

"WRASSEL"

"NOW...PUSS FACE...LET'S GO. WRASSEL!"

Lynette Coles is addressing her husband Jimmy while she's pulling off her socks and dropping down into a wrestling crouch. Jimmy puts his drink down on the deck rail to the hoots and admonitions of the Cole's Labor Day guests. The fireworks that had been taken out of Ray Sharp's pick-up earlier could wait.

The fireworks could always wait.

Because the guests were beginning to wonder when the Coles were going to start stretching their muscles ballet style on the tops of the wooden deck rails, as they leveled hair curling insults at each other, pumping themselves up for the backyard entertainment that was about to ensue. These warmups were sometimes even more entertaining than the actual main event.

While they all sat in the Coles' comfy, padded outdoor furniture, their guests, a good mix of friends and family of all ages, would get a hilarious view of the couple. Jimmy and Lynette would circle each other on the deck, pointing. Seated guests would have to occasionally duck, lest they catch an errant forearm. The Cole's then start to toss off Ric Flair worthy threats, while occasionally tossing drinks as veins would bulge grotesquely on reddened necks and foreheads. Lynette is now thrusting her index finger toward her husband as he stands behind his brother Chuck, who is buckled over in laughter. Lynette says

her peace and starts running in place which makes the drinks and food bounce on the round umbrella tables. She then begins to throw air punches as Jimmy does a few squat thrusts. Then, he begins pointing his finger at Lynette. The insults now are about the severity of the upcoming beat downs and who will suffer worse. Each threat trumps the other. Lynette does a few more leg stretches on the deck rail, claps her hands three times and says,

"LET'S GO...NOW....DICKHEAD."

Because it's finally time for the BI-ANNUAL COLES FAMILY PICNIC SMACKDOWN.

She sprints down the four steps into the grassy back yard. Lynette continues to throw air punches with fists that are covered in Cage Fight style padded, fingerless gloves. Finishing this, she then ties a red bandanna around her forehead. She fastens a yellow mouth guard into her teeth and begins bouncing in place. The small crowd roars. Jimmy throws a few more air punches, then bounds down the stairs to the roar and hooting of the woozy, standing room only deck audience. This pumps Jimmy up as he rips, yes, rips his Jacksonville Jaguars tee shirt off which now has the deck bouncing like it were some scene from an Appalachian Buck Dance. He runs onto the back yard grass as Lynette is hissing through her mouth guard. She's in a crouch position with her open hands out like claws and her short legs kicking at the expensive sod like a Brahma bull. Jimmy just

sneers at his wife as he jogs in place while snapping in his blue mouth guard. It's go time.

Back in therapy, Jimmy and Lynette told the doctor that their problem was too much pent up emotion.

"Doesn't sound too pent up from what I hear", Doctor Rene' St.Germaine replied to what she felt was a cop out.

"Your neighbors, where ever you have lived, have a list of complaints; like the two citations for disturbing the peace issued by the Savannah Police Department. Your children's teachers have even witnessed your behavior. And let's not forget the poor cashiers and customers in the Lion King who have heard your knock down, drag out cell phone conversations when Lynette is shopping. There is a...a... hmm, now wait a minute...."

Dr. St.Germaine is thinking out loud as she stands up and slowly circles the Cole's as they sit in the "love seat". They are sitting straight backed, watching the doctor as their hands stay folded in their laps,

"You two.....are a.... special couple.....hmmmm?" Dr. St.Germaine says as she looks up at the ceiling, tapping her pencil gently against her chin in full concentration while she continues to walk slowly around her office.

"Yes..... Maybe you're right...." she goes on. "Maybe it is *pent up*. The aggression, I mean."

The Cole's look at each other as they smile and Lynette says to Jimmy,

"See, we're not nuts."

"Oh, *don't tempt me*" Dr. St.Germaine is thinking, but instead says; "I have a suggestion..."

And it was there that the seeds for the PICNIC SMACKDOWN series of events to be held at the Cole's had been planted. It would be a combination party, and therapy session as suggested by the doctor. To be sure, the first match shocked many of the guests to the point that they got up and left. But you can believe that by the second and now this, the third season, they were fully on board. They would, in fact, turn out to sometimes be the rowdiest members of the audience.

The PICNIC SMACKDOWN was held twice a year; Fourth of July and Labor Day; making this, the final match of this year and the sixth overall. The record is Jimmy-3, Lynette-2. The verdict is rendered by a voting system which is becoming a not so stable and faultless method as the matches have built up. The gallery of judges are usually ass-drunk by the end of the match. On the past Fourth of July, Jimmy's brother Chuck and Lynette's nineteen year old nephew Jamey had to be separated over a dispute in the voting.

And for certain, this wasn't Dr. St.Germaine's idea, *per se*;

Her therapeutic suggestions were more along the lines of badminton, croquet, or tennis, as the most competitive types of endeavors. She at first even suggested Scrabble until Lynette assured her that;

"Those little letters'd be goin' up somebody's ass within five minutes."

The doctor took Lynette at her word and it was then that she suggested more benign activities; such as simply scheduling walks out in the open where they could talk out their problems and get some exercise while doing it.

"Besides" she said, "Fresh air, sunshine? Maybe that alone will help to fix things...hmmm?"

In truth, Dr. St.Germaine would have suggested a quick and hopefully painful divorce for the both of them. She'd never met a couple that she felt so negative about before the Coles. But, they *did* need a lot of help, and helping people like the Cole's was her business. Even if, in the end, it may not be worth the painful effort. When the Cole's returned for their next counseling appointment, Dr. St.Germaine said, as she sat in her leather chair, smoothing her skirt,

"Well..? Have you come up with anything to share together.... Hmmm?"

The Cole's grinned as they looked at each other, then turned to the doctor as Jimmy said,

"Ohhhh yeeeah doc.....we've come up with somethin' alright."

To the casual reader, this may seem disturbing. To the more sophisticated and urbane among you, you may want to laugh, but you just can't.

And it is disturbing.

But what a feather in the cap for Dr. Germaine though, should she be able to help repair this woeful coupling. For a brief moment, she saw herself behind a podium at the Department of Psychiatry Fall Seminar at Yale University Medical School; pushing her glasses up her nose as she stood in a darkened, packed room, using a pointer to single out on a fifteen foot digital screen; "LEVEL 5 SUBJECTS-CASE #6." And at the end of that pointer would be the grimacing, mug-shot like faces of "COLES-JAMES AND LYNETTE/SAVANNAH, GEORGIA."

It was becoming a major chore for the friends and family of Jimmy and Lynette to be around them most of the time. And it all came to a head at the wedding of Derb's daughter, Jackie. It was a beautiful affair, held right down at the river front. Delicious food was served as white tuxedoed servers made their rounds. At first, things went well, but then, with the Coles', they always do. Jimmy and Lynette share no problems with alcohol, infidelity, finances, or suspicions of any kind. In public, they are civil to

each other for awhile.

Then, it would all splatter against the windshield like a six inch Valdosta grasshopper.

This is why people that knew the Coles at this beautiful wedding began to look at their watches at around 9pm.

They wouldn't be let down.

By this time, the band had been well into the more upbeat, dance music portion of their repertoire. Before that, Derb had a good feeling while dancing with his daughter as he looked out at the smiling faces of Jimmy and Lynette as they sat close together at their table. He even saw Jimmy caress Lynette's hand. Many of the guests were now out on the dance floor, heads bobbing, cameras flashing. About a minute into "Don't Go Breakin' My Heart" you could see the couples part like bowling pins as the sound of two squawking voices became clearer. Within seconds, the gesticulating and foot stomping specter of the Coles' came bursting through the crowd as shocked and perturbed revelers got out of their way. Derb and close family members hung their heads while the bride covered her mouth there in the middle of the dance floor. And the funny thing was, the Coles' nor anyone else could ever understand or even remember what they would be arguing about. It was as if Lynette and Jimmy were those two Blue Jays up in that tree outside your bedroom window at seven in the morning on a Sunday, screeching about nothing until you think you'll go

crazy.

Then, they stop.

And that's what happened at the Perkins' wedding, as it would happen at just about every other occasion. They just stopped and carried on as before until, finally, they'd leave.

Jimmy and Lynette would resurface at the next social gathering, usually with enough time in between to cushion the fact that they dropped yet another grenade. And sure, close friends would ask in private encounters what the hell the problem might be. And it would always be the same answer.

They were just "*stuck in that ol' tunnel-o-fussin'*" as Lynette would put it. This one was different though. It was a wedding and it was Derb Perkins' daughter. Derb was one of the Cole's oldest friends and was very close to them both. He never thought they'd take their show on the road that would lead to his only daughter's wedding. The hard part was, most people liked Jimmy and Lynette. "*Let's go to the ol' J and L Collision*", as many would say while excitedly driving to their house for good times, good food and good cheer. Other than the disputes, they were great guests, phenomenal entertainers, whether as hosts or guests; quick with the joke, compliment, good natured jab. They just exuded the good life. And then....

The incident at the riverfront wedding was the last straw. The final breaking point. And it was then decided by all that Lynette's sister Mynie and her husband Jeff stage an intervention. Dr. St.Germaine lived in Mynie's neighborhood and Mynie told the doctor about the troubled couple at which point the marriage counselor and psychiatrist suggested her to;

"By all means, send them in or they'll end up alone with each other forever."

This sent a cold shiver right through Mynie. So while visiting the Coles one weekend, Mynie and Jeff sort of clenched their teeth after laying it all on the line. They each gave their carefully practiced and caring, but firmly worded speeches and exhortations. Finally, it wasn't long after hearing these pleas for change, that Lynette and Jimmy Coles looked at each other for a few seconds, shrugged their shoulders and said,

"Sure, why not?"

"C'mon man, get 'er goin.'" Jimmy said as he waved his gloved hand toward the deck at Floyd Barber.

Floyd was the manager of a Kia dealership and lived over on Sycamore Court. He had a rechargeable mic that he'd use during sales meetings. Floyd would bring it to the PICNIC SMACKDOWN's for the designated announcer to use for introductions and anything else going on. This would always include some graphic

play-by-play of the action happening down in "The Ring"; which was a circle of white lime chalk laid out not so perfectly on the thick Bermuda grass.

It was a great opportunity for anyone who wanted to exercise their bar room comedy chops while getting their two cents in.

To be a part of it all.

The privilege of being the announcer was becoming as anticipated as the actual bout itself. Floyd watched his bourbon consumption at this particular match because it was his draw to do the announcing duties. He knew he had his work cut out for him if he was going to top Rancey Wilcox's performance at the previous Labor Day fest. She had the crowd in stitches as she'd authoritatively shout;

"Oooooohh... *right in the grapes!*" after one of Lynettes fairly impressive barefoot kicks to Jimmy's groin. Or

"*Hello operator?.....give me inflammation*" after Jimmy accidentally elbowed Lynette in the eye, causing it to swell and turn bright red.

"Alright y'all. Calm it down a bit so I can make the intro."

Floyd now taps his index finger into the mic as the Cole's are jogging in place per Floyd's instructions. It's ninety two degrees out and Lynette is soaked right through her shirt.

"Ladies and Gentlemen!" Floyd shouts out while waving an arm

around.

"Welcome to PICNIC SMACKDOWN NUMBRRRRR THREEEEE! LAAAAAABOR DAY EDI-SHIONE!!"

Guests are up, pumping their fists into the air, and screaming. Marie Nettles and her husband eye each other and then, get up to leave. They come to these gatherings until the matches start. Marie works for Jimmy and shows up out of duty. Nobody notices as they close the gate and walk down the driveway toward their car. Floyd Barber continues the introductions, dragging it out for all it's worth until Rancey Wilcox finally says

"Get it DONE Floyd, will ya?"

Floyd is finishing up right in the center of the white circle as he sneers at Rancey's suggestion, but then, finally, he yells,

"ARE.... YOU..... READY???.....LET'S....WRRRRRAAASSSELL!!"

The Cole's circle each other then meet in the center of the ring as their foreheads are pressed together hard. It looks like they're saying something to each other, so Floyd says,

"Now, now, lovebirds. No time to sweet talk."

"I don't know Rancey", Mynie says. "Yer way better than Floyd, I can tell that already."

Suddenly, Lynette whirls around and kicks Jimmy square in the back, so hard, his mouthpiece flies out and onto the grass.

The deck erupts as drinks spill and the buckboards buck. Jimmy puts the mouthpiece back in and gives a thumbs up to the crowd. He bobs and weaves in a fairly convincing manner and then delivers a hard jackhammer left that hits his wife square in the mouth.

"NOW THAT AIN'T NO WAY TO TREAT A LADY!" Floyd interjects at the top of his lungs. But Lynette just wipes her mouth on her sweaty arm and rocks her husband with a two-fisted-back-hander worthy of Billie Jean King at the U.S. Open. A giant "OOOOOOh!" rises from the deck and falls on a sprawled and bleeding Jimmy Coles. At this point, three teenagers who had been on the sidewalk have now come up the driveway. They now have full view of the scene that they had just gotten a peek at earlier, right there in the Coles' backyard. The two males and single female give a stoned grin to one another. They then begin cheering for more blood.

Now at a separate table on the deck, Derb is taking the bet pool money and organizing it into piles as he sucks on a beer. He's trying to keep the cash from spilling onto the floor and watch the fight at the same time. He's got all his money on Lynette. Then, Lynette, her nose bleeding, whaps her headgear a few times with her fists and yells to Jimmy,

"C'mon PETERWACKER, and receive.. YER..... DUE!

"Woo, whoo, whoo, woooooo!!!" The crowd is now pumping their

arms and shouting in unison. Lynette then starts from the far end of the circle and takes a running jump and delivers a double-flying drop kick. Not pretty, or very athletic mind you, but it was definitely a drop kick. She has to be four feet off of the ground. Jimmy leans back but his wife's heel grazes his temple hard and down he goes, flat on his face. Lynette's force carries her right out of the circle as she hits the sod with a loud *splat*. A gasp goes up from the crowd as money spills from Derbs carefully tended betting table. A Margarita then slowly teeters, and finally falls to the ground as it splashes droplets of sticky liquor onto the now unmoving bodies of Jimmy and Lynette Coles' of Savannah Georgia.

The sign said: THE DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY FALL SEMINAR/ HALL # 3. It has an arrow below it, pointing in the direction of the large conference auditorium within the Yale University Medical complex. A series of short bells has alerted all assembled that the "SEMINAR ON MODERN MARITAL DYSFUNCTION" was about to begin. The commiserating medical professionals put down their coffee's, and their unfinished pastry and fruit refreshments, and make their way inside.

Dr. St.Germaine had a difficult time sleeping the night before. She knew that this was, quite literally, a dream come true. So much so, it almost frightened her in her recollection of

how this wishful possibility came to be. All thoughts had all left her mind however, as she strolled the slightly elevated stage and addressed the huge crowd while seven or eight different video and film cameras documented the presentation. Sophisticated charts and graphs came and went as the Doctor waved a pointer here and there. Finally, after speaking for twenty minutes, Dr. St.Germaine faced the audience:

“Aggression”, she stated. “In most cases, whether it’s in a severely damaged or unfortunate coupling, is almost always of the psychological nature. Or, at the very least, this is where it begins. Starting from the more passive-aggressive variety; consisting of unspoken or unaddressed needs, on up to and including the many types of “master-servant” situations.”

At this point, the doctor motions to the tech professional who is operating the visuals. As the audience watches the screen, a low roll of murmuring and giggles cascades throughout the darkened hall. Then, the sparse giggling erupts into all out laughter.

Dr. St.Germaine smiles in smug satisfaction as she gazes out at the normally staid members of the Northeastern medical community.

“In many cases though” she went on, trying to raise her voice above the throng,

We encounter a case or a situation where the physical

becomes involved as well."

She then turns to the object of the audience's jeers, howls and laughter. On the left is a large projection of two African beetles attempting to devour each other, flanked on the right by a male lion mounting an angry looking lioness. In the middle are Jimmy and Lynette Coles. They're wearing the cuts and bruises from the last SMACKDOWN. It looks like the middle of a Vegas boxing ring, but it's the Cole's backyard deck. The picture was probably taken by Derb, or any number of guests who are so happy that couple have found a way to get along. They are both beaming smiles of joy as they stand arm in arm like low country royalty rather than say, Tyson-Holyfield. The picture fades and is then replaced by another image. It's the Coles' standing nose to nose, holding up gloved fists into each other's faces as they both wear comical grimaces. The laughter rises in the large room as Dr. St.Germaine speaks into the microphone.

"Then", she continues while pointing at the screen, "As in this case.....

All bets are off."