Year after year, Luigi has always been teased, mocked, stepped on, pushed around and even abused by some of the Smashers. But as they're about to find out, Hell hath no fury like a Mario Bro bullied. I'm not sorry. Rated M for wince-inducing fight sequences, sensitive themes, blood and gore.
Ike: No Sympathy

On a bright, summery afternoon, a man in armor stood outside, surveying his surroundings. All was quiet. A group of different colored puffballs were playing a friendly game of tackle under a tree. A brown-haired child was sparring with his blonde friend, volleying PK this and PK that at one another. A diminutive boxer wearing green shorts jabbed and threw uppercuts at the air as his longtime trainer looked on and shouted encouragement. Three princesses and a bounty hunter shared some much needed girly time, and some Villagers were pulling random pranks and planting trees using their down special moves. It was just an ordinary day.

So, why did the armored guy have such a strong sense of foreboding?

The man, whose name was Ike, gazed toward the sky, shielding his eyes against the afternoon sun. It was perfectly cloudless and cyan blue, interrupted occasionally by flocks of birds. Suddenly, Ike squinted. A tiny speck that hadn’t been there previously was now visible. What was it? Maybe it was that Tabuu guy, out for revenge following the Subspace debacle. If that was the case, then Ike had to warn Master Hand, and quickly. That way, everyone else would be on their toes, ready to face whatever fast one Tabuu pulled on them.

Ike snapped out of his thoughts and saw that the tiny speck had grown into a shape. A green shape approaching—and closing fast.

His eyes widened. “WHAT THE…?!?” he bellowed as he tried to dodge out of the way.

Too late.

97 units of green adrenaline, hate and fury, traveling at a speed of approximately 22 miles per hour, slammed into Ike with a force of around 200 Newtons. This force applied a pressure of 0.46 atmospheres, enough to splinter his armor and crack his ribcage. Ike was lifted a foot or so off the ground and sent flying a distance of 18 feet, compacted on the head of the green avenger who had rammed him. The breath was driven from him in a heartbeat. Finally, the two reached terminal velocity and crashed to the ground, Ike landing flat on his back.

The poor fellow struggled for breath, attempting to gather his bearings and access who was attacking him and why. Just as he got to his feet and reoriented himself to his surroundings, a roundhouse dropkick encountered his jaw, chipping a tooth and sending him to his knees. Desperately, he crawled away, mouth filling with blood, his mind filled with questions on how to tackle this new threat. Finally, his head cleared, and he managed to stand, sword unsheathed and his body in a battle stance.

“Prepare yourself!” he shouted.

Maybe he should’ve prepared himself, because his attacker was upon him before the neurons in his brain could yell at him to react.

The first blow slammed into his side, again shearing his protective armor and possibly shattering some bone. The next blow was a vicious uppercut to the chin, erupting in a bright green flash and a fractured jaw. A flip-kick decimated his nose and sent blood spraying from the pulverized proboscis. As he reeled, a fist collided with the side of his neck, traumatizing a tendon. And then two feet drilled into him from above, sending him back to the floor.

Just as Ike jumped back up, the man barreled at him once more, unleashing everything he had on
him. But his green foe was too fast. Too close. Too powerful.

Finally, a straight jab connected with Ike’s throat, rupturing his windpipe. He was crumpled in a heap, coughing and choking on blood. It was then that he finally got a close look at the interloper. And he couldn’t believe his eyes.

“Impossible…” he managed to gasp.

A memory came back to him, one that seemed ages ago but actually was a few years. Guilt stabbed him as he remembered the jeering, biting words issuing from his lips in a voice which wounded like a blade. How he denounced and demeaned his target as a wimp, as an embarrassment, as a pitiful weakling and as a loser; mocking his relative obscurity, his awkward physics, his bad traction, and his less-than advantageous match-ups. He called him the Other Guy, the Eternal Understudy, the King of Second Bananas, Player Two, Whatever-His-Name-Is, What’s-His-Face. It was such a long time ago that he nearly forgot. But the victim never forgets. The victim always bears the scars.

Ike opened his mouth to apologize, to explain how big of an ego he had back then. His victim-turned-assailant didn’t want to hear it, executing another powerful straight jab. This one was harder than the first, aimed at the middle of the neck, and it hit home with almost superhuman power. His already injured windpipe was crushed beyond oblivion, and his Adam’s apple was cracked. He couldn’t speak, couldn’t erase and heal this wound between them. The other man’s eyes, steely blue, showed no hint of forgiveness. After experiencing an upswing in popularity, he’d decided he wasn’t taking anymore mess from anybody. Especially Ike.

For a while, he stood over the man who’d once bullied him, watching the thick blood pour from his mouth and throat, basically drowning him from the inside. He deserved to suffer after making him suffer under sneers and scorn. Initially, he planned to leave him like that to teach him a final lesson, even giving a dramatic monologue as his life slipped away. But then he remembered thoroughly trouncing him in previous matches. He’d fought well, and for that he deserved some mercy, however twisted it may be.

With that thought in mind, he approached the crumpled man, and with an innocent “Bye-bye”, he administered a bashful-looking kick to Ike’s skull, smashing it instantly.

“Now who’s the loser?” he spat, standing over the still form that was once a tormentor. Unfortunately, Ike wasn’t the only one who made this mistake. There were others, starkly carved into his memory, and he was going to help himself to each and every one of them like a tasty midnight snack.

Revenge was a dish best served…green.
King Dedede: Greed Before the Fall

Chapter Summary

During the Subspace adventure, King Dedede did more to Luigi than just turn him into a trophy. Seven years later, he’s about to answer for it.

“And don’t tell me you’re sorry, ’cause you’re not… Baby when I know you’re only sorry you got caught…”

--Rihanna, “Take a Bow”

“Come at me!”

“Okie-dokey!”

The training room became animated with the sounds of battle as Lucina tested the limits of her green-clad sparring partner. He was good, really good. She had a slight advantage because of her sword, yet he had air and speed on his side. His neutral aerial attack was considered one of the strongest, and he’d moved up the tier list in recent years. Plus, he could recover swiftly and meteor-smash people with a modest kick to the ground. Right now, he was a freshly lit firecracker as he leaped this way and that, avoiding Lucina’s sword and executing superb combos with his neutral aerial, up aerial and various special attacks.

“How did you get so good?” she asked after taking a hit from his side-B.

“Just practicing,” he casually replied, before grabbing her and starting another combo with his down throw. With a lucky sword slash, she was able to break his rhythm and perform her up smash. He was launched into the air, and she caught him before he could hit the floor.

“You’re holding back,” he noted.

“I am,” Lucina quietly admitted.

“Don’t.”

Lucina was more than happy to oblige, now relying more on her smash attacks and less on her tilt attacks. It didn’t take long for the battle to take a fierce turn, though it still remained friendly. They were two fighters, keeping their skills in tip-top shape while sweating out the toxins and stress that came with their own universes. Flexible bodies fluidly moved with agility that would make Bruce Lee jealous, brawn clashing with brawn, allowing no time to think and instinct to take over as they exchanged flurries of attacks. Their damage percentages were in the red, and their breath whistled harshly from their mouths. After nearly three hours of sparring, Lucina met her match, courtesy of a well-timed Super Jump Punch.

She respawned, turned off the simulator and patted her sparring buddy on the back. “Good fight,” she said.
“You too,” he replied as they shook hands and hugged. Together, they walked out of the training area and toward the dining room, hoping to snack on some “healing” food. Maybe they’d share a 1UP mushroom.

Later that day, Lucina was online, using the special Smasher social networking site that Master Hand thoughtfully set up for them. She’d just finished a blog post when she received an invitation to a video chat. Shrugging, she clicked “Accept.”

King Dedede appeared on the screen. “Hi, greetings from Dreamland,” he said cheerily. “You look terrific.”

“Hey, stranger, thanks,” said Lucina. “What are you doing there?”

“I’m getting ready for a match,” said the giant blue penguin. “I just warmed up with Kirby and Meta Knight, and believe me, they have some pretty strong stuff. But I have a feeling this match will be an easy win.”

“What makes you say that?” asked Lucina.

“Well, I have a klutzy opponent,” explained Dedede. “He’ll just slip and slide all over the place, and his attacks have a lot of lag. Plus, he’s a lightweight compared to me. No sweat. With this hammer, I’ll beat him in no time.”

 Lucina had a sick feeling in her stomach. “Dedede, I don’t think it’s nice to insult a fellow Smasher,” she warned.

He ignored her. “By the time I’m finished with him, he’ll be crying for his mommy,” he taunted. “He’s nothing but a wimpy pipsqueak. Why, I remember the time back in 2008 when he was scared of my Waddle Dees…”

“That’s enough,” snapped Lucina. Dedede fell silent.

“Before you talk about how wimpy he is, why don’t you look at the videos of him at those kart-racing tournaments, hmm? Once you see the way he looks at people, you won’t think he’s a wimp.”

Dedede chuckled. “Oh, he’s just trying to act tough with that stupid Death Stare. But he sure won’t be looking like that after our match is over. He’ll be shaking and bleeding and crying. Then, I’ll gloat to his brother about how I creamed him, and if he challenges me, then he’s burnt toast.”

“You wouldn’t be talking that trash if you saw us earlier today,” said Lucina. “He was at the top of his game.”

Dedede opened his mouth to retort, but then he realized he had a match ahead of him. “Okay, Lucina, I have to let you go. It’s almost time,” he said. “I’ll catch you afterward and tell you how it went, K?”

“Okay. Good luck, I guess,” muttered Lucina as she cut the connection. Something told her that it would be the last she saw of the King of Dreamland…
*Flashback to 2008*

Dedede snickered as he watched his target assume a fighting position, quivering in every limb, as the little Waddle Dees—well—waddled toward him. Despite the fact that they were oblivious to him, for some reason, they scared him senseless. One of them turned and looked at him, causing him to jump back in fright. He slumped in relief as it walked right on by, only to tense up once again when another one approached.

At that, Dedede saw his chance. Armed with his trusty hammer, equipped with a cannon that could turn people into trophies, he softly crept up on the distracted man, took careful aim of his trajectory, pulled back and then…

SLAM!

The hammer struck the target square in the back, launching him high into the sky. He literally had no idea what just hit him. Dedede nodded proudly at his hammer and then watched as the man plummeted back down to earth…in trophy form.

Even after the Subspace adventure had concluded, the sight of the green guy cowering before the innocent-looking Waddle Dees had continued to tickle Dedede’s funny bone. But there was something none of the Smashers knew. Dedede had hidden a web camera on that fateful day which recorded up until he’d taken his—er—prize. He’d waited until things had calmed down before uploading it to YouTube, and it didn’t take long for it to go viral. In a matter of days, the King of Second Bananas had become the laughingstock of social media.

It was an action Dedede was about to answer for. He just didn’t know it yet.

*Present Day*

The arena had quickly filled with spectators, and the announcer had taken his place where nobody could see. Dedede had finished psyching himself up and now readied his hammer as his challenger approached. Or, rather, seemingly approached. Little did Dedede know, he’d been present during the penguin’s chat with Lucina and had overheard everything. What’s more, he’d discovered some time ago that Dedede had uploaded that video and was thus responsible for his online humiliation. Select spectators also knew and were hungry for justice to be served.

Dedede, gleefully oblivious to all of this, warmly greeted his opponent. “Ready to fight?” he asked with a smile.

The other guy’s sole reaction was a wry expression. Whatever was going through his mind, whatever rage he felt toward Dedede—he knew better than to put it on display. Instead, he spoke to the little sneak in a level tone suggesting only mild curiosity. “Is there something you’d like to tell me before we begin?”

For all of his attempts to remain under control, Dedede was devoid of emotion. Positively stoic. He offered no apologies or explanations for sneak-attacking him that day; no remorse for going behind his back to cause more pain. All he said was, “Not really. No. Why? Is this like the last confessions they do in the movies?”
He wasn’t going to tell someone like Dedede. He’d let him find out for himself while he was recovering from a beatdown. Slowly, the challenger in green crossed the stage, closing the distance between him and the selfish, greedy king. Despite himself, Dedede flinched back, alarmed by the sudden offensive stance.

Everyone fell silent, eyes focused on the combatants. This was a one-stock match, with no items and no time limit. Judging by the tension between the fighters, Final Destination would’ve been a more suitable stage than Dreamland. Oh, well—they had to settle for what they could get.

The announcer started the countdown.

“3…2…1…GO!”

Quickly, Dedede mentally ran through his strategy before rushing at his opponent, hammer primed for the swing. But as he brought it down, the other man darted out of the way, causing him to miss. The shocked king was now in a vulnerable spot, and he paid for it dearly. Seconds later, a piercing pain shot into the small of his back as his opponent executed one of his dropkicks. Then, his fist plowed into his right shoulder blade, sending him straight up. He sprawled onto a floating platform and tried to punish with the Super Dedede Jump, but the challenger countered with ease. His down smash attack pulled Dedede under him, and then he effortlessly tossed him high in the air to begin an especially brutal combo attack. It was mostly comprised of neutral and up aerials, mixed in with forward and up tilts, up smashes, grab attacks and down throws, finishing with his prized down-B. By the time it was done, Dedede was throbbing and sore all over his body, and a small trickle of blood ran from his nose. He struggled up and twirled his hammer menacingly, suddenly angered over someone he thought as cowardly holding him in check. With a grunt, Dedede charged, intending to do his forward smash. But then, he was temporarily blinded by green. Cleverly, the challenger used his standard special, calmly flicking fireballs at the king, hampering his progress. He used his hammer to shield him, and while he was shielding, he couldn’t attack. Before he knew it, he was hit by his opponent’s down aerial and standard 3-hit attack.

Dedede was on his back, seeing Warp Stars. His opponent wouldn’t have wanted it any other way. He raced over and made him airborne again, this time with the Fire Jump Punch, which caused him to land comically on his head. Luckily, he got back up before Dedede did, charged up his body, and launched himself like a green human rocket into the obnoxious, bullying king.

The king in question took the hit right in the gut. Air left him in a rush, and his knees became wobbly. He could feel his lunch starting to rebel against him, and it was as if his pancreas was getting squeezed out of shape. As much as the attacker wanted to stand and watch, he had more plans for this guy. His left elbow was cocked, power surging into his arm, and Dedede straightened only to see an open hand stab collide with his jaw with a horrific cracking noise. Now, his lower beak was knocked askew, and he could feel his injured jaw starting to bruise and swell up. He nearly fell off the stage, but he managed to grab onto the edge, fighting to pull himself back up. He did manage to perform an edge attack as his opponent lunged toward him, but now his strategy was in shambles. The green guy seemed to anticipate Dedede’s every move.

Immediately, the two rushed at one another again, Dedede flailing his hammer this way and that, the other flipping and leaping out of harm’s way and doing aerials and tilts in the process. His hand tingled from that forward smash and screamed at him to do it again. But first, he tripped the oversized penguin with his down tilt attack, threw in more roundhouse kicks for good measure, and then followed up with a barrage of straight jabs. He continued with this till his hand was sore, and before Dedede could even consider counterattacking, he roughly grasped him, headbutting him three times, and then swung him round and round till the centrifugal force scrambled his victim’s mind. Finally, the relentless green fighting machine let go, and Dedede hurtled into the air. He came to his senses in
time to avoid a K.O.

He was met by his challenger charging at him with flailing fists, which were easy to block with the hammer. As his confidence returned, he tried some smash attacks with his handy weapon, but a sorry few connected. He received another flip kick to his already bruised jaw, and a hard-hitting up smash met him during his descent, emitting another audible crunch. Finally, he lost it, a roar of pain tearing from his lips.

It was exactly what his opponent wanted to hear, and he was also starting to lose control. He was upon Dedede before it could register with the spectator’s vision receptors, eyes alive with the heat of battle, face flushed, attacking from all directions. Sharp cracking and dull crunching continued to fill the air. Dedede’s world was reduced to dozens of tiny Warp Stars. Brutal, heavy blows tore teeth lose and dislocated his beak, the upper part now cracked and dented. It was as if he was trapped in a force field, with no opportunity to escape, counter attack or even breathe, for that matter. The crowd was engrossed and secretly satiated as Dedede’s damage meter climbed higher and higher till it couldn’t climb any more. He was at 999%, and still his opponent kept going. Seven years of humiliation spilled onto the stage like the dark blood from Dedede’s face. Now, there were rubbery “lips” where the beak used to be, and he was spitting out loose teeth and jaw fragments. And as Dedede looked into his opponent’s blazing eyes, it hit him harder than the endless smash attacks.

He knew.

How that came about he didn’t know. But he did know that he was in a heap of trouble, that there was no talking his way out of it, and that his opponent had come a long way from the man he ambushed on that dirt road. He’d seen how he rose through the Smash ranks, even besting some heavyweight fighters a few times, and he’d shrugged it off as nothing. Now, he was paying for it in spades. And now it was his turn to be frightened out of his wits.

With a shout of effort, the challenger slammed a straight jab into Dedede one final, glorious time. He was short of breath, and the time had come to end this once and for all. It was game over for the high and mighty gluttonous king, payback time for his unthinkable betrayal. There was nothing he could say or offer to change his mind. There was no hope for him. No mercy. No escape.

He knelt over Dedede, mouth to his ear. “You think bashing me with your hammer was funny?” he queried in a furious whisper. “You think my being spooked by your Waddle Dees was hilarious? Well, I’ll show you hilarious!”

And with that, he grabbed Dedede once more, hurled him skyward, jumped up and slammed both feet into him, shattering his ribs, stopping his heart, and of course, K.O.-ing him.

“GAME!” yelled the announcer as the victor comically posed for the crowd.

So, you think I’m a wimp, eh? Well, everyone just saw the true wimp today. A true wimp is the one who attacks people from behind and secretly posts hurtful videos. And the day somebody lays hands on my big bro, they’ve really had it.
Wario: Smelly Inside and Out

Chapter Summary

Mr. Ravioli is foul both inside and out. Too bad he's found the wrong plumber to mess with.

“You and I have unfinished business.”

The sounds of drilling, welding and hammering came from within the work shed. Such was the cacophony that the yellow-and-purple clad being inside didn’t notice the skitter of gravel and the steady beat of approaching footsteps. It was only the insistent rapping on the door that alerted him to potentially unwanted company.

“Go away!” he ordered.

Unfortunately, the knocker responded by pounding the door harder, louder. Realizing that the person wasn’t going away anytime soon, the greedy, odious, garlic-lover turned his attention from his prized motorcycle and crossed the room to the door.

“What do you want?” he barked. “I’m busy!”

No reply. Grumbling, he opened the door—and nearly jumped out of his skin.

Standing before him was a young man, tall and thin, dressed all in green with blue overalls, brown hair mostly covered by a green ball-cap. Looked harmless, right? Wrong. His gloved hands were clenched into fists, and his intense blue eyes were saturated with hatred. The look he gave the other man was enough to freeze him in his tracks.

The two stood there for seconds on end, looking at each other. As the one in green stood there, something welled up in the back of his throat like bile. Just the sight of that smug, ugly stinky mug, which now had the look of a child about to face the consequences of stealing a cookie from the cookie jar, was enough to bring the memories into crystal clear focus—the helplessness, the pain. As those memories gored him, ripping open the protective scar tissue of his mind, his heart rate and pulse shot up like his Green Missile, and that feeling in his throat grew to unbearable. He couldn’t take it anymore. Straight at Mr. Ravioli he launched his 97 units of long-repressed hurt, a now-fiery fist aimed for the center of that unnerving, infuriating face.

*Flashback*

Blows.

Insults.

Too much—it was all too much—all he wanted was for it all to stop, to make it stop—to make him stop—
“Heh-heh-heh. Who’s the big guy now, you little dink?” asked the gruff voice above him.

He coughed and choked back a cry of pain. Showing his weakness in this situation was akin to suicide. The bully in question continued to laugh and taunt, and all he could think was, Make it go away—make him go away—why won’t he go away and leave me alone?

“You’re nothing but a disgrace. What makes you think you could waltz in here in the first place?” The words penetrated deep into his soul and would remain there; though the bruises would heal, the words would make deep cuts which would be carried throughout a lifetime.

The hapless victim curled into a protective ball, trying to get away from this monster. Said monster was relentless, hurling one verbal and physical attack after another until his blood dripped onto the ground, his vision grew hazy, and his head was spinning in pain. But the endless blows were nothing compared to the venomous sting of the words.

“You’re just a pathetic underling, and that’s all you’ll ever be!”

“Why don’t you go back where you came from?”

“Nobody cares about you, and they never will!”

“You should just kill yourself; you don’t even deserve to live!”

“You’re more trouble than you’re worth.”

“I don’t see how anyone can stand to look at your face!”

On and on it went, with no signs of stopping. He couldn’t even cry out for help. All he could do was wait for it to be over. And eventually, it was. The bully, by some miracle, tired himself out. He grinned callously at his victim, now a heap on the ground.

“You look just fine like this, crumpled like a pile of refuse,” he sneered before walking away.

It was then that he allowed the tears to flow.

*End of flashback*

He was now creating a beautiful work of art.

The gross pile of filth in the form of a human being, struggling to get away from him, face covered in blood and snot as he cried like a kindergarten baby, whining at him to stop. Funny, the man in green recalled acting in a similar fashion when this bully seemed fit to take whatever he was feeling out on him. After getting him with a fiery punch, he next nailed him with a few of his signature spinning roundhouse kicks, all of them aimed at the guy’s revolting mouth, sending teeth rocketing out. Then, he grabbed him, forcefully bashing his skull against his a handful of times till his face was sticky with both of their blood. His punishment was just beginning. He launched his prized straight jab into the man’s stomach, doubling him over, compacting his intestines, followed by a harder one into his left side, snapping a rib or two. For the sake of symmetry, he also blasted one into his right side, earning a roar of agony, music to his ears. Wild, malicious excitement and savage glee coursed through his bloodstream, along with the initial surge of adrenaline. He threw him to the ground like a dog and body slammed him twice, sent him spinning into a wall, and then clubbed him repeatedly with his kitten-swipe attack before smashing the biker under the chin with his fist. Slightly dazed, the man grabbed a wrench and began to haphazardly swing it at the intruder, but he managed to duck and dodge every time. At last, he had enough of this game and knocked the wrench away with a flip kick, launching it well out of his reach.
A tripping kick sent him to the floor once more, the thinner man straddling him, pinning his arms above his head so he couldn’t shield himself. Now he was in a real bind, and he knew it. Silently, he pleaded with the attacker, but his eyes were ice, rebuffing him. Before he could brace himself, the first punches thudded into him, obliterating his ugly nose, dislocating his jaw, pulverizing his gum and cracking both of his cheeks. The blows were harder and harder, faster and faster, from the left, from the right, from above, seeking out ripe locations on his rotten mug. They delivered just the way the taller one wanted them to, crashing and colliding with the force of chisels. He wanted to reduce this man to oblivion, body and soul, just like he did to him. He wanted him to beg, to grovel, to weep, and above all, to bleed. By the time he was finished, his victim was certain that he’d swallowed the teeth popped loose from that onslaught. He saw everything through a crimson veil, and he didn’t know which way was up.

“Get up,” his attacker ordered him, and he struggled to get to his feet. The other man lost patience, yanked him up and then unleashed the worst of his fury with a string of attacks. It was what he’d conserved his energy for. Punches, kicks, jabs, fireballs, tilts, aerials and everything in between erupted from him, stronger than Mount St. Helens. The squatter man’s body was twisted helplessly through the air, parts of it shattering in milliseconds. Blood filled his eyes, nose and mouth, and it was impossible to scream. The one in green was gasping for breath, but still he kept going, allowing the hate to flow through him and take control. He’d wanted to do this for a long, long time. As he ate up the yellow-and-purple bully, he’d never felt so alive and free. The days as Mr. Ravioli’s prey seemed more remote with each attack he executed.

Finally, he allowed him to drop to the floor, covered in gore. He quivered as he heard the green avenger slowly approach him, a frightening calm painting his features. He took his time; none of them was going anywhere.

“Don’t hurt me,” the pathetic little man whimpered. “Just give me a chance. Just give me a chance!”

“What about me?” the green-clad one shot back. “Did you give me a chance? Did you?!”

“You made me do it to you; you wanted me to do it to you,” the bully wailed. “You asked for it!”

His one-time target yelled out in fury, grabbed him by the hair on the back of his head and slammed his face into a nearby desk.

“Now who’s the little dink?” he hollered, slamming him after each sentence. “Now who’s the pathetic one? How does it feel, being trapped in a living nightmare with no escape? Well, that’s how you made me feel!”

The bully in question screamed in fear and closed his eyes. “I’m sorry, I’m sorry…”

“No, you’re not sorry.” A jab. “You’re just realizing that nobody’s here to stick up for you (jab), to pray for you (jab), to hope for you (jab), and that you’re the weakest creature to ever walk this earth (very hard jab). You’re just scared (mighty jab), because everything is finally coming back to bite you (ungodly hard jab), and that there’s no free ride out of this (jab). You’re not sorry for bullying me (punishing jab). You’re sorry you got caught (epic jab)!”

He lunged with renewed passion, attacking nonstop until the un-manly screams dwindled to whimpering. He glared hard at the pleasingly bloody mass of a man, who had now lost control of his bodily functions and was wetting his pants. He took the opportunity to throw his own words back at him:

“You look perfect right now, crumpled on the ground like refuse.”
“B-b-but,” the bully whimpered, “you’re a secret character.”

There was a dramatic pause as the man in green seared the crumpled glutton with his gaze. “Not anymore,” he spat, slamming one last fiery punch into him. It was enough to liquefy his innards, and he lay still. The victor stood in the now quiet room, catching his breath and wiping the sweat from his brow, reflecting on how far he had come.

You could torment me, you could beat me, you could insult me and you could defame me. But there was one thing you could never take away—my will to survive. You could never take that away...
Interlude 1: Bring Me to Life

Chapter Summary

Take a trip with me into the mind of a green-capped avenger. When thoughts of his tormentors keep him awake, how does he cope?

*How can you see into my eyes, like open doors?*

*Leading you down into my core, where I’ve become so numb…?“*

-Evanescence, “Bring Me to Life”

As I lay on my bed at night, endeavoring to coax my brain out of a state of hyperactivity, I can see the faces of the scumbags who have done this to me and the monsters responsible. The big-shots, the jocks, the tough guys of Smash. Even the bliss of rapid eye movement does not shelter me from them. In the realm of my dreams, they continue to torment me, to even deny me the privilege of beauty sleep. I shouldn’t be surprised; if you’re a bully, allowing your most cherished victim forty winks would be too nice, wouldn’t it?

Thoughts and memories of them swirl on and on in a maddening maelstrom. It’s because of them I spend my nights in the Wii Fit Training Room laying waste to an army of eager Sandbags, pretending I’m facing down all of my enemies and single-handedly mopping the ground with them. Dark, death metal music plays at max volume, extremely suitable for my current mood. The lyrics pound into my ears as I set about decimating the Sandbag in front of me, shutting out all thoughts and emotions except for my movements and the howling need for release, the screaming need to get these monsters out of my head so I can at least grab an adequate amount of sleep. Adrenaline surges into me, and it feels great. My fists slam into the Sandbag, and I yell out. I keep yelling and pounding, yelling and pounding, music taking its desired effect. Sandbag after Sandbag falls, now ready for the scrap heap. I know replacement Sandbags will have to come out of my money, but I don’t care. I’m on fire, and if Master Hand chooses this precise moment to gripe at me over it, then I’ll tell him to stuff it and drop dead.

Though the duration of my beatdown, I allow myself to remember, to replay all of the events that have led me to my present situation. Me, backed up against a wall, the rough posse coming at me with snarling faces to do whatever they pleased because they simply wanted to. A leg “accidentally” tripping me, sending me to the dining hall floor, my food spilling all over me. The incessant taunting during a match, my opponents sidestepping as many rules as they could just so they could have at me. Laughter, slicing deep into me and agitating the fine hairs on my neck. Voices chanting, “Loser, nobody, loser, nobody, loser, loser, lame, lame, pitiful”. And while for some it fades into oblivion, it stays imprinted like a stamp, or a brand, for that matter, within my spirit. And so here we are, in the Training Room in the deep of night, Amy Lee leading Evanescence in crooning a Goth-y ditty, focusing on all of that garbage and letting it build, like a slow burn, until it finally—wins—finally explodes in me, sending me
cartwheeling and dodging and whirling and leaping from one end of the room to another, leaving destroyed Sandbags in my wake, hollering in complete exhilaration and anticipation of what’s to come.

“Wake me up inside, wake me up inside.

Call my name and save me from the dark.

Bid my blood to run, before I come undone.

Save me from the nothing I’ve become.

Bring me to life…bring me to life…”

Sweat pours down my face and soaks my shirt. My tongue flicks out and tastes it—it’s as salty as the tears that used to flow down my face. My throat’s going raw from shouting, but my exclamations don’t cease. One hard hand stab sends a Sandbag crashing out of a window with a satisfying shatter of glass, and I acrobatically flip, kicking another unlucky Sandbag during the flip. I drop to my back and spin around like an expert break-dancer, legs flying, sending a group of Sandbags flying like bowling pins. As I get back up, I feel invigorated. More Evanescence songs continue to spew from the stereo, the perfect soundtrack to my sweat-out. Even more Sandbags become airborne, sailing out the shattered window after my lethal attacks, attacks which have greatly improved after many years of steadfast training. The tension within me begins to splinter as I translate it into retribution for each Sandbag in my way, concentrating on obliterating every last one, just as I’ll obliterate every last Smasher who gave me grief for the past sixteen years. This prospect causes my passion to grow, and I unload even more aggression into my stationary foes.

At long last, I’m facing it. The very last one. I breathe heavily, my emotions coalescing into one undefinable mass. Inhaling, exhaling, feeling each tiny droplet of sweat sliding down my skin and onto the floor. Tension, coiling, building once more, and then suddenly—

…it explodes—

…like a cannon firing—

And I’m whaling away at the lone Sandbag, my grand finale, bombarding it with punches, jabs and kicks, practically screaming at it, jumping high to attack it from the air, sliding along the ground to attack it from below, tenderizing it, feasting on it—watching it give before my eyes, the white stuffing exposed like marshmallow filling, and I allow myself no time to think; just keep going and going until the Sandbag is on its last leg, and with one last blow, I send it off to join the majority of its friends.

I stand in a wasteland of ravaged Sandbags, wind blowing from the broken window, rustling my hair, moonlight pouring all over my perspiring form. My breathing slows, steadies. Five seconds in, five seconds hold, five seconds out. Five seconds in, five seconds hold, five seconds out.

Breathe in.

One Mississippi.
Two Mississippi.

Three Mississippi.

Four Mississippi.

Five Mississippi.

Now hold.

One Mississippi.

Two Mississippi.

Three Mississippi. (*Steady, think happy thoughts.*)

Four Mississippi. (*Easy there, take it easy.*)

Five Mississippi.

Now breathe out.

One Mississippi.

Two Mississippi.

Three Mississippi.

Four Mississippi.

Five Mississippi.

All I hear is the music, the sound of my breath, and the drum of my heart. I’ve banished the voices of my tormentors, for a while at least.

I smell pollinating flowers in the wind, a counterbalance to the adrenaline and body odor radiating off of me in waves.

I see my reflection in a nearby mirror, all sweated out, hair plastered against my forehead, a smile replacing the anger on my face.

I smile because I know that despite the bullies, I have some allies among the Smashers, a big bro’s love being the strongest. I smile because I’ve had a year all to myself, and because of that, I’m no longer a nobody. I smile because I have spirit on my side, for instead of allowing the hate and mocking to break me, I made it build me up with a stronger foundation. And I smile because as the day dawns, so will a chance for me to prove the haters wrong, to make them the weak ones, to make them regret what they regarded as child’s play. To break them like they’ve tried to break me.

When fortune smiles on something as violent and ugly as revenge, it seems proof like no other, that not only does God exist, you’re doing His will.

And I won’t have it any other way.
Chapter Summary

This OC is based on a boy who used to call me names like "butterball" way back when. Consider this his comeuppance.

Chapter Notes

Trigger warning: It gets creepy at the end. Not for the squeamish.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Crito, we owe a rooster to Asclepius. Please, don’t forget to pay the debt.”

--Socrates

2001

Raymond’s face was twisted into a sadistic leer as he slammed the shorter man face-first against the locker. He kept him in a painful arm-lock, enjoying the way he trembled and whimpered, nose bloodied, face beaten. As a tall but heavyweight fighter in Smash, he enjoyed flaunting his power, but nothing brought him more pleasure than demonstrating his prowess over the puny middleweight he had cornered right now. Sometimes, when he lost a match, he would be the go-to guy to take it out on. If they just so happened to be alone together, as they were now, then Raymond would seize the opportunity to pounce. Sure, he had a bigger brother to lay his weary head on, but Raymond could deal with him. And Raymond’s periodic threats against his target, or his brother, or his friends ensured that Master Hand would never find out his secret hobby.

“What’s the matter, butter-ball? Scared?” growled Raymond in a deep, husky voice. He seized the hair on the back of his victim’s head in a bruising grip and pulled it taut. God—it was as if he was trying to rip the skin off the back of his neck.

“Y’know, I’ve had a long morning of pummeling opponents, some of which didn’t make it easy, and with my muscles achy and all, I could use some more respect from people like you.” The way he said “people” crackled with senseless hate. “Don’t you long for the pleasure of my company?”

His temples were damp with tears now, eyelashes spiky from the tears that had splashed from them. Agony bit down on his pinned arm, and he gasped when Raymond twisted it tighter. He smelled mustard and bologna on Raymond’s breath, as well as something more repulsive, the smell of a foul, disgusting tick. That was what he was, an invasive pest who didn’t belong within an inch of these tournaments.

“Ray, please…” he whispered hoarsely as he was pressed further against the locker. “Please.”
But Raymond only laughed. “I love the way you beg for mercy,” he cooed. “That tells me you know who’s in charge around here.”

“I didn’t do anything, okay? Just leave me alone.” At those words, Raymond’s face darkened, and he pulled his face close to the shorter one’s.

“I’m sorry. Did you just tell me what to do?”

His victim knew that he’d erred, and tried to backpedal. Too late.

Seconds later, he was smashed onto the ground, seeing a brief white flash before his eyes. Frantically, he wriggled on his belly in a desperate bid to get away from this creature, but the creature in question stopped him with a strong foot on his back. Bending down, Raymond shoved his mouth against the other man’s ear and hissed, “I thought you’ve been warned time and time again. No one tells me what to do.” He didn’t yell or scream. The words were spoken in a calm, cold voice, frightening him further.

The victim was now unable to speak, fear in his eyes. Raymond dragged him deeper into the locker room, so that what would happen wouldn’t attract any attention. “You and I are going to have a nice conversation about that mouth of yours,” he announced, making the being-dragged man’s stomach curdle. He knew he wanted another excuse to whale at him again; the slightest comments were enough to set him off. It was pointless to try and talk him down—once he wanted to give someone a beatdown, someone would get a beatdown. Might as well get it over with sooner.

How wrong he was. They reached a spot which Raymond deemed as “safe”, and the bully cracked his knuckles, preparing to administer his “punishment”. He sneered down at him. “Anything you’d like to say?”

“I swear—I didn’t mean it…please…”

The only response was a fiendish giggle, and then, with the attitude of a boatswain flogging a belligerent sailor, he began.

There was no masking Raymond’s enjoyment. The way his victim feebly struggled and continued to entreat. His screams as he viciously unloaded his brute force on him, the blows blotting out all traces of suffering, his fists absorbing the pain and using it as fuel. Suddenly, one hand clamped down on his throat, pinning him to the hard, cold, laminated floor, cutting off his cries. He writhed, a muffled sob escaping his lips, but the “punishment” kept going. He was immobile, the terror making him sick to his stomach. His body trembled head to foot, more tears pricked at his eyes, and another whimper died in his throat. Raymond was both the prison and the jailer, and for the life of him, he could not escape. For fifty-six grotesque minutes, he was Raymond’s human punching bag, and the last ten minutes were the worst, since the guy wanted to leave a “lasting impression” on him. After the last blow, he watched contentedly as his victim cried, licking the tears and blood off of his face.

“So, my little green friend, we understand each other, yes? If you so much as say anything that I find displeasing, I’ll do such a job on you that nobody will recognize you for a year.”

Furiously, Raymond’s “little green friend” nodded, hoping it would stave off another volley of blows.

Raymond grinned. “Good. Don’t bother trying to get up; you’re perfect just like that—on the ground like vermin.”

He turned to leave, but then offered these parting words, “Oh, and I trust that none of this will
leave this locker room. Not that anyone going to do something about it, anyway—after all, there aren’t a lot of people here who care about you.” He walked away, whistling a tune, leaving his victim curled up and wondering if Raymond had serious brain damage.

After making his life miserable, all he could do was walk away and whistle?!

Raymond would always come back for more, and in the aftermath, he’d go about his merry way, acting like it never happened. But the man presently in a heap in the locker room would remember, even as the years passed, even as his skills improved, even as his fan base (and consequently his self-confidence) increased, even as he slowly overcame his worst fears, even as the public gave him a year all to himself, even as a simple menacing glare during a kart race gave him notoriety.

The man in green would always remember.

Present Day

Raymond Sinclair had a pretty swollen ego nowadays. He had the favor of both Master Hand and Crazy Hand, Smash trophies lining several walls in his room, and a charm that masked his true personality. He was the man of the hour, the Smasher about town, the one who had it all—power, wealth and swagger. In fact, his ego was such that it was surprising he could fit with the other Smashers. He was envied, feared—and hated.

As he trained, competed with, and competed against the fighters, his invincibility complex was Ford tough. To him, all of his transgressions were swept under the rug, never to bother him or impede his ambitions. He could—and possibly did—get away with anything, and had recently received “special privileges” from Master and Crazy. If you could cozy up to those two hands, then you were basically a Smash VIP.

Raymond felt on top of the world.

Until one fateful day, when it all fell apart.

Funny how it takes just a few seconds to reap what you’ve sown for over fourteen years.

So it was with Raymond. He was so self-absorbed that he’d failed to notice the eyes that had drilled into him during his ascent to “glory”. The eyes once filled with tears as their owner suffered from his abuse. The eyes once holding pain and terror and now containing a desire for retribution. The eyes belonging to a certain green-capped hero who’d experienced an ascent of his own. Raymond’s face was once a face the eyes never wanted to look at, but now, they intently drank in every detail of that face, branded it into memory banks and pondered over how the avenger should go about breaking it. He’d let Raymond chill for a while, and then he’d strike when he least expected it.

It was sheer chance that they both found themselves in the locker room one day. The same locker room where the abuses were carried out. Alone. After a match (not with each other, thank God). Both of them had won, and Raymond was in especially good spirits. In such good spirits, that he had no idea that danger was literally a few feet away.

Sighing in contentment, Raymond peeled off his shirt, intending to reward himself with a nice, long shower and a brag-a-thon to the middleweights and lightweights. As it turned out, a certain
middleweight decided that it was time to claim a long-overdue reward of his own.

Just as Raymond started to remove his bottoms, he finally sensed that he wasn’t alone. He straightened, turned around, and—

His old victim was standing right behind him.

The moment they locked eyes, the memories crashed onto the shorter man like Niagara Falls. Trapped, fists and sometimes feet battering his body, words cutting him to pieces, hard lockers digging into his flesh. A vein began to throb in his temple, now dry, and fire ignited in his baby blues. A primal scream of anger tore from him, and before Raymond could process this ghost from his past, he was rocketing through the air, and his back encountered the locker with massive impact.

Raymond could swear his vertebræ were breaking apart.

Being eyeball to eyeball with a bullied man hungry for revenge had his pulse through the roof. He tried to escape, but the man’s grip on him was iron, leaving a dark splotch on his neck. His free hand slowly clenched into a fist, and as Raymond’s eyes widened, he shot it forward. It made a perfect bull’s-eye on his bare upper body, splintering two of his ribs. Raymond grunted in pain, and another fist exploded against his face with an echoing crack.

The man smiled wickedly as Raymond’s face turned into a bloody mask. He was going to have tons of fun with this one. The punishing smash attacks would come later. Right now, he started off with some nice jabs and dropkicks, demonstrating his athleticism with rapid flips and strikes. His manner was calm, almost methodical even, as he kept Raymond pinned against the hard locker and worked on his exposed torso, feeling with the pads of his fingers before administering a blow. Raymond’s mind was scrambled, and his chest felt constricted as pain stabbed him from all directions. Chills crawled down his battered spine, and he felt feverish. His legs began to grow wobbly, and a ringing arose in his ears. Deftly, his attacker shoved a slice of a Maxim tomato into his mouth, healing him, only to whale away with unimaginable strength. Fists and feet flew with frightening precision, attacking ideal areas on Raymond’s bare upper body. He deliberately avoided critical areas, so that Raymond would stay conscious as long as possible. After sliding his tongue across his lips, he had another go at his tormentor, keeping his breathing steady, making no other noises except for his occasional battle grunts, savoring the helplessness in the eyes of one who used to make him feel helpless. Raymond was bleeding from the nose, mouth and side, and he had no time to defend himself against the onslaught. He bit back a yell of pain to maintain the dignity he had left, which didn’t sit well with the other man. He wanted to hear him scream like he made him scream, cry like he cried, bruise like he bruised, and bleed like he bled. He wanted whimpers and pleas to slip from his lips so his ears could savor them like balm or salve. He wanted to see him reduced to pathetic ruins and to bring his days in the fast lane to a bitter end. As Raymond stubbornly held back his screams, though, the other man’s anger finally reached its zenith. Gradually, he moved from standard and tilt attacks to his smash attacks, notably his forward and up smashes.

Now Raymond was positively certain he was going to die.

After a flurry of bruising forward smashes, Raymond’s screams tore loose from their restraints. He writhed against the locker, searching for an opening to make a break for it, all the while screaming like a stuck pig. The louder he screamed, the more savagely the other man attacked, now zeroing in on the major areas on his body. Getting him to wail and cry was the next step. Viciously, he tore up Raymond’s handsome face, his awesome abs, his enviably flat belly and especially his neck. Wherever he heard something break, that was where he hit the most. Raymond quivered like Jell-O and hollered his head off; still the avenger kept going. If they weren’t in such a cramped space, then he would’ve used his down-B and side-B on him, really making him yell. But he liked
having Raymond against a locker, since that was his m.o. back in the day. It also made it easier for
him to finally give back every last blow which had been administered to him.

After firing his open hand stab into the center of Raymond’s body, he force-fed him another slice
of Maxim tomato so he wouldn’t black out, grabbed him, headbutted him, spun him around, and
rammed him face-first against the locker, arm pinned in the familiar arm-lock. It was at that point that
deja-vu really got to Raymond, and he began to blubber. The green man had the arm in a viselike
grip, and applying pressure caused the blubering to increase. He hauled him back and slammed him
into the locker again and again until at least most of his teeth had been knocked away. Raymond was
sobbing in earnest by this point, which increased his once-victim’s bloodlust.

“Stop…please…stop…don’t hurt me…please…don’t hurt me…” The words he once spoke, now
spoken by the one who made him speak them. The irony was poetic. He bashed Raymond into the
locker a couple of more times and then squeezed his arm with all his strength until he was rewarded
with the sound of bones being crushed out of existence. He whipped him around to face him once
more and grabbed him by the throat, holding him in place.

“Please…let me go…I’ll do anything…”

For a while, the shorter man studied Raymond, savoring the moment, smiling at him with a cold,
unforgiving smile, eyes still burning with hatred. He licked his lips for the second time, anticipated
over the next thing he had in mind. His free hand began to glow bright green, and he slowly moved
his index finger toward Raymond’s chest, rapidly moving in and out as his breath quickened.

Vocal chords now paralyzed, Raymond shook his head a terrified “No!”

In response, the man nodded “Yes” and touched the index finger to the bare skin. Raymond
regained his voice and howled. That green glow was fire! Slowly, deliberately, the green-clad man
commenced to burn Raymond alive. And for the first time during their encounter, he spoke, albeit in
his native tongue, in a soothing, calm voice.

“Guardate la mia faccia, Raymond. Guardate i miei occi. Guardate il mio naso. Guardate la mia
baffi. Guardate la mia bocca. Mi riconosci? Ti sembro qualcuno—si vittima di bullismo?!?” He
spoke the last sentence harshly.

Raymond screamed in fear and closed his eyes as the man continued to scorch his skin. He was
burning a message, a brand—criminals were once branded, you know—taking his sweet time doing
it. Tears poured down Raymond’s face, and the man paused his work only to lick them off. Greedily,
he caught each teardrop on his tongue, humming in pleasure. “Ah, Raymond, le tue lacrime sapore
cosi buono.”

Forget Vaseline—that would’ve been too nice. The severe burns on Raymond’s upper body took
shape to form a message: I AM A REVOLTING PIG, A DISGRACE TO SOCIETY. The truth
was permanently branded on the bully. The man nodded at his artwork and lapped up Raymond’s
tears of shame.

“I’m sorry,” Raymond said, over and over. “I’m sorry.”

“To you, ‘sorry’ means nothing,” the man responded, switching back to English. “It’s just a word
to get you off the hook. But I promise you, when I’m done, you’re going to be truly sorry.”

Raymond’s face paled as the man opened a locker door and then dragged him over, positioning
his head halfway in. It became crystal clear what he was about to do. As the other man swung the
doors open, Raymond screamed out one final plea.
“No! No! Please!!!”

SLAM!

SLAM!

SLAM!

SLAM!

SLAM!

Raymond screamed at the top of his lungs in pain. His brain was rattling violently, and the blood profusely seeped down his face, nearly blinding him. He prayed for the pain to stop, for the man to stop. But his prayers went unanswered. He glimpsed the man’s satisfied smirk through blurring eyesight, his cries weakening. This was the end. There was no way out for him.

The man knew this too, and decided to end it here and now. *Goodbye forever, Raymond…*

And he threw all of his 97 units against the door, bringing it right down on his former bully’s head. Raymond’s vision failed him as his noggin was crushed like a watermelon, and the last thing he heard was his ex-victim’s voice, whispering in his ear. “*Ciao…*”

Blood and brain matter started spraying from what was once a head in a grisly shower as the body twitched in a post-mortem spasm. The man stood, pulling himself together, and stared intently at the crimson spray. A few minutes later, it fizzled and finally stopped. With a crazy thought now hazing his mind, the avenger leaned in, lolled out his tongue and licked up the blood, his mouth filling with the sweet and tangy taste of vengeance. He slurped up the pasta-like brain bits and swirled them round in his mouth a few times. Finally, he lost all control and dug in, licking, slurping, sucking. Savoring.

Revenge had never been so succulent.

Chapter End Notes

Translations (I used Google Translate):
1) Look at my face, Raymond. Look at my eyes. Look at my nose. Look at my moustache. Look at my mouth. Do you recognize me? Do I look like someone—you bullied?! 
2) Ah, Raymond, your tears taste so good.
Ganondorf: It's My Party

Chapter Summary

The Year of Luigi reaches the Smash universe. Ganondorf isn't happy with that. Unfortunately, Luigi's not taking any crap from anybody, even a dark ruler.

“What goes around, goes around, goes around comes all the way back around.”

-Justin Timberlake, “What Goes Around”

A lot of things happened in 2013. The Defense of Marriage Act was overturned, as well as Proposition 8 in California. It was the 50th anniversary of JFK’s assassination and of Dr. King’s “I Have a Dream” speech. And most importantly, a certain Smasher turned 30 years old.

Birthdays usually consisted of a special day, but for this lucky fellow, it was an entire year of celebrations, games, and best of all—recognition. Finally, he had his share in the spotlight. Related events also had boosted his self-esteem sky high (kicking your plasmophobia to the curb could do that to you). Even Master Hand threw something in, promoting him from an unlockable to a starter. After that, the Hero in Green was ready to play with the big boys, with his big bro and a smattering of friends by his side.

2013 was full of great cheer for the Smashers, as they did everything they could to make the birthday boy feel welcome, appreciated, confident, and comfortable. Master Hand and Crazy Hand even made the villains be nice to him. It was grudging, but no matter. Soon, they’d see the error of their ways.

But, as always, someone had to spoil this green year. The subject of the guest of honor’s clumsiness and cowardliness was discourteously brought up during one festive night. There was food, drink, a big cake (green, of course), and music, mixing and mingling. Unfortunately, there was a guest bound and determined to break the mood—and his name was Ganondorf.

The Keeper of the Tri-Force slammed a mighty fist on the table, causing the celebrations to screech to a halt and people to turn shocked faces to him.

“Ganondorf, what is the meaning of this outburst?!?” cried Master Hand. “This is a celebration!”

“A celebration of what?” Ganondorf wanted to know. “The perversion of the Super Smash universe?”

“Ganondorf, have you gone mad?” cried Palutena. “This will not be tolerated!”

“Poyo, poyo!” agreed Kirby.

“You’re insulting my brother! Apologize!” commanded Mario.

In contrast to everyone else, the green-clad birthday boy was unruffled. “Ganon, what perversion are you talking about?” he gently asked.
“In 1999, Master Core brought all of us together to engage of contests of might and will,” Ganondorf began, “and while we eat like pigs and laugh like hyenas, he weeps in the Subspace over the perversion committed today!”

“This is outrageous!” snapped Link. “We’re here to have a great time and to celebrate a fellow Smasher, and you have the gall to cut in like this. You crossed a line!”

“Oh, that’s rich coming from the guy who always spoils my plans to take over the world!” retorted Ganondorf.

“You leave that out of this!” Zelda broke in.

The Hands were desperately trying to calm everyone as the guest of honor continued to smile on, seemingly not bothered.

“How could you do this to him after how nice he’s been to you?” Mario demanded of Ganondorf, eyes on fire. “He told me that he was gonna bring over his Polterpup tomorrow and introduce him to everybody, including you. But now I think you’re giving him second thoughts.”

Ganondorf threw a drink in his face and called him a name. Before a fight could erupt, the target of Ganondorf’s outburst interceded.

“Bro, I know you’re trying to stick up for me, and I respect that. But Ganon obviously has something on his mind. Who are we not to allow him to express it?”

Reluctantly, the other guests allowed Ganondorf to continue.

Ganondorf took a breath. “I speak of the perversion done to the Smash universe, which I love as much as the Tri-Force—by giving a whole year and a boatload of attention to a big-nosed scaredy-cat who always needs his older brother to get him out of a jam, while I get stepped over like dog’s droppings!”

Everyone turned on him at once. Link kicked him in the crotch, Kirby swung his Ultra-Sword at him, Marth and Lucina charged at him with their swords, Samus restrained Ness from using PK Thunder, Little Mac threatened to give him “the old one-two”, and a certain peachy princess whacked him a few good times with her parasol.

“Mamma F---er!” With those words, and a Smash Ball conveniently floating around someplace (believe me, those things are everywhere), the Mario Finale was unleashed, blowing the party pooper away in a spectacular swirl of bright red flames.

But the damage had already been done. Nintendo’s 30-year-old number two mascot sat quietly in his spot, staring at his nice-sized cake, looking and feeling like he’d just taken a left hook to his face.

Two years later, nobody had officially forgiven Ganondorf for his little hissy-fit. Zelda, Link, Toon Link, Sheik, Ness, Palutena, Pit, Lucina, Marth, Shulk, Samus, both Robins, both Wii Fit Trainers, Little Mac, Peach and even Sonic wanted next to nothing to do with him. When Lucas and Mewtwo returned, Ness and Pikachu, respectively, wasted no time telling them what had transpired. Master Hand had briefly suspended him and ordered him to write a letter of apology to the man he had insulted. That letter was kept in a drawer, forever sealed, never to be read. Never to be forgiven.
On the second anniversary of Ganondorf’s outburst, he was in his quarters, recovering from a bout with Mario. Seriously, he had no idea what his problem was. He’d been harsher than necessary (in his opinion), and had used the Super Jump Punch more than he should have. By the time it was over, his muscles were sore from the beating he’d taken, and water clogged his ears from the times his opponent used F.L.U.D.D. “to cool him off”, so he said. Now all Ganon wanted to do was get some beauty rest and some time away from the flak he’d been subjected to.

Apparently, that wasn’t going to happen.

A knock on his door. “Room service!” sang out a voice.

“Perfect timing,” mumbled Ganondorf as he went to the door and opened it.

Last he checked, he didn’t order a knuckle sandwich. But that was what he got.

Ganon went flying across the room and landed on his bed, a geyser of blood spouting from the remnants of his nose, writhing. With steady footsteps, the person who had thrown the punch entered, slammed the door behind him, and locked it. Ganondorf was now trapped with someone who could really throw a punch.

When the throbbing died down, Ganondorf flew up and practically jumped out of his skin when he saw who had attacked him. “But…how…?” he spluttered.

The man in green, now thirty-two years old, was nose-to-nose with him. Blue eyes animated, fists clenched, cap pushed at an angle. “Remember me?” he asked darkly.

“Look, buddy, I just had a match, so get lost,” snarled Ganon.

“Sorry, Ganon,” the intruder replied. “Looks like you’re getting a beatdown from two Marios today!”

He summoned his strength and slammed another punch into Ganondorf, blasting his nose to bits. As his target reeled, he did his down tilt, bashing his heel into the ruler’s kneecap. Quickly, he straightened, spun, and followed up with a strong kick to Ganon’s side and then flipped into the air, crashing into him with a body slam. Next, he grabbed the dizzy man, shoved him underneath him, and ground-pounded him silly, grinding Ganondorf’s bones every time. Eventually, he tired of this and clubbed him with a series of up tilts and forward aerials, ending with his up smash. Ganon crashed miserably on the ground, letting out an un-manly squeak.

The avenger was just warming himself up. He noticed Ganondorf struggling to stand and nonchalantly bombarded him with fireballs. Furious, Ganon charged, only to be speared by a forward smash. The center of his ribcage sheared with the impact, and it became difficult and painful for Ganon to breathe. He was catapulted into a wall, and his assailant wasted no time rushing over and executing one of his lethal combo attacks, starting with a grab, several head-butts and an up throw, smoothly transitioning into and up-aerial and letting his imagination and instincts take him from there. For some reason, he started thinking of cake. Maybe it was the recollection of Ganondorf’s jeering voice, the voice which stalked him for two whole years, dampening a year that was supposed to be filled with pleasant memories. Maybe it was because he’d decided to give himself a belated birthday present, paying a surprise visit to Ganon and creaming him senseless. Maybe it was because of the aftershocks his year left behind. Who knew? Well, no time to ponder over it right now.

It did feel like devouring a tasty cake, though, brutally battering Ganon like a piñata, anticipating the moment when all of his stuffing spilled out like candy. Flipping and twisting through the air with
him actually gave him the sugar rush that came with eating cake. He had the frightening accuracy and precision of a ninja, attacking anywhere on Ganon’s body where it caused the most pain. He especially loved using his forward smash, down-B and up-B, feeling fierce joy at the sounds those attacks made when they hit their target. Ganon was stumbling and tripping at this point, and the man couldn’t have been happier. He went at him with renewed ferocity, letting the resentment he’d carried with him for the past two years drown out everything else. Though Ganon was a heavyweight and ranked quite high on the tier list, he stood no chance against a guy whose strength was multiplied by a myriad of strong emotions. He was also unnerved, too, by the malice behind those baby blues, by the clinical prejudice with which he chose a prime spot to slam an attack into and by the sound of his breath becoming faster and more forceful. Karma was about to bite him, and he knew it.

The Green Missile blew Ganondorf into another wall, and he sagged against it, dazed, face beaten, all of him spattered with blood. He could only see in a squint because the swelling on his face was so bad. Jagged shards that used to be teeth cut into the inside of his lip, and the numerous broken bones inside of him felt like crushed glass. His vision cleared, and all he saw was the man he’d denounced as cowardly, studying him curiously, only his eyes betraying the hurt inside.

“Look, if this is about what I said—I’m sorry,” muttered Ganondorf.

His attacker just looked at him. “Liar,” he said simply before blasting a fiery haymaker into him.

He was right about that. Ganondorf’s heart wasn’t into the letter of apology he’d written. He just did it because he was ordered to, and that he hoped it would get him off the hook with everyone else. Turns out, he was wrong about the latter, but at least Master Hand let him compete in matches, however unfair they turned out to be.

And when the letter was delivered to its recipient, he could tell without even opening it—there was no sincerity behind the words—just a begrudging hollowness, a reluctance, a flatness, a coldness. Just going through the motions without any feeling so he’d be left alone about it. Mechanical, almost like R.O.B., though R.O.B was capable of some emotion. Even the envelope containing the letter smelled—bitter, hateful and venomous. So he vowed never to open it, and when the day of Ganon’s comeuppance came, he would burn it.

Further enraged by the lie, the green-capped Smasher sliced into Ganondorf with his down-B, and then leaped acrobatically into the air, meeting him with one of his flip-kicks and another up smash. He allowed him to land on the ground; then, he ran over and plunged a truckload of smash attacks and tilts into him with gusto, tossing in an occasional Super/Fire Jump Punch just to break the monotony. He heard the dark ruler’s objections, excuses and pleas which only increased his adrenaline and made him hungrier for street justice. There was nothing more he wanted to do than to do the Hero of Time’s work for him, bringing Ganondorf down once and for all. Personally, he thought Link had been too lax on him during all of their battles. But he wouldn’t make that mistake. A calm look painted his features as energy burst from his body in the form of his attacks, but he internally grinned every time he heard something break or shatter. Each time he felt exhausted, he conjured up the image of him staring blankly at his birthday cake, the mood ruined, Ganondorf’s little rant puncturing him through the heart. No tears came—he cried them out long ago—but for some nights after, he’d lain awake, dry and sightless eyes burning, hearing the dark ruler essentially tell him that he didn’t deserve a year, or any fame or credit, for that matter.

It was something he would always remember.

Everything coalesced into a grand finale which lasted an hour long, making the preceding attacks
look like the routine skirmishes with Link in Ganondorf’s eyes. He tried repeatedly to fight back, but all in vain. The only thing he could do now was pray and wait for it to be over and for him to leave so he could rest up for his next match. But it was the last thing the other man wanted. He panted, and sweat dripped off of him, but he was so chock full of exhilaration that he couldn’t stop. His mind yelled at him for full repayment of what had been done to him. His soul spurred him on. He wanted blood, and he wanted damage. He smelled a critical hit for the Keeper of the Tri-Force. Most of all, he wanted him out. Out of Smash, out of his dreams, and out of his life. Out.

Finally, he slammed Ganon to the ground, jumped hard on him, and used that jump to execute a double jump. With a graceful corkscrew motion, his body twisted, and he rocketed back toward Earth, fist leading the way. A mighty shout tore from him as he gained speed, and then he landed, the terminal velocity landing smack-dab on Ganondorf’s face. The last thing the dark ruler saw was a blinding flash of white, and then black descended on him forevermore.

The other man stood over him, shaking with leftover anger, eyes drilling into the crater his fist left on Ganon’s face. A pulpy, bloody, mass of flesh that was once Ganon’s face, that is. For good measure, the man landed three more powerful punches, turning the “face” into a former shadow of itself. Then, he casually kicked the still form and turned away.

As soon as he left the room, his blood pressure dropped, and the fire left his eyes, replaced by a friendly sparkle. Today had been a very good day, and he hoped to end it on a high note. With that in mind, he headed off to join his friends in the training area. Maybe afterwards, he could make a side-stop to cuddle with his Polterpup.
Koopalings: Power Shift

Chapter Summary

The troublemaking Koopalings decide to gang up on Luigi after he beats one of them in a match. A decision which ultimately proves fatal.

Chapter Notes

Trigger warning: Fairly graphic fight scene ahead!

“Something changed in [him] that day. Something snapped.”

--Toy Story 3 (2010)

Eye contact—one of the most powerful and silent means of communication. Looking at someone at the right moment, with the perfect amount of fire in your eyes, could tell someone to pick on someone their own size. By a similar argument, soft looks could signify love, trust, sympathy, compassion, caring, and even forgiveness. Eyes said things that lips didn’t have the power to convey.

Let’s now turn our attention to a mustachioed man in green, and the look he presently gave the troublemaking Koopalings in their Junior Clown Cars. He glared at them through the brim of his green hat, eyes shooting death more intense than any Death Stare he’d given before, venom and bloodlust all riddled into one. One glance at him would be enough to convince potential attackers to make themselves scarce.

Unfortunately, the Koopalings (except Wendy, who was doing yoga with the Wii Fit Trainer) were either slow learners or too dense to take the hint. Instead, B.J. led them in spitting reproaches, ridicule and threats at their prey with ill-hidden contempt. You see, earlier that day, their victim had completely owned B.J. during a match, wrecking his Junior Clown Car (which had long since been repaired) and giving him such a beating that Mario, impressed beyond belief, had started cheering a little too loudly and was politely asked to leave. Humiliated, B.J. enlisted his brothers, including Iggy, Lemmy, Morton, Larry, Ludwig and Roy, in cornering him in a small courtyard a few meters from the locker rooms. Their aim was to sour the taste of his victory and break him from the inside. The assault was mainly verbal, and what they had to say would’ve earned them swift discipline had their father been, say, a little more respectable.

For the past five minutes, the fighter in green had been a de facto captive, suffering through words sharper than a razor and ominous remarks about how he couldn’t take on all seven of them. They mocked his long nose and the way he pulled on it when idling, as well as the sheepish way he rubbed the back of his head and the sad little kick to the ground he had as a down taunt. All he did was give them the silent treatment, refusing to allow them the benefit of seeing how their words affected him. But the Koopalings were a stubborn lot, just like their father, and strove to put a crack in that stoic armor.

Like an expert hunter, their target patiently waited for the opportune moment to use stronger
means of persuasion. That opportune moment came in the form of B.J. talking trash about how he was going to wreck Mario the next time they met in combat.

*Hey! Nobody messes with my big bro!* 

B.J.’s smart mouth would cost him dearly. Seconds later, he was out of the secure confines of the JCC and in the ghost-busting plumber’s cast-iron grip.

*“Non mi preoccupa più.” Never bother me again.*

To punctuate his point, he wound up and splattered B.J.’s smug little face with his Fire Jump Punch. B.J. was launched skyward, and then toppled back to the ground in a useless heap. His mug was pretty out of whack now, with a dislocated jaw, a squished eye and a flattened snout, all of it covered in a satisfying amount of blood. He could only watch as the man he was harassing marched over and forward smashed him into oblivion.

The remaining Koopalings were frozen in awe and terror, the balance of power dramatically shifted. B.J. had been the primary conspirator, and with him out, their plan was in ruins. The green avenger turned around and concentrated the hatred in his heart in his look. Blood still pumped from his earlier match, and it was time to show these stupid turtles who was number one!

Then, Morton decided to act tough. “Look here, the Green Mario wants to fight,” he sneered, the hated nickname throwing gas onto the fire. “C’mon, gang; let’s do what we normally do to his brother, but worse!”

Gaining courage from Morton’s cockiness, the Koopalings charged at their victim. But he was ready for them.

Morton attacked first, using the boxing gloves from his JCC. But with a rapid-fire chain of punches and kicks, his opponent tore them loose from the vehicle. He then performed a flip kick, sending Morton out of the JCC—and into his arms. Immediately, he flipped and slammed Morton onto the ground, following up with two forward aerials and his down-B, leaving him dizzy. While Morton was stunned, the man focused on the vacant JCC, ferociously smash attacking it till it was a twisted mass of scrap metal. Morton screamed in anguish, jumped up, and blindly charged at the vandal.

Big mistake.

Without the JCC, Morton was virtually defenseless. His opponent capitalized on this, meeting him with jab after jab, kick after kick, head-butt after head-butt and spike after spike. Something sang in his ear as he set about destroying Morton like he destroyed his precious JCC, using his up-B, side tilt, down smash and forward smashes whenever possible. By the time he grew short of breath, Morton was crying, drool and snot streaming from his nose. Unfazed, the man shoved Morton to the ground, driving his fist into his body until he was a pulpy mess just like B.J. For the finishing touch, he silenced the turtles annoying whimpers by snapping his neck.

*“Morton! No!”* wailed Iggy before rushing over to avenge his brother.

Iggy brought out his drill arms from the JCC, determined to turn this green wimp into shredded meat! Deftly, the man led him on a brief chase round the courtyard, confusing him by dodging and vaulting all over the place. There was so much adrenaline in his system that there was no room for fear. With one powerful leap, he was at eye level with Iggy, a big smile on his face. Before Iggy knew what was going on, the man put on a stunning aerial demonstration which knocked out his molars and tore both of his eye sockets. The man finished by using his neutral aerial to eject Iggy.
While falling, the man held Iggy so that when they landed, Iggy took all of the damage. He flopped around like a fish out of water, squealing. Lemmy readied the cannonballs on his JCC and ran to Iggy’s aid. As his prey dodged the swinging cannonballs, he battered all sides of the vehicle before graduating to his body, starting with his gut and moving on up to his chest, neck and face. Eventually, he grabbed Lemmy by the hair and jerked him out of the JCC, head-butting him during his descent. After they hit the ground, the man did his drill kick attack, turning Lemmy’s gut into a viscous soup, and topped it all off with a few good hand stabs, shearing his carotid artery. He then noticed Iggy, screeching that he couldn’t feel his legs, and opted to put him out of his misery by beating his face in.

He plopped onto his butt, resting, and then remembered that there were three more Koopalings who now wanted his head on a silver platter. But first, he allowed himself a minute-long trip to the conveniently located drinking fountain, slurping loudly and letting the stream pour all over his face and hair. Now, he was damp, but ready.

Roy unleashed the battle cry of his forefathers and launched his JCC at his target, a titanium ripping saw at the ready. At the same time, Larry rushed from behind, wielding a large drill from the bottom of his JCC. Finally, Ludwig advanced from the side with a giant fork. Their green prey was boxed in once more—or so they thought.

The man closed his eyes and jumped, performing an awesome corkscrew jump whilst airborne. The three JCCs collided with each other, the crunch of metal against metal pleasing to their intended victim’s ears. Their state of confusion left them ripe for attack. Larry was first, as payback for trying to sneak up on him and because he hated that drill. His blows disconnected said drill from the wrecked JCC. Then, he grabbed the disarmed vehicle and swung it so that centrifugal force pinned Larry. When he let go, the JCC bounced on the ground several times, losing crucial parts as it did, and then completely shattered when it hit on the last time. Larry crawled to safety, but it was short lived. The man put a half-nelson about his neck, brought up his knee and fell on top of him. The two grappled for several heart-stopping minutes before Larry finally accepted his fate. His foe released him, straddled him, and finished him with two fiery punches to his upper back, reducing his spinal cord to rubble.

Roy and Ludwig had long since abandoned their vehicles and now stood, shell-shocked, looking at the man who calmly stared back. Without further ado, he let loose with his fireballs, sending them both into a frenzy as they attended to singed hair and scorched hide. They made a mad dash for their incapacitated JCCs, looking for a weapon to salvage. Roy found a few ninja stars and wildly flung them at the man, who fluidly dodged while still hurling fireballs. Ludwig rushed at him with a large hammer over his head, but a lucky down smash knocked the feet from under him, jarring the hammer out of his reach. He then grabbed Ludwig and threw him into Roy.

They were on the ground, minds spinning, as the man quickly approached them. There was no time to consider a strategy. He could handle two opponents at once, punching one and kicking the other, spamming his down-B to simultaneously rack up their damage points. In desperation, they tried dashing at him from different directions and throwing rocks and clumps of dirt at him. But all in vain. Their enemy was on fire, punishing blows erupting from him at an alarming rate, sending them helplessly twisting in a vortex of pain. He grunted and yelled with each blow, and to say that it felt good was an understatement. He’d had enough of the Koopalings’ intimidation games. Just because they were inside heavily armed vehicles during a match didn’t make them better than the other Smashers. Memories of earlier harassment seeped into his brain, enabling him to release the sting and hate that had built inside him.
After launching Ludwig with a forward smash, he focused entirely on Roy, on destroying him bit by bit. His smashes and tilts ate him up like a delicious dessert, until finally he burrowed into him with his Green Missile, pinned him to a wall, and swiftly snatched both of his eyeballs from his face. Roy screamed as the man dropped him to the floor, sentencing him to live out his final minutes in darkness and agony.

Only Ludwig remained, and the last one was always the best. He strolled toward him, repeatedly licking his lips until they were almost sopping wet, and then popped him upwards with his down taunt. That opened the floodgates to the depths of his fury, smash attacks, dropkicks, roundhouse kicks and special moves crashing into Ludwig like ocean waves. His heart drummed against his chest, his face was red-hot, and his breathing became erratic. All Ludwig could do was pathetically scream and beg him to just finish him and get it over with. But the man wouldn’t settle for anything less than emptying every last drop of his emotions onto him, making sure it was all gone, and that Ludwig’s face was more banged up than his JCC.

At long last, he brought his punishment to an end with a brutal ground-pounding that left Ludwig senseless, barely hanging on. The man sifted through the remains of the JCCs and brought up the giant fork. Wearing his wicked smile, he casually strolled over to his downed tormentor.

“You can’t do this to me,” snorted Ludwig. “You’re a secret character.”

“Not anymore.”

With those parting words, he drove the fork in, twisting it so that a prolific amount of crimson liquid spurted from Ludwig’s mouth as well as from the stab wound. The fork had penetrated a vital organ and caused serious internal damage. The man sighed in contentment as Ludwig breathed his last.

Leaving the fork in, the victor spun on his heel and left the courtyard. He was on his way to spend some quality time with his bro before their scheduled Team Battle.

This afternoon was bound to be a good one indeed.
Interlude 2: When We Stand Together

Chapter Summary

Luigi reflects on his friends and his brother, and how they've stuck by him through thick and thin.

Chapter Notes

A little something to lighten the mood.

“Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light.”

--Helen Keller

Surprising as it may seem, there are more Smashers who care about me than those who want to hurt me.

They make the days bearable and the pain duller. They give me inner strength needed to face those jerks. If not for their love, then I’d fall apart.

After a long day of smashing, there’s nothing I love better than cooling off in the shower and spending some quality time with warm, friendly faces rather than icy, sneering ones. Master Hand has some recreational activities set up for us for some bonding time between tournaments, and my pals and I make good use of it.

There’s the yoga studio, where the Wii Fit Trainer creates exercises exclusively for an individual in order to relax body and mind. My mind is especially relaxed, for I call to mind the instances when either the male or the female trainer stood up for me whenever someone took a swing at my physique. After a rough day, I’d often show up on either of their doorsteps, all cried out and in need of a pillar. The Wii Fit Trainers have taught me how to focus my energy inward and to control my breathing, both of which I have applied in combat. Select foes like to taunt me during a match, but I heed the trainers’ advice to keep whatever I was feeling from clouding my strategy. Thanks to their pointers on meditation, the ridicule hardly bothers me nowadays—until I decide that another tormentor needs their comeuppance.

All of the young Smashers are very nice to me. There’s hardly a weekend that goes by which doesn’t involve me playing baseball with Ness, tennis with Lucas, capture-the-flag with Toon Link or hiking with some Villagers. Ness and Lucas come to all of my matches, and I can hear their wild cheering over the fray of battle. If my strong attacks don’t propel me to victory, then their voices do. If not for them, I’d be like a deflated balloon, a broken marionette, with no will to go on.
I return the favor by sticking my neck out for them. Sometimes, I help sneak the Villagers out to plant some trees before the day’s tournaments begin. If I catch someone picking on one of them, then I tell the interloper(s) to back off before I punish them for their badness. I invite them to kart-racing or sports tournaments, and I sweet-talk Master Hand into taking them to the amusement park, for ice-cream, or to the mall to spend their little hearts out. Even my Polterpup gets along with them by allowing them to cuddle with, pet and play with him. Lucas even offers to pull strings to get him in the next major tournament as an assist trophy, a gesture which touches my heart.

A popular stage for matches is the Punch-Out boxing arena. That’s also where I hang out with Little Mac and Doc Louis. Little Mac has been in the boxing business for thirty years, where his diminutive stature has made him a target of ridicule among the more imposing boxers. What he lacks in size, however, he makes up for in strength. His jabs, uppercuts, haymakers and lunges are precise and crisp, and when his power meter is all the way up, he can unleash a mighty punch with K.O. potential. Doc always stands nearby during Little Mac’s matches, shouting to him periodically, and celebrates victories alongside him. He’s very easygoing, ready to dispense advice, and laid back. No wonder Mac’s had him for three decades!

If I’m not training with a Sandbag or another one of my friends, then I’m training in the ring with Little Mac. Doc always has some upbeat music playing, and the two of us dance about the ring, exchanging punches with the speed of lightning. I have to be careful, though, since Mac isn’t as good in the air as I am. Regardless, Mac tells me not to hold back, and I don’t. He gives off such a positive vibe that I really don’t need that much encouragement. When Doc yells out things like, “Show him what you got, Mac, baby!”, I’m not bothered because I know it’s good natured. In between, Mac loves joking around and toying with me, but not in a bad way like most of the heavyweights. In exchange for gaining better speed for my attacks, I help him improve his aerial game. On stressful days, he tests me like never before so we can both work off the bitterness of being defeated and having it rubbed in our faces all day long. If the teasing is especially severe, then we retreat to the ring and spar till we can no longer ignore the ache in our muscles and/or the hunger pangs in our stomachs. When we head over to the dining area for some snacks, we’re shocked to realize that it’s almost dinnertime.

In times between training, we share a chocolate bar or two and discuss the ups and downs of our lives. They’re actually very similar, having to prove a lot of people wrong about what we can and can’t do. For Mac, he had to beat the stigma of being a “runt”. For me, I had to surpass the connotations of always coming in second. While he gives me advice on how to deal with potential antagonists, I offer similar counsel, and we share and learn from our respective strategies of coping.

Little Mac is awesome.

Other times, Kirby invites me for all-nighters along with Meta Knight, Jigglypuff, Olimar, Pikachu and Mr. Game and Watch. He’s such an adorable ball of fluff. Though all he says is “Poyo”, it’s the way he says it which conveys what he’s trying to tell me. One time, after some rough heavyweight yelled at me for nearly making him lose, Kirby used Inhale on him and used his copy ability to make him apologize. I repaid the debt by bringing about a truce
between Kirby and Meta Knight. And most recently, he showed up for a match against me in his green form. I knew it was his own special way of showing his support and respect for me.

Kirby enjoys telling me about his adventures on Popstar and Dreamland. He speaks wistfully of his friends, including, Tiff, Tuff and Chef Kawasaki. Also, he can go on for hours about how he’s saved Dreamland using his powers and copy abilities. People sometimes snicker behind his back, but he’s tuned out to those whispers. As he drones on and on, I wistfully think back to when he’s walked in on me, crying my eyes out, and drying my tears by slipping onto my lap and with a reassuring “Poyo, poyo, poyo”. And after our sleepovers, when we’re done watching movies and munching on snacks, we curl up together on the bed as Jigglypuff sings us to sleep.

All of my friends rally around me in more ways than I can count, but they eventually pale in comparison to my big bro.

While many refer to me as the number two guy, Mario treats me like an equal, despite the differences in our fighting styles, traction and jumping ability. He’s even gone so far as to publicly denounce my portrayal as an underling and insisting that he truly loves me, despite the occasional scraps that come with being brothers. There’s even this group that accuses him of treating me like dirt. Well, they should see us at our matches. Though they have a tenancy to heat up, we show love and respect toward each other throughout, and we don’t really care if we win or lose; we just want to have fun and practice our skills for trickier opponents. Team Battles are the best, where we can work together and show off our shared strengths rather than mull over things like how my fireballs defy gravity, where we sneak in brofists in the midst of the fray, and where our affection and concern for each other really shines through. Giving other teams a run for their money alongside someone who cares the most about my well-being gives me a feeling I just can’t describe.

So, the haters can get the thought of Mario hating me out of their heads, because he doesn’t.

Okay, maybe he raised eyebrows when he stepped on my foot after beating me in a tennis tournament, but it was an accident. Besides, he was busy congratulating me for my well-deserved win, accepting the fact that you couldn’t win at everything just because you were “super”. And then there was that other time when he and Peach took off in a hot air balloon without me, but that was the wind, and it was too risky to turn back and get me. Besides, having my own hot air balloon had its perks. And the fact that he appreciated my help beat out any hot air balloon ride.

Sorry, haters, but your argument is invalid.

What if I tell you that he understands my sleepless nights in the Training Room? Or that he frequently makes bullies take back the mean things they say about me? Or that he was my voice until I grew confident enough to speak up on my own? Or that he was strongly affected during the adventure on Pi’ilo Island when he was in the depths of my dreams? And don’t get me started on how I saved his life thrice, and he thanked me with a nice brotherly embrace and a remark of “That’s my bro!”

Last but not least, those who say that Mario hates me should see him when I’m fighting solo
in one-on-one matches or free-for-alls. He snags a front-row seat, most often with Ness, Lucas, Peach, Zelda and Samus, screaming at the top of his lungs like he was at the Super Bowl. Encouraging phrases like “Get ‘em, bro!”, “You go, bro!”, “Wah-hoo!”, “You’re doing great, bro!” and “You’re number one” echo across the stage, mixed in with similar encouragement in our mother tongue. On multiple occasions, he’s been asked to leave because he’s distracting the fighters, but he’s found ways to get around that so he can shower me with his full support, girding me to flawless and graceful victories. If I win, he playfully tackles me to the floor, and we roughhouse the way brothers do. If I lose, he always knows how to cheer me up, and if the victor lays it on thick, then he gives that pompous idiot a good talking-to.

At the end of the day, if everything else crumbles to dust, I still have my friends. They come in many shapes and sizes, many colors and from many backgrounds. Whenever I needed them, they were there for me, and I’m also there for them.

With my friends around me, I feel whole.
OC 2: Hitting a Home Run

Chapter Summary

The Smashers compete in a Home Run Contest. What can possibly go wrong?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“I may not be Einstein,
But I know that dumb + dumb= you.”

--Kelly Clarkson, “Einstein”

Not all Smash events consisted of people beating each other up.

There were plenty of other activities to test the Smashers’ skills. Break-the-Targets had existed since the tournament’s inception in 1999. And in 2008, Master and Crazy brought a new non-Smash event. It was called the Home Run Contest.

The Home Run Contest took place inside a special stadium and consisted of one Sandbag, a Home Run Bat, a Smasher’s best attacks, and ten seconds on the clock. During those ten seconds, the Sandbag was battered mercilessly, so as to rack up massive damage points. Once those ten seconds expired, the Smasher sent the Sandbag flying with their strongest blow. The distance the Sandbag traveled was measured in meters, and the Smasher who sent it the greatest distance was the winner.

Pretty straightforward, wasn’t it?

Every fighter had their own approach to the Home Run Contest. Some would use the bat, while the others would use their basic attacks. One rule of thumb was to avoid the smash attacks until time ran out, so as to keep the Sandbag grounded and taking heavy damage. Veteran fighters (cough-cough Captain Falcon) usually liked to make a big show out of attacking the Sandbag and then posing before landing the final strike. Newcomers hoping to make a favorable first impression (I’m looking at you, Mega Man) also enjoyed showing off or hiding their nervousness by making snide remarks about how no Sandbag stood a chance against them. Overall, they just wanted to have fun.

Ask any Smasher, and they’d tell you that the Home Run Contest was preferred over Break-the-Targets. There was always a full house in the stadium, and vendors sold classic favorites like peanuts, cracker jacks, popcorn and cotton candy along with such delicacies like Maxim tomatoes, cream cakes, peanut brittle, pizza, ice-cream cones, hot dogs, sour candy ropes and “lotsa” spaghetti. Those who placed second, third and fourth received equivalent prizes, and the rest received consolation prizes (usually a ticket for a Smash event or a free turn with Master Orders). Every Smasher spent the previous day setting up, and on the day of the Home Run Contest, everyone would be up early in the morning, warming up. Troubles and grudges were usually left behind for a whole day as Smashers old and new anticipated a date with a Sandbag, an opportunity to laugh and
joke around, and some pretty cool prizes to choose from.

One contest, however, would be extremely different.

The sound of his voice brought the hairs rising on the back of the green-capped contestant’s neck.

He’d been in the stadium’s tunnel, socializing, and had just found a spot to gather his bearings when he heard the voice. The same voice which had mocked him during every last Smash tournament.

“What is this I’m seeing?” crowed Ryan Gonzales. “You of all people hanging around in the stadium?”

“Yeah, I’m here for the contest,” he explained curtly.

“Oh, no. Don’t make me laugh,” chortled Ryan. “They actually let you compete in this thing? What do they think this is, the featherweight division?”

“I’ve done very well in the Home Run Contest, thank you very much.”

“Yeah, I bet they gave you the award for the tallest wimp!” Ryan burst out laughing again.

The man turned away from him and joined the other Smashers in line. Ryan followed, accompanied by his pal, Tyler.

“Hey, Ryan, isn’t that the Green Mario?” asked Tyler. “Fancy seeing him here.”

“That’s what I said,” smirked Ryan. “Then he told me that he’s in the contest. He probably can’t hold the bat right!”

“Or the Sandbag makes him soil himself!” guffawed Tyler. “I just can’t wait to see him embarrass himself in front of everybody!”

The subject of their conversation was ready to rip their heads off. He tried to think of the best remark to cut them down, and then he did something even better.

He ignored them.

It was a tactic his friends have taught him through the years, something they had used themselves. People like Tyler and Ryan fed off the reactions of the people they tormented. They enjoyed seeing them yell, scream and cry. But some of their victims were smart enough to catch on, and started walking on by as if they weren’t there. Once the instigators found out that they could no longer gauge the desired reactions out of certain victims, they grew bored of them and left them alone to find more prey.

Ryan and Tyler were exceptions to that rule. Their current victim had started ignoring them many years ago, and still they came after him. Maybe it was because they enjoyed making him miserable, whether he reacted or not. Being the traditional Player Two was a ripe excuse for them to dump on him. They didn’t even let up during his year, denouncing it as “a pity party”. It was all he could do not to suck them up in his ghost vacuum and shoot them straight into the sun. But he’d eventually concluded that they were just two sick, twisted people who took their personal problems out on him just because they read about how obscure and cowardly he was.
“So,” hissed Tyler, “what are you going to do when you lose this contest? Are you going to run to your brother and cry about how the Sandbag creamed you?”

“He’ll probably start crying as soon as the countdown starts,” snickered Ryan. “He’s so used to being the sidekick that he can’t take such pressure.”

“If you really want to get as much fame as your brother, then how come you always shrink when the opportunity arises?” challenged Tyler. “Maybe if you’re not such a scaredy-cat, you’ll get the recognition you’ve craved for.”

“Wait, Tyler; he’s already had his recognition,” said Ryan. “His own year, remember?”

“A year he didn’t deserve,” snarled Tyler.

“Sorry to burst your bubble, but your year is over,” spat Ryan. “Back to the number two slot for you.”

He kept his gaze in front of him, trying to watch each contestant as they sought to score out of the ball park. His hands were at his sides, tightly clenched into fists, and rage drained the color from his face. The only thing stopping him from turning around and busting their faces was the crowd. Making a scene would favor them more than him. He remained as still as a statue, repeating the same mantra over and over. *Sticks and stones—sticks and stones—sticks and stones—sticks and stones—*

“Aw, look at that. We’re hurting his feelings.”

*Sticks and stones.*

“What’s wrong? Can’t take the truth?”

*Sticks and stones.*

“Are you gonna cry, Mr. Green? Are you gonna blubber and whine to everyone about how we’re making you upset?”

*Sticks and stones.*

“He asked you a question, wuss.”

*Sticks and stones.*

“Smash should be ashamed of inviting someone like you.”

“That ‘L’ on your cap suits you, ’cuz you’re a loser.”

“Maybe it stands for ‘lousy’.”

“Yeah. Or ‘lazy’.”

“Ha-ha. The lazy, lousy loser. Ha-ha-ha.”

Now he was breathing rapidly, and his fists started glowing green. *Sticks and stones. Sticks and stones. Sticks and stones. Sticks and stones. Sticks and stones. Sticks and stones. Sticks and stones.*

Just then, he heard his name being called. He had made it. He was now at the front of the line, ready to compete, ready to escape these two pests. His fists slowly relaxed and returned to normal,
and he slightly adjusted his cap.

“Ha-ha-ha-ha. Good luck, dweeb,” snorted Tyler.

“Let’s pray you at least get the thing to move,” added Ryan.

Their laughter echoed in his ears as he entered the stadium to a cheering crowd. Smashers who had already had their turn watched as well, and he recognized Mario, Ness, Kirby, Meta Knight, Peach, Lucina, the Wii Fit Trainer and Olimar. Then, he squinted. Was that Daisy in the front row?

A fresh Sandbag was waiting for him, and a few feet from it stood a young woman with auburn hair, holding a Home Run Bat. She was in charge of overseeing the contest.

“You know the rules, right?” she asked as she handed him the bat.

“Yes,” he replied.

“Ten seconds to loosen up our friend here, and then it’s time for lift-off. Use this bat, your strength, your imagination, and nothing else. Understand?”

“Yes.”

“All right. The announcer will tell you when to start. Good luck.”

He could feel his two tormentors, taunting, laughing, jeering, as he hefted the weight of the bat into his hands. At that moment, he knew exactly how he’d use his inner emotions. Getting mad at them wouldn’t help him in this situation, anyway. His fingers wrapped tightly around the bat, and he raised it to his shoulder like a batter waiting for the baseball.

“Ready…GO!” boomed the announcer.

Immediately, he concentrated all of his resentment and frustration, all of his fury, on the Sandbag before him. Translated as much of that white-hot rage as humanly possible within ten seconds into full-fledged power, just like he’d do on sleepless nights. During the first five seconds, he slammed the bat against the Sandbag like a kid striving to break open a piñata at a birthday party. When one blow snapped the bat apart, he didn’t even hesitate. Breath whistled from his lungs as he lit into the Sandbag with rapid fire punches, just like Little Mac and Doc had taught him. As the announcer counted down from five seconds, he grew angrier and angrier, and at two seconds, after he delivered one of his roundhouse kicks and bent his left elbow in that familiar way, he was very, very angry.

Adrenaline roared through his system and into his left arm. He focused every last negative emotion associated with Ryan Gonzales and his buddy, Tyler, on that arm, so that it was literally trembling and glowing with energy.

“TIME!”

The contestant hollered as he released all he had into his Super Hand Poke, blasting it into the heavily damaged Sandbag and making it airborne. It flew, higher than a Warp Star, farther than a javelin. The stadium was silent as they watched it rocket through the air, practically slicing the sky. Mouths were agape. Eyes were wide. Breaths were bated. Little Mac was so stunned that he let a chocolate bar slip from his hand. Tyler and Ryan finally ran out of trash to talk. The redhead stopped tending to the problem of the broken bat to look. Even the announcer couldn’t announce what was going on; he was so stunned.

On and on and on the Sandbag sailed—it was going to fly straight out of the stadium!—it was going to hit somebody!—look how fast it’s going!—this is right up there with the Wright brothers!—
until it finally reached its peak and began its descent, tumbling end over end. When it landed, it continued to move, sliding along the ground till the friction slowed it and ultimately brought it to a stop.

A computer quickly measured the distance of this Sandbag’s trip. The result was shown on the screen, and the audience couldn’t believe their eyes. Neither could the announcer.

“2937.4 meters!” he exclaimed. “Wow! Incredible!”

Wild cheering shattered the quiet in the stadium. The contestant beamed as he did his infamous “Bang-bang!” victory pose. Through this cacophony, he could swear he could hear Daisy screaming with delight.

Tyler and Ryan were the only ones not cheering. They just stood there, slack-jawed.

He eventually placed second in the Home Run Contest, the winning distance being 3200.1 meters. However, he couldn’t mope over his prize—the opportunity to pick his opponents in his next match! And he knew just who he had in mind…

Tyler and Ryan were in the hallway of the now-emptying stadium, still dumbfounded over what they had witnessed. At that moment, the second-place winner strolled in, flanked by his brother and all of his closest friends. The bullies tried to make a break for it, but Lucina and Marth quickly blocked their way.

“Going somewhere?” asked a voice.

They turned to look at the man in green, smiling as he regarded them with his expressive eyes. He handed his second-place trophy to Mario and strolled toward them.

“So, how did I do?” he demanded of them, eyes flashing. “Was I as pathetic as you said I’d be, or was I better than you expected?”

“Well…” they began.

He didn’t let them finish. “I just thought you should know that even though I placed second, I still won a great prize,” he announced. “An untimed match at Final Destination with an opponent of my choice—you.”

Ryan and Tyler nearly stopped breathing.

“Did I mentioned that it’s a free-for-all?”

The two began to feel queasy.

“So, I’ll expect to see you two at Final Destination tomorrow. I’m going to enjoy that match immensely—but I’ll make sure you won’t.”

Swiftly, he backed them into a wall and rolled up Ryan’s shirt. “I thought I’d give you a little souvenir before I go,” he explained before pressing a fiery index finger against Ryan’s flesh.

Both bullies screamed, and Ryan began to wail. Mario restrained Tyler, forcing him to watch his pal get branded. The man slowly dragged his index finger down to Ryan’s waist and then across to the edge of his body. Then, as Ryan crumpled to the ground and caterwauled, he went to the
restrained Tyler and scorched him as well.

A nice, third-degree burn in the shape of an “L” was now embedded on their chests. An L to stand for his name. An L to stand for what they really were—losers.

The green punisher studied the two as they stared at their brands and cried in pain and shame. He licked Ryan’s tears first, and then Tyler’s.

“The three of us are going to have such a good time tomorrow,” he mused. “I suggest you sleep well tonight—it may be the last sleep you ever have.”

And it was.

Chapter End Notes

If you would like to send an OC for me to dispatch in a creative fashion, here are some simple guidelines:
It must be a guy. I don’t believe in violence against women.
Give your OC a name and a brief description of his appearance and attributes.
Provide an explanation of his “crime”, so to speak, and a suggestion of how severe his punishment should be.
OC 3: Prankster Problems

Chapter Summary

Two nefarious pranksters decide to Smack-Cam Luigi--with fatal consequences.

*Take me by the hand, take me somewhere new;
I don’t know who you are, but I—I’m with you.*

--Avril Levigne, “I’m With You”

There were the good pranksters, and there were the bad pranksters.

The good pranksters were the ones who just wanted to laugh and lighten the mood. Hurt and humiliation wasn’t their goal—a good time was. The pranks they pulled were quite simple and rarely involved anything physical. Villagers were the pranksters which fell into this category. Any tedium was instantly broken when any of them decided to make mischief. Ultimately, any Smasher on their list laughed it off, and all was forgiven—at least, until the next prank was pulled.

But the bad pranksters didn’t just want a laugh to break the tension. They wanted to see others suffering and utterly degraded. Their techniques involved taking shots at their victims’ morale just for the sake of having something to laugh at. Diabolical planning and physical actions were the thrust behind their plots. A major calling card was the video camera, so that the act was posted on YouTube within minutes. They didn’t want to limit the fun just to them. They wanted to share the so-called joke with the general public.

No Smasher was safe from their ilk—least of all, one in particular.

Teddy Wilcox and Spencer Trumbull were the most notorious pranksters in the world of Smash, and they were not to be underestimated as a team. One of them did the pranking, and the other did the recording. Most of their pranks had the flavor of guerilla warfare. They would strike their unsuspecting prey and then run for dear life like the cowards they were. Their victims would attempt to tattle on them, but Master Hand always let them go due to lack of evidence. Thus, the two Smashers felt invincible.

One memorable day, Spencer and Teddy were committing one of their signature offenses: the Smack-Cam. Teddy had the camera, and Spence did the smacking. As their targets cried out and recoiled, the two just laughed and laughed while sprinting away. So far, they’d gotten all of the lightweights, some of the heavyweights, and most of the middleweights. But now, they had something special in store for their next target.

They found him in his quarters, slipping into a fresh pair of overalls and fiddling with his cap. He was trying on one of his alternate costumes, as he was tired of green all of the time. The outfit he’d picked was a soft pink shirt, red overalls, and a pink cap to match—just like his Wrecking Crew days. He smiled as he observed himself in the mirror—he looked and felt good.

All of that would change within seconds. Spence advanced towards him on catlike feet, a
mint milkshake in his hand and a sneaky smirk on his face. Teddy had his camera at the ready. Their victim was too distracted to notice the pranksters right behind him, ready to spring their surprise—a surprise surprisingly simple to arrange.

“Smack Cam!” Teddy loudly announced, giving the target’s head a big swat.

The target yelped in surprise. At the same time, Teddy dumped his milkshake onto the victim, drenching him in the sweet, sticky liquid. While he shrieked in horror at his now-ruined clothes, Spence kneed him in the back, sending him to the floor. Need I mention that all of this was on camera?

Spence and Teddy howled with laughter as they made good their escape, thinking about how many views their newest video was certain to get. In their haste, however, they failed to consider that their latest victim was now curled on the ground, sobbing quietly.

He only allowed himself a short cry. Then, he got up and calmly headed for the showers, not speaking to anyone as he cleaned himself up and repeated the process of selecting an outfit. This time, he chose purple—the color of passion.

Shortly afterward, Teddy and Spence decided to go their separate ways until later. While Spence was in the Training Room preparing for a match, Teddy was in his own room, chuckling softly as he replayed the new video. Him smacking the man, emptying his cup on his pretty clothes, and then knocking him down as he screamed in distress. Already, he had long-distance friends commenting on this latest masterpiece, applauding him for his choice. After all, he was just a shadow; nobody cared what happened to him.

“I know, right?” he was saying into his headset. “You should’ve seen the look on his face—truly Oscar-worthy!”

“I’m playing it again so I can hear the way he squealed,” said the friend on the other end.

Whether or not Teddy wanted to be secretive about this, no one would ever know. But if he did, he wasn’t doing a good job, leaving his door open and speaking so that everyone could hear him. He was a genius when it came to pranks, but when it came to closing his door and keeping his voice down—not so much.

“Okay, I gotta go,” said Teddy, hanging up so he could watch the hits and comments pile up like jackpot money.

A finger gently tapped his shoulder.

He turned.

A normally-green-but-now-purple-clad man stood in front of him, holding something in his hand. Teddy started in recognition—it was his lucky yo-yo! It must’ve fallen out of his pocket earlier when he was—he pushed the thought away before guilt could hit him. He was a prankster! He had no room for remorse toward those he pranked—he was superior to them!

The man he’d targeted this morning spoke in a casual, conversational tone. “You dropped this,” he said, holding out the yo-yo.

“Uh—thanks,” said Teddy, taking his good luck charm. His eyes widened—it looked pretty beat-up. “Wow, what happened to it?”
“Must’ve been stepped on a few times before somebody finally noticed it,” the man explained, still conversational, slightly rolling his “r’s” as he always did. “You might want to check for a hole in your pocket.”

Teddy’s yo-yo looked more than just stepped on. It was practically ready for the junkyard. Smashed, flattened, crushed, destroyed—with telltale scorch marks on it. It had probably seen a fireball or two in its last moments. Teddy looked back up at the man, whose face beamed with a polite smile.

“Just thought I’d give it back to you,” he said cheerfully.

“Thanks again,” said Teddy. “Look—I—feel bad about what went down this morning.”

“Me, too,” the man replied. “I’ll see you round.”

As he walked away, Teddy stared at what was left of his yo-yo, knowing it was far from an accident.

It was a warning.

“GAME!”

Spence pompously posed while the loser, Mr. Game and Watch, politely applauded. It had been a grueling battle, both sides taking heavy damage, but Spence had managed to Star-KO his monochrome, 2D opponent with a lucky smash attack. He considered it a double-victory—Mr. Game and Watch had been a victim of the Smack-Cam spree. Of course, Spence had cheated a little, taunting Mr. G&W and making him lose his head, but it was something so slight that nobody noticed. As they walked to the locker room, Spence slapped his opponent on the back. “Nice fight,” he said.

“BEEP BOOP BEEP BOOP,” replied Mr. G&W. He reluctantly offered his hand, which Spence shook. Suddenly, the 2D man pulled him into a warm embrace, seemingly softening. Spence laughed as he accepted the hug. “I knew you couldn’t stay mad at me,” he said slyly.

Mr. G&W simply rang his bell in response before hitting the showers.

Spence couldn’t have been more wrong about the situation. During the hug, G&W had swiped Spence’s spare key to his locker. Once the prankster showered and left, the monochrome started spying. With luck, he found Spence’s secret diary, detailing all of the pranks he had pulled and identifying Teddy as his co-conspirator. At long last, concrete evidence to make them pay!

“BEEP BOOP BEEP BOOP BEEP BOOP,” Mr. G&W simply said.

By showing his face online, Teddy had also contributed to his and Spence’s downfall.

His invincibility complex was so inflated that he just had to post a video bragging about what he’d done to Smashers old and new. There was no sympathy in his voice as he detailed how he’d wounded the egos and even made the young Smashers cry. When he pulled a nasty number on poor Lucas involving his mother and his friend, Claus, he’d run to safety whilst shrieking with laughter. He’d tripped Toon Link, and then Spence had splattered mud all over him as he begged them to leave him alone. They even targeted poor Kirby—kicking him around like some sort of ball and
mocking him for saying nothing but “Poyo”. Those two were worse than bad pranksters. They were bullies.

Once again, he left his door wide open, and Peach had very good ears. She promptly went online to get the video’s URL, and then sent it out for everyone to watch. The victims called for vengeance. Then, Mr. Game and Watch fanned the flames by producing Spence’s diary. Peach, G&W, Samus and Zelda went before Master Hand and presented him with the proof he needed, requesting that they remain anonymous for the time being.

The stage was set. Spence and Teddy’s glory days were over.

It was dinnertime. Spence sat at a lonely table, waiting for Teddy to arrive, when the man in purple walked up to him.

“Hi, Spence,” he said. “I brought you a little surprise.”

“Aw, that’s sweet,” said Spence, disarmed by the innocent gesture. “Hey, listen, I’m sorry about…”

“I’m sorry, too,” smiled the man.

“So, what did you get?” asked Spence.

The man revealed a tall cup full of a familiar dessert—a mint milkshake! Spence shifted uncomfortably—the moment was quickly souring. “You didn’t have to get a mint shake just for me.”

“Spence, as a fellow Smasher, I feel obligated to ensure you have everything—and I do mean everything—you deserve.”

Spence gave a nervous laugh. “Just set it on the table; I’ll drink it after dinner. You know what they say—veggies first.”

“Before I do that—could you please do something for me?”

“S—sure,” stammered Spence. “What is it?”

“Stand up for a second.”

Spence got out of his chair for literally one second and then sat back down.

“Don’t get smart with me. Stand up if you want the shake.”

Quickly, Spence stood again.

“Now walk towards me.”

Spence obeyed.

“Let me get a very close look at you. We’ve never really had a time to get up close with one another. I’d like to see your eyes—they’re beautiful.”

“I like your eyes, too,” said Spence as he looked deeply into the pools of deep blue, dancing with a small flame. “You’re kind of cute with that nose—do you mind if I pull on it?”
He reached out and tweaked the long nose, and then he lightly tugged one end of his moustache. The man said nothing.

“Okay, what do I do now?”

“Wait for it.”

“Wait for wh…?”

A gloved fist crashed into Spence’s face.

As soon as he crashed onto the table, he was filled with the savage bloodlust of a hunter. Nobody raised their hand to Spencer Trumbull! Roaring, he hurled himself at his attacker, who’d set aside the milkshake and was absolutely ready for him.

The polite, forgiving man of that afternoon was now replaced by a fiery punisher. He fought with stunning aplomb, battering Spence all over his face until it was a hideous morass of bruises, blood and busted bone. The sight only served to increase his anger. Spence swung a chair at him, but he decimated it with his Super Hand Poke. Hate sizzled in his gaze as he delivered a series of spinning kicks to Spence’s sclera, sternum and groin area. Then, he used his Green Missile (now a Purple Missile) to wind him, chucked him upwards, and began chaining off combo after combo, firing off his horizontal spearhand from all directions when he could. He blasted both of Spence’s jaws to pieces, and then swung him around, letting go only when he saw his victim growing queasy. Spence crashed into the wall and lay still, moaning.

The man picked up the milkshake and strode towards Spence, the smile back on his face. “Okey-dokey,” he announced. “Now you can have your shake.”

Then, he removed the lid and slowly poured its contents on Spence’s body. As soon as it touched him, Spence screamed and fought to remove his clothes. The substance frothed and steamed, eating holes in the garment. That was no milkshake! The man tipped the cup again, this time aiming for skin. It burned worse than fire! The skin was shredding from his muscles! He smelled burning flesh and screamed louder. He saw horrible, bloody scabs form where his skin used to be. The man directed the stream towards them, intensifying the agony. He made sure that his upper body was equally saturated with the liquid, clinically observing the skin practically bubbling away.

“Do you like it, Spence? Do you like your shake? I call it the Green Fireball,” he hissed as he turned the cup upside down, making Spence screech and arch his back.

Teddy arrived on the scene and could only stare boggle-eyed at the sight of a caustic liquid burning his best friend and pranking partner. His legs froze, and he couldn’t move. The man spun around and briskly walked toward him.

“You’re just in time for dinner, Teddy,” he said in his artificially sweet voice before nailing him with a Fire Jump Punch. When Teddy landed, the man ran over and fiercely lit into him with combo attacks, not stopping till blood leaked out everywhere. Then, he produced a second cup of green liquid and straddled Teddy, making him look into his eyes.

“I made this one just for you,” he cooed before ripping off his shirt and directing a slow, steady trickle of the caustic substance onto the defenseless skin.

Teddy’s screams were better than Spence’s.

The man sang, softly, soothingly, as he kept up the endless stream, filling the hideous sores
with the stuff and making sure no part of his chest was left untreated. The sight of the horrid burns would repel most, but to the avenger, Teddy looked more handsome than in his official photo for the Smash tournament. The tears and snot all over his face made him look becoming, too. His free hand stroked Teddy’s cheek and hair, the way a mother would calm her young child, until the cup finally ran out.

After licking Teddy’s face clean of the tears, he flipped him onto his stomach and pulled out a third cup. With this, he carefully formed the letter “L” on his back. While Teddy writhed and sobbed, he went to Spence and administered the same treatment. After taking a while to admire this masterpiece, he decided to add the finishing touch.

He yanked Teddy to a sitting position, forced his mouth open, and held what was left of the substance to his face.

“This will not be over quickly,” he promised. “You will not enjoy this. I am not a pranking guinea pig!”

Teddy screamed so loudly that everyone else heard, but they didn’t do anything about it.

LLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLL

Teddy Wilcox would not be missed. Neither would Spencer Trumbull.
OC 4: Love and Loyalty

Chapter Summary

Luigi can always count on his roommate, Evan, to save him from bullies. One day, he jumps at the opportunity to return the favor.

“You leave him alone!”

Evan Vidad was lucky to come by the way he had. If not, then who would’ve saved his green-clad roommate from the group of jocks beating him up?

“Oh! Hi, Evan!” the ringleader said cheerily. “Your roomie just fell down, and we were helping him up. Right, green guy?”

“I’m not stupid,” snapped Evan. “I saw what you were doing back there. You have about five seconds to back off of him, or there’s going to be trouble.”

The jocks knew they were beat. Reluctantly, they released their frequent victim, who stared back at them with no emotion in his eyes.

“You okay, buddy?” asked Evan.

The man nodded, still wearing that emotionless expression. He was dirty and bruised, with still-fresh blood on his face. But their blows had given him no pain, because these monsters cut out his heart a long time ago. At this point, he really didn’t feel anything anymore.

“Thank you,” he said softly, standing up before Evan could help him. His eyes checked the jocks into his infallible memory. He tasted their names like buttered popcorn.

David.

Jim.

Adam.

Blaine.

Under Evan’s vigilant eye, the four mumbled a very insincere apology and promised to stay clear of him from now on. His blue eyes smoldered them, silently making it clear that their apology wasn’t accepted. Too bad they weren’t intimidated…

“Spar with me?” offered Evan.

His roommate smiled. “Absolutely.” Sparring with Evan provided an outlet for aggression after encountering the fearsome foursome.

Once Evan was out of earshot, headed for the Training Room, the ringleader, Blaine, leaned in his victim’s ear and whispered, “You won’t always have Evan around to protect you, and when that day comes—we’ll be waiting.”
Glaring, the man stepped on Blaine’s foot and stalked away. After hearing these threats for years, he was immune to them.

Those four should be the ones to watch their backs…

After six straight hours with Evan in the Training Room, the man in green was hot, sweaty, invigorated and craving more. The fact that he’d bested Evan further increased his adrenaline rush. His blood pumped so much, that he found his anger redoubling. He wouldn’t be satisfied till he punched the stuffing out of at least one of the four jocks. There was no telling what made him angrier—their joke of an apology or their hypocrisy when they called him a coward and yet tried to nail him whenever Evan wasn’t around. God, they made him sick.

He was taking a walk to try and cool off when he heard screaming. He recognized the voice—Evan! Without a second thought, he was dashing toward the source of the sound, hoping against hope, and when he got there—

Dear God.

No.

No!!

Blaine had a cruel smirk on his face, with David, Adam and Jim wearing similar expressions, getting a kick out of hearing Evan’s desperate cries. Their knuckles were stained with blood—theirs and Evan’s. Lust mingled with the malice in their eyes, and it was then that the man noticed their state of undress—

Evan himself, for simply standing up for a good friend, was completely naked and held on the floor by the four people who he’d stopped from beating his roommate to a pulp. They sought to break him, to make him unavailable as their favorite target’s hero. Blood laced his face and torso and pooled on the ground around him, but he continued to fight back, even as something the man couldn’t see was shoved inside him and his screams were muffled by their punches.

The green witness snapped out of it to notice that Blaine had a photo of a woman in his back pocket, a woman with auburn hair and wearing an orange dress. It occurred to him that after Evan, Daisy was on their list. The tiger inside him roared to life. He was going to do to them what he should’ve done this morning!

In an instant, Blaine was off of Evan and in the man’s angry grip. He slammed him into the ground and punched him harder than he ever punched during his years in Smash. This threw the remaining three into confusion, allowing Evan to kick free and scramble for some clothes. There would be plenty of time for his roommate to have some fun before he got back.

Still focusing on Blaine, he began to propel electrified fists into him, a technique taught to him not long after the first Smash tournament. The electricity caused his victim to jolt in pain, yowling. He called to his cronies to do something, yet fear had them anchored to where they were. They were essentially adrift without his leadership, another reason the man decided to pick him out first. After he took care of him, the others would be no sweat.

Calling out for his lightning powers once more, he wasted no time in suspending Blaine in the air with his electricity, watching him writhe and twist like some sort of puppet. He poured more and more volts into his body, smiling with glee as Blaine’s hair stood up on end and the smell of
something burning filled the air. The electric shocks caused his heart to overload, and the intense heat was enough to shut down his organs and melt all of his bones. Blaine screamed over and over again as every part of his body slowly ceased to function, praying for any deity to just take him and get it over with. The deities seemed to favor the lightning-wielding Smasher, though. It took a good fifteen minutes for Blaine’s pained shrieks to finally sputter out. The green avenger passively allowed what remained of him to drop to the floor with a stomach-wrenching thump.

Evan returned, now clean and in a fresh pair of clothes, nodding in approval at his roommate’s work thus far. He wasn’t broken yet, and he had a score to settle with the remaining three. The three who were now at the mercy of the one they just attempted to break as well as the one they spent years trying to break.

A gloved hand closed over Evan’s hand, a powerful, silent acknowledgement of the situation and their alliance.

David, Adam and Jim tried hard to hold it together, probably to appease the spirit of their dearly departed leader, but it was no use. Three deflated jocks stood no chance against two victims who’d patiently waited for a chance at retribution, two fiercely loyal friends. Evan was almost as creative as his roommate, and the way he crushed Jim’s windpipe with methodically placed blows was a severe indication of that. Adam and David made the unfortunate mistake of going for the man who’d dispatched their ringleader, and he showed them the same mercy he’d shown Blaine. They managed to give him a few good ones, but he shook them off as if they were nothing. Then, he introduced them to his awesome spearhand, plunging it over and over until they were on their knees. By that time, Evan had finished with Jim and was now available for assistance with vanquishing the last two. His roomie was doing okay on his own, thanks to his fireballs, his down-B and his acrobatics, but he was never alone during all of the times he’d put up with them, and this shouldn’t be any different.

When Adam suddenly tackled the man from behind, Evan saw his chance. He easily peeled the jock away, and his roomie jumped to his feet and focused on David as if nothing happened. His grunts and David’s pleas rang in Evan’s ears as he punished Adam for his little sneak attack. After lighting into him with rapid-fire jabs, he knee’d him into the ground and bashed his face against the pavement over and over. He didn’t stop till blood, skin and some muscle tissue started smearing the floor. Evan remained crouched over him, panting, until—

“Watch out.”

Evan jumped out of the way just as his roomie pounced on Adam with his hammer! He slammed it down with such force that the ground shook. Evan decided that he didn’t need to look at the end result. Besides, he still had a crumpled David to deal with.

For this one, they really put the “team” in teamwork. They played a twisted game of catch with him, Evan throwing David to his roomie while he smacked him back with his hammer. He tested himself to see if he could spike him harder, higher and farther every time. He wanted David’s cries to become just as panicked as Evan’s when he found him, and they were. Evan started volleying David to him with punches and kicks instead of throws, since the hammer was launching him so far. Finally, the two men tired of this game, and Evan threw the victim down and stomped on him, with the roomie putting on the finishing touches with his hammer.

When he finished, the man glared hard at what used to be four jocks. “You never thought you wouldn’t have your alpha-male to protect you, did you?” he asked sharply. “Well, you should’ve watched your backs, because this was bound to happen sooner or later.”

He turned to Evan, concern replacing rage. “Are you hurt?” he asked.
“Nothing I couldn’t handle,” Evan pompously responded. “Thanks, though.”

“Hey, we’re friends,” said his roommate. “We look out for one another.”

Still buzzing from the encounter, the two Smashers hightailed it back to the Training Room, where they whaled away at each other till they were called to dinner.
Interlude 3: Picture Day

Chapter Summary

Luigi discusses the way he fools potential opponents by posing for a photo shoot.

“Okay, look this way. A little up…”

The woman behind the camera gently coaxes me into the perfect position for a snapshot. I easily trust her with taking my picture because she’s one of my friends. Her bouncy auburn curls dance about her camera as she squints through the lens, trying to get it into proper focus. I’m in no hurry, really. I’ll have more time to perfect the pose I’ve chosen for this special moment, a moment every Smasher cherishes as much as when they receive the fated letter from Master Hand.

Getting your picture taken in the Smash universe is as sacred as sacred can be. You spend the previous night fussing over every little detail so you can look like the best of the best, like you’re worthy of being chosen for Smash. There are those who just primp so they can look the prettiest out there; there are those who want to look the toughest; and there are those who are happy for an excuse to be super-vain for one day.

But I don’t fall into either of those categories.

For me, I have a subtle approach to my pictures. I like to trick the viewer, or anyone passing, into dropping their guard so they won’t see what’s coming when I’m on the battlefield. I want my pose to look natural and relaxed, not like someone being forced into something they don’t like. That’s normally how the others look like by the time pictures are finished. Though I’m shy, I really don’t mind being photographed. It actually helps me relax.

The woman holding the camera smiles at me. “Wow, you’re doing great,” she praises, and I beam at her in response. Smash photographers like her aren’t like the prima donna professional photographers. They always screech that things have to be just the way they want them, or the shot is ruined. But for Smash, the mood is as casual as for events like Board the Platforms and the Home Run Contest. Everyone just wants to chill after spending so much time duking it out.

I don’t know what happened with my official photograph for the recent Smash tournament. For some reason, they had me standing on tiptoe, straight and stiff, arms at my sides, like I was about to flop on my face. Speaking of my face, it looked so—serious, with my eyes wide and unblinking. That wasn’t me. I’m usually laid back and easygoing, and the pose they wound up with was almost—robotic. My facial expression was trying too hard to be solemn in my opinion. So when they announced the next photo shoot, I decided that my pose would be on my terms from now on.
“Smile…”

Given the recent events that have happened, I know exactly what my pose is going to be. A relaxed posture, innocent eyes peering into the camera. Two fingers of one hand touching the back of my cap, while two fingers of the other are at the front. Casually adjusting it. Lastly, I hide what I have in store for the incoming Smashers behind a broad smile.

It’s similar to the pose I did back in 2008.

My photo session commences, and the woman takes picture after picture as I regard her and her camera with that seemingly benign gaze. She murmurs encouragement as she fiddles with her camera, experimenting with different angles and lighting. I feel like I can hold this pose all day. Soft music plays all around me on the stereo, and I can catch some of my favorite songs.

“Going great—going great—almost done…”

Ten pictures later, and I’m done. The woman thanks me for such a good shoot and sends me away in very good spirits.

A week later, the photos come out, and mine are what I expected. The image is clear, and I look fresh, clean, crisp and confident. My casualness is a clever rush aimed at those who joined Smash just to pummel me whenever they have the chance.

*There’s the Green Mario, with his awkward, scaredy-cat self. An easy target. Just look at those big blue eyes, that gentle smile, that innocent face. He wouldn’t even harm a fly.*

Boy, are they in for a big surprise…
Shulk: Betrayal with a Real Feel

Chapter Summary

Luigi has trusted the Xenoblade star, body and soul. When he learns that he's been playing him for a fool, the Man in Green teaches him a very cruel lesson.

Chapter Notes

I know I'm taking a lot of risks with this one, but I'm getting very annoyed with his taunt. Don't hate me.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The Punch-Out stage was jam-packed, just as it had been in the franchise’s heyday.

But this was no boxing match they were witnessing. This was a no-holds-barred Smash battle.

Such was the grandness of the tournament that the WVBA had no qualms about lending its best boxing ring for the Subspace to use. If anything, it really benefited them, as Master Hand had to pay a small sum in order to acquire their permission for him to include them in any way for any reason. Also, the entity had celebrated its 30th anniversary, and what better way to cap off three decades than to indirectly participate in Smash?

Now, the fighters could get a taste of the rush Little Mac got whenever he stepped into this ring to a roaring crowd, prepared to face off against the likes of Glass Joe or Don Flamenco. They could experience the rubber floor against their backs when they fell, or being trapped against the ropes, or the struggle to get up before the fated 10, or the referee raising their arms to confirm their victory. Spectators chanted and waved around colorful signs, and they feasted on all types of hot dogs and popcorn, giving the arena that familiar smell which never failed to energize a fighter.

Presently dominating in the Punch-Out ring was the Monado master himself—Shulk. He’d decided to fight this match out in nothing but a skintight thong to show off his handsome physique. It seemed to work, as the audience, especially the ladies, were going ape as he performed with amazing strength and agility, thanks to the power of his Monado. He literally anticipated his opponent’s every move, an ability which aroused jealousy among his fellow Smashers.

The opponent, outfitted in green and white, held his own against the Xenoblade star, even though Shulk literally saw his attacks coming. Shulk was having tons of fun with this guy, as they were close friends. In the scheme of things, he was the new kid, and he was sort of like the old pro, having been at this for sixteen years. An invitation to show Shulk around led to a perfect friendship, with him defending the green veteran against snide remarks, and the man joining him in Team Battles. They were loyal to one another, and it showed. Nothing could tear this friendship apart—or so it seemed.

Shulk was doing great, while his opponent only had one stock remaining. A sixth sense told
the latter that he was going to lose—but he was going to rage against the dying of the light. His baby blues flashed in open defiance of the Monado Shulk kept swinging at him, and as he attacked and defended, his cap bounced around on his head, exposing slightly rumpled hair. Quickly, he adjusted it to the way he liked it and kept going, holding on to his single stock like a lifeline. He had Shulk at 444%, while he was at 360%. The so-called “rage effect”, combined with Shulk’s high percentage, produced a single ember of hope. He lunged forward and let his spearhand bring Shulk’s three stocks down to two. The Monado boy smiled at him as he respawned, and they exchanged taunts before dashing at each other once more.

From there, they had a rally going. The disadvantaged one decided that it wasn’t time to give up yet. He used his fireballs to keep Shulk spaced so he could whip up a battle plan. Wild inspiration struck. He started feinting, getting in position to do one attack but then doing an entirely different one, tripping up his foreshadowing ability. It worked for a long while, enabling him to rack up damage Shulk could “really feel”. They danced, darted and weaved as they set up all sorts of intricate attacks. Their percentages were like a spiking fever, and the crowd loved it. Shulk was especially stunned. His adversary was at 520%...590%...610%...yet still he kept going! He never seemed to have enough, even when it was obvious that victory was lost! All of his attacks had more thrust, more power. The animation in his eyes was indicative of his excitement. The Monado was more than ready to give him what he wanted, and the weapon delivered. Shulk’s brilliant Monado Arts clashed with the green man’s clever tactics, powerful aerials, agility, force and aggression. It was an intense battle which would be preserved through the ages!

Finally, Shulk had his opponent sprawled on his back, at 999%, exhausted and unable to get back up. He was wide open for a K.O. move. As Shulk, also at 999%, stood over him, he began to feel quite strange. His downed foe had a neutral expression on his face, eyes slightly glazed over, sweat and some blood pooling on the floor around him. His cheeks were flushed and his chest visibly heaved with every labored, jerky breath. In this state, he was so—helpless.

It was the sight of the limp form, plastered with sweat, the glazed eyes, the open mouth, the reddened cheeks, the spasmodically rising and falling chest, which set Shulk off. He leaped onto the top rope, raised his arms, and yelled out:

“I’m really feeling it!”

And with that, he belly-flopped onto the man who’d helped to make himself at home in Smash, the man who respected and trusted him.

And that was where it all began.

LLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLL

The belly-flop had sidelined the green-clad Smasher for one week, leaving him under the care of Dr. Mario. The doc treated him well, and he had some company during his hospital visit. Get well cards, flowers and balloons surrounded him, and on rough days, Jigglypuff had her soothing lullabies. Physically, he recovered, but the same couldn’t be said on how he viewed Shulk.

At first, he thought it was only from the heat of battle, and that he didn’t really mean to. But as gossip spread around, he began to suspect more malicious intentions. But why? Shulk was supposed to be his friend! He’d never do something like that after what he’d done for him! Or maybe he was just playing him along, in which case…

The two hadn’t spoken since it all went down, the green man keeping his replies short and curt whenever Shulk spoke to him or just keeping coldly silent, letting his eyes do the talking. Both were certain that he’d cool off after a while, that he’d be ready to trust Shulk again. But another
incident proved otherwise—

Two weeks after the Hero in Green fully recovered from his battle with Shulk, he and some other Smashers were lounging outside, enjoying the weather, when suddenly…

Shulk strolled in, accompanied by some friends, all smiles, as if nothing ever happened. He never even visited his “green friend” during his convalescence, never sent him flowers or presents to make him feel better, and worse yet, never apologized. When the green man looked at him, all sorts of emotions flowed in—sadness, longing, betrayal, disgust. Shulk just pretended he wasn’t even there and socialized with his other friends.

“Wow, Shulk, you really made that guy feel it!” said a man named Ross. “That was the best Smashing I’ve ever seen!”

“He was really feeling it for a whole week,” said Shulk, and—was that pride in his voice? Shouldn’t he feel regret over hurting the first friend he ever made in Smash?

“That fellow thought he was everything, and then bam!” laughed another guy named Carl. “I’m sure his cockiness went ‘belly-up’ after that!”

Laughter.

“You should’ve seen him!” gloated Shulk. “One moment, he was fighting like a wild thing, and the next, he was mopping up the floor! The look on his face—priceless.”

“And did you hear the way he screamed after you flopped on him?” asked Carl. “That was bad—and I mean that in a good way!”

The men howled with laughter.

But—how did they know…? Thought the green eavesdropper.

He got his answer when he saw that the group was huddled over Shulk’s iPhone. Now and then, Shulk’s thumb would flick across the screen, and outbursts of guffawing would follow. There was no doubt as to what was on the screen, what they were laughing at, and what other social networking users were possibly also laughing at. And of the men, Shulk was laughing the hardest.

The man who’d sat next to him during meals, who’d offered to team up with him during certain matches, who’d shared his secrets to him before anything else, who’d comforted him after facing ridicule, who’d even offered to teach him some Monado Arts—was now treating him like some sort of joke. Presently, he was unable to move, barely able to breathe, and about to crumple to the floor in shock. He needed to stick around to hear the gritty details of Shulk’s abrupt about-face regarding his feelings for him.

“Hey, wait a minute,” said Carl. “I thought you two were friends.”

Shulk snorted. “Friends?! Are you kidding me?! Who would want to be friends with a sissy like him? Can’t you see I was just leading him on?”

The truth had come out. The friendliness and compassion was all an act. Get him to lower his guard, and then strike. A trick lower than anything a bully ever pulled on him.

“Gullible soup, I suppose,” snickered Shulk.

At that point, the eavesdropper collapsed. Everything they had shared was a lie. Shulk was a traitor! A traitor! A filthy, no-good, shameless traitor!! Any leftover loyalty and desire to win him back died. Their supposedly special bond burned to the point of no return. In the space of a few weeks, their friendship was over.

“Let’s hear again how he screeched,” said Ross.

The eavesdropper was back on his feet, and he didn’t need to hear any more. He told his friends he’d be right back and then went to his room.

There, his worst fears were confirmed. Photos and videos of the match were all over Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Google+, Instagram, Pinterest, everywhere. He didn’t need to guess who plastered them everywhere and why. A line was crossed. Shulk was dead to him. Switching off his computer, he proceeded to purge his room of his so-called “friend”. The “cleansing” lasted about an hour. Afterword, in a calm monotone, he broke the news of Shulk’s actions to his friends, his brother and the Hands. He was numb until after dinner. Then, he retreated to his quarters, crying silently. He cried for a tattered friendship. He cried for the buildup of love and trust which had been decimated over a short period of time. And he cried for the fact that he’d let himself fall right into Shulk’s little trap.

He made sure his pity party was over inside of five minutes. After shedding tears, the time had come to shed blood. His breath started to speed up at the thought, and his face turned as red as spaghetti sauce. His eyes snapped open, an icy blue, and he smiled a familiar smile…

He knew where he was going to be tonight.

LLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLL

Shulk sat up in his bed and stretched as the sun slat through his windowpane. Instead of giving himself five extra minutes of slumber, he threw back the covers, shimmied out of bed and launched right into his morning workout routine.

He was interrupted when the phone rang. Something told him to answer it, rather than let the machine get it.

“Hello?”

“Hi, Shulk.”

“Hey, L! How’ve you been?”

“Good, I guess. And you?”

“Okay. Look, I…”

“Can you meet me?”

“Really?”

“Now?”

“Uh—sure. Where?”

“At my mansion.”
“I’m on my way.”

“Okay.”

“I miss you.”

Click.

Shulk was elated. His secret was still safe. His “friend” was ready to mend fences with him and further play into his hands. He showered, dressed, gobbled up a Maxim tomato and was out the door.

LLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLL

He waited on the sofa, his Polterpup curled atop his stomach, napping. His hands absentmindedly stroked the ghost dog, while his eyes stared into nothingness. In his thoughts, he was splayed out on the floor of the boxing ring, looking up at the ceiling, his body drained and sticky with perspiration. Soft moans fluttering from his parted lips. Feeling a slight throbbing but no pain. Hearing Shulk’s infamous taunt: “I’m really feeling it!” Words which would echo until the deed was done. And then his body eclipsed the bright lights on the ceiling and dropped toward him like a stone—

Only then did he feel pain.

Footsteps shook the man out of his reverie. The doorbell rang, and his Polterpup stirred.

“It’s okay. It’s just a friend of mine,” he said soothingly. “We have some private stuff to talk about, so could you wait outside in your doghouse?”

Polterpup licked his cheek in agreement and happily trotted outside.

Outside, Shulk waited for his “friend”, armed with his Monado (for the trip to and from) as well as the green guy’s favorite things. He knew all of the ways to soften his heart and re-earn his favor. It would be easy enough, as he was always pure-hearted and forgiving.

Or so he thought.

The knob turned, and the door opened, revealing the man in green. He took in Shulk and his offerings. His face was cold. Expecting.

“Come in,” he simply said.

Shulk stepped inside and placed the goodies on the table. When he was done, he saw that he was barely centimeters away from his “friend”.

“Hey, buddy,” he said amiably.

“Don’t ‘hey, buddy’ me, you backstabber!” His anger roared to life, and before he knew it, his fist splattered into Shulk’s face.

Shulk staggered back. “C’mon, man. No hard feelings, all right?”

“Oh, there are plenty of hard feelings,” spat the man, sizzling another punch into the Monado boy, “and by the time I’m done with you, you’ll be really feeling them down to your toes!” A fist rocketed into Shulk’s jaw, snapping it apart, and he mumbled something.
“You don’t even know the trouble you’re in, Mr. Really Feeling It!” He roundhouse kicked him with all his strength.

“Whoa, man! Take it easy!” yelped Shulk. This wasn’t what he expected.

“Do you think you’re something now?” questioned his “friend”, splattering a spearhand into his chest. “Answer me!” Another spearhand.

“Wait—what’d I do?” Shulk muttered dumbly.

“There’s no use trying to play innocent with me,” growled the man, blood starting to pump. He knocked out a few teeth with a blow. “You really had me right where you wanted me with your friendly charade. I had no idea I was headed for trouble. To be honest, I didn’t see your belly flop coming. Isn’t it funny? It takes something like a battle to expose someone’s true colors.” He let a few attacks finish the rest of his monologue.

Shulk hit the ground and tried to get back up. “I don’t know what you’re talking about…”

The man yanked him to his feet. “You don’t remember? The little conversation you had with your buddies? Yeah, I just so happened to catch an earful. You all spoke loudly enough.” He body-slammed Shulk.

Wide-eyed, Shulk stared at the green-capped man he’d swindled, knowing that the jig was up. If he knew, then he would’ve wasted no time tattling on him. A suspension or a worse punishment was certain to await him. But the Hands weren’t going to punish him. His “friend” was.

“I must say, you have a genius mind,” spat the avenger, who now had him in a death grip. “I don’t think anyone else would’ve had the guts to pull this off. The serpent masked as a friend—very Shakespeare.”

“What do you want from me?” gasped Shulk.

“To admit it! Man up and have the decency to say it to my face!”

Shulk’s breathing evened out. “Did I pretend to be your friend just so I could pull this stunt on you? You’re darn right I did.”

Gut-punched at the confirmation, he dropped Shulk. “Why?”

“I wouldn’t do a child’s project with you,” spat Shulk, rubbing his neck. “You’re not man enough to participate in something like this. What is it to you, a Boy Scout camp?” He laughed harshly. “In all honesty, I’d like to have a friend here at Smash, someone I respect. But you—you’re the epitome of sissiness. I don’t respect you—and I don’t think I ever will.”

The words hit their mark like a professional sharpshooter. The victim closed his eyes, blind with pain, and his shoulders shook. He’d been led to believe that he had a strong ally, someone who could give him a grand amount of power, and it had been revealed as but a lie. The moments they’d shared were lies. All lies! He raised his head, and his tear-filled eyes pulsed with hatred.

“Liar! Betrayer! I trusted you!” he screamed before launching himself at Shulk.

The finality smashed into him like his trusty hammer, and he totally lost it on the man before him. He began to pound at him, screaming meaningless, senseless words, attacking him for his betrayal and his own carelessness to let someone dupe him like this. Shulk did everything he could to defend himself, but there was no time to use the Monado which gave him a competitive edge. The
brutality of it all was incredible. A spearhand exploded into his neck, robbing him of air. A kick to his sensitive spot brought him to the ground. Another blow crashed into his solar plexus, blasting it to shreds. The blood came out in rivers. Clots of blood and pieces of teeth came raining all around him.

Being the nice person he was, the one in green saved the best for last. A Super Jump Punch blasted into the center of Shulk’s face, sending a searing agony down to the tips of his toes. He began to scream. “Someone! Save me! Oh my God, I’m dying!” But the man ravaged this Brutus with his Super Hand Poke until his fingers went numb.

He stood over him and choked out. “How about now, Shulk? Are you feeling anything?”

Painfully, Shulk nodded. “I—I’m r—really feeling it…”

“Good. Now feel THIS!”

He shot a fiery fist into Shulk’s now banged up face, neatly cracking it open like a walnut. A hefty amount of blood and muscle tissue spattered into his own face, and he simply licked it off as calm settled over him. Briskly, he trekked to the bathroom.

A shower and a change of clothes later, he approached Polterpup’s doghouse, leash in hand.

“Okay, little guy. Time for a walk.”

Chapter End Notes

I’m still not ashamed. :)

When he woke up, it was still bright outside, and he could smell dinner. He sat up and smiled as he allowed himself to remember the preceding events. He’d taken a nap after battling a guy named Randolph. Randolph had a vain and arrogant streak which rivaled that of any opponent he faced so far. His version of fighting consisted of striking numerous flamboyant poses, baiting his “puny” opponent, preening for the crowd, busting moves like he was filming some sort of blockbuster and mockingly asking how he and Mario spent their days when they weren’t off rescuing princesses or capturing ghosts. The green fighting machine was not amused, and he wasn’t having any of it. He soon discovered that Mr. Man had some stubble growing on his fabulous face, but of course, he didn’t know this until his fist was snugly burrowed inside that mug, the bristles lightly scraping his knuckles. Thank God for his white gloves. It was a good, long, hard throwdown, and he’d enjoyed every last minute of it, releasing the tension and stress of the morning. And, oh yeah, he’d won. He’d laid it on thick afterwards by beating the air with his fists and looking exhausted, and then Mario had given him a bear hug. As for Randolph—he was going to look pretty funny trying to eat a protein bar with no teeth.

That last thought was the one he’d dozed off by.

Suddenly, he wrinkled his nose. He stunk! He’d been so exhausted that he’d simply flopped onto his bed, with Randy putting up a fight and all. As a late reward, he gave himself a five-minute shower, the cold water and sudsy soap reviving him. Then, he slipped into his freshly laundered Wrecking Crew outfit, changed the sheets on his bed, and then went to join the other Smashers for dinner.

It was pretty uneventful, save for the belated congratulations for his victory earlier. He made sure he sat at a table with many friendly faces, and there was plenty of gossip to go around. Afterward, he came across Randy, crying and pounding on the ground. He quickly taunted before leaving him to feel sorry for himself. Then, Ness and Kirby invited him for video games, and they played late into the night. At ten-thirty, he stumbled back into his room and practically collapsed on the bed, closing his eyes just as Jigglypuff started to sing.

The next morning, Master Hand summoned everyone into the auditorium, where he greeted them with a strange man in tow.

“Smashers,” said Master Hand. “This is Simon. He’s a very good camera operator and photographer. Some days ago, he came to me and offered his services.”

The Smashers said nothing.

“Crazy and I thought that maybe some matches should be televised, so that those who can’t make the journey can watch and support their favorite fighters,” Master Hand went on. “So, Simon’s going to do a trial run with his camera today, just to see how it works before an actual
Excitement began to buzz in the auditorium. They all knew what was coming.

“Poyo!” Kirby called to Simon in greeting. “Poyo, poyo, poyo, poyo!”


The stronger Smashers helped clear out the auditorium in order for the purpose to be properly served. Then, Master Hand explained how things were going to be done.

“When Simon tells me that he’s ready, we’ll have ourselves a big free-for-all. I’m sure you’ve all dreamed of this moment, am I right?”

Murmurs and grunts of assent.

“Okay, Master Hand, we’re all set,” announced Simon. “Let’s do this!”

He turned on his video camera.

The fighters skirmished for about 90 minutes while Simon recorded everything and Master Hand made himself comfortable with a bowl of buttered popcorn (how he eats, I have no idea). It got so heated that the air conditioners automatically turned on, refreshing everyone with a cool blast.

Nobody knew or cared who won.

Then, they all sat in Master Hand’s office to watch themselves in action, cheering madly as if they were watching the Super Bowl.

“Wow, look at Rosalina and Luma! They’re all over the place!” said the male Robin.

“And there’s Falco!” Meta Knight chimed in. “That guy’s fierce!”

The bird in question blushed. “Just practicing,” he said.

“Zelda, why do I keep forgetting that you and Sheik are different entities now?” asked Samus. “I was so confused when I saw both of you at the same time.”

“Takes some time for me to get used to, too,” admitted Zelda, giving her alter ego a little nudge.

“My databanks suggest that perhaps I was too harsh on Lucas,” mused R.O.B. “Since he just returned, I should have given him time to reacclimatize.”

“Don’t worry, you were fine,” Lucas assured him.

“Poyo-poyo-poyo-poyo-poyo-poyo,” gushed Kirby as he watched himself use Stone, Final Cutter, Hammer and Inhale/Copy on any fighter within his range. “Poyo-poyo-po-poyo-poyo!” Excitedly, he waved his appendages high in the air.

“Now that’s what I’m talking about!” crowed Doc as he and Mac viewed the battle. “Way to sock it to ‘em, Mac! I think I hear a chocolate bar calling.”

“Wait a minute—what’s that noise?” Marth suddenly asked.

Everyone fell silent and listened. They indeed heard a noise. But it wasn’t coming from
outside. It was coming from the video footage.

They heard the sound again. It sounded like a shout. It was a shout. The fighters exchanged puzzled looks as they tried to pinpoint who was shouting and why?

“That shouting almost distracted me,” said Mega Man. “It went on and on and didn’t stop until Master Hand signaled for us to stop. I’ve never heard anyone shout like that before.”


“Yeah, it boggled me, too,” said Simon, “so I started following the shouting to see who was doing it.” At that moment, the screen panned over to reveal a certain man in green, as quick as an arrow, in excellent form, his attacks precise and deadly, his eyes pinwheels of blue light—his mouth open in a great shout.

Mario was stunned. “Bro, was that you yelling like that?”

“Yes. It was,” he quietly replied, his voice a bit raw.

“Wow,” laughed Ness. “You were really into it, weren’t you?”

“Pika-pika,” joined in Pikachu.

The man nodded, allowing his voice to recover from an hour and a half of nearly nonstop vocalizing.

“I shouldn’t be surprised,” Captain Falcon said jovially. “Mr. Nintendo can be loud when he wants to—but his bro’s got pipes!”

“He must’ve been thinking of something if he was yelling like that,” said Samus.

“Everyone was shouting, but not as much as him,” added Lucina.

Eyes were glued to the monitor, contemplatively looking on as the Smasher in question continued to attack with envious and admirable speed, all the while screaming and hollering like mad. Frankly, they weren’t used to seeing such a mild-mannered person like this. No doubt, there was something in his system that he had to let out.

The man himself watched, a small smile on his face. This was too personal to share with the others. How could he put the sensations and emotions whirling in his body into words? How could he recall the adrenaline and exhilaration burning within him as he took on foes? It just couldn’t be done.

Wii Fit Trainer turned toward him. “Wow—why were you shouting like that?” she asked.

He quirked an eyebrow. “What do you shout in the heat of battle?” he slyly asked. “What would any of you shout?”

There was silence as everyone thought it over.

Little Mac finally broke the silence. “I dunno—my blood boils, and I shout.”

“I just shout because the heat gets to me sometimes,” shrugged Captain Falcon.

“I just shout because I get pretty wired,” Mario put in.

“I just shout because there’s this energy that comes from a battle,” opined Lucina.

“None of us quite remembers what we shout,” summed up Mewtwo.

The green man smiled. “Exactly. Once you know what you shout in battle, then you’ll figure out what I shout, as well.”
Comedy Break: Point-Counterpoint

Chapter Summary

Fox McCloud and Falco Lombardi playfully debate Luigi’s situation. Based on an iconic "Saturday Night Live" sketch.

“Good morning, Smashers—Fox McCloud here. As you all know, for the past sixteen years, one of our veteran fighters has put up with relentless teasing and harassment. Now, he’s finally making his displeasure known. This is the subject of our Super Smash Point-Counterpoint this week. My frenemy Falco Lombardi will take the pro-L standpoint, while I will take the anti-L counterpoint. And please remember, try not to take this so seriously and just accept it for what it really is—a funny sketch. Falco?”

“Fox, times change, and so have the veteran fighters of Smash. They realize that they need to make their skin a tad thicker these days, and with the addition of For Glory matches, who can blame them? But the lack of leniency during a battle doesn’t necessarily mean the lack of a pure heart. A Smasher in this modern world, especially those associated with the second player, might as well step out of their comfort zones, as L claims he’s done, to faithfully provide aid and assistance to the main hero of the game and convince others that he’s just as courageous. And L is just asking for us to acknowledge that reality. I’ve always liked to say that behind every famous hero is a sidekick—a loving, giving, caring sidekick. But you wouldn’t know about that, Fox, because I have nothing to say about what’s behind a pompous puppy.”

Everybody laughed.

Fox came back with a zinger. “Falco, you ignorant flappy bird.”

More laughter.

“Whiny, needy, attention mongers like you and L should know the rules. If you want a partnership, sign on the dotted line. Oh, but let’s all shed a tear for poor L. There were only reports that he needed a hand out of messes he made at least fifteen times whilst on quests with his big brother, but I guess that decline of nerves doesn’t matter to you, Falco, who flits back and forth between choices with the frequency of a CB radio. But alas, there’s no fury like a Mario brother scorned, and now L, like a prissy, poor little rich girl, is after his elder brother’s spotlight. I guess what you and L are trying to say is that when you’re messing your pants, the meter is running. Well, please, spare us and tell us your rankings on the tier list. Then we can choose which one of you overrated, ungrateful, wannabe heroes we want to main in the next tournament.”

Hearty laughter.

“Thank you so much, and have a great day,” smiled Falco, before turning to Fox and shaking his hand.

It was to their immense relief that they discovered that their sketch was L-approved.
Interlude 4: Never Alone

Chapter Summary

Luigi tells of how a chance encounter between him and Sheik leads to a touching friendship.

I’ve recently started training with Sheik.

She’s nimble, flexible and acrobatic. Not to mention mysterious, with her face wrapped in a veil. She’s been in Smash since 2001, first as Zelda’s alter ego, and recently as a separate person. We’d pair up for Team Battles, face off against one another in Free-For-Alls, or sit next to or near each other during meals. But we really haven’t spent a lot of time with each other until now.

It was the perfect accident which started it. One night, Sheik walked in on me taking out my frustrations on the Sandbags. As it turns out, she, too, couldn’t sleep and needed some time in the Training Room to cool off. Her blood was pumping, and so was mine, and before we knew it, the Sandbags were forgotten as we focused on each other. Training with a person is better than training with a Sandbag, after all, as a person can provide instant feedback and challenges. Sheik forced me to rework my strategy over and over again, and I took a few good blows before finally figuring her out. By daybreak, a silent agreement existed between us, and we met again the next night, both of us loaded for bear.

Sheik can really give someone a beatdown if she really wants to. As the only surviving member of her tribe, she has to be tough. During our training, I can connect with her, since I, too, have had to toughen up in order to survive. Her fighting style looks like a mixed martial arts-type deal, and it’s like she’s coming at me from everywhere at once. My brain welcomes the challenge; it’s just another distraction from thoughts of what’s happened to me in the past. Now, I’m jumping, dodging, rolling and flipping more than ever. I rely heavily on my fireballs to maintain distance until I’ve figured out what to do with her. Sometimes, I manage to get her in the air; other times, I nail her with a grab and a throw. I’m breaking a sweat eight minutes into our sparring, and our heartbeats are in perfect synchronization with each other. This time, heavy metal plays on the radio, and our movements are like a choreographed dance. I also notice that I don’t yell out as much when I’m sparring with Sheik. Maybe there’s an aura about her, a magic, which calms the storm inside my body. Maybe it’s because she more than matches me combo for combo, and that I need to use more of my energy for fighting rather than vocalizing. Maybe it’s a little bit of both. Who can tell?

I’ve grown to love spending my nights with Sheik. Before she walked in on me, I thought that I was the only one fighting sleeplessness. But now, I know that I’m not alone. I’ve never been truly alone in this battle, honestly. But it feels so nice to have another person in that Training Room with me, rather than a cold, unresponsive Sandbag, responding to my attacks with equal ferocity, welding the sound of my breath with the sound of hers and mixing her sweat with mine. The temperature in the room seems to shoot sky high, and I hear her
occasional battle cries answer mine, rather than hollow echoes. We can even exchange taunts to lighten the mood. Taunting a Sandbag is no fun.

Outside of training, we enjoy relaxing together. Sheik knows plenty of songs on her lyre. As she plays, I listen, eyes closed, and imagine the rest of her tribe gathering around for music and dance. Living as the lone survivor of a tribe must not be easy for her.

She opens up to me during those quiet moments. “You and I are not so different,” she tells me. “Both of us have had rough lives. We have to use our wits, or be crushed. And look at us now.”

Suddenly, she turns to face me. “When I saw you beating up those Sandbags that night, I sensed you needed help, so that was why I offered to train with you. Besides, those things cost money.”

We chuckle at that.

“I also spar with you because I want you to remember—we’re all here for you. If it’s a dark road you’re traveling, you’re not traveling it alone. We are behind you, every step of the way. And if you can’t sleep at night, then we’ll stay up with you.”

Tears brim my eyes. “Thank you.”

Night falls, and it’s just her, me, and an oldies station on the stereo. She’s changed out of her usual costume into something more suitable for heavy exercise. Capris and a sleeveless top, all emerald green, topped by a green veil. I know why she’s in green. It’s to reiterate what she said that afternoon.

You’re not traveling this road alone.

I replay her words over and over in my brain as energy zips through my body, and during her counterattacks, she transfers her own energy to me. We’re airborne, eye-to-eye, turning over and over in space. A smile tugs at my lips, which she returns.

And then we’re back on solid ground, fighting, shielding and dodging for all it’s worth.

Never alone.

A week later, Sheik and I engage a team of Link and Zelda in a Team Battle. They’re strong opponents and more than hold their own against our combined attacks. About fifteen minutes in, Sheik is sent flying off the stage and K.O’d. Now I remain, with one stock, at 125%, against two opponents, also with one stock each, Zelda at 96% and Link at 142%. But both still have enough energy to take on a middleweight like me.

And I’m not afraid.

For as I launch myself back into the fray, her voice speaks to me, reminding me of the promise she made while her fingers danced over her lyre.

We’re always here for you.
We are behind you, every step of the way.

Never alone.

Never alone.

Never alone…
OC 5: Best Smashing Episode Ever

Chapter Summary

Stuart Bennigan, troublemaker extraordinaire, mocks Luigi when he is nominated for Smasher of the Month. When Luigi challenges him to prove his point with a battle, what will happen?

Chapter Notes

This is the start of a multi-chapter arc which will tie the previous chapters together and push toward the climax.

Master Hand was cut off by Stuart’s laughter. He was in the middle of nominating his Smashers of the Month, and his gut told him which of the nominees he would eventually select. It was the one in green, sitting primly in the front, with eyes innocent enough to disarm St. Peter at Heaven’s Gate. With those eyes and that face, no one would know how fiercely he fought in the tournaments nowadays, the crushing, agonizing defeat he bestowed upon all of his opponents. If anyone gushed about it, all he’d do is blush and kick the ground. But he truly deserved the honor of being Smasher of the Month.

As always when bringing up the man in green during conversations, there had to be some objection. This time, the unfortunate soul bound and determined to break the mood was Stuart Bennigan. And what Stuart thought…

The Smash newcomer roared with laughter when Master Hand announced the angelic-looking, green-clad veteran as a nominee.

“What amuses you, Stuart?” asked Master Hand. “Perhaps you’d like to share the joke with the rest of us.”

“Oh, it’s nothing,” replied Stuart, bursting into another round of giggles.

“If you’ve found something that I’ve said funny, by all means, say so,” said Master Hand. “I don’t see anybody else laughing.”

“I guess it’s because they don’t see the outrageousness in your choices,” snickered Stuart. “I mean, what makes you think he qualifies for Smasher of the Month?”

There was a nasty silence.

“Explain this disrespectful behavior at once,” ordered Master Hand.

“ Granted, this is my first tournament,” Stuart said through his laughter. “I still need some time to break in. But at least I don’t jump out of my skin at everything that moves, unlike some people!”
“You are insulting a Smasher who treated you politely on your first day. Apologize!” commanded Master Hand.

Stuart ignored him. “At least I’m not klutzy,” he snickered.

Mario loudly cleared his throat in warning.

Stuart didn’t acknowledge it. “And at least I don’t demand attention,” he finished, howling once again with laughter.

Everybody turned and glared at him, except for the green Smasher, who kept his eyes in front and pretended that Stuart wasn’t there. But he was biting his lower lip, and a light began to dance in those disarming eyes.

“Master Hand, must we really put up with such cruelty?” asked Lucario.

“Stuart, it is never okay to laugh at somebody’s weaknesses!” reprimanded Master Hand, to no effect.

“He’s not listening right now,” huffed Rosalina, as her Luma gave Stuart a deathly glare.

“Can’t you just send him out?” asked Olimar.

“I’m sorry, but my hands are tied,” said Master Hand. “If I ask him to leave, then it’ll tarnish our reputation.”

“What about his?” challenged Mario, indicating his bro, still as calm as ever.

Master Hand turned to him. “Just ignore him, like you’re doing now,” he said. “He’s the one who wants attention, not you. You’ve worked very hard in the past sixteen years, and all he’s done lately is sit around.”

The man in question beamed a smile, but it was short-lived.

LLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLL

Later that morning, Stuart was still at it.

“Look everyone, here comes the future Smasher of the Month,” he said sarcastically as the green man approached. “Bow down and pay your respects.” Mockingly, he began to grovel on the ground.

“Stuart, what makes you think I don’t deserve this nomination?” the man asked sweetly.

“You got wax in your ears? I explained it earlier,” scoffed Stuart. “You manipulated Nintendo into giving you your own year, you fight like a girl, and you’re a coward.”

“I didn’t manipulate Nintendo to do a thing,” responded his target in a calm tone. “It was my 30th birthday, and they decided to celebrate with a line of games with me as the focus.”

“If you really want more attention, then how about you man up?” challenged Stuart. “All you do is run, cry, hide and expect your big bro to solve everything.”

“When Mario’s life was in danger, who rescued him—me or you?”

Stuart blinked. “Well—that was different, because you had no choice in the matter!”
The man whistled. “You have an answer for everything, don’t you?”

“T’d stay and chat with you longer, but I have a full lineup of matches ahead of me,” Stuart said abruptly. “Good luck winning Smasher of the Month—you’ll need it.”

“And when you’re finished, and if you’d really like to see how cowardly I am, meet me at the Stadium at three-thirty,” smiled the man. “So I suggest you conserve as much energy as you can until then.”

“Oh, I’d be happy to,” Stuart shot back. “You’ve got yourself a date.”

“Have fun with the rest of your matches,” the man called after Stuart as he sauntered out.

After winning his first two matches of the day, Stuart felt pretty good. He headed over to the lounge with his friend, Tristan, telling him about his appointment as they walked.

“Stuart, are you sure you know what you’re getting into?” asked Tristan. “He may be shy and awkward, but he’s a good fighter.”

“Yeah, well I just gave two heavyweights a run for their money,” said Stuart. “You’re stressing too much.”

“I still have a bad feeling about this. What if you lose?”

“Lose against him? Come on, man, no sweat. He has terrible traction, gets his head stuck in walls, has trouble approaching opponents, and his physics are a little off. Five minutes, and he’s mine.”

“Great. I hear he’s killer in the air,” sighed Tristan.

CRASH!!!

The men looked up to see a Sandbag hurtling out of the window of the Training Room. They leaped aside as it thumped onto the floor. It was ripped open, its innards spilling out onto the ground. Slowly, they looked back up to see flashes of green, hearing a familiar voice grunting and yelling with effort. Seconds later, a man wearing protective gear sailed out of the broken window, activated a parachute, and floated softly to the ground. His protective equipment was nicely battered, but it had done its job.

“Boy, is he in a mood,” grumbled the man as he picked himself back up and went inside.

Exchanging looks, Stuart and Tristan continued on their way to the lounge.

Once inside, the two separated, Stuart to get some food and drink, Tristan to hang out with his other friends.

Palutena glared at Stuart as he sat down. “You have a lot of nerve showing up here after your little stunt this morning,” she said.

“Well, I do feel badly about it,” Stuart told her.

“Then why don’t you apologize?” challenged Samus.

“He’s a little busy right now,” Stuart coolly replied. “Besides, we made a little date where
we can sort all of this mess out.”

“You made him very upset,” Ness told him. “He hasn’t spoken to anyone since it all went down.”

“If he can’t handle the truth, then too bad for him,” said Stuart, and then turned away to indicate that the conversation was over.

Word of the special event spread quickly.

Villager hollered to his friends back in Smashville, “There’s going to be a special event today at three-thirty!”

Sonic sped from room to room. “There’s going to be a special event today at three-thirty!”

Female Robin broke the news to Marth, Lucina and Male Robin. “There’s going to be a special event today at three-thirty.”

Captain Falcon notified Fox and Falco. “There’s gonna be a special event today at three-thirty! Yes!”

Olimar gathered up his Pikmin. “There’s going to be a special event today at three-thirty,” he whispered to them. He sent word to Alph.

Wii Fit Trainer interrupted her yoga session to announce: “There’s going to be a special event today at three-thirty. Now feel the burn!”

Kirby was playing with some Lumas when he saw Meta-Knight flying over.

“There’s going to be a special event today at three-thirty,” said Meta-Knight.

Kirby spread the news while mounted on his Warp Star. “Poyo-poyo-poyo-poyo-poyo-poyo-poyo-poyo!”

R.O.B. stopped Mario in the hallway and told him, “I have just been notified of a special event which will commence today at half-past three.”

“I already know that,” said Mario.

Mega-Man went from door to door, knocking three times and saying: “Fight today! Fight today! Fight today!”

DK burst into the training room and bellowed, “Big event this afternoon!”

“BEEP BOOP BEEP BOOP BEEP BOOP,” announced Mr. Game and Watch.

“So there’s this fight this afternoon,” Little Mac said to Doc as they trained. “You coming?”

“Course I am,” Doc replied jovially.

Nobody could hardly wait.
“So this is really happening,” said Tristan.

“Yup,” said Stuart. He’d vanquished yet another opponent, and his confidence was soaring. They sat together in the cafeteria, eating a carb-rich lunch.

“I trust you’ll be in the front row?” asked Stuart.

“Yes. I’ve brought some friends along, too.”

“Good. They need to see what happens to cowards like him. Only the strongest survive, you know?”

Tristan nodded, but he seemed distracted.

“What?”

“The majority of the Smashers say that he’s going to win,” explained Tristan.

Stuart laughed.

“I’m serious, Stu. The odds are against us two-to-one. Now I’m going to say this only because I’m your friend. This afternoon, there’s going to be a small contingent of people depending on you. You have to win this match. But that man is no-one to trifle with or underestimate. He’ll devour you.”

“How do you know?” scoffed Stuart.

“I happened by one of his matches, where he was taking on five opponents at once. The sweat was just pouring off of his face, and there was this passion in his eyes. I’m telling you, you cannot afford to lose to this man—because if you do, then word will get out that Stuart Bennigan had his butt handed to him on a silver platter by a coward. And nobody will ever take you seriously again.”

As the words sank in, Peach walked up to their table.

“Princess,” Stuart said politely, kissing her hand. Tristan followed suit.

“I really think you hurt his feelings this morning,” Peach said to Stuart.

“I was just telling the truth, Princess,” said Stuart. “Besides, he’s acting like he’s forgotten about it.”

“He hasn’t,” said Peach. “I know that something’s going to happen between you in about three hours. Judging by the job he’s done on his opponents, he’s really preparing for it. Dr. Mario has his hands full.”

“Aw, he’ll get over it,” said Stuart.

“But he said he’ll consider calling it off if you apologize. A sincere apology—that’s what he wants.”

“And if I choose not to?” defied Stuart.

“Then may God be with you,” sighed Peach.
Peach escorted Stuart down the corridor to the green man’s quarters. The door was ajar, and no sound came from within. When they reached it, Peach rapped on the door and withdrew, indicating that Stuart was to go inside alone. “Remember, a sincere apology,” she said sternly.

Stuart nodded and stepped inside.

The man sat on his bed, cuddling with a sleeping Polterpup. He looked up when Stuart entered and greeted him with the most innocent of smiles. “Hi, Stu,” he said.

“Hi, L.”

“I first met Polterpup during my trip to Evershade Valley,” said the man, stroking the dozing ghost dog. “At first, he spooked me, since he was pretty aggressive, with the Dark Moon in fragments and all. But after the business was finished and the day was saved—along with my bro—I discovered that all he wanted was a friend. He’s playful, cute, cuddly—and I keep in touch with the Evershade Valley ghosts, who are quite nice, compared to other ghosts I’ve encountered in the past.

“You see, if you put your mind to it, you can conquer your fears, and while the occasional Boo sort of spooks me, I’m not as afraid of them as I used to be.”

Stuart cleared his throat. “Look, L, this morning, I may have said some awful things to you, but I want you to know, I feel bad about the whole thing. Maybe I shouldn’t have been so quick to call you a coward before learning about all of your achievements. There was a reason you moved up the tier list, after all. Anyway, I hope I can rectify things between us. I don’t want to make a lousy first impression by picking a fight with a veteran like you.”

“I see,” said the man.

“As a token of my remorse, please accept one of my favorite sandwiches of all time,” said Stuart, presenting the man with a meatball hero oozing with sauce and cheese. Slowly, the man took it.

“You insulted me in front of my friends, and all you have to offer me is a meatball hero,” he said. “Like it’s going to erase it all.”

“I promise I’ll never do it again,” vowed Stuart.

“That’s what they always say,” the man said, his tone cool. “If one of their promises was a plate of spaghetti, then I’d be super-stuffed.”

“I—just thought you’d like a meatball hero.”

“Have you considered apologizing to Master Hand, to my bro, and to Daisy?”

“Daisy…?”

“That’s right, she found out about it, and she’s none-too-happy. Come to think of it, how about you apologize to the friends I have known since our N64 days? Or in front of them, for that matter?” His voice was starting to rise.

“All I ask is that you accept my apology and move on from this,” sighed Stuart.

The man in green had started to lose his patience with Stuart. “No, no, no. If you’re truly
sorry, and if you want to apologize, then you’re going to do it in public, since you ridiculed me in public. Seems fair.”

Stuart then noticed that a crowd had gathered outside the room, squared his shoulders, and gave the man a haughty look. “Apologize?” He spat out the word as if it was something revolting. “That’s not what I meant, you green ’stache.”

“Yes, you did,” said the man, getting exasperated. “You walked in here and told me that you wanted to apologize, and that you didn’t want to fight.”

“Oh, this is typical Green Mario. Always trying to find a way to bail. But everyone knows you’re just trying to make excuses because you want them to think that you’ve shed your cowardliness, which obviously isn’t true.”

A red tint appeared on the green man’s cheeks. “Just you wait until three-thirty, mister,” he promised.

“Bring it, bring it on,” spat Stuart. “I’ll be waiting for you with bells on, you klutzy excuse for a Mario Bro.”

He turned and left in a huff.

“Now you see what I’m talking about?” he asked Peach after she confronted him. “I tried to apologize and even gave him a meatball hero, but nooooooooooo! He had to demand attention by forcing me to do it in front of everyone. Like I said, he’s an attention-monger.”

Peach just walked away from him, shaking in anger.

Stuart went to find Tristan, passing by Dr. Mario’s office, where some patients lay, wearing bandages, some in casts, complaining about their injuries.

“You can stop exaggerating this on my account,” he snapped at them. “It’s not working.”

It was 1:45. Only an hour and forty-five minutes until the special event. Stuart fumed to anyone who would listen about his failed apology, accusing the man of always making it about him. For his part, the green-capped Smasher blazed through three more matches, barely escaping a disqualification on the last one, against an enormous opponent with a filthy mouth who either didn’t know or didn’t care about his bad mood and did everything in his power to exacerbate it. Master Hand warned that he’d cancel his remaining matches unless he calmed down.

“I know you’re still stung about what happened this morning, but you have no right to take it out on others,” he reprimanded.

After his chat with Master Hand, the last person the green guy wanted to run into was Stuart.

Stuart grabbed him and pulled him into a nearby storage closet. Desperation was in his eyes.

“What do you want?” the man asked coldly.

“I’m serious this time. I want to apologize for everything I said, even the bit about you being clumsy,” said Stuart.

The man was irritated by the mixed signals Stuart was sending him. “Do you really want to
make it up to me, or not?"

"Of course I do."

"Then we’ll go see Master Hand, where you can actually apologize to me."

"I’m apologizing right now!"

"Then why don’t you want anyone else to know how sorry you are?" challenged the man. "Are you trying to play the tough guy when in truth you’re the cowardly one? Look, you’re really convinced I’m a coward. I’m just giving you an opportunity to see for yourself. So you can either apologize before Master Hand, or we’re keeping the appointment. It’s your choice."

Stuart fell to his knees before the man. "Oh, please! Please, don’t do this! I’m begging you, don’t do this! You know I respect you, man! I wouldn’t lie about that! I didn’t mean to laugh at you this morning!"

The man’s eyes widened in disgust. "You contemptible pig," he spat. "Do you actually think you can grovel your way out of this?"

"I meant what I said—I don’t want to fight you!" Stuart was on the verge of tears. "I’ll do anything if you just call it off! I’ll wear green for a whole day! Heck, I’ll even dye my hair green!" He grabbed a quart of green paint and poured it onto his hair. "See?"

"Mio Dio!" sighed the man, wheeling around and stalking off.

Still stained with green paint, Stuart burst into Mario’s quarters. "Listen, you’ve gotta help me!" he screamed.

"Help yourself."

"Look, you need to stop your brother from making a giant mistake. He listens to you; surely, you can talk some sense into him!"

"You think he answers to me or something? Well, you’re wrong."

"Mario, come on. You don’t want to see what I’m going to do to him this afternoon. You won’t be able to recognize him when it’s over."

"Or maybe you want me to talk him out of it because you don’t want to fight him at all?"

"Don’t be a jerk. I’m no coward."

"Your actions have consequences. Deal with them."

"You know what? If that’s how you’re going to be, fine. When I go out there this afternoon, I’m going to rain an ungodly firestorm upon your baby bro. He’s gonna have to call his beloved flower princess all the way in Sarasaland to get a binding resolution to keep me from utterly destroying him. I’m talking scorched earth, you understand! I will massacre him. I will mess him up!"

"And I will tell him what you just said to me."
By 3:00, Stuart was more desperate than ever. He heard event organizers getting the stadium ready. He felt the green man’s eyes boring into his back. Everyone around him was talking about it. Smashers patted the green-capped man on the back in passing, and Mario exchanged secret looks with him. The same thought paraded through Stuart’s mind. There has to be a way out. There has to be a way out. There has to be a way out.

“I can’t go,” he heard someone say. “I got into trouble with Master Hand, so I have to do a quiet activity for an hour starting at three-thirty.”

That’s it! I’ll get myself in trouble! But how…?

As the minute hand inched forward on the clock, a wild idea flashed into Stuart’s mind. He raced into Master Hand’s office, stuck a finger down his throat and propelled a stream of barf onto a nearby Crazy Hand!

There was a shocked silence as the Smashers arrived on the scene.

“Stuart—did you just vomit all over my brother?” asked Master Hand.

“What’s up? What’s up? Vomited on your bro—what’s up with that?”

The man in green was in absolute shock.

Thank you, God—thank you, God—

Stuart mentally repeated the words like a mantra as he sat with Jared, the Smasher he’d eavesdropped on earlier. Master Hand gave them some board games, writing materials, art materials, and some packs of cards. “I’ll be back in an hour,” he said. “Enjoy.”

“Well, it looks like we’ll miss the special Stadium event today,” Stuart said jovially.

Soon, Stuart and Jared were playing a game of cards, everything else all but forgotten. Video games were off the table, but Stuart was in Heaven. He’d evaded a major obstacle. There would be no green-clad plumbers to fight. He was free.

Someone tapped on the window. It was Tristan.

“What are you doing? You’ll get in trouble!” hissed Stuart.

“Man, why did you barf on Crazy Hand?” demanded Tristan.

“Because I laugh in the face of danger,” crowed Stuart.

“Or was it because you wanted to get out of fighting him?” challenged Tristan.

“No, of course not!”

Mario suddenly appeared. “You didn’t actually think you could weasel your way out of it, could you?” he snapped.

“What do you mean?” Stuart’s stomach dropped.

“I mean that the fight is still on—we just moved it to tomorrow morning at 10:30 a.m. Don’t be late.”
“You’ve got to be joking,” choked out Stuart.

“Silly rabbit,” laughed Mario.

“Tricks are…” said Stuart.

“…for kids,” finished Mario.

Then, Stuart saw the green-clad man, smiling calmly at him.

“Tomorrow morning,” he said. “We’ll see who the true coward is tomorrow morning.”

And then they were gone.

It was time to implement Plan B.

After his final match for the day, the Hero in Green hoped to spend some time in his room to clear his head before eating dinner, going to bed, and ending a rotten day. Apparently, that wasn’t going to happen.

Master Hand summoned him to his office, where he happened upon a sobbing Stuart, accompanied by—his mother.

“Oh, hello, Mrs. Bennigan,” he said politely.

“Don’t ‘Hello, Mrs. Bennigan’ me,” the woman said icily. “Do you want to hear what my son told me?”

“What?”

“He told me that you spent the day harassing him, threatening him and picking fights with him. Is that true?”

“Not entirely,” said the man. “It’s not easy to tell you this, Mrs. Bennigan, but your son cruelly insulted me this morning. He laughed when Master Hand said I was nominated for Smasher of the Month and said that I was cowardly and unworthy of this honor. I merely wanted to give him a chance to prove his point.”

“I told him repeatedly that I was sorry,” sniffled Stuart, “but that failed to melt his frozen heart. I hoped that Smash would be a safe and enjoyable environment, and it started out so—but now I’m afraid to walk from one end of the hallway to another.” He burst into a fresh round of sobbing.

“He even went to my brother and talked trash to him,” said the man. “His apology was insincere, and I asked nicely for a more sincere one, but he got hostile and defensive. Can’t you see that he’s just manipulating and playing the victim?”

“I AM the victim here!” screamed Stuart.

“Mrs. Bennigan,” began Master Hand. “Please, accept my sincere apology. This man will be severely disciplined for his conduct.” He turned to the Smasher in question. “You will apologize to Stuart and his mother immediately, and then you will stay in your room. You are suspended indefinitely from this tournament.”
“Okay, fine. I’m sorry,” he said to Stuart and his mom.

“You’re sorry for what? Be specific.”

“I’m sorry for harassing and provoking you.”

“You don’t sound sorry,” noted Mrs. Bennigan.

“Well, I am, okay?”

“Mom, it’s cool,” Stuart said coyly. “I should share the blame for setting him off in the first place. It’s nothing to start a bloody war over.”

Master Hand nodded to the man in green. “You are dismissed.”

“Is it okay if I take Stuart off the property for a moment?” asked Mrs. Bennigan. “I’m going to get him his favorite dessert.”

Stuart’s eyes widened. “You’ll let me eat all of it this time?”

“Every bit of it is yours.”

Stuart hugged her. “I love you, Mom.”

When her back was turned, Stuart dropped his act and smirked triumphantly at the punished Smasher. “Maybe next time you’ll think before instigating a newcomer,” he hissed, giving him the finger. Unfortunately, the man in green could do nothing about it. He turned and stormed to his room.

Night came with softness, fooling the world into thinking the worst was over. Stuart, confident that the danger was behind him for good, slept heartily. Master Hand had given him special treatment for a whole week and hinted that he’d consider rescinding the green man’s nomination—and putting Stuart in his place. If the man didn’t challenge this, then it would prove once and for all that he was and would always be a coward. He felt a little guilty for withholding certain details from his mother, but the benefits he’d reaped ensured that the pang of guilt was short-lived.

In contrast, the man in green was certain that his world had fallen apart. A promising win for Smasher of the Month had turned into an indefinite suspension. And it was all Stuart’s fault. After a good cry in his room, he sneaked off to the Wii Fit Training Room to keep company with some music and the Sandbags, pretending they were either Master Hand or Stuart’s smug face. He knew that the mother would overlook everything when faced with her son in distress, but how could Master Hand fall for that victim act? If he was so weak-willed and susceptible, then what made him think he could lead a Smash tournament? He really wanted to march up to that office and give him a piece of his mind—God knows what he might do to him then.

Unbeknownst to him, Tristan was hiding nearby, watching goggle-eyed as he viciously gutted the Sandbags. Quietly, he slipped away, pursued by the aggravated man’s grunts and gasps, and went to Stuart’s room, rousing him.
“I’m gonna get you someplace safe before he runs out of Sandbags,” he hastily explained as they hastened away.

Jared gallantly did the same for Mario and Peach as soon as he heard the sounds. “Try not to talk to him until he has a chance to calm down, okay?” he said to them.

It was going to be a long night.

Stuart began the next day by flaunting his newfound power. He summoned everyone to the auditorium at 9 a.m., thirty minutes before the event was supposed to begin.

“Stu, what’s this about?” asked Meta Knight. “We have a big brawl to prepare for!”

“That’s exactly why you’re here,” said Stuart. “I regret to inform you all that the special event has been cancelled.”

Gasps of disbelief.

“My opponent decided to bail,” Stuart went on. “Late yesterday afternoon, he showed up at my room, telling me he acted rashly, begging for my forgiveness. Being the gentle-hearted soul I was, I quickly absolved him—and he agreed to call it off.”

Heads turned to the man in green, trying futilely to conceal his embarrassment.

“I’d like to invite him onto the stage,” smiled Stuart.

Reluctantly, the man rose and joined his tormentor on stage, forcing a smile as Stuart patted him on the back.

“L, is there something you’d like to say to me—and to your fellow Smashers?” He pushed a microphone into his face.

He swallowed and made himself speak the words. “There’s not going to be a fight between me and Stuart Bennigan. I apologize for overreacting and antagonizing him.”

Stuart wasn’t done yet. “Master Hand had a good talk with us the other day, and he agreed that Mr. Green was in the wrong. Don’t expect to see him on the battlefield for a while—he’s been suspended indefinitely.”

Cries of chagrin arose.

The man was beside himself. Why was this happening to him?!

Waves of pleasure coursed through Stuart’s body. “And L is dying to make it up to me for what he’s done. Aren’t you, L?”

“Yes.”

“Would you like to say how?”

He swallowed again. “I—I withdraw my nomination as Smasher of the Month and offer it to you, Stuart.”

“Aw, you don’t have to give me your place as a nominee,” purred Stuart with feigned
contrition. “But I’ll take it if you feel *that* bad about it.”

The man nodded. “I promise never to act like that again.”

He hopped off the stage, returned to his seat and added to his mea culpa in a furious whisper, “Even if you’re a devious, selfish scumbag who—*stinks!*”

That morning, Stuart had a good lineup of matches, and he forced his supposed tormentor to attend every single one of them, milking every drop for all it was worth. But the absolute worst moment came when he stepped out to battle Lucina.

“Before we start, I’d like to dedicate this match to a very good friend of my opponent’s. A man who’s certainly made his mark on all four of the Super Smash tournaments. I’m talking of course about the Green Mario.”

The man he was addressing raised an eyebrow.

“The L on his cap says everything about him, but his innocent face deceives you. He has a deluded belief that he’s someone he’s not—and if anyone objects, then he will try to hurt them. This man complains of being bullied—but is the pot calling the kettle black? All we can do is pray that he’ll come to grips with the type of person he really is—a coward, a manipulator, a pushover and a loser. L—this match is for you.”

Lucina tightened her grip on her sword and shot daggers at Stuart with her eyes. This wasn’t going to be a friendly fight. This battle—would be personal.

Stuart’s little speech did nothing to improve his chances against an angry, blade-wielding princess of Ylisse. His stock dropped faster than a stone six minutes in. But when he was down to his final stock, he called into action a secret weapon—his victim act. He subtly provoked Chrom’s daughter into attacking him ferociously and then put on such a convincing show of defenselessness that Lucina was disqualified and suspended for a whole week!

It was his offensive against the man in green. He had arranged matches with those who sympathized with him to get them suspended. He even got innocent little Kirby in trouble by mimicking his “Poyo” and baiting him into wounding Stuart with his Final Cutter.

The fun was just beginning.

By lunchtime, the man was frazzled and internally screaming for release. Luckily, spaghetti was on the menu today, and maybe a nice, heaping plate would soothe his nerves. Stuart had other plans. As the man in green made his way to the entrée station, he tripped a wire. This wire was attached to a pair of scissors, and the scissors cut a string, which was tied to one end of a bucket—a nice, big bucket. And when this bucket tipped over, gallons of ectoplasm poured all over the man.

He yelled in surprise as eyes turned to him. The mean-spirited ones began laughing at once as his friends barked at them to stop. He stood perfectly still, his eyes trained on Stuart. And then he slowly and calmly walked towards him.

He’d hardly gone five paces when a voice over the intercom summoned him to the office.

He cursed and left the cafeteria to face his fate.

By the time he reached the office, he decided that he was going to scream at Master Hand for
“Professor?”

His sort-of mentor of fourteen years scrutinized him. “My boy, you look a fright! What happened to you?”

“Let’s just say someone slimed their way into my lunch hour,” he quipped, his blood pressure dropping. “Where’s Master Hand? He wanted to see me.”

“He didn’t summon you here, my boy. I did.”

The man smiled. “I had no idea you had that privilege.”

E. Gadd smiled back and invited him to sit down and catch up on things. The elderly ghost hunter told a few entertaining stories about his paranormal studies, and then he changed the subject. “So, I hear that there’s going to be a little—dust-up—between you and young Mr. Bennigan. Is that true?”

His “apprentice” quickly shook his head. “You know I’m not like that, Professor.”

“Do you recall me saying that I was afraid of ghosts when I was a small youth?”

“Yes. But you overcame it, just like I did.”

“Before I overcame it, I had to fight it. I had to let that ugly, sniveling eyesore know that it wasn’t in control of my life, you see? I battled it until I nearly bled, but it was worth it in the end. Now, I’m in control of that frightful little monster, instead of it controlling me.”

“Were you ever—bullied about it?”

“For sure, it was the subject of a few mean-spirited pranks—but they hardly bothered me. I was too focused on winning against this phobia and stopping it from completely dominating everything I did. You see, my boy, you can’t tell a squirt such as a phobia to go away—you have to make it go away—even if you have to get your hands dirty.”

The man’s face lit up. Then, he frowned. “Master Hand said that…”

“Whose battle is this? Yours or his?”

“Mine, of course.”

“Alrighty, then. He has no right to tell you how to fight your own battle—unless he’s your general.”

“He wasn’t with me when I had to purge two haunted mansions of ghosts and save my brother,” the man said stiffly. “He doesn’t have to fight my battles for me.”

“You should never be afraid to defy expectations and challenge authority,” entreated the professor. “No matter what it takes, you need to stand up to that troublesome little squirt and banish him from your life for good. Say ‘enough’!”

“I will, Professor,” smiled the man. “You bet I will!”
Stuart was in his room, reading a comic book, when suddenly…

The door burst open, revealing Mario and Jared. Mario was armed with F.L.U.D.D., while Jared had a fire extinguisher. Together, they commenced to propel jets of water at Stuart. He screeched like a girl as he tried to get away.

“What are you doing? What is this?” he demanded of them.

“You know perfectly well what it is!” snapped Mario. “Get moving!”

He and Jared dragged Stuart out of his room and toward the stadium.

Meanwhile, Peach burst into the Smash lounge. “Everyone to the stadium!” she yelled. “You have fifteen minutes!”

It didn’t take long for a crowd to surge toward the stadium. Matches were interrupted as word got out. Dr. Mario decided to attend as a physician in case someone got hurt. Even friends from out of town came to watch.

In no time flat, the stadium was nearly full.

“Please, we just want to cheer him on.” The gaggle of friends Tristan had invited was attempting unsuccessfully to get in.

“Yes, I understand, but I’m afraid we’re all full,” said Samus.

Inside, concessions were hopping, and the spectators were chattering amongst themselves.

“It was about time,” said Captain Falcon.

Mario had joined Samus at the front door and saw a familiar auburn-haired princess in the crowd. “I’m terribly sorry,” he called to the others as he took Daisy’s hand and helped her inside. “It’s too crowded in here—just too crowded!”

Stuart was standing in the arena like a deer in the headlights, hoping against hope as more and more seats became occupied. His fear was confirmed when he saw his opponent enter the arena, flanked by Little Mac, Doc and Wii Fit Trainer. He’d changed clothes and was dressed in a sky-blue shirt, navy overalls and a sky-blue hat. Doc rubbed his shoulders while giving the usual pep-talk, Wii Fit Trainer helped him practice his breathing technique, and Mac was busy dividing a chocolate bar between them.

When they reached Stuart, he began acting tough. “What’s up?” he asked.

“You knew this was coming, Stu,” the challenger tightly replied.

“I hope you understand that I’ll tell on you,” warned Stuart. “I’ll get the last laugh.”

“If all I’ve accomplished today is that I’ll no longer be invited to these Smash tournaments, then so be it,” replied his opponent. “At least my conscience will be clear, because I fought for what I believe in.”

“Look, man. I know you feel you must defend your honor and reputation. But I beg you—walk away.”
The man laughed scornfully. “You call that begging? Surely, you can beg better than that. Now quit stalling, and let’s fight!” He rolled up his sleeves in preparation.

Stuart drew a breath, now realizing the inevitable. “All right, let’s dance,” he spat, throwing off his shirt.

“Put your shirt back on!” someone barked.

The blue-clad man waved the person off. “No, it’s fine,” he smiled, his eyes studying Stuart’s physique and contemplating how much fun he was going to have with it. How many smash attacks could it withstand before it shattered apart? Only one way to find out…

Everyone started to cheer as the men circled each other, fists raised. Stuart attacked first with a right cross, but his opponent ducked and threw a roundhouse kick, followed by his standard combo attack. Quickly, Stuart tripped him and slammed three good punches into him. The man just shook it off and countered with his down-B, scrambling Stuart’s mind. Next, he kept him at bay with his fireballs as he set up his next attack. When Stuart closed the distance, he grabbed him, shoved him beneath him to ground pound him and then lit off a string of forward aerials, finishing with a Super Jump Punch. Stuart performed a floor attack as he got back up, and they began to dance and shuffle for position. The blue-clad fighter went on the offensive, with a left cross and a right jab, and then blasted a fiery number into Stuart’s gut. From there, he delivered a series of up tilts, ending with his up smash, and when Stuart crashed to the ground, he made him airborne with his down smash.

Afterward, the man decided to really turn up the heat. He started hacking away at the man who insulted him and eventually got him in trouble. Confidence and adrenaline made his face come aglow. He seemed to attack from everywhere at once, and there was no time for Stuart to cough up a strategy. All he could do was play it by ear. He managed to deliver a few hard-hitting uppercuts and hooks, but that didn’t stop his opponent. With his relentless attacks, he managed to back Stuart into a corner of the stadium, where his long-repressed tension fully ignited. His spearhand rocketed into him so many times that the spectators were shocked that it didn’t break his fingers. Suddenly, Stuart grabbed him and sharply turned so that his opponent was the one trapped, and his revenge began as he used the blue-clad Smasher as a punching bag. Those punches were nothing compared to the emotional toil he’d put him through. A sharp jab broke the onslaught, and he grabbed and headbutted Stuart before spinning him three times and throwing him as hard as he could.

“Tear him up, L!” he heard someone yell.

Stuart was back on his feet, charging at his opponent and aiming a haymaker at him! He dodged, responding with a spinning kick, a haymaker of his own and a few smash attacks. Effortlessly, he flipped Stuart over his shoulder and slammed him against the ground. Stuart tried to crawl away, but his opponent slid to the ground and clamped down on his ankles with his own. Slowly, he climbed atop him and let the power and everything surge into his fist. As Stuart struggled, his opponent plunged his gloved fist over and over into the first place he saw. His face. His chest. His stomach. His shoulders. His torso. Wherever he saw bare skin, he slammed his fist down. He was slightly conscious of something cracking apart, of something wet dripping onto the floor. His glove was getting smeared with blood, both his and Stuart’s. His knuckles were starting to ache. He grasped Stuart and yanked him to his feet.

“Get up,” he spat at him, which he did.

The man bashed Stuart’s face against a nearby pole several times, kneed him, gave him a few electrified punches and cannoned another Super Jump Punch into the point of his chin. As he struggled back up, the man blew into him with the Green Missile. The spectators cheered louder as the man executed an especially painful combo of smash and aerial attacks. Stuart tried, but there was
no way he could escape. Tristan had been right. The man in blue was gobbling him up! Stuart’s combat skills were no match for his opponent’s fast speed, limitless combo options, high jumping ability and enviable strength. Not to mention the thrust of aggression, hurt, energy and frustration which gave him the competitive edge. The blows literally burned, as if they were filled with venom, and his opponent’s eyes were intense, unforgiving and determined.

This was it. Stuart Bennigan’s fate was sealed.

The man finished up with a bruising spin kick and allowed Stuart to topple to the ground. His once-charming face was now splattered with ugly blotches of purple and black. His eyes were bloodshot, the skin around them tender patches of deep blue. Almost half of his teeth were gone. Blood sprayed his horrible visage and the entire upper part of his body. His nose was gone. He felt a crater in his chest where his ribs used to be, and it was a chore to breathe. The blue-capped man had done a job on him—but at least Stuart had managed to bloody him up.

As for the victor, he, too, had collapsed on the ground. He sat cross-legged, fanning himself with his cap. Strands of brown clung to a sticky forehead, and he spat out mouthfuls of blood. He breathed heavily as he regained control of his runaway emotions. But the spectators could tell he’d been crying. Whether it was from anger, sadness, relief or exhaustion, they didn’t know.

Finally, he stood, smoothed his hair, put his cap back on, pushed it at a smart angle, and stared calmly at the audience.

Daisy and Mario were the first to applaud, followed by Rosalina, Ness, Lucas, Kirby, Meta Knight, Captain Falcon, DK, Diddy Kong, Fox, Falco, the Pokémon and finally everyone else. Smiling, the victor lightened the mood with one of his comical poses.

“Yeah! I knew he’d do it!” whooped Jared. “Group hug in the shower tonight!!”

Everyone incredulously looked at him.

“…or not,” Jared meekly finished.

Crazy Hand emerged into the stadium, taking in Stuart, in a heap on the ground, the man in blue, bloodied and doing a victory pose, and the cheering crowd.

Just then, the place quieted as everyone realized Crazy Hand’s presence. The victor showed no apprehension at all, offering no pleas or excuses. He simply regarded him with an unruffled expression.

“I’m finished,” he stated, following Crazy Hand out of the stadium without being asked to.

Stuart remained where he’d fallen, wailing, tears and boogers mixing with the blood on his face. He could feel the eyes on him. Just as Tristan had prophesized, the Eternal Understudy had handed his butt to him on a silver platter in front of all of his friends and a full house.

“I’m a failure!” he bawled. “I called him a coward, and yet he beat me in front of all of you! Now you’ll never take me seriously again!”

“We’ve never taken you seriously to begin with,” said Wii Fit Trainer.

“You’re just saying that to make me feel better,” sniffled Stuart, “but I can see it in your eyes. I’ll be known as the guy who got creamed by a coward. Nobody will want to hang out with me or fight me in matches—Master Hand will give me the thumbs-down! All of you will remember me as a pox on this tournament!” He wailed again.
“We already think you’re a pox on this tournament,” stated Mario.

“Pika-pika-pika,” said Pikachu.

“Our opinion of you can’t get any lower,” added Fox.

“Poyo,” affirmed Kirby.

“I know you’re trying to comfort me, but you’re consoling words only make it worse!” cried Stuart. Then, he hesitated. “Wait a minute. If you’re trying to make me feel better, then that means you don’t think I’m a disgrace at all! You still think I’m a cool, hip guy! Wow, what a relief! I had no idea such fierce fighters had such big hearts!”

The other Smashers exchanged looks, wondering what was wrong with this dude.

“You guys are the best friends ever!” Stuart shouted in joy, despite his injuries. “This tournament is the best thing that’s ever happened to me! Yahoo! Long live Master Hand! Long live Super Smash Bros.!!”

And with that deluded thought, Stuart Bennigan breathed his last.
Chapter Summary

In the aftermath of the Stuart Bennigan incident, Luigi and Master Hand clash over the latter's handling of the situation, as the green-clad Smasher feels that he's being punished unjustly. Tempers explode, shocking moves are made, and the relationship between Luigi and Master Hand is hanging in the balance!

Chapter Notes

Miis are introduced here and will be featured in upcoming chapters.

Who were the Miis?

Miis were a special group of avatars used by gamers to interact with one another in the Nintendo world. They were brought to life and customized in a creator’s studio known as the Mii Maker. Hair style, hair color, eye color, eye shape, complexion, facial blemishes, the color of their clothes, height and even weight could be determined in this studio. Afterwards, each new Mii was assigned a name and had the opportunity to cross paths with other Miis at Mii Plaza.

The fourth Smash tournament introduced an elite squad of Miis called the Mii Fighters. They were grouped into three categories: Brawler, Swordfighter and Gunner. Each category had its own special moves, Final Smash, customizations and equipment. Brawlers were experts in hand-to-hand combat, Swordfighters were masters of swordplay and Gunners were skilled in advanced weaponry and firearms. The supply of Miis to fill these positions was endless.

Miis were likely to be found in Multi-Man Smash events. One Smasher fighting for his or her life against an oncoming horde of opponents. They were fierce fighters, these Miis, dealing out the same mercy they expected to receive from their lone challenger. They fed only on the heat of battle and on grit and sweat. Their ranks never ran out. They were just what Smash needed.

They were the Fighting Mii Team.

“LLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLL

“For the last time, the answer is no. I’ll take you off probation when I decide that you’re ready, and your constant haranguing me about this proves to me that you’re not,” Master Hand said patiently.

The mustachioed Smasher in green fumed. “Well, that’s not fair!” he protested.

“What you did to Stuart Bennigan wasn’t really fair, either, don’t you think?” challenged Master Hand.
The man sliced into Master Hand with his infamous Death Stare. After his fistfight with Stuart, Master Hand had re-examined the preceding events with help from Crazy Hand, Daisy and E. Gadd. Upon discovering Stuart’s provocation of most of the Smashers and his lies by omission, the leader of Smash had downgraded the plumber’s punishment from suspension to probation. But to the green man, it sounded just as bad. He couldn’t fight in the more intense matches, he was barred from Trophy Rush, and the most challenging of events he was allowed in were Smash Runs, where he navigated a treacherous labyrinth in search of stat boosts and then faced three opponents of his choice in a final battle. In some of the final battles, there was no actual fighting involved. The Smash Runs were fun, but he longed to be on the battlefield again, to feel that familiar rush.

However, Master Hand had told him that while there were mitigating factors, he’d disobeyed him by beating up Stuart, an action he had to answer for. Hence his probationary status in the tournament.

“It had to be done, and you know it,” he argued.

“I specifically stated that you were prohibited from approaching Stuart in a hostile fashion, but you did so anyway,” Master Hand told him. “It was disrespectful to me, and also to his mother.”

“All morning, he was making me miserable—and he got my friends in trouble!”

“That has also been settled.”

“That guy was pushing me and pushing me, and I was sick of it!”

“Regardless, there was no reason for you to resort to such heinous violence,” said Master Hand as evenly as he could.

“Why are you doing this to me?!”

“Maybe next time, you’ll control your temper instead of willfully defying me and beating someone to a pulp in front of God and everyone.”

The man’s Death Stare got a mite deadlier. “I had good reason for what I did, and that’s the truth. I was sticking up for myself!”

“You could’ve just walked away,” Master Hand shot back, “or better yet, you should’ve just talked it out with him. Instead, you chose to act against my authority and start a violent confrontation. Your actions have consequences, and now, you’re going to face them.”

Master Hand breathed deeply and slowly counted to ten before he could think about exploding.

“This has been going on for far too long, and I just can’t take it anymore. I have some other matches to oversee, and you have a lot of things to think about. You’re on probation until further notice, and that’s final.”

And with that, he floated away. The aggrieved Smasher grabbed a vase and threw it in his direction, screaming curses at him in Italian. Master Hand ignored him; it was the best thing to do.

A Smasher on probation was a Mii’s best friend.

You see, Multi-Man Smash was the place where such a Smasher sought redemption in Master Hand’s eyes. Normally, they’d choose 3-minute Smash. It may seem like a short time, but to the Smasher, those three minutes were close to three hours. Miis came at their target by the dozens,
all of them aggressive, and the Smasher’s biggest weapon was the will to survive. Master Hand said on record that if a probationer managed to survive “three measly minutes” against the merciless Miis, then he’d consider taking the Smasher off of probation and restoring all of his or her privileges.

But it wasn’t a guarantee. Some long-suffering probationers had to serve out the remainder of their sentence.

Luckily, most of them weren’t in that crowd.

Master Hand passed by the Training Room and sighed deeply as he listened to the green-clad probationer emptying his anger on this Sandbag and that Sandbag, the Evanescence song barely drowning out his interjections. He was a good fighter, and Master Hand ached to bestow that Smasher of the Month award on him more than anything. But rules were rules, and when he picked a fight with Stuart, one rule was broken. True, Stuart had provoked him first, but he still should’ve exercised self-restraint. He and Crazy Hand would’ve punished Stuart accordingly. Maybe he’d cool off, accept his punishment and apologize for the 10,000G vase and the profane words he’d thrown at him earlier. But judging by the sounds within the Training Room—that was highly unlikely.

Crazy Hand floated over. “Hey. You okay?” he asked with concern.

“I don’t know,” huffed Master Hand. “I’m starting to think that inviting him to the tournament was a mistake.”

“It was his thirtieth birthday when we started getting this tournament together, and besides, he was a veteran,” said Crazy Hand. “Besides, Mario would’ve been frightfully upset if we decided not to include his brother.”

“No, I mean in the very beginning!” Master Hand’s temper rocketed to the surface. “I wish I’d listened to everyone else and just left him out! He’s proven that he’s not fit to be in this type of thing! He can’t deal with the pressure.”

Crazy Hand was in shock. He’d never seen his brother like this before.

“Nobody would’ve cared anyway,” Master Hand went on. “He’s always second fiddle to Mario, and that’s all he’ll ever be, anniversary or not! Thanks to some stupid vacuum on his back, he thinks he owns the place! Disobeying me, instigating others, destroying property, throwing tantrums and backsassing me—I’ve just had enough, okay?!”

“What—are you trying to say?”

“He never should’ve been in Super Smash Bros. to begin with!! If I’d known that he’d become like this sixteen years down the line, then I honestly wouldn’t have allowed him to participate! A line has been crossed today, Crazy—the second he grabbed that vase and flung it, he was finished here! I’m dumping him back to his universe first thing tomorrow morning!”

“Bro, please! You’re not thinking straight!” pleaded Crazy Hand. “You’ve had a rough day, and you just need to clear your head. Go for a walk or something, and I’ll let you know when he’s ready to talk to you.”

“I guess you’re right,” muttered Master Hand. “I’ll probably pay a visit to Jigglypuff; she’ll know what to do.”
He left, leaving Crazy Hand keeping vigil outside the Training Room. When he realized it had gone quiet in there, he started feeling sick to his stomach.

Gingerly, Crazy Hand knocked on the door. “L? You all right in there?”

The door blew open, and the penalized Smasher stepped out. He’d overheard everything. Without even glancing at Crazy Hand, he marched away, tight-lipped and eyes brimming with tears.

_Maybe he’s just going to his room_, thought Crazy Hand as he watched him go. Even so, his gut twisted…

_LLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLL_

“This isn’t the featherweight division, small fry. Next!”

“I’m serious about this. Sign me up.”

The small man at the desk scrutinized the Smasher. Quivering with contained energy. Eyes red from crying. Face puffy with dried tears. Rage and hatred in his heart. Expressive eyes drilling a hole into him. He wasn’t about to take “no” for an answer.

“Very well. Do you understand that we aren’t responsible for any injury you may and probably will sustain while participating in this event?”

“I do.”

“Are you participating on your own free will?”

“I am.”

“Okay, then. Down the hall, take a left, and then go up the stairs to the portal. May God be with you.”

_LLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLL_

“We’ve got one!”

The Miis assembled on the Battlefield stage to meet their newest challenger. The same thought coursed through their minds when the saw him: _Piece of cake_.

Perhaps they thought so because the challenger had excellently hid a coming storm behind his smile. They had no way of knowing how betrayed he felt. How nice to know that Master Hand never actually cared for him at all! It took dealing with a pest for the truth to come out, but he really had him going for the past sixteen years. Even from beyond the grave, Stuart could torment and manipulate people. The man in green could just picture him laughing from where he was currently roasting in the flames. _That fixed you, didn’t it, L? That fixed you good and proper._

If he was indeed on his way out, then he was going out on his own terms.

One Mii, however, noticed the eagerness in the Smasher’s eyes and deduced everything.

“Looks like we have ourselves another probationer. You think Master Hand will change his tune about you if you face us?”

“Oh, his mind is made up,” said the challenger with a little laugh. “I just want to give him something to help him remember me.”
He began to stroll around the edge of the crowd of Miis, searching for the prime place to make his mark. His tongue flicked once across his lips, anticipation quickening his breath. Centimeter by centimeter, the Miis started to gang up on him. They hoped it would end a battle before it even began, but so far, this tactic had failed. This was no exception.

“Do you know what you’ve gotten yourself into, little green ’stache?” asked a Brawler. “We’ve got you for three minutes. Three minutes of playtime.”

READY…GO!

The Brawler immediately had his face bludgeoned by the challenger’s fist. His innocent mask was cast aside, and now the Miis could see that he had a very high chance of surviving the three minutes. Yet they went for him anyway.

Music began to blare from the loudspeakers as the man squared off against the Fighting Mii Team, translating feelings of unbearable rage and betrayal into power. The Brawler who’d spoken was long since launched off the stage, but not before the challenger had smashed his nose clean from his face and busted his vocal chords with his forward smash. Even the most resolute of Gunners fell before his down-B spin attack, getting KO’d after taking as low as 6% damage. Giant Miis rushed to their aid, but they too, survived for only a few seconds. Infected by such mercilessness, the Mii Fighters held nothing back. Brawlers flooded in, assailing him with flurries of jabs and uppercuts. Gunners brought the deadliest of their arms to the table. Swordfighters—who cleaned and sharpened their swords daily—mobbed and practically dog-piled the challenger, slicing and slashing furiously. Still, he held firm. Whenever he did his down-B, he became a green tornado of fury! If he got dizzy, then he’d claim the air, dazzling the Miis with his aerial prowess. He could KO five or six Miis with his up smash, anyone from his left and his right with his down smash, and when he angled his forward smash upward, it caused more devastation than usual. Even when they trapped him in a nightmarish morass of blows, sword strikes and blasts, he wouldn’t yield. The events of the past few days powered him up like Gatorade. He used his dash attack to knock scores of them off the stage. He blasted through a Swordfighter’s temple with a single spearhand, tore up the intestines of another with a score of blows. Though he was taking hefty damage, he seemed to grow more fearsome with each hit. The rage effect, probably. Time was halfway up, and he was already past 100%. He didn’t care—he was going tomorrow, anyway. Might as well have his fun while he still could.

The enemy masses doubled and re-doubled as he defeated them. He rolled, dodged, shielded, spaced with his fireballs and used some of the items occasionally floating by on platforms. But his attacks were strong enough. The Miis had enough guts to continue going at him, even as they heard the sickening snap of their comrades’ bones and the sounds of their star KOs. Even as he regarded them with eyes which would make the toughest Boos skedaddle. Even as his punches and kicks penetrated their concentrated assaults. Even as he quickly hopped to his feet after taking a devastating attack. Even as his down-B cut through their ranks.

Only a minute left on the clock. This was where the Mii Fighters gave it all they had and their challenger reacted in kind. The green-clad one was starting to feel the high damage, but he shoved it into the back of his mind. He had to let a certain gloved hand know who was boss. He plowed through the swelling ranks with all of his best attacks. He jumped and flipped whenever he needed some air. He lashed out faster than a deadly viper, catching even the most precise of Miis off guard. He ignored what he knew was blood dripping into his mouth. He threw back his head and screamed out his challenge as reinforcements came at him.

His future with Smash was at stake, yet he never felt so alive.
Dr. Mario knew that the wild pounding on his office door was bad news. When he opened it, though, he didn’t expect it would be *this* awful.

The Mii Brawler known as Green Fury had desperation in her eyes. “Doctor, you have to help!” she cried. Behind her was a small group of Miis, concern mixed with guilt on their faces, carrying the green-clad challenger. He was barely conscious, covered in blood and mottled with bruises. He’d survived the full three minutes—at a high price.

“What happened?” asked Dr. Mario. Then, the answer came to him. “He made a bid to get his privileges reinstated, didn’t he?”

“Yes,” the carrying Miis whispered.

Master Hand was quickly summoned, and he reeled at the sight of the man in the Miis’ arms, moaning softly, struggling to stay awake. One look at the guilt in their eyes told him everything.

“What have you done?!” he cried.

“It’s not our fault!” wailed a Gunner. “He just pushed himself too hard!”

Green Fury gave the Gunner a dirty look. “You all weren’t going too easy on him yourselves,” she snapped.

“He acted like he was asking for it,” argued a Swordfighter.

“You could’ve killed him,” barked Master Hand. “That alone is cause enough to exercise restraint!”

“Well, he wasn’t,” the Swordfighter shot back.

“Please, do something,” entreated Green Fury. “He’s badly hurt.”

Master Hand listened, his apprehension growing, as Green Fury described the 3-minute Smash to him. She detailed how the challenger stood firm against the best and strongest of Mii Fighters, how he refused to let them see the pain as his percentage reached the 200s. How he stayed on his feet till the very end, collapsing only after the announcer called out “GAME!” She decided to leave out the savage brutality doled out to the onslaught.

“We didn’t want it to be like this,” said another Brawler. “Honest to God.”

“You have to believe us,” added a Swordfighter. “We tried to talk him out of it. We kept telling him that it was close to suicide, but I guess he was determined to prove himself to you.”

At those words, immense guilt stabbed Master Hand as he remembered the heated exchange earlier.

“Don’t worry,” promised Dr. Mario. “I’ll take care of him.”

“Thank you,” breathed Green Fury.

The injured Smasher’s eyes suddenly focused on Master Hand, and he could swear he’d never seen such hatred in them in the history of the tournaments.

“You,” he spat, his breathing labored. “You. *You* did this. *I hate you.*”

And then he passed out cold.
Green Fury is one of the first Miis I created in the Nintendo Mii Maker.
Chapter Summary

Master Hand has an insightful conversation with Princess Daisy.

Dr. Mario stepped outside of his office and approached Master Hand.

“He’s going to be okay,” he said.

“Oh, thank God,” breathed Master Hand. “Can I see him?”

“Sure, just keep it brief. I want him to rest.”

Master Hand entered the office and sat at the green Smasher’s bedside. The blood had been wiped away, but the ugly bruises were still visible. He wondered if the Miis actually felt remorse for this. Green Fury seemed the only one who did.

“I’m so sorry,” he whispered. “I’ve been a complete idiot. Blind—to what Smash is all about. So caught up in the changing times and newcomers that I…” He cleared his throat. “I have been very proud to lead this tournament. When we first started on the N64, I never thought it would become this big. It was just something to try out—characters from different Nintendo universes interacting with each other. And now—everybody loves Smash. You and the original Smashers are my greatest adventure, and if we want this to work, then we have to stick together, no matter what. L—you didn’t follow the rules, but I would never wish something like this upon you. If you’re listening to this, I ask you to forgive me. For everything.”

“I hope I’m not interrupting.”

Master Hand turned. “Daisy?”

The Princess of Sarasaland smiled. “I got here as fast as I could,” she said. “I’m glad he’s going to be all right.”

“Me, too.”

Daisy joined Master Hand. “He’s so cute when he sleeps, isn’t he?”

Master Hand nodded. “Thank you for being here.”

“He’s the man I love. I have to look out for him.”

Master Hand smiled, if that was possible. “I respect you, Daisy. You’re smart. You’re tough. You’re strong. Maybe if I get sick, then you can oversee Smash for the day.”

Daisy chuckled.

“How’ve you been holding up?” asked Master Hand.

“If Stuart Bennigan was still here, then I’d have no problem strangling him with my bare hands,” growled Daisy, her tomboy spirit kicking in. “I mean, look at what he’s done!”
“I know, but honestly, I wish he’d handled it in a better way.”

Daisy turned to him, her face serious. “We need to talk.”

Master Hand swallowed.

“I know something happened between the two of you. And no, he didn’t tell me. We just have such an intense, spiritual connection to each other that I just know. With all due respect, you made him very upset.”

Master Hand recalled the sound of the 10,000G vase shattering inches from him and the man’s voice and he yelled obscenities in his mother tongue. “I was doing the right thing by punishing him,” he explained. “I told him not to do something, but he did it anyway.”

“If Stuart was antagonizing Crazy Hand, then what would you have done?” challenged Daisy.

Master Hand opened his mouth to respond, but the patient made a small noise and shifted a little in his bed.

“Thank God, he’s stirring,” said Daisy. “Listen to me. Nobody’s perfect, and everyone makes mistakes, including you. He knows that you’re trying to keep the Smash tournaments a safe, enjoyable and friendly environment.”

Master Hand took the slumbering Smasher’s hand in one of his fingers. “I know he’s had it rough in his own universe, but…” He trailed off.

Daisy breathed deeply. “I don’t know how I’m going to tell you this, so I’m just going to tell you. He overheard your little rant to Crazy.”

“I knew it,” sighed Master Hand. “I knew it, I knew it, I knew it. How can I make it up to him?”

Daisy smiled again. “I think you’re off to a good start already.” She kissed her sweetheart on the forehead and left.

Master Hand was about to follow her when a hand stopped him. “Wait… a voice whispered.

He whirled. The man in green was sitting up in the bed, and his expression was softer than when he was brought in. That was a good sign.

“Hey! You’re awake!” Master Hand exclaimed.

“I’ve already been awake. I just didn’t want to interrupt your little chat with Daisy. She was trying to help you, if you can believe that.”

Master Hand prepared himself for the task at hand. “Look, L, I’m not upset about your encounter with the Miis. It’s just—I know why you did it, okay? And I swear to you, with God as my witness, they were just words. I was upset, and I wanted to let off steam. Kicking you out is the last thing I want to do. You’re one of the best Smashers I’ve ever known, and it’s been a pleasure having you on the battlefield.”

The man nodded. “I didn’t mean it when I told you that I hated you. I don’t know what made me say that. I didn’t mean to curse you out, either. And I promise I’ll pay for the vase.”
“Right now, you need to focus on getting healthy again,” Master Hand told him.

The patient’s eyes teared up, and the two shared a hearty hug. When it was over, Master Hand gave the Hero in Green a half-happy, half-stern look.

“And the next time you want to compete in Multi-Man Smash, could you please let me know beforehand? Furthermore, if you’re starting to feel unwell, let someone know so they can stop the match as soon as possible.”

The green-capped patient rolled his eyes, and they shook on it.

“I need to tell everyone the good news, so just rest easy. I’m sure Dr. Mario will know you’re up and talking, and he’ll check on you before long. As of now, you are on paid vacation for two weeks, and don’t even think about arguing with me on this one. God knows you deserve it after what you’ve been through.”

The man laughed. “Yes, sir.”

Master Hand sat with him, giving him the scoop on what’s happened during his absence, until he fell asleep. Then, he quietly floated out of the room, closing the door behind him.

He located Daisy in an animated conversation with Dr. Mario and clasped her hand in his pointer finger. “Thank you,” he said, on the verge of tears.

“No, Master Hand,” Daisy said softly. “Thank you.”
Interlude 5: Recover and Begin Again

Chapter Summary

Luigi takes a two-week vacation to clear his head.

Master Hand is right. I need to take a break after enduring so much. So much awful memories and so much score-settling. Two weeks is just the right amount of time to arrange my thoughts into order, so I can come back nice and refreshed, ready for more.

I honestly can’t believe that someone nearly caused me to fall out with Master Hand. Of the charges I’ve racked against my tormentors, this is the most capital. Stuart Bennigan was—and still is—a pox on everyone. Slimy, deceitful and manipulative—even from beyond the grave. Maybe this vacation is just the thing to banish his voice from inside my head. But what perplexes me more is that Master Hand completely fell for it. He sided with him, made me look like the bad guy, and got me suspended. Eventually, he saw the light and lessened my punishment, but the damage had already been done. My faith in him was significantly shaken. If he can fall for Stuart, then who’s to say he can’t be susceptible to the charms of more dangerous folk—like Tabuu?

Acting as I had in the aftermath convinced both of us that I needed a two-week time-out. I was starting to lose control; the stress of the past and present was getting to me. My brain went crazy with long-suppressed frustration, and I took it out on Master Hand. His vase, that is. 10,000G is a lot of money, which means bye-bye to Trophy Rush until I’ve saved enough. He tells me not to worry about it yet, but I can’t help it. I feel really bad about losing my temper. Despite the circumstances, despite him giving Stuart the benefit of the doubt and punishing me instead of him—I feel awful about snapping like that. How I'll make it up to him, I'll never know.

Following the heated altercation between us, I practically barricaded myself inside the Training Room and promptly destroyed some more Sandbags, adding to the amount of money I probably owe him. I’d reached the apex of my “rampage”, and my anger was just about to subside when I heard Master Hand speak those cruel words. That I didn’t belong in Smash—that I’ll always play second fiddle to Mario—and that he’ll throw me out tomorrow morning. Well, that did it! After he left, I went to my room, threw some things around, cried for a bit—and then signed up for 3-minute Smash.

The shebang is nothing but a blur to me now. I remember the satisfaction I got out of decimating the endless ranks of Mii Fighters. There was music from the loudspeakers. I was doing my down-B, smash attacks and aerials a lot. I remember feeling blood as well as sweat all over me. I remember pretending it was Master Hand I was beating up instead of a Mii army. They had their scare tactics, melee attacks, flurry attacks and the tenancy to trap me in a web of pain—but I kept on fighting. I was over 200% and climbing, yet I kept on fighting.

To be honest, I’d never screamed and hollered so much in my life.
I don’t remember hearing the announcer shout: “GAME!” My wild emotions had drowned me by that point.

Next thing I knew, I was in Dr. Mario’s office, things fading out and back in, Miis explaining the situation the best they could. I was laid on a bed, and then Master Hand, the biggest Judas of all, was in front of me.

I’ll never forget saying that I hated him before things went black.

For some reason, I dreamed that I was back in Evershade Valley with Professor Gadd, helping him with his research. I was calm and happy, no longer afraid of ghosts, my trusty Poltergust 5000 strapped to my back in the event of any trouble. No bullies bothered me, because they don’t know that such a place exists.

It was a sign.

Slowly, I swam back into consciousness, and I heard my Flower Princess, Daisy, talking to Master Hand, smoothing things out between us. She confirmed that I’d overheard his tempestuous diatribe. In a moment of peace, I realized that he didn’t mean it, and that if I hadn’t exploded, then he wouldn’t have ranted to Crazy Hand in the first place.

After Daisy left, I let Master Hand know I was awake. It was as if we were looking at one another with fresh eyes. Wounds began to heal, messes were cleaned up, and amends were made. Things were just the way they’d been before.

But not exactly the same.

Which leads us to the present moment. Packing my things, reassuring my buddy, Evan, that I’ll be back, and saying goodbye-for-now to my friends and my bro. Two weeks ahead of me, two weeks to recuperate from what amounts to a heavy storm. And I know just how I’ll go about doing that…

First, however, I see about Daisy, and we go on a romantic date. I thank her for initiating a truce between me and Master Hand. She pleads with me to talk it over with someone before doing something as rash as Multi-Man Smash, and I agree. At the end of the date, I tell her my travel plans, and she wishes me well. I spend the night with her, and then E. Gadd pixelates me straight to Evershade Valley. As soon as I see him, my stress level and blood pressure drop like stones.

I’m surprised that the friendly ghosts have missed me so much. And to be honest, I never thought there would be a time when I’d miss them. They like to play pranks on me, but they never attempt to actually scare me.

The Professor is ecstatic that I’m all right. He feels a tad guilty for encouraging me to fight Stuart, thus setting these events into motion, and who can blame him? But I assure him that it was all for the best, and that the “little squirt” is gone from my life. I learn that he slipped in and visited me while I was under, and that he hasn’t told Master Hand about his role in the drama. He adds that it’s going to stay that way.

From there, we stop talking about Stuart Bennigan, and anything that happened in the
past, for that matter, because it’s wasting precious seconds from my two weeks. I tell him that Polterpup is doing well, and that he’s getting along with the other Smashers. He causes little irritations from time to time, but the Hands generally tolerate him.

Let me tell you, it’s a wonderful two weeks. Gadd and I travel all over the valley, observing the local ghosts and their behaviors and then coaxing them to the lab for further study. There are no problems with the latter, with them being the nice ghosts, but then there are some not-so-nice ghosts hanging around. I tell Gadd that I want to go ghost-hunting again, get some extra cash and pay the bills, maybe enough to buy you-know-who a new vase. Plus, if he suddenly changes his mind about me and wants me permanently gone from the tournaments, then I’ll have another outlet for spare time.

After we’re finished with our research for the day, it’s my time. I use it to surprise the not-so-nice ghosts and suck them all up in my vacuum. It’s in tip-top shape, since I’ve used it in the tournaments as my Final Smash. I’ve heard rumors that E. Gadd pulled some strings to allow me to use his invention in Smash, but I digress.

There’s nothing more satisfying to me, other than my victories in Smash, than my Poltergust on high power, the sound of its suction as it pulls a victim into its trap, the look on the hapless ghost’s face as it realizes that there’s no escape and my grip on the nozzle as I’m pulled this way and that. Unlike my opponent in a match, I don’t shoot them back out till I’m back in the lab. Then, in they go into yet another prison. At first, I’m a bit rusty and slightly frazzled, but then it all comes back to me, and it’s not so bad. I’ve gotten very good at this!

I rarely have to use my Poltergust at all these days. One look from me convinces any ghosts who want to give me trouble that I’m no one to trifle with. I capture them anyway as a precaution, and they put up little to no resistance. With each captured ghost, recent events grow remote. I remember the night fourteen years ago when I repeatedly resisted the urge to turn around, run back home and curl up under my bed in order to see my bro safe and sound, and I don’t feel useless or insignificant anymore. If I’m in a stormy mood when I leave the lab, then I’m in a sunny mood when I get back.

Then there are the quiet nights when there are no ghosts to capture, when Gadd tells his ghost stories, some of them funny, some of them cute, and some of them heartwarming. When he’s done, I finally confide the troubles I’ve had in Smash to him—the taunting, the name-calling, the harassment. I tell him that I’ve always heeded the advice he gave me on that fateful day, even found more effective ways to do so as I became more self-confident. I can’t describe the feeling I experience as I relieve myself of that burden for the first time.

Also during my vacation, my friends send me written well-wishes, which E. Gadd delivers to me on breaks from researching. Their words cause my eyes to tear up.

*Hey, Bro. I hope you’re doing well. Tell the good Professor hi for me!*—Mario

*We can hardly wait for you to get back. May Fanore bless the rest of your days.*—Link and Zelda

*Sorry all of this has happened to you. We have some bananas for you when you get back!*—DK and Diddy
Poyo, poyo!—Kirby

Hi, we miss you. Hope you’re having a good time!—Duck Hunt

BEEP BOOP.—Mr. G&W

When you get back, I expect you to show me ya moves! Yes!—Douglas F.

Have a nice trip!—Olimar

Doc and I are thinking of you!—Mac

Hey, L. I hope you feel better. Ridley says hello.—Samus A.

On behalf of all of the Pokémon, we’d like to wish you a full recovery.—Charizard

Pika-pi, pika-pika!—Pikachu


Hang in there, scout. Things will get better!—Fox and Falco

We’ll tip the scales for you!—Robin and Robin

Never let up! You will survive!—Lucina

L, I salute you!—Marth

Make sure you drop by for a checkup before you jump back onto the battlefield!—Dr. Mario

These are just some of the short-but-sweet letters I receive. I write back and thank them for thinking about me. There was once a time when I thought no such messages would come my way, that nobody would notice if I left. Fortunately, I’m wrong.

Towards the end of my leave, I get a very long, eloquent letter from Master Hand. I read it several times, tears of joy threatening to spill. It states that everyone in Smash greatly anticipates my return, and that things haven’t been the same without me. He apologizes for the times in all four tournaments where he was overly strict with me, as well as further smoothing things over from this latest misunderstanding. Furthermore, I’m re-nominated as Smasher of the Month, and he’s decided not to penalize me for the vase and the cuss words. I’m still buying him a new one, though.

Wow, I’ve been very wrong about how the public sees me!

On the final day of my vacation, E. Gadd and I take the day off. I spend the morning packing up and making calls to my friends. After the two of us have lunch, I read the letter from Master Hand to him. He hands me a letter from Crazy Hand saying something similar, adding that I probably won’t get off so easy next time. That evening, I go on one final ghost hunt, and then the Professor and I exchange farewells before he pixelates me back to the Smash universe.
The next morning, all of my friends charge into my room and spray me with soda pop. I’m led to the auditorium, where a welcome back party for me is in full swing. There’s a nice, green cake in the center of the room, and after most of the other food is scarfed down, generous slices are served up. During the course of the day, I’m hugged multiple times by every last fighter on the roster. As promised, I drop by Dr. Mario’s office, and he gives me a clean bill of health. By dinnertime, I’m crying my eyes out.

Coming home never felt so wonderful.
Nice and easy.

Those three words governed his first few weeks back at Smash. After Dr. Mario cleared him, he played Target Blast a few times and scored around 30 points. As luck would have it, another Home-Run Contest rolled around, and he managed to beat his previous record. When he felt ready for actual fighting again, Master Hand gave him a light load. He fought one-on-ones with Kirby, Jigglypuff, Pikachu, Ness and Duck Hunt. Then, he moved up to Marth, Female Robin, Lucina and Meta Knight. After that, he seemed well enough for free-for-alls, with the Wii Fit Trainers, Olimar, Male Robin, Fox, Falco and Captain Falcon. Before long, he was facing heavyweights again. He lost once against an obnoxious guy, but he’d gained some respect from his entourage that day, thanks to his specials, aerials, strategy, speed and ability to hold firm against his opponent’s abuse. The experience with Stuart taught him to better control his temper during matches.

One Smash Run later, he was battling in earnest once more.

“L, are you sure you’re ready for this?”

He smiled. “I already cleared it with Daisy and Dr. Mario.”

“And what about Mario and Peach?”

“I just got back from talking to them,” the man said. “They said that I looked ready.”

Master Hand was still concerned. “Do you feel ready, though?”

The man’s eyes sparkled. “Oh, yes.”

“Okay,” sighed Master Hand, defeated. “Just try not to overdo it this time, and let someone know if you’re starting to feel faint.”

“Okey-dokie!”

“Well, look who’s back.”

Ten Miis greeted the man in green as he stepped forward, feeling nice, refreshed and confident. He exuded innocence from those eyes of his, and his injuries from his last encounter were
nicely healed up.

“Please, try not to scare us like last time,” said Green Fury.

“I promise,” he smiled.

He was still taking it easy. He’d signed up for Ten-Man Smash. Instead of an endless onslaught, he was faced with ten Mii Fighters, no time limit. All he had to do was defeat them in the quickest time possible. The only similarities were: his will to survive and the mercy his opponents would show toward him.

READY…GO!

First things first, he isolated the Miis from each other with his fireballs as he selected the one he’d deal with first. The Mii who caught his eye was a shy one—a new addition, probably—small, with a wide but angular face and beautiful brown eyes. Her name was Freyda, and she was a Swordfighter, sticking to basic sword slashes and shurikens of light. He tested her skills with fireballs and jabs, building her confidence with standard attacks and tilts, all the while reassuring her with his beaming smile. When he saw she wanted more, he tossed in some aerials and uncharged Smash attacks to whet her appetite, and when she started going at him wholeheartedly, it was his signal to stop holding back.

Baby steps…

The nine remaining Miis, all guys, stopped in their tracks and observed as Freyda poured her hidden fierceness, fire and passion into her efforts. Her eye contact with her opponent never broke, and he continued to smile at her, almost in admiration as she pushed herself to threshold. He could hear the others relaxing, reassuring themselves and one another. Look how remarkably gentle he is with her. It’s as if he knows she’s nervous. See? He’s perfectly harmless.

Wrong.

Freyda went in close, fully engaging the man in green, and after a very heated fight, he bested her with a quick and painless down-throw combo. There was no despairing scream of a star KO. She sailed off the stage, waving goodbye to him, and then respawned somewhere and went about her own business.

The rest wouldn’t be so lucky.

Nine Miis encircled him as he put up his dukes. Swords glinted. Brawlers raised their gloves. Gunners cocked their weapons. They were ready, and so was he.

What the Miis expected was quick work of their challenger, and then off to their favorite restaurant for a celebratory meal. What they got was a polar opposite.

The friendly, mischievous twinkle in his eye had now reverted to ice. Stone shoved the gentleness from his angular features. He still smiled, but it was a cool, anticipated smile. His left arm shot out and took down the first Mii he saw, and from there, the fight was on!

His strategies stayed generally the same. Down-B or dash attack his way out of a tight spot. Send them into confusion and separate them with fireballs. Get in the air, where he excelled the most. Fire off smash attacks when the percentages were high enough. Shield. Dodge. Jump. Slide. Whenever he jumped, it was as if he was flying. Emotionally, he felt as light as a feather. His attacks were still aggressive, but there was no anger behind them. Besides, he saw no old foes in this group—yet. He heard his voice, but no wild hollering came forth. Only his controlled grunts and
battle yells slid from his lips as he heard the loudspeakers playing their music and the sun moved across the sea-blue sky.

Five more to go.

Breath flowed easily into his long nose and between his closed lips. It seemed like he was moving in time to the pumping party anthem overhead. Maybe he was. Mingling with the music was the rush of air as boxing gloves just missed his face, the swishing of swords, the discharge of blasters and cannons. And at the very tip of it was the whispering wind of his breath. He was doing a breathing exercise Wii Fit Trainer had taught him long ago while struggling against one tenacious Mii and staring down four more, holding them at bay with his fireballs. A feat he once saw as impossible but learned through experience.

Four more to go.


Three left.


And then instinct took over. He no longer had to command his body to do something. It did it on its own.

All that mattered was that he just kept breathing.

One more.

Now that he had the stage to himself without the fear of being double-teamed, he had greater freedom of movement. He dodged and rolled excessively, attacking as quickly as an arrow. Giving him his best and his strongest attacks and pinning him down with fireballs. The rock tune had reached an instrumental with a solo and riffs, and as it pulsed toward an ecstatic conclusion, so did the battle. Three nice jabs later, the Mii was sailing straight into the air by way of a Super Jump Punch.

COMPLETE!

When he saw his time, he was stunned. He’d defeated the 10 Miis in only 58 seconds?! It seemed way longer than that! But wasn’t that just the way in such a situation?

He laughed as he departed the stage.

To say the least, Master Hand and Dr. Mario were relieved to see that he was still on his feet.

Chapter End Notes

Freyda is yet another one of my Miis.
Chapter Summary

Inspired by the song by RED. Luigi confronts 100 Miis, but when he recognizes some of them, how will he react?

Chapter Notes

I don't own any of the lyrics.

After doing 10-Man Smash a few times, he whittled 58 seconds down to 24. He played Trophy Rush several times and saved up his earnings to get that vase. He Smash Ran with Kirby, Samus, Captain Falcon, Ness, Mario and Peach. He took on several heavyweights at once in free-for-alls. A month went by, and soon, he was hungry for more.

“If you really want to step it up,” Master Hand told him, “then there’s 100-Man Smash, and after that, you have Endless Smash. Let’s start you off at 100-Man Smash and see how you deal with that.”

“Fine by me,” shrugged the Smasher.

“I’ve got to warn you, these guys have gotten tougher,” Master Hand continued.

“Nothing I can’t handle.”

“Okay, but remember the rules.” The words were spoken sternly.

“Will do, Master Hand!”

Oh, oh, oh. There were a few familiar faces in this crowd. Faces pretending not to remember his face, but he'd make them remember. He saw them, gravitating toward the far ends of the crowd, as if to elude his gaze. But his eyes followed them, and once he took care of the new faces, he’d deal with these faces.

A deep breath, filling his lungs, swelling his chest, air passing softly into his nostrils, pushing the memories back where they came from, stifling the rising emotions. Exhaling, just as softly, through the mouth which was now rounded into a perfect “O”. Almost a whistling sound, and then another breath in, and another breath out, and another breath in, and another breath out, and…

READY…GO!

Just keep breathing—breathing—breathing.

The first of the 100 fighters lunged toward him, and he held his ground, delivering a series of
well-coordinated, brilliantly paced jabs. Then, he executed his spin attack repeatedly, knocking away about 5 Miis in seconds. Giant Miis were cut down to size by his devastating smash attacks, and by now, his opponents had come to fear the moment when he cocked his elbow, hand held flat, palm up, and launched it with a shout into an unfortunate victim. His light, springy jumps were perfect for his aerials. Since he was quicker on his feet than last time, he took less damage as he activated his shield, rolled, and dodged when he saw a melee attack coming. Adrenaline sparkled along his body like fireworks, causing him to yell for the first time in about a month, but there was no intense emotion behind the yells—just pure energy. Energy fueled by the hard rock song blaring on the loudspeakers.

And this is how it feels when I ignore the words you spoke to me

And this is how I lose myself when I keep running away from you

And this is who I am when—when I don’t know myself anymore

And this is what I choose when it’s all left up to me...

A Gunner tried to sneak up on him, but he backflipped, briefly closing his eyes, feeling the wind tickle his face and inhaling. When he landed, he exhaled and blindsided the Gunner with a chain of roundhouse kicks and ejected him off the platform with his forward smash. Almost immediately, he dropped down and launched several more away with his down smash. He hadn’t seen any of the familiar ones yet. They were hiding behind the new blood, sending them into the shark’s jaws for the sake of short-lived safety. But he was dodging and dancing about the group, flicking fireballs to disperse them, picking and choosing a singular opponent with whom to demonstrate the extent of his mercy when he finally got his hands on one he recognized. He kept his breathing even, his mind clear of judgement-clouding flashbacks and his face calm. Drawing opponents in with a smile, faster than his down-B, and then showing them what being in Smash really meant.

Breathe your life into me

I can feel you

I’m falling—falling faster!

Breathe your life into me

I still need you

I’m falling—falling—

Breathe into me

Breathe into me...

65 opponents still stood, greedy for him. Aggression flushed his face, sweat gathered in a band at the tip of his forehead and along his brow. Quickly, he rolled up his sleeves and jarred the ribs of a Brawler who tried to punish him during this distraction. He checked the pace of his breathing and whaled away at a large Mii with aerial after aerial—he seemed to buzz around him like a fly. Only he couldn’t be swatted away because he was too fast, too strong and too determined. He’d always bounce back for more. And the Miis gave him exactly what he wanted—more. Each time they turned up the heat, sweat streamed down him in greater frequencies, and it became hard to control the sparkles animating his eyes. He’d find himself searching out one of the familiar faces so he could give a proper reunion. His breathing was noticeably faster—he laid off of the Smash
attacks and settled for fireballs and tilts until it had slowed back to a desirable pace. His moment
would come—they were running out of newcomers to hide behind.

And this is how it looks when I am standing on the edge
And this is how I break apart when I finally hit the ground
And this is how it hurts when I pretend I don’t feel any pain
And this is how I disappear when I throw myself away…

It just had to be one of them who dashed in and sent him nearly hurtling into space, and then
dashing away as he recovered to an upper platform. He burned off the tiny knot of anger using his
down-B, turning a gaggle of Miis into bowling pins, and then he took to the sky for some more air
action. He was about halfway through, and he could see the familiar ones more clearly—look how
they withered before his eyes! Deeply he breathed—he was starting to lose himself a bit—until the
emotion drained from his face and left behind a genuine smile. His eyes went from piercing to
playful. Once more, many Miis dropped their guard to get a taste of close combat with him. It was a
walk in the park after all, right? Mr. Green didn’t pose that much of a threat, right? It was a decision
they’d soon regret as his skill clashed with theirs, as the glow in his face increased to an urgent pulse,
as his mouth suddenly morphed into the “O” and redness tinged his cheeks. They’d rock him a good
few times, but he’d always get the upper hand, tending to his sweat-moistened cap after he sent them
soaring. He could feel those he recognized shrink back as they awaited their own fates.

Breathe your life into me
I can feel you
I’m falling—falling faster!
Breathe your life into me
I still need you
I’m falling—falling—
Breathe into me
Breathe into me
Breathe into me
Breathe into me…

So many familiar faces—20 of them—were the only Miis remaining on the battlefield. He
paused for a moment; he needed time to regroup. Recollections flitted through him like Flappy
Birds, and they would do nothing but distract him. But still—looking at their faces was enough to
dredge up the dormant resentment for what they’d done to him. As they surrounded him, his eyes
closed. His breathing slowed. His mind worked. His fists clenched. His pulse beat against the
tension in the air. His green shirt now cleaved to his body, and his gloves to his hands. He felt the
silent contempt of his opponents ripple toward him in shock waves. His cheeks puffed in and out in
a stronger endeavor to steady his breathing. He sensed a few Miis slightly backing away. But most
of them held their ground. This was it, the final thrust to the finish, and he’d take them all down
without even a trace of rage.
Breathe your life into me

I can feel you

I'm falling—falling faster!

Breathe your life into me

I still need you

I'm falling—falling

Breathe into me!

All at once, the 20 Miis rushed forward. Bad idea. They were all sucked into his whirling tornado attack and catapulted in all directions. Those closest to him were KO’d on the spot, yet quite a few remained. His eyes glittered dangerously as he prevented the remainder from teaming up with his fireballs. They were going to face him one at a time, with nobody to rescue them—just like him.

For the first few, he managed to keep his expression neutral as he hammered away at them, not daring to remember how they ridiculed him during the first tournament’s closing ceremony or mailed embarrassing photos of him all over the Nintendo universe or made fun of his wardrobe from his early arcade days in 1983. His mind was solely centered on his breathing, his attacks, his KO move of choice and on staying in control. He assaulted them with his eyes as well, holding his gaze with them, even though they were layered by calm. In no time at all, the Miis were struggling for breath and leverage, bloodied and all but disoriented. He plunged his open hand into them, relishing their screams as they hurtled to their doom.

But the last ones were always the hardest. Maybe it was the way they looked at him, with such disdain. Maybe because tiredness was starting to set in. Maybe because he knew they were going to give him one heck of a fight. But as they attacked him, everything he repressed shot up his throat. He really began to holler as he pounded away at them. His breath started coming in quick, fierce bursts, and there was no way he could rein it back in. His face further reddened. The only thing keeping him from further losing it was the memory of the tiff with Master Hand which nearly cost him his place in the tournament. He deliberately scanned their bodies for places to ravage, and he always found them. They dodged, shielded and scrambled over one another, to no avail. One of them even started praying aloud. The lone challenger took care of that one in a heartbeat, knocking him flat onto the floor and pummeling his neck with his forward smash until blood fountained from his mouth, and then throwing his limp form off the stage. Three fell before his down-B, two before his up smash, another three to his down smash, a stubborn one to his forward smash, and then—

Then—

His final one was an oversized one, shuffling this way and that, looking at him down the length of his nose. He hated it when people looked at him like that. The beating and howling in his brain had died away, and breath steadily streamed once more through his mouth. Sweat droplets clung to him as he tilted his chin up and looked the giant in the eye, smiling wryly, seeming to forget the moment years ago when this monstrosity flattened the cake he’d baked specially for Daisy’s birthday. Size didn’t matter to him anymore. He could eat this one up and spit out his bones!

He threw a handful of fireballs as he approached, and then he caught the giant by surprise with his dash attack. From there, he was upon him like a mythological giant killer, eyes intense, jabbing, punching, kicking, headbutting, smash attacking, giving him no time to retaliate. The giant flailed his arms, hoping to fend him off, but he jumped and leaped all over him, weakening,
brusing. Destroying.

_Breathe your life into me!_

_I’m falling—falling faster!_

_Breathe your life into me!_

_Falling—falling—falling—_

_Breathe into me!_

_Breathe into me!_

_Breathe into me!_

_Breathe into me!_

_Breathe!!_

Concentrating everything into the final blow, he wound up and BLAM! The giant tumbled off of his feet and into oblivion, face broken, vision clouded by blood, his own cry the last sound he ever heard.

COMPLETE!

He dropped onto his bottom, sweat pattering onto the ground, his breathing wild and erratic for long seconds until he willed himself to pull it together. He’d done it. He’d cut his way through 100 Mii Fighters, one-fifth of them ghosts from his pasts. And he wasn’t seriously injured! He threw his head back and exploded into laughter.

Once his laughing fit died down, he looked at the scoreboard for his time. It took nearly four minutes to defeat such a massive army. After such a feat, he deserved a shower!

With the thought of cold water pouring over his now-sweatering body now hazeing his mind, the man in green left to tell Master Hand that he’d survived 100-Man Smash, and to redeem his refreshing self-reward.
Through the Fire and Flames

Chapter Summary

Based on the song by Dragonforce. Luigi unleashes his true green fury in Endless Smash, where he'll battle till he can battle no more.

Chapter Notes

I do not own the lyrics.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“IT begins as a whisper—a promise—the lightest of breezes dances above the death cries of 300 men. THAT breeze became a wind. A wind that my brothers have sacrificed. A wind of freedom—a wind of justice—a wind of vengeance.”

--300: Rise of an Empire (2014)

They say that your life flashes before your eyes during a dangerous situation.

Whoever said that didn’t note an exception to the rule. For the man in green, it wasn’t his whole life flashing before him, but moments appropriate to the situation he was in.

Thousands of Miis surrounded him, weapons and fists primed and ready for use. He recognized a lot of them in this crowd. There was the one called Matty who demonstrated his impressions of popping a zit—propelling a mouthful of mashed potatoes and spit in the man’s face. There was the one named Boris who enjoyed knocking him around before leaving him in garbage bins or Dumpsters because of his green shirt. There was the one known as Alvin, along with his cronies, Lee, Greg, Ira, Vance, Max and Marcus, who cornered him and often relieved him of the favorite part of his lunch, among other heinous acts. Quickly, he flicked his gaze from one Mii to the other, keeping his peripherals locked, just in case. He saw the one called Miles (responsible for blurring his cowardliness to everyone) shuffle forward eagerly, and then just as quickly shuffle back. There were others, many others, who bullied and pushed him around in the past, and today was their Judgment Day.

On a cold winter morning

In the time before the light

In the flames of death’s eternal reign

We ride towards the fight...

Casually, he studied the one who’d suddenly dashed forward and now impaled on the end of his fist. This one had put a skunk in his room, and the stench had been terrible all day long, even after the skunk had been scared off. He’d grown a beard now, and was trying to act all
sophisticated, but the man recognized him still. Presently, he dislocated the skunk-prankster’s jaw with a clinical series of punches, broke his nose with his wrist and launched his forward smash into his diaphragm, leaving him writhing and screaming in agony on the ground. He would’ve toyed with him longer had he not remembered that there were other Miis to deal with.

One stock. No time limit. Endless Miis. This was the norm for Endless Smash. He would fight till he could fight no more, the scoreboard counting his conquests. Nothing better to get his mind off of recent events in Smash.

When the darkness has fallen down
And the times are tough alright
The sound of evil laughter falls
Around the world tonight…

The sounds of death metal swirled round the battlefield as the Miis closed in on their prey. Step by step, they tightened the ring they’d formed around him, steadily boxing him in. His body was tense as he steadfastly held his position, waiting. Waves of raw, animalistic energy rippled between attackers and challenger. They (the attackers) drew closer, honing in on the beat of his heart, the deceptive smile on his face, the firecrackers in his eyes.

When they came even closer, they could hear the sound of his breath. Meticulously slow, even, smoother than velvet, rhythmic, a beat between the inhales and the exhales.

Closer still, and they could smell his sweat. Not the icy sweat of the fearful, but a fiery and musky sweat—the sweat of adrenaline, testosterone, aftershave. The sweat of a hard-working man. His smell was so strong that the Miis at the back strongly smelled it, whetting their appetites.

Closer still, and they caught the sound of his pulse, in time with his heart, whipping against the flesh of his neck.

Closer still, and they swore they caught the scent of his blood. It was this particular smell which drove them wild, an effect akin to hunting dogs, bloodhounds or wolves. They were crazed, ravenous—aroused, even—by the smell of their opponent’s blood. These Miis were not like ordinary fighters. They preyed on the mad thrust of adrenaline, the smell of fear, the taste of sweat, dirt, blood and grit and the lust for battle. But just the slightest whiff of a target’s blood brought out the true animals in them—the fighters in Smash were all animals, really, yearning for blood and cracking bones and to beat the living daylights out of someone, because during a match, it was either them or their opponent. Even the dainty princesses weren’t immune from the surreal giddiness which came with being in Super Smash Bros, blurring the line between a test of skill and strength and pure primal bloodlust—animals hungering to smash, crush and destroy the one who equally desired to smash, crush and destroy them.

Fighting hard, fighting on for the steel
Through the wastelands evermore
The scattered souls will feel the Hell
Bodies wasted on the shores…

But where? Where was the blood on the man they had enclosed in a ring of ravenous animals? They dared to venture into his personal space, increasing the discomfort level and
tightening the proverbial noose. Looking deep into the whites of his eyes and seeing that he possessed the same eagerness, the same hunger and thirst for damage, for feeling energy sapping from the opponent, for KOs—and for settling scores. They smelled blood, a stronger smell, but they didn’t see it. Their circle tightened—and tightened—and tightened—

There!

It glistened, nice and fresh and scarlet and wet, all over his mouth. Turns out, he’d miscalculated during an evasive maneuver and wound up caught in a web of Brawlers and Swordfighters. They saw a small stream of blood on his long nose, too, and they leaned close to him, sniffing deeply, the aromas of the crimson egret and bodily essence lazily mingling together.

On the blackest plains of Hell’s domain

We watch them as they go

Through the fire and pain and once again we know!

The Miis watched, fascinated, as the man’s pink tongue danced once—twice—across his crimson splattered lips, tasting his own blood and denying them the pleasure of smelling it. His eyes were eager, alert, anticipated, as his opponents came eyeball close. One of them slightly brushed his nose, and he turned slightly to look at him. Hi, Rolf—remember when you stole my “clunky vacuum”—the one preventing me from turning back when I had to rescue my brother? Well, guess what? I have a better one, and it serves me well as my Final Smash. But giving you a taste of it would be too nice, wouldn’t it? He closed his eyes and inhaled, snagging one last lungful of a vile man’s scent, as Rolf reacted in kind, smilling awkwardly at the frequent butt of his practical jokes. The man allowed his facial features to soften, dispelling Rolf’s fears, kindness and forgiveness emanating from him like the Sun’s rays. It’s okay—I forgive you for making fun of my handy-dandy Poltergust—besides, I’m too shy to hold a grudge…and Rolf, like the fool he was, totally bought it. His guard collapsed, as did those of the Miis behind him. Powered up by false confidence, Rolf dashed forward.

So now we fly ever free

We’re free before the thunderstorm

On towards the wilderness

Our quest carries on…

A left hook crashed against Rolf’s face, jarring all of the teeth in his mouth. He barely had time to react to the pain before a rapid kick tore into his gut. He sank to his knees, breath fleeing from him like a deflating balloon. The Miis near him charged to his defense, but the man in green was ready for them, putting his whirling tornado attack into action. One or two were KO’d, but many of them were sprawled on the ground, open to a counterattack. He wasted no time deciding who to go at first. As Rolf attempted to crawl away, he crouched, turned around and slammed his heel against him. Rolf screamed as he collapsed, and the other man relished those screams just like the Miis relished seeing and smelling blood. Still low to the ground, he executed a double-legged sweep, launching Rolf and a few other Miis stupid enough to try and intervene. While pursuing them, he plowed through a gaggle of oncoming attackers with his dash attack and then finished the job with his forward smash. Rolf and his allies took the opportunity to regroup and launch a heavy offensive against the green Smasher. He escaped with a few jabs, broke apart their alliance with his fireballs and then went in for the kill. The look on Rolf’s face was picture perfect as the man grabbed him, body-slammed him, butt-stomped him, and used his down-B to trap him in a flurry of
hits. Then, he attacked with a jump-kick, a quick string of forward aerals, an up aerial and a furious barrage of smash attacks. At long last, he delivered his spearhand to the base of Rolf’s skull, plus one to the back of his neck for good measure.

Far beyond the sundown

Far beyond the moonlight

Deep inside our hearts and our souls!

He backflipped, sending a power strike into Boris. He was so busy gawking at what was left of Rolf that he paid no attention to the goings-on around him. Seconds later, he was screeching in exquisite agony as the man meteor-smashed him with his down aerial. He literally became compacted between a rock (the platform) and a hard place (the opponent’s drill kick). The top of his head split open like a cracked nut, and the rest of his body practically exploded into a bloody, fleshy mess. Nearby Miis recoiled, and then just as quickly pulled themselves together, refusing to show any sign of weakness to their lone challenger. Unfortunately, he noticed their reaction and took the opportunity to improve his offensive stance. With a flurry of fireballs, he caused confusion before singling out the one called Ira. He put up a great fight for sure, but the man in green smelled his fear, radiating off of his sweat glands just like adrenaline radiated off of his. Casually, the man whacked Ira upwards, right in the middle of his forehead. In almost the next breath, he shot a fist into Ira’s abdomen. As Ira started screaming about his spleen, the man smash-attacked his torso, his chest, his sides, his neck and his face without mercy. He saved the tendons in Ira’s neck for last, holding off his friends with his fireballs while listening to the gurgling noises he made. At last, he blasted his forward smash into his windpipe, grabbed him, and threw him into an oncoming crowd. It was as if he rolled a bowling ball at a set of bowling pins.

So far away we wait for the day

For the lives all so wasted and gone

We feel the pain of a lifetime lost in a thousand days

Through the fire and the flames we carry on!

Miles was on his left side now, sniffing down his neck, for the visible blood was either drying or had been licked off. He wanted to smell a major store of blood—the blood which pumped through veins and arteries in his neck and to and from his wildly beating heart. The blood giving him life and the will to live and to endure. The Miis closest to him could almost hear the sound of pulsing, rushing blood, in conjunction with his pulsing heartbeat. But as Miles smelled down the man’s neck, he was smelling up Miles’s neck, and it was there he detected the paralyzing terror he hid behind that cocky bravado. He shoved his nose deeper and took one last deep sniff, and that was when Miles got an intense whiff of the other man’s aggression. But he didn’t back off. He wouldn’t allow himself to.

Then, the man felt Alvin and his remaining cronies gang up on him. He attended to that problem with a back jump, and then attacked the resulting confused huddle with his dash attack. When he saw that a few were teetering on the edge of the stage afterward, he executed an especially powerful spearhand, creating a domino effect which launched everyone away. He allowed himself no time to boast, however. Entire populations of Miis came in the space of a second. A handful of spinning kicks subdued some of them, but when he put his whirling tornado attack back into action, they were sent flying every which way. Good thing, too, because he glimpsed a few who brought back memories he was trying to repress. He spammed his tornado until he grew dizzy and then switched back to his hard-hitting smash attacks. He dared not stop, for they might regroup and team
him. He heavily used his down-B, dash attack and aerials when he wasn’t smash-attacking, and he knew to avoid his up-B like the plague, since it left him very vulnerable. *He* was the predator now, and he was going to feast on as much prey as he could till he was stuffed like a doll.

*As the red day is dawning*

*And the lightning cracks the sky*

*They’ll raise their hands to the heavens above*

*With resentment in their eyes…*

As his fists (and sometimes his feet) flew, he did his best to narrow his focus to the present, to anticipating melee attacks, onslaughts and knocking out as many fighters as he could before he himself was knocked out. But it was so hard! There were those with condescending, smug and disdainful expressions on their faces. There were those looking at him down the lengths of their noses. And there were those flimsily hiding their fright and shame at what they’d done to them. They set him off the most, giving him a taste of power and control he’d never savored in his life. It was too late for redemption—they’d only get retribution.

*Running back through the midmorning light*

*There’s a burning in my heart*

*We’re banished from a time in a fallen land*

*To a life beyond the stars…*

It was too much. He couldn’t help himself. His already-pumping blood boiled, and he began yelling as he attacked. His body had become a misfiring piston as emotions raged through him. This was something he’d waited for all of his life, something he once believed would never happen. The fact that it did caught him a little off guard, and he went a little crazy. The music on the loudspeakers mounted above also infected him, the perfect soundtrack to the business taking place here. He shouted his defiance of the endless attackers to the sky, to the sun, to all of Subspace. He aimed his attacks without prejudice, making them feel twice the pain he once felt before sending them to their doom. He made sure to knock Matty’s hammy face way out of proportion before meteor-smashing him off the platform. His forward smash lashed out like a rattlesnake so much that his fingernails began to split. Numerous times, he dropped to the floor and attacked with his breakdance kick, and for those around him, it was a one-way ticket to KO Land. His pulse noticeably sped up, and his strength seemed to double. The Miis knew what the cracking, crunching, snapping and sometimes shattering noises were, but they couldn’t get enough of this man. Stubbornly, they came back for more.

*In your darkest dreams see to believe*

*Our destiny is time*

*And endlessly we’ll all be free tonight!*

*And on the wings of a dream*

*So far beyond reality*

*All alone in desperation*
Now the time has gone…

Despite the fact that he threw fireballs in every direction, they all managed to reform their circle of intimidation, starting wide at first, and then getting smaller and smaller. Breaths puffed against the back of his neck. Odor and sweat suffused his senses. His eyes slid across the new faces crowding round him, recognizing, remembering. Suddenly, he dropped his gaze, and the Miis exchanged glances as they listened to the sure sound of his heavy breathing.

Lost inside you’ll never find

Lost within my own mind

Day after day this misery must go on!

Azure eyes fixed on something on the floor without really looking at it. Lungs slowly filling with oxygen and just as slowly releasing carbon dioxide. With each breath, his mind slowly began to unscramble. A wind began to blow across the battlefield, ruffling hair, rustling clothes and drying sweat. A few leaves swirled round the fighters before fluttering off. The man in green breathed in the serenity of the wind—it seemed to fill him. He closed his eyes as Wii Fit Trainer’s voice floated to him, telling him that he was breathing too fast and that he needed to slow it down. Automatically, he employed a breathing exercise, listening as it fell back into a steady, rhythmic pace. All the while, he felt the body heat of the Mii Fighters as they stepped still closer, smelling them as he inhaled. His face, nose and mouth were all splattered with sweat and blood. He’d taken a moderate amount of damage, yet he still felt invigorated. Tilting his head back, he slurped some blood into his mouth and then slowly licked his lips. Thanks to the wind, most of the blood and sweat quickly dried. Finally, his eyes opened, sparkling at the Miis now just centimeters away from him. Sparkling with defiance.

So far away we wait for the day

For the lives all so wasted and gone

We feel the pain of a lifetime lost in a thousand days

Through the fire and the flames we carry on!

They stood there for a bit, breaths in sync with one another, as the trapped one gave the Miis one of his smiles and looked meaningfully at one in particular. Steady, steady—don’t think about how he was there when you soundly lost to one of his friends, and he taped it and showed it everywhere. He felt himself concentrating on that one Mii, his mouth rounding into the perfect “O”, a sign that he was in the middle of an intense match and he was concentrating really hard—

A hard, spirited guitar solo began to play, and as it started, so did he.

Nimbly, he dropped and did a few twisting double-legged sweeps, mowing down about half of those who had him boxed in. He added to the ensuing calamity with his fireballs, and before long, he isolated the one named Brad, the one responsible for publicly exhibiting a painful defeat. One look, and it was no mystery that both remembered. He loved seeing Brad’s eyes widen and then narrow in an attempt to act tough. He moved in close and touched his nose to Brad’s cheek, immersing himself in the aroma of absolute terror. Then, he examined Brad, dissecting him with friendly, forgiving eyes. His apprehension dispelled, Brad engaged him, soon wishing that he hadn’t. Swordfighters dashed in for sneak-attacks, but he managed to hold a few at bay with fireballs. But it was very few. Recollections of Brad’s actions (note the “s”—he did more than just rub in the fact that a good friend squashed Mr. Green like a loathsome bug) crammed his soul, distracting him from his surroundings. By the time he snapped himself back to the present, it was
normally too late. Luckily, he was quick, so the damage was not as severe. But it was still a lot. He’d just hit 100%, the “rage effect” starting to creep over him. The brunt of it was unloaded on Brad—smash attacks, aerals and combos were the norm for him; he’d save his spin attack for when he truly needed it. Butterflies stirred in his stomach. His pulse slammed against his throat. His heart whammed at his ribcage like his hammer. He grabbed quick breaths, chest heaving. Fiery, venomous sweat dribbled down his neck, under his shirt, and it left dark splotches on his overalls. He shouted his battle cry; his face reddened. Either the volume on the loudspeakers turned up, or he was just imagining it. But over the ruckus of battle came that guitar solo, rebellious, brutal, kicking, explosive. Now, his Adam’s apple seemed to dance all over his neck, as if a game of Pong was going on in there. His body came alive with the animalistic energy; his fists glowed neon green. He continued to holler through it all, his cap knocked to the side, his hair disordered and stuck to his forehead, his respirations becoming more and more erratic, a wicked smile worming its way onto his lips.

\[
\text{Now here we stand with their blood on our hands}
\]
\[
\text{We fought so hard, now can we understand}
\]
\[
\text{I’ll break the seal of this curse if I possibly can}
\]
\[
\text{For freedom of every man!}
\]

And then Brad was gone, sailing from the battlefield quicker than a missile, followed by a smattering of other familiar faces. He lunged back into the fight before they could regroup, satiating his appetite for retribution. They fell, faster than Kirby’s Stone, as a simple smash attack was enough to launch them. Deftly, he straightened his cap, his breathing now ragged but returning to normal. Now that the guitar was no longer howling and screaming in his ears, he could think more rationally. He flicked out some more fireballs, rolling, dodging and shielding about the platform. He exploited weak spots in concerted assaults, destroying the weaker links and then building from there. He spent a lot of time in the air, meteor-smashing Miis below, firing off forward and neutral aerals and hitting with the occasional back aerial. When he needed to stir things up, there was always his tornado attack. Though he got dizzy, it was worth it to hear and feel his victims practically getting mashed up and then cannoning them away with the last hit. He could even move back and forth across the stage and get some slight lift while executing this attack. However, his smash attacks were the meat of his strategy. He loved doing them and he loved the moment of impact with an unfortunate Mii. It also didn’t hurt that it could KO multiple opponents at once, if timed correctly. Now that his damage percentage was around 150, the devastation was multiplied. There was no question now—he owned the battlefield today.

\[
\text{So far away we wait for the day}
\]
\[
\text{For the lives all so wasted and gone}
\]
\[
\text{We feel the pain of a lifetime lost in a thousand days}
\]
\[
\text{Through the fire and the flames we carry on!}
\]

He smiled as a Maxim tomato suddenly dropped into his hand. His lips caressed the soft, cool skin of the fruit, droplets of condensation clinging to it. The Miis glared enviously at him as he bit into the Maxim tomato, tasting the ripened flesh, the juice exploding inside his mouth and trailing down his chin. Bits of his blood mingled with both flesh and juice. His eyes slid closed as strength and energy visibly returned to him. His tongue did another revolution round his lips, and then he took another big bite, laying it on thick for the Miis. This Maxim tomato was nice, fat, juicy and red, at the peak of ripeness. It made his mouth, chin and neck sticky with its juice. Some of it even
caught in the bristles of his ’stache, but he paid it no mind. Hungrily, he feasted on this sweet nectar like it was his lifeblood, replenishing everything that had been sweated out of him. By the time he slipped the last piece between his lips like a Popsicle, his damage percentage had been restored to about 75. He licked his fingers clean of Maxim tomato juice, holding his gaze with the very upset Mii, smacking his lips to add insult to this injury. One finger drew across his forehead, catching a sweat droplet. Nonchalantly, he flicked it into the eye of the first Mii Fighter he saw. The one who tricked him into saying a bad word and almost ruined his friendships with the other Smashers. The Mii staggered backwards with a yelp, and the man lunged for him. At the same time, every last Mii present on the battlefield dove for the man—and it all began again.

We feel the pain of a lifetime lost in a thousand days…

Through the fire and the flames we carry on!

LLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLL

The fray lasted until the sun had almost set. In that time, the man in green had punished over 300 past tormentors in a very creative fashion. He wasn’t even upset when a trio of them pulled a sneaky little number on him, resulting in his KO at around 230%.

The adrenaline in his system lasted long after lights-out.

Chapter End Notes

This story reached 100 hits! Yay!
I wish I can defeat that many opponents in Endless Smash. My highest yet is 142.
Interlude 6: Summing it Up

Chapter Summary

This chapter serves to tie the previous chapters together, as Luigi mulls over the list he compiled back in 1999.

There is a list I keep in one of my drawers, the paper yellow and crinkled with age. It is a list I’ve started on sixteen years ago, when the first tournament first awakened my fighting spirit. It is a list I’ve added to as the years went by, a list which has shortened in recent months. A list I have held near and dear to my heart.

You see, on that yellow, crinkled paper is a list of names. Names of the ones who have hurt me, degraded me, teased me, taunted me, tortured me and tormented me. I haven’t followed this list in chronological order. Chronological order is of no importance to me compared to the intense desire for revenge. I haven’t really taken my vengeance in a set order. When the memory of someone nags me enough, though, then I decided that it’s time for comeuppance.

Now that we both have time on our hands, let’s sit down and go through this list together. I’ll explain the charges against each offender to help you better understand why I just couldn’t let them slide. We can start in the order of which they were—taken care of.

- **Ike**

Believe it or not, I actually got off to a good start with the Griel mercenary. He believed in the power of friendship, and I thought that it would be cool to have him as a buddy, as he was willing to draw his sword for me at the drop of a hat. This was seemingly confirmed when all of us faced off against Tabuu. But following the incident, Ike started giving me the cold shoulder, apparently too busy with the “cooler” crowd to find time for me. Whenever I confided my troubles to him, he’d just shrug and say, “You’ll get no sympathy from me.” I guess he gave in to peer pressure and started mocking me along with the rest. After my year and the business with the Death Stare, I thought back to Ike’s snub and decided that due to the severity of that offense, he had to go first. His Aether and Great Aether hurt something fierce, too.

Ike fought for his friends, but I obviously wasn’t one of them. He certainly got no sympathy from me.

- **King Dedede**

Ah, the self-proclaimed King of Dreamland. I was absolutely ready to forgive him for letting his Waddle Dees scare me and for turning me into a trophy. When Tabuu transformed all of Subspace into trophies, he put a badge on me and Ness which revived us. The three of us teamed up to revive our other friends, even convincing the bad guys that Tabuu was no good. Once he was defeated, I spent the remainder of the 2008 tournament hanging around
with Ness and Dedede—we became sort of a threesome. We kept in touch between 2008 and the present tournament, and we returned to Subspace in 2014 ready to pick up where we left off. But that year, it all fell apart. While browsing social media, I discovered that Dedede had filmed my reaction to the Waddle Dees as well as slamming me with his hammer. When I first found it out, I wanted to give him the benefit of the doubt; I refused to believe it was true. But wee minutes before a scheduled match between us, I walked in on him video-chatting with Lucina, one of my new friends. His words were confirmation enough for me. I let him figure everything out for himself as I beat him all bloody. That battle turned out to be his last.

- **Wario**

  Do I really need to explain why Wario was on my list? It was bad enough that he annoyed Mario and was a selfish pig. But when he took his hatred for Mario out on me, he crossed a line. I had to force myself to revive his smelly behind during the Subspace affair. If the threat of Tabuu hadn’t been so serious, then I would’ve left him in trophy form—maybe even defiled it in some way. But old grudges had to be pushed aside in order to beat Tabuu. He never even thanked me for reviving him, by the way.

- **Raymond**

  This vile being haunted the worst of my nightmares in 2001. He especially made me feel weak, as he threatened to do these things to Mario, Peach and Daisy if I ever squawked on him. I felt that there was nobody to turn to, that there was no escape from this horror. I was even afraid to go in the locker room, dreading that he’d be waiting for me. I could endure his acts in that secluded spot because I had confidence that one day, I would make him sorry. He left me alone for a while after we defeated Tabuu—I guess spending some time as a trophy gave him an epiphany. Or maybe not. He’d recovered and was back on my tail in no time. But on a wonderful day seven years later, I finally paid him back and found it—delicious.

- **Ganondorf**

  Ganon, the Gerudo King, had spent his days hating Link, lusting after Zelda and conspiring to take the Tri-Force of Wisdom for himself. I just ignored him, except when he was my opponent in a match. We weren’t close, but at least I thought he respected me. He’d invite me to Gerudo Valley to do battle with him, and I’d always come close to winning against him. In retrospect, he could’ve been cheating. Who knew?

  I never really gave him that much thought until my year. During one of the celebrations, in front of my brother and everyone, he called my 30th anniversary “a perversion of the Smash universe” and whined that I didn’t deserve this honor, just because I was shy, awkward, and a plasmophobe! Later that night, his name went on my list. Two years later, I crossed it out.

- **The Koopalings**

  And I thought their father was bad enough. B.J. and his brothers always seized an opportunity to pick on me and Mario. Whether it was helping their dear old dad with his evil schemes or simply stirring up trouble, they had a way of getting on my nerves. The final straw was their harassment after my victory against B.J., when he started talking about
hurting my bro. That day, I showed them that I was just as formidable as Mario. I spared Wendy because even though she was spoiled, she never actually bothered me.

- **Ryan and Tyler**

  These were one of the first two on my list. I waited because they were in the back of my mind for a bit. Then, they showed up at the Home-Run Contest and started spewing their hateful nonsense. They said that I’d never be able to get the Sandbag to move, but they should’ve seen me on my sleepless nights. Anyway, I silenced them but good when I launched that Sandbag nearly out of the Stadium with my open hand stab. The next day, as my prize, I got a free match against them at Final Destination. I won’t go into details about that, but I’ll tell you it was the last this tournament saw of them.

- **Teddy and Spencer**

  When would they ever learn? I don’t take kindly to being humiliated on camera and then shamed in cyberspace. They had a love affair going on with the Smack Cam, and they chose me as the target. I wouldn’t have minded so much if they just gave me the smack and then went on their merry way. But, no. They had to make it very special for me and add a mint milkshake to the equation because I was Player Two. I’d hoped that maiming Teddy’s yo-yo would warn him, but alas, it didn’t. He boasted via online video about his little stunt, as well as ones from the past. I waited until dinner to make my move, personally showing them that their actions had burning consequences.

- **David, Jim, Adam and Blaine**

  Why must I always be the prime punching bag for the Smash jocks nowadays? Thank God for Evan—deciding to room with him saved my life. I could tell these four were scared of him, for they always waited till he was gone before targeting me. But one day, I had enough. I was so angry that I was trying to walk it off. But as soon as I came upon those sickos doing these nasty things to Evan and saw the photo of Daisy in Blaine’s pocket, I decided that their hour was upon them. I took care of Blaine first, and then Evan regained his wits and assisted me with the other three. It was like a Team Battle, the two of us against three tormentors in our lives. The experience pushed us closer together—so close, in fact, that I finally trusted him enough to show him this list. He’s making sandwiches for us as I write these words.

- **Shulk**

  Shulk, Shulk, Shulk—how could I have suspected him? The Monado Boy, with his ability to see the future and his meme-inspiring taunt, had me wrapped around his finger when he first arrived in the tournament. It was my fault, sort of, volunteering to show him around, being the kind-hearted person I was. I didn’t realize the error of my ways until that dreadful day in the Punch-Out boxing ring. At first, I thought that the heat of battle had gotten to him when he belly-flopped me. But after eavesdropping on a telling conversation with his friends and checking online, I learned the awful truth. Shulk was a wolf in sheep’s clothing. The next day saw a confrontation at my mansion, in which I successfully pressured him into coming clean about his treachery. I must say that I was “really feeling it”—betrayed, that is. By the end of our face-off, Mr. Really Feeling It “really felt” what happened if he pulled a fast one on me.
Stuart

Mirror, mirror, on the wall—who’s the most despicable of them all? That honor goes to Stuart Bennigan, the man responsible for besmirching my good standing with the tournament. I had a possible nomination for Smasher of the Month ahead of me, but Stu wouldn’t have any of that. All I did was invite him to prove his arguments against my nomination. But with his lies, manipulations, charm and doting mother, he turned it into a case of a veteran harassing a newcomer, getting me slapped with an indefinite suspension. Forcing me to call off the fight and then tormenting my other friends was just the icing on the cake. Professor Gadd gave me the boost I needed to go ahead with the bout, but Stuart had managed to poison the Hands against me. You know the rest.

But I owe Stu thanks, though. The aftermath of our fight gave me the opportunity to even the score with more people than I could ever imagine in Multi-Man Smash. Since that disastrous episode with 3-Minute Smash, I’ve locked horns with as many Miis as I could. Nowadays, when I’m not in scheduled battles or sparring with friends, I’m keeping my skills sharp in Endless Smash. I haven’t been able to beat my record yet, but I don’t mind. Holding out against a massive horde for as long as possible can cut tension better than, say, hitting Sandbags all night. And special kudos to whoever controls the music, because their picks are quite similar to mine.

Oh! It looks like Evan’s almost done with the sandwiches, so we’ll have to continue our chat another time.

Really? Evan invited you to stay for sandwiches? That’s so sweet of him.

Before we dig in, I’d like to give you this final thought—

You thought they broke me, didn’t you? But they didn’t. Actually, putting up with their abuse gave me super armor and powered me up like a Mega Mushroom. It took clearing some haunted mansions of ghosts, getting my own year and a kart race to activate the ticking time bomb of my spirit. When the timer hit zero, I went on what some might call “a roaring rampage of revenge”. I roared—I rampaged—and I got gory satisfaction—strong emphasis on “gory”. I had to go through so many bullies to get to this point, where I can sleep peacefully through the night without their faces and voices depriving me of my well-earned forty winks. But I’m not done yet. I have only one more. The last one. The one I plan to confront tomorrow once my matches are done. The only one left. And when we meet for the last time—I will be the one who walks out alive.
Luigi prepares to confront the last bully on his list.

“You wanted to talk to me?”

It was late in the afternoon. Master Hand sat in his office, accompanied by Crazy Hand. Sitting across from them was the mustachioed man in green, his expression most serious.

“Yes, sir,” said the visitor, his voice soft and solemn. “There’s something I really need to get off my chest.”

Master Hand leaned forward intently, Crazy Hand copying his action. “Really? You haven’t seemed bothered by anything lately.”

“I know. I feel a little better now, but maybe if I talk to you about this, then it’ll help put recent events into perspective.”

Crazy Hand groaned. “L, if you’re going to start talking about the Stuart Bennigan nonsense, then I’m going to ask you to leave right now.”

The man shook his head. “It’s not about that. It’s about something else. Something that started a long time ago.”

“What’s on your mind, L?” asked Master Hand, his curiosity peaked.

The man took a deep breath. “I—I—I’m being bullied, Master Hand.”

Both Hands temporarily lost their breath.

“Bullied?” Master Hand managed to gasp out.

The man nodded.

“How long has this been going on?” demanded Crazy Hand.

“Since the very beginning,” the man explained. “It started out as simple teasing about how I was always the second player, overshadowed by Mario. I could shake that off because I was already dealing with it—I honestly thought that it would stop. But—it didn’t. It only got worse.”

The Hands exchanged horrified glances.

“Somehow—they found out that I was scared of ghosts, that I was a coward. The teasing evolved into name-calling, the name-calling eventually evolved into harassment, and before long, it started getting physical.” He inhaled sharply, his voice beginning to crack. “Look online, and you’ll find humiliating videos and photos of me. The first time I rescued Mario, they treated it like a joke. They laughed at the nightmares I sometimes had about it. The tournaments were their excuses to use me as a green punching bag. I tried to ignore them, to get away from them, but they just kept going.
They wouldn’t stop. I had never felt so helpless in my life.”

“Why didn’t you tell us?” asked Master Hand. “We would’ve done something about it.”

The man shook his head. “They said that they’d do horrible things to me and everyone I loved if I ever told,” he choked out. “And you know the worst thing? They called my year ‘a pity party’. And as soon as it was over, it was open season for me all over again. To them, my anniversary had never taken place.”

“So, it wasn’t just Ganondorf who insulted your year?” asked Crazy Hand.

“No,” whispered the man. “Many of them did worse than that, anything to tarnish my special year.”

“L, you know you can tell us anything,” said Master Hand. “So, we’d like you to start from the first tournament and tell us about everything that happened to you. I promise you, whatever you say will stay inside this office.”

Breathing deeply, the man began to spin out his tale. He told them about Ryan and Tyler making him miserable, starting in the N64 days, about Blaine, Adam, Jim and David ganging up on him whenever they had the chance. He gave a grisly account of the atrocities Raymond carried out in the hidden alcove in the men’s locker room. He talked about the physical and verbal attacks he endured from Wario. He filled them in on how Ike seemed to get along with him at first, and then coldly rejected him, giving in to peer pressure and jumping on the bullying bandwagon. He revealed King Dedede’s sneaky behavior, the Koopalings’ ill treatment, and Shulk’s betrayal. He divulged his sleepless nights beating up Sandbags in the Training Room and the friends who kept him from truly falling apart. By the time he was finished with his narrative, he was awash in tears.

“L—I cannot begin to tell you how sorry I am,” Master Hand said after a while. “Crazy and I will ensure that the guilty parties are soundly punished.”

“Don’t bother,” said the man. “That matter is already taken care of.”

Master Hand’s heart skipped a beat. “You mean…?”

“Yes.” The man’s tears had dried, and he had reacquired his calm demeanor. “I promised myself that one day, all of them would answer for their actions. Year by year, I became stronger and my skin became thicker. It’s amazing what saving your brother’s life twice can do. Then, even as my year took its final bow, my popularity got a big boost, thanks to the Death Stare I debuted at the kart race back home and my mean shell-throwing skills. It started off as a seed, and when I got the invite to this tournament, it didn’t take long for it to grow. It was time to show my tormentors that I was no longer the overshadowed, shy, awkward, cowardly guy they met back in 1999. The opportunity to make them feel my pain had finally knocked. I enjoyed every minute of it. And I’m not sorry.”

Master Hand and Crazy Hand seemed frozen in their seats as they processed the news. How could they have known that the man seated before them, with the innocent eyes, the beaming smile and the heart of gold, endured so much? How could they have sensed the rage he’d hidden inside for so long? In a heartbeat, they understood the mornings of cleaning up the wreckage of beaten Sandbags, the jobs he’d done on his opponents, his improved stats, his yelling and shouting in the heat of battle, his reaction to Stuart Bennigan’s insults and his frequent participation in Endless Smash.

They understood, they understood!
“So, what happens to me now?” asked the man, his tone defiant.

“We’re not sure,” Master Hand said slowly. “We get that you were at your wit’s end with these people, and that you didn’t know what else to do—so you took justice into your own hands.”

“And do you now understand why I acted as I did with Stuart?” pressed the man.

“Yes, but…”

“But nothing! He, along with the rest of them, got everything that was coming to them, and then some!”

“What will your loved ones think of this?” asked Master Hand.

“Don’t try to play that card with me. I already told them myself.”

The man reached into his pocket and pulled out a yellowed, crinkled sheet of paper. “Just a little something I’d like you to see,” he explained as he handed it to Master Hand.

Running down the paper was a list of crossed-out names, scrawled in big letters. Master Hand skimmed all the way down to the bottom. And it was there, in dark, thick print, that he saw one last name that hadn’t been crossed out.

His.

Slowly, he looked back up at the man in green. A subtle change had come over him. His face set into granite firmness. His baby blues flashed with fierce determination. He had become as capable of a fighter as Super Mario. Master Hand shuffled back, awed, alarmed and frightened by the sight of the green-clad Smasher.

“L…” He was begging, pleading with him. “What have I ever done to you?”

“Nothing,” the man said coldly. “That’s the problem.”

“What are you talking about?” asked Crazy Hand.

“You should’ve known something was going on,” explained the man, leaning towards the Hands. “For sixteen years, I suffered in silence, unable to turn to anyone for help. If you think back to the way I sometimes looked at you, or certain words that I said, then you should’ve seen that I was trying to tell you something. The bullies used threats to keep me quiet, but they sure weren’t secret about it themselves. It was happening right under your noses. And what did you do? What did you do? Absolutely nothing.”

“What could we have done?” cried Master Hand.

“Maybe if you had asked me what was wrong, I would’ve defied those monsters and sung like a canary,” pointed out the man. “But no, you were always busy with other things. Especially you.” He jabbed an accusing finger at Crazy Hand. “I never had a clue what you were up to when you weren’t being the tournament’s final boss.”

“They call me Crazy Hand for a reason, L,” Crazy Hand shot back.

“If you’re going off on us because of how I handled the situation with you-know-who—you know why I had to do that,” Master Hand said firmly. “I get that you were upset and provoked, but rules are still rules. Please, let’s not fight about that again.”
“That time wasn’t the first time someone has easily manipulated you,” said the man. “Raymond Sinclair’s *rico suave* façade was just enough to play you right into his hands. Same as with the rest of them. Pulling you in with their superficial charm, concealing the monsters within, allowing them to get away with virtually anything. Especially tormenting me. Giving Player Two a hard time is especially a capital offense, right?”

“Look, L, we try to be as fair and impartial as we can to the Smashers,” said Master Hand. “We don’t care if you’re Player One, Player Two, or Player Sixteen, for that matter. Heck, we even have some unplayable characters and damsels in distress on our roster. But the truth is, we can’t read minds. If someone’s bothering you, then you have to let us know.”

“We know you’re agitated, and you have every right to be,” added Crazy Hand. “But we want to help you. We’re the last ones you want to take this out on.”

“You had your chance to help,” the man said evenly. “I honestly gave you a chance. And you blew it. You blew it. I was tired of waiting around for help, so I helped myself.” He chuckled. “I owe you some thanks for that, by the way.”

A sly look suddenly crossed Master Hand’s features, if that was possible. “You know, L, I know just the thing that can solve our problem,” he said.

“Really? And what’s that?” asked the man.

“Let’s not waste time getting mad,” said Master Hand.

“If there’s a score to settle…” added Crazy Hand.

“…then let’s settle it in Smash!” both Hands finished together.

The man smiled eagerly. “Okey-dokie!”
Chapter Summary

Luigi faces off against his last target on Final Destination.

He stood on Final Destination, watching as ambience flashed all around the simple stage. It had been a hard fight to get where he was now, preparing to face his most powerful enemy yet. Only two stock, and 5 minutes on the timer. He had done this many times before. There was no way he could lose—and no way was he going to turn back.

The man in green whipped his head in the direction of a familiar laugh. Master Hand floated toward him, and as part of his battle entrance, he pointed his index finger towards his opponent. At the same time, Crazy Hand emerged from the other direction, waggling his fingers and laughing maniacally. The two did a gigantic brofist in the air and then focused in on their challenger.

Letting out a breath, the green-clad challenger started attacking at once, starting with Master Hand. He threw several up and forward smashes, and then slipped behind him to attack the wrist. Since the Hands shared the same health meter, doing damage to one also lowered the HP of the other. He had to resist the temptation to execute aerial attacks, since he knew that it left his defense vulnerable. For the time being, he stuck to his quickest and most powerful attacks, keeping an eye on the entire battlefield. If the Hands weren’t coordinating attacks, then one was preparing an attack while he had the other on the ropes. Patience and defensive techniques were key, as Master and Crazy could pull a fast one with their combined attacks. Crazy Hand, especially, had wild, unpredictable movements. The man found himself caught by his flailing attack more than once. His keen eyes watched carefully for their every move, and once he saw their attacks take shape, he made quick decisions on how to react.

When the Hands began to throw the rising platforms, he began to dance and dodge about the stage, avoiding them. All of a sudden, Master Hand swooped down and grabbed him! As he began to squeeze, the trapped man struggled with almost superhuman strength and managed to wrench himself free. Then, Crazy Hand initiated a game of Pong with Master Hand using an energy ball, trying to hit their opponent with it! The man shielded and roll-dodged, and as soon as the attack was over, he went back on the offensive. First nailing Crazy Hand with some swift aerial attacks, and then sliding out of the range of Master Hand’s swipe attack. He threw some good kicks at Master Hand, and then took a chance with his whirling cyclone attack. Turning his attention to the stunned Crazy Hand, he smacked a Super Jump Punch into his palm, and when he landed, he used his floor attack to keep Master Hand at bay before nailing him with a flip kick.

Crazy Hand launched into the air and flew at the opponent from the side, but he was ready. At the last possible second, he activated his shield, and while Crazy was recovering from the attack, he bent his elbow and let him have it right on the knuckles. Master Hand took the opportunity to perform his laser attack, nearly pushing the man off the stage. He managed to grab the edge, but then Crazy Hand decided it was payback time for that painful attack. He plucked the helpless fellow off the platform and applied an ungodly amount of pressure. Crazy couldn’t crush the man’s will, though, and he broke free just as he had done with Master.

Speaking of Master, he clenched his fist above the platform, aiming to squash the challenger.
Said challenger saw, and once Master slammed back down, he whaled at the prone Hand until Crazy arrested his attention once more. He walked his fingers toward him before kicking him into a now-recovered Master Hand. From there, they commenced to whack him back and forth in some sick game. Crazy Hand finished by drilling him into the platform. As he struggled up, Master Hand temporarily incapacitated him with a loud snap of his fingers. To add insult to this injury, the Hand elected to give their opponent a taste of his own medicine, pummeling him while in this vulnerable state. Together, they launched him off the stage, but a misfired Green Missile saved him from losing a stock.

After successfully recovering to the platform, the man looked up in time to see Master Hand flash him a certain gesture before becoming airborne and attempting to smack into him. He blocked the attack and wasted precious seconds gaping at him.

Did he just do what he thought he did?!

The distracted man was suddenly hit with bursts from Crazy Hand’s projectile attack. He barely avoided falling off and started firing off projectiles of his own—his fireballs. While keeping Crazy pinned in this way, he marched up to Master, making him see stars with a smattering of smash attacks. As Master staggered, Crazy charged up a laser attack of his own. This time, the man in green was ready for him. Quickly, he got behind Crazy and battered away at his carpals, finishing with a strong kick. Crazy went flying and smacked right into Master.

A quick check let the man know that his opponents’ HP was very low. They could be finished with a few strong attacks. And that was just what he did. He attacked with a series of overhand hits, causing the Hands to writhe uncontrollably. Unfortunately, they had one last trump card to pull. Crazy threw a single rising platform at him, and the man started to roll and dodge, anticipating the stage hazards. Instead, he ran right into Master’s grasp! He squeezed and squeezed while the man struggled with everything he had. Finally, Master gently placed him back on the stage.

He was asleep.

For a while, the Hands watched, weighing their options. They could let him sleep it off and give him a chance to calm down, or they could finish the battle. While lost in thought, they didn’t notice the green man wake up. By the time they did, however—

…it was too late.

Yelling out, the man finished the job on the Hands with his spearhand, watching proudly as the Hands moaned in agony. Slowly, they drifted off the stage and into the distance, a bright light enveloping them. The man let himself go stiff and fell face-forward onto the floor, balancing on his stomach.

However, he allowed himself only a quick moment of celebration. He knew that it was only halftime, and the toughest part of the battle was about to begin.

As he slowed his breathing once more, flurries of black splotches began to swirl around him, and he readied himself to take on a being more powerful than Master Hand and Crazy Hand combined…
And The Winner Is...

Chapter Summary

The final boss battle comes to an end. Who walks out alive?

His battle plan had already taken shape, and he knew exactly how he was going to deal with the monstrosity now standing before him. It began swiping wildly at him, but he calmly slipped out of range, jumped and did a devastating aerial number on its head. Back on the ground, he continued to give the giant a headache with his overhand attacks, mainly his up smash. The previous battle with Master and Crazy had left him with some injuries, but he hardly felt them. He only felt the fight-or-flight response in his mind kick in—and he chose to fight. Eyes locked onto the giant with a level gaze as he continued to slam blows against its massive head. Breaths were deliberately deep and slow, even though his pulse had taken on a rhythm close to DK’s Konga Beat (not from fear, I can tell you that). Now and then, he’d let out a defiant shout as he attacked his giant foe. However, the giant felt pain but no fear, and unlike the man’s previous tormentors, it had no trepidation over facing its final judgment. That being said, it had a lot of nasty tricks up its sleeve which were easy to pull off.

Master Giant, the name of this monstrous creature, swept a mighty arm across Final Destination. Unfortunately for it, the man immediately anticipated the resulting large beam and executed an impressive dodge. Then, he resumed his attacks as if he hadn’t been interrupted. The adrenaline pumping and exploding all over his body was multiplied threefold. He had no time to fret over what Master Giant had in store for him next. All he could do was attack till he was forced to go on the defensive once more.

And he did in due time. He looked up in time to see strange growths on Master Giant’s head. The creature slammed onto the stage, releasing the growths into the air. His opponent didn’t waste time gawking. He hit the ground, covering his head, as the growths exploded into vertical and horizontal beams, some of them coming just centimeters from him. After mentally commanding his legs to stop shaking, he jumped up and attacked harder than ever before. Sizzling sweat coated him, and he allowed some droplets to fall onto Master Giant. He went right up to its dark, dead eyes and viciously poked his hand at them. Howling in fury, Master Giant spawned some additional arms, two hands glowing and becoming fists. These were the fists which hammered at the man, who effortlessly shook off the pain and did his evasive dance. Suddenly, the giant managed to blindside him, seizing him in one of the glowing fists! Cackling, Master Giant pulled the man deep inside it.

Being inside Master Giant was like being inside a broiler on its highest temperature with an invisible force trying to stretch him apart and a dozen knives stabbing him.

After tearing his way out, he managed to land back on the platform and miraculously had enough energy and breath in him to pay Master Giant back for its stunt. Impulsively, he propelled a stream of blood and spit into the giant’s face as fists and feet sought to break its face open. Master Giant responded by gathering up some energy orbs and releasing them round the stage. The man saw a gap between two of the energy orbs and planted his body there. As the orbs swarmed at him, Master Giant lifted the entire stage up high, but the man kept his balance and evaded the orbs with his dodging and shielding techniques. As soon as the attack ended, the man counterattacked with the Green Missile before getting back up and battering the giant’s head with karate chops.
Suddenly, it tore a space in an area close to its head! The man leaped aside and shielded, making it impossible to be pulled in. The giant tried to be crafty with the energy orbs, but quick and well-executed dodges left the man unscathed by them. It then summoned massive ripples by clutching its head and writhing. This last resort did nil, as the man’s perfect shield laughed it off. Smiling at the giant, the man dashed forward and—POW! His fiery uppercut was too much for Master Giant, and it exploded into swirls of black.

Laughing, the man quickly planked before refocusing his attention. He knew what was coming next.

The blackness reformed into a more fearsome creature, with the head of a T-Rex and the tail of a scorpion. It roared as it leaped at him, but he kept his cool, jumping up and attacking with a quick succession of aerials. He used his forward smash on its snout and was especially aggressive on its tail. When he wasn’t attacking or watching for counterattacks, he was hard at work with his fireballs, which had the effect of a rolled-up newspaper lightly rapping a misbehaving pet on the nose. He couldn’t help but smirk at the sight of the hunter becoming the hunted.

He was really going at it when he saw that spikes were growing out of the creature’s back. Dark energy began to trail towards him, at which point spikes began erupting from the platform. Every fiber in his body screamed at him to shield, so he did. Enraged, the creature leaped up and slammed back down, tilting the stage! As the man struggled to keep his ground, Master Beast, the name of this new abomination, crashed onto the platform again and again, trying to squash its opponent like a bug. Finding itself unable to do so, it charged up its tail with dark energy and used this to lash out at the man. Some hits were successful, but never enough to down him. He was an army general seeing imminent victory up ahead, a sprinter sighting the finish line and pushing his body beyond his limits despite how loudly it complained. The three heads of the Smash tournament, through inaction, had allowed so many people to do so many things to him, and if they did intervene, then it was too little, too late. So, the sentence was clear—they had to pay.

Master Beast jumped into the background and came thundering back, jaws agape. The man cartwheeled and backflipped as Master Beast started snapping its jaws at him, thinking he would be a tasty snack. He wouldn’t actually. Should it succeed in getting him in its enormous maw, it would find the man quite indigestible. The buttons of his overalls would stick in its throat, the denim cloth of said overalls would be difficult to chew, and it would choke to death and die. Above all, he would taste like sweat and grit; he was exerting himself so much. But I digress.

Anyway, the man was not interested in being Master Beast’s lunch, and he demonstrated this with a combo of his powerful, swift attacks. Bit by bit, Master Beast began to waver, and its attacks became less confident, less strong. Like Master Giant before it, Master Beast met its end with a Fire Jump Punch, bursting into the black swirls which promptly reshaped into—

…five sharp, shadowy, slashing blades, ready to draw the green-clad Smasher’s blood. Collectively, they were known to the Smash universe as Master Edges. It had many single and multiple-blade attacks in its arsenal, and it unleashed them in very quick succession upon the man daring to challenge it. Here, the challenger began to rely on aerial attacks as well as ground attacks, managing to sneak in smash attacks whenever Master Edges was on the ground after unleashing an attack. Master Edges was more difficult than the previous forms, having the tendency to generate orbs of dark matter. The tiny orbs were small, but they could lock in on him pretty well. He experienced many near-misses before he finally got it right. The big orbs had to be taken seriously, too, for they were fast and had a bigger chance of hitting him. While he could expertly dodge the small orbs, he more often than not had to shield against the large orbs.

Fortunately, he could tell when an attack was coming, for the blades would shimmer yellow
just prior to striking. Sometimes, Master Edges clustered its blades tightly together to unleash flurry attacks. During this situation, the man could do nothing but shield and wait it out, and then strike back whilst the blades were regrouping. Other times, Master Edges would execute a simple slash attack, producing those orbs in the process. After shielding the slash, he’d act accordingly with the orbs, depending on their size. Either way, he’d dash in immediately afterward and chisel away at those blades with his punches.

But most of the time, Master Edges would surround the man with its blades before slicing and dicing about the battlefield. This would never fail to catch him off guard, and at least two or three of the blades would make contact each time. But he made sure to evade the plummeting large blade which finished the move, its vulnerable position creating numerous countering possibilities. His favorite was a combination of spearhands and roundhouse kicks, topping it off with a down smash. His quick-wittedness positively owned Master Edges, and it wasn’t long before it was reduced to black bits after he angled his forward smash upward.

The black mass reassembled into—a creation in his likeness, awkward physics and everything. However, the doppelganger was bigger, stronger and more cunning. Master Shadow was its name.

For a while, the man and his shadowy clone studied each other with identical wry expressions. There was something Master Shadow didn’t have—the increasing supply of energy and adrenaline, powered up by determination, high damage and rage. Now, he neither knew nor cared how high his percentage was. All he thought about was triumphing against this mysterious force.

As he engaged Master Shadow, he thought it was poetically ironic, dueling against a dark version of himself. To him, Master Shadow represented the awful recollections of what had been done to him in the past sixteen years, the weakling who’d allowed these bullies to dictate his life in Smash. Standing on Final Destination, he was going to beat this back once and for all. Holding this thought in his mind, he began to cut Master Shadow down to size with blistering attacks, throwing fireballs when appropriate. It was a little complex at first, as Master Shadow had the annoying habit of using his own moves against him or copying his actions, but the man had more aggression in his system than his look-alike. He quickly found that he could grab, pummel and throw Master Shadow, just like any other opponent. However, he executed a throw as soon as he could, due to his short grabbing range. Pulling Master Shadow close, he saw it visibly flinch and wrinkle its nose at its flesh-and-blood opponent’s smell. The fact that Master Shadow felt fear gave the man confidence. He did his back throw and then nailed Master Shadow with his down-B spin attack. They battled furiously across Final Destination, the man staying close, steering clear of the attacks his opponent had the gall to steal for itself. Master Shadow scored some points of its own, almost launching him off the stage twice, but he got even by burrowing into it with a misfired Green Missile. He whacked it over and over with his up tilt and then executed his back spinning kick, striking it right in the gut. Master Shadow fell flat on its bottom, and the man took the opportunity to finish it off with a very powerful hit.

As soon as Master Shadow was KO’d, the man was enveloped in blackness. It was soon lifted, unveiling Master Fortress to him. At the same time, a Heart Container floated towards him, and he gratefully took it, sighing with pleasure as he felt his health replenish.

At this point, extra time was added to the clock. Squaring his shoulders, the man strode inside Master Fortress. There, all sorts of foes awaited him, flower-like turrets shooting beams at him, flower-like creatures, skeletons with shields, and wall crawlers. He punched, kicked, grabbed and threw his way through them all, resorting to his fireballs and long-range attacks to avoid taking unnecessary damage. Making his way to a small enclosure, he found a core, glowing bright pink.
and pulsating. This was the “treasure” he was looking for. He only had to throw a few karate chops before the core gave way. As it collapsed, he left the enclosure and made his way to a new path above the original entrance. More enemies rushed to impede him, but he handled them with ease, saving his strength for those who provided a serious threat. After some quick searching, he located another core, suspended above some glowing yellow material. Carefully, he hopped across the platforms to avoid touching the yellow substance, opened his attack with an aerial, and pummeled it with smash attacks till it burst. Before he could celebrate, however, he felt himself being thrown from the structure.

He landed back on Final Destination, got up, and hopped onto the upper path of Master Fortress. En route, he encountered and destroyed some persistent enemies before arriving at the far edge. There, he spotted a third core, floating there, tantalizing him. Alternating between fireballs, arials, and some good jumping action, he successfully destroyed this core. After a large shadow passed through the area, he saw a ledge which hadn’t been there before. Curious, he jumped onto the ledge, trekked along the path to the left and dropped down, making sure to land on a platform hovering above the glowing yellow stuff. From there, he followed a twisting and turning pathway to a fourth core. This one was bigger and brighter than the previous three, and it was also the last one. As he stepped toward it, a horde of enemies attacked him! He grabbed a platform to avoid hitting the yellow glow and fought back, clearing them out in a matter of seconds. Finally, he jumped to the core and mercilessly battered it until it quivered and exploded in a burst of yellow light.

He found himself once again on Final Destination, in darkened silence except for the brisk sound of his breath. A smile played along his lips as he mused over the powerful shadowy forms he’d just vanquished. All of a sudden, there was a brief flash, and a spherical object with the Smash symbol emblazoned on it descended onto the platform.

Master Core. The being purported to be the father of Master Hand and Crazy Hand.

Despite Master Core’s vulnerability, the man knew that this was no time to dawdle. As he rushed at Master Core, he took all of the memories, all of the suffering, all of the distress, all of the laughter, abuse and mocking, and shaped it into a beast of his own designs, a beast now residing in the pit of his stomach. And this beast’s prey of choice was Master Core.

The man in green opened his assault with his open hand stab, followed by another—and another—and another—and another—and another—until his hand throbbed and Master Core turned deep red. Blow by blow, the being was becoming easier to launch, but he kept returning to his original position. He started to quiver, a major red flag for his opponent, and he attacked with everything he had left. This is it—this is it—

And at long glorious last, a mighty shout tore from the man’s lips as one final forward smash speared into Master Core, blasting the sphere apart. Brightness spilled all over the entire stage, and then it faded to reveal the victor. The not-so-cowardly-anymore hero. The last one standing.

The mean, green fighting machine whose year wasn’t over until he said so.

He looked himself over. Sweaty, bloodied and battered, but still on his feet. Then, he scanned his surroundings. All was quiet save for a mutter of conversation. Without warning, he began to laugh. Laughed as hard as the day Mario was freed from that portrait, dizzy but otherwise okay. He flopped onto his belly, still laughing, tears trailing down his cheeks. Despite the odds stacked against him, he had done it. Justice had finally been served. And if a new definition came out for the word “perseverance”, then it was presently doing the flop on Final Destination.

A few minutes later, he pulled himself together and did a cool pose—the one with the finger pistols and his “Bang-bang!” He knew that Master Hand, Crazy Hand, and Master Core
rematerialized after every boss fight; they never really died. But they were changed, now aware that there was more stuff going on in Smash that they had to be on the lookout for.

Nobody would ever bully him again.

Master Hand and Crazy Hand shook the soreness from their fingers and watched as the green-clad ghost-buster celebrated his victory. After what had happened to him in the last few months—or the last sixteen years, for that matter—he deserved it. They resolved to put up new rules for the Smash tournaments, rules ensuring that the other King Dededes, the other Ganondorfs, the other Raymond Sinclairs and the other Stuart Bennigans out there would never again spoil the competitive but friendship-forging endeavor that was Super Smash Bros.

“Excuse me, sir?”

Master Hand turned to see Evan standing nearby, beaming. It was clear that he had watched the whole thing, cheering his roommate on.

“What is it, Evan?”

“Package for you,” explained Evan as he handed a fancy-wrapped parcel to Master Hand.

There was a brief note, in green ink, attached to the front of the package. Master Hand peeled it off and read it aloud:

“I hope this evens the score between us.—L”

Master Hand chuckled as he began to undo the wrapping. Even before opening it, he knew what it was.

It was a beautiful, brand new vase.
Epilogue: The Healing Begins

Chapter Summary

With the last of the bullies punished, Luigi begins to move forward.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I’m free.

The more times I think it, the less I believe it. I’ve beaten them all, given them what they’ve soundly deserved. No more bullies. No more sleepless nights pummeling Sandbags. No more tortuous memories. I’m free.

For my trouble, I receive three prizes, aside from the obligatory gold and other rewards. First up is a trophy of me, standing stiff, straight and serious. I keep it on my nightstand so I can smile at it before going to bed. Second, after I hack away at a bunch of names scrolling up all around me, I unveil a cool picture. Take a look, isn’t it funny? But the third prize is even better—peace of mind.

I’m free.

And there are plenty of changes in store. Yet another familiar face has presented itself, but it’s a good one, not a bad one. Master Hand has informed us that an old fighter is returning to the tournament. It’s not a vision; it’s not a dream. Our boy Roy is standing in front of me, smiling, happy to be back. We’re just like university alumni as I grab him and pull him close, feeling his arms encircle my back as my own arms round his shoulders. Our boy Roy, my buddy from Melee. One of those who’d tell anyone giving me a hard time to back off or taste his blade. And he’s asking me to bring him up to speed on what has transpired since his absence—me, the second player! I’m more than happy to fill him in on recent events, both good and bad. Turns out, he also had a falling-out with Ike, and he’s glad he’s gone. I introduce him to Evan, and they hit it off like old chums. The three of us have lunch together, trading stories from our Melee days and reflecting on how the tournament has changed. Roy is especially pleased about how wonderful I am to Lucina.

Speaking of which, as soon as Lucina sees Roy, she charges at him, squealing, and tackles him playfully in a bear hug. I laugh softly as they roll on the ground, and then calm down and pick themselves up. Lucina’s eyes widen as Roy and I explain that we go way back, and she thanks him for sticking up for me. Once the how’ve-you-beens and the explanations are through, we stroll off, arm in arm. It’s the beginning of a perfect three-way friendship—me, Lucina and our boy Roy.

Shortly after our boy Roy’s pompous comeback, a newcomer approaches. It’s Ryu, the legendary Street Fighter, with moves destined to shake things up here. He’s spent so much time fighting that he doesn’t need much breaking in for the Smash universe. On his first day,
he’s already won over Mac, Samus and Wii Fit Trainer. And his first opponent—me.

How will I ever forget our first match together? Four-and-a-half hours of much-needed, high-octane release at Ryu’s home stage. He doesn’t know it yet, but I just so happened to overhear him talking some smack about me prior to our bout. Thinking that he knows everything about me, even though we haven’t come face-to-face. Talking about how he’s going to snap me in two with his Focus Punches. Calling me things like “bean pole”, “little green man” and referring to me as his “afternoon snack”. I am determined to prove him wrong. And I do. He has his fancy street moves, but I have mine. I introduce him to my Super Jump Punch, my Cyclone, my Green Missile. I show him the power of my Super Hand Poke and my other smash attacks. I demonstrate my strong aerial prowess and my fireballs. His trash-talking may work on opponents in his universe—but it will never work on me. Our bodies and muscles engage in a contest of strength and force, and we’re so evenly matched that we wind up settling things in Sudden Death. I cannot begin to describe the rush, thrill and exhilaration of the two of us eagerly and hungrily pounding away at one another as bombs rain down all around us. Ninety minutes, maybe two hours of this. And it’s during Sudden Death that we lock eyes, and Ryu gets his moment of sweat-soaked reckoning.

The throwdown ends in a draw, and I don’t care. I know that I’ve gotten my point across.

As I shower, I feel as if I’m washing the bite of his words off of me, along with the sweat, dirt and blood from our fight. It feels so good that I’m in there for about an hour.

After showering, I relax in my room, playing Mad Libs with Evan, curling up with Polterpup and a good book and then exchanging mushy, I-love-you texts with Daisy. Once that’s out of my system, I doze off for a while.

A knock on the door wakes me up, and who should I find but Ryu? He’s carrying some street food, and its smell is thick in my nose. His face is remorseful, and I know right then and there the purpose of his visit.

“Yes?” I say.

Ryu clears his throat. “I—I think we got off on the wrong foot this morning, L. Maybe I should’ve have said those things without really knowing you. But—you fought well today, and I think you have the makings of a true warrior. Afterwards, I talked to Master Hand about it, and he told me everything. That you had the strength to face your fears and save your brother, and that you finally stood up to those trying to crush you—even him. For that, I respect you, and I humbly ask for your forgiveness.”

Forgiveness.

It tastes better than revenge, I’ll tell you that. As I gaze at Ryu, and he gazes at me, my guard is up, for I want to make certain that he doesn’t pull a Shulk on me. But I listen real closely to his words, to his voice, and a part of my mind tells me to pay attention.

So I do. And that’s when that part of my brain—one that’s been silent this whole time—finally speaks up. It sings out in a joyful tone that the man standing in front of me means every word he says—and that he’s truly, deeply, genuinely sorry.
I let Ryu know that I’ve seen the light with a broad smile and slowly draw him into a tender, forgiving embrace. What’s left of my anger evaporates, and in its place in something far more potent than rage or vengeance.

Forgiveness.

With the end of that final battle has come the dawn of a new day. My period of holding grudges has ended. Grudges prevent me from sleeping and even thinking rationally. Heck, grudges nearly got me kicked out! The fighting and score-settling is over, and it’s time for the healing to begin. Only with forgiveness can I truly heal my wounds, put everything behind me and move on with my life.

With forgiveness is a fresh start.

So, I forgive Ryu, and we go outside and share the street food he brought. He talks about life as a Street Fighter, and I talk about life as the overshadowed Mario Bro. Ryu knows all about my year and my Death Stare—he just hasn’t taken it seriously until now. One thing’s for sure—he won’t be tempted to talk smack about me after today!

That night, before I go to sleep, I take the time to forgive every last person I’ve taken my revenge on. Ike for his snub. Dedede and Shulk for their backstabbing. Wario for his insults. David, Jim, Adam, Blaine, Ryan, Tyler and the Koopalings for their harassment. Raymond for his sadism. Ganondorf for spoiling my year. Even Stuart for manipulating Master Hand and Crazy Hand. With each bully I forgive, my spirit feels a thousand pounds lighter, and I can really seal this epoch in my life and look ahead with a bright attitude.

On that note, I’d like to tell you about the Smash Fighter Ballots that Master Hand has introduced. These ballots give power to the loyal fans of this tournament. Now, they can submit possible candidates for Master Hand’s consideration. With the introduction of the Smash Fighter Ballots, there’s the possibility that I might make new friends—or reunite with old ones. The suggestions thrown out so far make me very happy—especially one of them—

Fighter Ballots aside, I’ll give you another reason why life is good. I realize why I’ve been an easy target for bullies. It’s because I’ve felt ashamed of my flaws. Nowadays, I look in the mirror and tell myself that my flaws do nothing except make me unique, because sometimes, my flaws become my strengths. I’ve grown to become proud of who I am, to accept that everyone will always have flaws, Player Two or otherwise. Whenever I gaze at my reflection, I like what I see, and if someone takes a shot at it, then I’ll just pay them no mind. I am who I am, and no insults or setbacks will change that.

Who am I? Well, I’m plenty of things. I’m the taller, loyal baby brother of the face of Nintendo. I’m an expert kart racer, with a shell in hand, spicing up the competition with a menacing look. I’m the happy owner of the most adorable ghost dog in the world. I’m the boyfriend of the gorgeous Princess of Sarasaland. I’m the cowardly hero, always shoving my fears aside when my life or the lives of others depend on it. I’m a brilliant ghost-hunter, putting an end to a spook’s reign of terror with the satisfying suction of my Poltergust 5000. I’m a veteran of what is arguably the coolest and most flexible fighting tournament in all of history. I’m your everyday, Brooklyn-born plumber, with many powers and abilities, as well as the uncanny knack for tapping between the real world and the dream world and spawning
crazy Internet memes.

I’m-a Luigi, number one!

And that is something that not even the meanest and foulest of enemies can ever take away.

You’ll have to excuse me now. I have to take this very important phone call.

“Hello, Mr. Sakurai? Yes, thank you for calling me back…”

FIN

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for the hits and kudos; they really kept me going!
Also, stay tuned for a prequel/companion fic for this story, more of a mystery than suspense.
Thanks again for your support.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!