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Andre the Giant

By Unknown

Man:

Most of us,
when we're children,
your parents
read fairytales to you.
There are knights,
there are dragons,
there are sorcerers,
there are giants.
He was those drawings
come to life.
He was a living manifestation
of our childhood dreams.

Ring Announcer:

And from Grenoble
in the French Alps,
weighing 477 pounds,
the eighth wonder
of the world,
Andr the Giant!

Man:

Everybody remembers
that moment
where they first saw
Andr the Giant.
We're all intrigued
by Andr the Giant
the human,
but the reason
we're intrigued by that
is because he seems
like so much more.
He was a god.

Ring Announcer:

The crowd goes wild.
This is the one
we've all been waiting for.
Andr the Giant.

Ring Announcer:

Holy mackerel!
Andr the Giant,
off the top turnbuckle!

Ring Announcer:

Andr cleaning house!

Announcer 2:

This is one man you
do not want to get riled up.

Ring Announcer:

Look at the size
of the Giant!
Andr still undefeated.

Ring Announcer:

Oh, slam!
Andr picked him up with ease!
Andr is unbelievable!
(crowd cheering)
(birds singing)
(man speaking French)
(camera clicks)
(clicks)
(clicks)
(clicks)
(man #2 speaking French)
(Andr "The Giant" Roussimoff
speaking)
(Andr continues speaking)
(grunting)

Patric Laprade:

He was just starting.
He was at the time
maybe 6'9, 6'10
when he was wrestling
in France.
He hadn't fully grown yet
'cause he started around
19, 20 years old.
He was leaner than what

North American people
remember of him.

So he would do a much more
athletic style than what
we saw in North America.

(grunting)

(both speaking French)

The first name that they used
in France was Jean Ferr.

The name come from
a folk hero from France
that was named Grand Ferr,
which means Great Fairy.

The backstory for
the Jean Ferr character
was that he was
a lumberjack.

That he was, you know,
discovered
in the middle of the woods
chopping wood.

(Andr, man speaking French)

You have to sell
a background story
to your character,
and he had the size
to be believable
that he was a lumberjack.
Thank you, Monsieur.

Laprade:

Andr was wrestling in many
venues all over Paris.
He was also working a lot
on the south coast of France,
and during the summer
was working in a lot
of festivals
all over the country.
(speaking French)

Laprade:

The first country
outside of France

where Andr wrestled
was Monaco.
And then he went
to Japan,
and he was called there
"Monster Roussimoff."
In June of 1971,
that was the first match
he ever had
in North America,
that was in Verdun,
just a suburb of Montreal,
and he was working
for a promotion
called Grand Prix Wrestling.
The very first ad said
that he was a giant
of 7'4", 390 pounds,
from the French Alps.
Being a giant from
the French Alps,
it's a much better story
than just being, you know,
a guy from a town
that nobody have heard of.
From the French Alps,
7'4", 415 pounds,
the friendly French Giant,
Jean Ferr!
(crowd cheering)
(man groans)

Commentator:

And there's a shot
to the top of the head.
And he's going into
the figure-four.
- Well...
- Commentator #2: Oh!
First thing, I said,
"There's money to be made
with the guy."
And they did draw money,
they sold out all over,

and the Giant
became a household name.
We'd get into a little town
and they'd come from all over.
You'd draw
3, 4, 5, 6 thousand people
at least 5 nights a week.

Commentator:

There's a shot
to the top
of the head.

Commentator #2:

Maurice is in very bad shape.

David Shoemaker:

Wrestling comes out
of circus sideshows,
and Andr in a lot of ways
was one of these...
sideshow spectacles.
Anybody would pay a quarter
and line up to see him.
But you don't go back
a second or a third time.
So at a certain point, the move
with a wrestler like Andr
is to move on,
to migrate
to a different territory,
and, you know, try out
greener pastures.

Man:

One, two, three
I'm your boogie man,
that's what I am
I'm here to do
whatever I can...

Shoemaker:

The '70s was the heart
of the territorial era

in pro wrestling
in the United States.
(shouting)

Wrestler:

I love to hurt people
and I'm gonna hurt you
very, very bad.

Commentator:

Heads up! Ooh! Oh!

Shoemaker:

When Andr came down,
professional wrestling
was divided up
into these fiefdoms
around the country.
I think at one time
there were as many
as 32 separate territories.
Hello again, everybody,
and welcome
to Mid-South Wrestling.
Welcome to another hour
of Florida Championship
Wrestling.
Welcome again to an exciting
hour of wrestling.

Jerry Lawler:

You had certain stars
in your territory,
in your region,
and they were seen
as far as your local television
coverage would go.
Nobody had
a national TV show.

Announcer:

Lone Eagle rolling over,
and here they come back.
There they go again,

come on.

Do what you want,

I'm your boogie man...

You have got to wrestle me
right here and right now.

Do what you want,

I'm your boogie man

Lawler:

We had a TV show in Memphis.

200 miles north of Memphis,
then that started

the St. Louis territory.

Then they had a whole set
of different wrestling stars
there.

And over to the east was
the Carolinas territory,
and they had a whole set
of different stars there.

Outside of Canada when Andr
first came to North America,
he was wrestling
mainly in the Midwest.

(cheering)

Laprade:

Minneapolis, Milwaukee,
Detroit.

In Detroit, he was actually
called the "Polish Giant."

And in Minneapolis,
he was called either

Andr Roussimoff

or Andr the Giant

Frenchman.

The name under the Giant,
the first time it actually
happened, was in Chicago.

There was a promoter there
who wanted to book Andr,
so he called the promoter
back in Montreal.

So he said, you know, we call

him Gant Ferr, Giant Ferr.
So the promoter there
starts laughing and says,
"I cannot call him
a giant fairy!
What's his real name?
What's his first name?"
So he said,
"Well, it's Andr."
"Well, okay, we'll call him
Andr the Giant then."

Announcer:

Here is the eighth wonder
of the world!
Andr the Giant!
(cheering)

Commentator:

My goodness!
Look at these fans!
In appreciation
for Andr the Giant!

Gene Okerlund:

When Andr started
circulating in the territories,
he'd come in for a period of
maybe six weeks or seven weeks
and then was gone
and onto the next territory.
Hello, ladies and gentlemen,
I'd like to tell you my name,
you know who I am.
I am so happy to come back
in Florida to see all
my friends.
I want to welcome you once again
to the Mid-Atlantic states
for Mid-Atlantic
Championships Wrestling.
My pleasure.
Oh, s, s.
I guess that's Spanish.

Shane McMahon:

Andr started very small.
He started in small towns
performing in front
of 10 people,
100 people, 300 people.
By the time he got to
my grandfather's territory,
which was the Northeast,
then you had made it, you know,
all the way to the big time.

Shoemaker:

Vincent J. McMahon, Vince Sr.,
was one of the real
power brokers
in those days
of professional wrestling.
He had New York.
We say New York--
the territory ran up
and down the Atlantic seaboard
from Bangor, Maine, to D.C.
Vince McMahon Jr.:
My dad first found out
about Andr
because of the exposure
that he was getting in Canada.
Someone said,
"Vince, you have to get
your hands on this guy.
He's an
extraordinary attraction."
So my dad met with Andr
and they hit it off really,
really well.
And my dad
started booking Andr.
My dad built the way
the public looked at him now,
as an attraction,
he was a giant attraction.

Announcer:

Andr will now demonstrate
feats of strength.
Look at this,
it's off the ground!
Over 2,000 pounds
of solid dead weight.
Andr the Giant has done
the unbelievable!

Dr. Terry Todd:

I began to see pictures
of Andr,
I said, "I want to cover this
guy as a unique physical being,
a man who's living in a world
that's not made for him."
What's it like
to be seven feet tall
and weigh close
to 500 pounds?
There's a famous photograph
that appeared with the article
that I did
for "Sports Illustrated."
Our hands are close together,
and you can see
the difference
in the thickness
of the fingers,
the breadth
of the fingers,
the size
of the fingernails.
And my collection here
at the University of Texas,
I have the hands
of a lowland gorilla.
They are approximately
as wide as Andr's hands were.
You that knew you were seeing
something unique in the world
when you saw him.
I want you

to take a look,
what size boot is that,
Andr?

That's 22, size 22.

Take a look at that
along my size nine.

Weather does get chilly
periodically.

My word.

It looks like a top coat!

I can't believe it!

Let me ask you,
how about your diet?

How much food
do you eat a day?

(laughs)

The food--

I eat four times,
the food from the--

I'm sorry,

I'm not stuck

on English.

He was not the most articulate
man in the world.

He spoke in other ways.

Commentator:

Andr. Oh!

Commentator #2:

Andr the Giant at 7'4",
507 pounds.

Commentator #3:

Being strangled with
the rope by Andr the Giant!

Commentator #4:

...covered by Andr!

Commentator:

Look at that!

The most exciting thing
you'll ever see in the ring!

(cheering)

Ooh!

Oh, boy! Look at that!

Laprade:

There are two types of match
that Andr did a lot.

Handicap matches, meaning
him against two wrestlers,
or battle royals.

Commentator:

You'll notice that these men,
all of these wrestlers
seemingly a little hesitant
to attack Andr the Giant.

Because, you know,
he was such a big man.
You could see him just throw
19 other wrestlers,
you know,
over the top rope.

Commentator:

...both from the Giant!
Bockwinkel colliding
with Patera.
There goes Patera!
There goes Duncum!
Bockwinkel,
the only one left!

Lawler:

Andr was an attraction.
He was not the kind of person
that you could put on your card
every single week,
because he would lose
that aura of specialness.

Commentator:

Here's the Giant now,
coming down the runway.
(cheering)

Lawler:

So that's why Andr got loaned out so much by Vince McMahon. The other promoters respected my dad even all the more because he could deliver Andr or not deliver Andr to them. And normally when Andr came to town, he drew a lot of money. People would want to see this giant. In those days, there were wrestling magazines that would chronicle these wrestlers in different territories, and you would see Andr's face on the cover of a magazine and that's maybe the first time you'd ever seen him. This is before cable TV. This is definitely before the internet. You haven't seen YouTube videos of Andr the Giant. You've just heard legend of him, so he comes out of the back, you see a full head above the crowd.

Announcer:

All right! The crowd's starting to surge!

Hulk Hogan:

I first saw Andr the Giant, it was junior high school, ninth grade, eighth grade, and I just remember how intense it was. It's almost like the whole room moved when he walked through

the crowd.

Announcer:

Just talking
about anticipation.
There he is!

Hogan:

And then when
he climbed up on the ring,
the back of his leg
and the size of his thigh
and his quad
and his rear end
and his whole hip looked like
a Clydesdale horse.
I was hooked immediately.
This is an era where
word of mouth
carried as much weight
as anything else.
And you would hear rumor
of wrestlers
and you would
just have to wait for them
to come to your town,
if they ever got there.
Everywhere he went,
people turned out to see him.

Announcer:

And the eighth wonder
of the world...

Lawler:

There was nobody else
in the business
at that time
that you could say,
"Hey, let me put this guy
on your card,
and you're gonna have
an automatic sellout."
- (cheering)

- (grunting)

Commentator:

Whoa! That's the wrong guy
to do that to.
He knew how to create
emotion, energy, drama.
For somebody that big
to go down to a knee
and to get sympathy.
There was just something
magical about him.
He had a way
to reel you in.
The term that we have
in wrestling is,
it's a sell
for your opponent.
And Andr would
sell anything that I did.
You knew you weren't
gonna beat Andr,
that just wasn't
in the cards.
The understanding was Andr
would sell anything
that I did to him.
But then at the end
of the match,
Andr was going over.
Andr was gonna get
his hand raised.
Andr the Giant,
ladies and gentlemen,
for the benefit
of you who do not know,
is the only undefeated superstar
in professional wrestling.

Dave Meltzer:

They could have made him
the champion,
but it probably would have
gotten stale after a while

because there was no confidence
when people wrestled Andr
that anyone
was gonna beat him.
He could have won the title,
but then,
how could he lose
the title?

Shoemaker :

Nobody had any expectation
that Andr was gonna come in
and get beat up
by the local hero.
Although he could make
those local heroes look good
if he wanted to.

Announcer :

One more shot,
across the jaw!

Shoemaker :

If Andr came in and took on
the local champion,
if they could just get
their licks in against Andr,
if they could look good
for five minutes,
hold their own against
Andr the Giant,
that was a win!

Commentator :

Andr's in trouble here,
big trouble.
Really big trouble.

Shoemaker :

If you get in
some shots against Andr,
that's like going
toe to toe with a god.
Andr was very kind, and took

care of, as we call it,
you know, the performers
he worked with.
He was very proud of that.
He never hurt anyone.
And he was very,
very proud of that.
But if he wanted to show you
who was the boss,
you know, it was easy
for him to do that.
If Andr liked you, yeah,
he knew that he had
the power to make careers.
If he didn't like you,
God help you.
Do you promise me that?!
- I promise you.
- Yeah?!
- We'll do our best.
- You better do it!
You've never seen me mad,
you have seen me mad now.
If he decided that he was
not gonna get picked up
or you were
not gonna throw a punch
or you weren't gonna put
a wrestling move on it,
it didn't happen.
He was stronger than all of us,
he was bigger than all of us.
He kept everybody in line.
This is not a business
of tough guys.
If you're in this business,
it's to entertain.
And for those guys that thought
they were tough guys
in this business,
Andr would straighten 'em out
real quick.

Commentator:

Like a rag doll,
he's shaking him!

Commentator #2:

Like a child!
(cheering)
- (grunting)
- (groaning)

Announcer:

Oh, look at this!
500 pounds plus!
(shouting)
He hated Randy Savage,
the Macho Man,
hated him with a passion.
Nassau Coliseum
is gonna witness, yeah!

Hogan:

So whenever I'd see Randy
was wrestling Andr,
I used to laugh.

Commentator:

Andr doing whatever
he wants right now.
Sitting on him!
Sitting right on his head!
Randy was always worried
on how Andr was gonna beat him.
And Randy would wait till
the very last minute.
You know,
he'd be all taped up,
and he'd have baby oil
all over him
and Randy would come in,
"Uh, excuse me, Andr,
hey, brother,
you know, uh, what do you think
we're gonna do out there
in the ring tonight?"
And Andr would look up

at him, playing cards, and go,
(imitates Andr)
"No baby oil. Get out!
Get out! No baby oil!"
Then I'd watch the match,
Andr would just get in
and would just beat
the hell out of him,
just pull his hair out.
"This is for you,
Elizabeth!"
Whap! And he'd hit him,
I'm like, "Oh, my God,
he just beat Randy
to death."
I saw him grab the Iron Sheik
one night.
He irritated the hell out
of Andr, I mean, just always.
I'm gonna show
who is the real giant...

Hogan:

"Andr, I thought maybe tonight,
Sheikie could try to slam you."
"Get out!" You know?
And Andr had had enough
of his mouth.
And one night, he just
took him out into the ring
and just beat him,
I thought he killed him.
(groaning)

Commentator:

Andr trying to twist
that leg right off.
Sheik now getting
a wrestling lesson.
Wow! Holy mackerel,
what a slam!
(cheering)
There's 500 pounds.
I'm watching, like,

"Oh, my God, somebody
stop this massacre,
he's gonna kill the guy."

Commentator:

Little lower lumbar
adjustment there.

Okerlund:

The loudmouths,
Andr didn't care for.
"Down, boss."
He didn't have
to say it twice.
There was this guy named
Big John Studd.
Now Big John Studd was
6'10", probably 350 pounds.
And Andr, he liked being
the giant among giants,
so it didn't work out
very well for John Studd.

McMahon:

John Studd, among other things,
when he came to the ring,
he would step
over the top rope.
That's what Andr did.
So no one should step
over the top rope,
because that's Andr's thing.
If you didn't respect that,
Andr had no respect
for you.

Hogan:

Andr would beat
the crap out of John Studd,
to prove who
the real giant was.

Commentator:

He's not having

a good time, is he?
Andr's having a good time.
- (cheering)

- Referee:

He came out of the ring,
flying past me,
gets all of his gear
and is coming out, and I said,
"Where are you going,
what are you doing?"
and he said,
"He's gonna kill me."
- (cheering)
- (yelling)

Andr did sports entertainment
before there was
sports entertainment.
He had it figured out
long before myself
or Vince McMahon
figured it out.

Announcer:

Andr the Giant!

Hogan:

In Andr's prime,
everybody knew him.
On every continent,
every foreign country,
he traveled everywhere.
(Commentator
speaking Japanese)

Hogan:

He transcended wrestling.

Lawler:

Without a doubt, Andr was
the most famous wrestler
in the world.
Maybe the most famous wrestler
that there had ever been.

Announcer :

There's only one athlete
like this in the world today!
The one
and the only Andr.

Shoemaker :

Andr wasn't a movie star,
but he was famous
on a different level.
Literally the biggest celebrity
in the world.
He tried out for the Redskins,
which was a publicity stunt,
but still, it shows you how
famous Andr was at the time.
He was
in "The Six Million Dollar Man"
playing a Sasquatch.
Before there was CGI,
there was only Andr the Giant.
(loud growling)
(growling continues)

Andr :

One LaBatt light, bud.
It's not just a light,
it's a Labatt light.
- Oh, boy! How are ya?
- This is a nice chair.
- How are ya?
- Fine.
Can I get you a mimosa?
(chuckling)
No, thank you.
Arnold Schwarzenegger:
I met Andr
several times because
I always have been
a big fan
of professional wrestling,
and that developed
into a great friendship.

There was this one time where
I took him out for dinner.
And, of course, I grabbed
the bill immediately.
He looks over at me
like this and says, "I pay."
I said, "No, no, Andr,
I invited, I pay.
You're the boss in your ring,
I'm the boss right now here."
And he says, "You're right"
and he gets up
and he grabs me out
of the chair, like this,
and he holds me up,
and then he puts me up
on a piece of furniture,
on an armoire.
He just set me up there
like a little doll.
This just shows you
how strong he was.
But at the same time,
what a generous person he was.

Okerlund:

Andr commanded great respect.
By promoters,
producers, or handlers,
Andr was to be treated
as something special.
Fans, take a look at this.
Can you believe that?
Perhaps even let's compare it
to the size of my head.
Andr the...
(laughing)
He was billed as 7'4".
I think he was over seven--
whether or not it was
four more inches, I don't know.
When he walked into a room,
he knew what the reactions
were going to be.

And it was not like
he was trying to hide.
Andr didn't try to hide.
Andr was going to be Andr.
Most males were
immediately intimidated.
With women,
it was different.
From what females
would tell me,
you could feel more of,
you know,
"Wow, this is-- Mother Nature
has done something really
magnificent here.
And I would like
to say hello to this person
and maybe even get
to know them."

Hogan:

They were attracted
to him like he was a magnet.
I don't know about
his girlfriends.
I don't know about
his personal relationships
with women, but I know
the girls loved him.

Jason Hehir:

Curiosity factor,
probably?
I guess, I guess.
May have been more
than that.
Maybe it was his cologne,
who knows.
He wears a size 24 ring, baby.
What else can I tell you?
(chuckling)
And he's wearing size 24 shoes.
What else do you want to know?
Everyone catered to Andr,

justifiably so.
You know, a case a beer,
it was always booze,
there was always whatever
it was Andr wanted.
He enjoyed performing,
but he enjoyed
the party afterwards.
The stories
about Andr's drinking
are almost another
level of mythology
from the man himself.
Andr was certainly,
I mean, one of,
if not the greatest drinker
that ever lived.
I, myself,
saw him almost every night
drink 7,000 calories'
worth of alcohol.
Say 20 to 25 beers,
maybe four bottles of wine,
usually several mixed drinks.
Brother, I was with him
one night when he drank
106 beers.
106!
Yeah, that's
Andr the Giant, brother.
Andr was a big drinker
after the matches.
Most wrestlers would, like,
maybe have a six-pack,
and Andr, the minimum
that he would ever have is 24.

Okerlund:

He liked the wine.
He'd have them bring
in a case to start the day.
A case of wine.
We go to this hotel,
I mean, drinking and drinking

and drinking,
and all of a sudden,
oh, it's time to go to bed.
And then we get close
to the elevator,
Andr drops.
And the manager of the hotel
says, "Well, what are
you gonna do?"
I say, "Call AAA, that's all
I can tell you."
I was there. I wasn't there
for the drinking,
I was there the next morning
in the lobby
where he's still sleeping
on the floor.
Nobody could keep up with him.
I don't care who you were.

Ric Flair:

Timmy White probably got
to know him the best.
I don't know
how Timmy White's alive.
They had a pool going on me
in the locker room
when I was gonna drop dead
from running with the Giant.
Before I met Andr,
I was doing the merchandise
and helping set up the arenas
and doing all sorts of stuff.
I wasn't up to speed
on wrestling protocol
in locker room,
the way you act.
The only people that set foot
in the locker room
are the wrestlers
and the referees.
Everybody else can knock
on the door, they don't come in.

Man:

Well, that's everything.
Hey, the fuck
are you doing here?
I'm like four days on the job.
I thought, "I'm in.
I'm one of you guys."
I walked into
the locker room,
and there's Andr
sitting there,
playing cards
with Tito Santana.
Tito, I saw him put his head
down like, "What is this guy
doing?"
And he said,
(imitates Andr)"Get out."
So I said,
"No, no, no, no,
I work for you guys."
"I said, get out!"
He pushed the table away
they were playing cards on
and he got up, and I went,
"Oh, my God,"
and I ran out the door.
But Andr and I got
to know each other.
We became best friends.
Vince said, "Andr's requested
that you travel with him."
I said, "No problem." He said,
"Really?" I said, "Yeah!"
And then we were off
and running.
It was his big smile,
his sense of humor,
which was a little bit warped
sometimes, but made me laugh.

Man:

Compare your hand with Andr's,
will you, please?

You're a big man,
Lord Alfred.
Oh, my goodness!
Where did you go?
Andr just loved to laugh.
He just loved that.
Andr so enjoyed flatulence.
When he passed gas,
it was-- it was an event.
Flatulence,
that was his trademark.
And he had a real knack
for lifting his left leg.
I would see him go into
the launch position
and I'd say,
"Oh, my God, here it comes."
You never heard anything
like it.
It sounded like, you know,
like a deep roar kind of thing.
It would rumble.
(makes rumbling sound)
(imitating deep,
loud flatulence)
The sound of Andr
takin' a fart?
Well, they were loud.
Big man, big fart!
He loved to get you
in an elevator
and cut one of those
long 30-second farts
that sounded like skin
was flapping together.
(imitates farting noises)
I remember every once in
a while we'd charter a plane,
but to see the pilots almost
like somebody gets smoke
in their eyes,
I'm like, "You're gonna wreck
the plane, Andr.
You can't fart like that

in your pants."
And the pilots would be,
"GD this, F that,
I'm never getting
on this plane again."
Because of
his incredible size,
because of the era
that he lived in,
everything about him
is mythology.
The wildest, most outlandish
stories are what takes hold
in the public consciousness.
You could say anything
about Andr
and people would believe it.
You know, his...
the ring on his finger
is bigger than your wrist.
"Oh, really? Okay."
You could believe that.
This belongs
to Andr the Giant.
This is his ring,
and I kid you not,
I can get all three fingers
in that ring.
Beautiful ring indeed,
and thank you, Andr.
I used to say to people
that Andr has 82 teeth.
And they believed it.
I said, "Yeah, and it's kinda
like when you see his teeth
they're not real big
but they're like rows of teeth
like a shark behind him."
"No kidding!"
Larry Henning told me
when I first met him,
"You know he's got two hearts
and two rows of teeth."
And I believed him!

So I always catch myself
to try looking...
Every time Andr talked
to me,
I'd be looking
for that second row of teeth!
I said, "He couldn't have
two rows of teeth,
I could never seem them!"
The two hearts
I believed forever.

Okerlund:

Andr's life, in essence,
was one big traveling
road show.
300 days or nights
a year on the road.
I tell you,
I'm traveling so much,
last year I buy for \$67,000
just in airplane tickets.
\$67,000 just
in airplane tickets?

Announcer:

Where will you be traveling
in the near future?
You'll be going to
different countries, I guess.

Andr:

I'm gonna be between USA
and Canada for next month.
Then I go in Japan,
Australia, New Zealand...

Lawler:

He would be in Memphis
on Monday night,
have to travel 450 miles up
to Louisville, Kentucky,
the next day.
Then he would go from

Louisville to Evansville
the next night
and wrestle basically
for seven times
just in our territory
in that one week.
And then, he would hit
the road, you know,
to the next territory.
He may be in Florida
the following week.

Okerlund:

Think of all of the times
he went to Japan.
And international travel back
in the early days of his career
was not as slick
as it is today.

Lawler:

It had to be
an uncomfortable life.
There was no level
of comfort
for Andr when
he was on the road.

Talk Show Host:

That's right!

Hogan:

There was never a bed,
there never a knife,
there never a fork,
there was never a chair.
It was like if you had
to sit on baby furniture
your whole life
in a doll house.
I just remember
the 14-hour flights
from JFK to Narita
in Tokyo

that I knew he could not
go in the bathroom.
Those lavatories or whatever,
too small, he couldn't fit
in there,
so they have to draw
the curtain
and he would relieve himself
into a bucket
and then they'd bring it in
and dump it into the toilet.
But this is the type of thing
he had to endure every day.
(chattering)

Hogan:

When we'd walk through
the airports
if he got ahead of me,
I'd hear all the unkind things
that people would say
as he'd walk ahead of me,
"Oh, my God, look at that guy."
And it'd just break
my heart,
I felt like these people
don't even know this guy.
(chattering)

Okerlund:

They were making fun of him.
They perceived him as
a freak of nature.
And that hurt Andr
more than anything.
This guy was very sensitive.
People never saw
that side of him.
But he told me, he says,
"You know, boss,
sometimes they laugh at me,
they point at me,
it hurts my feelings."
He would cry.

You'd never think a guy
like that would cry,
but he would cry.

Shoemaker :

He's recognizable as
any sports star of the time.
This before the heyday
of the NBA
or, you know, of the NFL.
You can compare him
to Ali,
you can compare him
to Michael Jordan later on.
Muhammad Ali could put
on a trench coat and a ball cap.
Andr the Giant couldn't
hide in the back seat of a car.
Andr couldn't go anywhere.
No, think about it,
where could he go
in New York City right now
and sit down
and have a drink...
without people bugging him?
People would not
leave him alone.
You're always gonna
be bothered.
People are always going
to be pulling on your sleeve,
touching your hand,
wanting to take a picture.
He was conscious of not being
able to, kind of, hide.
He mentioned to me once that
he'd be so grateful
if he could have
one day a week
in which "I can
just walk around
and I'll be the size
of a normal man.
I could go to a movie,

I could get into a cab,
I could have my own car,
a normal car."

White:

On more than one occasion
he said,
"I wish I could be you
just for a weekend."
The only place he was really,
really comfortable
was when we got home
to the ranch.

Jackie McAuley:

In Charlotte, where
the Crockett promotion was,
he became friends with
a guy that lived there
who was from Ellerbe.
So, they would come
to Ellerbe to visit.
And he liked the town,
and so he decided
to buy the house.
My husband at the time,
Frenchie,
he had met Andr
when Andr was in Louisiana.
He called up and he asked
if we wanted to move up
and take care of his house,
that he had a house in Ellerbe,
and he wanted us to live there.
He told me that it reminded him
of France and the little town
that he grew up in.
He could just come here
and be himself.
He could go
to a convenience store,
which he couldn't do
in the real world.
I don't know of anybody

that even came up and said,
"Can I have your autograph?"
or "Can I take your picture?"
He would spend time
cutting trees and chopping wood
and the type of things
that he used to do
on his family's farm.

McAuley:

Don't you run into me!
- (laughing)
- Make me jump.

McAuley:

We were like
a surrogate family.
He didn't know
if he'd ever find somebody
that could put up with
the traveling that he does.
Before we even moved into
the house, he told me
that he had a daughter.
And, you know, that
she lived on the West Coast.

Robin Christensen:

I knew from day one
who my dad was.
So yeah, I totally noticed
that he was not around.
I knew what he was doing.
I knew he was
on the road wrestling.
Whenever they came to town,
my mom would take me.
He would come out after doing
his thing in the ring,
and we'd spend time together,
I'd sit on his lap.
My parents didn't really
stay in communication
with each other.
My mom didn't want me raised

around wrestling,
and from what I understand,
my dad didn't really want
that either.
I think he was a good man.
It's a grueling industry.
I totally get that.
I fully understand that
he couldn't be the father
he probably wanted to be.
I do forgive him
for not being there
when I wish
he would have been,
but at the same time,
you know, the hurt comes back.

White:

He wanted to be part
of her life,
but it just
didn't work out that way.
And, um...
it hurt him.
A lot of things hurt him,
just like they hurt you or me.

Morley Safer:

Andr Roussimoff,
known to his public
as Andr the Giant.
He's well over seven feet tall,
weighs almost 500 pounds,
and has made a tidy living
on the pro wrestling circuit.
As a child in France,
his body produced
too much hormone naturally,
which not only made him taller
but enlarged all of his organs
and distorted his features.
It is a condition
called Acromegaly,
and its signs

are unmistakable.
The condition
can be corrected
if diagnosed
at an early age.
I use what God give me.
I'm not supernatural,
I'm just myself.
So what God give me,
I use it to make a living.

Gino Brito:

He knew that he wouldn't
live to be 100. Right?
And he knew,
so he didn't care.
He says, "When I get to
the bump in the road,
I'll fall and that's it."
His philosophy was that,
you know, the Lord made him
the way that is he is
and, you know, that's how
he was going to live his life.
He never went to the doctor
until he broke his ankle.

Dr. Harris Yett:

He came into my office
in the early '80s
with an injury
of the ankle.
I'd never heard of him.
He was new to me,
and so my first impression was
this is the about
biggest guy I've ever seen.
As he came through
the door,
the room
temporarily darkened.
It was surprising
he was walking.
It was the sort of fracture

that people don't usually walk on.

Made measures to get him into the hospital to fix the ankle.

He had the features of gigantism, or the technical term is acromegaly.

Some features of his appearance, his forehead, his nose was large, his jaw was large.

His ankle bones were as a large as an average man's knee bones, for instance.

So I suspected this was a pituitary tumor acromegaly.

Hehir:

In Andr's condition at the time, would the disease have been treatable?

That was my impression from the endocrinologist. Treatable to a degree, not reversible, but maybe arrestable.

He decided that he didn't want treatment at that time because he thought it would interfere with his career as a wrestler.

Okerlund:

Andr initially didn't realize that he had acromegaly.

When he was informed, the commission doctors at Madison Square Garden told me he's gonna be lucky to live to be 40.

He refused, though,
the medical help.
He refused a lot
of medical help
during the course
of his lifetime.

McMahon:

There used to be a 10-pound
cast on this size 22 foot.

Shoemaker:

An ankle injury is never
a small deal.
But career-wise, the injury
was a really big deal
for Andr too.
Because while he was recovering
and getting back to action,
the pro wrestling world
was going through a sort
of seismic shift.
The Hulk Hogan era
was starting in earnest
under the watchful eye
of Vincent K. McMahon.
So in the early '80s,
Vince buys out his dad
and embarks upon
this program
of national conquest
of professional wrestling.
He realized that with the rise
of cable television,
he could turn the WWF
from a northeastern
wrestling promotion
into the first
national promotion.

Meltzer:

Vince took over in '82
and he decided he was
gonna go national.

He had his local television
that he taped in Allentown
and Hamburg, Pennsylvania,
and then Vince would send that
tape all over North America.

Hello everybody,

Vince McMahon here

at ringside

welcoming you to another
great championship card
of professional wrestling.

I knew exactly what

I wanted to do.

And I wanted to compete
with everybody.

And all the regional guys
in the little territories,
some of them even did
television out of a studio
and had a painting of
an audience in the background.

Commentator:

They're tearing up
about \$175
worth of clothes
off of him!

Commentator #2:

A match that you probably
never thought
you would see
on television.

A match that could fill
in any arena,
anywhere in the world,
as two champions battle
for supremacy at the...

The audience had never seen
our show before.

And it was vastly better than
anyone else's,
because we put
production value in it.

Commentator:

Superfly on his shoulders!
Right now, he's got 'em.
One, two, three!
The top stars from
all these territories
were calling up
Vince McMahon saying,
"Hey, I want to come work
for you."

Announcer:

The "Macho Man" Randy Savage.
Paul Orndorff!
Tito Santana, making
his initial appearance...

Ring Announcer:

Magnificent Muraco!
There was talk at this time
about cable television
becoming a reality.
What would happen
if suddenly there was
a TV station
that would be seen all over
the country?
How would that
affect wrestling?

Announcer:

Remember when TV was
its own little world?
Now with cable TV,
the world has gotten
a whole lot bigger. Cable TV.
Cable, all of a sudden,
gave you national distribution
of your wrestling product.
That's when those territories
went down the tube.
These networks were looking
for programming.

They bombarded
the USA Network.
They were on all the time.
Hello everyone this is
Vince McMahon in the studios
of the USA Cable Network!
Welcome to the Superstars
of Wrestling.
This is Vince McMahon
at ringside.
Welcome to
All-American Wrestling.
Hello, everyone,
welcome to Tuesday Night Fight.

Shoemaker :

Before, your only outlets
for self-promotion
were the pamphlets advertising
the wrestling matches
or the magazines
that would sometimes
be national.
Now you're on cable TV
once a week.
Your face on every television
in the country.
You can't have any better
self-promotion than that.
Combination
of cable penetration
and syndication
really brought
Vince and the WWE
to the forefront.
And all of a sudden
you had a universe.

Shoemaker :

He gets Bobby Heenan,
Jessie "The Body" Ventura
from the AWA.
He gets the Junkyard Dog
and King Kong Bundy

from Mid-South.
He goes
to the Crockett territory
and gets Ricky
"The Dragon" Steamboat,
Greg "The Hammer" Valentine,
and Rowdy Roddy Piper.
One of the most
integral figures to the WWF
becoming the cultural force
that it was, was Hulk Hogan.
McMahon, I found a man
out in my backyard,
Venice Beach, California.
I seen this man over there
pressing 615 pounds,
620 pounds...

Shoemaker:

You looked at Hulk Hogan,
you see everything
that Vince McMahon wants
a pro wrestler to be.
He's big, he's tan,
he's got the long blonde hair.
He was an action figure come
to life in the wrestling ring,
and he was young
and vital in a way
the wrestlers that
were famous
under Vince Sr.
weren't necessarily.

Man:

The Hulk is supported
by tree-like legs
that can leg press
over 1900 pounds.

Hogan:

My real name is
Terry Gene Bollea,
but when I first got

into the wrestling business
they gave me
the name Sterling Golden.

Announcer:

And it is Sterling Golden
catching him
with the golden squeeze.

Hogan:

I went to Memphis
with Jerry Lawler,
wrestled as
Terry "The Hulk" Boulder,
and then Vince McMahon Sr.
grabbed me and gave me
the name Hulk Hogan.
And when I asked him why Hogan,
he said,
"Well, we have all these
ethnic type wrestlers.
Chief J. Strongbow
for the Native Americans,
Bruno Sammartino
for the Italian-Americans,
Ivan Putski
for the Polish-Americans,
and you're Hulk Hogan
for the Irish-Americans."
It was the character,
the look, I grew up
watching this stuff.
And so I would take a little bit
from Dusty Rhodes, a little bit
from Superstar Billy Graham...
I'm gonna bury the man.
I'm gonna put my fist--
You know what
a fist sandwich is?
I heard about it.
Salt, pepper, tomatoes,
lettuce, ketchup...
Billy Graham one time said,
"I can pull the bumper off

a Cadillac, Jack."
But to me it turned into,
(huskily) "I can pull the
bumper off a Cadillac, Jack!"
And when I said it
I wanted it to be something
you never forget.
With all the fans,
in every arena,
I feel like a thousand
Hercules in one.
The 24" Pythons
are undefeatable.
Hogan was picked
to be in "Rocky III."
Sylvester Stallone
wanted to do a boxer
versus wrestler scene.

Movie Announcer:

Tonight we have a most unlikely
match for you.
The boxer against the wrestler.
I'm comin' after you, Balboa.
Let's call it off.
Aw, come on,
it's for charity.
Back in the day
when wrestling was
still regional and territorial,
it was just
a one-dimensional audience.
When they saw me standing
in the ring with Stallone,
the tan, the full head of hair,
35 years ago,
I think it made wrestling more
than one-dimensional.
They went, "Oh, my God, that's
what a wrestler looks like?"
Aaaah!

Hogan:

It's all fake, meatball!

All fake!
Thunderlips has gone
absolutely berserk!
Ow! Ahh!
Run for your life!
I think it changed the dynamics
of what wrestling was
to the mainstream audience.
Somebody hand me a hatchet!
No one can believe
the superhuman strength
of Thunderlips!
- Adrian!
- Rocky!
- Aaaaah!

- **Rocky:**

Announcer:

That's incredible!
Balboa was just heaved
clear into the fifth row!

Hogan:

And the movie hit,
that Hulkmania thing
took off like crazy.
Then I think Vince McMahon
saw it, that's why he talked
to me about coming back
to do this global takeover
that we did.

Announcer:

Hulk Hogan once again
with the Sheik.
And a big knee right
to the throat area.
He's got him!
We have a new champion!
As Hulk Hogan....
Hogan wins the title
from the Iron Sheik
in Madison Square Garden,

and they have
the big celebration
and Andr's there essentially
endorsing him.
Andr the Giant
congratulating
the new heavyweight
champion of the world.
That's nice of you.
I'm really proud of you!
Pouring the champagne
on him and everything
like that
to make sure
that everyone knew that
Hogan is the golden boy now.

Lawler:

The next thing you see
are Hulk Hogan action figures,
Hulk Hogan in music videos,
Hulk Hogan everything!
He was a marketable commodity.

Hogan:

I was getting
a lot of momentum.
You know, we had mainstream
coverage with MTV
and they were the new kid
on the block
as far as TV content,
they were red hot.
It was just a perfect storm.
It all just came together
at the right time.
When it broke loose
it really exploded.
I know I was there
for "WrestleMania I,"
and that was absolutely
the biggest thing
I'd ever been involved in
in professional wrestling.

Announcer:

The greatest spectacle
in wrestling.
Muhammad Ali!
Wrestling history
is taking place right now!
Right now!
I don't believe it!
I don't believe it!
(commentary continues,
indistinct)
That period from '84 through
the first "WrestleMania"
was the real breakthrough.

Okerlund:

Became more of
an entertainment vehicle
as opposed
to the old wrestling.
Andy Warhol, your impressions
of what took place earlier
on here.
Oh, I'm speechless.
That two-year period was huge
in changing the whole face
of the business.
In the '70s, pro wrestling
was still sort
of a niche attraction.
But in the early '80s,
you saw this explosion.
Hulk Hogan was on the cover
of "Sports Illustrated"
and there were wrestlers
appearing
on "Saturday Night Live"
and Andr the Giant
gets cast in
"The Princess Bride,"
a major motion picture.

Cary Elwes:

"The Princess Bride"
is a comedy.
It's a fantasy film.
It's a romantic adventure film.
It has everything.
It has giant rats,
giant eels.
It's one the classic fairytale
movies of all time,
and one of
the leading characters in it
is a giant called Fezzik.
Everybody move!

Elwes:

Bill Goldman, who wrote
the screenplay and the book,
described himself as
a lunatic fan of Andr's
and really wrote
the part for him.
So when Rob Reiner came onboard
as the director,
Goldman said to him,
"There's only one guy
who can do this."
He auditioned for the part,
and I didn't understand
a single word he said.
I didn't understand anything.

Fezzik:

How long do we have to wait
before if we know
if the miracle works?
I think he like
to scream at us.
But he was perfect for the part!
He's a giant!
There is nothing nearby,
not for miles.
Then there will be no one
to hear you scream.
(exclaims)

Robin Wright:

The size of his hands
were startling.
And I remember being freezing
cold, we were out in the woods.
He came over to me
and just put his hand
on my head, and his hand came
down to here all the way around.
Keep my head warm.

Rob Reiner:

The cliché of gentle giant...
- Hello, lady!
- is Andr,
that's what he was!
He did not do bad guy well.
- No.
- That was not his thing.
Beat it or I'll call
the brute squad!
- I'm on the brute squad.
- You are the brute squad.

Billy Crystal:

He had this poetry about him
and the sensitivity that was
so appealing.
He talked about the village
he was from
and his parents,
and he just wanted
to go back there,
and he talked about this farm
in North Carolina.
He said he loves it because
"nobody looks twice at me."
There were two sides to him.
There was the performer,
there was Andr the Giant,
and then there was
Andr Roussimoff.
The public Andr

had to be always on,
and then the private Andr
just wanted to hang out
and be one of the guys.
That's really who
he wanted to be.
He just didn't want
to be treated differently.

Reiner:

One day he came to work
and I said,
"What did
you do last night, Andr?"
He says, "I went to the bar,
I had a couple of drinks."
I said, "Well, tell me, what
do you drink? On an average?
What do you drink?"
He said, "Well,
I had six bottles of wine,
three bottles of cognac."
I said,
"You must have been drunk!"
He said, "No, no,
I didn't get drunk.
A little tipsy,
but not drunk."

So now, at 9:

the Nouveau Beaujolais
comes out.
And Andr--
I'm not exaggerating--
he starts drinking
and by the end of the day,
I'm not exaggerating,
he had drank 20 bottles
of Nouveau Beaujolais.
Andr couldn't fit on a horse,
he was too heavy,
we had guide wires from
the ceilings being lowered
a 500-pound drunken giant.

And he goes,
"Hello, boss, hello!"
Like this. And I thought,
this is an interesting job
I have here.

Westley:

Are there rocks ahead?

Fezzik:

we'll all be dead!

Vizzini:

No more rhymes,
now, I mean it!

Fezzik:

Anybody want a peanut?

Andr:

It's difficult everywhere I go.
They don't build anything
for big people.
They build everything for blind
people, for crippled people,
for some other people,
but not for big people.
So we have to fit in there,
and it's not too easy
all the time.

Elwes:

People think, oh--"
That's the first question
they ask me,
"Hey, do you go
drinking with Andr?
Wasn't it fun
to drink with Andr?"
'Cause they think of him
as this legendary drinker
and they think it's funny,
but in fact
he drank

because he was in pain.
And I asked him one day
and he explained to me
that his spine
and his neck and his knees
gave him a lot of trouble.

Crystal:

He wasn't that well during
the course of the movie
'cause his back
was so bad.
And I always thought
that the hard part
would be his performance,
but the wrestling was
the hardest thing for him.

Crystal:

he couldn't do
against the rock.
- And he couldn't catch Robin.
- He couldn't catch Robin.
There's a scene where
I'm supposed to fall
from the castle
and he catches me.
And they had to put me
on cables so that he had
no weight in his arms.
He had this wonderful sense
of humor about himself,
but he had a sadness too.
The reality of who he was was
was getting
more intense on him.
He knew he wasn't
gonna live long.

McMahon:

Andr knew that he wasn't
long for the world.
And he was hurting, he was
really, really hurting,

and I went over
to visit with him.
And Andr told me,
"I'm done, boss."
When he said done,
he meant not just wrestling,
but "After this, I'm done,"
basically, "I'm gonna go die."
And he told me about
his neck and his back
and things
of that nature
and what it would take
to have it fixed,
but he was not interested
at all.
And then when
I spoke to him about,
"Well, here's why I came over,
you know,
because there's a building
in Pontiac, Michigan,
it holds 93,000 people...
(camera lenses clicking)
...and I think that we could
set up the promotion correctly
and I think
it would sell it out."
What would everyone
really want to see?
And as mean Andr comes in,
"Who's gonna stop Andr?"
If he had a temper
or if he's a bad guy,
who's gonna stop him?
Well, there's only one person
who might be able to...

Meltzer:

Andr was in bad shape.
Andr needed the back surgery.
Vince had to tell Andr,
"Get the operation,
prolong your career,

come back to wrestle."
Andr wanted to have a reason
to live, not a reason to die.
And he knew that, "Wow,
I would have a whole
lease on life
if I can get through
this operation."
The allure of Hogan
pulled Andr through.

Shoemaker :

Hogan in a lot of ways
was the sort of
territorial hero,
but now the territory
is the entire country.
They bring in villains
for him to face,
and at some point
you gotta
come up with something
bigger and better.
Andr the Giant,
as a villain,
was bigger and better
than everything that
had come before.
Wasn't sure how
it was gonna go down,
I didn't have a problem doing
the job and Andr beating me.
It made me
just as big in my mind.
I wanted to be him,
he was the guy.
On the surface,
this is earth-shattering.
Andr and Hogan are going
to have a match
after being buddies for so long
and they've
never fought before.
In reality, of course,

they had fought before.

Meltzer:

They'd only wrestled
all over the country.
They'd wrestled in Florida,
they wrestled in Georgia,
they'd wrestle in Alabama,
they'd wrestle
in the northeast.
And they would often
be a tag team.
And it was
a great attraction,
Andr the Giant
and Hulk Hogan tag team
against whoever the villains
were at the time.
I can't think
of a better partner,
a better person
that'll stand toe to toe
and fight with me
all the way
than the big boss
Andr the Giant.
For the purposes
of "WrestleMania III,"
none of that ever happened.
That was a hard and fast rule.
Anything that happened
before "WrestleMania III,"
forget about it.
The majority of the fans
that are new cable fans
have not seen these
two guys wrestle before.
Now, I'm sure that
Hogan and Andr
had wrestled sometimes
in the New York area,
but the world had not seen these
guys go against each other.
Wait, what's going on here?

Hold on, man.
What are you
doing with him?

Shoemaker :

Hogan and Andr
are both on "Piper's Pit,"
and Andr comes out
with Bobby "The Brain" Heenan.
You're the reason I got
into professional wrestling,
you were like a God to me,
a role model!
You can't be here
with him, man.

Shoemaker :

Aligning yourself with
Bobby "The Brain" Heenan
is the most evil thing
a professional wrestler can do,
except maybe slapping
an old lady.
He's sick and tired of you
and what you stand for.

Shoemaker :

It's the first time
any wrestling fans
had seen Andr turn heel.
He had worked heel in Japan,
but again,
if it didn't happen
on American TV,
it doesn't count
for the WWF.
You're so jealous
of this man
you can't stand it!
This is the man for 15 years
that is undefeated.
But did you ever once--
No, man, you're wrong,
you're wrong!

The company told the story
so perfectly.
This was Cain and Abel.
Look at me when
I'm talking to you.
I'm here for one reason,
to challenge you for
the World Championship match
in "Wrestlemania."
(cheering)
Andr, please, no,
it's not happening.
I wanted to have it be
such an emotional moment.
I knew when Andr
ripped the shirt
if I could shed a tear,
that that would seal the deal.
We're friends, Andr, please.

Heenan:

You can't believe it?
Maybe you'll
believe this,
Hogan!
(cheering)
What are you doing, man?
I had Vicks VapoRub
on my finger,
and you could see me
as he's ripping the shirt,
I'm trying to stick it
in my eye,
but he's jerking me back
and forth...
I really didn't need it.
It was just so upsetting
that he did that
that I was
in the moment anyway.
What is he doin'?
You're bleeding.
- What's-- Andre...
- Come on.

Hogan:

We wanted a clear-cut
good and bad guy.
Andr became bitter
and jealous and evil.
The significance made
the fans go, "You know what?
We want Hulk Hogan to beat
this big, nasty giant now.
Now we're all
on Hulk Hogan's side."
Are you or are you not
gonna fight him
at "WrestleMania III"
for the World Heavyweight
Championship?
Yes or no?
Yes!
(cheering)

Announcer:

We are here for
the most auspicious signing
for any heavyweight title match
in history, as you all know.

Lawler:

It was monumental,
Because Andr had been
such a revered character
for so many years.
He was the kind of guy
that people could relate to
and felt that they knew
the real Andr
and that he was genuinely
a good guy.
All of a sudden we're gonna
create a new character,
totally different from anything
that people had ever seen,
and that's the bad guy
Andr the Giant.

You never once gave this man
an opportunity.
Now he's got
that opportunity.
Sign it
if you're gonna sign it!
In the fans' eyes,
they were shocked.
When you tore my shirt off, man,
when you tore the cross,
you tore the heart
and soul out of all
the little Hulksters, man.
Not just me.

Shoemaker :

For fans of my generation,
that wasn't just the first time
we'd seen Andr as a heel,
that was the first time
that we'd even thought about
morality on that level.
We can't possibly imagine
Hogan losing.
But we also can't imagine him
beating Andr the Giant.
You know, it's crazy,
but we would really talk
about these things
like you're talking
about Ali-Frazier.
Both are physical phenoms.
Andr stands at 7'4"
and weighs 525 pounds.
We were kids, but we were
breaking this down like
it was a real sporting contest,
even though on some level
we knew it was fake, right?
But it's just like,
"How could this possibly go?"
Hulk Hogan,
champion for over three years,
Andr the Giant,

undefeated for 15 years.
It promises to be
the greatest title bout
in wrestling history.
Hulk Hogan versus
Andr the Giant
in "WrestleMania III."
Sunday afternoon,
March the 29th.
Andr was in dire straits
when it came to his health.
He had had the back surgery,
and he was walking around
on a cane.
And I said to myself,
"That's gonna be your main event
for "WrestleMania III?"
How are these two guys
gonna pull this off?"
Andr didn't let Hogan
know a whole lot
about what he could
or couldn't do in the ring.
And I think that kind
of weighed on Hulk Hogan
in the back of his mind
for a match of that magnitude.
It bothered him.
Hogan was really concerned
that Andr wasn't gonna,
quote, "Put him over."
And Andr did not want
Hogan to know.
Terry had so much respect,
again, for Andr,
he just wouldn't
come up to Andr and say,
"Are you gonna put me over?"
You know?
He wouldn't do that because
that would be disrespectful.
So it was always
this bit of doubt.
And Hogan kept coming to me,

"Are you sure the boss
is gonna put me over?"
"No problem."
"Are you sure?"
"No, he's gonna do it, Terry."
He was nervous.
Because Andr kept playing

to him:

(imitates Andr)
"I'm gonna do what
I wanna do."
And Hogan would hear that,
"What the fuck?"
I kept asking Vince, "What are
we gonna do for a finish?"
He goes,
"Hey, don't worry about it,
I'm gonna talk with Andr."
Finally we're
in Detroit, okay?
The night before
"WrestleMania."
He goes, "Well, what do
you picture the match as?"
I said, "Give me
your yellow legal pad."
So I get Vince's legal pad
and I go, "Okay, walk
to the center of the ring,
start arguing,
I'll start shaking my head.
Andr throws a punch,
I block it,
hit him one punch,
two punch,
I go to the slam,
he falls on top of me,
one-two, almost pins
right out of the chute.
Picks me up, slam me again,
step on my back"--
I wrote it all down.
Wrote the hole match

from top to finish,
and then I left
the finish open.
Gave Vince the legal pad,
Vince goes
to talk to Andr.
Andr loved to bust balls,
and, you know,
he was busting Hogan's,
and out of respect to Andr
I'm gonna go
right along with it.
So Hogan was concerned
all the way up
to the day of the show.
(cheering)

Hogan:

I'm at the building early,
and I said, "Hey, man,
what's the deal, brother?"
"Oh, don't worry,
you're gonna be okay."
I said,
"Well, what's the finish?"
"Andr's gonna do
the right thing."

Announcer:

Welcome to the magnificent
Silverdome...
and welcome to
"WrestleMania III!"
(cheering)

Hogan:

If Vince knew the finish,
I don't remember him telling me
that "You're gonna win."
I never remember him
saying that to me.
I never remember him saying,
"You're winning."
When he got to the building

that day, Andr, typical Andr,
he went in, put a bottle
of wine on the table,
started playing cards.
Everyone's running around,
nervous wrecks.
I mean, this was
the biggest show of all time.
Usually I didn't sit next
to him in the dressing room.
But that day he wanted me
in the dressing room.
And I know his back
was killing him.
And as we were sitting
there I said,
"Andr, what do you want
to do out there?"
"Don't worry."
I said, "Okay, I won't worry."
Andr just kept playing cards.
Wasn't sweatin' a thing.
Hulk came over a couple times
and said, "We good, boss?"
He goes,
"I don't know."
(cheering)

Okerlund:

And Andr the Giant
just moments away from
you're stepping
through the ropes
and into the ring
to meet Hulk Hogan
in the biggest title match
of all time.
I want to get your thoughts.
Gene, you see me now,
and I'm going into the ring,
and believe me,
it's not gonna take me too long
to come back right here
in front of the camera

with the World Championship belt
around my waist.

We're getting ready to go out
for the main event
with 93,000 people,
and maybe Andr
changed his mind.

And I believe this too:
Vince wasn't completely sure.
(cheering)

Announcer :

This is the main event
of the evening!
There was
this incredible buzz.
It was time
for the main event.
That's a sight to behold,
just Andr on that cart
going to the ring
and how big he is standing
next to Bobby Heenan.

Announcer :

An awesome figure,
that 7'5" frame
of Andr the Giant.
The roof of the Silverdome
about to explode here!
I remember it was just
so loud in there
my jaws watered like
I smelled food or something.
It was just so electric
and so loud that it was
just pure adrenaline.

Announcer :

You got 93,173 fans
standing on their feet
for this one, Gorilla.

Gorilla Monsoon:

The irresistible force meeting
the immovable object!
We started the match,
and out of nowhere
he throws that first punch.
Whoa. I block it.
I throw one, I throw two,
and I go under him
for the slam,
and we fall backwards
exactly like I wrote it down.

Announcer:

And the Hulkster unloading,
going for a slam!
Oh, he almost got him up!
He collapsed! One, two!
He pulled himself up by
the ropes, and I'm waiting,
he picks me up and slams me.

Announcer:

Oh, a slam! Andr picked him up
with ease!
Ohhhh!
Then he stood on me and walked
over me with his foot.
Exactly what was
written down there.
(cheering)
The whole match was built around
Andr's limitations.
And Hulk Hogan
working around Andr.
Andr couldn't move.

Hogan:

His back was really bad,
he probably should not
have been in the ring.

Announcer:

Oh! The bear hug!

Meltzer:

It was a very basic match.
One of the key spots
in the match,
actually one of the most
memorable spots
'cause it was like
four minutes,
Andr grabbing him
in a bear hug.

Hogan:

Usually when we grab
the bear hug
I'd jump up and he'd
hold me up in the air
and rag doll me--
I wouldn't let him
do any of that.
Made sure
I stood up straight
so he could stand up
as straight as he could.

Announcer:

The Hulkster,
just withering away here.
One more time.
If that arm drops, it's over.
(cheering)
Tossing it up! It's up there!
Listen to these fans!

Meltzer:

Andr knew what to do.
Andr could do the basic things
that he had to do
that didn't
tax any physicality.

Announcer:

Andr being stung now!

Meltzer:

But they were so popular,
it didn't matter what they did.
It was like no way
this match couldn't work
short of Andr getting hurt and
then being unable to continue.

Announcer:

Andr now with
an Irish Whip!
Oh, he dropped
the big guy!

Jesse Ventura:

That's the first time
I think that
the Giant's ever been
knocked off his feet like that!

Announcer:

on the face of the champion!
He's Hulking up, Jess!
Finally, out of nowhere, "Slam!"
Holy shit, he called slam.
(cheering)

Announcer:

Look at this!
He slammed him!
I don't believe it!
Right when he hit
I heard him go, "Leg drop!"
I went and hit the leg drop,
thinking he's gonna kick out.
You know?
And he didn't kick out.
(cheering)

Announcer:

Hulk dropping a big leg!
Over for the jumper!
He got him!
- (cheering)
- Unbelievable!

Ventura:

it could be done, Gorilla.

Monsoon:

Neither did these 93,000 plus
as the World Heavyweight
Champion,
Hulk Hogan, has proven
to everyone what he's made of.
Hmm.

At the time he knew much more
than all of us.

He knew that that's
what had to be done
to get me to where
I needed to be
to help Vince
move this business forward.

Ventura:

That's 525 pounds
of living flesh
that he picked up
and slammed.

Monsoon:

There go the losers. Look at
Bobby "The Brain" Heenan.
Andr still extremely upset.
And that man right there
has won the hearts of everyone.
Look at what the Hulk
is giving them now.

Meltzer:

For the narrative of wrestling,
you want that old star to pass
the torch to the new star,
and that was, you know,
the moment that it happened.
In the history of wrestling,
it was-- it was huge.
If Hogan talks about

his legacy,
I bet you that's the first thing
he talks about still.
Hogan beating Andr was symbolic
of Vince McMahon
putting the ghosts of
the territorial era to bed.
This is Hulk Hogan
defeating the biggest star
in professional wrestling
history until Hulk Hogan.
Andr's career
started going downhill
pretty much immediately
after "WrestleMania III."
They kept him feuding
with Hulk Hogan,
but I don't think he ever
wanted to be a heel.
He liked to ride into every town
with people cheering him on.
And that sort of reaction
is addictive.
It's hard to be booed
when you go out in public,
especially if you're 7'4"
and it's impossible
to hide from those sort
of reactions.

Announcer:

At one time,
Andr was a hero
to young and old alike,
male, female--
didn't matter.
Everybody loved Andr.
But now?
Persona non grata.
There he is outside the ring,
and the fans
are letting him know
he's not very welcome here.
It was over

a matter of time.
You didn't see it every day.
But month after month
you could see Andr failing.
First he starts working
a very limited ring style.
Now he can barely
walk around the ring.
I mean, you see him
in some fights where
he constantly
has one hand on the ropes.
Or he has his hands
on his opponent, to get--
he just needs something
to steady himself.

Announcer:

Andr the Giant
with glazed eyes.
Then he starts working
predominantly tag team matches
where he can just stand there
and look imposing.

White:

I spent every day with him.
And I could see it
going this way.
He was in a lot of pain.
To look at him
in the rear view mirror,
he was-- you could see it
on his face, the pain he was in.
I'd say, "Boss, you all right?"
"Don't worry, boss."
He was so easy even though
he was suffering.

McMahon:

Andr's body was breaking down
and he could not perform.
So we could slow things down
for Andr

in the latter years,
and what have you.
But eventually it
does catch up with you,
and your career is over.
And it's difficult
for someone to accept that.
Andr got knocked out
of the game.
It was very hard on him...
you gotta remember
this was his life.
Now all of a sudden
where you're not in action,
you're introduced as a guest.
Andr didn't like that.
He kind of disappeared
off the scene
and was spending his time
more down in North Carolina,
kind of on the shelf.

McAuley:

As his physical health
started to deteriorate,
his knees and his back
were succumbing
to the weight of his body.
And he wasn't laughing
and joking as much.
I still think he had that...
that instinct, you know,
"I'm young at heart,
I love this business."
I think he wanted to be
out there with the fans.
He just loved this business,
and he lived for it.
I'm going to be here
for a long, long, long time.
That happens to a lot of us.
You know?
It happens to
a lot of the guys,

and Andr was our leader.
When his career was over,
he had no value, you know,
to himself.
(cheering)
"No longer. I'm not gonna
be around the boys
and socializing
and things of that nature.
I'm stuck here
in North Carolina,
and I was responsible for the
fact that business was good."
And everybody else
was going on without him.
Andr more or less
wanted to blame me
and resented me a bit
because he knew that
the business was going
to go on without him.
I think Andr resented
that a little bit too,
that his time was up, damn it.
You know?
And yet I was gonna continue on.
And sometimes it can even
be a situation whereby
"Well, you used me."
No longer, when I was
in Andr's presence,
no longer was it this loving,
warm, admiration
that we had for each other.
Wasn't there.

Laprade:

In December of 1992,
Andr's health
was getting worse.
He really, really
was in bad shape.
He was still growing,
but the organs,

and especially the heart,
weren't.

McAuley:

His father had been sick
and in and out of the hospital.
And he flew back to France.

(woman speaking French)

(man speaking French)

I get a call saying
that his father had passed
and he was staying there
for the funeral.

While he was
in his hometown,
he had been sitting
in the local bar/restaurant
with his friends.

The skin tone and texture
in the pictures...

he just looked so bad.

I don't know,
it's almost like he already
looked like he was dying.

(Hortense speaking French)

(man speaking French)

News Anchor:

One of the legends
of the professional
wrestling world
is dead tonight.
Andr Roussimoff,
better known
as Andr the Giant,
died of an apparent
heart attack in Paris.

News Anchor #2:

The professional wrestler
known as Andr the Giant
has died in Paris
of an apparent heart attack.
He was 46 years old.

We all have regrets in life,
but I wish...
There's no cryin'
in wrestlin'.
I wish
I could have been there.
With him.
He died all alone
in a hotel room.
I can't change that now,
can I?

Interviewer:

Do you remember the last time
you spoke with him?
Not specifically.
Um...
No, I don't.
I have a facility to...
to get rid of negatives
very quickly.
And if something hurts me,
I get rid of it.
Did Andr's passing affect
you more than other passings
that you've experienced?
More than what?
More than other passings
that--
Oh, God. (sniffles)
He was special.
(birds singing)
(speaking French)
(Hortense speaking French)

Andr:

You never know, maybe tonight
will be my last night.
Maybe tomorrow will be
my last night,
and so I don't make any plans,
I just keep going.
He was like...
a brother.

He was like a big part of me.
How do you replace that?
He was the guy, and he always
will be the guy.
And I say all the time,
I don't want to be the champion,
I just want to be the Giant.
I just want
to be Andr the Giant.

Todd:

Andr never needed costuming.
He never needed to paint
his face or wear strange robes.

Announcer:

The single most
extraordinary athlete
of this or any other
generation...

Todd:

He was absolutely unique.
He was a figure
of the imagination
come to life.

Meltzer:

We're a myth-making people.
That's how
we understand ourselves
and the world around us.
He's not the only
real person
around whom
mythology has grown.
William Wallace,
Vlad the Impaler,
Davy Crockett.
These are real people
around whom
these incredible mythologies
grew over the years.
Andr the Giant

is one of those people.
He is at once a real human,
but at the same time
he's a mythological figure.

Andr:

I like to make everybody happy
and that's why I'm traveling
all over the world.

I want to make everybody
have the chance
to see the Giant,
and I want to say hello
to everybody.

(music playing)

Man:

This has been
a presentation of...