

**UNSTOPPABLE**

Screenplay By

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Based on the book by  
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Artists Equity

1

**INT. CAR - MOVING - PAST (C. 1995)**

1

A child's view of the world, framed by the backseat window. The tops of palm trees glide by, the roofs of low beige buildings. The white Arizona sky.

The car comes to a stop. Out the window, a strip mall.

2

**EXT. BURGER JOINT - CAR - PARKED**

2

Young ANTHONY ROBLES sits in the backseat of a car. In the front, an older man, RICK ROBLES and Anthony's MOTHER, JUDY. Anthony is SEVEN years old. A lighter skinned FOUR-YEAR OLD BOY sits next to him.

Anthony's MOTHER, JUDY, turns to the back, speaking directly to us. She is warm and animated.

JUDY

Who wants hamburgers for lunch?

We hear young kids cheering this decision.

JUDY (CONT'D)

Anthony, cheese on yours and lots of extra pickles, right?

(feigning shock)

What? You don't like pickles?

RICK

Kickoff's in thirty. And hey, tell 'em not to over salt the fries this time.

JUDY

Be right back. Be good for your father.

Judy gets out of the car and hurries into the restaurant. We sit in silence. We can see Judy at the counter. We look around - the sky - the back of the seat - the ONE TINY CONVERSE SNEAKER on the one leg--

Our gaze drifts to the rear view mirror - Rick's eyes boring into us. He adjusts the mirror. Anthony's seven year old face is framed in it.

RICK

Hey, Anthony!

(beat)

I want to tell you something.

Young Anthony looks up at him.

(CONTINUED)

RICK (CONT'D)

You know I'm not your dad, right?

Anthony's eyes go wide. He didn't know, how could he?

RICK (CONT'D)

You're old enough to know that now.  
Because I love your mother, I pay for you  
and act a father to you but you are not  
my son. You understand? Be grateful  
someone is taking care of you. More than  
I had.

Anthony and the toddler are stone quiet.

Pre Lap the voice of Iowa wrestling legendary coach Tom  
Brands as we push in on little Anthony's shocked face.

CROSS FADE. PRE LAP AUDIO.

TOM BRANDS (O.S.)

"In order for me to be successful, or in order for my athlete to be successful, he better be selfish. He better be mean. He better be a dick."

CROSS DISSOLVE TO: 11 years later

Anthony at 18, a steely faced young man, eyes intent, watching the recording we have been listening to:

**INT. GARAGE/ANTHONY'S ROOM - (C.2006-2007)**

In the humble bedroom Anthony shares with his sibling, he does push ups and watches this tape for, by the looks of it, the millionth time... watching intently.

VIDEO SCREEN: scratchy video of wrestling's legendary coach Tom Brands, who gives his unflinching brand of tough love coaching straight into the lens.

The graphic reads *"Tom Brands - Three time NCAA Champion - Olympic Gold Medalist - Wrestling Coach - Iowa."*

TOM BRANDS

"He better be an asshole. It's you or the other guy. Win you live. Lose you die."

SMASH BLACK:

**SUPER TITLE: FINNERAN PAVILION VILLANOVA UNIV. -  
PHILADELPHIA HIGH SCHOOL NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS**

**INT. FINNERAN PAVILION - PHILADELPHIA - DAY**

The face of Mesa High School Coach BOBBY WILLIAMS fills our view. In contrast to Tom Brands he is calm. This is the yin to Brands' yang. He is giving last minute instructions to Anthony. Three fellow Mesa High school wrestlers stand nearby in support of Anthony.

COACH WILLIAMS

This is what you worked for and you deserve this. You've given yourself the opportunity to be a National Champion. Enjoy this moment right now, you will never be here again.

(leans in)

Be patient. Stick to the center and let him come to you. Don't chase-

(CONTINUED)

We SWING AWAY and scan the enormous gym. Roaming searching, BOUNCING FROM IMAGE TO IMAGE.

- CHEERING CROWD. They are all teeth and fists.
- The school banners. Each one a flag. Each section it's own country.
- The nonstop PA splits the air.
- A modern day Roman Colosseum.

COACH WILLIAMS (O.S) (CONT'D)  
- Are you listening to me?

We land on the other side of the gym where we find an ARRAY OF COLLEGE COACHES, including TOM BRANDS (from the video) and stop, lock on.

COACH WILLIAMS (CONT'D)  
Anthony.

Now we see ANTHONY, overwhelmed by the moment.

COACH WILLIAMS (CONT'D)  
Look at me.

No one has ever wanted anything more. Williams takes Anthony's head in his hands, looks in his eyes.

COACH WILLIAMS (CONT'D)  
There is no future. There is no Iowa.  
There is no nothing but this match. Right now.

Anthony nods and gets off the bench. Over the P.A. we hear - *"From Mesa High school in Mesa Arizona, Anthony Robles"*. The crowd cheers as we see him HOP to the center of the mat.

**INT. GYM STANDS - SAME**

JUDY ROBLES, Anthony's mother, beautiful and tough (mid 40s). Hers is a hard face slightly softened by beauty.

A couple HIGH SCHOOL KIDS in the row right below her STIFLE LAUGHTER at Anthony's missing leg. Judy clocks them, looks over.

GIRL 1  
Oh my god! Is that guy missing a leg?

(CONTINUED)

GIRL 2

Is this a joke? Maybe it's a charity sports thing?

GIRL 1

Wait, no...he's really wrestling. I mean is that even fair?

Over the P.A. - *"Wrestlers to the center of the mat"*.

GIRL 2

I'm pretty sure I could beat him.

They laugh. Judy leans in.

JUDY

(to girls)

That's my son.

The girls wither in embarrassment.

JUDY (CONT'D)

You're not gonna cheer?

They're frozen.

JUDY (CONT'D)

Do it!

They start cheering. Loud.

ON THE MAT - ANTHONY AND HIS OPPONENT DUSTIN KEEFE (17) FACE EACH OTHER - LOCK EYES. THE REF BLOWS THE WHISTLE.

CLOSE ON: BODY PARTS. Violence and Desperation. Hands GRIPPING - legs TWISTING - arms SQUEEZING - nails TEARING - eyes shut in effort. An ancient struggle in a modern arena.

ANTHONY - face smashed against the mat, struggling to get the advantage.

CLOSE ON: Keefe's hand slips HALF AN INCH. Quick as a snake, Anthony WHIPS AROUND and throws Keefe. Point Anthony.

COACH WILLIAMS - LIES ON THE EDGE OF THE MAT. HE WHISPERS TO HIMSELF AND WATCHES WITH THE FOCUS OF A SNIPER.

8

ON THE MAT - ANTHONY MOVES BACK TO THE CENTER AND LOOKS AT THE SCORE BOARD - UP BY TWO. HIS EYES FLICK OVER TO TOM BRANDS AND HIS SCOUTS. TOM GIVES HIM A SLIGHT NOD. ANTHONY LIGHTS UP.

8

9 QUICK CUTS: STRUGGLE AND SWEAT AND STRAIN. ANTHONY FIGHTS 9  
EVEN HARDER. KEEFE FEELS THE DIFFERENCE AND IS SPOOKED.

Now, Anthony waits on the mat for Keefe to come to him.

The crowd noise fades into SILENCE.

WILLIAMS

(whispering)

Stay in the center... let him come to  
you... be patient.

ON THE MAT - Anthony EXPLODES toward Keefe. No one saw it  
coming. Keefe is a man caught in a tornado. A FLURRY OF  
FLIPS AND GRABS.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

Ball and chain... ball and chain.

Keefe struggles to his elbows. Anthony reaches under and  
grabs Keefe's wrist, his knuckles go WHITE. He YANKS  
Keefe's wrist and collapses the platform. The ball and  
chain.

He is on top. Three... two... one.

Anthony wins.

The SOUND OF THE CROWD SMASHES BACK IN.

Keefe lies on the mat, eyes staring at the loss he will  
watch in his mind for the rest of his life.

The ref raises Anthony's hand. Anthony throws his arms in  
the air "victory".

Anthony hops to Coach Williams for an emotional embrace.

10 **INT. STANDS - SAME** 10

Judy doesn't look at the girls who were talking about  
Anthony. She walks down toward the floor. The girls stop  
cheering and exchange a look, "holy shit".

11 **INT. FINNERAN PAVILION VILLANOVA UNIV. - LATER** 11

The medal ceremony.

Anthony accepts his national medal. Pure joy.

Anthony watches as Keefe shoots off the podium, joins his  
parents... and TOM BRANDS.

(CONTINUED)



His parents are wearing IOWA JACKETS. Every one congratulates Keefe - the kid Anthony just beat is going to Iowa.

Anthony holds his look to Brands. Brands never even looks his way.

A grand party. The tournaments champions enjoy their fifteen minutes - holding court for various scouts, donors, coaches and university elite.

Anthony's at the buffet. A young CATERER, 20, comes up, and stacks some cups. He's clearly a fan. Anthony pours a cup of punch. He downs it in a shot.

ANTHONY

(off his look)

Hard to hold the punch and the crutches at the same time.

He gets it, nods. Sees his opening--

CATERER

I gotta say, that shit was amazing! So you can totally cash in now, right?

Anthony smiles, he's heard it before.

ANTHONY

Cashing in for me would be a full ride to college.

CATERER

Bro! College is dudes in tights wrestling for free. You need to head straight to the WWE.

ANTHONY

(laughs)

That's not even real.

CATERER

Real? Is a million dollars real? You can have a character. A heroic peg-leg Pete type dude, who comes out and beats the dude's ass with a cane.

ANTHONY

Nah, man, It's all about college, after that wrestling is over for me.

CATERER

Man why do you think people go to college? To *get paid*. You gotta get yourself on TV ASAP. Plus, you see them muscled up wrestling girls?

He laughs.

ANTHONY

I guess I need to watch more Wrestlemania.

CATERER

You do. You definitely do.

Williams approaches.

WILLIAMS

Anthony I want you to meet someone.

The caterer watches them walk off.

CATERER

Watch. I'll see you out on TBS in a hot minute after your first class at college.

**INT. BALLROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

Anthony and Williams spot Judy, at the edge of the ballroom. She doesn't have a dress for a function like this. She never did. She is talking to GARY SHERMAN (40's), as they walk up.

JUDY

Anthony! This is Gary Sherman.

Gary sticks out a hand. Anthony is polite.

GARY

I'm the wrestling coach for Drexel here in Philly. You were very impressive out there.

ANTHONY

Thanks.

GARY  
Fine work, Coach.

They shake.

WILLIAMS  
I deserve no credit.

ANTHONY  
That's not true. No way I'd be here  
without him.

GARY  
We're very excited, Anthony. I want you  
to know Drexel would love to have you.

ANTHONY  
(trying to get it up)  
For real?

JUDY  
What would Drexel have to offer?

GARY  
We would come with the full ride--that  
means everything. Four years, tuition,  
room and board, stipend.

Judy's hand flies to her mouth in shock.

GARY (CONT'D)  
We think you're a Dragon, Anthony.  
Looking forward to giving you the tour.

He hands Anthony a DREXEL LAPEL PIN, expects Anthony to  
put it on. But...

ANTHONY  
Okay. Thank you so much.

He puts the pin in his pocket. There is a moment of  
awkwardness, Anthony isn't as excited as the rest of them  
think he should be.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)  
Mr. Sherman, will you excuse me? I have  
somewhere I need to go.

GARY  
Of course. See you tomorrow.

Anthony kisses his mom on the cheek.

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY

See you at the hotel.

JUDY

Yes, you will. By eleven.

13

CONTINUED:

9.  
13

They watch him move off.

JUDY (CONT'D)  
"Somewhere I need to go..."

GARY  
(to Williams)  
Someone should tell him he won.

Gary is feeling spurned, Williams reaction tells us this was unusual for Anthony.

14

**EXT. PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART STEPS - NIGHT**

14

The building glows in the night. Anthony, dwarfed by the enormous structure, stands alone at the base of the famed "Rocky Steps".

He begins the long climb to the top, working his way up, careful to not let the crutches slip on the ICY STEPS.

At the top, he looks out at the iconic view of Philadelphia and then finds TWO GOLDEN FOOTPRINTS in cement at the top of the stairs - Rocky's footprints.

He puts his left foot on Rocky's. The right one stays EMPTY. He tries to cover both with one foot. No chance.

15

**EXT. ESTABLISHING, AERIAL - DAY**

15

Establishing shot flying high above the airport in Arizona. Purple mountain's majesty and urban sprawl.

16

**EXT. ESTABLISHING, DRIVING THROUGH MESA - LATE AFTERNOON**

16

Over Anthony in a cab, we see how marginalized and underfunded this community is.

17

**EXT. ROBLES' HOUSE - EVENING**

17

A cab pulls up in front of a small three bedroom house. The lawn is DEAD. Three trees are now three STUMPS jutting out three feet from the hard packed ground.

CAB DRIVER  
This where you getting out?

Anthony jumps out. She looks up.

(CONTINUED)

JUDY

Why?

Our driver is the awkward sort, prone to saying things aloud others might not.

CAB DRIVER

You ever see The Lorax?

He finds his remark to be clever. She hands him a bill.

JUDY

You ever see Taxi Driver?

He is uncertain what this means.

JUDY (CONT'D)

Keep the change.

**INT. ROBLES HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER**

The house is clean and orderly. A SHEET doubles as a curtain in the front window. Furniture that came from garage sales or Good Will.

They walk through the door and are immediately set upon by Anthony's siblings.

NICHOLAS (15) Outspoken and playful

JOSHUA "BO" (9) Shy and careful.

RONNIE (7) Strong, like her mom.

ANDREW (6) A happy little guy. The "baby".

They all crowd around Anthony.

KIDS

Where is the medal? / Did it hurt? / Did you have to pee on the plane?

Anthony beams. He loves them and they love him back. He takes the MEDAL out of his pocket and puts it around Ronnie's neck.

ANTHONY

I brought this back for you.

RONNIE

For me?

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY

Yes... wait! You're not Bo. My bad.

He puts it around Bo's neck.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Here you go, Andrew.

BO

(in on it)

I'm not Andrew.

ANDREW

I'm Andrew!

Anthony feigns shock.

ANTHONY

Damn, I been gone so long I don't recognize anyone. I better hold on to this then--

The kids all laugh and clamber for the medal.

JUDY

Everybody gets a turn to wear it, calm down.

This is only mild admonishment, she adores Anthony and the way he treats his siblings.

ANTHONY

All right...but you have to beat me first.

The kids shriek in that terror/thrilled way that is unique to childhood rough housing with older boys. Anthony does mock-WWE moves, elbow drops and suplexes.

JUDY

Where's your father?

NICHOLAS

Went out to get dinner.

JUDY

When?

NICHOLAS

A few hours ago.

Judy all but conceals the frustration that flickers across her face, smiles.

(CONTINUED)

JUDY

Get washed up.

Anthony looks at Judy, from his vantage point at the bottom of the pile of siblings. She has turned away.

RICK ROBLES (40), enters. The same man who told Anthony he wasn't his father in the open. Rick wears a PRISON GUARD UNIFORM (AZ-DOC) and carries bags full of In-N-Out. He sees Anthony playing with the kids.

RICK

No one wants to say hi to me?

KIDS

Hi daddy / In-N-Out! / Hey dad.

Judy gives him a kiss, dutifully takes the food from him, and heads to the table.

RICK

Yes. I got what you need. Cheeseburgers, french fries, milkshakes.

JUDY

It's a celebration dinner for Anthony.

Rick looks at her like she's spoiled it.

RICK

Is that what it is?

ANTHONY

I won the national championship.

Rick is the kind of guy who is handsome and charming and often the center of attention in a room. He has a disarming way of delivering stinging words in a playful, "just fucking with you" way that make a person feel too self-conscious to react to his barbs for fear of being made to look like they can't take a joke--but the words often have real bite.

RICK

How much does that pay? I put food on the table. You ain't won *that* championship. That's what a real champion is.

He smiles --

RICK (CONT'D)

What are you waiting for? Dig in?

They do.



**INT. KITCHEN - LATER**

The table shows all the signs of a messy feast. Anthony is mid-story and the kids hang on every word. Rick, out of his guard uniform, sits to the side smoking.

ANTHONY

-- And he has me around the neck  
 (grabs Bo by the neck)  
 And he's choking me... and choking me  
 (Bo mimes passing out)  
 Then he slipped a little tiny bit and I  
 flipped around and got on top. Flipped,  
 watched the hesitation and used the grip  
 to reverse...  
 (mocks pinning Bo)  
 Pinned him, bang! Ohhhh!

The kids react. Rick seems jealous at the attention Anthony is getting. The words he says are congratulatory but belied by something in his tone.

RICK

Your mom told me about Drexel. Praise the lord, my man. I know you were sweating getting that scholarship. You know people talk a good game about trying to help people like you.

ANTHONY

(on his back, kids on him)  
 I'm gonna keep the options open.

RICK

What? I know I didn't hear that. When you out there in the ocean and someone throws you a life boat you don't "keep your options open." You get your ass in a boat.

(laughs)

Only other reason somebody gets a scholarship is for schoolwork achievement --and you know *that* wasn't it.

JUDY

Anthony has good grades, I don't know who you're talking about.

Rick is irked by his wife's defending her son to him.

RICK

Really? Where's that academic scholarship then?

(CONTINUED)

Anthony and Judy say nothing. Rick feels he's won a major point, evidently this is unusual because Rick is too proud about it. Rick 'mugs' at Anthony, rubbing it in.

RICK (CONT'D)

Oh, I thought so. I thought so.

ANTHONY

(to Rick)

It's only March. The schools don't finalize their rosters until April third. I've been writing to Iowa.

RICK

Iowa?? You can go to school for free! If I had an opportunity like that, I wouldn't be looking up convicts assholes for dime bags would I?

No one answers.

ANTHONY

I don't know. Is that what you're doing now? You might need to wash your hands before you eat.

Rick doesn't care for this.

RICK

Punk ass, I'm trying to help you because I care. It's no joke. Grab-assing kids in some gym shorts don't pay the bills, look around you. You think it's free paying a mortgage, all these kids. How many kids we got, baby?

He picks up Ronnie.

RICK (CONT'D)

Who are you, are you mine?

(to Judy)

She don't look like you, go back to the factory.

He is sweet and kind to the younger kids at times.

RONNIE

Daddy!

RICK

Take her back, baby.

Ronnie squeals. Judy laughs, shakes her head.

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY

I'd love to go to go to Drexel. Just don't want to seem needy, ya know?

On that, Anthony grabs his plate and heads for the sink. Rick follows him with his eyes.

RICK

That's right. Make 'em need you. But also know your weakness. You know if no other girls asking you to the prom, you might think twice about the heavysset honey who gave you her number.

JUDY

Stop it.

RICK

He's a man now. Needs to know man shit.

JUDY

Not your kind.

(to Rick)

Did you get enough to eat?

Rick gets up.

RICK

No white meat left.

(to Anthony, half kidding)

Guess when you go away to school there will be plenty of chicken.

He's laughing but there is a tone under the humor that isn't funny. As he walks to the door...

RICK (CONT'D)

All right. Gotta go to work.

JUDY

I thought you already went to work.

He grabs his KEYS off the HOOK by the door.

RICK

Yeah baby, I wish one job paid the bills. I wish K-Mart paid the bills. See that, I work two jobs to support you and *all these* kids and you don't remember I have to work tonight? If you was working it you would remember. *Bills...*

(to Anthony)

You need to remember that too.

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED: 16.  
19

Rick exits. Judy takes a deep breath, then begins to clear the table.

20 **INT. GARAGE/ANTHONY AND NICHOLAS' ROOM - NIGHT** 20

Anthony lies on the bed as the screen lights up *"The Season - Hawkeye Iowa's Men of the Mat"*. Tom Brands face pops up.

TOM BRANDS  
*"Wrestling is a miniature battle between two guys that both have strong wills..."*

The boys are ready for bed. Anthony drops and bangs out FIFTY PUSHUPS. Nicholas watches. Anthony is his God.

21 OMITTED 21

22 **EXT. MESA HIGH SCHOOL EXTERIOR WALKWAY - DAY** 22

HUNDREDS OF SHOES tromp by the camera. Each one telling a story about the teenager who wears them.

Through the sea of feet we see a FLASH OF CRUTCHES. The feet slowly part as a few people start to CLAP.

The single Nike comes right up to camera then goes right into---

23 **INT. LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS** 23

Anthony enters to find everyone STANDING and CHEERING him. Back slaps as he makes his way through. He's a hero.

A MESA WRESTLER (18) open and friendly, greets Anthony. Teases him.

MESA WRESTLER  
You finally gonna come out and celebrate with us? Now the season's over you can have a beer and stay out past eight, right?

ANTHONY  
Why do you need to judge? Some of us got jobs. And like to win our matches...

(CONTINUED)

MESA WRESTLER

You've got the wrong priorities if you'd rather win at wrestling than drink beer.

ANTHONY

That's what your mom said.

MESA WRESTLER

My mom loves beer.

ANTHONY

Your mom loves wrestling.

As they laugh, Anthony heads over to a bank of lockers that face the showers.

Anthony opens his locker. Inside it's covered with IOWA STICKERS and inspirational post-its "*Win you live. Lose You die*" "*The only pain is the pain of losing*". He looks them over. He's champion now. But why doesn't he feel like one?

**INT. WRESTLING OFFICE - SAME TIME**

The office is a miracle of STACKED PAPERS, overflowing drawers. A smattering of TROPHIES adorn the top of the filing cabinet, a photo of a younger Williams in wrestling gear holding a trophy.

On the desk is a list of Division 1 schools. All but a few have been crossed out. Coach Williams is on the phone, pacing - making his case to the jury.

WILLIAMS

(on the phone)

...it may seem like a risk until you get to---they didn't give him the championship on personality--

As he listens he glances out the window to see Anthony moving toward the office.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

(off Anthony)

-- With respect I've been around college wrestling myself, I am very confident he-- this is a wrestler who would excel at...

(listens)

I'm trying to help you-- Really? You know what, you should be begging me.

He hangs up. Anthony sees him in the window and flashes a big smile.

**INT. WRESTLING OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER**

Anthony enters to find Williams at his desk - waiting.  
Anthony tries to play it cool but he is all nerves.

WILLIAMS

How's it going, champ?

ANTHONY

It's good, it's good. You know, taking it  
in. Thinking about my options.

(then)

Kinda' hard to have your fate in someone  
else's hands.

WILLIAMS

Hereclitus said "A man's character is his  
fate".

ANTHONY

Oh cool, yeah... any word from Iowa?

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Any word from Iowa?

Williams looks at him. A beat.

WILLIAMS

There are other schools besides Iowa.

ANTHONY

There are other medals besides gold, too.

WILLIAMS

Every big college saw you wrestle. Iowa,  
Oklahoma State, Cornell, so far, only  
Drexel has made you an offer. And it's a  
good one.

ANTHONY

The other schools are still finalizing  
their picks, I've been writing Iowa  
directly and they haven't confirmed their  
squad yet.

Williams shakes his head.

WILLIAMS

The school doesn't make the man. The  
school is the people who go there.

ANTHONY

And they have the best people.

(CONTINUED)

WILLIAMS

This year they did. Next year hasn't happened yet.

Anthony gets up.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

You in a hurry?

ANTHONY

I'm running late and I know seniors are supposed to clean out our lockers--

WILLIAMS

(smiles)

Anthony. That locker is retired. No wrestler will ever use it again. So I would say in that regard, you have time.

Anthony gives a tight nod, but heads out. Williams watches him go.

**EXT. SCOTTSDALE MUNICIPAL AIRPORT - NIGHT**

Anthony sits on the wing of a plane while he washes the windows. He scoots back - another window. The roar of a jet pulls his eyes across the tarmac. The plane WOBBLES as it takes flight.

VOICE (O.S)

Work hard enough and one day you can wash the windows from the inside, champ.

Anthony turns to see EDDIE (50s), African-American, Anthony's supervisor. Anthony laughs at the joke.

ANTHONY

All I need is a wing and a prayer. And I thought you were getting us lunch?

EDDIE

I *thought* you worked for me.

ANTHONY

Nah, I *report* to you. I work for whoever buys lunch.

EDDIE

When you're done with this we got a G-650 and two G-IV's you can report to. Some conference for people with airplanes tonight. Going to get hectic.

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY

Don't worry about it.

EDDIE

You sure? It's a school night.

ANTHONY

Yeah, yeah. You know me. I never quit.  
Wing and a prayer, baby, check it out--

Anthony stands on the wing of the plane.

EDDIE

How are you gonna feel if that plane  
crashes.

Anthony considers...

ANTHONY

Mixed?

EDDIE

That's cold. You have no future in the  
window washing business.

ANTHONY

You're supposed to tell me if I work hard  
enough all this will be mine.

He gestures grandly at the tarmac.

EDDIE

Nah. Cessna citation, John Denver.

ANTHONY

No, see, *that's* cold...

Anthony laughs and goes back to the window. Eddie looks  
at him for a long beat. He cares about this kid.

A27

**INT. ANTHONY'S ROOM - NIGHT - LATER**

A27

Anthony is on his bed, "*The Season*" playing softly on his  
TV. He hears... the sound of a MUFFLED ARGUMENT. His  
parents, at it again.

Nicholas turns over, hears the muffled fight. He and  
Anthony exchange a look.

NICHOLAS

Can you turn it up a little?

He does.





ANTHONY

Where's dad?

JUDY

(ignoring that)

Can you or not?

And she's out the door. Anthony follows. And we are on the FRONT LAWN, headed for their cars at the curb.

ANTHONY

Mom, you can't spring stuff on me. I mean, Coach Williams has someone he wants me to meet at ASU today.

That stops her.

JUDY

ASU! Did something happen to Drexel?

ANTHONY

Drexel's good. He said the coach wants to talk to me. It's okay, I can blow it off.

Across the street a shirtless teen, MANNY, 18 is leaning into a dark sedan. He PASSES SOMETHING to the driver. An everyday thing on this street.

JUDY

No no. I'll see if I can get someone to cover.

ANTHONY

Aren't you covering someone's shift?

Judy has no answer. Manny finishes the deal and the car drives off.

MANNY

(calling out)

You the man, yo!

Manny STANDS ON ONE LEG and raises his arms in victory, mimicking Anthony winning the championship.

MANNY (CONT'D)

Sweep the leg! Cobra Kai and shit!

Anthony waves.

JUDY

Don't wave at him! He's not your friend.

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY

It's just Manny.

That snaps Judy's head up, the day's frustrations getting the best of her.

JUDY

"Just Manny." It's Manny and some bullshit you don't need. I know all about the "just Mannys" of the world. Trust me, I know.

Judy takes a breath, collects herself.

JUDY (CONT'D)

I'll get somebody to be with them after school. You don't need to worry.

ANTHONY

It's just that he asked me last minute. Am I supposed to say I have to babysit? How does that look? If you asked me last night I would have moved it. And I can make dinner you know?

(beat)

I heard you cooking at two a.m. You don't need to do that."

JUDY

(covering)

I couldn't sleep, so, cooking helps.

ANTHONY

Why couldn't you sleep?

Judy shakes it off.

JUDY

Anthony, go to ASU, it's fine.

She spins to her car, Anthony to his, walking away from each other.

30

OMIT

30

31

**EXT. ASU CAMPUS - DAY**

31

The campus is a tribute to mid-century and contemporary architecture. Anthony walks through campus, taking in all that money can buy.

32

**INT. ASU WRESTLING GYM - MOMENTS LATER**

32

Anthony enters and steps onto a rubber floor that is deep CRIMSON. Steel beams and air ducts line the ceiling. The far wall is BRIGHT YELLOW with CRIMSON WORDS that cut through the dim light -- "ASU NCAA CHAMPIONS".

It's more than a wrestling gym. The air in here feels charged, sacred.

An unassuming man walks toward him. He could be an insurance salesman, a pharmacist, anything that requires a bland expression. This is SHAWN CHARLES, (40s) ASU wrestling coach.

He walks up to Anthony and shakes his hand.

CHARLES

(serious)

Hello Anthony, I'm Shawn Charles. How about you and I take a walk.

33

**EXT. TRACK - DAY**

33

Anthony and Shawn Charles walk along the track. The empty metal bleachers are a SILVER WALL reflecting the sun. Anthony wonders if he's supposed to say something? Then--

CHARLES (V.O)

I'm gonna tell you a story. A Chinese farmer was using an old horse to till his field. One day, the horse escaped into the hills. The farmer's son was devastated "Without a horse we can't plow. This is such bad luck". The farmer replied, "Good luck? Bad luck? Who knows?" A week later, the horse returned with a herd of horses from the hills and the son says "This is incredible. All these horses. Our lives will be so much easier!" The farmer said "Good luck? Bad luck? Who knows?"--

34

**INT. ASU SPORTS HALL OF FAME BUILDING - CONTINUOUS**

34

ROW UPON ROW OF CHAMPIONS are on display for tourists and squads of kids on field trips.

CHARLES (V.O.)

One day the son was riding one of the new horses and he fell off and broke his leg.

(CONTINUED)

Every glass cabinet is filled with TROPHIES, PLAQUES, TRIBUTES and ACCOLADES. It's like King Tut's tomb in here.

CHARLES (V.O.)

He said, "I'm so sorry father. Now I can't help with the farm." And, the father said, "Good luck, bad luck. Who knows?"

A state of the art basketball arena. Empty. Huge. Holy.

Anthony feels the full power and might of a Division 1 school. Charles' words echo in the vast space.

CHARLES

A few weeks later, the army came and drafted every young man to fight in the war. But the farmer's son had a broken leg, so they didn't take him. The son said "Lucky my leg is broken". To which the farmer said...

ANTHONY

Good--

CHARLES

Exactly.

Charles turns to Anthony.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

I never lie to my wrestlers and I won't lie to you-I have no place for you on this team.

He lets that sink in.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

We recruit very hard. Mostly, we get who we want. Same with the other big schools. If you haven't heard from them by now, you are being strung along. Coach Williams is a personal friend and I agreed to talk to you as a favor to him and out of respect for what you did. So here it is... ASU would not spend a dime on you.

(MORE)

CHARLES (CONT'D)

If you are even considering coming here, the best I could offer you is to be a walk-on and hope you make the team. And that's unlikely given our current recruiting class.

ANTHONY

I'm still waiting on Iowa and, you know, I also have a full ride offer from Drexel so--

CHARLES

If you have an offer for a scholarship I strongly suggest you take it. I admire everything about you and I wish you every success. We're done here.

He shakes his hand.

Charles walks off leaving a stunned Anthony alone in the center of the court.

36        **EST. AIRPORT - DAY**

36

Small planes parked in a line. As if waiting their turn to lift off.

37        **INT. AIRPORT HANGER - DAY**

37

Anthony, in his work clothes, is going through the mail at the FBO desk. The clerk, TAYLOR, chats with him. Anthony rifling through the mail...

TAYLOR

Why don't you get mail at home? Hiding something?--

Anthony spots a LETTER, he whips it out from the pile and walks across the hanger to be alone.

He looks at it. Its THIN. From UNIVERSITY OF IOWA. He tears it open.

(CONTINUED)

## LETTER

"Dear Mr. Robles, I am writing to inform you that you do not qualify for, a scholarship or special consideration for admission as a University of Iowa wrestler. This is the top program in the nation for wrestling and we have made our final selections.  
-Tom Brands"

He looks up, tears welling in his eyes immediately. Even he didn't know how much he had pinned on going to Iowa.

**INT. PLANE - SCOTTSDALE MUNICIPAL AIRPORT - DAY**

Inside the small jet, Anthony is in the pilot's seat, cleaning the controls. Eddie is in the co-pilot's seat, reading the letter from Iowa. Done, he takes a beat...

## EDDIE

I don't know why you wanted to go to Iowa anyway. Going for maximum whiteness?

## ANTHONY

The best college wrestlers in the world go there.

Eddie looks at him.

## EDDIE

Do they?

## ANTHONY

What they say.

## EDDIE

Okay. And you got a scholarship to Drexel.

## ANTHONY

I do. And they want an answer. Or I can walk on at ASU.

## EDDIE

And pay?

## ANTHONY

They have a better program. And better costs.

Eddie nods, he can see Anthony's struggle.



EDDIE

Let me see if I've got this right, it's stay here, and walk on to a team that *doesn't* want you, at a school you can't afford. Or move away and go to Drexel, a school that *does* want you... for free.

That lands. He hadn't thought of it that way.

ANTHONY

(a joke)

Well, when you put it like that...

(then)

Either way, I'm gonna need more hours.

Eddie picks up the intercom.

EDDIE

(on intercom)

Control tower this is Air Robles requesting a fleet of dusty ass planes that need cleaning while this young man makes up his mind. Over.

Anthony laughs, but he feels the pressure too.

**INT. ROBLES HOUSE - NIGHT**

Anthony walks in to see the kids are finishing off the lasagna. At the head of the table is Rick.

RICK

You surprised to see me? I live here.

Anthony drops his head and heads for the kitchen. He doesn't want any trouble.

ANTHONY

Thought you were working, is all.

RICK

I know people expect me to be just working 24/7--but even I get a day off. I was out doing some errands.

Anthony gets a glass of water, his back to Rick.

ANTHONY

I see.

RICK

You do? Did you make this dinner?

ANTHONY

Mom did.

RICK

You ever think that maybe she'd like it if you made dinner once in a while?

ANTHONY

If I want to make dinner guess I'd have to get up at two a.m. to do it.

Rick grins. Gets up and walks to Anthony. A charged silence. They both know why she was up late. Finally, Rick claps him on the shoulder, HARD.

RICK

See, why do you get lippy with me? You fight boys, not men. You want to step into a man's world? You know what they would do to your narrow ass in the pen?

He laughs too hard at this... The kids are quiet.

RICK (CONT'D)

(bragging)

Teach you a lesson like I had to teach a convict last night. Tuned him up good. Real world gets literal. These are the easy lessons I'm trying to teach you.

Anthony holds Rick's gaze. The kids keep their eyes down.

ANTHONY

So the lesson is it's okay to beat on guy who can't defend himself?

Rick steps to Anthony as JUDY WALKS IN THE FRONT DOOR and sees the two men squaring off.

RICK

Those men are locked up because they didn't make the right choices. Remember that.

(stresses like it's real  
wisdom)

*Choices. chooiiccceessss...*

ANDREW

Nobody is in prison by mistake?

RICK

No. Scrappy Doo--they're not. Which one of us works in a prison every day to put food on *your* wise mouth plate?

(CONTINUED)

Judy's heard enough. She steps forward.

JUDY  
(to Rick)  
Stop! You don't need to talk like--

RICK  
Who am I? Your fucking employee? I try to have a nice family evening and have to hear all this bullshit from everybody? In your mind does the world stop moving when you leave the room? Or can someone else have a life? God damn...

Judy wishes she could disappear, wishes her kids didn't see her like this. Rick turns back to Anthony.

RICK (CONT'D)  
And you! Get some humble, son. Respect your elders. They're *criminals* and they broke the rules. Rules keep people safe and they need a real man in there to make sure they don't break them... I keep the population *safe*...

Nicholas holds up his hand like Spock - "Live Long and Prosper".

NICHOLAS  
(trying to lighten the mood)  
*"The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few"*

RICK  
(turns to Nicholas)  
Oh, now you got something wrong with you, too? This generation thinks some dumb ass shit passes for jokes.

ANTHONY  
No... it's from Star Trek-

RICK  
--I know what it is! You disrespect me, you gonna find out the order of shit the hard way. You hear me?

Anthony is stuck, doesn't know how to answer.

RICK (CONT'D)  
What I thought. Get out my face with your wise bullshit.

He reaches in his pocket. Reaches into other pockets.

(CONTINUED)

RICK (CONT'D)

God dammit. Where's my phone!

Rick searches frantically. Everyone's frozen as he rifles through the couch cushions - looks in the kitchen. Judy inches toward the table, a small act of protection.

Ronnie puts Rick's phone on the table.

RONNIE

I just wanted to play a game.

Rick grabs it, scrolls through. Satisfied, he looks to Ronnie.

RICK

Baby girl, don't ever, ever touch my phone. Not ever.

She nods, tearfully. He sweeps a finger at everyone, but lands on Anthony.

RICK (CONT'D)

Respect my space. Respect my things. Are we clear?

(then)

I'm going out with some guys from work. Anthony, clean this shit up for getting wise with me. Next time you want to talk back...

(looks to her)

Or pick up Daddy's phone...

(to Anthony)

*Choices...*

He holds the look. This might be his new catchphrase. He grabs his KEYS off the HOOK by the door and is gone.

Silence. The air is thick with tension.

ANTHONY

(imitating)

"Choices."

The kids snicker.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Why'd he make the choice to wear that shirt?

They laugh, breaking the spell.

(CONTINUED)

JUDY

I'm about to make a choice to eat some  
ice cream. Who's with me?

The kids give a LOUD CHEER and race for the freezer. Judy  
and Anthony share a look.

**EXT. ROBLES HOUSE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS**

Rick is about to get into his car when he hears the kids  
CHEER. He takes it personally, they must be cheering  
because he's gone. He closes his eyes... hates himself -  
hates himself - hates himself.

He turns to go back inside in when his phone BUZZES. He  
reads the text, then looks at the house. Torn.

But the laughter defeats him. We all have demons, and  
Rick's win again. He heads for the car.

**INT. GYM - STEAM ROOM - DAY**

Anthony is in the sauna at the exercise facility, doing  
incline pushups. Sweat pours down his body, which is  
perfectly aligned, his control over his body is  
astonishing and his upper body strength is incredible.

**EXT. MESA VIEW - SUNSET**

Anthony sits, staring out at a vista at a freeway rest  
stop populated by cross country sight seers and tourists.  
He watches the sun burn on the horizon.

On Anthony - he takes the DREXEL LAPEL PIN out of his  
jacket pocket, turns it over in his fingers. He's made  
his decision.

**INT. ROBLES LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - LATER**

Anthony opens the door slowly, and creeps inside. He goes  
to hang his keys up to find the key holder on the floor.  
As he bends to pick it up he sees Judy, on the couch,  
dabbing her nose with a tissue.

JUDY

Hey, baby.

ANTHONY

What happened, mom.

JUDY

Nothing. I'm fine. Are you hungry?

She gets up but Anthony blocks her way. Judy tries to shepherd him out of the living room.

ANTHONY

I'm not hungry. What happened-

JUDY

-Let's go into the kitchen-

Then Anthony sees it -- a HOLE PUNCHED IN THE WALL. It's big and ugly. A scar.

ANTHONY

What happened?

She shakes her head.

JUDY

You know I get tired when I come home and I was in a mood.

He doesn't buy it.

JUDY (CONT'D)

And I accused him of something that turned out not to be true. It was my fault. I shouldn't have said anything. I was wrong.

ANTHONY

Is that a reason to put a hole in the wall?

Judy's facade crumbles, she starts crying.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Mom...

JUDY

(whispers)

He left, Anthony.

Judy drops her head.

Anthony looks at the hole in the wall, the hole in his life. He's not going anywhere.

**ON SCREEN:** The same rough video we saw before. On it, a 44 college age wrestler speaks matter-of-factly to camera.

"THE SEASON" WRESTLER

*"I think wrestling is a good sport. You can break somebody. Break their spirit.*

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

**"THE SEASON" WRESTLER**

*Make them be a different person the rest  
of their life."*

FADE TO BLACK.

**TITLE: FRESHMEN YEAR (C. 2007-2008)****INT. ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY WRESTLING GYM - DAY**

THE CAMERA SLOWLY MOVES AROUND THE CIRCLE OF WRESTLERS  
picking up snippets of conversation as it goes.

We go around the circle until we land on Anthony. Keeping  
to himself, eyes down. The man next to him, BRIAN CORWIN  
(18), is looking at Anthony's missing leg.

BRIAN

You're Anthony Robles.

ANTHONY

I am.

Brian puts his hand out. They shake, as behind them Coach  
Charles strides into the gym.

CHARLES

(calling out)

Have a seat. Listen up.

Anthony and Brian drift to the mat with the others.

BRIAN

(to Anthony)

You going for one twenty five?

Anthony nods.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

So are they.

He nods toward THREE OTHER GUYS across the circle. One of  
them, DORIAN, is already staring down Anthony.

Charles stops center mat. He takes in all the wrestlers  
on the floor around him.

CHARLES

Okay. How many of you were the best  
wrestlers on your high school team?

All hands go up.

(CONTINUED)



CHARLES (CONT'D)

How many of you were state champions?

THREE FOURTHS of the guys raise their hands.

CHARLES (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

And how many took second place.

THE REST raise their hands. Shawn lets that soak in.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

We have fifty five men in here today.  
When I turn in the roster in November  
we'll have thirty three. The rest of you  
will either quit or not be good enough.  
That's just how it is.

(then)

How many of you are walk-ons?

Anthony and fourteen others raise their hands. A sobering moment.

CHARLES (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

So you need to beat out the wrestlers who  
*were recruited*. You need to prove  
everyone wrong just to make the team. You  
feel that pressure? Good. 'Cause if you  
can't take that, you might as well walk  
out the door now, because it gets worse.

(lets that land)

If you're walking around at 133, don't  
try to wrestle at 133, don't even try to  
wrestle at 125. You'll get your ass beat  
by a guy who walks around at 140 and  
dropped fifteen pounds for the weigh in  
then put it back on before the match.  
Push yourself. Harder than you think you  
can. Then go harder than that. Or go  
home, and give your spot to someone who  
wants it.

(then)

Let's go.

The entire team runs on the track. Anthony moving at a serious clip. It becomes a race, guys not wanting to be passed by Anthony. Faster and faster.

Charles watches from the bleachers, taking it all in.

46

CONTINUED:

35A.  
46

He blows his whistle. Off the whistle we --

CUT TO:

47 SEVERAL WRESTLERS are on the field, running through drills with weights. 47

THE REST are running a RELAY RACE. But instead of a baton each man carries a FORTY-FIVE POUND PLATE.

The guys struggle to the next leg of the race and PASS THE WEIGHT OFF. They run/hobble around the track to the next guy. Brian comes huffing up to Anthony and stops. How can Anthony carry it and use his crutches?

Anthony whips off his shirt and loops it through the weight then TIES IT AROUND HIS NECK. He takes off down the track with the worlds heaviest necklace.

Charles watches it all.

Anthony finishes his segment of the race, unties the weight, and hands it the next man.

CHARLES

Three miles. That's twelve more laps, gentlemen!

He blows his whistle and we --

CUT TO:

A48 **OMIT** A48

48 NEXT - THE TEAM HOPS UP THE BLEACHERS ONE STEP AT A TIME. 48  
THEY ARE DRIPPING SWEAT, SLIPPING IN IT. ANTHONY HAS BEEN HOPPING HIS WHOLE LIFE BUT THIS IS SOMETHING DIFFERENT. THE GUYS IN HIS WEIGHT CLASS KEEP LOOKING OVER AT HIM AND HE AT THEM.

The team gets to the top and waits for the last man. A heavy two hundred pounder who gasps up the last step.

CHARLES

(shouting)

Five more times!

They all sag in disbelief. One wrestler pukes. Anthony's already on the move, no slowing down.

49 **INT. LOCKER ROOM - LATER** 49

The team staggers in, beaten. All eyes are on Anthony. They aren't too tired to be impressed by him.

(CONTINUED)

49

CONTINUED:

Anthony opens his locker, grabs his stuff, and heads for the door.

ANTHONY  
(to Brian)  
Nice meeting you.

(CONTINUED)

49

CONTINUED:

37.  
49

BRIAN  
(calling after)  
You sure you don't want to run track?

50

**INT. ASU CAMPUS - WRESTLING GYM - ANOTHER DAY**

50

CLOSE ON: A framed grid hangs on the wall. Every man's name is on it, organized by weight class. Under the 125 column are the names "Dorian" "Kennedy" "Markarian" and "Robles".

WE TURN AROUND TO FIND - The men are paired up. All are frozen in a "ready" stance. Anthony is across from Dorian, one of the four in his weight class.

Coach Charles walks through the paired off wrestlers.

CHARLES  
Today is about balance. Defined as weight evenly distributed so as to achieve equilibrium.

He is by Anthony and Dorian.

CHARLES (CONT'D)  
When something is out of balance, it's not in harmony with itself, it cannot sustain it's own weight.

He looks at Anthony for a beat then suddenly SHOVES DORIAN who goes sailing and lands hard.

CHARLES (CONT'D)  
You take balance for granted.

Dorian gets up, embarrassed, angry.

Charles blows the whistle.

51

SERIES OF SHOTS- ANTHONY AND MARKARIAN IN A DEATH GRIP, GRUNTING AND GRABBING, DESPERATE FOR THE ADVANTAGE. MARKARIAN GRABS ANTHONY AND QUICKLY FLIPS HIM ... SLAM.

51

52

- NEXT ROUND. MARKARIAN STRIKES BUT ANTHONY'S SUPERIOR BODY STRENGTH ALLOWS HIM TO HOLD HIS GROUND. MARKARIAN FAKES AND SWEEPS ANTHONY'S LEG OUT AND CRASHES HIM TO THE MAT -WHAM!

52

53 - ANTHONY IS MAD NOW. HE COLLAPSES DOWN ON THE MAT AND 53  
 MAKES MARKARIAN COME TO HIM. MARKARIAN IS WARY BUT NEEDS  
 TO MAKE A MOVE. THEY LASH OUT AT THE SAME TIME - EACH  
 GRABBING THE OTHERS WRIST. THEY SQUEEZE FOR ALL THEIR  
 WORTH AND IT BECOMES A STAND OFF - WHO'S GRIP IS  
 STRONGER.

- Knuckles turn white - hands turn purple... whistle.

A54 **INT. ASU WRESTLING GYM - MOMENTS LATER** A54

All eyes on Coach Charles as he walks up and ERASES ONE  
 MAN'S NAME from the 175 weight class. In the corner, a  
 WRESTLER slumps to the floor in despair. Anthony and  
 Dorian watch as that man's dreams die, relieved it wasn't  
 them.

54 **INT. LOCKER ROOM - LATER** 54

Anthony opens his locker. Inside is a fresh pack of Post-  
 its. He tears off one and writes "Balance" and sticks it  
 on the locker wall. He grabs his stuff and slams it  
 closed. Dorian blocks his way - a threat? Then...

DORIAN

See you tomorrow.

ANTHONY

Yeah. You will.

They both stand there for a beat, waiting for the other  
 to leave first. After a nod, they both break away.

In the far corner, the wrestler who's been cut slowly  
 empties his locker.

55 OMIT (MOVED TO A54) 55

56 **EXT. PARKING LOT - MORNING** 56

The sun has yet to peek over the horizon. The flat desert  
 is offset by the mountain's silhouette to the north. The  
 mountains are ragged shards jutting from the earth.

WE MOVE DOWNWARD to find--

Williams and Anthony stand beside Williams' car. Anthony  
 simmers.

(CONTINUED)

WILLIAMS

I don't know what you're mad about. He took out your one leg. This isn't high school, everyone's going to do that. Your advantage is you *know* that's what they're going to do.

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY

All I need is another leg.

WILLIAMS

You don't need another one. You just need the one leg to be as strong as two.

ANTHONY

Is that all? How come no one told me?

WILLIAMS

I'm not wasting either of our time. I'm here because I believe in you. If you don't, you are welcome to go.

ANTHONY

You think I don't believe in myself? If I didn't believe in myself I would have been gone a long time ago.

WILLIAMS

You have something to prove. Good. Use that. Prove it to me.

ANTHONY

Okay.

WILLIAMS

(then)

You're going to push this car over that speed bump.

Anthony hands his crutches to Williams and hops to the back of the car. The front wheels are right against the speed bump.

He puts his shoulders into it - No dice.

His back - doesn't budge.

Tries bouncing it - no good.

He can't do it.

A beaten Anthony leans on the trunk of the car.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

It can be done.

ANTHONY

Really?

(CONTINUED)



Williams moves to the back of the car, puts his hands on the bumper, starts to move it forward... glacial progress.

WILLIAMS

Just don't ever let it enter your mind that the car won't move. It's only a question of pressure.

The wheels are halfway up the speed bump now. Williams is really straining now.

The wheels crest the bump and roll down the other side. Anthony is impressed.

ANTHONY

Do it again.

WILLIAMS

Do it once!

But Anthony is already backing away from the car.

ANTHONY

Maybe next time. Gotta save some leg strength. We're all running up The Peak tomorrow.

WILLIAMS

"We"? You're doing it too?

ANTHONY

I am. Charles said I didn't have to but...

WILLIAMS

That's not a trail. It's a cliff.

ANTHONY

I'll be okay.

**INT. ROBLES HOUSE - NIGHT**

Anthony walks in the front door. His eyes land on the KEYS that hang on the hook - Rick's back.

He hears laughter coming from the kitchen. He walks in to find --- Rick. He and Judy are snuggled up close like teenagers.

Anthony is speechless.

RICK

Hey, buddy.

Nothing.

JUDY

Dad's back.

She sends Anthony a message with her eyes "*Go with it*".

ANTHONY

(to Rick)

Where you been?

RICK

Work. And you know, I had to look at my life and my choices. That's what a man does. A real man knows how to apologize too. And I had to appreciate what I had at home. What kind of a woman I have and what *I* need to do to make *her* happy.

To Anthony, this has the feel of the sin and forgiveness ritual that characterizes some cyclical, toxic relationships. To Judy, it's what she's been waiting to hear.

JUDY

Things are going to be better around here. Easier.

RICK

A lot better. Believe that.

He PINCHES JUDY'S ASS and she playfully smacks his arm. He gets up and starts dancing with her, moving around the room.

RICK (CONT'D)

Damn, Mama, you look too good! How come you still move like that.

(CONTINUED)

Judy dances beautifully, there is clearly a chemistry of some kind between them and it is an attention that Judy takes in. She tilts her head back, dancing like a twenty one year old.

JUDY

You can't keep up with me.

RICK

I can try...

This is not how Anthony wants to see his mom. He has had enough and walks out.

**INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT - LATER**

The family is eating around the table. The relaxation when Rick is in a good mood is palpable. Anthony is missing.

**INT. GARAGE - SAME**

Anthony stoically, watches "The Season".

TOM BRANDS

(on screen)

"Pain is a mind set. You have to make pain your friend. You can defeat it if you want. No compassion. No pity. No weakness."

**EXT. THE PEAK - PARKING LOT - EARLY MORNING**

No sun yet. The only light comes from Anthony's car as he pulls into the empty lot. He checks his watch - 5:00am.

Anthony gets out, his breath makes small clouds in the cold desert air. He grabs a backpack and stuffs water bottles into it then walks to the trail head sign - "*The Peak elevation. 2,610 feet.*"

He looks up at the peak - might as well be on the moon.

Anthony heads toward the INCREDIBLY DAUNTING PATH.

The RUBBER TIPS on his crutches instantly SLIP and SLIDE under the cracked shale.



64 CONTINUED: 44.  
64

Charles nods and continues up.

65 **EXT. THE PEAK - SUMMIT - LATER** 65

Top of the mountain. Charles stands in front of the LINE OF WRESTLERS - everyone watching Anthony in silence.

Anthony is weak from the effort, like a runner on his second marathon of the day. His arms and leg are failing. He is bloodied, hurt. The crutches barely clear the ground, but his chin is up. Defiant. He only has one hundred yards to go.

The guys watch in silence as one broken man makes his final ascent.

CHARLES  
(softly)  
Jesus Christ...

Anthony staggers to the top and stops, looking completely exhausted. The guys drift over and clap him on the back. Anthony's hands are LOCKED around the GRIPS. He slowly pulls them off - they're COATED WITH BLOOD AND TORN.

They get it. Anthony wants this.

66 **INT. ASU WRESTLING GYM - NIGHT** 66

Shawn Charles looks long and hard at the grid with everyone's name. He taps a white board eraser in one hand - need to make cuts- need to make cuts-

67 **INT. ASU WRESTLING GYM - NEXT DAY** 67

The guys are working out in the corner, some practicing on the mat. Laughing and talking. The animosity and competition has been replaced by solidarity. BARNHOLD, a 185 lb wrestler, and Anthony jump rope side by side.

Charles walks into the gym.

CHARLES  
Listen up, now.

He stands still until everyone gathers around and waits for him to speak. They know what's coming.

CHARLES (CONT'D)  
The roster is due.  
(a charged silence)  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES (CONT'D)

We have too many wrestlers. You know how this works. Any of you in a weight class with more than three guys will wrestle your teammate for a spot on the team.

It seems like he throws Anthony a look.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

After tonight, some of you will be on the Arizona State University wrestling team. And for some of you, this is the end of that road.

Charles takes in the faces, hopeful, determined, fearful

CHARLES (CONT'D)

We can't choose when we are great. We can only hope to be great when it counts.

(beat)

Hands in.

The team piles there hands in the middle. Charles looks at Anthony, gives him a nod.

ANTHONY

Family on three. One- Two- Three --

ALL

FAMILY!

Anthony looks at Dorian. Dorian's already looking at him.

**INT. GARAGE/ANTHONY'S ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON**

Anthony watches "*The Season*". The sound is turned all the way down, but Anthony knows the words by heart.

ANTHONY

(along with video)

"...pain is a mindset. It's either first or failure."

**INT. ROBLES HOUSE - NIGHT**

Dinner. The newness of Rick's return has worn off. Anthony has a small salad and a tablespoon of spaghetti on his plate. He picks at his food. Rick can't take his eyes off it. Finally -

JUDY

What's wrong?

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY

There's a match tonight. I have to  
wrestle to keep my spot on the team.

(CONTINUED)

KIDS

I want to go / Can I come / me too.

ANTHONY

No, it's not like that. I have to beat one of my teammates to stay on the team.

A quiet moment, Anthony is clearly struggling with this.

Rick flashes a big smile.

RICK

Let's all go. A family outing. We need to see this.

All eyes swivel to Anthony.

ANTHONY

You've never once come to a match before. Why do you want to come now all of a sudden?

RICK

Wouldn't miss it. One thing to take on your enemy, but we need to fight each other to survive, too. That's gonna tell you who you are.

Anthony is disgusted by the appeal of internecine violence by Rick.

ANTHONY

Nah, it's not one to come see.

RICK

It's a celebration for Anthony. We gonna come as a family. Come on, man, you ain't gonna let your family support you?

This is disingenuous but it appeals to Judy's desire to unite the family.

JUDY

Baby you got to let people show they love you. We all love you.

Rick starts piling up food on Anthony's plate.

RICK

Eat up now. How you gonna fight somebody if you don't eat?

ANTHONY

It's not fighting. It's wrestling.

(CONTINUED)



RICK

And I'ma let you in on some secret  
jailhouse shit-- the big guy win out.

ANTHONY

(for the millionth time)

If I go over one twenty five I don't get  
to wrestle.

RICK

Think if I was one twenty five those  
prisoners would respect me? Hell, no. You  
put some weight on you and people will  
notice I'm telling you. Fight is won when  
a man looks you in the eye and sees what  
you're capable of. It's called respect.

Anthony shakes his head, Rick's never going to get it. He  
quickly scarfs up his food and gets up from the table.

ANTHONY

I need to go and get ready. Thank you for  
dinner *mom*.

And he's gone.

**INT. GARAGE/ANTHONY'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

Anthony sits on his bed, putting gear into his bag,  
Andrew comes in. Sits on the bed next to him.

ANDREW

Hi, Anthony.

ANTHONY

Hi, buddy.

ANDREW

You're going to win. I know it. Nobody  
can beat you.

Anthony smiles at the sweet hero worship of his sibling.

ANTHONY

We'll see. He's tough. And he's naturally  
bigger than me.

(beat)

And I'll tell you a secret I been  
hiding... I only got one leg-- he has  
two!

(CONTINUED)

ANDREW

That don't mean shit!  
(catches himself swearing,  
covers mouths)  
Don't tell mama!

He smiles.

ANTHONY

We're good. Me and you can talk like that  
in private.

ANDREW

He can't beat you! No one can beat you!

ANTHONY

Everybody got somebody who can beat 'em.

ANDREW

Not you!  
(dead sincere)  
I'll tell you a secret. At night when I  
say my prayers, I tell God to take away  
my one leg if I can be like you.

Andrew looks up at Anthony, who realizes the power of  
what he carries, what he means is less about himself than  
all the people in his life who count on him.

ANTHONY

You don't need to do that. You gonna be  
plenty strong with both legs.

Andrew throws his arms around Anthony in a big hug. Holds  
him for a long time.

ANDREW

(whispers)  
I like living here with you. Don't tell  
nobody. You're my favorite. I love you.

On Anthony's face as his heart melts a little.

Anthony heads for the front door. His family is at the  
kitchen table, finishing dinner. Andrew is on Rick's lap.

ANTHONY

Okay. I'll see you guys there-

The phone in the kitchen rings.

JUDY

Will you grab that, honey.

Anthony picks up the phone. He is facing the wall, his family behind him.

ANTHONY

Hello?

VOICE (O.S.)

Is this the home of Rick Robles.

ANTHONY

Sure.

VOICE (O.S.)

I won't bother asking if he'll come to the phone. He's been avoiding me all week. Give him a message - when you get fired you have to take your shit with you or it ends up in the trash.

Anthony is speechless.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Got that?

ANTHONY

Yeah I -

The caller hangs up.

RICK

Who was it?

He turns and looks at all of them. The family his mom is always fighting to save.

ANTHONY

Uh... assistant coach... making sure I'm on my way.

RICK

Better get that ass in gear then. You want respect you show up first.

Anthony holds his gaze for a beat. Sees the hypocrisy in all the bluster, lecturing Anthony to feel better about his own shortcomings.

ANTHONY

(beat, to family)

See you there.

72

**INT. ASU LOCKER ROOM - LATER**

72

The guys are somber. Focused. Staying loose and not working too hard. The ones who don't have to wrestle tonight hang at a distance - giving the other guys space.

Anthony dresses next to Dorian.

DORIAN

Hey. It's nothing personal.

ANTHONY

Let's not lie to each other.

DORIAN

Yeah.

(beat)

I'm gonna go hard at you-- so you know.

ANTHONY

Me too.

And with that, they walk off.

73

**INT. ASU WRESTLING GYM - LATER**

73

Williams enters and sits with a few wrestlers from Mesa. The big guys are on the mat. The wrestlers are gathered behind Charles. Charles eyes the mat, all focus.

CHARLES

Robles. Dorian.

ON ANTHONY: All nervous energy as he walks to the center of the mat. He looks at the crowd - scanning - until he finds RICK and JUDY and the KIDS - all in the front row, sitting in a line. Rick is playing with the kids - tickling them - performing "*loving father*".

Anthony stares at Rick. Seething. Hurting. Betrayed.

Anthony snaps out of it and stands. As he does, the crowd goes nuts. He is a favorite and everyone is pulling for him.

ON THE MAT - Anthony and Dorian face off. Dorian is confident, a steely eyed killer.

THE WHISTLE BLOWS - Anthony lunges forward, a wild take down attempt that goes no where.

Williams shakes his head "No no no".

(CONTINUED)

ON THE MAT - They grapple. Each trying to get the upper hand. Anthony's on Dorian's back. Dorian quickly slips out. Anthony is already looking desperate. He lunges again and Dorian slips to one side.

SCOREBOARD: 0-0

ON WILLIAMS and a few guys from ANTHONY'S high school team - *"it's not going well"*.

ON THE MAT - The ref flips a coin for the second period. Dorian wins and chooses top. Anthony's eyes flick to Rick who simply stares back --

The whistle blows - Dorian is slowly taking Anthony apart - piece by piece. Anthony is nothing more than a spectator at his own destruction.

Charles is unreadable.

Dorian gets Anthony in a front head cover - trapping Anthony's head under his chest. This is an endgame move. He jams a forearm into Anthony's neck as he squeezes-squeezes - squeezes.

Everything gets BLURRY for Anthony. The bleachers, the mat, his family - all blurry - but Rick stays SHARP. Disgust and disappointment etched into his face. The world fades until Rick is only thing Anthony can see.

Dorian whips his leg around and pins Anthony to the mat--

The ref slaps the mat -- It's over.

- Judy and the kids are shocked.

- Coach Williams, trying not to show his disappointment.

- Charles confers with the ASU coaches, making notes.

- Anthony, looks around, helpless. Lost. No idea what happened.

Anthony walks in the front door. He is shell shocked. The kids are in bed. Judy and Rick watch TV.

Anthony says nothing and walks in front of the TV on his way to his room. As he passes, Rick turns off the TV.

Silence.

ANTHONY

I just want to go to bed.

RICK

What was that?

ANTHONY

I had on off night

RICK

An "off night"?

Anthony's had enough, turns to him.

ANTHONY

That's right. Now I'm going to lose my spot on the team.

RICK

Who told you to go to ASU in the first place?

Anthony glares at Rick. This cannot be happening.

RICK (CONT'D)

Told ya you should have gone to Drexel.

ANTHONY

What did you say?

Rick stands and his voice raises with him

RICK

You heard me. You have put everyone under a lot of pressure because you wanted to wrestle. And maybe now that that's over you can get serious about life. Get a job. Help out around here. I can't do everything.

There are tears in Anthony's eyes now. The tears that can only come from a profound injustice.

Around the corner of the hallway, Bo and Ronnie, huddled together, hearing it all.

ANTHONY

You want to tell everyone why you're really here or should I?

Rick sees that Anthony knows.

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Why you're playing with the kids? Why you suddenly want to see me wrestle?

JUDY

Rick... what's he talking about.

RICK

I quit my job.

ANTHONY

Not what I heard.

Rick whirls on him.

RICK

You shut your mouth.

(to Judy)

My boss and I disagree on what needs to be done. I say the inmates need one thing and he says they need another. But I'm the one on the floor! I'm trying to get *results* and they don't like that. Makes them look bad. I can't work like that.

JUDY

Why didn't you tell me?

RICK

Because I didn't want this! I didn't want you to get upset.

JUDY

We are barely getting by.

RICK

That's why it's time for Anthony to pitch in.

ANTHONY

Time for me to pitch in? I work, I do hours at school for credit. I watch the kids, *your kids!* How can I do more than I am?

RICK

You said it yourself, wrestling is done.

ANTHONY

I bet that's just what you want. Should I quit school too? Follow in your footsteps?

(CONTINUED)

Anthony can hear soft crying in the hallway, Bo and Ronnie.

RICK

Look player, you want to be bad? You want people to say how good you are? You need to hear the truth. You got flexed like a woman, on the bottom too. I'll be honest the shit was embarrassing.

Anthony holds his rage in.

RICK (CONT'D)

Your prideful ass passed up the one chance you had for a free ride. Do I hear, "Yes Rick, you were right?" No. Because that's not the kind of character you have.

ANTHONY

Someone had to stay here in this house. I'm not gonna leave them like that. *That's* the kind of character I have.

Rick goes cold. Moves toward Anthony.

RICK

Oh you want to talk shit 'cause you're a wrestler? I don't play wrestling games. I'll Floyd Mayweather your ass back on the canvas.

JUDY

Rick, please... that's enough.

RICK

Do you want your son to disrespect me? Is that why I don't hear shit from you? Do you want him to learn some consequences? I'm trying to teach the boy the right way but he can learn the wrong way, too--

JUDY

I will not let him quit wrestling and I will not let him quit school.

RICK

(to Judy, quiet)

Oh, are you going to get a real job now? And you're gonna tell me what to do? You better think about what you have and if you want to keep it.

(CONTINUED)



The only sound in the house is the sound of the sniffles down the hall.

RICK (CONT'D)  
(shouting down the hall)  
GO TO BED!

Judy looks at the floor - frozen.

ANTHONY  
Mom?

She doesn't look up.

JUDY  
(softly)  
Go to bed, Anthony.

Anthony turns and heads into his room, slamming the door behind him.

75

**INT. COACH CHARLES - OFFICE - DAY**

75

Charles is at his desk. Anthony in the chair across from him.

CHARLES

What happened?

Anthony struggles with the question, chooses the truth.

ANTHONY

I had some personal issues. I let that affect me.

Charles appreciates the honesty.

CHARLES

They say the greatest warriors in history were the horseback warriors in ancient Tibet. They destroyed every enemy they came across until it became obvious they'd never be defeated. They chose to become peaceful and spend their lives in Buddhist meditation as monks, choosing to better themselves rather than fight others.

ANTHONY

Wait... you think I should become a monk?

CHARLES

In a way. Because the monks realized their greatest enemy wasn't the opponent. It was the self.

Anthony - no idea where this is going.

ANTHONY

Uh...Buddhist monks begged in the streets for food, too.

CHARLES

Yeah, but they did that because the community believed the monks were doing the spiritual work on their behalf and felt obliged to fill their bowl. Everybody wins.

ANTHONY

Are you saying I should become a monk now and start begging? These stories always equal you showing me the door. I'm cut right? I know I'm cut.

(CONTINUED)

Charles suddenly realizes he's not explaining this well.

CHARLES (V.O.)

What? No! You just said you had personal issues so I was telling you a cool story about Tibetan warriors and how it relates to---

(cutting to the chase)

I'm moving Dorian up to one thirty three.

For a second, the world stops turning.

CHARLES

And, I'm keeping you at one twenty five.

Anthony can't speak.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

And, it's not a gift if that's what you're thinking. Dorian's built for one thirty three. One twenty five costs him strength. He'll do great. You lost a match. I can live with that if you can.

Anthony nods.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

(then)

Congratulations. You made the team.

Off Anthony-- a second chance.

**INT. ROBLES HOUSE - NIGHT**

Anthony comes through the front door excited to share the news about making the team. The house is quiet. Judy is putting dishes away.

ANTHONY

You don't have to worry about my future anymore. I have a plan.

JUDY

Is that right?

ANTHONY

Did you know there are people who only live in monasteries and go around begging for food all day and meditating and they believe they are doing it for the benefit of others?

JUDY

I know a few people like that.

ANTHONY

That's my plan. Become a monk.

JUDY

Something tells me that's not gonna last.

She smiles.

ANTHONY

Charles is moving Dorian up to one thirty three.

JUDY

What does that mean?

ANTHONY

It means even though I lost, I get to keep my spot! It means I made the team! It means--

He stops. Right above Judy's elbow is an UGLY BRUISE in the shape of finger prints. She sees him see it and crosses her arms, covering it.

He looks at her. She is holding him to a level of maturity. He wants to hold her to the same. She looks back at him with a combination of sorrow and hard years.

(CONTINUED)

JUDY

You know Anthony, no matter how many words you use, sometimes you just can't explain life to your children.

ANTHONY

Or, maybe you could. But you don't want to. Because you don't like what you would say.

At that moment something in Anthony hardens. Slams shut.

77           **INT. WRESTLING MONTAGE COVERING FRESHMAN SEASON - DAY**           77

Anthony's face SLAMMED onto the mat- Something about it fuels him. He stands and looks at his opponent, a PENN STATE WRESTLER. It occurs to Anthony that he isn't hurt at all, a small smile.

77A           THE PENN STATE WRESTLER GETS HIS FACE SLAMMED NOW.           77A

77B           AN OREGON WRESTLER GETS- A SERIES OF BODY BLOWS - THE MAT 77B  
BECOMES A RELENTLESS FIST THAT PUNCHES HIM - ANTHONY  
CRUNCHES AND SMASHES HIM OVER AND OVER AND OVER.

Anger is his God now. And he is feeding it.

77C           INSERT: FLO WRESTLING WEBSITE. Every stat, pin, and vide 77C  
in the nation. Each weight class has a list of names  
below it. Finish in the TOP THIRTY THREE you go to  
Nationals, fall below you go home. We will watch  
Anthony's name drift above and below that red line over  
the course of the season... Anthony is ranked twenty-  
ninth

77D           The student "Suncat" paper reads "**ASU PINS ITS HOPES ON 77D  
ROBLES**" along with a photo of Anthony wrestling--

77E           Anthony, in a sauna. Baking. He slowly wipes the sweat 77E  
off his body with a credit card. Every little bit counts.

77F           ON ANTHONY- his face is set in a scowl. His teeth are 77F  
clenched in rage. Widen to see Anthony has been pinned by  
a NORTHWESTERN WRESTLER.

77G           BELOW THE RED LINE - thirty-fifth.           77G

77H Anthony has finished his lunch and gets off the steps of 77H  
by a campus monument. The WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL TEAM passes  
by. The CAPTAIN, trots over and shakes Anthony's hand  
followed by "prayer hands" and deep bowing. They both  
laugh. He's becoming famous.

77J Dawn. FOUR WRESTLERS, carrying gear and to-go coffee 77J  
cups, shuffle into the gym. As they step inside they see  
Anthony on the arm bike, covered in sweat, he's been here  
for a while. Three roll their eyes and peel off to the  
locker room.

WRESTLER

You're making us look bad!

Anthony looks up.

ANTHONY

You're making you look bad.

77K ABOVE THE RED LINE - twenty-eighth. 77K

77L Anthony weighs himself. Willing the sliding weight to go 77L  
a bit lower - 131 lbs.

77M Another dawn workout. Anthony does pull-ups with 77M  
machinelike intensity - a forty-five pound plate hanging  
from his waist.

We WIDEN OUT to see there's now a HALF DOZEN WRESTLERS  
working out with him.

77N OMITTED 77N

77P BELOW THE RED LINE - thirty-eighth. 77P

77Q Night. An empty gym. Anthony, wearing sweats and a 77Q  
beanie, runs through a series of wrestling moves over and  
over to drop weight.

77R CLOSE ON: THE SCALE - 124 LBS. 77R

77S ANTHONY SLOWLY PUSHES THE CAR. WILLIAMS WATCHES HIM. 77S

77T We can't hear but it looks like Charles is telling 77T  
Anthony to calm down. But instead, Anthony hops up and  
down, yells out at the air like LeBron. Anthony springs  
at a NORTH CAROLINA WRESTLER, pins him. He hops up--  
MOBBED AND CONGRATULATED by his teammates.

77U Anthony's finger tapping the scale weight... 125 lbs. 77U

(CONTINUED)

77S CONTINUED: 59A.  
77S

77V He's ON THE RED LINE. He cannot lose. 77V

77X AN OKLAHOMA WRESTLER remains calm as Anthony wails on 77X  
him, but he slips... and the OKLAHOMA WRESTLER PINS  
ANTHONY QUICKLY. Charles looks unsurprised.

CLOSE ON: Anthony's eyes fill with tears of rage. His  
eyes take us to--

78 INT. ASU WRESTLING GYM, BULLETIN BOARD - NIGHT 78

WE WIDEN to see wrestlers passing behind him. They pat  
him on the shoulder, offer condolences "Better luck next  
year" "Good try" "Hang in there".

(CONTINUED)

- WE MOVE AROUND to reveal what he's looking at -- The final score grid. The last column "Nationals". Next to Anthony's name is a RED ZERO WITH A SLASH through it. He didn't make it.

Charles is there.

CHARLES

You know why you lost right?

ANTHONY

Because I got pinned.

CHARLES

Because raw talent and anger only get you so far.

CUT TO BLACK

**TITLE UP: SOPHOMORE YEAR (C.2008-2009)**

ON VIDEO: A series of shots from "The Season"

- A seven year old boy, JIMMY, in wrestling gear.

JIMMY

*"You gotta be reeeel mad."*

- A different COACH leans over and screams at a WRESTLER who is on the floor - his face in his hands.

COACH

*"You got hurt? Fine. You failed that's why. It's your fault. It's your fault. It's your fault."*

OMIT

TIME LAPSE

The sun rises over the ASU campus.

**EXT. ASU CAMPUS - TRACK - DAY**

Anthony's walking in front of the bleachers heading to practice. A fellow wrestler, WALKER and a FEW OTHER WRESTLERS, head down the bleachers toward him.

WALKER

Amazing, right. The balls on these guys.

(CONTINUED)



ANTHONY

What?

WALKER

You didn't hear?

ANTHONY

Hear what?

TRACK TUNNEL - We don't hear what they tell him. We see the other wrestlers exit as behind them Anthony slumps in defeat.

**INT. COACH CHARLES' OFFICE - LATER**

The tiny room is packed with wrestlers all shouting in indignation.

CHARLES

(yelling)

Quiet!

(then)

Yes. They cut the wrestling program. This year, at least, there will be no wrestling season.

Loud verbal objections and protests from the team.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Hey. Hey!! I know this is hard. But the fact of the matter is we don't make the school any money. Football brings in millions. I don't like it any more than you men. But it's the way of the world.

Shock rolls through the room.

Charles has been here before. He bites down on years of fighting a battle he can't win.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Might as well learn now. If you don't make people money, you're always beholden to someone. Every time. I tried my best to prevent this but-- I let you down. I'm sorry.

It's settling in, this is real.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

I've reached out to some donors and I'm hoping to hear back soon. I've also contacted other schools to see if they have room for some of you on their roster.

He's clutching at straws and they all know it.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Meanwhile, your academic year continues and I suggest you not use this as an excuse to lose focus. Each of you is here to get a degree. That's what matters.

For Anthony, the bottom drops out of the world.

**EXT. ROBLES HOUSE - NEXT MORNING**

The sun is barely out but the day is already heating up.

**INT. BATHROOM - MORNING**

Anthony braces himself against the sink. Trying to find the strength for another day. He's had losses before but this...

He blows his nose, puts the tissue in the trash -- then stops. He pulls out a BAND-AID with a COTTON BALL that has a SINGLE SPOT OF BLOOD on it. He digs deeper-- finds another one... and another.

**EXT. BACK PATIO - MOMENTS LATER**

Judy sits at the patio table. She has a weariness we haven't seen before. She spots something in the yard and stands, reaching out to steady herself.

(CONTINUED)

OUR POV: Anthony, by the dining room table, watching her intently.

The sun is bright. It's hot. Magnifying glass hot. Judy is in a line of people from all walks of life. The sign on the door reads "*Red Cross - Blood Donation*".

Judy is having a hard time staying on her feet - the sun - the heat. A car pulls up next to her on the sidewalk - Anthony! She sees him and for a split second looks around for somewhere to hide - anywhere.

He walks up.

ANTHONY

Mom. What are you doing here?

JUDY

I'm helping. They need blood and --

Anthony spins toward the door. She grabs his arm.

JUDY (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

ANTHONY

To get someone fired. They've been letting you come here everyday!

JUDY

(quietly)

I go to different locations.

ANTHONY

For how long? How long have you been  
doing this?

People are starting to look now - making a scene - who is  
the guy harassing this woman?

JUDY

(scrambling)

I just... I do this sometimes...without  
him... we need it.

We get that Rick is gone. Again. Anthony shakes with  
frustration - anger - shame.

She pulls him toward the car.

JUDY (CONT'D)

Let's go. Let's go Anthony.

**INT. ANTHONY'S CAR - MOVING - LATER**

Anthony and his mom ride in silence. On the radio we  
faintly hear news about the mortgage crisis.

One TEAR rolls down Anthony's cheek. He swipes it away  
before she can see it.

She saw it anyway.

One of her own rolls down her cheek.

**INT. GARAGE/ANTHONY'S ROOM - DUSK**

They sit on Anthony's bed.

JUDY

They can't close the program like that,  
baby.

ANTHONY

They just did. Like that.

JUDY

Well, you've got a lot of options.

Anthony shakes his head. They both know that's not true.

ANTHONY

For a walk-on who didn't make Nationals.  
Oklahoma needs someone at one twenty five-  
-but it ain't free.

(CONTINUED)

JUDY

-- You should go.

ANTHONY

Who's gonna help you? Watch the kids?

Judy releases a practiced smile that has become less convincing with time.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

(softly)

It's just a sport, mama. It doesn't put food on the table.

JUDY

Anthony. We will be fine. I want you to go where you need to go. Wrestling is who you are.

ANTHONY

Maybe not.

JUDY

A dreamer is only as big as the dreams they chase.

ANTHONY

I gotta grow up someday.

(beat)

He wasn't wrong about everything.

He smiles, tries to console her.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

This gives me a chance to make some money. I'll keep training at the gym. Then I'll try and transfer next year. I have two years of eligibility left. I will keep wrestling.

JUDY

Do you promise? Say it.

ANTHONY

I love you.

She holds back tears.

JUDY

I love you more than you will ever know.

90           **INT. ASU WRESTLING GYM - NIGHT**

90

Anthony, a lone figure in a room of long shadows. He's cleaned out his locker, has an armful of gear. He hears a voice - faint, but intense. The voice pulls him to--

91           **INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER**

91

Anthony peers around the door of the office. Coach Charles is on the phone. Anthony's never seen him like this.

CHARLES

Listen to me... listen to me, okay.... I think you guys are making a big mistake... a big--

(listens)

I've studied your program. Peoria High School has a good team, and I think I could bring a lot to your-

Charles drops his head, he's losing this.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Yes... ASU is D1. I get that I might seem overqualified...

(listens)

But if you...

(listens)

Thank you for your time.

A ragged breath escapes from Charles. He stares at the phone, angry, helpless. Sensing someone, he turns to see Anthony. He quickly tries to compose himself, swipes his eyes.

ANTHONY

Sorry... I was just cleaning out my locker.

Charles pastes on a smile, tries to recover. Somehow it's even sadder.

CHARLES

Oh sure! Yeah, okay. Good to see you.

ANTHONY

You too.

Anthony backs out and moves down the dark hallway.

92

**EXT. AIRPORT - DAY**

92

Anthony approaches Eddie in the setting sun.

ANTHONY  
(making light)  
Looks like you're stuck with me full  
time! Lunch is on me.

EDDIE  
(knows how hard this is)  
We're lucky to have you.

**JUNIOR YEAR - C. 2009-2010**

93

**EXT. STREET - ROBLES HOUSE - DAY**

93

Anthony pulls up to his house. A large car is parked in front and on the driveway his mom is YELLING at a MAN in a suit. His siblings watch from the porch. Except for Andrew who has crawled up onto the stump.

Everyone in the neighborhood is on their lawn watching.

He hears the conversation as he gets out.

JUDY  
But you need to make sense. You're not  
making any sense-

MAN  
I don't have another way to say it. He  
wasn't-

Anthony is on the lawn now.

ANTHONY  
What's going on?

MAN  
I'm Bennett Karobedian from Harper  
National Bank. As I was explaining to  
your mother-

JUDY  
Go inside Anthony, I can handle this-

BENNETT  
- You are six months behind on the  
mortgage.

ANTHONY  
How?

(CONTINUED)

BENNETT

By not paying it. And, I am required by  
the bank to post this on your door.

He holds up a paper that reads "Foreclosure/Eviction".

ANTHONY

(to Bennett)

You said no payments in six months. None?  
Not even partial payments?

He shakes his head "no".

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

(to Judy)

Where is he?

JUDY

He's not answering.

BENNETT

You have ninety days to vacate. I was  
supposed to be here with a police officer  
to serve you but---

(gestures at Anthony)

You wrestle with my nephew. Ian  
Tallarico?

Anthony nods. This couldn't be worse.

BENNETT (CONT'D)

I'm required to post this but--

He goes to hand the eviction paper to Anthony. Judy  
snatches it from his hand and starts TEARING IT UP.

JUDY

Get out. Leave my property right now. I  
do not grant you permission to be here--

BENNETT

Ma'am.

JUDY

I will call the police. You are  
trespassing, I do not know you and I need  
you to leave *right now*.

Judy is holding it together but on the very verge of  
coming undone.

JUDY (CONT'D)

Go. Now!

(CONTINUED)



Anthony looks away to see the neighbors drift back inside, eyes cast down.

Anthony walks into the bedroom to find Judy ripping Rick'S CLOTHES out of the closet, the drawers, and slamming them into boxes. Both of them panicked, overwhelmed.

ANTHONY

Mom! Stop it! What are you doing?

JUDY

How could I not know he wasn't making payments?

Pounds clothes into a box.

ANTHONY

You tell me! You're supposed to be the adult!

Judy barely registers him as she cycles through the rage.

JUDY

How could I not know?!?

(slams clothes)

He said he was paying the mortgage!

He said he would take care of it! He said he had two jobs! Does he?

(slam)

What's he's been doing with the money?

Throws the box to the floor, grabs another.

JUDY (CONT'D)

All this time making me think he was... making me feel stupid for *even asking!*

(more clothes)

And I just stood by...

And there it is. The truth.

She hears it as it comes out of her mouth. Her part in all of it. It stops her in her tracks.

ANTHONY

Mom?... MOM!

That pulls her out. He puts his hands on her shoulders.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

(pointed)

You have to find a way out of this. And until you do, don't call him. Don't text him. And don't answer if he does.

She nods. Lost as a child.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Promise. Say it.

JUDY

I promise.

Anthony's had enough, walks out. Leaving Judy to survey the wreckage of her life.

**INT. GARAGE/ANTHONY'S ROOM - NIGHT**

Anthony is asleep. He opens his eyes and hears soft whispering behind him. He turns to find his mom, on her knees, quietly praying beside Nicholas's bed. After a moment she stands. Anthony turns his head away from her.

He can hear her kneel behind him. After a moment.

JUDY

(softly)

Heavenly Father, help me to be the mother he needs. Give me the strength to...

(beat)

Grant that we may---

(lost)

--I need new words. I've used the old ones too many times...

(breaking)

...this one... this one makes me so proud. Just give *us* strength, Lord. We need help and it has to be *right now*. Not because I deserve it, but because he does. They all do. But Anthony...

(she starts to cry)

I don't want life to be so hard for my little boy. Please, Lord. Don't forget about him. That's all I ask.

(beat)

Amen.

She gets up and quietly walks out.

97 OMITTED

97

98 **EXT. ASU CAMPUS - QUAD - DAY**

98

Anthony is doing homework on campus. SOLIS, a fellow wrestler, trots up to him.

SOLIS

Yo, you hear there is a meeting about wrestling?

ANTHONY

When?

SOLIS

Right now.

ANTHONY

Everyone?

SOLIS

Coach wants to talk to you.

Anthony gets up and heads toward the gym, confused.

**INT. COACH CHARLES OFFICE - DAY**

Anthony walks in to find Charles, feet on the desk, staring at the ceiling.

ANTHONY

You wanted to see me?

He takes his feet down. Faces Anthony.

CHARLES

Yes, I do.

Anthony waits.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Sit down Anthony.

He sits. Charles nervously rubs a small coin between his thumb and forefinger. He holds it out to Anthony.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Hang onto this for me.

ANTHONY

Okay?

CHARLES

(a sad smile)

Do you remember when we met? Seems like yesterday we were walking around and I was telling you...

The sentence dies. Anthony is spooked.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

(dives in)

Art Martori, owns Sunkist Foods, he used to wrestle here and he's taking losing wrestling personally. So personally, that he and some other alumni have pledged money to get the program started again. That's the good news. I've talked to the rest the team because there were several conditions placed on them.

ANTHONY

You already talked to everyone else?

CHARLES

I did.

Charles nods. This is starting to feel bad.

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY

So what's the bad news?

CHARLES

It means a reduction in spending and less money overall for the program. Less money equals less wrestlers.

(nods at Anthony)

Even wrestlers who aren't on scholarship cost money. We can't keep everyone.

Anthony sees where this is going.

ANTHONY

I understand.

CHARLES

However, one of the wrestlers refused to come back unless you were on the team.

ANTHONY

What?

CHARLES

But, for you to be on the team, every scholarship athlete would have to agree because they'd get less.

(beat)

So, two jars, pro and con. Everyone on scholarship got a vote, and it had to be unanimous.

Charles reaches behind him for jar.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

I know this sucks but it had to be this way.

He turns the jar upside down. Not a single coin. Anthony sags.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Oh shit...wrong jar!

He upends the other jar. DOZENS OF COINS pour out. Anthony is stunned. Anthony starts to tremble a bit, the door opens behind him and THE WHOLE TEAM IS THERE, they flow into the room. For a second, Anthony doesn't understand.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Oh, and I lied, it wasn't one wrestler, it was all of them.

(CONTINUED)

WRESTLER

We didn't just vote to keep you on the team. It's for a full-ride. Either that or no one is coming back.

Anthony's overwhelmed.

ANTHONY

(bewildered)

So what's the bad news?

CHARLES

Bad news, good news - you haven't voted yet.

Anthony remembers the coin in his hand. He looks to the team, then drops his coin on the pile. The team explodes in a cheer.

BRIAN

You're more than the face of this team, you're the captain.

DORIAN

I won't lie, I wanted to keep the money-- but there has to be one guy I can beat up The Peak.

All the guys laugh.

Anthony's face splits into a huge grin as the guys come forward to congratulate their new leader.

Anthony enters. The house is quiet. Judy sits at the dining room table. Eyes locked on her phone.

ANTHONY

Mom?

She says nothing. The depressive affect evident on her face. She is distant, lonely, lost.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Mama, what is it?

Nothing.

JUDY

You ever realize you think you know who you are, but really you might not know yourself at all?

Anthony looks at the phone.

ANTHONY

Were you going to text dad?

She nods.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Why are you gonna do that?

JUDY

Baby. Some things... I can't explain to you. Life is complicated.

ANTHONY

No, it isn't.

She looks up at him, a tear rolling down her cheek.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Mama. I know he's their father. I know you think you need him. I know he's nice sometimes. He apologizes. He can be funny. He says it won't happen again. I know you think you need him. But you don't.

JUDY

There is a part of me that's out to get me, Anthony. I don't know why that is. I don't want it but it's there, every day.

(beat)

Sometimes you think the more you have to chase a thing, the more it's worth. Or if it hurts to love someone, it must hurt them to love you, too.

(turns to him)

But, maybe it just hurts.

ANTHONY

Maybe I don't understand all that. But I understand one thing for sure: you're better than this.

101

**EXT. BACK PATIO - NEXT DAY**

101

Judy sits at a weathered metal patio table. The phone cord snaking out from inside. She regards the phone in her hand -- thinking -- thinking --

**SERIES OF SHOTS-**

Judy, on the phone, pacing - a motor keeping her moving forward as she tries to get on top of it all.

JUDY

Yes, hello. I am trying to find out when the last payment was made... Well, if you don't have that information can you tell me who does?

New call. Judy listens to endless hold music.

JUDY (CONT'D)

(new call)

But I was told that you purchased my home loan... Is this Global Lending inc.? What do you mean, not anymore!.. Then who should I call?

New call. Same hold music.

JUDY (CONT'D)

(new call)

8503 East Harmony Ave... that's right...yes, thank you... I need a physical copy of mortgage... Would it be possible for you to send me one?

102

OMITTED

102

103

OMITTED

103

104

OMITTED

104

A105

**INT. ASU WRESTLING GYM - DAY**

A105

Anthony alone in the gym, already covered in sweat, tank top on, holding his body above the mat while balancing a FOUR 20lb SANDBAGS on his back.

He rolls them off and heads for the locker room.

(CONTINUED)



In the corner a few wrestlers, Dorian, Brian, WALKER and SOLIS watch something on a laptop - "Flo Wrestling".

On it is a montage of Iowa's MATT MCDONOUGH launching himself at opponent after opponent. He EXPLODES like a tiger, destroys everyone in front of him.

BRIAN

That Iowa dude is no joke. National Champion.

SOLIS

(calls to Anthony)

Hey, Anthony. Come check this out.

DORIAN

Matt McDonough. Never lost a match, never lost a round in his college career.

BRIAN

Damn. What weight.

As Anthony approaches.

DORIAN

One twenty five.

SOLIS

(to Anthony)

That's your weight.

Anthony looks down at the video.

ANTHONY

Seen him. Why do you think I'm here early?

The guys look back at the video, impressed. Anthony walks off.

WALKER

(calling back)

Well, silver ain't nothing.

Judy opens the mailbox and extracts a letter she was expecting.



PEOPLE IN THE WAITING AREA HEAR. Judy catches sight of Bennett escorting a customer out. He sees her and heads over.

BENNETT

How can I help you, Mrs. Robles?

JUDY

I need to talk to you about our house.

Bennett quickly gestures for Judy to follow him.

A108

**INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

A108

Judy and Bennett enter - a long modern conference table next to a fifteen foot glass wall that looks out at a cactus lined garden.

BENNETT

As you know, you had three months--

JUDY

I do. And I've been reviewing the loan.

Judy drops the folder on the table and takes a seat.

BENNETT

And, you discovered it is in fact overdue.

JUDY

What I discovered is that it actually qualifies as predatory lending.

BENNETT

I'm sorry?

Bennett sits.

JUDY

And the interesting thing about what the courts are doing to predatory lenders is that the banks themselves are being found liable for the outstanding loans.

BENNETT

What you're saying is technically accurate.

Judy opens the folder.

JUDY

Yes.

(looking at her notes)

And not only are the banks liable for the outstanding loan, to be proven to have lent money or received money in a predatory way puts the lending institution on a federal database of offenders that requires a lengthy appeals process with the FDIC and the state in order to be removed--until which time you are prohibited from any further lending activity.

(beat)

But, you know that.

(CONTINUED)

A108

CONTINUED:

77A.  
A108

The look on Bennett's face tells us she is right.

BENNETT

Listen, I'm not supposed to tell you  
this...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BENNETT (CONT'D)

So many banks have bundled bad loans from so many other banks that no longer exist, that no one knows who actually owns what. Bottom line: we don't know who owns your house. Could take a while to untangle.

JUDY

I know.

Bennett is at a loss. She opens the folder, takes out a sheaf of papers.

JUDY (CONT'D)

I have filed an extension. It should give me eighteen months to rectify the situation. In the meantime, I am going to honor our agreement by making payments on my loan.

Bennett thinks on this.

BENNETT

I look forward to doing business with you, Mrs. Robles.

She sticks out her hand.

JUDY

Judy.

They shake on it.

CUT TO:

The ref's hand chops the air signaling the start of a match. MCDONOUGH AND A NORTHWESTERN WRESTLER crash together. McDonough works quickly. It's over in seconds. Brutal. Decisive. The ref lifts McDonough's arm in the air. Brands is all business.

Fifteen thousand people scream as one.

THE CAMERA FINDS ANTHONY, MATSIDE, LOCKED IN ON MCDONOUGH AND BRANDS HAVING JUST WITNESSED THE WHOLE THING.

**SUPER TITLE: NCAA WRESTLING CHAMPIONSHIP**

Over all this, we hear....

(CONTINUED)

ADAM AMIN (O.S.)

And there it is, McDonough's signature ferocity. As expected, making short work of his opponent as he continues to dominate his weight class.

ADAM AMIN and DON KURRING broadcast from the ESPN desk.

DON

Matt McDonough is now one win away from a return trip to the finals. For more we go to Quint Kessenich.

109,110 OMITTED

109,110

111,112 OMITTED

111,112

A113 **INT. QWEST ARENA - FLOOR - SAME**

A113

ESPN ANNOUNCER QUINT KESSENICH on the floor.

QUINT KESSENICH

You're right Don. Day two at Qwest Arena in Nebraska has not disappointed. And all eyes are on Anthony Robles and Matt McDonough, the hundred and twenty five pounders who are nearing the head to head showdown that wrestling fans everywhere are eager to see.

B113 **INT. QWEST ARENA - FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER**

B113

CLOSE ON: Coach Charles. Yelling over the crowd. Last minute instructions about this match to the Anthony.

CHARLES

Know where you're at at all times. He likes to go Russian or use the overhook so look out for that. This is the semi-finals. He wants this as bad as you do. You want McDonough, you have to go through him.

Anthony nods, steely, eyes his opponent a MINNESOTA WRESTLER.

C113 SECONDS LATER. THE MINNESOTA WRESTLER'S FACE PRESSED TO C113  
THE MAT.

Done. Anthony pops up and the ref raises Anthony's arm in the air. He looks back to McDonough and Brands. They're not even watching.

(CONTINUED)



ADAM (O.S.)

Effectively staying out of the Russian with that decisive win, ASU's Anthony Robles is headed to the finals at one-twenty-five.

DON

It's been an exciting day of competition so far but every fan is going to be focused on Matt McDonough's next match in the semis.

ADAM

If he wins that, it's he and Robles in the finals. Each of them eager to answer the question, who's the best in the country at one twenty five.

D113 INT. QWEST ARENA - FLOOR - DAY

D113

McDonough's semi-final match. He is punishing a DREXEL WRESTLER.

E113 INT. QWEST ARENA - TUNNEL - DAY

E113

Anthony, in the tunnel, watching McDonough. It's clear where this match is going. Brand is smirking, he know's it too. And then, just like that, McDonough pins him with a vengeance. He immediately jumps up and trots to Brands to celebrate. A war of conflicting emotions in Anthony.

Dorian comes into the tunnel. It's clear he's just lost. He's devastated. He sees Anthony is struggling, locked in on McDonough. Dorian's tournament is over but he's still a part of a team...

DORIAN

(off McDonough)

I don't know what all the noise is about. Dude looks like a pussy to me.

Anthony has to smile a little.

DORIAN (CONT'D)

I mean he puts his shit on just like everyone else. He ain't superman. Just go out and whup his ass like you do everyone else.

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY

(not caring)

He isn't everyone else. His father started him wrestling when he was two years old. He was recruited by Iowa at thirteen. He runs a 4.5 forty and can bench 245 for ten. He has never lost a match.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

He doesn't know what it feels like. I don't know if he believes it can happen. I don't know if I do either.

DORIAN

Everybody can lose.

ANTHONY

Some people are special.

(beat)

They have more money than we do, more training, I been listening to *their* coach's tapes for five years... Trying to live the poor man's version of their system.

DORIAN

What are you afraid of?

Takes a minute, then tells the truth:

ANTHONY

That I can't beat him. That I'm lucky to be here. That my one claim to fame will be saying "I wrestled Matt McDonough in college."

DORIAN

I see. Well you don't need to be afraid then.

ANTHONY

No?

DORIAN

I know how it is. Because that's what I thought when I wrestled you. That kid is the best I've ever seen. He just don't know it yet.

(beat)

I knew that day like I know now that the high point of my own wrestling career would be, "I wrestled Anthony Robles in college." I knew as soon as you understood what you could do, you wouldn't lose to anyone ever again. Shit, when I'm old I'll be like that dude talking about how he beat LeBron in ninth grade. And I'm proud of it.

CUT TO:

113

**INT. QWEST ARENA STANDS - NEXT DAY**

113

The arena is electric. Judy and Coach Williams are still, eyes on Anthony. Adam Amin on the floor.

ADAM(O.S.)

Day three and you can feel the excitement in the air as the match everyone has hoped for is next. McDonough has not lost this season and few expect him to lose today.

DON

And as for Robles, his whole season has been about getting to this moment.

Brands and McDonough relaxed, seemingly without a care, it's as if they already won.

Anthony tries to shake it off, tries to focus.

ADAM

We'll get underway now with the national championship at stake at 125 pounds.

The ref signals the match to start. Anthony springs into action attacking McDonough. He is much more aggressive than we've seen him, trying to take the champion off guard.

McDonough seems non-plussed, weathers Anthony's attacks. Holds steady. Anthony seems to be wearing himself out.

DON

A much more aggressive Robles than we've seen before. He's coming in strong on offense hoping to overpower McDonough.

But the truth is Anthony is simply overcome, all the unbridled, stored up anticipation and energy is coming out-- too fast and not focused enough. McDonough is at ease, bides his time. Anthony starts to seem almost desperate.

ADAM

Robles abandoning his technique, seems to be fueling on fire. But if he's not careful, Robles may be the one who gets burned.

Anthony goes for a desperate move, gets ahold of McDonough in a particular way. We see on McDonough's face that maybe for the first time he feels vulnerable. Anthony's skill is more than he expected.

(CONTINUED)

For a moment it appears Anthony may have the upper hand, ball and chain tilt but McDonough is patient, lowers his body weight, uses Anthony's momentum against him and once that is spent, McDonough easily rolls and pins Robles. Its shocking how abruptly it ends.

Anthony has lost.

ADAM (CONT'D)

A disappointing showing from Robles as he allows emotion to overtake him. In a sport built on technique, Anthony Robles went for brute force and the champion makes quick work of him. Matt McDonough, to the surprise of few, has now won his second consecutive national championship.

Anthony lies spent on the mat. Empty.

McDonough leaps up, runs to the arms of Brands who lifts him in the air in celebration.

Close on Robles's eyes. Either dead, given up or just somewhere far, far away in his mind from the site of this ignominious defeat.

Charles closes his eyes, disappointed.

In the stands Judy and Williams are stunned.

Iowa fans go wild.

114

**EXT. MESA - SUNRISE**

114

Dawn breaks over the bleached out city of Mesa.

115

**EXT. ROBLES HOUSE - DAY**

115

Ronnie and Andrew are playing hopscotch on the driveway. They turn when they hear a cab coming their way. Nicolas and Bo glide up on their bikes, they've been trailing the cab for the last block.

The cab stops at the curb. Judy and Anthony get out, weary and glad to be home. His brothers and sisters drift toward him, all feeling for him, no one wanting to say anything. Judy steps aside, giving the kids a moment together.

ANTHONY

I'm sorry guys. I don't know what happened.

(CONTINUED)

ANDREW

He cheated.

Anthony smiles a little, appreciating the unwavering support.

ANTHONY

No. He didn't cheat. He was the best wrestler that day.

ANDREW

But he's not really the best, is he?

Anthony looks at his brother. Takes some measure of belief from the faith they have in him.

ANTHONY

No. I don't think so. I thought he would be much stronger than he was. And better. I'll tell you what, don't let me get back to the finals next year.

As the kids cheer for Anthony, Judy watches, admiring their strength, their joy.

116

**EXT. MESA HIGH, FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY**

116

Anthony sits on the bleachers by the high school football field with Coach Williams. The track team is practicing.

WILLIAMS

So what happened?

The guys on the track go RUNNING by - fast. Anthony watches them pass.

ANTHONY

When you want something so much, losing that like that, that fast, I haven't felt that kind of pain in a long time.

WILLIAMS

Would you like the standard coach speech; There is no joy without pain, success without failure. Gain and loss, they're just two sides of the same coin.

ANTHONY

Not today.

Anthony is still, not ready to talk about what's on his mind yet.

WILLIAMS

I wish I had the answers, man. I've known you for seven years but I'll never know what it is to be you. What you go through, what you'll continue to go through you're whole life. But I do know you care more and work harder than anyone I've ever met.

(beat)

So what happened?

The question hangs in the air. Williams can see Anthony's struggling with something. Anthony follows as they glide by.

ANTHONY

*"Nothing wrong with you. You're the same as everyone else."* My mother's told me that my whole life. I almost believed it.

WILLIAMS

You're not the same as everyone else. You're better. Except for one guy, on one day, in one match.

(beat)

Why do you do this? Wrestle.

(CONTINUED)



ANTHONY

It's the only sport where the other guy  
can't run away?

A shared laugh at that. After it fades... Williams  
focuses in on Anthony.

WILLIAMS

So what happened?

ANTHONY

You know, when people look at me the  
first thing they see it's what's missing.

(beat)

I got all the way there. And lost. Maybe  
there's something missing in me that I  
can't see.

Anthony stays fixed in the distance, avoiding eye contact  
with Williams. Then softly, almost to himself--

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Most people, people like you, have their  
whole lives to try and achieve their  
goals. And no matter how many times they  
stumble or fall, everyone tells them  
*"it's never too late" - "keep going" -  
"it's not about winning"*.

(beat)

I'm twenty one years old and I only have  
one more year to achieve my goal.

(beat)

After that I'll get a job somewhere,  
doing something. Let's be honest,  
probably sitting behind a desk.

(beat)

If I don't win... if I come in second...  
for the rest of my life... I'll be  
telling everyone how I came *this close*.  
And they'll listen and smile. And for the  
rest of my life everyone will always feel  
...a little bit sorry for me.

(beat)

But if I win, for the rest of my life...  
having one leg won't be the most  
important thing about me.

Anthony watches as runners speed by.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

I'm running out of time to be someone.

And with that, Williams finally understands the gravity  
of what Anthony is fighting.

(CONTINUED)

116 CONTINUED: 86B.  
116

**TITLE: SENIOR YEAR (C. 2010-2011)**

117 **INT. ASU WEIGHT ROOM - NIGHT** 117

SERIES OF SHOTS

- Anthony benches heavy. Relentless.

118 - PARKING LOT. ANTHONY TRYING TO PUSH THE CAR OVER THE 118  
SPEED BUMP. IT INCHES IT'S WAY UP... ALMOST REACHING THE  
TOP... THEN ROLLING BACK DOWN. ANTHONY BANGS ON THE CAR  
IN FRUSTRATION.

119 - CLIMBING ROPE, ANTHONY PULLS HIMSELF UP, SLOWLY, 119  
 DELIBERATELY. AT THE TOP NOW, HE HOLDS ON. WE MARVEL AS  
 HE HOLDS HIMSELF STILL, HIS BODY TREMBLING, EVERY CELL  
 BEGGING HIM TO LET GO.

We stay on the shot longer than we expect.

Close on Anthony's face. He is in pain. Struggling, like  
 a man possessed, to hold on.

120 **EXT. STREET - NIGHT** 120

Anthony drives down his street. Every other house has a  
 "For Sale" sign. He passes Manny's house -- it's  
 ribboned in police tape.

He pulls up to his house and sees all four of his  
 siblings on the driveway. He parks quickly, hops out.

ANTHONY

What's going on? You guys locked out?

The kids look spooked, scared. Andrew points across the  
 street - RICK'S CAR. Anthony hears YELLING and CRASHING  
 inside the house.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Wait here. Don't come in no matter what.

Anthony races for the door - locked. He puts his shoulder  
 against it and pushes for all he's worth - cords stand  
 out on his neck - CRACK - it smashes open. He darts  
 inside to find --

121 **INT. ROBLES HOUSE - CONTINUOUS** 121

-- Plates are smashed in the kitchen. LOUD YELLING echoes  
 down the hallway. Just as he starts down the hall, Judy  
 RUNS out of the bedroom and TRIPS, BANGING against the  
 wall. She is clearly escaping someone. She sees Anthony.  
 She runs at him, clumsy with fear, hands out.

JUDY

Go, Anthony! Go outside! Go be with--

Rick bolts out of the bedroom with a roar. It startles  
 Judy and she stumbles, falling to the floor.

Rick sees Anthony. For the first time Anthony seems less  
 cowed by Rick. We barely see the outrage he must feel at  
 seeing his mother running scared.

(CONTINUED)

His confidence, as he steps in front of Rick, blocking his way, takes Rick off guard.

RICK

What the hell are you doing here?

ANTHONY

This is my home.

RICK

This is between me and your mother.

ANTHONY

No.

RICK

Boy, this is not the time for your mouth to act up. You're too light in the ass to talk shit to me. Get out of my way.

ANTHONY

You need to leave.

RICK

What?

ANTHONY

You heard me. Leave. And I don't ever want to see you here again. You're poison to this family.

RICK

Oh, you're man of the house now? You think wrestling little kids makes you a man and you want to step to me? You ready? Because a man who fights me--I have no mercy.

Anthony looks him in the eye.

ANTHONY

This is your last chance before I call the police.

RICK

You want to step to me? You ready for that? You pick up the phone and call the police, you're not my son.

ANTHONY

I never was.

(CONTINUED)

RICK

That's right. You have no father.  
(calms)

But that don't mean you're ready to be a man and take on a man.

ANTHONY

You haven't been a man one day in your life.

Rick tries to charge past Anthony but Anthony blocks his way. Rick knocks Anthony back but he's taken tougher blows in practice. He just looks at him, stone cold. Anthony realizes who this man is that he's been afraid of his whole life.

RICK

You see now? You a man? You ready?

Rick tries to shove Anthony out of his way but Anthony is so much stronger, faster, and more adept, it's something of a shock how quickly and deftly he FLEXES Rick. He whips Rick around, gripping his wrist with a strength far beyond what Rick can defy. Anthony's practiced, expert technique makes easy quick work of Rick. He TWISTS him, CRANKS his arm, Rick CRIES OUT, and Anthony SLAMS HIM ON THE FLOOR-- Holding Rick in place in a submission hold that Rick is impotent to break.

ANTHONY

Yeah, Rick. I'm ready.

RICK

(struggles)  
Get off me--

He struggles more, Anthony just CRANKS UP THE HOLD ON RICK and Rick is frozen, trapped and silent, at Anthony's mercy.

ANTHONY

I'm not afraid. Not at all. But now you are. How does it feel?

Judy comes in.

JUDY

STOP IT!

Anthony pulls himself up, keeping Rick in a CHOKE HOLD.

He holds a look to his mother. So does Rick. She has a choice to make.

(CONTINUED)

121 CONTINUED:

RICK

Tell this boy to get off me before I get serious.

Both men watch her take careful and deliberate steps. She picks up the phone, and dials.

JUDY

(on phone)

I'd like to report a domestic violence incident.

Anthony's eyes show relief, glisten, as he sees what he long hoped for. Rick shows only bitterness.

122 **EXT. ROBLES LAWN - NIGHT - LATER**

122

Neighbors watch from their lawns. The street is awash in BLUE AND RED LIGHT - like spaceships have landed.

Judy and Ronnie are framed in the front door. Andrew, Nicholas and Bo are on the driveway. Anthony stands a few feet in front of them, closest to the street - a police car pulls away.

JUDY

Okay. That's enough now. Let's go back inside.

She and Ronnie head back into the house. After a beat, Anthony turns.

ANTHONY

C'mon guys. Back inside.

As they walk to the front door --

ANDREW

(softly, to Anthony)

I don't like living here anymore.

Anthony stops. Heartbroken.

123 **INT. GARAGE/ANTHONY AND NICOLAS' ROOM - NIGHT**

123

Anthony and Nicolas lay in their beds.

CLOSE ON: Anthony. From above. We are looking right down at him. There is something he wants to say. Something that will cost him. Then --

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY

If I ask you something do you promise not to laugh?

NICHOLAS

Yeah.

ANTHONY

And, you promise to tell me the truth?

NICHOLAS

Of course.

ANTHONY

Even if it hurts my feelings?

NICHOLAS

Yeah.

Long beat.

ANTHONY

Are you my brother?

NICHOLAS

Of course I'm you're brother. You remember when I was born!

ANTHONY

It's just... after Rick told me he wasn't my dad I never brought it up again. Not with anyone. After that, I felt I could never really be sure of anything you know?

(beat)

I've always wanted to ask but I was scared of the answer. So I never asked.

(beat)

Are you my real brother?

For the first time Nicholas understands what his brother has been carrying around his whole life.

NICHOLAS

I'm you're real brother.

(beat)

You're my real brother.

(beat)

Ronnie is your real sister.

(beat)

Bo is your real brother. Andrew too.

Anthony nods. Baby steps.

(CONTINUED)

123 CONTINUED:

ANTHONY  
That's what I thought.

Anthony closes his eyes. A lifelong weight lifted.

124 **EXT. DAY - TIME LAPSE** 124

The sun comes up, a fiery ball of white arcing through the southwestern sky.

125 **INT. ROBLES HOUSE - DAY** 125

Judy is carrying a laundry basket through the house when she hears a knock on the door. She opens it to find Coach Williams holding a box, inside are hundreds of letters.

WILLIAMS  
Good morning, Mrs. Robles. I apologize for just stopping by. I have this box for Anthony I wanted to drop off.

JUDY  
Of course. I'll make sure he gets these.

Williams turns to leave, turns back.

WILLIAMS  
Ma'am, you might want to read some.  
(moment)  
They were sent to the school and... it's funny, you spend a life coaching young men, it can be frustrating at times.

JUDY  
I can imagine.

WILLIAMS  
You must be an extraordinary mother.

She is taken aback a little but also gives herself permission to take this in. By now she allows herself to believe she's earned it.

JUDY  
Don't thank me. That's just Anthony.  
That's who he is.

Williams smiles.

WILLIAMS  
With respect, in my experience, it doesn't work that way.

(CONTINUED)



125 CONTINUED:

Judy nods, touched.

A126 INT. ASU WRESTLING GYM - BULLETIN BOARD - DAY A126

We have seen this board before. It is a record of each wrestler's season. We slowly move down it to find Anthony's name. As we move across his stats we see win-win-win... Anthony has not lost a match all year. The final column at the end reads "Nationals".

Next to Anthony's name there is a BLUE CHECK - Anthony is going back to the NCAA Finals.

126 INT. LOCKER ROOM, AFTER MATCH - DAY 126

Charles walks in to do his post match wrap up. The boys are sweaty, in various states of changing back into their street clothes. As they quietly dress, they listen to the coach address their effort on the year.

CHARLES

For most of you, this was the last match of the season and I want to acknowledge that everyone of you got better this year. And some of you, who won't be named, even figured out how to read a clock--

One WRESTLER smiles, this is something they clearly give him shit about on an ongoing basis.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Six of you will be moving on to the NCAA Championships in Philadelphia.

We find Anthony and five others. Proud. Humble.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

An incredible achievement. We're honored to have you represent us on the national stage.

(then)

But there was one accomplishment even more notable than that.

The room goes a little quiet.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

We have someone here today who walked onto this team.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES (CONT'D)

And despite being *dis*-couraged by the coach- this young man, un-recruited, without financial aid, worked full time on the side to support his family, and maintained the third best GPA on the team.

Anthony looks down, uncomfortable with being singled out.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

He proved himself at The Peak, made captain, and sets the standard for this team everyday, and now he's gone undefeated in his Senior season.

The coach's acknowledgement allows the team to acknowledge something no one wanted to jinx until now. We start to hear clapping and verbal congratulations.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

So, what I'm going to do is tip my damn hat to this impressive young man.

(to Anthony)

I'm sorry, Anthony. I failed to recognize who you were. I was unable to see your character. You compensated for my error and for that I'm grateful. Know that I see you now. So I invite you all to stand with me because, on top of all this, someone pointed out to me, Anthony has one leg! I was like, "For real? You only got one leg? What!"

The TEAM RISES, CHEERING AND YELLING, an unabashed ovation. Anthony takes it in for a moment. He nods to the coach who nods to him with genuine respect and a true recognition.

Anthony, starting to become overwhelmed, turns the energy back toward the future.

ANTHONY

We ain't done yet. Come on! Nationals now. We're gonna be champions, baby!

The team explodes in celebration. Anthony and the team now get into beast mode. Yelling and banging lockers. This is what inspiration and leadership looks like.

(CONTINUED)

Charles looks at Anthony, something in his eyes makes clear he knows this is the finest day of his life as a coach.

Anthony comes in the side door to the garage. He is deep in thought, feeling the pressure. He takes in his room, a snapshot of his life.

JUDY (O.S.)

Anthony? Can you come in here?

He snaps out of it and enters the dining room, Judy is sitting at the dining room table. In front of her is the box of letters. She's holds up the one she was reading, her eyes shining with emotion.

ANTHONY

What's this?

He sits down and opens one, starts to read. He is only three lines in before tears blur his vision. He wipes his eyes and keeps going. Judy picks up letters, reading lines from several of them.

JUDY

(reading)

*"Dear, Mr. Robles. Mr. Balcombe said we needed to write to a living hero...."*

(another)

*Anthony, I am in the third grade. When I see you wrestle I think I can do anything...*

(another)

*I'm in a wheelchair but after seeing you wrestle I joined a basketball team with kids like me...*

(another)

*Anthony, my friends play soccer and I want to play with them but I'm shy. You gave me the courage to give it try...*

Anthony is stunned. He looks over the letters, now realizing what they all say.

JUDY (CONT'D)

Anything that makes you think you are not perfect and beautiful in any way is my fault. Because as a mom you make choices. How long you stay. How much damage is done.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JUDY (CONT'D)

How long it takes before you can love yourself enough to fight for yourself.

ANTHONY

It's not your fault.

JUDY

It is my fault because I chose him. And I'm sorry.

ANTHONY

Mom.

JUDY

I know. It's the feelings. I am getting more honest with myself. But that doesn't change the responsibility I take. Because I love you and that's what love is.

Anthony fights tears. He has no words.

JUDY (CONT'D)

Who you are already is what matters. You make people believe in something.

She goes back to the letters.

JUDY (CONT'D)

When they see you they don't see someone with a missing leg. They don't see where you live. Or, who you live with. They see someone who's unstoppable and it makes them believe in themselves.

(hands him the letter)

You can show them that anything is possible. I know because you showed me.

SHANE SPARKS (V.O.)

(pre-lap)

Welcome to ESPN's coverage of the 2011 NCAA Wrestling Championship here at Wells Fargo Center in Philadelphia.

**SUPERTITLE: NCAA WRESTLING CHAMPIONSHIPS**

We've been here before, but it has never felt like this.

IN THE ARENA - The crowd erupts with each school cheering for their own.

129 ON THE FLOOR - 129

QUINT KESSENICH

This place is packed, Shane. Over twenty thousand here to see the best athletes in the world fighting for wrestling immortality.

130 PRELIMINARIES - ON THE MAT - Anthony FLIPS a Stanford 130  
wrestler then takes him down instantly. Score 8-2. Time  
is expiring... 3...2...

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Roblesssssssss!

131 THE ASU SECTION has many of the faces we have seen 131  
including COACH WILLIAMS, AND JUDY, NICHOLAS, BO, RONNIE,  
AND ANDREW. They are outnumbered by some of the bigger  
schools but they cheer like the best of them.

132 THE REF RAISES ANTHONY'S ARM. ANTHONY SPOTS HIS MOM AND 132  
RAISES THREE FINGERS - "THREE MORE". SHE RAISES THREE  
RIGHT BACK AT HIM.

- From the ESPN table, SHANE SPARKS and DON KURRING.

SHANE SPARKS

The big story this year Don, is Anthony Robles going undefeated. Four years ago he won the high school championship right here in Philadelphia and now he is back where it all began.

DON

And this year the refs have been pretty hard on Robles, refusing to award any points until they see a clean release between holds. Given that extra pressure, will he go all the way or will he fall apart like last year.

133 QUARTER FINALS - ON THE MAT - MATCH TWO - A STRONG 133  
LOOKING KID FROM HARVARD CIRCLES ANTHONY WHO WAITS  
PATIENTLY IN THE CENTER. SUDDENLY THEY CRASH TOGETHER  
LIKE RAMS.

CLOSE ON: skin getting TWISTED - sucking air through the  
mouthpiece - muscles TIGHTENING...

WHISTLE

Score is 2-2

(CONTINUED)

Back at it. Anthony uses his superior body strength and gets an arm under the Harvard kid - ball and chain. It's over before the guy even knows what happened.

The REF slams the mat.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
Roblessssssssssss

133 CONTINUED:

The ref raises Anthony's hand. Most of the stadium cheers. He is quickly becoming the crowd favorite.

Anthony raises TWO FINGERS to his mom.

134 SEMI-FINALS - NEW DAY - NEW MATCH - IN CLOSE DIRTY WORK.134  
ANTHONY HAS THE UPPER HAND. A WRESTLER FROM VIRGINIA BENEATH HIM IS DESPERATE. HE TWISTS OUT - GRINDING HIS SHOE INTO ANTHONY'S FACE. ANTHONY IS CUT. THIS MAKES ANTHONY REDOUBLE HIS EFFORTS. HE SLAMS THE WRESTLER TO THE MAT. MATCH OVER.

He stands, face bleeding, and raises ONE FINGER to his mom.

Suddenly the IOWA SECTION ERUPTS.

One mat over, McDonough is making the kid from NORTH CAROLINA wish he had never shown up.

He lifts him and SLAMS him onto the mat. In a flash he is ON TOP OF HIM twisting him - breaking him.

The ref slams the mat.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
McDooooonooooough.

The Iowa section EXPLODES. McDonough hops up and looks right at Anthony - *"comin' for you"*.

135 **INT. WELLS FARGO CENTER LOCKER ROOM - MOMENTS LATER** 135

The ESPN feed plays on a wall mounted TV. Quint is interviewing Matt McDonough and Tom Brands. Anthony walks up to it slowly. He can't believe what he's hearing.

QUINT  
It appears the championship will be a rematch of last years match. With more than one coach stating Anthony has an advantage since he has one less leg to grab. Some even suggesting he should weigh in with a prosthetic leg.

TOM BRANDS  
Look, Iowa is the best wrestling program by far. At Iowa we don't accept excuses and we don't make them.

(CONTINUED)

QUINT

Any change of strategy going into a match with Robles?

TOM BRANDS

No. Matt's the reigning national champion for a reason. There's not a wrestler in the building who has any possibility of winning.

MCDONOUGH

ASU was supposed to wrestle us earlier in the season but for some reason they backed out. Anthony's done a great job with the opponents he's faced but he still hasn't faced me.

QUINT

But he did come in second. Are you saying he's not a wrestler to take seriously?

BRANDS

At Iowa, we believe second is the same as last.

That lands on Anthony - cuts close to the bone.

Charles is there. He turns off the tv. He looks at Anthony, trying to read him.

(CONTINUED)



CHARLES

"You lose you die... no pity no weakness"  
and all that scorched earth shit. What  
kind of world is that to live in? The  
real deal is when you look across the mat  
and realize the other guy isn't the  
enemy... he's you.

Anthony takes that in, rolls it around. Then--

ANTHONY

I used to be angry all the time. Even  
when I won I was angry. I would use it.  
(beat)  
But I'm not angry anymore.

CHARLES

What are you?

ANTHONY

I'm a little scared.

CHARLES

Me, too.

Anthony looks at him. They hold each others eyes for a  
beat -- then start laughing.

All the tension, everything they've been through comes  
out. Two men being emotionally honest with each other for  
maybe the first time.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

(still laughing)  
Don't tell anyone!

ANTHONY

I got you.  
(then)  
Is it too late for us to become monks?

CHARLES

I'll get the horses!

Fresh laughter. As it gradually fades, Anthony takes a  
long beat, letting all the feelings course through him.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

You ready?

ANTHONY

Yes, I am.

136

**EXT. PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART STEPS - NIGHT**

136

Anthony stands alone at the base of the famed "Rocky Steps".

(CONTINUED)

136 CONTINUED:

Once more, Anthony begins the long climb to the top.

He gets to the top and looks out at the view. So much has changed since he was here before. Not in the city, in himself.

Anthony looks down to TWO GOLDEN FOOTPRINTS set in cement.

He puts his left foot on Rocky's. The right footprint is just as empty as it was before. Then, Anthony plants the RIGHT CRUTCH TIP solidly and decisively on the right.

Not empty anymore.

137 **INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAWN** 137

Anthony, awake, sitting quietly. Meditating. Slowly we fade up the pre-lap sounds of a crowd, cameras clicking, the buzz of excitement.

138 **INT. WELLS FARGO CENTER WEIGHING CEREMONY - DAY** 138

CLOSE ON: McDonough's face.

CLOSE ON: Anthony's face.

They stare each other down.

FLASHBULBS pop non-stop. The CLICK OF CAMERAS fills the air.

McDonough gets on the scale - 125.

Anthony does the same - 125

A139 **INT. WELLS FARGO CENTER - NIGHT** A139

Above her section, Judy paces the floor like a tiger, trying to burn off the anxiety. With hope comes fear.

139 **INT. WELLS FARGO CENTER TUNNEL - NIGHT** 139

Anthony STANDS ALONE in the tunnel. Headphones on.

A silhouette on crutches.

He tries to get his breathing under control, his heart rate.

(CONTINUED)

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. FROM ARIZONA  
STATE UNIVERSITY, ... ANTHONY  
ROOOOOBBBBBLEESSSSSS!

Anthony takes one more deep breath and walks out of the tunnel and into-

THE PACKED ARENA - As soon as they see him the crowd ERUPTS. Anthony moves down the RED CARPET as fast as he can - they cheer louder.

SERIES OF SHOTS-

140 -Mesa High. The gym is packed with CHEERING KIDS who watch on a movie screen 140

141 - Airport. Eddie in the VIP section of the hangar, feet up, flips the channel and finds the match. 141

142 BACK TO ANTHONY- 142

He climbs the stairs to the LIFTED MAT that dominates the center of the arena and heads over to Charles who puts an arm around his shoulder.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
AND NOW, FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA YOUR  
DEFENDING NCAA NATIONAL CHAMPION... MATT  
MCDOOOONNNNNNOOOOUGHHHHH.

McDonough SPRINTS out of the tunnel and joins Tom Brands as the Iowa section LOSES THEIR MINDS.

ASU CORNER - Anthony takes off his shirt, tugs his headgear on. Turns to Charles for last minute advice.

ANTHONY  
Well? What's the plan?

CHARLES  
What do you think?

Not what he was expecting.

ANTHONY  
What do I think!?!?

CHARLES  
(leading him to it)  
You've been here before. That makes you an expert. You know as much about him as his coach. So yes, what's the plan?

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY

He'll be expecting me to come out of the gate like last time. Make him wait. Show him I have more discipline.

Charles smiles, nods.

CHARLES

He'll try to goad you into making the same mistake. But we're not falling for that today are we?

Anthony shakes his head.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

No. As long as it takes. Wait. Wait for him to come to you.

Anthony nods. Charles taps his headgear and Anthony shoots out to the mat - dead center. Waiting.

McDonough keeps eye contact as he enters the mat.

(CONTINUED)

The ref gives the usual speech but they don't even hear him. Anthony sticks his hand out and McDonough barely touches it.

TWEEET - The whistle blows.

SHANE (O.S.)

Here we go! Robles has the green ankle band and McDonough wearing red. First period is three minutes followed by two two minute periods. Seven minutes stand between them and a national championship.

They are both crouched - facing each other - looking for an opening. Their hands SHOOT FORWARD and they LOCK ARMS.

McDonough SLIPS OUT and gets a hand on the back of Anthony's neck - PULLING with all his strength - trying to DRIVE ANTHONY'S FACE INTO THE MAT. Anthony's neck muscles strain to keep his head up.

Anthony is relying on his capacity to control his body. Maintaining his position. McDonough hesitates, expecting Anthony to strike, but Anthony merely holds his position.

McDonough grapples on one side, then the other, but he can't control Anthony and Anthony gives him no opening. In fact it's as if Anthony is almost on the mat by himself.

120 fps. McDonough's arms wrenching at Anthony, tugging. Anthony immovable. McDonough switching sides. Still no movement.

JUDY AND THE KIDS - riveted.

BO

(sotto)

C'mon ... Do something.

ON THE MAT- as McDonough tries to grip even tighter, he makes a mistake, leaving an opening for Anthony who SHOOTS HIS LEG BACK and then WHIPS IT IN THE AIR OVER HIS HEAD - taking McDonough with him.

DON (O.S.)

That was a mistake. Robles the calmer combatant seemingly waited McDonough out and frustrated him and capitalized. Two points.

143

**INT. EMPLOYEE BREAK ROOM - SAME TIME**

143

A few tables. Less chairs. A row of vending machines. Rick, wearing a CHEAP EMPLOYEE VEST, watches Anthony's match on a TV mounted on the wall. He leans forward, living second by second as Anthony tries to--

Two employees walk in. One grabs the remote and casually changes the channel without even a glance.

Rick goes to protest but stops. He can't say anything. We can tell he never told them that Anthony is his kid.

OFF RICK - *A life time of bad choices.*

144

**INT. WELLS FARGO CENTER - CONTINUOUS**

144

BACK TO THE FLIP - Anthony WHIPS HIS LEG IN THE AIR OVER HIS HEAD - taking McDonough with him.

Now McDonough is on his side and Anthony has his WRIST IN A CROSS GRIP - controlling him from underneath. McDonough tries to get away - looking for an opening. But before he can ---

Anthony FLIPS OVER AGAIN! McDonough is on his back!

SHANE (V.O.)

McDonough did *not* see that coming. Two more for Robles. He has genuinely surprised McDonough.

QUINT

I don't know if he and Brands did not adequately prepare for this match. They seemed confident, events suggesting perhaps too confident...

McDonough ARCHES HIS NECK IMPOSSIBLY FAR -- BRIDGES in an effort to keep from being pinned. Only the TOP OF HIS HEAD AND HIS HEELS ARE ON THE GROUND.

Anthony has his right arm wrapped around McDonough's thigh - those fingers, digging in.

SHANE

Anthony with that signature grip. But the ref isn't awarding any points just yet. Not until Anthony shows that clean release...

Anthony switches his grip, shows the ref his hand.

(CONTINUED)

Lightening fast, McDonough KICKS OUT and is on top of Anthony. He can't find a way in. Going for the ankle -- going for the ankle.

SHANE (CONT'D)

McDonough, capitalizing on the moment and making Robles pay.

He finally GRIPS Anthony and hooks him, once he finds purchase, McDonough deftly flips and levels Anthony. Ref indicates a score for McDonough-- 4-4 at the end of the first period.

(CONTINUED)



DON

There's the dominance we're used to seeing from McDonough. He appears to have a handle on Robles technique now. My guess is McDonough comes out strong in the second.

145

BETWEEN PERIODS. MCDONOUGH STARES AT ANTHONY. ANTHONY SEEMS COMFORTABLE, LOOSE. HE LOOKS UP AND SEES JUDY. THEY HOLD A LOOK. 145

A146

BEHIND HER A JEERING WOMAN/ALISON CALLS OUT--

A146

ALISON

Break his leg!

IN A FLASH Judy whirls around like a demon - is up and coming for her. Alison's eyes go wide in terror.

JUDY

You shut your mouth or I'll beat your ass!

Nicholas and Ronnie pull her back to her seat.

ALL THE KIDS

Mom! - Sit down!

Judy lets herself be pulled back down, she shoots one final death glare.

146

SECOND PERIOD - THEY FACE OFF AGAIN. MCDONOUGH LOOKS MORE DETERMINED THAN EVER. A BEAT AS THEY BOTH SIZE THE OTHER UP. SHOULDERS ROLLING - EYES NOT BLINKING. THE REF COMES TO THE CENTER FOR THE COIN TOSS. 146

The ref tosses the red and green coin.

MCDONOUGH

Red.

Red it is. McDonough points to Anthony - "his choice". Anthony looks to Coach Charles who makes the sign for "neutral". They will start on their feet.

CENTER MAT - On Anthony... waiting... waiting... McDonough SHOOTS IN LIKE AN ARROW but Anthony is too fast for him - HE SNATCHES BOTH OF MCDONOUGH'S WRISTS MID-AIR.

Now McDonough can only use his head, GRINDING IT against Anthony's - trying to get a wrist free.

(CONTINUED)

McDonough SPINS AROUND, then SPINS AGAIN, trying to get a wrist free.

Anthony looks down at his hand on McDonough's wrist. He grits his teeth and SQUEEZES HARDER until the KNUCKLES GO WHITE.

McDonough is desperate, trying anything he can to break free but Anthony. Won't. Let. Go.

The crowd is chanting "RO-BLES" "RO-BLES"

Suddenly McDonough SPINS OUT AND WHIRLS AROUND on Anthony. A mad scramble as both men try to regain control.

SHANE

A match characterized by early discipline descending, perhaps, into emotion as these two men clearly have no fondness for one another.

McDonough has the upper hand - he has Anthony where he wants him -- but Anthony VIOLENTLY TWISTS OUT in the nick of time. But he is still vulnerable - and he knows it.

He CLAWS HIS WAY TO THE PERIMETER as McDonough tries to drag him back. Robles goes STILL, holding himself in position again, neither attacker nor defender, simply holding the integrity of his body in place.

WHISTLE - end of the second period. Anthony is ahead by one.

SHANE (CONT'D)

Robles narrowly escapes being taken from the circle there and he appears to be tiring. At the end of the round did it feel Quint as if he almost surrendered?

DON

I don't know about surrender but this match has been strangely quiet for Robles who made a career out of dispatching wrestlers and who came out of the gates last year like a rocket.

THIRD PERIOD - THE TWO WRESTLERS FACE EACH OTHER. THEY ARE PANTING, OUT OF BREATH. SKIN RUBBED RED. COVERED IN SWEAT. 147

THE REF LOOKS TO McDONOUGH.

REF

Your call, Iowa.

A glimmer of indecision from McDonough. He looks to Brands. Brands gives a short nod - "Your choice".

MCDONOUGH

Top.

In that moment, Anthony looks at McDonough and doesn't see an invincible foe. Not the killer from Iowa he feared and worshipped. But a young man. Out of breath, running out of options, trying to win a wrestling match.

Something close to calm comes over Anthony as he moves to the CENTER OF THE MAT. He gets in the position - DEAD CENTER. And waits.

McDonough kneels beside him - grabs his elbow.

SHANE

This is it. A lifetime of dreams and hard work comes down to this two minutes.

DON

Last year Robles made a critical error in going for the ball and chain tilt on McDonough when he got desperate. I would expect possibly to see a repeat of that.

SHANE

That would be a mistake in my view because McDonough would certainly be ready.

WHISTLE

McDonough tries to move Anthony but he can't. Anthony drops down, making an opening even more difficult.

1:30

The FURY of McDonough plays out above him but Anthony is centered, focused, the EYE OF THE STORM.

1:15

McDonough moves FASTER, DIGGING, GRABBING - *Nothing's working!*

Anthony smoothly lashes out and HOOKS HIS RIGHT ARM around McDonough's leg and curls his arm toward himself, almost collecting it, TRAPPING MCDONOUGH'S LEG AGAINST HIS BODY.

Now McDonough only has one leg.

1:00

SHANE (V.O.)

Look how Robles is controlling him with just the one arm! The strength he has is unbelievable!

(CONTINUED)

147 CONTINUED:

:45

Anthony is still in the center of the mat. McDonough is all over him - like there's three of him.

:30

And now he's desperate. Trying as hard as he can to FLIP ANTHONY OVER - TURN HIM OVER - MOVE HIM. He grabs Anthony's ankle... and PULLS.

:15

The final push. McDonough gives it all he has. All anybody ever had.

CROWD

12... 11..

There are some moments that are so important they are almost frozen in time. As if life slows to a crawl so that destiny may take its rightful place.

Anthony closes his eyes.

SERIES OF SHOTS -

148 - THE THIRD GRADE CLASS WHO WROTE THE LETTERS - WE MOVE 148  
OVER THEIR YOUNG FACES, EYES WIDE, WATCHING ANTHONY ON  
TV.

CROWD (O.S.)

10... 9...

149 - EDDIE, ON THE EDGE OF HIS SEAT, HOLDING HIS BREATH. 149

CROWD (O.S.)

8... 7...

150 - THE MESA HIGH GYM. PACKED. SILENT. THEY CRANE FORWARD 150  
AS ONE, LIKE A SLOW WAVE.

CROWD (O.S.)

6... 5...

151 - HARPER NATIONAL BANK. BENNETT AT HIS DESK, SEVERAL EMPLOYEES FROZEN BEHIND HIM AS THEY WATCH THE MATCH. 151

CROWD (O.S.)

4... 3...

152 - ON THE MAT. ANTHONY, ONCE AGAIN MAKES THE MOVE HE LOST WITH JUNIOR YEAR, AS PREDICTED. 152

QUINT

There's the ball and chain tilt!

McDonough expecting this, instantly counters--but Anthony sets him and reverses his body, for the first time using the full measure of his upper body strength, flips McDonough and PINS HIM FLAT ON THE MAT.

CROWD

... 1

THWEEEEEEEEET! THE FINAL WHISTLE!

The crowd erupts. Horns blast.

Anthony opens his eyes and it hits him - *I did it...*

McDonough pops up and jogs quickly out of the arena.

JUDY AND THE KIDS - are sobbing, celebrating.

BRANDS - his world upside down.

COACH WILLIAMS - a grown man struggling not to cry.

ON THE MAT - Anthony, his eyes filled with tears, hasn't moved. Finally, he stands and the ENTIRE CROWD STANDS UP WITH HIM. A standing ovation for their new champion.

Anthony spots his mom and the kids - he nods "*we did it*". She nods back, puts her hands to her heart "*we did*".

ANNOUNCER

YOUR NCAA CHAMPION....ANTHOOOONY  
ROOOOBBBBBLEESSSSSS..

He raises his hand and the ROAR OF THE CROWD grows even louder - becomes an almost living thing - a TORRENT OF SOUND - A WAVE OF APPROVAL - it becomes the validation that will carry him for all of his days.

FADE TO WHITE.

153           **INT. ASU SPORTS HALL OF FAME BUILDING - DAY**

153

A field trip of second graders. WE ARE ONE OF THEM, in the middle of the pack, as we move through the ROW UPON ROW OF CHAMPIONS. Every glass cabinet filled with TROPHIES, PLAQUES, TRIBUTES and ACCOLADES.

Something PULLS OUR ATTENTION and we stop and look into a cabinet to see... ANTHONY ROBLES' accomplishments on full display - PICTURES - HEADLINES - TROPHIES ...the NCAA TROPHY front and center.

154           **INT. MESA HIGH WRESTLING ROOM - DAY**

154

A new crop of kids flows into the wrestling gym. Coach Williams is warming up with a couple of kids. NEWSPAPER HEADLINES and ACCOLADES have been blown up and line the upper half of the entire gym. One entire wall is dedicated to Anthony.

A YOUNG FEMALE STUDENT(14)ENTERS. Before her, THE ENTIRE WALL, floor to ceiling, is a BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPH OF MANY HANDS HOLDING A TROPHY HIGH IN THE AIR. She looks up at the giant quote on the photo --

*"A MAN'S CHARACTER IS HIS FATE"*

The End