

**YARD WARS**  
a play for one performer

**Jonathan Dorf**

## Cast of Characters

All the characters are played by one actor. All are in high school.

The Wrestler (Christian Connors), aka John Done, smart and skilled, he thinks too much

Jimmy Talatifierre, aka Double T, well-meaning but not the sharpest tack in the box

Paul Jackson, a black kid who's way too white to be as black as he'd like to be

Jack Scamuto, the other half of the Oreo Express, your average suburban semi-jock

Marley, aka Obgyn, friendly but frightening, something of a redneck

Backyard Brawler, a boy who looks like he has breasts

Mr. Scooper, the announcer

Various Kids at school

(Lights up on the Wrestler, about eighteen years old. He wears muddy street clothes. It looks like he's been in a fight—or rather, that he was in the middle of one and suddenly stopped. Upstage is a mattress.)

### WRESTLER

There's no timeouts in wrestling. Maybe in "real" wrestling there are. Kinda'. If you get hurt or you start bleeding. In high school they gotta' stop if there's blood. In case you got AIDS or something. But not in the backyard: realer than real wrestling.

(pause)

There's definitely no timeouts in Jimmy Double T's backyard, where the ring's a couple mattresses, and most of the action's not on 'em.

(pause)

I think I'm in a timeout. I know—I just got done saying no timeouts. But I got powerbombed on my head. A powerbomb's when the other guy picks you up and holds you on his shoulders

(He mimes picking up an opponent for a powerbomb.)

and then throws you down on your back and shoulders—

(He demonstrates the proper way to land.)

like this. You're supposed to land with your arms spread out. Takes some of the pressure off your back. And you gotta' be relaxed.

(beat)

I'm wrestling the Backyard Brawler. He's this fat kid. Not round fat, but he kind of jiggles a little when he moves, like he's got tits. And he sucks. His one move is the fat-ass splash. I thought that was his one move. It's not. Somebody taught Titty Boy a powerbomb. And he does it to me. He's not supposed to—he's supposed to fat-ass splash me through the table for the win—but he gets all adrenalized, and suddenly I'm getting powerbombed. No warning. Through the table. Of course, he fucks it up and plants me on my head. And it's not like I hit the table head first and I'm done—I'm still flying through the air, and I miss the mattress by three feet, and there's not fuck-all I can do about it except get my head busted.

(beat)

But I can still stand, at least on concussion time. I'm not dead, and I don't think my neck is broken. That's good. I like backyard wrestling, and I don't mind taking the bumps and bruises and even bleedin' a little. But I'm not gonna' die for it. I always said if I ever almost died or got in a spot where I lucked out of having something really serious happen, I'd end the match right there. And that would be it. I'd quit.

(pause)

I always said that, and now it's happened. But I'm lucky. Another three inches this way

(He gestures with his hands to show how his head could have landed.)

and I woulda' broken my neck. Another three inches and maybe I'm paralyzed or maybe I'm dead. I don't know about you, but I don't wanna' get killed by a guy with tits. I mean, backyard's supposed to be fun—right?

(He becomes Jimmy Double T.)

### **JIMMY DOUBLE T**

Dude, this is gonna' be so awesome! We got these mattresses from when my brothers moved out, and my Mom said we can set 'em up in the backyard if we move 'em out of the garage. We gotta' clean the garage first and take all the stuff to the curb—I kinda' had to promise that—but with the two of us, it'll only take a couple hours. She was like ready to throw them out, and I was like bam,

(He slaps his hands together.)

“I'll take 'em.”

(pause)

I told her we're practicing holds for school so we can try out for the wrestling team. So if she's there, we gotta' pretend we're practicing. But she never gets home 'til six, so don't even worry about it. If you see her, yell “half-nelson.” Like a code.

(pause)

Dude, this is gonna' be so awesome! I'll be the President, 'cause it's at my house, but you can be the Vice-President, and tell everybody except me what to do.

(beat)

I was thinkin' about the belts, and I think we oughta' have two, the world championship and the hardcore championship. And we gotta' have a tag team championship—Jack Scamuto said he'd do it if he could be tag team champions with Paul Jackson. They wanna' be the Oreo Express, you know, a white guy and a black guy.

(beat)

Dude, the bell is not gay. If we don't have a bell, how are we gonna' start the matches? The WWE has a bell. I know we're not the WWE, but maybe we will be some day. And we're gonna' need a bell. Like in the WWE, when the guy goes crazy and runs up the aisle and attacks the other guy, the announcers talk about how they're gettin' it on before the bell. I can't attack you before the bell if there's no bell. That's just wrong.

(beat)

If my bell's so gay, then *you* get one.

### **WRESTLER**

Most important thing in wrestling isn't the bell. It's the names. The names and the gimmicks. Jimmy Double T's got a big advantage, on account of his fucked up last name,

(pronounced TAH-LAH-TEE-FEE-ERREE)

Talatiferre. First time I met Jimmy I couldn't pronounce it right—'cause I'm not Italian, and I said Tala-tee-fairy. I wasn't trying to be a smart-ass, I just couldn't say the last “I,” and he looks like he's gonna' cry, only he doesn't. And then it starts: first his pants get all wet 'round his crotch, and then the stream runs down his leg. Then he starts crying, and he tells his Mom, and his Mom calls my Mom, and my Mom starts yelling at me, and pretty soon I'm crying, and she drags me over to Jimmy's.

**WRESTLER** (cont'd)

(pause)

And when we get there he's standing in the bathtub—'cause I don't know where he's gettin' it from but he just keeps pissin' and cryin'—and I'm trying to give him stuff to make him stop. So I'm giving him gum and stickers and whatever else I have in my pockets, and finally I'm like trying to give him my Air Jordans if he'll just stop pissin' and cryin'. But he keeps going, and I'm trying to reach into the tub and put the Jordans in his hand. He says "leave me alone," but I don't know what else to do, so I'm still pushing the Jordans at him, and finally he yells, "Stop it!" And I'm thinking it's about to get worse, and my Mom, who's in the other room trying to explain to his Mom that I'm not the spawn of Satan, is going to drop me at the bus station—she was always threatening to put me on a bus when I was little. This time she's going to do it for real. But then a weird thing happens. He stops peeing and crying and says, "thanks, but you don't have to give me your sneakers. You say it Ta-la-tee-fee-erree." I say, "Can I just say Double T? I'm scared I might mess it up, and I don't want you to start peeing again." He thinks about it for a few seconds, then he says OK, and do I want to be best friends and play in the backyard. That was when we were eight. Funny how not much has changed since we were eight.

**JIMMY**

Double T stands for Total Terror or Triple Team, 'cause wrestling me is like wrestling three guys at once. Double T is also the two crosses on your grave if you try to mess with me. If you mess with me, I'll take you out for the one-two-three with my finisher, Teed Off. Ring the bell, Mr. Referee.

**WRESTLER**

Jimmy has it easy. He lives with his wrestling name. The rest of us have to think one up. And the problem is that most of the good ones are taken: Nature Boy, the Road Warriors, the Undertaker, Justin Credible. I wanted something really cool. Anarchy. Fear. They're cool—right? The problem with names like Anarchy and Fear is they're too abstract. They're ideas. You can't root for an idea. Fans want to root for people.

(pause)

And you need a name with an attitude. When you wrestle a guy named Mr. Wonderful or Kane, you know what you're up against. So I'm thinkin' and thinkin', and I got nothin'. And Jimmy comes over and tries to help.

(He sits on the stage right side of the mattress, assuming the position of Rodin's The Thinker and becoming Jimmy.)

**JIMMY**

Homicidal Hank. Or Fearless Fred.

(He scurries over to the Wrestler's position, which is the stage left side of the mattress, and becomes the Wrestler. Each move in this scene is accompanied by a character change. Pause. The Wrestler shakes his head. He then hops into Jimmy position again.)

Sam the Man.

(He hops back to the Wrestler position.)

**WRESTLER**

Sam the Man? That's like a fuckin' Dr. Seuss book. Why do you keep coming up with names that rhyme? They don't have to rhyme. They sound stupid when they rhyme.

(He hops into Jimmy position.)

**JIMMY**

Homicidal Hank and Fearless Fred don't rhyme.

(He hops back into Wrestler position.)

**WRESTLER**

They rhyme with retarded.

(pause)

It's alliteration. That's as bad as rhyming.

(pause)

Jimmy, man, you're not going to piss yourself, are you?

(pause)

You can have alliteration in your finisher, just not in your name. Maybe it worked for Hulk Hogan, but I don't look like Hulk Hogan, and that one's taken.

(pause)

Don't worry—I'll think of a name.

(He hops into Jimmy position.)

**JIMMY**

You can't wrestle without a name. We're supposed to start on Friday. What if you can't come up with a name by Friday? It's Wednesday already. If you don't come up with a name, we'll have to call off the whole thing. And I'm not pissin' myself!

(He hops into Wrestler position.)

**WRESTLER**

I'll come up with a name. I swear to God.

(pause)

And I did. In English class. I like English, so I'm usually bored—'cause I read ahead—so I flip through the next section of our book. And then bang—it hits me: John Done. There's this English writer named John Donne. D-O-N-N-E. But I can be John Done, D-O-N-E. Like “you're done.” Instant asskicker, but smart too. And the English writer already wrote the perfect move, “Death Be Not Proud.” You know, like not only am I killing my opponent, but I'm embarrassing him too. And some of my other moves can be Well-Done, One and Done, Done In, Over and Done, Undone—the name's a fuckin' gold mine.

(pause)

I have a name, I have a finisher—all I need is a gimmick.

**JIMMY**

Dude, that's awesome. You should come into the match with one of those cooking gloves. An oven mitt—whatever it's called. You should come in with an oven mitt, and each match, after you kick ass, you should leave it on top of the guy—like a calling card.

**WRESTLER**

There's no way I'm wearin' an oven mitt to the ring, but it's not a bad gimmick. Gimmicks are key. Your gimmick is your concept, how you get over with the fans. It starts with the name. Think of Ric Flair. Simple, right? “Flair” says that he's a star, that he's slick, cocky. Then you add in “Nature Boy.” Nature Boy Ric Flair. Natural talent. Natural blond hair. Natural flair. Does what he wants. Just like Ric. R-I-C. Spells his name the way he wants. Nature Boy Ric Flair, the master of the figure-four leglock.

(pause)

Now it's Thursday. Just over twenty-four hours to go before our big debut, and still no gimmick.

(pause)

Just after dinner. Twenty hours to go. Nothing.

(pause)

Sixteen hours. Still no gimmick. Time to go to bed.

(pause)

I stayed up 'til three, 'til I finally passed out. Jimmy and the oven mitt really screwed me up, 'cause for a while, all I could think about was oven stuff. Oven mitt. A toaster. A cookie sheet. In a moment of total desperation, I think “what if I gut the oven at my house and drag it out?” The little part of my brain that's still working says that's crazy, that it's too heavy, that it'll wreck the oven, that it'll wreck the kitchen. That same little part of my brain says, “what about the microwave?” Finally, at two-forty-seven AM, I get the oven mitts and everything they make me think of out of my head. But there's nothing to take their place. One minute there's this monster oven screaming encouragement as I kick Jimmy's ass up and down the yard, and the next minute there's nothing. Total silence. For thirteen minutes. I see the digits on my clock go from two-fifty-nine to three.

**WRESTLER (cont'd)**

(pause)

My alarm wakes me up for school at seven-o-two. My lights are still on. Eight hours away, and still no gimmick. Without a gimmick, it's like being naked.

(beat)

I totally can't concentrate in school. Maybe I'm trying too hard. Last period, English class again, I'm actually sweating. Sweating so much it's dripping onto my book. Drip. Drip. Drip. The pages are starting to get seriously wet, like soaked through kind of wet.

(pause)

Just for kicks, I start turning pages to see how many pages are wet. First, there's really wet, then there's kinda' wet, and finally just damp. Forty-eight pages until I hit a totally dry page. John Donne again. Somebody's tryin' to tell me something.

(pause)

I'm tryin' to get a vibe on his stuff, but I'm not sparking to anything. Just lots of old poems.

(pause)

Poems . . .

(He is now John Done, backyard villain, in the middle of Jimmy Double T's wrestling ring.)

**JOHN DONE**

Violets are blue,  
Your blood is red.  
I'll make it flow,  
And I'll make you dead.

**WRESTLER**

I had my gimmick. I was John Done, bad poet and backyard villain. I had to explain it to everybody, but after that they thought it was really funny.

Like what you see? Hit the back button and follow the instructions to order a perusal copy of the full script!