...]

...and we cut to modern day footage, first of Lori Dane.]

LD: This was a big one for us. Kurayami - at the time - was a huge name in Japan... was a huge name online as far as women's wrestling goes. Because of her controversial past though, her pricetag was within reach for us and we... well, we wanted her as part of this new division BAD.

[Cut to modern day Kurayami.]

K: They came in with a strong offer. I was happy in Japan but... I wanted more. So, it was tempting. The Rumble was basically a tryout for both sides - they could see if they liked what I brought to their table... I could see if it was a good fit for me.

[Cut to Ayako, shaking her head.]

AF: When Kurayami entered the Rumble, the air changed. She's a legend - the first Empress Cup winner, a champion everywhere she goes - but her violence, her chaos... I didn't respect it. I still don't.

[A slight pause.]

AF: After the first Empress Cup, she'd attacked Miyuki and left scars that are still visible to this day. Seeing her storm in, I knew she'd disrupt everything. I stayed focused, relied on my training, but her presence made the ring feel... dangerous.

[Cut to Melissa.]

MC: I knew her. She was around when I worked in Japan but that was a while ago. I knew what she was capable of... and I was of the opinion that she was a gamechanger for the Division if we could bring her on board. There's a lot of women in wrestling now... but there's not many like Kurayami.

[We cut back to footage from MSG.]

BW: Five foot eleven... 250 pounds... this monster among mere mortals is one of the most fearsome competitors - man or woman - in all of Japan! And now she's here to battle for the AWA Women's World Title!

[Inside the ring, Ozaki can be seen shouting at Fujiwara in Japanese, waving her over to stand by her side. Nervously, Ozaki scans the rest of the ring and then physically grabs Melissa Cannon, speaking quickly to her, gesturing at the incoming Kurayami as she nears the ring.]

BW: Ozaki's putting an army together! She's no stranger to Kurayami, Gordo.

GM: Absolutely not. If I've done my research right, Kurayami once put Ozaki out of action for an extended period with several running splashes!

BW: Ozaki is also the reason that Kurayami is blacklisted from the Empress Cup!

[Kurayami climbs up on the apron, ducking through the ropes to stand in the ring where the action has frozen. The knowledgeable part of the crowd is going absolutely bananas at this point as Kurayami stands in the ring, locking eyes with Ozaki. She takes a step towards her when...]

GM: Uh oh!

[The sudden arrival of the Serpentine in her path stops Kurayami cold. Copperhead immediately starts laying the bad mouth on the massive woman as Mamba (who actually is taller than Kurayami) looks down on her.]

GM: I'm not sure this is the best idea for the Serpentine.

BW: Copperhead should probably beg for forgiveness right about now. I'm not sure even a two-on-one is enough to stop her.

[Copperhead delivers a two-handed shove to the chest of Kurayami, earning an "ooooooooh" from the crowd. Kurayami's response?

Laughter. A deep, booming laugh in Copperhead's face.]

GM: This is going to be a problem.

BW: Yeah? For who?

GM: That remains to-

[Suddenly and without warning, Kurayami reaches out, grabbing Copperhead by the hair...

...and HURLS her over the top rope to the floor before Mamba has a chance to react!]

GM: OHH! COPPERHEAD IS GONE! COPPERHEAD IS GONE!

[Mamba rushes forward, pummeling Kurayami from the blind side, hammering away with forearms across her broad back, angrily shouting at her for eliminating her partner!]

GM: Mamba's all over her, battering her back against the ropes!

[But what Mamba can't see is the expression on Kurayami's face - amusement turning into blind rage. She slowly turns around, staring right at Mamba, showing that the taller woman's clubbing blows are having no effect on her...]

GM: Mamba can't believe it! What the heck does she have to hit her with to do some damage?

BW: A tank?

[And suddenly, Kurayami lashes out with a standing lariat, knocking Mamba down to the mat in a heap. Kurayami glares across the ring, almost daring someone else to come after her...]

...and again locks eyes with Ozaki who sticks out her arms, keeping Cannon and Fujiwara by her sides.]

GM: Miyuki Ozaki isn't ready to tangle with Kurayami... not yet at least...

[Kurayami pulls a limp Mamba off the mat, lifting her up over her head...]

GM: Oh my stars... look at the power! Look at the strength!

[And with ease, she tosses the very large Serpentine over the top rope, throwing her on top of the still-angry Copperhead!]

GM: Mamba is eliminated as well... and the massive Kurayami just eliminated BOTH of the Serpentine in seemingly no time at all!

[Kurayami again slowly turns around, glaring out at the ring to see who is next...

...and we cut back to modern day footage of Kurayami as a voice is heard.]

"Is that the perfect example of announcing your presence with authority?"

[Kurayami chuckles, a deep, booming laugh.]

K: Well, they definitely knew what I was capable of after that... they all did.

[We cut to modern day Lauryn Rage.]

LR: Yeah, yeah... she's big and bad. We know yada yada ... but now we're gettin' to the good part. Is it my turn?

"Xenia Sonova came out next."

[Rage waves a dismissive hand.]

LR: And then? And then?

"Ricki Toughill eliminated Kayla Cristol."

LR: Uh huh... whatever whatever sure... good for Ricki and Pistol... but then...?

[Rage looks anxious, grinning as she waits...

...and we cut back to MSG footage where a countdown starts.]

"THREE!"

"TWO!"

"ONE!"

BZZZZZZZZZZZZZZT!

[The houselights filter pink, bathing the arena in a fuchsia light. A single gold light shines through the pink and spotlights the stage as Nicki Minaj's "I'm the Best" plays over the arena.

Suddenly, on the stage, Lauryn Rage emerges. She is holding a pose, one hand on her hip, the left hand out to the fans to kiss her rings. Her head is down, cerise hair covering her face.]

GM: Lauryn Rage is #15!

BW: That's a heck of a draw, Gordo. She could win it all from that spot.

[We cut to current day Lauryn Rage pumping her fist, grinning wide.]

LR: Aw Hell yeaaaaaah! Da Kid is here, ya dig? I COULD win it all from that spot, Bucky, and I was ready to get right up in there and start kickin' ass!

[We cut back to Rumble footage where we see Rage confronting the Serpentine in the aisle.]

GM: Uh oh.

BW: They failed her, Gordo. This can't be good.

[Rage glares at the duo who returns the stare...

...and then, of course, she can't resist giving them the business for it.]

"YOU DROPPED THE BALL! BOTH OF YA!"

[Mamba glares at Rage, holding the back of her head as she walks by.]

"WE WERE SUPPOSED TO DO THIS TOGETHER... THIS IS WHY I DUMPED YER ASSES!"

[And that's quite enough for the hot-headed Copperhead who twists around, rushing at Rage who looks shocked as she's bowled over by her former ally. Copperhead is wildly flailing at Rage, pounding her into the floor as AWA officials rush to try and get control!]

GM: Well, it's hard to say she didn't have that coming, Bucky.

[And then back to a smirking modern day Rage.]

LR: Stay tuned 'cause this was about to get real.

[We cut back to Rumble footage where we see Kurayami charging in on Ricki Toughill, running headlong into a pair of raised boots!]

"OHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

GM: Toughill caught her coming in!

[Toughill hops up to the middle rope, eyeing the stunned Kurayami...

...and leaps off, throwing a back elbow up under the chin, sending her staggering away from Toughill!]

"NOW!"

[And at a shout from Miyuki Ozaki, the trio of Ozaki, Melissa Cannon, and Ayako Fujiwara rush the larger competitor!]

GM: HERE WE GO!

[A flurry of forearm strikes from Melissa Cannon finds the mark as Ozaki throws kicks to the legs and Fujiwara throws roundhouse kicks to the chest!]

GM: And if the two-on-one of the Serpentes wasn't enough to take down Kurayami, maybe the three-on-one of this unlikely trio would be enough to get the job done!

[Ozaki backs off, directing traffic as Cannon and Fujiwara each grab an arm, whipping the larger competitor across the ring.]

GM: Double whip shoots her across...

[The Empress of Joshi leads off, throwing herself into a spinning leg lariat that catches Kurayami under the chin...

...but does not bring her down!]

GM: Ozaki again directing traffic, shouting in Japanese at Cannon and Fujiwara.

BW: Does Cannon SPEAK Japanese?

GM: Not that I'm aware of but I suppose some things in this sport are universal in any language.

[Cannon hits the ropes behind her, building up momentum as she leaps into the air, driving an elbowstrike into the temple that staggers Kurayami...

...but does not bring her down!]

GM: Ozaki couldn't drop her! Cannon couldn't drop her!

[Fujiwara takes her turn, rolling her neck, hopping up and down as she considers her shot...

...and then lunges in like she's going for a double leg takedown but comes in higher around the waist of Kurayami!]

GM: What is she... oh my stars! She's trying to pick her up!

BW: She can't! There's no way!

[Wrapping her arms around Kurayami's frame the best she can, Fujiwara grits her teeth...

...and with a massive roar of effort, she muscles Kurayami up onto her shoulder, draped over it!]

GM: OH MY GOD! SHE GOT HER UP! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!

[Fujiwara slowly walks to the middle of the ring... slowly... slowly... looking out at the roaring crowd...

...and then DROPS backwards, smashing Kurayami into the canvas!]

"OHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

[Cut to modern day Ayako.]

AF: When I lifted Kurayami and slammed her down, the crowd's roar was deafening. It was like a wave crashing over the ring. I'd trained for moments like that. Kurayami's chaos - her violence, her history with my sensei - it made me dislike her, but I saw my chance and took it.

[She takes a deep breath.]

AF: That deep in the Rumble, we were exhausted, battered. Miyuki's fire, Melissa's grit, my focus - it was all being tested. The ring was a battlefield, but that moment... it felt like we were rewriting what women's wrestling could be.

[Cut back to the Rumble with the countdown running.]

"THREE!"

"TWO!"

"ONE!"

BZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZT!

[The crowd EXPLODES in cheers as Julie Somers comes rushing through the curtain, tearing down the aisle in a sprint!]

GM: And she's wasting no time in making herself part of this match, fans! One of the most popular women in the entire division is heading to the ring!

[We cut to Julie Somers, who has a big grin on her face.]

JS: People say that when you enter late in a Rumble match, it's to your advantage because you're fresh and ready to go. But the problem with coming in late is that you're just getting anxious and nervous and really wanting to be out there in the worst way. I waited too long, to be honest!

[She laughs at that remark.]

JS: But when I finally went out there, I could not believe how the fans responded. They had been going nuts all night, but once my music kicked in, it was just... wow! Up to that point of my career, I had never experienced as loud of a reception as I got that night in Madison Square Garden.

[She takes a deep breath, but still grinning.]

JS: Being a part of the first ever women's Rumble in AWA history and the reception I got that night... that memory is going to stay with me forever.

[We cut back to Rumble footage as Somers scrambles up on the apron, leaping off the top rope with a dropkick that sends Charisma Knight tumbling away from the ropes, freeing up Miyuki Ozaki!]

GM: DROPKICK OFF THE TOP ON KNIGHT!

[Somers comes back to her feet, rushing across the ring again, leaping into the air...]

GM: What in the...?!

[The Spitfire snags Tamara Jackson's head between her legs, hanging onto the ropes as she flips backwards, using a rana to toss Jackson over the top rope, throwing her down to the floor as Somers lands on the apron!]

GM: OH MY! TOMMY JACKSON IS ELIMINATED!

[Xenia Sonova goes for Somers, trying to eliminate one of the favorites. She comes in swinging with a right cross but Somers ducks down, using the middle rope to swing forward and drive her shoulder into the midsection.]

GM: Somers goes downstairs on Sonova!

[Slingshotting over the top rope, Somers snatches a front facelock...

...and DRIVES Sonova facefirst into the canvas with a DDT!]

"OHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

GM: OH MY!! WHAT A MOVE BY JULIE SOMERS!

[Somers pops back up, ducking a wild clothesline attempt from Charisma Knight. As Knight approaches the ropes, she spots Miyuki Ozaki trying to pull down the ropes but Knight slams on the brakes...

...and flashes a middle finger at Ozaki!]

GM: Oh... well, we apologize for that one, fans... and-

[With Knight shouting at Ozaki, Somers rushes in behind her, throwing a dropkick to the back of Knight, sending her falling towards the ropes...

...where Ozaki pulls the ropes down, sending Knight tumbling over the ropes and down to the floor!]

GM: CHARISMA KNIGHT IS GONE! ONE OF THE FAVORITES IS GONE!

BW: WHAT?!

GM: Julie Somers is living up to her nickname! She's a house of fire in there right now!

[We cut back to Julie again.]

JS: And then on top of that, to get two eliminations right off the bat... and one of them being Tommy Jackson, who was somebody I met before and liked. For her to let me have that moment, words can't describe it.

[She pauses, perhaps for effect.]

JS: And now we're heading into the home stretch, I have two quick eliminations and I wonder how many people are thinking I might win this thing. But then...

[She shakes her head, but smiles as she does.]

JS: While I'm tearing it up, somebody else hadn't even gotten in the ring yet!

[We cut back to that night in MSG as we see Lauryn Rage out on the floor, just barely peeking over the ring apron, watching to see what's happening.]

GM: Wait... isn't that...

BW: Haha! It's Lauryn Rage! We forgot all about her after she got into it with the Serpentes!

GM: But... she hasn't even gotten into the ring yet!

BW: That's what makes it so brilliant, Gordo! If you don't get in the ring, you can't get eliminated!

GM: I don't believe it! What kind of champion would SHE make?!

BW: A brilliant one!

[Cut back to modern day footage of Lori Dane.]

LD: #17 was...?

[A voice answers from off-camera.]

"Skylar Swift."

[Dane smiles with a warm expression.]

LD: Oh, Skylar... I miss her. The Canadian Dream Girl! What I loved the most about Skylar is she looked like a model... legit... but she was as tough as they come inside the ring. She didn't want any shortcuts. She didn't want to get by on her looks. She was right there in the Combat Corner on her days off, trying to get better every day... and she was well on her way too.

[We cut back to the action, showing some brief highlights:

An eliminated Charisma Knight striking with a steel chair, laying out Skylar Swift before she can even get into the ring.

Kurayami eliminating Xenia Sonova with a stunning drop across the top rope.

An Ozaki moonsault onto Fujiwara, Somers, Toughill, and Kurayami, knocking the entire pile down on the canvas.]

"OHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

[The crowd is ROARING for the daredevil move in the middle of the Rumble...

...and then somehow gets even louder as Melissa Cannon looks across the ring and spots Lauryn Rage standing on the apron. Rage lifts her hands, begging off, shaking her head as Cannon slowly stalks across the ring towards her!]

GM: Yeah! Yeah! Get her!

[And suddenly, Cannon breaks into a sprint, sliding under the bottom rope to the floor as Rage drops down off the apron...

...and off they go, Rage running around the ring with Cannon running right behind her, trying to get her hands on her rival!]

GM: We've got a footrace on the floor!

BW: Cannon's been in the ring for... what? Over a half hour? There's no way she's catching up with Lauryn!

[After one lap around the ring, Rage rounds a ringpost, rolling under the ropes into the ring as Cannon continues to follow her. Rage runs straight to the ropes, rebounding back towards Cannon who ducks her attempt at a clothesline, both women hitting the ropes and bouncing back again...]

GM: They're on a collision course!

[And Cannon dives into a double leg takedown, yanking Rage's legs out from under her and putting her down on the canvas...]

GM: She takes her down! And how sweet this must be for Melissa Cannon!

[Cannon grabs Rage by her weave, laying in shot after shot to the head with her forearm from the mounted position...

...and we cut to modern day Melissa.]

MC: I gotta admit... that felt pretty good.

[To Lauryn.]

LR: Didn't feel too good to me... but that's aight, Melissa, 'cause what's comin' up was gonna feel REAL sweet, ya dig?.

[Rage is all smiles as we cut to Sarah Sharpe.]

SS: The last three Rumble entrants were all surprises. It only made sense to have some big surprises to appear toward the end of the first ever women's Rumble match in AWA history.

[She pauses for a bit.]

SS: I'll give you the backstory on one of them: The Privateers had competed in the Stampede Cup previously and, after their brief run, they told us that we were welcome to contact them if there were any future possibilities for their involvement in AWA. And as we were going over our list of possible surprise Rumble entrants, that's when we realized that Edward and Jacob Drake had a sister who was an accomplished wrestler in her own right.

[She grins.]

SS: It didn't take long for all of us to say "yes, we'd like to have her in the Rumble." And we were so fortunate that when we asked her, she said, "I'll be there."

[And back to MSG.]

"THREE!"

"TWO!"

"ONE!"

BZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZT!

[The opening drum beats of "Break It Down Again" by Tears for Fears play over the PA system. At that moment, a British flag is lowered from the rafters, the crowd swelling.]

GM: OH MY STARS!

BW: You've gotta be kidding me!

[And as the tempo of the song kicks in, "British Bad Girl" Lisa Drake emerges from the entranceway.]

GM: LISA DRAKE! Former tag team champion! Former singles champion!

[Drake stands at the top of the ramp, no traces of emotion on her face. She walks down toward the ring, her eyes focused ahead and nowhere else...

...and we cut again, showing the countdown once more...]

"THREE!"

"TWO!"

"ONE!"

BZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZT!

[The strings make their ominous pass, building to the crescendo and the crash of the horns as Mussorgsky's "4th Movement of the New World Symphony" plays and the New York fans are in shock.]

GM: ARE YOU KIDDING ME?!

BW: I HAVEN'T HEARD THAT THEME MUSIC IN YEARS!

GM: IS IT?! CAN IT BE!?

[The curtain parts and Medusa Rage steps out to a HUGE ROAR!]

GM: IT IS! MEDUSA RAGE! THE FORMER WORLD CHAMPION AND HALL OF FAMER IS HERE AND SHE'S IN THE RUMBLE!

[The Matriarch of the Rage family and the Hall Of Famer soaks in the crowd cheers.]

GM: I can't believe it! We talked about history being made here tonight

BW: Gordo, Medusa Rage retired after a Battle Royal that was Miyuki Ozaki's debut! History has come full circle!

GM: Medusa Rage is heading down the aisle - a lot of tough competitors still inside that ring right now. She may be one of the greatest of all time but she's also got her work cut out for her if she thinks she's gonna be the first AWA Women's World Champion!

[Cut to modern day footage of the Hall of Famer, Medusa Rage, addressing the camera.]

MR: Thank Mantha. I was good never stepping in a ring again, but Mantha is always wheeling and dealing. I think my appearance might have greased the wheels for the Serps and June. It did a helluva lot of business for Age of Rage. Who knows. Whatever. I had a chance to give back in a big way so I did. It was rough, though. I wanted to step back on the national stage like a wrestler - not a nostalgia act. I owed the fans that much. It was a lot of work getting my physique right. No wonder Monet didn't do it.

[We cut from one Rage sister to another, showing Lauryn Rage with a grin, remembering her sister's appearance that night.]

LR: Dang. Dusa is in this? Hell yeah! We didn't think big sis was gonna do it, but it was her backyard. It was New York and the fans were showing they still loved her. That was so cool.

[Cut to Lori Dane.]

LD: It was big. Real big. Medusa wanted to do us a favor though after we brought in Lauryn and the Serpentes and Victoria June. We all know how important family is to the Rages. So, we cashed it in here and... yeah, it was a cool moment.

[We cut to some shots of in-ring action - Medusa using two hands full of hair to throw Melissa Cannon off Lauryn Rage... then the two sisters working together, trying to eliminate Cannon but gets taken down with a Julie Somers crossbody to save her friend...

...and Somers being yanked off the mat by Ricki Toughill who grabs the hair, rushing towards the ropes...]

GM: TOUGHILL TOSSES SOMERS!

[But as Somers tumbles over the top, she hooks the ropes with both hands, dangling with her feet just inches from the floor...

...but Toughill, who thinks she was successful, turns her attention towards Skylar Swift who is leaning against the ropes.]

GM: Toughill thinks she eliminated Somers but Julie's hanging on!

[The Spitfire uses the ropes to pull herself back up, depositing herself back inside the ring...]

BW: Somers skins the cat! Behind you, Ricki!

[Grabbing the back of Toughill's tights, Somers rushes the ropes, tossing her over as Swift drops down, pulling the ropes with her...]

...and Toughill slams down on the floor!]

"OHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

GM: TOUGHILL'S GONE! ONE OF THE FAVORITES IS ELIMINATED!

[Toughill sits on the floor, staring up at the ring in disbelief as Julie Somers trades a high five with a weakened Skylar Swift, celebrating the elimination.]

GM: And that's gotta feel good for Julie Somers after the problems she's had with Toughill in recent weeks!

[Toughill is glowering up into the ring as the final countdown begins...]

...and we cut to modern footage.]

LD: The last person in... we know it had to be big. We know it had to be a big moment for everyone after all that led up to that moment, the crowning of the first champion. This night was a celebration for this Division... a tribute to all the hard work we'd all gone through. The blood, the sweat... all the tears especially... but who could it be? Who could live up to all that hype?

[Back to MSG.]

"THREE!"

"TWO!"

"ONE!"

BZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZT!

GM: The final entry in the Rumble is...

["The Lonely Shepherd" by Zamfir starts off very quietly, the sounds of the panflute giving off a beautiful, almost haunting sound as smoke trails out from behind the entrance curtain.]

GM: Wait... I don't understand... we've heard this song already tonight.

BW: We have, yeah, but... Melissa Cannon's not the only one who uses this!

[As the rest of the song kicks in, Lori Dane emerges from the curtain to a HUUUUGE ROAR!]

GM: OH MY STARS! LORI DANE IS NUMBER TWENTY!

[Cut to modern day Lori smirking.]

LD: It helped that it was someone willing to work for free.

[She shrugs as we cut to Julie Somers.]

JS: Lori Dane had been backstage talking to all the girls about the Rumble, but I had no idea she was actually going to appear in it. But after everything she did to get women's wrestling its rightful place in AWA, her getting to have that moment was really cool!

[Cut to Ricki Toughill, looking less enthused, and more pensive.]

RT: Landing on my big ol' can, and finding out that I JUST missed the opportunity to really show off toe-to-toe against Lori... that was just an extra twist of the knife for me...

[Dane stands in a set of skin-tight yellow vinyl pants and top that appears to be made of the same material. The front of the top is slit dramatically to reveal the lovely Ms. Dane's assets. Her dark brown hair is pulled back in a ponytail and she appears to be all business...

...oh, and she's carrying a Singapore cane.]

GM: The Queen of Extreme is in the building!

[Dane points the cane down the aisle, getting a big cheer from the New York crowd as she starts making her way towards the ring...]

GM: Lori Dane is headed to the ring, one of the owners of this company!

BW: That's right! She owns the place! She can't be the champion too, can she?!

GM: I think Lori Dane can do pretty much whatever the heck she wants, Bucky!

[Dane marches down the aisle, heading towards the squared circle...

...when she spots Charisma Knight coming over the railing, steel chair gripped in her hands, babbling madly to herself...]

"WHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAACK!"

"OHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

GM: SINGAPORE CANE TO THE SKULL! GOOD GOD!

[The blow causes Knight to let go of the chair, flopping over the railing into the entryway. A grinning Dane steps over her, diving under the bottom rope into the ring. She twirls the cane around once...

...and goes exactly where you might expect her to!]

"WHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAACK!"

"OHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

GM: CANE ACROSS THE BACK OF MEDUSA RAGE!

[The Hall of Famer cringes, slumping down to her knees near the corner where she was assaulting Dane's prize student. A shocked Lauryn Rage turns around, eyes going wide as she spots Dane with the cane...

...the cane that BOUNCES right between her wide eyes a moment later!]

"WHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAACK!"

"OHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

GM: GOOD GRIEF! LAURYN RAGE TAKES THE CANE BETWEEN THE EYES!

[A grinning Dane reaches down, helping her student up to her feet. An exhausted Melissa Cannon looks on in shock before falling into a happy embrace with her trainer.]

GM: Oh yeah! What a moment for Melissa Cannon who has fought so hard to get here... and it's only right that her teacher... her trainer... her mentor... the woman who was almost like a second mother to her... is here too!

[Cut to modern day Melissa who is dabbing at her eye.]

MC: Damn it, Gordo. Make me cry on national TV. Okay! Yes! It was a VERY emotional moment for me... for Lori too.

[Cut to Lori who is also crying.]

LD: Melissa and I had been through so much to get to that point and... I mean, of course everyone had but the two of us... all the Holly Hotbodys of the world... even going back to those days in PWR or the E... this was the culmination of all of it. All the years of hard work and sacrifice and wondering if this would ever truly be real...? It was here. In Madison Square Garden.

[Dane smiles.]

LD: One of the greatest moments of my life... period.

[We go back to the Rumble to a shot of Cannon and Dane using the Singapore cane to flatten a rising Medusa Rage before Dane smashes Lisa Drake across the back with it as well.]

BW: And when you think about Lori Dane being the EMWC Women's Champion way back in the mid-90s, you have to think about matches like Lori Dane versus Medusa Rage... or Lori Dane versus Lisa Drake... that we never got to see because she retired and became an announcer... because the opportunity wasn't present for her to be a wrestler on the level she wanted to be!

GM: Well, I'd say that opportunity is there now... and Lori Dane has a window of opportunity to become the AWA Women's World Champion right here tonight!

[We cut ahead further, watching as Lisa Drake tries to rid the ring of an interrupting Charisma Knight who refuses to leave despite her elimination, ending up out on the apron after a running clothesline carries both her and Knight out of the ring...]

GM: Drake almost eliminated herself! Almost! She managed to hang on and-

[But just for a moment before Lauryn Rage charges across the ring, leaping into the air to smash her hindquarters into Lisa Drake, sending her flying off the apron to the floor!]

GM: Ohhh! Flying hip attack and Lisa Drake is eliminated! She's gone! We're down to nine!

[And back to some quick highlights as the assembled talent in the ring decide to take aim on Kurayami:

Lori Dane trying to use her Singapore Cane on the Japanest monster who snatches the cane away, snapping it with her bare hands...

Lauryn Rage smashing a steel chair across the back of Kurayami who jerks around and laughs sadistically in her face.

Ayako Fujiwara and Melissa Cannon score with running, leaping elbowstrikes to the head...

Skylar Swift lands a running dropkick which leads to a Lauryn Rage flying hip attack and a Julie Somers flying dropkick, sending Kurayami mere steps away from the ropes now...

...before Miyuki Ozaki snatches a handful of mohawk, screeching with rage before throwing everything she's got into a huge headbutt that knocks the biggest woman in the match into the ropes!]

GM: Ozaki puts her on the ropes! She knocked her back into the ropes!

[Ozaki gives a fist pump, shouting in Japanese as she dashes across the ring to the opposite ropes, bouncing off, charging across the ring...

...and as she draws near, Kurayami reaches out, snatches two hands full of Ozaki's hair...]

GM: OH MY STARS!

[...and lifts her by the hair, swinging her wildly over the ropes, and HURLING her out to the floor!]

"OHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

GM: OZAKI'S GONE! OZAKI'S ELIMINATED!

[The crowd jeers, having gained respect for the Empress of Joshi throughout the match. She lies on the floor, having been in the ring for well over forty minutes at this point.]

[Cut to Miyuki, sighing.]

MO: (Over 40 minutes in that Rumble... I thought I had it all under control. Then Kurayami, of all people, grabs me by the hair and tosses me out like yesterday's news!)

[She chuckles, shaking her head.]

MO: (There went my perfect record in Rumble matches - poof! But that elimination? It stung less than you'd think. The crowd's respect, Ayako's fight, the division we were building - it was worth it.)

[Miyuki nods in affirmation.]

MO: (That Rumble made history. Kurayami might have ruined my Rumble, but she couldn't ruin what we achieved. I went back to Japan proud, even with my record blemished. [Jokingly] Damn you, She-Wolf!)

[And as we cut back to MSG, we see Kurayami lift Skylar Swift into the air, tossing her over the ropes to the floor...

...and turns right into the Hall of Famer, Medusa Rage, who catches her in the gut with a boot before snatching her head and neck, leaping into the air...]

GM: SNAKEBITE!

[Kurayami staggers backwards...

...and here comes Ayako Fujiwara, rushing forward with serious intent!]

GM: Fujiwara ducks down... oh my... oh my stars... CAN SHE DO IT?!

[Fujiwara slides Kurayami into fireman's carry position...

...and with an earsplitting bellow, she muscles Kurayami up until Fujiwara is standing up...]

GM: SHE'S GOT HER UP! SHE GOT HER UP AND...

[Fujiwara leans to the side, flipping Kurayami over the top rope and down to the floor!]

"OHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

GM: SHE DID IT! FUJIWARA ELIMINATES KURAYAMI! OH MY STARS, I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!

[Cut to Ayako.]

AF: When I got Kurayami up in that fireman's carry, the crowd's roar pushed me. Flipping her over the top rope and eliminating her...

[She gives a faint smile.]

AF: ...it felt like justice.

[Cut back to MSG.]

BW: We're down to six, Gordo!

GM: Melissa Cannon, Ayako Fujiwara, Lauryn Rage, Julie Somers, Medusa Rage, and Lori Dane! One of these six women are going to be the very first AWA Women's World Champion!

[And as the participants look on in shock at the elimination of Kurayami, Lauryn Rage snatches Lori Dane from behind by the hair...

...and HURLS her over the top rope to the floor!

And we cut to modern day Lori Dane who sighs.]

LD: Can't win 'em all.

[Cut to Melissa Cannon.]

MC: And that put us down to five - the Rages, me, Julie, and Ayako. One of those five would walk out as the first AWA Women's World Champion and... to say it was a lot of pressure in that moment would be an understatement. I was running on fumes but I could... see it... I could reach it and...

[She reaches out to the camera now, a wistful look on her face.]

MC: ...almost feel it in my hand.

[We get a quick shot of Melissa battling both Rages...

We see her setting up for a Billion Dollar Bomb on Lauryn before Medusa spews mist into her eyes.]

BW: DEADLY VENOM SPIT! RIGHT IN THE EYES!

[Cannon staggers backwards, screaming in pain as she falls into the corner, frantically rubbing at her eyes. Medusa Rage smirks at her screams of pain as she pulls Lauryn Rage up off the mat, patting her sister on the shoulder...]

GM: The Rages are ruling the roost right now!

[Julie Somers rushes forward, spinning Medusa Rage around into a right hand to the jaw to a big cheer...]

...and we cut to the current AWA Women's World Champion.]

JS: Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would ever go toe-to-toe with a Hall of Famer like Medusa Rage! She's one of the all-time greats, one of those who set the standard for women's wrestling, and now, I'm getting to work with her! Even if it was for just a moment, it was awesome to get that chance!

[We cut ahead to Somers delivering an enzuigiri on Medusa Rage before Lauryn Rage tries to toss her. Somers is ready though and reverses the toss, sending the younger Rage over the top, clinging to the ropes for survival.]

GM: Rage is on the apron! Somers needs to knock her off to eliminate her!

[Grabbing Lauryn by the hair, Somers throws a big forearm to the jaw... and another... and another...]

GM: Somers trying to knock Rage to the floor!

[Stumbling up to her feet, the Hall of Famer - Medusa Rage - rushes forward, smashing Somers in the back of the head with a forearm. She grabs Somers by the hair, flinging her down to the mat!]

GM: Ohhh! Somers goes down hard off that!

[Medusa sits on the ropes, bringing her sister back inside the ring. Lauryn falls into an embrace, thanking her sister profusely...]

...and then steps back, putting her open hand up in Medusa's face.]

GM: What the...?

[And then surges forward, connecting with a clothesline that sends her big sister, the Hall of Famer, over the ropes to the floor!]

"OHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

GM: WHOA! LAURYN RAGE JUST ELIMINATED HER OWN SISTER!

BW: Hey, it's every woman for herself trying to be the first Women's World Champion!

GM: And it all comes down to this, fans! Melissa Cannon, Ayako Fujiwara, Lauryn Rage, and Julie Somers! One of these four will walk out having made history to become the first Women's World Champion!

[Cut to modern day Lori.]

LD: I think... yeah, there were a lot of talented people in the division or coming into the division at that point but if you were to look at that moment in time, I think the Final Four were the top talent in the division. No offense to Ricki or Skylar or Kayla or some of the others but... this was where the money was.

[We cut to Sarah Sharpe.]

SS: It's always tough to narrow down the field and figure out who is going to be there at the end in a Rumble match, because it's letting the fans know who is going to lead the way. But I would say the final four that night in MSG, those were the four who had shown the most to lead the way.

[She then gets a smile on her face.]

SS: But it did serve as fuel for other women to step up their games and show what they could do in the months to come.

[We cut back to MSG, all four combatants having backed into corners.]

GM: Remember, fans... Melissa Cannon has been in this match for about fifty minutes now. Ayako Fujiwara is right behind her... just a couple minutes less since she was #3. Lauryn Rage came in at #15 and Julie Somers at #16 which means they're relatively fresh compared to the other two. All four women remaining in this match taking a breather. They know what's at stake. And it's only fitting, I think, that three of these four women were amongst the first to debut in this Women's Division. Ayako Fujiwara, of course, debuted at Memorial Day Mayhem but the other three have been here quite some time now.

[We cut ahead, showing Rage pummeling Cannon before Julie Somers comes charging out of the corner. Rage shoves Cannon aside, hoping to stop Somers but Somers leaps into the air, snagging her in a rana, flipping her over to the mat!]

GM: Somers takes Rage down!

[Fujiwara stomps out of her corner, looking to snatch a running Somers who ducks under Fujiwara's grasp, hitting the far ropes, rebounding back...

...and leaps up, snagging another rana, flipping Fujiwara over to the canvas!]

GM: Somers is moving fast and with great impact so far!

[Somers climbs off the mat, raising an arm over her head, pointing a finger to the fans as she backs to the corner, eyes locked on Lauryn Rage...

...which is why she's not paying the slightest bit of attention when Erica Toughill is suddenly on the apron, grabbing a stunned Somers by the arm, and YANKING her off the top rope, flinging her down recklessly to the barely-padded floor!]

"OHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

GM: WHAT THE-?! WHERE THE HELL DID TOUGHILL COME FROM?!

BW: I think she never left, Gordo! I think she never left at all! She's been out here since she got eliminated by Somers earlier, waiting for her moment... and she just grabbed it, daddy!

GM: The AWA officials are all over her but-

BW: But there ain't a damn thing they can do about it! Ricki Toughill just cost Julie Somers her chance at the World Title!

[We cut to current Julie Somers, who has a sly grin on her face.]

JS: Oh yeah, it was totally the wrong call! Ricki wasn't even in the match any more and the refs didn't make sure she got sent to the back! Come on!

[She shrugs, but still has that sly grin.]

JS: Ricki, you know I love you, but you had to know I wasn't going to stand for that, right? And SuperClash VIII wasn't that far off!

[We then cut to Ricki Toughill... who has a very guilty smile on her face thinking back to the moment.]

RT: If you couldn't tell... I do wear my emotions on my sleeve... a bit. Soooo...

[She grimaces and grins, showing off her broken smile.]

RT: I get paid to act like I'm eleven years old anyway. Might as well throw a tantrum for some overtime. And... oh my god, did Julie pay me back with interest!

[We cut back to MSG.]

GM: I can't believe what I just saw but... fans, we're down to three! Will it be Ayako Fujiwara, Lauryn Rage, or Melissa CANNNNNNNONNNNNNNN?!

[Gordon's shout comes as Cannon DIVES through the ropes, wiping out Toughill with a diving elbowstrike!]

GM: And Melissa Cannon is coming to the defense of her friend!

[Cannon stays on top of Toughill, throwing a series of elbows to the side of the head as Lauryn Rage rolls to her feet, watching the action on the floor with disbelief. Ayako Fujiwara seems surprised as well, asking a ringside official about it as she gets closer to the ropes...

...and we see Rage charging Fujiwara's exposed back, hitting her with a running elbowstrike to the back of the head, sending the Olympian tumbling over the top rope!]

GM: FUJIWARA GOES OVER... BUT SHE'S HANGING ON!

[A frantic Lauryn Rage starts stomping and kicking Fujiwara, trying to knock her off the apron to score the elimination!]

GM: Lauryn Rage is giving it everything she's got to knock Fujiwara off the apron!

[Dropping down to a seated position on the mat, Rage grabs the middle rope, pressing her feet against Fujiwara, leaning back to try and shove her off the apron.]

GM: Can she do it?! Can she send Fujiwara to the floor and put it down to her and Melissa Cannon with the title on the line?!

[Fujiwara's grip on the ropes is iron, refusing to go off the apron no matter how much Rage screams like a banshee at her. The Halifax native scampers to her feet, watching helplessly as Fujiwara rolls under the ropes into the ring...

...and we cut to modern Ayako.]

AF: Being in the final three of the Rumble was exhilarating, but grueling. I could hear her screams, feel the crowd's energy. I felt the weight of the title, the division's future and I was ready to prove I belonged. The Rumble was our chance to make history.

[To Melissa.]

MC: Almost there... alllllmoooooost there.

[We cut ahead just as Rage uses a handspring elbow in the corner on Fujiwara, snapmaring her out of the corner before landing a dropkick to the back of the head...]

GM: Rage is going for it here! She's trying to toss her out!

[But as she tries to do it, she runs into Melissa Cannon who is back up on the apron, blocking Rage's path. Rage shouts "WHY?!" before spinning around to go back the other way...

...and the momentary hesitation allows Fujiwara to reverse it, flinging Rage over the ropes...]

GM: RAGE GOES OVER...

[...but Rage just BARELY snags the top rope, pulling herself onto the apron!]

GM: ...BUT HANGS ON!

[We cut further into the match again, showing some highlights of the home stretch.

Rage diving off the ropes with a pair of knees on Melissa Cannon.

Fujiwara folding Rage in half with a devastating German Suplex.

The Olympic gold medalist pulling up Cannon who drills her with an elbow.]

GM: Cannon with an elbow!

[The exhausted Cannon throws a second blow, sending Fujiwara stumbling back as Cannon falls back into the ropes, hanging onto the top rope, trying to stay on her feet.]

GM: Cannon's barely able to stand, Bucky! She's running on fumes!

BW: Nah, she's running on the dream of being the World Champion, daddy!

[Fujiwara slowly moves back in, fatigue slowing her down as well. Leaning back, Cannon swings a leg up for a front kick...

...but Fujiwara catches it!]

GM: Fujiwara catches the kick... walking Cannon away from the ropes...

[Back towards the middle of the ring, Fujiwara takes a deep breath...

...and then yanks Cannon up into the air, catching her in her powerful arms, cradling Cannon and DUMPING her down across a bent knee!]

GM: OHHHH! BACKBREAKER! WHAT A COUNTER!

[Cannon's face is etched in exhaustion and pain, writhing on the canvas as Fujiwara stands over her...]

GM: Fujiwara's taking some deep breaths, her tank being driven further than perhaps it ever has before as well...

[And as she throws her head back, she lets loose a shout "KANPEKINAAAAA!" The crowd roars for the call of her signature move.]

GM: She's calling for it! Calling for the Kanpekina!

BW: Okay... but why? Again, I think this is a mistake, Gordo. What good does a powerslam do her here? She needs to throw Cannon over the top rope, not pin her!

[Fujiwara, breathing deeply, leans down to haul a barely-moving Cannon off the mat. She leans over, moving into scoop slam position...

...where an absolutely frantic Melissa Cannon swings the point of her elbow down into the temple... and again... and again... and again!]

GM: Cannon's trying to fight her way out!

[Grabbing Fujiwara by the hair, Cannon swings her knee up to the head... and again... and again... and again...]

GM: KNEESTRIKES!

[And with Cannon pulling Fujiwara into a standing headscissors, she doesn't notice Lauryn Rage roll out to the apron, dragging herself up the ropes.]

GM: Where is Rage going?

BW: She's going up top, daddy!

GM: Why?! What's she going to do up there?!

BW: I have no idea!

[Cannon reaches down, snaring one of Fujiwara's arms...]

GM: She hooks one arm!

[The crowd roars as Cannon reaches down, snatching the other...]

GM: Melissa Cannon setting up for the Billion Dollar Bomb! But she's so tired! Can she do it? Can she get Fujiwara up?!

[Cannon tries to lift... but with a grunt, she sets Fujiwara back down.]

BW: No! She can't do it!

GM: She's gonna try it again!

[With a roar this time, Cannon attempts the lift a second time...

...but again is forced to put Fujiwara back down. This time, an exhausted Cannon slumps forward, her torso against Fujiwara's back!]

GM: Cannon can't even-

BW: RAAAAAAAAAAGE!

[The crowd ROARS with surprise as Lauryn Rage leaps from her perch, tucking her legs up...

...and DRIVING her feet down onto the back of Cannon's head with a double stomp!]

GM: DOUBLE STOMP OFF THE TOP!!

[The two feet being driven into the back of Cannon's head drives her down but she immediately springs back up, staggering backwards as Fujiwara straightens up...

...and then ducks down, scooping Cannon up!]

GM: She's got her! She's got her!

[Fujiwara walks across the ring, pausing to readjust her grip near the ropes. She turns, dipping down low to put Cannon's head nearly touching the canvas before rapidly swinging back the other way, getting all her momentum twisting towards the ropes...

...which is when a crawling Lauryn Rage surges upwards, hooking her arms between the legs of Fujiwara...]

GM: NO!

[...and FLIPS her over the top rope, sending both Fujiwara and Cannon toppling to the floor!]

GM: NO!

BW: YEAH! SHE DID IT! SHE DID IT!

"DING! DING! DING!"

GM: Oh my... I can't believe this!

BW: Oh, I can! I knew she could do it, Gordo! I knew she could do it!

[Lauryn Rage sinks to her knees, burying her face in the canvas as the ring announcer makes it official...]

RO: Your winner of the 2016 Rumble...

...and the very first AWA WOMEN'S WORRRRRRRRLD CHAMMMMPIONNNNNN...

[Deep breath.]

RO: LAURRRRRRRRYNNNNNNNNN RAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAGE!

[Rage throws her arms in the air, jeers pouring down on her from the AWA faithful who are stunned by this result.]

GM: I can't... of all the people who could have won this title... who could have represented this division and this company with dignity and honor... Melissa Cannon, Julie Somers, Ayako Fujiwara... so many others. This is...

BW: She outlasted 'em all, daddy!

[Rage drags herself to her feet, snatching the title belt away from Emerson Gellar. She rushes to the ropes, stepping up to the second, gesturing to herself, shouting at the fans as she holds the title belt up in the air!]

GM: Lauryn Rage is celebrating in front of these fans and-

[A loud burst is heard as white and gold streamers erupt from the upper reaches of the world's most famous arena, pouring down all over the crowd and the ring where the new champion is celebrating...

...and we cut to modern day footage of the inaugural champion, Lauryn Rage. Rage, dressed in a black knit dress that blends in with the dark studio in which she sits, turns away from the screen and smiles for herself proudly.]

LR: BOO YA! I told y'all the Kid would shake up the world and I shook up the world! Everybody thought for sure it was going to Melissa Cannon or Ayako Fujiwara. They were getting all the press at the time. Charisma Knight and Julie Somers, too. Look who did it. Look at the kid with the fuchsia hair. I'm so inspirational.

[Rage runs a hand through her low cut hair.]

LR: That night a kid from Halifax got to be the last woman standing and live out her dreams in Madison Square Garden.

[Rage chews her lip and tilts her head, mocking the concept.]

LR: I was so amped up that night. My hands were all swollen from the adrenaline. I could barely feel my face. Yo, I was going to run through everybody's face to win that title. I was not going to throw away my shot. Next to my debut and maybe shocking the world by retaining the title at SuperClash, this is my favorite moment of my career. I did that! Me! I was the champ!

[The shot fades from the arrogant first champion to footage from the Chimpanzee that evening, as Lauryn Rage steps through the curtain to applause. Ricki Toughill glomps on to her in a big, goofy hug. Rage seems momentarily embarrassed, but reciprocates. We can hear Ricki's voiceover.]

RT: I had to make sure that whatever I was going through... I had to forget my disappointment to make sure I was there for her to celebrate. Because Lauryn was there for me in my darkest years. We would joke when we tagging together in sweatboxes and gyms in Southern Ontario that she and I would headline Skydome one day, and... that didn't work out exactly... but, in the moment... it was amazing.

[Cut to current Victoria June.]

VJ: Ah was shocked. Lauryn did it? Age of Rage represent. The AWA was Lynch country. It had its style. Ah didn't think Lauryn would break through. Made me believe ah could do it, too. AH will do it, too!

[Cut to Casey Cash, giddy with excitement.]

CC: I was there that night! It was my reward from my parents for making the Dean's List in the spring semester!

[She sighs happily.]

CC: I just wouldn't shut up about it. It felt like my dream was real, more real than it ever felt before. I begged my daddy to let me train even harder then, and he said

if I could find a school within a reasonable distance of Baltimore, as long as it was a good quality school, he'd pay for it.

[We see a picture of Casey Cash and Kimmy Bailey, marked "FIRST TRAINING DAY - JANUARY 2017".]

CC: We found Shane Destiny's school in Philadelphia, I met Misaki Ishikawa, and I started the same day as Kimmy Bailey - although she tried to pretend she wasn't Michelle Bailey and Juan Vasquez's daughter back then. I found out a couple of months later and FREAKED. OUT.

[She shakes her head.]

CC: It didn't feel real. But it was really real! And every time I think about that night in Madison Square Garden, I think about how I finally felt like I could do this, after years of dreaming. Sitting up there in that seat, watching that Rumble, knowing it was possible. It was such an overwhelming feeling!

[We cut to Hall of Fame wrestler Stephanie Harper.]

SH: I'm sure every fan will have an opinion about who should have won that night.

[She smiles for a moment.]

SH: But when you look at families who are synonymous with women's wrestling, the Rage family has to come at the top of the list. To see Lauryn Rage become the inaugural AWA Women's Champion was only fitting, considering the impact the Rage family has made on women's wrestling. And Lauryn has shown she can more than live up to that family's legacy.

[She gives a quick nod.]

SH: Not only that, but that night made it clear that women's wrestling was here to stay in the AWA. And I told Lauryn that when I visited with her at SuperClash VIII... that I hoped she realized not only how great it was to become the AWA's first-ever Women's Champion, but to win it in a match which showed that women's wrestling had earned its place in AWA.

[Cut back to Lori Dane.]

LD: And that was that. It was over.

[Dane grins.]

LD: But it was really just getting started, yeah? We had the sanction. We had the talent. We had the title. We had the champion. But you don't become the...

[She air quotes.]

LD: ..."hottest division in professional wrestling" by just stopping there, right? By resting on your laurels and calling it a day? No. No way. We had more to do. And everyone knew it.

[Dane pauses with a raised finger.]

LD: But... that's for next time. This show was about the Birth of the Women's Division... and that night in Madison Square Garden, after far too long of a wait, that baby was born.

[Cut to Cannon.]

MC: It seems crazy to stop it right there, doesn't it? We've accomplished so much since then. Our first title match at SuperClash...

[Cut to a shot from the start of said match with Melissa Cannon, Ayako Fujiwara, and Lauryn Rage in the ring.]

RT: Three words. Falls Count Anywhere.

[Cut to a clip of Julie Somers leaping into a Moonsault off the stage onto Ricki Toughill the same night at SuperClash VIII.]

LD: New talent from all over the world.

[We see a promotional photo of Kurayami signing her AWA contract before cutting to a shot of Kayla Cristol.]

KC: Becoming SO hot, we had celebrities wanting to get involved and be a part of the show.

[Cut to a promo photo of Julie Somers and a grinning Gal Gadot...

...and then to Lauryn Rage.]

LR: Medusa getting one more run.

[Cut to a still of Medusa Rage and Kurayami squaring off at Memorial Day Mayhem 2017...

...and then to Laura Davis]

LD: Yours truly debuting.

[...followed by Madame X being revealed as Davis herself the same night. Cut to Lori Dane chuckling.]

LD: My old boss being forced to admit that I was right all along AND put FOUR Women's matches on Eternally Extreme in Philly. Take that, Blue!

[Cut to Michelle Bailey.]

MB: My debut!

[Cut to Ayako Fujiwara.]

AF: The first Iron Woman match.

[To Lauryn Rage.]

LR: The first women's cage match.

[To Julie Somers.]

JS: The first time the Women's Title was the Main Event for a supercard.

[To a smirking Harley Hamilton.]

HH: The first women's Steal The Spotlight.

[And back to Somers.]

JS: To me finally winning that title.

[Cut to a shot of Somers triumphing at last year's SuperClash, holding the World Title over her head.]

JS: We've done... a lot... since the division was announced but...

[She shakes her head.]

JS: In a lot of ways, it feels like we're still just scratching the surface of what we're capable of. You look in that locker room and there's just so much talent from all over the world... you look down in CCW or in Mexico and Japan and Australia and the UK and... everywhere they lace up boots, you hear women talking about this...

[She gestures around her.]

JS: ...this is where they want to be. This is what they want to do. They've got a dream... just like I did and Melissa did and Ricki and Lauryn and Charisma and everybody else...

[Cut to Lori Dane.]

LD: Like I did.

[Back to Somers.]

JS: ...and they want to...

[She chuckles.]

JS: ...live the dream... here... with us... in an AWA ring.

[Back to Dane.]

LD: The women getting the Rumble again this year. This show... this thing we're taping right here and now...

[She shakes her head.]

LD: We've gone from begging for one match on ANY show to being a hot enough commodity that this year, the women are getting their OWN show. Girls To The Front is going to be such a special night... such an emotional night for all of us who've been around this thing since the beginning.

[She pauses, her eyes glistening as she sits silent for a moment.]

LD: Is it weird that after talking to y'all for hours now, I don't know what else to say.

[A voice calls from off-camera.]

"You did it."

[She shakes her head.]

LD: No... no way. We all did it. We got the foot in the door and we got it opened up just enough for a whole lot of girls to kick their way through it. But... you know... that's just the start. I think... I HOPE that the women who come after me... and after Melissa and Julie and Lauryn and... everyone who has come after them... I

hope they don't take it for granted. I hope they understand how hard everyone fought to get them this chance... and I hope they never stop fighting themselves to prove that those women were right. We deserve to be here... and every time they go out there, they have to honor the fight that made that happen... that gave a chance for some little girl at home to say "I want to do that someday" and know that there's a chance for her dream to become a reality.

[Dane nods with a smile.]

LD: So... is that it?

[A voice replies.]

"One more question...?"

[Dane laughs.]

LD: What more could you possibly ask me?

[The voiceover laughs as well.]

"Do you think we'll ever see a women's match as the SuperClash Main Event?"

[Dane pauses, looking thoughtful...

...and we cut to modern day Lauryn Rage.]

LR: SuperClash XI. Bet that.

[To Victoria June.]

VJ: Ah feel like it's only a matter of time.

[We see Michelle Bailey, a finger to her lips in thought.]

MB: Of course.

[She smiles.]

MB: It'll happen. And I bet it happens sooner than people think it will. There is a lot of hungry talent that wants to make it happen. Not just have it handed to them, but go out there and take that spot. We're already seeing the people who grew up watching and wanting to be part of the AWA showing up and making their mark.

[We see a b-roll of Casey Cash, from a teenage fan in the crowd in 2010 to walking to the ring as a wrestler in 2018, behind Michelle's words, then we cut back to the "Platinum Princess".]

MB: Eventually there will be a match people will want to see so badly as the Main Event of SuperClash that it will be undeniable. But it's on you...

[She playfully points to the camera to the people watching, her smile widening.]

MB: ...to let them know!

[Cut to Ricki Toughill.]

RT: I already feel like I've been there.

[Cut to a montage of clips... Ricki shaving her head in the middle of the ring to honor a stipulation at the first "Fight Night on Fox"... earning the fans' respect during the trials of "Free Ricki"... the overwhelming reception to her comeback on the second "Fight Night on Fox"... and emerging triumphant in Atlanta at SuperClash.]

RT: I have my redemption. I can finally say "Mr. and Mrs. Toughill's Little Princess" is doing something great.

[We cut to Sarah Sharpe.]

SS: One could argue that SuperClash IX had two Main Events because it was held in two separate venues. This year, SuperClash X is going to be a two-night event.

[She grins.]

SS: Who is to say there can't be two Main Events then as well, with the women closing out one of those nights?

[She nods her head.]

SS: After all, we already have several women who have caught on with the fans, at a level that rivals the top men in the AWA.

[She grins again.]

SS: Like the woman who once told me, "Sarah, I'm a wrestler, not a manager."

[That's the cue to cut to the current Women's Champion.]

JS: It wouldn't surprise me at all if someday we have the women in a SuperClash Main Event. But for me, as much as I'd love to be in a SuperClash Main Event, what I want to do is be the one who stole the show at SuperClash!

[She's got a big smile at that remark.]

JS: You look at past SuperClashes and you hear about how Jack Lynch or Supreme Wright might not have been in the Main Event, but they were in the match that everyone talked about, the match everyone said was the best match on the card. That's what I want!

[She nods emphatically.]

JS: Don't get me wrong, being in the Main Event is what everyone should want! But when I had people come up to me and say that my SuperClash IX match with Kurayami was the best match on the card, that means the world to me! And it makes me want to go out and have even a better match at the next SuperClash!

[She pauses, perhaps for effect.]

JS: Yeah, I'd love to be in the Main Event at SuperClash, but I want the match that everyone says was the best SuperClash match, Main Event or not!

[And we cut back to Dane.]

LD: I think that the women of this division - the ones who've been and gone, the ones who are here, and the ones who are still to come - have proven that there's nothing that can stop them from achieving their dreams. And if that's someone's dream in that locker room?

[Dane smiles.]

LD: Yeah. Absolutely. And I can't wait to be there to see it happen.

[Fade to black.]