

THE DESVALIDO



Written by

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**OVER BLACK -**

A thunderous CHEERING CROWD.

SUPER: *"There's no drama like wrestling."* - Andy Kaufman

FADE IN:

**INT. WRESTLING RING - NIGHT**

Smoke curls through the lights. Camera flashes. The audience chants for a conquering hero.

The heel of a black boot rests on the cheek of MUERTE (40s), a massive luchador in a skull-black mask, face smushed to the mat.

We tilt up the boot to find it belonging to -

Dwight (30), a plump young man in red tights, cape, and afro.

SIDELINE ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Muerte took a devastating blow  
delivered by the mighty Dwight!

Dwight combs his thin mustache, sprints to the ropes, climbs to the top level, and raises both fists like a champion.

AUDIENCE (V.O.)

DW-IGHT! DW-IGHT! DW-IGHT!

SELENA (O.S.)

Dwight!

Dwight turns to the crowd and sees -

SELENA (30), radiant, Latina, and impossibly angelic, blowing him a kiss from the front row.

SELENA (CONT'D)

You're going to be late!

DWIGHT

Huh?

Muerte rises up, no longer defeated. He comes at Dwight with the authority.

SELENA

Dwight, you're going to be late!

Muerte pushes Dwight off the top rope.

Dwight falls backward out of the ring letting out a high-pitched scream.

MATCH CUT:

**INT. DWIGHT'S BEDROOM - DAY**

Dwight falls out of bed and slams onto the floor in the exact same scream. The arena is gone. No crowd. No cape. Just a blanket over his head.

MOM (60) stands in the doorframe holding MR. MORDECAI, an old cat who has seen everything and approved of none of it.

MOM

You're going to be late, son.

DWIGHT

Ma! The alarm hasn't even gone off.

MOM

You slept through it, Dwight.

Dwight clocks the nightstand: 12:37 P.M.

DWIGHT

FROM THE LEGIONS OF THOR!

He rockets up in a T-shirt, underwear, and socks. He digs through a laundry pile, finds pants, throws them over his shoulder, and stumbles out half-dressed.

MOM

What about your shoes?

DWIGHT (O.S.)

There's a pair in my locker!

MOM

Don't forget about the newspapers!

**INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY**

The TV plays a Spanish-language soap opera at high melodrama volume.

Dwight races past a waffle on the breakfast table, notices it, and keeps on - stops, then dashes back.

He drowns the waffle in syrup, folds it like a taco, stuffs it into his mouth, and bolts out the door.

**EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY**

Dwight jiggles the door handle of his piece-of-junk car. It opens with a metallic cough.

He sees a pile of old newspapers stacked on the roof.

DWIGHT  
(to himself)  
I'll deal with it later.

Dwight's car puttters down the street, one wrong noise away from retirement.

**EXT./INT. DWIGHT'S CAR - DAY**

A Saint Jude necklace dangles from the rearview mirror.

Upbeat Latin music plays. Dwight dances in the driver's seat with complete commitment and no technique.

The song ends.

RADIO ANNOUNCER  
Lucha Libre! High-flying wrestlers  
from all over are now in town -

**EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT - DAY**

Dwight enters to find one last open space.

A muscle car enters on the opposite side - A standoff. Two cars. One parking spot. No dignity.

The muscle car revs: ROARRR.

Dwight revs his engine: RAT-TAT-TAT-TAT... phlegm.

The muscle car launches. Dwight hits the gas. His car stalls instantly.

DWIGHT  
FOR THE LOVE OF LOKI!

**INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY**

Dwight slides to his locker on socked feet, pulls the handle - Locked.

DWIGHT  
 (to himself)  
 Are you kidding me?

MR. JESÚS (40), the boss, precise, judgmental, and armed with a bad haircut, creeps up behind him.

MR. JESÚS (O.S.)  
 Muchacho?

Dwight screams.

DWIGHT  
 Mr. Jesús! I just needed my -

Mr. Jesús pulls a key attached to a recoil wire on his belt. He unlocks the locker. Opens it - Empty.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)  
 Where are my shoes?

MR. JESÚS  
 Incinerated.

DWIGHT  
 Incinerated?

MR. JESÚS  
 To burn or reduce something completely to ashes.

DWIGHT  
 I know what it means. Why did you set my shoes on fire?

MR. JESÚS  
 They stunk. The florist passed out when she walked in here yesterday.

Dwight looks down at his bare feet.

DWIGHT  
 But those were my only pair.

MR. JESÚS  
 Take a stroll with me.

**INT. BREAKFAST AISLE - DAY**

Dwight trails Mr. Jesús through cereal boxes arranged with religious precision.

MR. JESÚS  
Dwight, how long have you worked  
for me in this store?

DWIGHT  
Seven years.

MR. JESÚS  
Seven years, and you're still just  
a bagboy.

DWIGHT  
Mr. Jesús, shouldn't I clock in?

MR. JESÚS  
I'm afraid that won't be necessary.

DWIGHT  
Why's that?

MR. JESÚS  
I have to let you go, Dwight.

The blood drains from Dwight's face.

DWIGHT  
What? No, I need this job. Ma's out  
of work and everything I make goes  
to the house. Please.

MR. JESÚS  
This is a result of your actions.  
You are late, unprepared, and  
always waiting for someone else to  
fix the problem.

He notices a bright, expensive cereal box sitting on the  
bottom shelf and calls Dwight's attention to it.

MR. JESÚS (CONT'D)  
Look at this, Dwight. Top brand  
cereal. Good box. Good name. Good  
product. But placed in on the wrong  
shelf. You are like that cereal.

DWIGHT  
What?

MR. JESÚS  
You have value, kid, but you're  
misplaced. If you keep yourself at  
the bottom shelf where no one  
looks, you will spend your whole  
life there.

Dwight stares at the cereal.

DWIGHT

Just give me a second chance. You want the cereal on the right shelf? I'll re-organize the whole store if I have to.

MR. JESÚS

This isn't a movie. No need for a scene. We have a new guy coming in, and he needs to be trained.

DWIGHT

So if I train him, I'm not fired?

MR. JESÚS

We'll see.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Clean up, men's bathroom. It's a mess...

DWIGHT

On it!

Dwight runs down the aisle, sliding in his socks.

**INT. MEN'S BATHROOM - DAY**

Dwight, now in flip-flops and socks, mops his way into a stall and tracks the leak.

On the stall door: a huge smiley face drawn in permanent marker. Dumb. Cheerful. Immovable.

Dwight scrubs it. Nothing. He scrubs harder. Nothing. The smile keeps smiling.

He attacks it with both hands, slips, and crashes to the wet floor.

Dwight lies there, eye level with the grin.

DWIGHT

Shut up.

KNOCK, KNOCK.

CLAY (O.S.)

Hey, bro.

DWIGHT  
Use the other one.

CLAY  
I was told my trainer is in here.

Dwight flings the door open to find CLAY (30), a broad-shouldered redheaded hunk with a smile that melts everyone.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
The name's Clay.

**INT. EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH WALL - DAY**

A photo of a happier Dwight hangs slightly crooked. A MUSCULAR MAN enters, pins something over it, and exits.

A Lucha Libre advertisement now covers Dwight's photo.

**SERIES OF SHOTS - REGISTERS / PARKING LOT / TRASH COMPACTOR**

- Dwight bags groceries perfectly.

DWIGHT  
When bagging, you need to be diligent.

Clay steps in and bags just as well, twice as fast, with a wink to the CUSTOMER.

- Dwight pushes ten carts and gets winded. Clay glides past with a long train of carts, barely breathing.

- Dwight and Clay stare into the trash compactor like it has a criminal history.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)  
Someone died here.

Clay looks at him, deciding whether that is a joke.

**INT. AISLE - CONTINUOUS**

They mop a massive spill of milk.

Dwight works carefully.

Clay works like the mop owes him money.

SELENA (O.S.)  
Dwight!

They look up and see -

Selena running toward them in slow motion: Luchador T-shirt, Saint Jude necklace, hair alive with urgency.

To Dwight, she is a vision. To everyone else, she is a woman trying not to lose her mind.

CLAY

Broski. Who is that?

DWIGHT

Selena.

Selena reaches them, focused, breathless, already solving three problems at once.

SELENA

Boy, am I glad to see you.

DWIGHT

Me also. Glad to I am, to see you.

Beat.

CLAY

The name's Clay. Just started working here. So if you need anything -

SELENA

(to Dwight)

My abuelo's hosting a community lucha event in twenty minutes and the caterer shorted us.

She digs through her purse and hands Dwight a long list.

SELENA (CONT'D)

I already mapped the store and listed out the items we need.

DWIGHT

You mapped it?

SELENA

By section. Produce, dairy, meat, dry goods. Abuelo says I should've been a doctor based on my handwriting. Can you make it out.

Dwight glances over the list, impressed beyond reason.

DWIGHT

I can make out. I mean, not make-out, but yeah. I can read.

Selena hides her smile.

SELENA

Good. Then I choose you.

DWIGHT

It's all organized too. By food category and everything.

SELENA

Thought of you while writing it.

Dwight and Selena catch each other's eye. Clay clocks the chemistry, then clocks the deadline.

CLAY

So, twenty minutes?

Dwight tears the list into sections and hands pieces to Selena and Clay.

DWIGHT

Clay, produce. Selena, dairy. I'll tackle meat.

Clay giggles.

CLAY

Beat you will.

Dwight sticks his hand into the middle. Selena, amused, joins in. Clay stacks his giant paw on top.

DWIGHT

Go!

They explode in three directions.

Clay runs back into frame.

CLAY

(whispering)  
Han Brolo.

Dwight runs back to him.

CLAY (CONT'D)

What's produce?

**MONTAGE - GROCERY STORE AS ACTION ARENA**

- Selena drives a cart hard around a corner, catches a sliding bag of tortillas before it hits the floor, and keeps moving.
- Dwight spin-moves around a CUSTOMER, snatches ground beef from the case, then politely returns to help the confused man choose chuck roast.
- Clay studies a squash, studies the list, then studies the squash again as if it might confess.

CLAY

Jalapeños?

- Selena skids into dairy, loads milk, cheese, and crema with surgical speed.
- Dwight ducks beneath a stock cart, pops up in the spice aisle, and catches a falling jar against his chest.
- Clay triumphantly drops a pineapple into his cart.
- The three carts converge at the registers like a heist crew hitting the extraction point.

**EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY**

Selena's SUV is loaded with bags. She closes the hatch and touches Dwight's arm.

SELENA

Thank you. You saved me.

An awkward, charged moment.

SELENA (CONT'D)

I'll see you later.

Selena heads for the driver's seat.

Dwight and Clay push the empty carts back toward the store.

CLAY

My dude.

Dwight and Clay high-five.

DWIGHT

I think you broke my hand.

CLAY

What's your story, bro?

DWIGHT

You're looking at it. And you? How does someone with pecs like Captain America end up here?

CLAY

That is so nice of you to say, man.

For the first time, Clay's smile softens into something real.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Truth? I've fallen on my face a few times. This place is me learning how to stand back up without making it everybody else's problem.

DWIGHT

That was weirdly deep.

CLAY

I know. I scared myself.

TICKING and GRINDING from Selena's SUV. The guys turn as Selena exits, alarmed.

SELENA

I think I left the lights on...

DWIGHT

How long do we have?

Clay looks up at the sun, squints, and does one inexplicable aerobic stretch.

CLAY

Four minutes and twenty-four seconds.

DWIGHT

I'll be right back.

Dwight runs off.

Beat. Clay and Selena stand there -

CLAY

So you come here often?

Dwight's car comes around the corner and pulls up to Selena's SUV, and clips a loose cart. The cart spins perfectly into a corral.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
Points for style!

Dwight opens Selena's trunk and loads groceries into his tiny car with desperate efficiency.

DWIGHT  
Dude, tell Mr. Jesús I'll be back  
in ten minutes.

CLAY  
I smell what you're stepping in.  
Selena! Get in the Bro-mobile.

**EXT./INT. DWIGHT'S CAR - DAY**

Dwight and Selena putter down the street. Bags are jammed everywhere.

The Saint Jude necklace swings beneath the mirror. Latin music plays.

SELENA  
You still have the necklace I gave  
you.

DWIGHT  
Of course.

The song ends. A wrestling ad hits the radio. Selena laughs, despite the crisis.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)  
What's funny?

SELENA  
That's my abuelo's lucha libre  
event. He runs it every year for  
the neighborhood.

DWIGHT  
"Luncha" what?

SELENA  
Lucha. Santo? Blue Demon? Mil  
Máscaras?

No light bulb. Not even a flicker.

SELENA (CONT'D)  
You're telling me you listen to  
Latin music, wear Saint Jude, and  
don't know what Lucha Libre is?

DWIGHT  
Isn't it like wrestling.

SELENA  
It's more than wrestling. For  
Abuelo, it's church, theater, and  
family all in the ring.

DWIGHT  
So, you like watching muscular guys  
in underwear?

SELENA  
What are you doing tonight?

Dwight looks at her - deer in headlights.

SELENA (CONT'D)  
Come to our event.

DWIGHT  
Como se dice "Maybe," in -

SELENA  
Huh, huh, huh!

DWIGHT  
What? What? What?

SELENA  
There! There! There! Turn!

Dwight yanks the wheel. The car swerves. Grocery bags launch  
like tiny asteroids.

**EXT. OUTSIDE EVENT - DAY**

The community event: Music. Kids chase balloons. Tías set out  
foil trays. Tíos unfold chairs. Masked LUCHADORES pose for  
photos with children.

ABUELO (70s), commands a smoky grill like a general.

An RC toy car zips into the driveway, piloted by PEDRO (10),  
bright-eyed and serious about tiny machinery.

Dwight's tire rolls over it with a CRUNCH.

Dwight freezes. A bag of tortillas slides out of the car and  
smacks the pavement.

Pedro stares at the crushed toy. Then at Dwight. First  
impression: devastation with a witness.

DWIGHT

Oh no. I am so sorry.

Pedro says nothing - Dwight kneels, picks up the broken toy, and tries to snap a wheel back on. It falls off again.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

I can fix this.

Pedro runs off.

Selena stuck in the car.

SELENA

Dwight, I'm stuck.

LUCHADOR 01 opens Selena's door like she is royalty. LUCHADOR 02 and LUCHADOR 03 grab grocery bags. The community absorbs Selena instantly: hugs, questions, favors, responsibility.

Dwight watches her move through it all - not just his crush, but the person holding the whole event together.

Selena hugs Luchador 01. Dwight sees the hug and deflates. He enters the car and starts it up.

SELENA (CONT'D)

Dwight!

Selena runs to the driver's window.

SELENA (CONT'D)

So, you coming tonight?

DWIGHT

I have a double shift, so...

SELENA

I'm working a double too. After I put out this event, I go straight to the restaurant.

A near-kiss hangs between them. Dwight panics and offers his hand. Selena shakes it, amused and a little disappointed.

DWIGHT

Well, and bye, bye.

SELENA

And bye, bye to you too, Dwight.

**INT. DWIGHT'S CAR - DAY**

Dwight grips the wheel, replaying the handshake like a crime.

DWIGHT

And bye, bye. And bye, bye. And  
bye, bye, you stupid idiot.

**EXT. GROCERY STORE - DAY**

Dwight walks back with his head down.

Clay exits, throws an arm around Dwight's neck, and nearly changes his posture by force.

CLAY

Dude, first day, survived. Dinner's  
on me. I know the perfect place.

DWIGHT

Why do I feel like this is a trap?

CLAY

Because friendship is new to you.

**INT. MEXICAN RESTAURANT - DAY**

The restaurant is alive with plates, families, Spanish from the kitchen, and Selena weaving through it like she belongs to every table.

Dwight shakes his leg while Clay colors with crayons.

CLAY

Dude, quit shaking your leg.  
You're making me go outside the  
lines.

DWIGHT

What are you, eight?

CLAY

You're never too old to color,  
broannasaurs-rex. Also, I process  
big feelings in primary colors.

Dwight takes a swig of water. Selena walks by with a tray.

SELENA

Hey guys!

Dwight does a spit take and coughs.

SELENA (CONT'D)  
Are you okay?

DWIGHT  
(choking)  
I'm beautiful.

SELENA  
Okay... I'll come back for your  
order.

Selena smiles and exits.

DWIGHT  
Is she why we came here?

CLAY  
Dude, she likes you. I'm pretty  
good at seeing these things. Ask  
her out.

DWIGHT  
I can't do that.

CLAY  
Why not?

DWIGHT  
Look at her. Family, community,  
luchadors. I'm just a guy.

Clay stops coloring. He hears the real wound.

CLAY  
Then stop stop being just a guy.

DWIGHT  
What does that even mean?

Clay looks toward the lucha poster on the wall.

CLAY  
Wait for it. Yep. Lightning just  
struck the Claydome.

DWIGHT  
Please don't call your head that.

CLAY  
We make you into one.

DWIGHT  
Into what?

CLAY  
A luchador.

Dwight absorbs that despite himself.

DWIGHT  
I can't be a luchador, dude. Look  
at me.

Clay looks Dwight up and down.

CLAY  
We can fix that.

DWIGHT  
Who's "We?"

Clay quickly sketches on his napkin: a luchador mask with a bold D and an exaggerated little mustache.

CLAY  
We can do this, bro-nado.

Dwight studies the sketch. It is ridiculous. It is also the first time someone has drawn him as the center of anything.

Dwight smiles and nods. Clay smiles and knocks on the table.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
Yeah!

**INSERT LUCHADOR GRAPHIC: *THE NEXT DAY***

CUT TO:

**ESTABLISHING. EXT. DWIGHT'S HOUSE - DAY**

A newspaper is tossed up on the roof.

**INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY**

KNOCKING... Mom flings the front door open.

MOM  
Who on God's green earth is - ?

Clay stands there with volcanic enthusiasm and two gym bags.

CLAY  
Can Dwight come out to play?



CLAY

Scale of one to ten. One, you're faking. Ten, it's coming out?

DWIGHT

Three?

CLAY

Three's good. Let's gain some pain.

Dwight leans out of the window. Clay stops the car.

Dwight collects himself and wipes his mouth.

DWIGHT

I can't do this, Clay. I'm not like you. I'm not top self, you know.

CLAY

Is that code for something?

DWIGHT

Look at me, dude. Does it look like I can be the man of Selena's dreams? I'm just a bagboy.

CLAY

Me too, man. And yet here we are. I'm thirty years old, don't have a dime to my name, live with my brother, but you know what I do everyday I wake up?

DWIGHT

A bunch of push-ups?

CLAY

Other than that.

DWIGHT

What do you do?

CLAY

I imagine my life is a mountain and I need to move that mountain to a better spot. You know how to move a mountain, Dwight?

DWIGHT

No. How?

CLAY

You move one rock a day. Some days it feels like a pebble, and others, a boulder, but as long as you are moving them, one day that mountain will shift. So are you going to leave your mountain where it is, or are you going to pick up a rock?

DWIGHT

Can I pick up two of them?

CLAY

There's my bro.

Clay punches the gas.

**INT. GYM - DAY**

Clay bursts through the front door and takes in a big whiff. Dwight follows.

CLAY

Take it in.

Dwight inhales and gags.

DWIGHT

What is that?

CLAY

Victory. And a lot of sweat.

Muscular WRESTLERS pump iron, rehearse falls, practice holds, and sell every hit like the crowd is already watching.

One wrestler punches a dummy, checks its angle, then punches again with more drama.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Emmet, I found our champion!

EMMET (35) jumps from the mat and lands in a superhero pose.

EMMET

As you were, gentlemen.

A BODY BUILDER approaches Dwight.

CLAY

(whispering)

Don't let him smell your fear.

DWIGHT  
That's not fear...

Body Builder sniffs Dwight.

Emmet stops Body Builder with one hand.

EMMET  
We don't chew guests until they  
sign the waiver.

Body Builder backs off. Emmet inspects Dwight's hands,  
posture, eyes, fear.

EMMET (CONT'D)  
So you're Dwight.

Clay massages Dwight's shoulders roughly.

CLAY  
And we are going to transform him  
into a lucha machine.

EMMET  
(to Dwight)  
Can Dwight speak for himself?

DWIGHT  
Yes he - yes, sir, I can.

Emmet steps nose to nose with him.

EMMET  
Tell me, do you have what it takes?

DWIGHT  
...yes?

EMMET  
Then get in the ring.

CLAY  
YAZ!

Clay skips to the ring.

DWIGHT  
But I just got here.

**INT. RING - CONTINUOUS**

Dwight bends through the ropes, slips, and lands on his face.

DWIGHT

I'm okay. I just landed on my face.

Emmet gives Clay a look. Clay helps Dwight into the ring.

A HUGE GUY slides in and comes at Dwight with a clothesline - controlled, safe, and still terrifying. Dwight hits the mat.

EMMET

Again. Learn the fall.

Dwight gets up. A STALLONE-LOOK-A-LIKE picks him up, turns him, and body slams him with practiced care and real impact.

EMMET (CONT'D)

Again. Learn the trust.

DWIGHT

Mama?

Body Builder rebounds off the ropes and dropkicks Dwight out of the ring. Clay finds Dwight on the floor.

CLAY

Gotta get back in there, bud.

DWIGHT

But it's so comfortable down here.

Clay picks Dwight up and Dwight reaches for the ropes.

EMMET

Stop.

All activity stops. Dead silence.

DWIGHT

Want me to try again?

EMMET

Not until you understand why you failed.

DWIGHT

Because I was attacked by several refrigerators?

EMMET

You failed because you are waiting for the costume to make you brave.

Dwight freezes.

EMMET (CONT'D)  
I don't train masks. I train the  
person under them.

Dwight gets back in the ring.

DWIGHT  
But I do. I'm top brand cereal.

EMMET  
Then stop acting like clearance  
stock.

That lands. A wrestler comes at Dwight and puts him to the  
mat - Emmet leans over Dwight.

EMMET (CONT'D)  
Changing the outside does not fix  
the inside. The mask reveals what  
you already believe. If all you  
believe is that you are nothing,  
the crowd will believe it too.

Emmet helps Dwight to his feet.

EMMET (CONT'D)  
Why are you here?

DWIGHT  
For Selena.

Emmet signals - A wrestler comes at Dwight and puts him to  
the mat.

EMMET  
Why are you here?

DWIGHT  
To become be seen.

Emmet signals - A wrestler comes at Dwight and puts him to  
the mat.

EMMET  
Why are you here?

DWIGHT  
To become brave.

Emmet signals - A wrestler comes at Dwight and puts him to  
the mat.

Silence. Clay's goofy smile is gone.

Dwight rolls over on the mat and cries.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)  
I'm tired.

Clay goes into comfort his friend, but is held back by a wrestler.

EMMET  
Tired of what?

DWIGHT  
Of being me. I'm tired of not being good enough.

Dwight continues to cry.

Body Builder picks Dwight up to his feet and places a hand on his shoulder, and says something in gibberish.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)  
What was that?

EMMET  
He said, "Welcome to the gym, Greenhorn."

Dwight smiles.

EMMET (CONT'D)  
Now we can start your training.

DWIGHT  
So what was all that?

#### **INT. GYM - DAY**

Body Builder draws the last line of a tournament chart on a board. In the center reads: FINAL FIGHT.

He places Dwight's photo on one of the outside lines, studies Dwight's thin mustache, and thickens it with a marker until it looks heroic and completely absurd.

#### **INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY**

Dwight tiptoes past Mom sleeping on the couch. She snores.

He pulls the quilt up around her and notices a long shoelace hanging from underneath her pillow.

MOM  
(sleep talking)  
Pile, hammer-drive, cage.

**EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY**

Clay and Dwight push an endless line of carts.

CLAY  
Picked your Tonto yet, bro-seph?

DWIGHT  
My what?

CLAY  
The Robin to your Batman. Your ring partner.

DWIGHT  
I didn't know I needed one.

CLAY  
Nobody climbs alone. Even Robinhood had Little John.

DWIGHT  
How about you?

Clay lights up. Maybe too much.

CLAY  
My man!

Clay gives Dwight a high-five.

DWIGHT  
Yep, my hand just went numb.

CLAY  
What's your luchador name?

DWIGHT  
Dwight.

Clay stops the cart train.

CLAY  
Bro-tato chip. No. You can't use your actual name.

DWIGHT  
But it's who I am.

CLAY

Exactly. That's why the mask matters. It shouldn't erase you. It should reveal the part of you that's been hiding.

DWIGHT

That sounds like something embroidered on a pillow at a gym.

CLAY

The name tells the crowd what to see before you believe it yourself.

DWIGHT

So what's your luchador name?

Clay hops onto the carts and strikes a heroic stance.

CLAY

El Rojo Zorro.

DWIGHT

Isn't concealing my identity defeating the whole point? If I wear a mask and go by a different name, how is Selena going to know it's me?

CLAY

Same way Lois Lane learned Clark Kent was Superman.

DWIGHT

So I have a dual identity?

CLAY

Isn't it great? A meek grocery clerk by day, victorious luchador by night. But the goal is not to disappear into the mask, bro. It is to finally show up inside it.

DWIGHT

That's very philosophical of you, Clay.

CLAY

I read Friedrich Nietzsche at night before bed. The point is, man -

Clay points at Dwight's mustache.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
You already have the secret weapon.

Dwight touches his mustache, self-conscious but pleased.

Clay sees Selena walking toward the store.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
Speaking of secret weapon.

Dwight sees her and panics.

DWIGHT  
How's my breath?

Dwight opens his mouth. Clay leans in, inhales, and seriously evaluates it.

CLAY  
Blue berry waffle, nice.

SELENA  
Hey, guys.

CLAY  
Adios, Greenhorn.

Clay pushes the carts away with all the subtlety of a man abandoning a crime scene.

SELENA  
I have another list, but no emergency today. No dead battery. No abuelo slapping me with a spatula.

DWIGHT  
Absolutely. I mean, I can help. With the list. Not with the spatula.

He takes the list. Their fingers almost touch. Dwight notices. Selena notices that he notices.

SELENA  
Good. Then I'm all yours today.

DWIGHT  
Hot.

Selena smiles. Dwight realizes what he said.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)  
Out here. The weather. Yeah.

SELENA  
Want to go in where there's AC?

DWIGHT  
Yes!

**INT. AISLES - DAY**

Dwight pushes a cart as Selena hangs on to the front like a kid. She knows the store now, but lets him steer.

DWIGHT  
Selena?

SELENA  
Yes?

Dwight raises the list with extreme seriousness.

DWIGHT  
Hard or soft shells?

Selena steps off, grabs both boxes, and tosses them in.

SELENA  
Always both.

Dwight pushes again. Selena checks the list.

DWIGHT  
You like luchadors, right?

SELENA  
I grew up around them. My abuelo says every mask is a promise. You wear it, you have to live up to it.

DWIGHT  
Did you hear about the new one coming to town?

SELENA  
No. What's his name?

DWIGHT  
...The Underdog.

Selena gives him a look: close, but not enough.

SELENA  
That's not a good name.

DWIGHT  
But that's what he is.

SELENA  
A luchador name should say what  
hurts and what survives it.  
Something people can cheer because  
they recognize it in themselves.

DWIGHT  
What's underdog in Spanish?

Selena studies him. She sees more than the question.

SELENA  
Desvalido.

DWIGHT  
Des-va-li-do.

SELENA  
It means the helpless one. The  
unprotected one. Someone people  
overlook until they realize he's  
still standing.

DWIGHT  
Interesting.

SELENA  
Now that sounds like somebody I'd  
cheer for.

Dwight combs his mustache as he pushes the cart.

**EXT. PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER**

Selena helps Dwight stock her SUV with groceries.

SELENA  
That's all of them.

Dwight looks at the empty cart.

DWIGHT  
Yeah.

Selena closes her trunk, sits on the rear bumper, and pats  
the area beside her.

SELENA  
Still have the necklace?

DWIGHT  
It's next to my heart.

Selena places her hand on his chest. Dwight forgets how lungs work.

SELENA  
Yep. There it is.

She pulls her matching Saint Jude necklace from under her shirt.

SELENA (CONT'D)  
Do you know what St. Jude stands for?

DWIGHT  
No clue.

SELENA  
Underdogs.

Dwight looks down at the necklace and at her.

TIRES SCREECH. A HORN BLASTS - They turn to -

A large truck pulling up.

SELENA (CONT'D)  
And there he is. Mi abuelo.

Another awkward silence. The HORN BEEPS again.

SELENA (CONT'D)  
(at truck)  
OKAY!

Selena gets in the SUV. Before she drives off -

SELENA (CONT'D)  
Hey, Dwight. I dig the mustache.

Selena drives off. Dwight pushes the cart back to the store and kicks his heels.

**LUCHADOR GRAPHIC: TRAINING BEGINS**

**INT. BEDROOM - DAY**

The alarm clock blares at 5:00 A.M.

Dwight rolls over, drags the blanket from his head, and swats the clock off the table.

**INT. GYM - DAY**

Clay jump ropes like a pro. Each foot hits in clean rhythm.

EMMET

Stamina first. If your lungs quit,  
your courage goes with them.

Dwight tries. The rope knots around his ankles instantly.

**INT. BEDROOM / KITCHEN - DAY**

The clock is on the other side of the room. It goes off.

Dwight rolls out of bed, crosses the room, and shuts it off.

He drinks a raw egg, gags, swallows through sheer pride, and marks the calendar.

**INT. POOL - DAY**

Clay, blindfolded, dives beautifully.

EMMET

A flyer learns to fall before he  
earns the right to fly.

Dwight, blindfolded, creeps to the edge of the diving board.

DWIGHT

Is the pool still there?

Body Builder gives Dwight a gentle shove. Dwight pinwheels off the board and splashes down flat.

Emmet opens an umbrella as water erupts over him.

**INT. BEDROOM / KITCHEN - DAY**

Dwight is already awake when the clock goes off.

Egg crack. Swallow. Calendar marked.

**INT. GYM - DAY**

Clay runs and jumps three hurdles.

EMMET

Footwork. In the ring, one step is the difference between pain and applause.

Dwight runs, clears the first hurdle, runs around the second, and knocks over the third.

DWIGHT

Strategic pathfinding.

Emmet palms his face.

**EXT. STADIUM STAIRCASE - DAY**

Emmet, Clay and Dwight run up a mountain of stairs. Clay and Emmet make it to the top. Dwight slows, fighting for breath.

EMMET

Believe before the body does,  
Greenhorn!

DWIGHT

My body filed a complaint.

Clay runs down to him.

CLAY

I know that look.

DWIGHT

Sweaty panic?

CLAY

Wanting to quit before anyone can see you fail. I used to do that.

DWIGHT

You?

CLAY

Yeah, bro. Muscles are not emotional armor. They are just loud sleeves.

Clay offers a hand, not a shove.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Come on. You do not have to believe all the way up. Just believe to the next step.

Dwight takes the hand and climbs.

**INT. BEDROOM / KITCHEN - DAY**

Empty bed. A cracked eggshell beside an empty glass. A day is marked on the calendar.

**EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY**

Clay sits on Dwight's back as Dwight bear-crawls across the field.

EMMET

Patience. Clear mind. A wrestler  
lets pressure teach him where he is  
strong.

CLAY

On Dancer, on Prancer, on Comet!

DWIGHT

I swear I will become a horse just  
to throw you.

**MONTAGE - GYM / POOL / STAIRS**

Dwight reps the bench press as Clay spots. The bar wobbles.

Clay keeps his hands close, trusting Dwight to finish the rep.

Clay pounds Dwight's torso during hanging sit-ups. Dwight takes the hits and keeps counting.

Dwight tussles with Clay and gets him in a headlock.

DWIGHT

I did it!

EMMET

You sacrificed stance for a sleeper  
hold.

Clay uses Dwight's weight against him, flips him over, and puts him in a headlock. Dwight taps out.

CLAY

You're getting it, bro-tein shake.

Dwight smiles despite himself.

Dwight does one clean push-up. Then another. His arms tremble, but he does not collapse.

EMMET

Again. This one is for when the crowd thinks you are finished.

Dwight jump ropes in rhythm with Clay. The earlier knot is gone.

Dwight pulls Body Builder on a sled with a bear crawl. Later strength for moving men larger than him.

Dwight, blindfolded, dives into the pool and lands with a controlled splash. Later courage for the ropes.

The gym guys hold up score cards: a six, a three, and a drawing of a cat.

On the stairs, Dwight outruns Clay and Emmet. He reaches the top, throws his fists into the air, and dances as if a crowd is already cheering.

CLAY

Dude.

EMMET

He is ready for the -

**LUCHADOR GRAPHIC: *TOURNAMENT***

**INT. WRESTLING LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT**

Clay holds the back of Dwight's head in a bucket of water.

He lifts Dwight up, then dunks him again.

Dwight jerks free, gasping.

DWIGHT

That's enough!

CLAY

Rad. My turn.

Clay leans over for Dwight to dunk him.

EMMET

What are you doing?

DWIGHT

I read that if you do this before a match, it numbs your face so when you get hit, you won't feel a thing.

EMMET

Do us a favor. Don't read anymore.

Emmet plops down a large box. Clay and Dwight open it.

Clay pulls out a red, straight-brimmed lucha hat. Dwight pulls out red boots polished like treasure.

CLAY

Bro, this is -

EMMET

I know. I know.

Dwight starts crying.

DWIGHT

I'm never taking this off. Not even when I take a bubble bath.

EMMET

You're a weird dude, Dwight. Now suit up. We have a match to win.

#### **GLORIOUSLY OVER-SERIOUS HERO SUIT-UP MONTAGE - NIGHT**

Quick push-in CU: Clay tightens the back of his red mask like he is sealing himself into legend.

Quick push-in CU: Dwight pulls his mask down. His eyes appear. Then the mustache, perfectly framed beneath the fabric.

Quick push-in CU: Dwight fights his way into spandex with the solemnity of a knight donning armor and the grace of a man losing to elastic.

Quick push-in CU: Clay tightens the laces on his boot. He takes his time, making sure the bow has swagger.

Dwight puts on the Saint Jude necklace. His fingers shake.

He has trouble with the clasp.

DWIGHT

Hey, man, could you -

CLAY

Yeah, dude.

Clay, fully costumed, helps Dwight fasten the necklace.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
Lost causes, right?

DWIGHT  
Something like that.

CLAY  
Good. Then we are exactly on brand.

LAWYER (O.S.)  
Excuse me, gentlemen?

A LAWYER enters with a clipboard.

LAWYER (CONT'D)  
Sign here, please.

DWIGHT  
What is this?

LAWYER  
A statement releasing us of all  
liability in case you get hurt,  
injured, die, or worse.

Dwight looks at Clay, who is doing push-ups.

DWIGHT  
Or worse? What's worse than death?

LAWYER  
You don't sign, you don't wrestle.

Dwight signs. Clay signs without stopping the push-ups.

LAWYER (CONT'D)  
Thank you, gentlemen. Break a leg.

The Lawyer exits.

SELENA (O.S.)  
Hello?

CLAY  
Is that...?

DWIGHT  
Selena!

CLAY  
Wait, they come back here? That  
feels like a flaw in security.

SELENA (O.S.)  
Anybody in here?

Dwight plants his hands on his hips, suddenly heroic.

DWIGHT  
(hero voice)  
We're back here!

Selena and Pedro enter. Pedro hides behind her leg, wary.

SELENA  
(to Pedro)  
See? They're nice. Say hi.

Pedro gives a tiny wave. He recognizes Dwight's mustache beneath the mask, but cannot place it.

CLAY  
(big hero voice)  
Hola, niño y señora. I am El Rojo  
Zorro, defender of the innocent

Clay lifts his foot to place it on the bench, misses, and recovers as if he meant to do it.

SELENA  
(to Pedro)  
Go on. It's okay.

Pedro steps up to Rojo Zorro.

PEDRO  
Pedro.

CLAY  
Well, Pedrrrrro, you look like a  
strong man. Let's see the muscles.

Clay flexes. Pedro flexes back.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
Wow. Dangerous. Give me a high  
five.

Pedro high-fives Rojo Zorro. Clay reacts in playful agony.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
My hand! I need you to wrestle for  
me and take my place in the ring.

Pedro shakes his head, then looks up at Dwight.

SELENA  
(to Pedro)  
Okay, say bye to The Desvaldio.

Pedro waves and exits hand in hand with Selena.

DWIGHT  
Bye.

**INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Dwight and Clay stand in the dark, silhouetted by flashing lights at the end of the tunnel. The crowd rumbles beyond them.

CLAY  
It's cold in here. Do you think  
it's cold? I think it's cold here.

DWIGHT  
Serious question, man.

CLAY  
What's up?

DWIGHT  
Does this costume make me look fat?

Clay looks him over, taking the question with ridiculous seriousness.

CLAY  
Tell you after we survive.

Upbeat Latin music BLASTS. A STAGEHAND waves them forward.

STAGEHAND  
Go! Go! Go!

Dwight freezes. Clay grabs his wrist and turns panic into choreography. They dance toward the light.

**INT. OUTSIDE WRESTLING RING - NIGHT**

The two luchadors enter with big heroic energy and almost no heroic coordination. Clay spins. Dwight copies him half a beat late.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Señoras y señores, boys and girls,  
welcome to the arena of pain, the  
torment of titans, the world of  
Mexican wrestling, Lucha Libre!

The crowd gives them nothing. A cough. A squeaky chair.

DWIGHT

Tough crowd.

Pedro pops up in his seat like a spark plug.

PEDRO

Go get them, Desvalido!

Dwight finds Pedro in the crowd. Then he notices a CAMERAMAN circling ringside. Another camera. A tiny local-TV monitor shows Dwight's masked face LIVE.

DWIGHT

Dude. There are cameras.

CLAY

Yeah. Local TV. Tiny audience.  
Like, emotionally tiny.

DWIGHT

Local people are people I know  
locally.

CLAY

Don't worry. Your mom doesn't even  
know what wrestling is.

A red tally light snaps on. Dwight tries to look heroic and accidentally waves like he is on a parade float.

ROUGH HISPANIC MUSIC BOOMS. The audience comes alive.

Two DEMON LUCHADORS flip down the aisle. Horned masks. Sharp footwork. They hit the ring like professional nightmares.

Dwight and Clay watch them warm up with synchronized cartwheels.

DWIGHT

We have made a scheduling mistake.

CLAY

No retreat, only branding.

**INT. WRESTLING RING - CONTINUOUS**

The REFEREE gestures both teams to the middle. The Demons cartwheel in. Dwight walks. Clay salsa-steps beside him, terrified but committed.

REFEREE

Caballeros, nice clean fight. Give the people pain, but professional pain.

One Demon spits in Dwight's face.

DWIGHT

My eye!

The other Demon kicks Clay in the stomach. Clay folds.

The crowd ROARS. The Referee pushes the Demons back to their corner.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

Zorro? You alive?

CLAY

Bueno, muchacho. Mostly organs.

DWIGHT

He hit me right in the pupil.

BELL RINGS.

CLAY

It's show time!

Clay charges first. Good setup. Bad judgment. He leaps at Demon One. Demon One catches him, spins him by the neck, and dumps him to the mat.

Clay pops up on instinct and punches Demon One down. The crowd starts to notice. Demon One kips up and sweeps Clay's legs.

Clay grabs the Demon, removes his red hat, and head-butts him with the crown of his mask. It works. Clay is shocked it works.

CLAY (CONT'D)

I planned that spiritually!

Demon Two springboards off the rope and kicks Clay under the chin. Clay drops like a felled tree.

Clay crawls toward Dwight on hands and knees.

DWIGHT

Oh no, no, no.

Clay reaches. Falls short. Reaches again. Falls shorter.

CLAY

Tag, bro. Tag the destiny.

Dwight tries to duck between the ropes, gets tangled, climbs higher to fix it, then trips over his own boot and FLAILS into the ring.

His falling elbow lands on Demon One by accident. The crowd LAUGHS, then CHEERS.

REFEREE

Rojo Zorro, you're out. Desvalido, you're in!

Dwight stands center ring. Heartbeat in his ears. Camera inches closer. The local-TV lens is now another opponent.

DWIGHT

(to camera)

Please do not zoom.

Demon One screams and charges in slow motion.

CLAY

Desvalido! Vámonos, amigo!

DWIGHT

Clothesline!

Dwight swings his arm. Demon One runs straight into it and flips to the mat. Dwight stares at his own arm.

EMMET (O.S.)

Don't announce your moves!

Demon Two flies from the top rope toward Dwight.

CLAY

Look out!

DWIGHT

Step back!

Dwight steps back one awkward inch. Demon Two body-smashes Demon One instead.

The crowd laughs bigger. Dwight realizes his panic has timing.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

I meant to do exactly some of that.

The Demons recover and circle him. Dwight backs into the ropes, his weight bending them. Demon One charges. Dwight ducks too late, rebounds off the rope, and belly-bumps him out of balance.

The move is ugly, but the physics are undeniable. Demon One stumbles into Demon Two. Both go down.

PEDRO

He used his belly!

Dwight climbs to the second rope. Then considers the third.

The third looks back at him with consequences. He stays on the second.

DWIGHT

Body smash!

He jumps. Not graceful. Perfectly heavy. He lands across both Demons.

EMMET

Like a bomb!

The crowd chants now, half laughing, half believing.

AUDIENCE

Des-val-ido! Des-val-ido!

Dwight hears it. For the first time, a room is looking at him and not past him.

The wrong lesson begins to form behind his eyes.

Both Demons kick Dwight in the back with both feet. Dwight hits the mat hard. The chant fractures into gasps.

STALLONE LOOK-A-LIKE

I don't think he can do it, Emmet.

The Demons split to opposite corners, climb the ropes, and launch for a double body splash.

Dwight rolls by accident, trying to crawl away. The Demons crash into each other.

Dwight sees the opening. Same awkward timing. Same heavy physics. He grabs Demon One by the horns and uses his own backward stumble to sling him through the ropes.

Demon One's mask pops loose. Dwight catches it without meaning to.

The crowd ERUPTS. Dwight raises the mask. Cameras push in.

He sees himself on the monitor, victorious and huge.

DWIGHT  
(softly)  
They see me.

Demon Two tackles Dwight from behind. Demon One slides back in, maskless and furious. Together, they twist Dwight down and pin him.

REFEREE  
One!

SELENA AND PEDRO  
No!

HUGE GUY  
Get up, Greenhorn!

REFEREE  
Two!

Demon One reaches for Dwight's mask strings. Dwight freezes. Without the mask, the cheering could vanish.

EMMET  
What are you doing?

SELENA  
Get up!

Dwight sees Pedro standing, believing. Selena beside him, terrified for him. The crowd is split between cheers and boos.

Dwight plants one foot. He shifts his weight instead of fighting strength with strength. The move is crude, born from panic, but real: he rolls his hips, lets the Demons overcommit, and uses their pull to drag them off-balance.

He rebounds from the ropes, faster now, and hits both Demons with a flying cross body. Same awkward body smash. Better timing.

The referee slaps the mat three times.

REFEREE  
That's it!

The Referee lifts Dwight's arm. Beat. Then the crowd goes wild.

AUDIENCE

Des-val-ido! Des-val-ido! Des-  
valido!

Dwight looks at the mask in his hand, then touches his own mask on his face. The conclusion lands clean and dangerous: the mask made him valuable.

**INT. WRESTLING LOCKER ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

Dwight sits with his mask in his hands, staring at it like it answered a prayer. Clay lies on the floor with an ice pack on his head.

EMMET

Good match, boys.

CLAY

Does anyone else see unicorns?

DWIGHT

They were just guys like us.

EMMET

Theatricality, my boy. The crowd  
loves a story. But never confuse  
the story with the man telling it.

Dwight barely hears the warning. He studies the mask.

DWIGHT

They chanted for me.

EMMET

They chanted for what you showed  
them.

DWIGHT

Because of this.

He lifts the mask.

EMMET

Because of what came through it.  
Learn the difference early.

The Referee enters and hands Dwight and Clay an envelope.

DWIGHT

What's this?

EMMET

Your winnings, my main man.

CLAY

Uni, uni, uni-unicorns.

EMMET

Enjoy this. The stakes will only rise the closer we get to the championship.

Dwight looks up at Emmet confused.

**LUCHADOR GRAPHIC: *RAISED STAKES***

**EXT. AIRPLANE HANGAR - MORNING**

A private jet door opens. Stairs fold out. A CROWD of cheering fans stand behind the ropes.

Security AGENTS form a line as if royalty has landed.

MUERTE steps out. Controlled stillness. He does not perform for the crowd; he makes the crowd perform for him.

Fans throw flowers. Hands reach. Cameras flash. Muerte walks through it all like worship is weather.

Pedro crawls under an agent and approaches with a marker and a photo.

PEDRO

Señor Muerte!

PEDRO (CONT'D)

¿Por favor? You're my hero.

Muerte takes the photo, then looks at Pedro.

MUERTE

Heroes are for children who need permission to be weak.

He crumples the photo and eats it.

Muerte walks toward his limo. Pedro stands there stung.

**INT. KITCHEN - DAY**

Cheese is grated. Tomatoes are cut. Other ingredients are scattered messily along the countertop. A domestic disaster trying to become breakfast.

Mom shuffles in.

MOM

What are you doing, Dwight?

Dwight, holding a spatula and wearing an apron with a muscular torso printed on it, presents breakfast with new confidence.

MOM (CONT'D)

Who are you and what have you done with my son?

DWIGHT

I'm the improved version, ma.

He spins her. The smoke detector SHRIEKS. Dwight and Mom wave oven towels toward the ceiling until the beeping stops.

Dwight looks at the burnt omelet.

MOM

That one took a beating.

DWIGHT

Still standing though.

He digs into his pocket and gives Mom a handful of cash.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

We can start fixing the house now.

Mom looks at the money, then at her son. This is help, but it is also a performance.

MOM

Where did you get this, Dwight?

DWIGHT

Overtime. At the store. I'll have more coming in soon, so call the repairman.

MOM

We do not need a repairman for every problem.

DWIGHT

We kind of do, ma. The roof is collecting newspapers like it's saving for retirement.

MOM

That roof did not get that way by itself.

DWIGHT

Exactly. I kept saying I would get to it. Now I can pay somebody who actually gets to things.

MOM

Sweetie, money is not the same as responsibility.

DWIGHT

It fixes more things than waffles do.

That lands harsher than he meant. Mom absorbs it.

MOM

You think I do not see what needs fixing?

DWIGHT

I think everybody sees it and nobody does anything. The roof. The car. The house. Me being late. You sleeping on the couch every night.

MOM

Careful.

DWIGHT

I am trying to be careful. That was the problem. I was careful so long I became invisible.

MOM

No, son. You became absent. There is a difference.

Dwight has no defense for that, so he reaches for offense.

DWIGHT

All I see you do is watch your stupid late-night soap operas and feed Mr. Mordecai.

The old cat falls off the refrigerator with perfect timing.

MOM  
They're not soap operas.

DWIGHT  
What are they then?

Mom takes her plate and fork. Her hurt has gone quiet, which is worse.

MOM  
Something I thought you might understand one day.

DWIGHT  
Ma -

MOM  
Let's go, Mr. Mordecai.

Mom exits. The cat follows. Dwight stands in the kitchen with money in his hand and no victory left in it.

#### **INT. GYM - DAY**

The guys mess around with Clay and Dwight. Body Builder throws a playful punch. Dwight blocks it and slaps him on the face.

Dwight throws a playful blow to the stomach. Body Builder blocks it and slaps Dwight back. The gym laughs.

Dwight touches his mustache, now part of the act.

CLAY  
The stache remains undefeated.

EMMET  
Gentlemen! Introducing El Rojo Zorro y The Desvalido. They know how to take a hit, am I right?

Dwight slaps Body Builder again, laughs, and runs. It is confidence with a little too much edge.

EMMET (CONT'D)  
But the truth is, you got lucky. Luck is not a foundation. You're going to have to dig deeper.

The front doors burst open. The room temperature drops before anyone moves.

Muerte steps inside. He does not hurry. He lets everyone feel the space become his.

Body Builder instinctively steps in front of Dwight.

CLAY  
Who is that?

STALLONE LOOK-A-LIKE  
No idea.

CLAY  
Should we be worried?

STALLONE LOOK-A-LIKE  
Hmm. Maybe.

Muerte sees Dwight laughing with the gym, sees the men rallying around him, then clocks the tournament board. A fresh crowd favorite has appeared in his kingdom.

MUERTE  
Where is this the new little saint  
they cheer for?

Dwight stiffens. The room feels the target land.

Muerte sniffs the air as if praise has a scent. He nears Stallone-look-a-like.

MUERTE (CONT'D)  
Nada.

He nears Huge Guy. Sniffs. Nothing. He walks behind Clay and sniffs.

MUERTE (CONT'D)  
Ah, Señor Peacock.

CLAY  
That feels accurate and hurtful.

MUERTE  
Bright feathers. Soft bones.

DWIGHT  
HEY!

Muerte smiles. Dwight has revealed the nerve.

MUERTE  
There you are.

Body Builder grabs Dwight and says something in gibberish: do not take the bait.

DWIGHT  
Spin move!

Dwight twirls out of the hold and rushes Muerte.

Muerte backhands Dwight across the face with surgical contempt. Dwight hits the floor.

EMMET  
Stop!

Muerte kneels beside Dwight. Quiet enough that only Dwight truly hears.

MUERTE  
The crowd cheered for you once.  
That will not happen again.

Muerte grips Dwight's chin and angles his masked face toward the gym.

MUERTE (CONT'D)  
A mask makes people look. It does  
not make you worthy of being seen.

He leans closer, almost tender in his cruelty.

MUERTE (CONT'D)  
See you in the ring, Desvalido.

**INT. WRESTLING RING - DAY**

Clay, Dwight and Emmet sit on the mat. Dwight has a frozen bag of peas taped to his face.

CLAY  
Who was that guy?

EMMET  
Señor Muerte.

CLAY  
Muerte? What does that mean?

EMMET  
Death.

CLAY  
Why is he called Mr. -

EMMET  
He killed a man in the ring.

CLAY  
On accident?

Emmet gives Clay the answer without words.

DWIGHT  
He's just trying to scare me.

EMMET  
Yes. And he accomplished that today.

EMMET (CONT'D)  
Dwight, you said you were doing this for a girl?

CLAY  
Selena. Dwight's number one reason for living and making strange eye contact with taco shells.

EMMET  
That's not good.

DWIGHT  
Why?

EMMET  
Does she know you're the Desvaldio?

CLAY  
Not a clue.

EMMET  
Good.

DWIGHT  
Why do you ask?

EMMET  
You are no longer allowed to see that girl anymore.

DWIGHT  
Wait, what? She's the only reason I'm doing all this.

EMMET  
She has become your weakness, not your reason.

That hits Dwight. He hates that it might be true.

EMMET (CONT'D)

A luchador wears a mask to protect what matters. Not to become less human. To protect what is human.

DWIGHT

And you think Selena is what matters?

EMMET

I think Muerte saw you jump because Clay was insulted. Imagine what he does if he sees your heart walk into the room.

DWIGHT

Couldn't we use the same tactic? Find what he cares about?

EMMET

I don't train bad guys, Dwight.

CLAY

But he's like just a guy, like us, right?

EMMET

Nobody knows who Señor Muerte is. They say he was born with the mask on. Men with nothing to lose are dangerous. Men like him who enjoy humiliating weakness are worse.

DWIGHT

Fine. I won't see her.

EMMET

It's the only way to keep her safe. And while we are on the subject, lose the cape.

**INT. RESTROOM STALL - DAY**

Dwight scrubs the smiley face on the stall door. It is almost gone now, reduced to one stubborn curve of a mouth.

He scrubs harder, not cleaning anymore. Erasing.

DWIGHT

(to himself)

I'm the Desvalido.

(MORE)

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

I'm not the guy on the floor. I'm  
not the guy everyone has to remind.  
I'm not -

MAN'S VOICE

Who are you talking to?

DWIGHT

No one.

Dwight gives the last mark a vicious scrub. The smile vanishes. The door is clean, but the paint beneath it is scarred.

Dwight stares at the blank spot like it cost him something.

**INT. WRESTLING LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT**

Dwight steps out of a stall wearing his wrestling costume. No cape.

Clay puts on his hat, watching Dwight a little too carefully.

CLAY

No cape?

DWIGHT

Dead weight.

CLAY

I was emotionally attached, but I respect the journey.

EMMET

Gentlemen! Are we -

Pedro steps in from the corner of the room.

PEDRO

Desvalido!

Dwight quickly puts on his mask. Pedro runs up to Dwight and hugs him. Dwight is startled by how much the kid believes.

PEDRO (CONT'D)

I knew you were real.

DWIGHT

(hero voice)

Real enough.

PEDRO  
Are you gonna beat the bad guys  
again?

DWIGHT  
(hero voice)  
That is the advertised service.

EMMET  
Kid, you cannot be in here. Go back  
to your seat.

PEDRO  
But he needs luck.

Pedro offers Dwight a tiny toy wheel from the broken RC car.  
Dwight recognizes it. The emotional debt lands.

PEDRO (CONT'D)  
For when you need to keep going.

Dwight takes it, humbled despite himself.

DWIGHT  
(hero voice)  
Thanks, Pedro.

EMMET  
Seat. Now.

Pedro runs out.

CLAY  
You didn't have to raise your  
voice, man.

Emmet turns to Dwight and Clay, softening by half an inch.

EMMET  
Get your head in the game.

Emmet snatches the tire from Dwight.

#### **INT. WRESTLING RING - NIGHT**

Dwight has his head bashed against the post by a luchador who looks like a glitter-rock astronaut. The post wins every exchange.

Clay sweep-kicks the opponent, launches off the ropes, grabs him around the torso, flips, and body slams him on the mat.

**INTERCUT WITH: AUDIENCE - NIGHT**

PEDRO

Is he going to be okay?

SELENA

This is a walk in the park for him.

Selena smiles for Pedro, but her eyes stay on Dwight. She knows when someone is pretending not to hurt.

**TOURNAMENT BOARD**

Body Builder moves Dwight's picture closer to the center. He thickens the little drawn mustache with a marker.

**MOM'S HOUSE**

Dwight eats breakfast alone at the table. Mom passes behind him with laundry. Neither of them says the first word.

**AISLE OF GROCERY STORE**

Dwight stocks cereal with mechanical focus. Clay runs in.

CLAY

Ice Man to Maverick, the Forbidden  
Angel is coming this way.

Selena enters with a cart and a list. She sees Dwight, brightens, then catches him turning away.

SELENA

Dwight?

Dwight disappears into the next aisle. Selena is left with the list in her hand and the smile fading from her face.

**WRESTLING RING**

A FISH LUCHADOR does a swimming spin kick to Clay's back, knocking him down. The audience boos.

Dwight jumps in, catches the Fish with his awkward weight shift, and tosses him out of the ring.

**TOURNAMENT BOARD**

Stallone-look-a-like moves Dwight's picture closer to center. The mustache on the photo is now absurdly heroic.

**LIVING ROOM**

Dwight vacuums around Mom's closed bedroom door. He pauses, almost knocks, then keeps vacuuming.

**AISLE OF GROCERY STORE**

Dwight sweeps. Clay spots Selena coming and gently pushes him behind a display.

CLAY  
(whispering)  
Danger zone. I repeat, emotional  
danger zone.

Dwight peeks around it and sees Selena searching for him. Not coy. Hurt.

SELENA  
Did I do something?

Dwight does not answer. Clay sees his face and realizes the avoidance is costing more than a crush.

**WRESTLING RING**

Dwight is lifted in the air by a LUCHADOR and dropped on the mat. The audience goes nuts. Clay comes around and helps him up.

CLAY  
You good?

DWIGHT  
Just do the match.

Clay absorbs the edge.

**TOURNAMENT BOARD**

Emmet moves Dwight's picture into the center. The marker mustache now looks like it is challenging the entire bracket.

**LIVING ROOM**

Dwight stares at his mother's shut door. He lifts his hand to knock. The crowd from a remembered match swells in his head. He lowers his hand.

**AREAS OF GROCERY STORE**

Dwight helps a customer. Clay comes up from behind, softer this time.

CLAY  
Selena on your six.

Dwight looks back. Selena waves, hopeful despite herself.

SELENA  
Can we talk for one second?

Dwight turns away before she can reach him. Selena stops in the aisle, embarrassed in public. Clay watches Dwight choose the mask over the person.

**WRESTLING LOCKER ROOM**

Clay enters covered in sweat, trying to bring the old energy back.

CLAY  
What a match, my man.

Dwight, head down, shoves Clay from behind. Clay turns, assumes play, and lightly shoves him back.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
Okay. Contact sport. I get it.

Dwight shoves him harder, still without eye contact. Clay takes off his mask.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
Dwight?

DWIGHT  
You told me this would fix everything.

CLAY  
No, I told you it would be hard and then said something beautiful about pain.

DWIGHT

Selena thinks I hate her. Ma barely looks at me. And every time I go out there, people cheer for a guy who is not me.

CLAY

It is you, buddy.

DWIGHT

Stop calling me that. I'm not your buddy.

Clay goes quiet. That lands deeper than the shove.

CLAY

Don't do that because you're ashamed.

DWIGHT

Ashamed? I was invisible before you dragged me into this.

CLAY

You were lonely. So was I.

DWIGHT

No. This was all your idea.

CLAY

And you needed it.

DWIGHT

My life was perfectly fine until you showed up.

The lie hangs there. Dwight knows it. Clay knows it.

Dwight takes off his mask and throws it on the floor.

CLAY

I loved your freaking guts, man.

Clay walks out.

Dwight looks at the mask on the floor, then away from it. For once, neither version of himself feels usable.

**INT. RESTROOM STALL - DAY**

Dwight looks at the blank place where the smiley face used to be. The marker is gone, but the old pressure marks remain in the paint.

He sees his warped reflection in the metal latch: bruised, tired, and smaller without an audience.

DWIGHT  
 (to himself)  
 You're the Desvalido. You're not  
 Dwight. You're not the guy on the  
 floor. You're not the guy who gets  
 left behind anymore.

**INT. DARK HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Dwight stands alone in full costume. Mask on. Mustache visible. Cape back on his shoulders, grand and ridiculous.

He touches it like armor.

DWIGHT  
 You got this. The mask works. The  
 cape works. You're the Desvalido.

Nobody sees Dwight unless you let them.

A P.A. leans in from the light at the end of the tunnel.

P.A.  
 You ready?

DWIGHT  
 Yeah. Sure. Totally. Very ready.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
 Welcome to the ring, the fire from  
 down under, the pride of the  
 people, The Desvalido!

Upbeat Latin music EXPLODES. Dwight rolls his shoulders, dances, and forces swagger into his knees.

Halfway down the aisle, he notices the CAMERAS. Not one. Not local cable small. Multiple cameras. Red lights blinking.

Dwight's dance shrinks.

DWIGHT  
 (to himself)  
 That's a lot of local.

A camera operator tracks him. Dwight waves too hard, trips on his cape, recovers into a spin like he meant it. The crowd

LAUGHS, then CHEERS.

He smiles, misreading the laugh as worship.

MATCH CUT TO:

**EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT - DAY**

Dwight walks toward the automatic doors with a bandage around his head, a black eye, and a splint on his pinkie finger.

His cape is gone. His confidence is gone with it.

**INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY**

Employees douse Dwight with a mop bucket of water and laugh.

EMPLOYEES

It's the Desvalido! What a loser!

EMPLOYEE GUY

Hey, Dwight, did you get the license plate?

DWIGHT

What license plate?

EMPLOYEE GUY

The one on the truck that ran over your face.

More laughter. Mr. Jesús rushes in.

MR. JESÚS

Hey! Silencio!

The employees scatter. Mr. Jesús sees Dwight dripping wet.

MR. JESÚS (CONT'D)

Go back to work. Rápido.

They exit. Mr. Jesús studies the damage.

MR. JESÚS (CONT'D)

So. You're the infamous luchador everyone is talking about.

Dwight looks at his boss...

**LUCHADOR GRAPHIC: FLASHBACK**

**FLASHBACK: INT. WRESTLING LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT**

Dwight ties his cape with ceremony. Clay is not there. The empty bench beside him says so.

He slips Pedro's tiny toy wheel into his boot, then puts on Selena's St. Jude necklace.

DWIGHT

Patron saint of lost causes.

(beat)

Don't be a lost cause.

He looks at the mask. Puts it on.

MATCH CUT TO:

**INT. WRESTLING RING - NIGHT**

Dwight's masked face snaps sideways under a theatrical fist.

The sound is huge. The impact is controlled, but it still hurts.

MUERTE stands over him. Beside him is SCYTHER, a lean, cruel luchador dressed like Muerte's shadow.

MUERTE

Welcome to my world, boy.

Scythe spits beside Dwight's face. Close enough to humiliate, not enough to miss the camera.

The REFEREE forces them apart.

**INTERCUT WITH: AUDIENCE - NIGHT**

Handmade DESVALIDO signs. A poster with a mustache drawn on it. Pedro holds that one like it is holy.

Selena sits beside him, worried before the bell.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Ladies and gentlemen, niños y  
niñas! Are you ready for the fight  
of the century?

Dwight sees cameras around the ring. One finds his eyes.

Another finds Selena. Another finds Pedro.

MUERTE

Smile, niño. The whole town gets to watch you learn.

In the crowd, Body Builder, Stallone-look-a-like, and Huge Guy squeeze into a row with absurd mountains of snacks. Clay sits with Emmet, guilt written all over him.

**INT. BATHROOM STALL - NIGHT**

Mr. Jesús watches on his phone, pants around his ankles, completely invested.

**INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT**

The WAIT STAFF watch the mounted TV.

WOMAN AT BAR

Hello, can I order now?

**INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

Mom sits with popcorn and red wine. She wears a Desvalido-style mask. Mr. Mordecai wears one too and hates it.

MOM

All right, son. Show them what the bottom shelf can do.

BACK TO:

**INT. WRESTLING RING / AUDIENCE - NIGHT**

The Referee checks Dwight's gloves, then eyes the other corner.

REFEREE

Two against one. You sure?

Dwight throws on his cape.

DWIGHT

I have a cape.

REFEREE

It's your funeral.

Dwight dances anyway. Scythe steps on the cape. Dwight jerks back and almost chokes himself. The crowd GROANS.

EMMET

I thought I told him to lose the  
cape!

CLAY

I think it's a statement of  
rebellion.

Emmet shakes his head.

BELL RINGS.

Muerte explodes forward with a high, theatrical BOOT that  
lands clean enough for safety and hard enough for Dwight to  
feel his ancestors complain.

Dwight hits the mat. The crowd reacts with a delighted,  
worried OHHH.

Muerte does not rush. He performs cruelty. He lets Dwight get  
to one knee, then sweeps the knee away like correcting bad  
posture.

MUERTE

The mask brought them to you. It  
cannot keep them with you.

Scythe tags in. He climbs the ropes, milks the boos, and  
lands a broad, showy body splash. Dwight folds like laundry.

In the crowd, the Fat Guy behind Emmet screams in Emmet's ear  
and spills soda onto his shoulder.

FAT GUY

That's cinema!

EMMET

That's assault adjacent!

Dwight staggers up. The cape swings in front of his eyes.

He swats at it, blind for half a second.

Muerte and Scythe trade him back and forth in a crisp,  
cartoonishly brutal rhythm: chop, spin, bounce, mat.

DWIGHT

(to the Referee)  
They know everything before I do!

REFEREE

Most people do right now!

Dwight charges. Scythe clotheslines him with a move broad enough for the cheap seats. Dwight's feet flip up. His mustache somehow survives.

#### **LIVING ROOM**

Mom rises with the popcorn bowl.

MOM  
Lose the cape!

Mr. Mordecai bolts from her lap.

#### **BATHROOM STALL**

Mr. Jesús pounds the partition.

MR. JESÚS  
Lose the cape, muchacho!

#### **RESTAURANT**

The wait staff chant at the TV.

WOMAN AT BAR  
Destroy him!

#### **WRESTLING RING / AUDIENCE**

Dwight finally reaches for the knot around his neck. Scythe yanks the cape first, spinning Dwight in a full ridiculous circle.

The crowd LAUGHS. Dwight hears only humiliation.

Muerte takes the cape, holds it up like a dead bird, and tears it down the middle. The sound is theatrical, amplified, cruel.

MUERTE  
A king who trips on his own robe is  
not a king.

Dwight crawls to a corner, breathing hard. No Clay in his corner. No cape. Just the necklace at his throat.

He touches St. Jude.

DWIGHT  
(barely)  
Help me.

Muerte clocks it. Smiles.

MUERTE  
Ah. There is the prayer.

Scythe grabs the necklace and twists it just enough to pull Dwight to his knees. The crowd turns from laughter to uneasy boos.

SELENA  
No!

The chain SNAPS in slow motion.

The little St. Jude medal drops, skitters across the mat, and stops beneath Muerte's boot.

Silence cuts through the arena.

Muerte lifts the broken necklace for the cameras.

MUERTE  
Patron saint of lost causes.  
(to Dwight)  
Even your saint knows what you are.

Dwight reaches for it. Scythe stomps near his hand, catching his pinkie with a precise, exaggerated crunch. Dwight screams.

#### **LIVING ROOM**

Mom's mask comes off.

MOM  
Stop it.

#### **BATHROOM STALL**

Mr. Jesús forgets where he is.

MR. JESÚS  
That's enough.

**RESTAURANT**

The wait staff stop cheering. One lowers a tray of chips like it is suddenly too heavy.

**WRESTLING RING / AUDIENCE**

Dwight lies on the mat. The match is still heightened. Still showy. But the joke has curdled.

Muerte crouches beside him.

MUERTE

You wanted them to see the mask.  
Good. Now they will see what the  
mask was hiding.

Scythe drags Dwight upright by the collar, not the teeth now: staged, humiliating, clean for camera. Dwight's boots scrape the canvas.

REFEREE

Watch the mask.

MUERTE

I am.

Muerte pulls at the back strings. One lace pops. Then another.

Clay and Emmet jump up.

CLAY

Get up. Come on, man. Get up.

EMMET

Fight the hand, Dwight!

Pedro grips the barricade. Selena grips Pedro.

PEDRO

Why isn't he stopping him?

SELENA

I don't know.

**LIVING ROOM**

Mom stands now, wine forgotten.

MOM

Don't let him take it from you.

**BATHROOM STALL**

Mr. Jesús stomps both feet.

MR. JESÚS

Fight!

**WRESTLING RING / AUDIENCE**

Muerte keeps undoing the strings slowly enough for every camera to find every second.

MUERTE

A mask is power. But on the wrong  
face, it is a lie.

Dwight hears the crowd. Not cheering. Waiting. Watching.

The thing he wanted most becomes unbearable.

He looks to the corner where Clay should be, then to the broken necklace on the mat. The medal is face down.

MUERTE (CONT'D)

You are not Desvalido. You are a  
boy who borrowed a name.

Dwight stops fighting.

EMMET

No.

CLAY

Dwight!

Muerte grips the top of the mask.

MUERTE

Let the world meet the underdog.

He tears the mask off.

Dwight's bruised, bandaged, naked face is exposed to the arena, the cameras, the grocery store, the restaurant, Mom, Selena, Pedro, everyone.

Beat.

A flash of laughter from somewhere in the crowd. Then gasps.

Dwight instinctively tries to cover his face, but Muerte holds the mask high like a trophy.

**LIVING ROOM**

Mom spews red wine, then covers her mouth.

MOM

Dwight?

**RESTAURANT**

The wait staff stare. Salsa drops from the mouth of the woman at the bar.

**BATHROOM STALL**

Mr. Jesús glued to the phone. Farts.

**WRESTLING RING / AUDIENCE**

Clay and Emmet stand frozen.

Selena wipes a tear. Pedro slips out from under her arm.

SELENA

Pedro, wait.

PEDRO

He needs to know we're still here.

Pedro runs toward the barricade. Selena follows.

Muerte circles Dwight, displaying the mask to each side of the crowd.

MUERTE

This is what happens when weakness asks to be worshipped.

Dwight is on his knees, face exposed, eyes wet. He sees the

St. Jude medal under Muerte's boot, the mask in Muerte's hand, the cameras, the crowd.

Every identity has failed him at once.

Pedro reaches the barricade.

PEDRO

Desvalido!

Dwight hears him but cannot look.

PEDRO (CONT'D)

You don't need the mask to be him!

That cuts through everything.

Dwight turns. Selena catches up to Pedro and wraps an arm around him. She and Dwight share a look. She is not looking at the mask in Muerte's hand. She is looking at Dwight.

For one second, that almost saves him.

Then Muerte steps on the medal. A small metallic CRACK.

Dwight flinches like something inside him cracked too.

His lowers his head to the mat near Muerte's feet.

REFEREE

Dwight?

No answer. The Referee drops and slaps the mat.

REFEREE (CONT'D)

One!

PEDRO

Don't give up!

Dwight's fingers twitch toward the broken medal.

REFEREE

Two!

CLAY

Get up, bro-tato. Please.

PEDRO

(louder)

Heroes get up!

Dwight opens his eyes. The words reach him. Not enough to lift him. Enough to hurt.

The Referee's hand rises in slow motion.

QUICK CUTS:

- Clay ashamed.
- Emmet furious.
- Mom pleading at the television.
- Mr. Jesús on the toilet.

- Selena sympathetic.
- Pedro disappointed.

REFEREE

Three!

The bell rings. The audience splits: cheers for Muerte, boos, stunned silence, scattered cruel laughter.

Muerte parades with the Desvalido mask raised like a flag he has captured in war.

MUERTE

Remember this face. This is what was under your hero.

Dwight curls around himself on the mat. No mask. No cape. No necklace. No joke big enough to hide inside.

DWIGHT

I don't have what it takes.

**LUCHADOR GRAPHIC: *BACK TO REALITY***

**INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY**

Mr. Jesús puts a hand on Dwight's shoulder.

MR. JESÚS

I guess I was wrong. Seems you do belong on the bottom shelf.

Dwight takes that like the final pin.

MR. JESÚS (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Hand over your apron and name tag.

**INT. EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH WALL - DAY**

The lucha libre advertisement still covers Dwight's old Employee of the Month photo.

Dwight's bandaged hand rips it down and crumples it. Behind it, his old photo smiles back.

In the glass reflection, the smiling old Dwight and the bruised unmasked Dwight occupy the same broken face.

Dwight cannot stand either version.

He trudges out.

**EXT. HOUSE - MORNING**

A KID on a bicycle reaches into his bag, grabs a rolled-up newspaper, and throws.

It lands on the roof with all the others.

The roof is now ridiculous: weeks of postponement, papered over responsibility, every later stacked in public view.

**INT. DWIGHT'S BEDROOM - MORNING**

The room is dark. Light cuts through half-closed blinds. The clock reads 11:01 A.M.

Dwight lies awake, bandaged and swollen. He is not sleeping.

He is avoiding morning.

He shifts his head and his nose moves wrong. He jolts up.

DWIGHT  
Daughter of Thanos!

He touches his nose and winces.

KNOCK, KNOCK.

MOM (V.O.)  
Dwight? You okay, honey?

DWIGHT  
Yeah, Ma. Just...

MOM (V.O.)  
Just what, sweetie?

Dwight looks at the corner where his costume bag sits. The mask is not there. The bag looks like evidence.

DWIGHT  
Just don't worry about it.

He gets out of bed. Every part of him objects.

**INT. BATHROOM - MORNING**

The shower is off. Dwight stumbles out. Steam covers the mirror.

Without thinking, he draws a smiley face in the fog.

He looks at it. The same stupid grin. The same thing he tried to erase.

He wipes it away with his palm, but the wet outline remains.

**INT. BREAKFAST TABLE - MORNING**

Mom sets down breakfast: a waffle with syrup. The old ritual, softened into an offering.

Dwight enters wearing a dress shirt that does not go over his head. His bruises make it look like he dressed for a job interview after losing a fight with a garage door.

MOM

Haven't seen you wear that shirt in a while.

DWIGHT

It's the only thing that doesn't go over my head.

MOM

Well, I think it looks nice.

She raises her orange juice.

MOM (CONT'D)

You know -

DWIGHT

Ma, could we not?

MOM

I was only going to say I'm proud of you.

Dwight laughs once. It is ugly because it is pain in disguise.

DWIGHT

For what? Getting fired? Getting unmasked on television? Making the whole town stare at the thing I was trying to hide?

MOM

For still coming to the table.

That stops him.

MOM (CONT'D)

You think I don't see the roof? The sink? The bulbs? The papers? I see all of it. I also see you carrying shame around like if you hold it tight enough it becomes strength.

Dwight cannot meet her eyes.

DWIGHT

The mask didn't work.

MOM

Maybe it was never supposed to do the work for you.

She clinks her glass gently against his untouched one.

Dwight does not drink. But he does not leave.

**EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY**

A ladder is propped against the house.

Dwight stands beneath the roof, looking up at the mountain of newspapers. The task is absurd. So is the amount of time he has spent avoiding it.

He climbs. Halfway up, pain flashes through him. He freezes, reaches too far, loses balance, and falls into the bushes.

He lies there in the dirt, defeated by home maintenance.

A hand enters frame, followed by red hair.

CLAY

Need a hand? No pun intended, but I accept credit.

DWIGHT

Clay?

Clay lifts him out of the bushes. They stand in the awkward silence of the friendship they broke.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

What are you doing here?

CLAY

You think you'd get used to it, but it's new every time.

DWIGHT  
What?

CLAY  
Falling.

Dwight looks away. Clay lets the joke die instead of forcing it.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
You weren't at work.

DWIGHT  
Yeah, well.

CLAY  
You want to go get a bite? I know  
the perfect place -

DWIGHT  
I'm not going anywhere.

He picks up the ladder and props it back against the wall.

CLAY  
Good.

Dwight starts climbing. Clay grabs the ladder with both hands and plants his feet.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
I got you.

DWIGHT  
You don't have to.

CLAY  
I know. That's the friendship part.

Clay reaches for a metal rake and hands it up. Dwight rakes the first newspaper loose. It falls. Then another. Then another. The papers hit the ground like overdue apologies.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
You know the best thing about a  
broken nose?

DWIGHT  
No, Clay. Tell me.

CLAY  
When the doctor fixes it, he breaks  
it again first.

Dwight looks down at Clay.

CLAY (CONT'D)

I know it sounds insane, but apparently some stuff has to be broken further in order for it to heal correctly.

DWIGHT

Is this another one of your mountain speeches?

CLAY

No just a fun fact.

Dwight considers that. Then he rakes down another newspaper.

Now off the ladder, Dwight and Clay finish gathering the rotten paper into the trash bag.

CLAY (CONT'D)

What else do you have to do?

DWIGHT

What do you mean?

CLAY

What do you mean, "What do you mean?" I want to spend time with my buddy, and if this is the only way, then this is the way.

DWIGHT

We're still friends? What about our fight?

CLAY

I was mad. You were ashamed. Both of us were loud. That's basically brother math.

DWIGHT

I said I was not your friend.

CLAY

Yeah. I knew you didn't mean it.

Clay tosses the trash bag into the trash can.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Plus, I know what it feels like to need people and still shove them away. The gym guys. When I pushed them away.

(MORE)

CLAY (CONT'D)

They did not disappear on me. So,  
this is me not disappearing on you.

DWIGHT

Why did you choose me to be your  
friend?

CLAY

You chose me, bro. You just didn't  
know it at the time.

Dwight absorbs that. Another paper drops.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Now stop making this beautiful,  
emotional, and uncomfortable. We  
have a lot to do around here.

Clay walks off carrying the ladder.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Hey, Ma! What's next on the list?

Dwight watches him go, then follows.

### **LIVING ROOM**

Dwight hands bulbs to Clay for the ceiling fan. Clay changes  
them while Dwight steadies the chair.

DWIGHT

What are they saying about me?

MOM

What Susie says about Sally says  
more about Susie than it does about  
Sally.

CLAY

That is either deep or a horoscope.

MOM

Exactly.

Mom flips on the lights. The room brightens for the first  
time in a long while.

### **KITCHEN**

Dwight fixes the kitchen sink. Clay turns the water on too  
early. Water sprays Dwight in the face.

DWIGHT  
Dude, turn it off!

**BEDROOM**

They replace a torn window screen. Dwight works slowly, but he keeps working.

DWIGHT  
Have you seen Selena?

CLAY  
No. But I have seen you ask that while trying to pretend you did not ask that.

DWIGHT  
She saw me quit. She saw all of it.

CLAY  
Then maybe let her see you do something after all of it.

**EXT. DRIVEWAY - LATER**

Clay and Dwight stand beside the Jeep and look at the clean roof. It is not glamorous. It is victory.

CLAY  
That's a good feeling. Oh!

Clay digs in his bag and pulls out Dwight's torn mask, folded carefully.

CLAY (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
I managed to get it after the show. You would not believe how many people I had to fight just to get this thing.

DWIGHT  
How many?

CLAY  
Emotionally? Thousands.

DWIGHT  
Actually?

CLAY  
One concession guy. He had nacho cheese and confidence.

Dwight takes the mask. It no longer looks magical. It looks wounded.

DWIGHT  
I don't know what to do with it.

CLAY  
You know the perfect place.

Dwight understands. Clay smiles.

**INT. RESTAURANT - DAY**

The guys sit in their booth. The restaurant is too quiet, like the whole place knows Dwight is here and has agreed not to stare.

DWIGHT  
Are we the only ones in here?

CLAY  
Uh. I forgot to ask for some  
crayons. Be back in a bit.

Clay hops out and exits with all the subtlety of a man evacuating a setup.

Abuelo (a.k.a MONTTOYA) settles into the booth across from Dwight. He carries himself with the calm authority of someone who has cooked for a family, run a room, and seen men mistake pride for strength.

DWIGHT  
I'm sorry, but my friend -

MONTTOYA  
No hables.

Dwight shuts up.

DWIGHT  
Who are you?

MONTTOYA  
Mi nombre es Señor Montoya. I see  
you eat, I see you work, I see you  
wrestle, and I see you are in love  
with my nieta.

DWIGHT  
Nieta? Selena? Oh. You are her  
abuelo.

MONTOYA  
Precisamente.

DWIGHT  
Love, I would not -

MONTOYA  
No hables.

Montoya takes Dwight's splinted pinkie with surprising gentleness. Then he studies the rest of him: bruises, shame, torn mask on the table.

MONTOYA (CONT'D)  
You think lucha is only masks and flying. No. Lucha is pain with rhythm. Pride with rules. A body telling the truth in front of everyone.

DWIGHT  
My body told the truth pretty loudly.

MONTOYA  
Good. Lies are quiet. Truth makes noise.

DWIGHT  
I embarrassed your family. Pedro believed in me and I turned my face away from him.

MONTOYA  
Pedro believed because he saw something before you did. That is what children do. That is what underdogs do. They recognize each other.

Dwight looks at the torn mask.

DWIGHT  
I lost everything that made me Desvalido.

MONTOYA  
No. You lost cloth. You lost pretending. Different things.

Montoya removes the splint.

MONTOYA (CONT'D)

Pain is a beautiful teacher. It tells us where we are broken, but pride decides whether we heal crooked.

DWIGHT

That sounds like it is about to hurt.

MONTOYA

Sí.

Montoya snaps Dwight's pinkie back into place. Dwight yelps so loud a busboy drops a tray in the distance.

DWIGHT

Are you nuts?! My pinkie is -

He bends it with ease. He looks at Montoya.

MONTOYA

Better. One more thing to fix.

DWIGHT

Please tell me it is not another finger.

MONTOYA

Mi amor.

Selena rises from the booth behind her grandfather. She has been there long enough to hear the part that mattered.

DWIGHT

Selena?

SELENA

(to Dwight)  
Come with me.

**INT. SUV - DAY**

Selena drives. Her St. Jude necklace dangles from the rearview mirror.

A wrapped gift sits between them.

SELENA

I am going to ask you something, and I need the real answer. Not the mask answer. Not the joke answer.

DWIGHT  
Those are most of my answers.

SELENA  
Why did you get in the ring?

DWIGHT  
You.

SELENA  
That is not the whole answer.

Dwight looks out the window. No escape there.

DWIGHT  
I wanted you to see me.

SELENA  
I did see you.

DWIGHT  
No. You saw the guy who carried groceries and said weird things and could not even take care of his roof. I wanted to be someone worth looking at.

SELENA  
Dwight, I liked that guy.

DWIGHT  
You did?

SELENA  
Why do you think I came to you whenever my abuelo had a crisis list? You listened. You solved problems. You made my impossible family errands feel possible.

DWIGHT  
I thought you needed a bagboy.

SELENA  
I needed Dwight.

That lands harder than any body slam.

SELENA (CONT'D)  
The mask did not make you valuable. It helped you believe what some of us already knew.

DWIGHT  
Look at me.

SELENA  
I am.

DWIGHT  
I am bruised. I got fired. I cried  
on television. I let a man in a  
skull mask hold my face up like a  
warning label.

SELENA  
And I am still looking.

Dwight finally turns to her.

DWIGHT  
Pedro saw too.

SELENA  
Yes. And you owe him.

Dwight notices the gift.

DWIGHT  
Who's the gift for?

SELENA  
Pedro's birthday.

Dwight picks it up, reads the tag.

DWIGHT  
"From: Dwight"?

SELENA  
You ran over his toy car. Debt is  
debt.

DWIGHT  
What is it?

SELENA  
You will see when you give it to  
him. You can pay me back later.  
Dinner and a movie will do.

DWIGHT  
Did you just ask me out on a date?

SELENA  
No. You just asked me out on a  
date. You just do not know it yet.

Dwight almost smiles, then looks at the necklace.

**INT. KITCHEN - DAY**

Dwight, Selena, Pedro, Clay, Emmet, Mom, and the gym guys crowd around the table for a home-cooked dinner. It is too many people for the room and exactly the right amount of family.

Body Builder tries to sit in a chair. The chair whimpers. He gently switches to the floor without comment.

MOM

All right, everybody. Before we eat my entire grocery budget, we say grace.

Everyone grabs hands.

MOM (CONT'D)

Dear Lord, thank you for bringing these people into my home, for giving my son a stronger heart, and for not letting that skull-faced man ruin his nose permanently.

DWIGHT

Still pending.

MOM

And please watch over every ring we step into, every family we choose, and every wrestler we pile-drive responsibly into the mat. Amen.

ALL

Amen.

They dig in. Plates pass. Elbows collide. Pedro sneaks rolls to Body Builder, who accepts them like sacred offerings.

Dwight takes it in: Mom at one end, Selena beside him, Clay across from him, Pedro between the gym guys. The lonely house is no longer lonely.

**LATER**

Plates are half-empty. The room has settled into the warm chaos after a meal.

EMMET

Now. About the championship.

DWIGHT

There is no championship for me. I  
lost my mask.

CLAY

And some dignity, but we agreed not  
to lead with that.

SELENA

Clay.

CLAY

Supportive honesty.

Emmet pulls out a battered rule book full of tabs. Everyone  
groans as if this is not the first time he has produced it.

EMMET

According to tournament rules, a  
luchador who loses his mask may not  
return under that same identity  
unless the identity is formally  
renewed.

DWIGHT

That sounds like paperwork wearing  
spandex.

Body Builder raises one finger. Everyone braces for  
gibberish.

BODY BUILDER

(in crisp English)

If I may clarify.

Everyone freezes.

BODY BUILDER (CONT'D)

The mask is not a costume. In  
lucha, the mask is a covenant  
between performer and public.  
Losing it can destroy an identity,  
unless the luchador proves the  
identity was never trapped in the  
cloth.

CLAY

Dude, you're from England?

Everyone laughs.

BODY BUILDER

As I was saying, Dwight does not  
need to hide again.

(MORE)

BODY BUILDER (CONT'D)  
 He needs to enter as himself and  
 make the mask answer to him. It is  
 he the mask wears, not the other  
 way around.

The room quiets. That lands clean.

DWIGHT  
 So I fight without hiding.

SELENA  
 You fight as the man we already  
 see.

MOM  
 And you fight with a clean cape,  
 because we are not animals.

**EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY**

Dwight sits beside Pedro on the front porch. He gives Pedro  
 the gift. Pedro rips it open -

It is an RC HELICOPTER. Pedro smiles from ear to ear.

DWIGHT  
 Sorry about your car.

Pedro hugs Dwight - They set it on the grass and Pedro turns  
 the remote on.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)  
 I do not know how to beat Muerte.

PEDRO  
 You don't have to. You're already  
 my hero.

Dwight smiles. Pedro toggles the remote and the helicopter  
 lifts up into the sky.

**LUCHADOR GRAPHIC: 5 MINUTES UNTIL REMATCH**

**INT. WRESTLING LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT**

Clay laces his boots. Dwight stands in his suit, no mask on  
 his face. The old Desvalido mask rests in his hands, repaired  
 but not worn.

CLAY  
 See you out there, Desvalido.

DWIGHT  
I will be right behind you.

CLAY  
Almost forgot. This is from your  
mom.

Clay hands him a package and exits.

Dwight opens it. Inside: a new red cape with a large D on the back. Also, a note.

DWIGHT  
"Dwight, a hero should look  
presentable when the whole town is  
watching. Wear this walking in.  
Take it off before the bell. You  
are enough. Forever loving, Mom."

Dwight kisses the note, ties the cape around his neck, and looks at himself - not hidden, but ready.

#### **INT. WRESTLING ARENA - NIGHT**

Music pounds. Lights sweep the crowd. This is not the fantasy from Dwight's dream. This is louder, messier, and real enough to hurt.

Muerte and Scythe step into the ring. Muerte soaks in the boos like perfume. Scythe stares at the Desvalido mask displayed on Dwight's corner post.

Desvalido music hits. Dwight and Clay dance down the aisle together. Dwight wears the cape. He does not wear the mask.

The crowd rises, confused at first, then louder as they recognize him.

AUDIENCE  
DES-VA-LI-DO! DES-VA-LI-DO!

Mom arrives with Selena, Pedro, Emmet, and the gym guys. A huge BIKER GUY sits beside Mom.

MOM  
(to Biker Guy)  
That is my son.

#### **INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT**

Montoya stops sweeping and turns toward the match on the mounted TV.

MONTOYA  
Órale, chico.

**BACK TO RING**

Dwight climbs the corner, holds up the repaired Desvalido mask, and places it around the post like a banner, not a hiding place.

DWIGHT  
I am Dwight. I am the Desvalido.  
And I have come to finish what you  
started, Muerte.

The crowd roars.

Dwight jumps down. He high-fives Clay, then removes the cape before the bell. Mom points at him from the crowd.

MOM  
Thank you!

Scythe whispers to Muerte and gestures toward the mask on the post. Muerte shoves him off, insulted that Scythe is distracted by Dwight's symbol.

MUERTE  
Forget the cloth. Break the man.

REFEREE  
Luchadores ready?

The bell RINGS.

**LUCHADRO GRAPHIC: *THE FINAL MATCH***

**INT. RING - CONTINUOUS**

Muerte and Scythe charge. Dwight and Clay do not.

DWIGHT  
High?

CLAY  
Low.

Dwight steps in and bumps Muerte chest-to-chest. Clay slides under Scythe and sweeps his legs. Muerte stumbles over Scythe. The villains collide.

The crowd pops. First clean visual: teamwork beats force.

Scythe attacks Clay with a spinning kick.

Clay ducks.

Dwight catches Clay by the wrist and slings him forward.

Clay turns the momentum into a flying shoulder block that sends Scythe into the ropes.

Muerte rushes Dwight from behind. Clay spots it and shouts.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Shelf check!

Dwight drops flat. Muerte sails over him and crashes into Scythe. Muerte glares at Scythe like it is somehow Scythe's fault.

MUERTE

Move when I move!

SCYTHE

You moved into me!

Dwight and Clay exchange a look: that is the opening.

They work in rhythm. Dwight uses his weight to anchor. Clay uses speed to redirect. Dwight absorbs a theatrical chop,

Clay answers with a dropkick. Clay gets grabbed, Dwight bear crawls under Muerte's legs and trips him using the exact training beat from the field.

EMMET

That is pressure teaching strength!

CLAY

I still hate how much sense that makes!

Muerte recovers and stops playing. He rakes Dwight across the maskless face with an open-handed slap - loud, humiliating, safe enough for the crowd to gasp and still boo.

MUERTE

No mask. No power.

DWIGHT

You keep saying that like it worked.

Dwight swings. Muerte dodges. Scythe catches Dwight. For the first time, the villains coordinate: Scythe holds Dwight as

Muerte charges.

Clay launches himself off the second rope and knocks Dwight free. Muerte accidentally levels Scythe. The crowd laughs.

Scythe shoves Muerte.

SCYTHE

Watch me!

MUERTE

Be worth watching.

That cuts Scythe. He looks again at the Desvalido mask on the post.

Muerte punishes Clay for the save. He drives Clay into the corner with a rapid, theatrical barrage: shoulder, chop, knee pad to the ribs. Big sound. Big selling. No gore.

PEDRO

Rajo Zorro!

Clay fights back, lands one heroic punch, then turns directly into Scythe. They both throw at the same time.

DOUBLE KNOCKOUT.

Clay and Scythe collapse like marionettes with cut strings.

DWIGHT

Clay!

Dwight reaches him. Clay's eyes are crossed but he tries to smile.

CLAY

Serious question.

DWIGHT

Yeah?

CLAY

How pretty is that unicorn over there?

DWIGHT

Very pretty, buddy.

CLAY

Then tell her I died handsome.

DWIGHT

You are not dying.

Dwight helps Clay to the ropes. The crowd chants for Rojo Zorro as officials help Clay out.

Clay grabs Dwight's arm before leaving.

CLAY

Show them who you are, bro.

Dwight nods. This hurts more than the match. Clay exits.

Scythe is dragged to the opposite side, but his eyes stay on the Desvalido mask.

The bell resets the match: Dwight versus Muerte.

MUERTE

Alone again.

DWIGHT

Not really.

#### **RING / AUDIENCE - CONTINUOUS**

Muerte circles Dwight. The theatrical brutality sharpens. He does not try to win fast. He tries to make Dwight small.

Muerte snaps Dwight into the ropes. Dwight bounces back into a spinning back elbow. The sound is huge. Dwight hits the mat.

Muerte grabs Dwight's arm and threads it through the ropes.

He twists just enough to make the arena cringe - a nasty joint lock, not a snapped limb.

MUERTE

This is where helpless belongs.

The referee warns him. Muerte releases at four. Dwight clutches his arm, fingers tingling, eyes watering.

REFEREE

One!

SELENA

Desvalido!

MOM

Get up, Dwight! You hear me?

REFEREE

Two!

EMMET

You already did the hard part!

REFEREE

Thr -

PEDRO

Fly, Desvalido!

Dwight hears Pedro and pushes himself up with the bad arm trembling.

He combs his mustache with the good hand. The crowd erupts.

DWIGHT

I am top-shelf brand.

Muerte charges.

Dwight does not overpower him. He uses everything he learned: the pool fall, the stairs timing, the bear-crawl base, the first-match awkward weight shift.

Dwight sidesteps late - almost too late - letting Muerte's momentum carry him into the post. Muerte staggers.

Dwight climbs to the second rope, remembers the pool, breathes, then climbs to the third. He looks at Selena.

SELENA

Fly!

Dwight launches. Not graceful. Not perfect. Completely his.

He crashes down onto Muerte in a controlled body splash that uses every pound, every bruise, and every ounce of timing.

BOOM. The ring shakes. Muerte is down.

Dwight hooks the leg. Muerte writhes and Dwight grabs at Muerte's mask...

Pedro's eyes widen. Selena holds her breath. Clay, half-awake with an ice bag on his head, watches from ringside.

Dwight lets go.

MUERTE

What are you waiting for? Do it.  
Take your revenge.

DWIGHT

No.

MUERTE

No?

DWIGHT

The mask is yours. I do not need to steal somebody else's face to know mine matters.

Dwight lets go of the mask and tightens the pin instead.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

I am not the bad guy.

REFEREE

One! Two! Three!

The bell RINGS. The arena detonates.

The referee raises Dwight's good arm. Dwight winces, laughs, and lets himself be seen.

The stadium ROARS - Mom cheers and pulls the Biker Guy into a kiss.

Emmet claps, proud and contained until he gives up and yells.

EMMET

Greenhorn!

Body Builder lifts Pedro onto his shoulders. Pedro raises both fists.

PEDRO

The Desvalido lives!

Dwight goes to Clay. Clay pulls him into a one-armed hug.

CLAY

I knew you had it in you, bro.

DWIGHT

Thank you, bro.

Dwight approaches Muerte and offers his hand. Muerte hesitates, then takes it. He stands, shows respect and exits.

Across the ring, Scythe slips away. He pauses by Dwight's corner, eyes the repaired Desvalido mask, then disappears into the crowd.

Selena climbs to the apron.

SELENA

Dwight!

DWIGHT

Selena!

He meets her at the ropes. She does not kiss the winner. She kisses the man who finally stopped hiding.

SELENA

I told you I saw you.

DWIGHT

I am starting to believe you.

She kisses him. The crowd cheers like this was always part of the match.

**INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT**

Montoya watches the kiss on TV. He nods, satisfied, and turns it off.

MONTOYA

Bien hecho, chico.

FADE TO:

**LUCHADRO GRAPHIC: ONE WEEK LATER**

**INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY**

Dwight, in normal clothes and an arm sling, reaches for a cereal box on the top shelf. He cannot quite reach it.

SELENA

Step aside.

Selena enters, jumps, and gets the box.

DWIGHT

Show-off.

SELENA

I like what I like.

DWIGHT

Well, it is top shelf.

SELENA

That is why it is the best.

They share a smile and lean in for a kiss.

MR. JESÚS (O.S.)  
The periodical son returns!

They turn. Mr. Jesús hurries up, all business smile and panic sweat.

MR. JESÚS (CONT'D)  
Dwight, do you have a moment? I would like to talk about bringing you back on board. Ever since people learned the Desvalido worked here, customers are coming in like flocks.

DWIGHT  
Would I be manager?

MR. JESÚS  
We can iron out details later. We need you back doing what you do best.

He offers his hand. Dwight looks at it, then at the cereal.

DWIGHT  
Thanks for the offer, Mr. Jesús, but I am doing what I do best.

MR. JESÚS  
I will throw in a new pair of shoes!

DWIGHT  
Make Clay manager. He know what people want even when they don't.

SELENA  
And he knows what produce is now.

Dwight and Selena walk off together.

SELENA (CONT'D)  
Ciao.

**INT. BATHROOM STALL - DAY**

Dwight stands before the stall door. The old smiley face is gone.

He removes a marker from his pocket, twists off the cap, and draws something on the door.

He steps back, studies it, and smiles.

He leaves the stall.

The door closes and a new smiley face resides on the door.

**LUCHADRO GRAPHIC: *EL FIN***

Uplifting Latin music plays, but then gets interrupted -

CUT TO:

**INT. MYSTERIOUS GYM SETTING - NIGHT**

Machine WEIGHTS SLAM against each other.

Scythe pushes up one final rep and locks the bar. Beside him sits a gym bag. Inside it: red fabric.

He removes his Scythe mask. We do not see his face.

From behind, he pulls on a new mask inspired by Desvalido's old colors, not the same mask but a corrupted echo of it. He tightens the strings.

Upbeat Latin music plays, warped and darker.

CUT TO BLACK:

**LUCHADRO GRAPHIC: *PARA MI FAMILIA***