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Lookin' for Bad News and findin' it

"I think Brooks is in a bad mood — I heard his chains rattling." The young usher stays out of the way. Just a moment before, Killer Brooks (Bad News Brooks to Northwest fans) had pounded on the door at the end of the corridor, wanting in. The usher, frozen, called for someone to admit the wrestler. He'd been paid to watch the door, he said, not open it.

Street clothes cannot hide the black-haired mountain tramping down the corridor. With a thick cigar clamped between his teeth, Brooks goes into the Bad Guys' dressing room and slams the door behind him, scattering the few young fans who until a moment ago waited nervously for a glimpse of a villain. They pocket their autograph books and run back into the arena.

Tonight the Eugene Armory goes Noah's Ark one better. Not a pair, but a dozen of every kind of creature has come tonight to watch the wrestling matches. A computer couldn't have created a more heterogeneous blend of humanity: well-dressed businessmen jostle little old ladies at the popcorn stand; swarthy, two-fisted laborers ignore the longhairs giggling nearby. They have temporarily lost their demographic identities. Tonight they are Wrestling Fans.

In the pre-match tension they scramble around the ring, shouting to each other, laughing, making predictions. No one knows who'll be on first; no one cares. However they're stacked up, there will be good guys, whom the crowd will love, and bad guys, whom they will hate. They will hate them fully and roundly; it is their pleasure and their duty. They will not fail.

The bell rings to begin the contests, and in one Pavlovian wave the crowd explodes.

The noise reverberates in the corridor where Bad News Brooks is demonstrating his trademark, his chain, to onlookers. At each end of the 10-foot steel chain is a spiked leather collar. He buckles one around his thick neck and demonstrates the tug o' war tactics he will use against Jesse Ventura tonight.

Kangaroo Jonathan Boyd, usually a wrestler (a Good Guy), looks alien as he passes by Brooks wearing a striped referee shirt. Boyd will officiate the chain match tonight. He glares at the chain and mutters, "I'll stick that thing up your ass, Brooks!"

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