

# An Open Letter to All Who Treasured Monty Oum

by Shane Newville

## Summary

I had big dreams for a long time but never believed in myself. I started going for it anyway and met Monty Oum, who helped the crap out of me. After years of teaching myself, loads of practice, picking his brain, and taking his advice, I eventually got a job that allowed me to work with him and get paid for it. It was the dream job, for a time. Regardless of what follows I am forever grateful for that. Working with him was really my only reason for being at Rooster Teeth.

Monty met one of the greatest women on earth (Sheena Duquette) and got married. For close to a year both he and she worked together on RWBY Volumes 2 & 3 (herself unofficially and uncredited). He spent more time at home working with her at his side than he did at the office, hoping to bring RWBY back on track to the way he wanted to tell the story. Too soon, Monty passed away. Sheena was not allowed to continue working on RWBY. After Rooster Teeth closed the door in her face, she moved to LA to be around people who loved and supported her. It was a long 4 months of politics and fighting to protect Monty's legacy, as we cared about him and his vision more than we cared about the company selling its IP and making bank.

My wife left with our kids. She wanted a divorce. It was difficult for her to deal with me, my issues, and the insane amount of work I took on. She was hurting and lonely. I was still supporting my family though as the main income provider, and because I cared so much about honoring Monty I had 2 reasons for spending 7 months alone in Austin, TX: 1) To provide for my family. 2) To do what I could to ensure every bit of Monty's finished and unfinished work still made it into the show intact.

I was not allowed to work the way I did with Monty, but was instead pushed to meet the new standards— effectively doubling or tripling the amount of work I had to do. This meant more time spent trying to make everything fit the new, "proper", way, and leaving less time for making cool stuff. At times I had to animate scenes without the assets, then do it all over again when they were given to me later, often last minute or close to the due date. It was very discouraging, among many other things, but I still looked forward to doing Monty proud and finishing his scenes. Scenes which, several times, got completely cut or changed so that they no longer had any relevance, or just way less of an impact.

As much as I wanted to leave throughout 2015, I was still committed to trying my best and not quitting until my job was complete. I imagine Rooster Teeth knew this about me and chose to let me go (for whatever reason they decided) in the middle of working on the last fight. It made no sense to anyone who knew me and what I was dealing with. Especially so close to the end. I was lied to and totally caught off guard. Without explanation or warning I was brought to the office where I was given a speech about my performance not being that great. They escorted me back to collect my things but they had already removed the computers and my personal hard drives and would not return them until they finished archiving them all. And that was that.

## Introduction

While I have many thoughts and opinions about other people and their actions, I can't speak for them. But what I can do is tell you my story so you might understand who and what Monty was (and still is) to me. I feel it's the only way I can truly explain those things I want you to know.

I spent a large portion of my life wishing I could make awesome animations. I wanted to go to school but no opportunities came my way, not that I even believed in myself enough to attempt to enroll. I doubted my ability to keep up with the average person and learn, even if I were to find a way in.

In late 90's I installed a trueSpace demo, pushed buttons, got lost, and uninstalled. I tried Blender, didn't get far before letting the UI overwhelm me, and uninstalled. I got the furthest with DOGA-L1/L2, but had to delete any finished animation to make space on the computer for the next. Eventually I put animation on hold to pursue music.

# 2007

## *Baby Steps*

This was the year that it hit me. No one was going to make it happen for me so I needed to make it happen for myself. I needed to be the one to pursue my own passions and stop making excuses for why I couldn't. The only thing I was ensuring by not doing anything was my own failure, which was the biggest thing I feared, and it kept me from even trying. I was stuck in a never-ending loop of nothing happening. It was time to start taking steps whether I felt I could or not. Even if I was taking baby steps I knew that that was still progression toward my goals. And so it began.

I grew up being a fan of ninjas and martial arts, so naturally I wanted to make awesome fights. I loved watching cut scenes in games like Panzer Dragoon, the Final Fantasy series, etc., and anything 3D. I began researching 3D martial arts animations and right away came across Monty Oum's "Haloid". It was the first time I saw the work of someone doing exactly what I wanted to do and it blew my mind. I wrote a letter to him thinking slim chance I would get a reply, but I had to try anyway. I had questions. Lots and lots of questions.

### *Letters from Monty*

To my surprise, about a week later I got a response. Maybe his inboxes were not yet flooded with fan letters. Monty had just begun gaining popularity from his work so maybe the timing just happened to work in my favor. I don't know. Either way, I was overwhelmed with excitement and couldn't wait to read his response. I soaked in every single word he wrote to me, typos and all. I tasked myself with doing the research and working to figure out what he was talking about before I would even think about sending another message of questions. I valued his time and did not want to waste a moment of it. If I was going to bother him to pick his brain, I better have some results to show from our last talk. Lots of people show interest and ask questions but then vanish.

The years went on. Sometimes months would pass between letters. But I was learning, I was moving forward. Any time I got stuck I had to remind myself that other people most likely ran into these problems too, and that the answers were out there. Research. Practice. Practice. Research.

## **2008**

I made my first 3D test fight animation. I did it one night while house-sitting with my wife Katie. It was total crap but a lot of fun to make. Most importantly, it was another step towards doing what I wanted to do.

Test - Fight Animation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyY3ROG-7eI>

## **2009**

I finally met up with Monty in person at Anime Expo in Los Angeles. Meeting him face-to-face was the sole reason I went. I prepared so many questions in advance, and I even offered to buy him lunch to make it more worth his time. This is one of the few photos I have of he and I together:

<http://shanenewville.deviantart.com/art/Monty-Oum-and-Shane-Newville-128509564>

It was such a great time. I showed him my work on Little Ninja Project and, thankfully, he saw potential in my work and gave me tons of helpful feedback and tips for things to work on.

Little Ninja Project: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJX2pjbXAsc>

Death of Little Ninja Project: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xe3nchjxpzc>

I regret not taking more photos with him. I was always afraid of coming off as a fanboy. I was insecure. I loved him as my brother and close friend, and I was worried pictures would take away from that. But it is now a regret of mine. I no longer have the opportunity to take photos. I saw Monty write before, "Life is short, take more photos". Whether he was quoting someone else or not, it is good advice, and I wish I had taken it to heart.

## 2010

I started working on another Test Fight animation, deciding to continue the "story". I was hoping to slowly develop it into something more as I learned how to animate. I met up with Monty again at Anime Expo 2010 in LA, and again that month when he attended San Diego Comic Con.

He gave me lots of helpful feedback and showed me some incredible, still unreleased work for future Dead Fantasy episodes. It was like being on cloud nine any time I got to have a discussion with him. Not just from being a fan of his work, but here was a guy doing something amazing... why the heck was he talking to me? Regardless, I soaked it in and learned all I could from my time with him.

### *Almost Too Much*

After he had gone back to Austin, my wife Katie snuck his number off my phone, called him and set up the best birthday gift ever. She sent me off in November to spend a weekend with him at an empty Rooster Teeth building. Everyone was out of the office all weekend except for him. What did we do? Nothing but work.

It was glorious. I learned so much— so so much. I saw, finally, first hand, how he created his amazing choreographed scenes in Poser. The Test Fight Animation 2 project I had spent months working on... he took the whole thing and recreated it with me, in Poser, in less than 2

days. Everything I thought I knew about how one was supposed to approach animation got shredded to bits, scattered across the ground, and used as fertilizer for the new seeds planted in my mind to grow and flourish. It was almost too much. But at the same time, no, it was not too much. In fact, it was way less because this way allowed much more time for actually creating things. His way of work was so pure, raw, unorthodox, and efficient. It was flawed— not stuck in the cookie cutter shapes of standardization, and that is what made it perfect. He was actually able to accomplish things. All the things that we've come to know him for.

Test - Fight Animation 2 – Original: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=shfQ6G6Yp4I>

Test – Fight Animation 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TOWlCZzTZYI>

### *Challenges*

I had a lot working against me. Diagnosed with major depression at a very young age (4 or 5), my self esteem had been shot to pieces by many things that happened or were told to me from early childhood all the way into adulthood. I felt I had no right to call myself an artist, or a real animator for that matter, even while working directly with Monty.

I have had people tell me right to my face that I was not going to stand a chance because I just don't have what it takes. I was working full-time at a job that did not pay me enough for rent. My wife and I had to live in special situations where extra labor (yard work, house cleaning, taking care of animals on a ranch, etc.) was required as trade for a place to stay. I thought negatively about waiting this long to start pursuing my passion. I was married. I had 2 kids. Where is there room for not only teaching myself animation, but getting good enough to make anything worth watching? No matter what, I kept going. Monty's undying drive and motivation to create things, no matter what, kept me going.

I had hope. I took the many difficulties as simply a challenge to overcome. Because if I could accomplish something even remotely cool with all of those obstacles, how much more would it encourage others to keep going and overcome their own challenges? Even if one had greater challenges, could I give them the motivation to face them anyway and overcome? It's so important to keep hope alive in the face of what seems impossible.

## 2011

I felt trapped out in the desert. It was the second year my wife and I had spent living in a house where it was over 100 degrees most of the year. This was southeast of San Diego, where the people don't believe in air conditioning either. I would spend all day working at the studio, feeling uninspired and uncertain if what I was doing was worth it. We were making too little income to even rent our own place and working too many hours to have room for a second job. If any emergencies had come up we would have been screwed. We didn't even have enough money to move. We were just trapped. It was a very difficult and trying time.

Finally things started to work out after what seemed like forever. Katie, myself, and our 2 kids hopped in the car and we made our way across the country, back to Michigan. I made it a priority to work on my Megaman X Fanimation project, feeling as if that was all I had to show for myself in hopes of getting a job anywhere. I applied at McDonald's, Blockbuster, local restaurants, a pizza joint. Nobody had room for me. I took on freelance jobs, the kind where they pay you peanuts and require you to work around the clock to get unrealistic tasks done. It was incredibly stressful and I had little to nothing to show for it. I was almost certain I'd be getting kicked out and living on the streets as a failure not too far from then.

## 2012

After 3 months of unemployment hell I decided to check Rooster Teeth's job openings on LinkedIn for the heck of it. The only opening was for Technical Director (which I definitely didn't qualify to do). Katie was very enthusiastic about me applying, and even though I doubted myself, I applied anyway. I explained how I was not qualified for the TD position, but mentioned my animation skills. Kathleen was in charge of some things at the time and called me up to tell me they were interested in bringing me on board. I think a week went by. Katie, surprised with the lack of info in my initial email, encouraged me to send a better resume as well as a portfolio of my work. I was later told that Kathleen showed Monty my email, he immediately knew who I was, and said "yes". So I got the job. I am very grateful to her for helping make it possible for me to work alongside Monty. The next day Matt called to welcome me onto the team.

I headed down to Texas right away without a plan or much money. It was tough being away from my family for a few weeks and not having a place to live until I finally got sorted. I'm sure I

could have asked Monty or someone if I could have used their couch until I could afford a place, but I did not want to be an inconvenience to anyone.

### *Red Vs Blue Season 10*

When I arrived there were only a couple people on the team working on Red vs Blue Season 10. It was finally time for me to put into practice all I had learned from Monty. I adopted his workflow as my workflow. He first tasked me with making some general one-on-one fight animations. The cool thing about using Poser is we could easily reuse or repurpose whatever we made for any character we might work on in the future. Because of this feature Monty convinced Rooster Teeth to let me finish my own project, Megaman X Fanimation, on company time. Usually this meant working all morning and day on RvB, then all night on MMXF. It was tough on Katie— I was not home very much. I felt I needed to do this though, to establish myself, especially since I had no prior schooling or experience in the industry like everyone else there did. I was just some kid who worked at a pizza place and had nothing to show but a few personal test animations and unfinished projects.

After making some awesome and fun stuff with Monty on RvB, Season 10 came to an end. I was then brought on as full-time employee. Even though the season was over work never stopped. I went into hardcore mode, finishing Megaman X Fanimation and doing some research and development with Monty for whatever came next.

Megaman X Fanimation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F991RSOU00Y>

### *RWBY*

It was Monty's turn to come up with his own show, so there was a period of time in which much brainstorming took place. He formulated the ideas of who Ruby would be, and what the universe and all of its rules would be. I remember being there while he tried explaining his ideas to his other colleagues, and some of their responses were very underwhelming (it's difficult to get others to see your vision without showing them). Regardless, he got to work on something. He spent the next week designing what we now know as the Crescent Rose. Of course, everyone who saw the transformation animation on his computer got excited.

Then he spent about a week, by himself, making the Red Trailer. Jeff and Casey Williams were also a huge part of it, coming up with the sound for the show. Finally, at the Monday company-wide meeting Monty came out, set the laptop on the table, and showed the trailer. Jaws dropped. You could see everyone understood now that this was something big.

Red Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pYW2GmHB5xs>



Right away he got started on the White Trailer, which was also done solo. Around the time of its completion I finished making MMXF.

White Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vt9vI8iAN5Q>

## 2013

Now that I was freed up, Monty and I were fully able to join forces to make the Black and Yellow trailers. It was quite possibly the most fun, hard work I have done with him. Since Monty was in charge, we could do whatever we wanted. We were constantly brainstorming things that were too crazy, but then we went and did them anyway. Really, we had too many ideas to fit into the trailers, so lots were put on hold for use at a different time. All the while, the show's direction was solidifying.

We were still finishing up the Black Trailer in the hotel at PAX East before our panel, where we would show the world what was cooking.

Black Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImKCt7BD4U4>

The same thing happened with the Yellow Trailer, which we premiered at our panel at A-kon in Dallas, TX.

Yellow Trailer: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCw\\_aAS7vWI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCw_aAS7vWI)

### *RWBY Volume 1*

When official production started a lot more people became involved. This was good because we needed a team. It was also bad because it meant that suddenly other people were calling the shots on his show in ways different from how Monty intended. I was there to witness his frustrations. The look of the show changed. The process of creating assets and the art style changed. The quality in animation varied drastically from scene to scene. People were hired who we said no to. People we wanted on the team were passed over. He never let it slow him down though, he was not the type to confront people unless absolutely necessary. He just did his best and made all of his contributions to the show stand out, and I did my best to do the

same. After all, we were still able to use our unorthodox methods to bring our imagination to life with very little limitation.

## 2014

Early in the year Katie told me she wanted a divorce. It was devastating and I became ill for a time. I still went to work, but it was all-consuming. I would escape to the bathroom to try and deal with the pain just enough to get back to my desk.

I still managed to do my work on RWBY Volume 2. It was one of the few things I could do that gave me a sense of accomplishment, and was something I could feel good about. Still, I'd be lying if I said my productivity didn't take a major hit because of it. I did all I could to work on my marriage even after being told nothing I did mattered. I began going to counseling, and then marriage counseling. I really thought things were looking hopeful. Still, I could only focus on one day at a time. I did my best.

### *Those Monty Moments*

Pretty much every single day I worked with him we would get coffee and talk. They were always productive conversations. We were always figuring out new and more efficient ways to make cool things happen. There was so much value in our (his) workflow—the workflow that caused people on the same team to begin to dislike him and how much power he had. But his power was never about control. He used it to make beautiful things, and no one could replicate what he did. Because of this, no matter what kind of changes and attempts to standardize our workflow were made, he continued to do what he did best. And because of that we got those insanely awesome scenes people watched the show to see. Those Monty moments. The parts that were memorable and meaningful way beyond just making things that look pretty, just to look pretty.

It was not as easy for me though, as I was in a unique position: I tried to stick to Monty's workflow but Rooster Teeth would not allow me to. I was the only person who worked this closely with Monty, the only other person to keep my secondary hard drive synced with his, and the only other person who seemed to see the value of working the way we worked. Unfortunately, I wasn't untouchable and I did not have the same sway that he had. I felt them prying me away from him, little by little, throughout my time there. I had to fall into the company's standardized ways of working, just like the rest of the team. I had to work harder than most just to get my simple tasks accomplished because I still worked closely with Monty and stuck to the way we did things. I then had to go back and spend a good amount of time

making it fit the new system. But I didn't complain because it was doable and I still had the freedom to make the things happen that Monty and I discussed. Either way, we always ended up hitting a place where there was just no time left to make my work fit their new standards. It came to a point where I simply had to get stuff done. So those moments allowed me little windows of time to go full Monty. Some examples are the Zwei fireball (RWBY Volume 2), making Penny slice a gunship in half with lasers (specifically to tease Miles), and having a velociraptor fall out of it (RWBY Volume 1). We did a lot of things that were not scripted.

### *Velociraptor*

The Velociraptor easter eggs were really sort of our thing, between Monty and I. Monty started it just to be silly. After each girl from team RWBY was revealed in their individual trailers, he posted a ridiculous series of pictures on Twitter of all of them doing something with the velociraptor (a default asset that comes with Poser). It was just senseless fun. These were much needed wtf moments. It was a reminder that Monty was still Monty and could still have fun doing great things. It was never once about money or fame— it was about making people happy. It was about giving a gift to the world, something new and fun to enjoy. It was amazing and perfect. We always talked about putting the velociraptor in the show and that became my personal task to ensure that it happened. Unfortunately, the way things went in Volume 3 made that much more difficult and I did not put it in the show. Later I heard someone else did. While I appreciate the efforts, if done by someone who had no clue of its origin, it's not quite the same.

It took a lot of work and was a lot of fun, but we finally made it through Volume 2. No matter how difficult things were, it was no problem as long as Monty was there. No matter what anyone else thought, we were a team. It was starting to become clear though that some people did not see it that way within the company's walls. They tried to pull me away from Monty and referred to me as "an asset". I had to fight to continue working alongside Monty, the only reason I was there in the first place. A whole month's worth of time was wasted trying to get an official word, just so they would stop trying to pull me over to RvB. Monty was aware of this too and he would have public conversations with me on Twitter to show that we were actually working on things.

## **2015**

### **January**

A new year. I was sure it was going to be such a great year. We were finally through two volumes of RWBY and had advanced our workflow significantly for Volume 3. Although I was not allowed to fully work the way Monty worked anymore, I still considered his workflow our workflow no matter how much people might have tried to separate us. Since Volume 2 ended Monty and I had been working on developing some extremely helpful animation tools and effects.

### *New Tools*

After much discussion over coffee he came up with an awesome tool for Poser he called the "Pivot Tool", where we could easily animate the change of weapon parenting from its holster, from one hand to the other, or both, etc. It would let us change between world and local rotation, and it had a built-in blur tool for weapon spinning. It was something we had been hoping to make for years and it was finally ready to go. However, for Volume 3 they decided we weren't allowed to use this awesome tool because it "breaks" the new pipeline they implemented.

Monty also developed a facial rig to make all the new animators happy. Everyone else on the team came from the professional industry where they are used to using Maya and standard face rigs with little objects off to the side representing the eyes, brows, mouth, etc. Monty's tool simulated those facial rigs that Maya animators were used to using because they kept complaining about how much easier it was to do in Maya. Unfortunately, no one got to use it because it was later decided not to be important enough, or something. So this tool went to waste.

### *Monty's Workflow*

A lot of the things that Monty made ultimately did not work out because once he was gone they scrapped his workflow in a hurry. I believe they wanted this for some time (even during Volume 1). Now they were calling the shots and decided that their way of doing things was far superior and hella more efficient. I 100% fought against many of these changes and tried to voice my opinions and reasoning as much as I could without sounding like a complainer. The workflow he spoke of so often, when he would describe how it allowed us to do things so quickly and efficiently... that was not him speaking on behalf of Rooster Teeth Animation. That was him talking about how he and I got things done. Speaking of which, let me remind you that the Rooster Teeth Animation department only exists because of Monty and how much of a huge and positive impact he had on the company as a whole. His workflow defined 100% how he did things. And it was definitely 100% how I wanted to do things. For example:

<http://www.creativebloq.com/animation/rbwy-anime-action-dynamic-3d-twist-9134477>

### *A Small Team*

In fact, throughout Volume 2 and up to his death, Monty was trying to figure out a way to take RWBY offsite to his own studio (likely somewhere in LA), with his own team (myself, Sheena, Kristina Haku Nguyen, Max Song, Ein Lee, maybe a few more animators, etc.) so we could craft it the way he intended it to be from the start. Also, keep in mind the insane amount of work he was capable of doing with no help from a single other person. He was convinced we could do this and I absolutely agreed with him. We wanted a small office with a mocap stage at the center for easy access. We didn't need much— just enough to do what we did best and we would deliver. With Monty in charge of things and Sheena at his side, I believe we would have surpassed what most people think impossible with such a small team.

Of course that was not exactly a realistic situation... at least not yet. But he wanted to do things his way. He did not like what was happening and where production was taking things as it continued to grow bigger and less efficient.

### *A Good Place*

There was a very fruitful yet short season of R&D with Monty. I had come up with new ways to create FX in Poser to make them more comparable to what we saw and loved in anime and games (like the Naruto Ninja Storm series). Things were looking good, even my marriage seemed to be getting better. Finally, everything looked like it was in such a good place that I was convinced that Volume 3 would be the greatest and most fun to work on yet. Monty had even set up folders in his main project directory, all of them titled for the many fights that were supposed to take place. We were so excited to make use of the new tools and methods we had just spent so much time developing. Then suddenly...

## **January 22**

Around 5:00pm I received news that Sheena had been trying to reach me for hours through every social media and chat platform possible. Monty was in trouble. I dropped everything and rushed to the hospital as fast as I could.



### *At the Hospital*

When I got there she was in the waiting room crying. We didn't know what to expect. He had only gone in for a maintenance allergy shot— this sort of thing doesn't happen. I spent as much time at the hospital as I could because I wanted to be there if anything came up. I did my best to stay strong and positive while facing an uncertain future. Over the course of the next week and a half there were many ups and downs. Someone would give us good news and then someone would give us bad news. This had happened about three times when finally the neurologist came in and told us the extent of the damage... and that there was no coming back from it. At that moment all I can remember is the heart-wrenching cry of the person who loved him most.

Monty was everything to Sheena. She gave up everything to be with him. She did everything for him. She was the best partner that man could possibly have had and at this point only a miracle would bring him back. And that is exactly what we were praying for.

### *Soft Lights*

Dan Ham (Danjitsu) and Sonja Carter (SoulFirePhotography) came out as soon as they could and stayed right beside Sheena the entire time. Personally, I felt safer knowing they were around, and they were pretty much Monty and Sheena's guardian angels. The "Montourage" crew (Jason Rose, Chloe (Sushimonstuh), Aku, Max Song, Kristina Haku, Johnny Junkers, Max Song, Amie Lynn (sorry in advance if I missed someone) came out as soon as they could. They were such a gentle, bright light while we were in this dark place. They stayed strong. They brought good memories and sweet laughter in the face of ugliness. Monty's siblings came out. It was surreal to finally meet them and see the resemblance. People from the office came and took turns saying their last words to Monty.

During this time I kept seeing people from work show up and consult amongst themselves about what to do. They even stepped in and tried to call the shots, "managing" who could come see Monty and when. They claimed they were there for Sheena. I heard so many people say to her, "If you need anything, anything at all, just ask."

## **February 1**

Monty Oum passed away.

## **March**

I had a few weeks off from work to mourn and deal with the loss. It was quiet at the office as people wondered what would happen next, but I kept working on the scenes I discussed doing with Monty. I thought long and hard about what might be the best way to move forward. It's true that RWBY was Rooster Teeth's IP and that ultimately they were the ones who were going to decide what to do with it, but I was not going to let that stop me from trying to keep it Monty's.

It was at some point in March that we finally had our first pre-pre-production meeting to start talking about how to move forward with the show. Right away, one of the producers made a strong statement that I did not like.

**“Just so you know, Sheena has absolutely no business, whatsoever, with any part of RWBY.”**

It was clearly aimed at me, the only one in the room who actually spent time with Sheena and Monty discussing RWBY. At that moment I had to make a choice. Do I just go along with it, doing whatever they wanted to do with the show without question, betraying Monty and Sheena, and regretting it the rest of my life? No way.

### *Sheena Duquette-Oum*

I felt I was being forced into isolation and pushed into secrecy about Sheena. I dealt with it because I knew that she was a major... no, the most important part— the key person we needed in order to truly move forward with RWBY, while keeping the show intact. Bringing her into Rooster Teeth so she could be an official part of the production was the best shot we had to do things right. One of the biggest reasons I felt this way is because Monty included her. He had her stay at his side as he worked because he wanted her there. She assisted him however she could. She cared so much and she wanted this as well, and not because she felt entitled or that she had something to gain from it. Hell no! She was there for love.

As hard as it was for her being alone, she was more ready than anyone to pick herself up and do everything she could in Monty's stead. Not to mention she is also a professional more qualified than most of the people who got hired on as contract workers for the show. She cared



about keeping Monty's show as Monty's show. For him! Not her. She had already done so many things completely uncredited in Volume 2, for Volume 3, and for future volumes as well. She knew the RWBY universe better than any of the people who still "officially" worked on the show.

Why? Because she was right there next to Monty. Why?

Because that's right where Monty wanted her.

And when Rooster Teeth made her feel uncomfortable and unwelcome at the office, Monty began working from home so she could stay next to him— where she deserved to be.

If Monty believed in her enough to have her at his side and trusted her enough to include her, then I sure as hell believe in her 100% and without a doubt.

There were, without question, many gaps in the story and a lack of understanding of the RWBY universe amongst those in production. There were many characters only she and Monty (and certain close friends) knew the exact purpose of. Without her being an official part of the show, what was left but to make things up as we went and to fill the gaps with new ideas? Ideas that did not fit the vision and plans of the one who made the show to begin with. Even if she did not have Monty's skills, as no one does, she's the closest thing to Monty's mind that exists in the world we live in. As terrified as I was of the thought, I was even ready to take on the role of director of the show. I would only do it with her there, because I wanted to ensure Monty's legacy was kept intact.

Everything was there. All the details. All the plans. All the events, story, characters, meanings, etc. So much had already been thought out and meticulously planned by Monty with Sheena at his side. But Rooster Teeth was so bent on keeping her out of the picture that it didn't matter how much the show might suffer, or how much things would stray from Monty's vision as a result. The intentions, the characters, the weapons... so many parts of it had depth and meaning, but now the people running things and calling the shots had only a partial or no idea what the original plans were.

Several times I suggested contacting Sheena to find out what certain things meant in the RWBY universe, or why certain events were supposed to take place... but just even mentioning her name around them felt like saying an unforgivable curse word.

Throughout the next 4 months of politics, one by one, the people Sheena and I thought we could trust turned out to be a part of the decisions being made. She finally left Texas— moving across the country after being told,

“Trying to find a place for you to work on RWBY is like trying to fit a square peg into a round hole”.

It was clear that honoring Monty, protecting his legacy, and his vision were not important. Well, it was important to appear that way to the public, but internally RWBY was just another company IP. I reminded them on several occasions that one of the biggest reasons RWBY was popular was because it was Monty’s show, but it was clear they believed otherwise. They felt it was their great team that was responsible for RWBY’s popularity, and for making the show better than it has ever been.

They pride themselves in what they have accomplished without Monty in the picture.

Of course without him things were bound to go off in another direction eventually. But Monty left RWBY in such a way that if only someone had dropped their pride and stopped treating Sheena like a nobody, or as a threat to their power... we would have been able to keep things intact for quite a while.

#### *Raven vs. JNPR*

One of the first scenes to get cut as writing began for Volume 3 was a scene Monty planned to do of Raven attacking team JNPR while they were sitting at a cafe. It was meant to foreshadow things to come. However, I believe that Rooster Teeth did not know the purpose of the scene and did not care to ask if Sheena knew, so they cut it altogether. I questioned their decision and they made light of it. It made me worry about what other things they might change.

Previously, in Volume 2, they treated Monty poorly with regards to him adding the scene with Raven after the credits. They tried very hard to cut it but obviously were not successful. I was even told how stupid they thought his decision was. Because of that, it was no surprise to me that they would not hesitate to make drastic changes— since he was no longer around to tell the story he wanted.

#### *Winter Schnee*

Monty liked to create characters based on people that he knew. Winter Schnee was created in Sheena’s likeness, and it was his intention that she would also be doing her voice. Sheena is a great concept artist and had already crafted her design. This had been approved by Monty for

Volume 3 back in December of 2013. Not only did Rooster Teeth take away any possibility of Sheena playing the part, the design was scrapped and recreated as what we eventually saw in Volume 3.

After it felt like everything had been taken away or changed so that the show could be “the best it can possibly be”, the last thing I felt I had to fight for was her part as Winter. However, at one of the meetings I had with the CEO they said they would give her a “fair chance” by making her audition next to a whole lineup of professional and well known voice actors. “**May the best one for the part win.**”

That was it. They did it, they took it all away. In my mind the show was turned into something completely different, with little to no respect for Monty unless it made them look good to the public, as though they were honoring him with his own show. It was clear to me this was going to be a battle we could not win. Even so, it didn't stop me. I knew I'd regret it for the rest of my life if I didn't do my best to keep what little I could of his dream alive.

## **May**

I took Sheena to go see Mad Max: Fury Road. It was good, but she was not able to enjoy the movie because of a tweet Rooster Teeth had just sent, thanking the voice actors for making RWBY what it is. There was no thanks to Monty. It was given to only those who were still alive and in the spotlight, ready to receive it. Even that soon after his death. It seemed more like a strategic effort to draw people's attention to those who were still there, to reassure the public that they've got this, no problem. Focus on them. Focus on their show.

### *Marriage Troubles*

My already broken marriage was taking more hits from this too. It's understandable that Katie didn't want me alone with another woman, except... I wanted my wife to stand with me in this too. But she had her hands full with our kids and her own issues, and wanted nothing to do with it. I have nothing but respect for Sheena, and full intention of being a man of integrity—honoring Monty with my interactions with his widow. But it wasn't enough for her and I was accused of trying to have an affair.

Regardless, Katie was still following through with the plans she had made a year before: to leave with the kids and go back to Michigan. I felt like there were no right choices in our relationship. I was reminded daily that nothing I did mattered, but I still tried. All I knew was that I had to do my best, to do what I could in this mess, and I wanted to do what was right. That

meant that I was going to be there to support the wife of my closest friend, mentor, colleague, and brother: Monty Oum.

It seemed like 99% of the people in Austin who said, “if you need anything...” soon turned their backs on her. The people who did support her were the people who valued their friendship with Monty, and who had great respect for him. Because Sheena is just as important. You don't abandon family. JJ (Jose Jones, voice of Mercury) and his girlfriend Jenny Gacy were among the few people in Austin I knew of that were still helping her out. These difficult times revealed the people who actually cared like they said they did.

Monty gave so much to me, and now I was never going to be able to repay him. The least I could do was help his wife, who was now alone, without a US driver's license, with unfinished immigration paperwork, endless court documentation, etc... it was this overwhelming mess piled on top of her loss. I didn't know what I could do to help, but I made myself available as much as I could and I tried to follow her lead on things as it came time to deal with each successive part.

### *RWBY Volume 3 Preparations*

I put together a well thought out list of issues, concerns, solutions, and suggestions for moving forward. I came up with a list of people who I thought would be the RWBY dream team. People I knew and believed in— that if anyone could pull it off, we could with this team. Because they were also people that Monty believed in. They were people that he wanted on his team. I spoke my concerns to the powers that be several times in hopes of bringing awareness. After all, I was told that no matter what we were going to do everything we could do to make RWBY the best it could possibly be, moving forward. I was told things that made me believe that my input actually mattered. Sadly, it turned out to be quite the opposite.

The things I had to say might as well have been written out on a giant chalkboard and erased before anyone saw it. My concerns were ignored, and in most cases the opposite of my suggestions is what they decided to go with. These suggestions were not just my own, however, they were things I knew Monty was trying to make happen— things that came from our countless brain-fart sessions and discussions.

### *Monty's Office*

One weekend I was feeling motivated to come into the office like I normally would, while Monty was there, just to make something cool that we could use in the show. The best time to go in, for us, was when things were quiet and we could get as much work done as possible. I decided

to sit in Monty's office with the laptop to work. It was hard, but it was also a reminder of all the good times.

I made sure to keep all of his monitors rolling footage of fighting games, fight clips, anime / sakuga, k-pop videos, everything you'd see going while he was working. As I sat there getting pumped, one of the producers showed up and cornered me.

First I was questioned for being in his office. Then I was told that he was going to move the new game dev guy into that office. Then I was told we were likely going to be leaving Poser in the dust to use Maya for RWBY in Volume 3. I was reminded that **"Monty's behaviors are unacceptable"**. Finally, I was told that the animation department was going to be moving off site, away from the mocap stage, and that I was going to be sitting at a normal desk like everybody else.

All of this basically meant I was being made obsolete, and that everything Monty and I had worked so hard to do— shaping and advancing that unique workflow... there was no longer room for it. As a result this meant I would no longer have a way to do what I was good at. I did my best to keep these things from crushing me to the point I could not respond. I made it clear I wanted to move into Monty's office and give up my spot.

### *Dillon Gu*

It was weird for a while being on Twitter, as I knew everything I posted was being watched. Sometimes I would get approached by people in the office and questioned about what I meant, just because it sounded like I was hinting at something.

Around that time someone on Twitter pointed out to me that Dillon Gu was working on a tribute animation for Monty. I checked it out and tweeted at him, complimenting his work. I mentioned his name at an early RWBY meeting as we tried to figure out how to move forward with the show. They said something to the effect of, "Oh we were wondering if you heard of him and were going to say..." These, of course, being the same people who approached me about my tweets. I asked them if they would consider bringing him on board and they sounded positive about it.

On May 11 I decided to contact Dillon via private message, as just one animator to another. I wanted to know his thoughts on working on RWBY if the opportunity were to come. He wanted to honor Monty, and that was already made clear in the work he was doing. At the office they suggested I invite him down for a tour. I felt he deserved to know the truth about how things were progressing and get a chance to meet with Sheena first. This was especially important

because he was not just some fanboy who wanted to work at Rooster Teeth. He wanted to honor Monty. He cared. He showed promise. He had a similar fire and passion in him. In such a case, I myself would have wanted to know what I was getting into.

On May 18, Dillon messaged me on Twitter that the Producer invited him to Rooster Teeth for a tour. No one told me. That felt a little odd after being the one to bring his name up to them, and after being told directly from the top that we would work to put the “RWBY Dream Team” together.

On May 22 I took the liberty of meeting up with him to show him around Poser so he could get a heads up on how Monty and I worked. Then on May 24 I found out that he was officially hired, but again this was only because I asked him. No one from the company told me. He told me he assumed I knew so he didn’t say anything, but I had no clue.

Even though it was weird how they maneuvered around me in bringing him on board, he was a major part of my being able to cope with and survive the madness ahead. He was one of the very few people, if not the only person, who knew the whole story. Yet he stayed there as a positive light in a dark place. Not only is his work top notch, his attitude and values are great. Dillon is definitely someone I am grateful to have been around and know.

## **July**

It was time for production to officially begin on RWBY Volume 3. Between my wife leaving Texas with the kids, facing divorce, Sheena being officially booted out of RWBY followed by her moving to LA to surround herself with supportive people, and fighting a losing battle of endless politics that sapped the joy out of working on Monty’s show, I felt there was very little left for me in Austin, TX. That 4 months of fighting to protect Monty’s legacy felt like a violent beat down. No, it was more like trying to shake hands with a blender. I was utterly exhausted mentally and emotionally. Those things that Monty had planned, as far as everything having to do with Sheena, had been lost. Officially lost. She was no more as far as Rooster Teeth was concerned, and now it was time to “move forward”.

Many people quote Monty here, “Keep moving forward”, but they don’t seem to have the same idea about what that means. And quoting Monty to reinforce ill plans for the show he created, just to appear as some shining bright star honoring him... is honestly just some sick bullshit.

Either way it was still the main income for my family and my wife told me I’d be a complete idiot to quit now and move to Michigan. I felt stuck and had to decide really quickly what I was going to do. It all basically came down to two things, two reasons that kept me around:

- 1) I needed income to make it possible for me to visit my family in Michigan as much as possible.
- 2) I made it my personal goal to make sure that every piece of Monty's work (finished and unfinished) he did for RWBY Volume 3 made it into the show intact.

### *Daniel Fowler*

In the middle of those 4 months they brought on a very cool guy named Daniel Fowler who took the HR position. For once, Rooster Teeth had someone in a position of power who had the best interest of their employees in mind. Even better, he himself was an artist so he understood things on the same level that we did. He became my hope for survival within Rooster Teeth's walls while dealing with an ugly, impossible situation. And even though it felt the battle was lost, he managed to make things a little more bearable. He helped me negotiate a raise and spoke on my behalf to the people who became unreachable in the midst of having their hands full with Lazer Team.

Rooster Teeth eventually fired him, and I had no one left as a safety net. I was now completely alone in a place surround by an entity that I knew wanted me out of the picture. I was a thorn in their side, the last piece standing in the way of their new and improved way of production. Later I was told that after he was let go they were just waiting for a chance to get rid of me too.

### *A New Agreement*

As a part of my request for a pay increase, they agreed only if I could meet a specific set of goals each month. On paper this looked reasonable, but because of all the changes being implemented in the pipeline I knew that these goals were unfair and entirely unrealistic. But in working alongside Monty for so long you learn not to quit even while faced with the impossible. So I went along with it because I was holding on to the above reasons, to keep me there.

I stayed at Rooster Teeth under this new agreement. However I was not allowed to work the way Monty and I worked, at least not without a ton of extra hassle as they made company-wide changes and standardizations— things that Monty was able to bypass when he was there. They were things he bypassed in order to continue doing what he did best, in order to give the fans what they looked forward to seeing when they saw Monty's name.

When we needed to make something, we made it. If we didn't have the FX to do what we envisioned, we made it. If we didn't have the props or the weapons for a scene, we made them. Most of the time this was because getting them made through the "official" channels took way

too long. Additionally, we often had to fix whatever asset it was when it finally got back to us, just in order to do what we needed it to do in our scenes. Making things myself is something I was no longer allowed to do, at least not without jumping through seemingly endless hoops and regulations. This was a major setback.

### *Monty's Way*

Monty stood his ground and kept moving forward in the way he knew best, for you guys. People did not like him for it within the Rooster Teeth walls. Yes they smiled and pretended to love him to his face, but I heard the conversations and the muttering of words from one person to another.

And so it was, as soon as he was out of the picture, those are the people who were then in charge and able to “keep moving forward” with their plans to completely remove Monty’s ways from the animation department that only exists because of him. And I was really the only person left in the building who saw it that way. As far as I know, I was the only other person who fully valued and practiced Monty’s way of doing things.

The team was larger than ever now; all people who were taught the new way of doing things. They were told what they needed to hear in order to stay pumped and excited to do the best they could on a show they loved.

Let me make this clear: the people on the team are all really cool people. But they also had no clue what had been going on or what sort of things I was dealing with there. They only know what they were told. And even now, I can only guess what sort of things are said within the walls that would make me look like I’ve lost my marbles and hold up the show runners on a heroic pedestal, further reinforcing them and their decisions as being the best way to have done it.

### *RWBY Volume 3, Episode 1*

I requested to be paired up with Dillon for the first fight scene, for obvious reasons. I animated Blake vs Reese while he animated Yang vs Arslan. Then we tag-teamed on some other, supplementary, character animations. In the midst of a dark place I had a lot of fun working with Dillon on those scenes.

For the most part, the scene was blank in the scripts— and that is how Monty and I liked to work. It always gave us directorial control, choice of camera work, etc. Even though they tried to make a storyboard so the production people could feel better, it was a big waste of time,



money, and energy. That was the main reason we stayed away from it all those years in the action department. Pre-scripted fights just look... scripted, and I avoid them like the plague. You need that organic freedom to be able to go in, knowing the characters and their abilities, and just let them go at it.

They made me sit through a storyboard meeting anyway, and I did it because that was part of my agreement for the raise. All I could think was that I was losing time by not making cool stuff right then. Instead I was made to sit through a very slow moving debate about each shot, which was forced out with no artistic inspiration. I just wanted to get to it and make it happen.

Music had always been a major part of our workflow. For this scene it took forever to get an actual song to work with, and the one the director chose felt very forced and out of place (the one that was played with the footage at RTX 2015 during the RWBY panel). It did not inspire the creativity of the scene, so instead I chose to work with no music at all.

I was tasked to finish the first fight by the end of the month, at least a first pass. However, that meant we had to animate characters we didn't have yet, with weapons and props that didn't exist yet. I made and rigged a temporary hoverboard that transformed into a pair of guns so I could get my scenes made. I was finally able to convince the Producer to let me do what I needed to do in order to get my stuff done. Not even a full week left to the deadline, while the Supervising Producer was still saying no, he finally told me to just go for it and he'd take the hit. So I did.

I got way more done in that last week than I did all month. Why? Because I was allowed to do what I do the way I knew best. The way Monty taught me. It was also around that time I finally said that I couldn't wait any longer for this hoverboard—I needed it now. I sketched it all out on paper and gave it to the artist, and finally modeling gave me a raw model. There wasn't even a transformation animation on it.

Previously, Monty made the weapon models, the transformations, and implemented them in the scenes the way they were meant to be used. Now it was spread out between 3 or 4 departments and had to navigate red tape and protocol. At the end of it I still had to animate the asset myself. So I did. Then at the very last minute we started running into a significant amount of file pathing problems. This was already into August, past when it's supposed to be finished.

### *The New System*

Monty and I had always sworn by working on local drives because it's faster and much more reliable, and more importantly, far easier to manage and take offsite. However, for Volume 3 they decided to leave that behind and work on a single networked hard drive. They claimed it

was faster, but it was much slower since every single person was trying to access data stored on the network at the same time. It was a mess.

Because of this, when I made FX I could not just make it and call it done, put it in a scene, and have it ready to go. Instead I had to make it, submit hundreds of files to Perforce, (a file manager) which copied all the files to the network drive, then go back and remake the FX so the program looked for the files in the new location (already over double the amount of work). Since tweaks and problems were sure to come up, I then had to find, select, and “check out” all those files in order to make any changes to them. Finally I would have to then resubmit the changed files to Perforce, recreate the FX again, and hope everything worked. So on and so on. It was the same with any other assets created. It all had to go through the new system, and it was just a big mess.

### *RTX 2015*

We finally finished enough of the Episode 1 fight that they could show it at the RTX 2015 RWBY panel. It really started to hit me that this was the first convention I was going to go to without Monty. The first several conventions I went to was just so I could meet up and hang out with him. Then I went with him in order for us to show our work. Now I was going without him, to a convention run by the people who shat all over Sheena, kicked her out of the picture, mangled Monty’s vision for RWBY into something else, and... there I was willingly driving there to face the thousands of people who loved Rooster Teeth, who loved Monty, and who had no idea what had been going on.

I showed up late. Actually I was just in time to catch them showing Dillon’s and my work at the panel. Everyone seemed to love it. It was cool to see and hear their reactions. Though I wasn’t there for the panel, I was told by people later that it was kind of weird how they mentioned my name, almost in passing, and quickly introduced the new team. After what I had already been through I wasn’t surprised, nor did it phase me. I knew they didn’t want me there. I knew I didn’t mesh well with the new order of things.

### *Yang vs. Mercury*

My next scene was one I had been looking forward to doing since Volume 2: Yang vs Mercury. It was a scene I had discussed doing directly with Monty. Even at the hospital while Monty lay there, I was working on it on the laptop in the waiting room. I was doing it for him.

Not to mention my favorite bad guy was in it. Mercury was based on JJ, and after everything that had happened I was excited to work with him again. But then, as it was news to my ears,

JJ was no longer the voice of Mercury. Instead it was some other guy whose voice I honestly thought was just thrown in there as temp audio. That news was like getting the wind knocked out of me. JJ's Mercury is the only Mercury as far as I'm concerned. So much had changed.

It took a few days to regain my motivation for this fight. But I did and I still wanted to do my best. It was a special fight to me because I spent so much time working with Monty on it. I didn't want anyone else's help because I did not trust anyone else to properly handle Monty's animation and camera work. Plus, I finally got to do the crazy projectile attack Monty and I used to joke about doing. Originally there were going to be so many of them that it was just a wall of projectiles shooting around the pair, but the arena had become so big there were no walls close enough for them to ricochet off of. So I just kind of... made them spin around and payed homage to Monty by doing a similar attack to the one Yuna used in Dead Fantasy 2.

### *Technical Difficulties*

I got the fight done, but because of the new system I had to go through every single scene of the fight and replace the characters and assets with ones that were on the network drive. Then I had to go through and add scene numbers to every shot in the sequence before submitting each one onto Perforce. Lastly I had to add all the information for each shot into Shotgun, which is another, browser-based, file management application. All of this was a regular part of the process for the other animators, but it was a part of the process Monty sidestepped so he could get his crazy scenes done.

It took a few days to get through them all but I did, and then I was told there were still problems. I finally figured out there was a software-level issue, because opening each scene, deleting the old characters, and copying the animation to the correct ones was not actually doing what I was trying to do. Poser was still using the local version of all the files instead of the network versions because it sticks to whatever was there first, in order to avoid duplicates. Of course I didn't find this out until after the fact, so I had to go through and do it all again.

This time it was much more complicated since I had to first check all the scenes out on Perforce before I could make changes, then create a new scene with correct assets, import the data from the finished animations onto the new ones, save, and resubmit them all to Perforce. It was a big setback, but I stayed to make sure it got done.

Next it was brought up that all the scenes in Shotgun did not have "correct" information for frame numbers. In all of my scenes I purposely left a few extra frames at the start and end so that the editors would have room to retime if needed. Apparently this was unacceptable though, because we "could not afford" to render 1 or 2 extra frames here and there, only exactly the ones we needed. So again, I had to go back through every single scene.

The most frustrating part about it was that these things were not as big of a deal as they were made out to be. They acted like it was the end of the world. They acted like all of production had to come to a halt because of these things. But really... it was never a problem before. It was not a problem for Monty all those years. It was not a problem for me. I'm not saying they're wrong, but the changes they made to production, "for the better", just seemed like a lot of unnecessary work and headache just for the sake of doing it all their way, the "correct" way.

### *Blake vs. Adam / Yang vs. Adam*

Next up was another scene that I had been looking forward to for a very long time. Blake was meant to fight Adam, and then Yang was supposed to come in and take over the fight, protecting Blake from death. Once I was done with Yang vs Mercury I asked about this long-anticipated, ultra-badass scene.

But guess what— they didn't even write it in the script because they didn't look at what Monty created for the scene before they began! It was all available to them before Monty passed away, and after he was gone I made sure all those scenes were available to them— that they had them in their hands. It was even more of a surprise to me since I had rendered out Monty's timelines for them, at the Producer's request, before production even started. They didn't even look at what Monty, the creator of the show, made for his show.

The only reason I chose to stay, next to supporting my family with income, was continuing to be dissolved to nothing.

Let me add that the Yang vs Adam fight was looking beyond badass. Monty was using a Linkin Park song as the soundtrack to animate it to. I was told that they would just find some other place for it down the road. But I know that when they eventually make the switch to Maya, everything Monty and I worked so hard to build up will become unusable and therefore be thrown into the garbage.

Each time this sort of thing happened I did my best to keep my composure and not flip out. I didn't want to give them more reason to cut me off completely before I could do absolutely everything possible to get what little there still was of Monty's, into the show intact.

Because of this decision to completely cut out this fight, there was nothing for me to do on it.

### *Ruby vs. Torchwick Neo*

So next up was Torchwick and Neo vs Ruby. Which, as soon as I heard they decided to put this fight on top of an aircraft, I face-palmed inside. That meant the stuff Monty made for this fight would no longer make sense, in that situation. When I heard they wanted to change the ending so that Neo's umbrella goes "poof" and she gets whisked away in the wind... I think I face-palmed so hard I may have suffered a concussion.

I then wanted absolutely nothing to do with that scene. I didn't want to have my name on something that was straight up just shitting all over what Monty made. It was against my reasons for staying. I wanted to preserve it.

### *Pyrrha vs. Cinder*

The only thing left that I could do was the final fight: Pyrrha vs Cinder. I knew how it was supposed to go, for the most part, because Monty talked a lot about it. They agreed to let me work on that, but at this point I was struggling so much just to keep moving forward with this. It hurt to think to myself what changes they had in store for this fight. A lot of it was still intact, but they modified just enough of it that it did not have the same emotional impact.

No longer did Jaune witness and cause Pyrrha's death, triggering a major character growth moment for him. No longer did we get to see Pyrrha as the perfect warrior who could actually stand a chance against Cinder, who is now so OP it's almost a joke. I still did my best to work within what little was left to work with. I still came up with the most impressive ideas I could think of to fill the gaps and make the fight happen as spectacularly as I could.

As much as I would have loved to walk away many, many times throughout the whole ordeal, I was determined to see it through to the end. I would have regretted it forever if I did not. So I kept working. It was so close to being over. My plan was to leave as soon as I had finished my tasks, so I could finally move back to Michigan to be near my kids. But it didn't quite go that way.

Every new scene or step in production had a plethora of disappointment, whether it was news of change, obviously bad decisions, production completely doing the opposite of what Monty intended to do with certain characters, cutting his work out, etc. Early on I was told that I'd probably be getting some help on this scene, but then they mentioned how they were dividing things up to different people and calling it two fights, just because there was a little bit of talking in the middle. They did a lot to keep "fights" and "talking head" scenes very far apart from each other and animated by different people.

I still saw it as one scene, as did Monty. I was there from the start. I was there when Monty explained over and over how the scene would end. These were key points in the story, character-changing events. Little was discussed about the actual trading of hits, but from what little I knew of it, I wanted to make sure to see it through properly to the end.

When they told me who they were considering to work on the actual death scene itself, I, knowing the animator's strengths and weaknesses, told them that it was not a good decision. Not because the person lacked the skill, but because there were other people who could do more justice to such an important scene. I mentioned a few animators who I thought could be trusted to handle it better, if I was not going to be allowed to work on it. But I absolutely protested against the person they mentioned. Later, the Director approached me face to face at my desk and said, "Just so you know, I want him to work on that scene. I feel like he's earned it. And that's how it's going to be. So... sorry."

"Sorry"...?

Of the many moments I wish I could have lashed out, this one would have ended with a knee to the chest and a flaming uppercut to the balls. Since when did this become something we could earn? Aren't we supposed to be doing our best to honor Monty? In the show he created? Especially now after he's gone? Really? I already knew before production officially started on Volume 3 that RWBY was in big trouble. With all the disappointments that came throughout, it baffles me why it still hurt, even though it shouldn't have surprised me. Why did I still hang on to hope when it felt so hopeless? Why did I still give it my all?

Because, I wasn't doing the show for me! I wasn't there for me! The most important thing to me was to do our best making the show go on the way Monty intended. The way he left it in perfect condition for us to do. All the pieces were there ready to be utilized so the show would flourish more than ever. But no, people thought they knew better. They thought the wheel Monty invented was not good enough and attempted to start over in their own way.

So much time was wasted. So many decisions were made that put the entire team in a constant state of "crunch". It could have gone so much better if egos, pride, greed, and the desire to appear as the heroes who saved RWBY, were nonexistent.

Can you imagine if from day one they actually brought Sheena on board, even if for a small part? But no, they would not even do that. She was not asking for much. She is capable of a lot, and I still to this day wholeheartedly believe that the show needed her in order to stand a chance at following Monty's vision as close as possible.

I feel the fans deserved to get that. But they did not get that. They got something else, but at least the renders look a little prettier, right? At least now the files are all sorted nicely and more organized and more professionally on the Rooster Teeth hard drives. Yay.

All the while the people who cared, who were close to Monty, who worked with Monty, who wanted to see his show through and do whatever we could to make that happen, all got stepped on and shoved aside like garbage. I think that part of why I was able to work at Rooster Teeth as long as I did was because I managed to “play along”, or at least appear that way. I was enraged, but I kept my mouth shut. I was hurt, but I didn’t let it cause me to quit.

## 2016

So how did this end? Well, as I mentioned, I knew back in July— the moment I decided not to leave Rooster Teeth that I had likely given up my chance to leave, and that they would probably be the ones to off me whenever they saw fit.

I’ve faced many challenges and seemingly impossible difficulties in my life. I don’t quit. That is something in me that was greatly reinforced and strengthened while working with Monty. He was not a quitter either. So, I continued on with what little energy I had left in me. As for motivation, it was shot to pieces by the decisions made by the people in charge and there was no going back. Everything I fought to protect had already been turned to ashes and scattered to the winds. Either way, I planned to finish the job to the best of my ability before deciding to part ways.

### *Out of Passion*

I no longer trusted very many people at Rooster Teeth and I was keenly aware that I was a thorn in their side. I was the one last piece standing in the way of them fully moving away from Monty’s way of doing things. With the massive company-wide changes going on it was inevitable.

The thing is, if I came on board Rooster Teeth to work as an animator, I would still be there. But the truth is I came on board to work with Monty. I wanted to be a blessing to him and enhance his workflow or make easier anything and everything he created. If a career in animation was my goal, this would have been a very different story. But it was never about that for me— what I do is out of passion.

I do it for the love of creating things that are (hopefully) awesome, so that people can enjoy them and be inspired to create even more awesome and inspiring things. I want to make beautiful things that have meaning and purpose, not just make something that looks pretty for the sake of popularity or fame or money. Nah bro. This is no such thing. But it was never about those things for Monty either, which is why it worked so well with us working together.

## **January 5**

On the way to work I decided to ask the producer if anyone was available to assist me in finishing the final fight. It's better to ask and be told no than not to ask at all, and I was told many times to just ask for help if I needed it. I made it clear that it was totally fine if not. Ideally I wanted Dillon and Kim, but either way I planned on finishing what I had started one way or another.

### *General Maintenance*

Later that day the Technical Director told me that they needed my work laptop to do some updates they've been meaning to do for Maya and some other software. Just general maintenance. I thought it was weird so I hesitated, but he was one of the few people I still trusted so I handed it over. I told him that as long as I could get it back by the end of the day, so I could keep working from home, it was fine. He assured me that I would have it back.

I was also excited to share some news about Poser development with him that would totally help bypass some issues that made it difficult for converting my work into the new way of doing things (for example, the major software issues we ran into during the Yang vs Mercury fight). He was one of the few people who understood some of the technical parts of Poser like Monty and I, so naturally he was the first guy I would track down to tell. He smiled and seemed happy about it too. It was very good news. I asked if they were almost done with the laptop, since it was supposedly not going to take very long to update, but again he told me it should be done soon.

### *The Last Straw*

Around noon I got an email from the Supervising Producer telling me that we had a meeting at 5pm and to meet him at his desk. No explanation. I thought it was odd so I asked what it was for, but like most times I asked questions, I was ignored and not given any further information.



And just like most other times it was frustrating, but I was used to it so I continued on working—setting up mocap, figuring out ways to do FX in my scene that would make it stand out, etc.

I showed up at 5pm at his desk, just like he asked. He motioned to have me follow him to the office across the parking lot. On the way over he made small talk, asking how the kids were doing and stuff... I was already thinking to myself that this was sort of weird, but we got to the CEO's office and I took a seat. They wasted no time letting me know that they were seeing patterns in my performance and that I kept cutting it too close to deadline.

They told me that “making demands” for them to pull their best animators away from their current assignments to come work on mine was the last straw. They were letting me go and said that hopefully it would give me time to sort things out. They told me they were hoping that eventually I could come back to work with them. It then hit me that the whole story about needing my laptop for maintenance was a lie. And they used the one guy I still trusted to do it.

### *Escort*

The Supervising Producer then offered to escort me back to the office so I could collect my things. And just like that, it was all done. I knew I would probably have to come back another day to collect all of my stuff, but for now I just wanted to get my personal hard drives. However, when we finally got back to the office they had already pulled out both mine and Monty's computers— plus all my personal hard drives.

They had started doing it the moment I followed the Supervising Producer away. I told them that they had grabbed my personal stuff and I needed it back, but they told me they weren't going to give it back until they made copies of everything and archived it all. It was pretty violating.

Leaving Rooster Teeth came as no surprise to me. I knew it was either going to be me or them, depending on if they were intending to let me finish my work first or not. But the way they did it just felt filthy to me. That they ended up putting Dillon and Kim on my scene to finish it out. These were the same animators they accused me of “demanding” that they pull away from their scenes to work on it.

### *Unemployment*

“Our investigations found your employer fired you because you were unable to perform your assigned work to their satisfaction.”

To me it's no surprise they chose to fire me. I was there for Monty and chose to do 100% of what little I could, within the limits they gave me, to ensure his show stayed true to his vision. It was great when he was there, but without him they just wanted to do their own thing with his work. I was not ok with that.

I understand that changes were going to happen either way, but I thought they would at least take place gradually and with respect for Monty on his own show. But no, it all happened too fast and with little to no respect. By the time they fired me I was already so disgusted with their decisions and actions, the way they treated Sheena, the way they treated Kristina, the way they treated anyone who gave a damn about protecting Monty's legacy... I was ready to leave.

### *Nothing to Say*

My words don't do it justice. I have nothing to say to them. I could care less what happens to RWBY now, because it is not Monty's RWBY— it's something completely different. It's Rooster Teeth's RWBY. Monty's RWBY was the Red, White, Black, & Yellow Trailers, Volume 1 and Volume 2. Anything past that is only a reminder of the pain and disappointment. To put it point blank, I want nothing to do with Rooster Teeth until the end of time.

Honestly, I hold nothing against the many people who were brought on board to work on the show. A lot of them were fans themselves. They had no clue. They only knew what their superiors told them, which was full of great news and positive pep talk, constant reminders of how much of an honor it was for them to be a part of this, all while killing them with insane hours. All for a good cause, they said.

### *Things Did Not Go as Planned*

It took some coaching and encouragement from Kara Eberle, but a few days later I made a post on Twitter:

“Hey everybody. I'm no longer at Rooster Teeth. Things did not go as planned. Wish the RWBY team the best of luck.”

Now, hopefully, you know what I meant by that post. Now, hopefully, you understand why I could not respond right then. Now, hopefully, a million other questions you might have had have been answered.

My goal with this letter is not to point fingers. It's not to slander, to lash out. This is not something I wrote in a hurry while stewing in my emotions over it all. This is something that took much thought and consideration. I did my best not to name names or point fingers with blame. My goals are not to cause trouble or bring ruin to the company or any person.

Some people told me to stay silent and not to say anything at all. To just let it work itself out. Be professional. Etc, etc, etc... I also know that Rooster Teeth is a business and they are just doing what businesses do. They make money. They do what they have to in order to get more sales. There is nothing wrong with that.

But I have a major problem with it if it is going to be done at the expense of the people I care about. This particular situation... it is dishonoring Monty (the creator of RWBY) and treating his wife (the one who loved) as unimportant garbage to be kept at a far distance and forgotten. And on top of it all, after everything above, they claim that it is such an honor to be able to continue Monty's legacy.

#### *Not an Honor*

They work continuously to convince the contract animators and staff, who are unaware of the truth, of these things in order to keep them pumped up and motivated. They say, "What an honor". No, this is not an honor. This is a company IP you are working on. It is no longer Monty's RWBY, it's something different, and people could already see that without a single word from me. It is what it is. And what it has turned into is something I don't want anything to do with.

It's sad how little time it took for changes to take place, but it happened and that's that. While it might make more sense to some why Rooster Teeth off'ed me, I feel strongly that it went that way on purpose. We have to keep moving forward.

I just want the truth to be out there. With everything that has happened, I know all that you've seen are the results with some pretty paper slapped on top... to try and cover up the truth. Sorry, but I've been sharpening my scissors and I have finally gained the strength to use them.

#### *Monty's Torch*

The best analogy I've discussed with anyone for this whole thing is this: Monty carried the torch. When he passed away I picked up the torch, and Sheena was there to carry it with me. We were ready. Some people had major problems with that, but they also did not want any part of Monty's torch. So they created a new torch altogether and did everything they could to make

people believe it was Monty's torch. It was created to look like his, but they made it with their own hands and are sickeningly proud of it for that reason.

I'm still carrying Monty's torch. Sheena is still carrying it. Inspired fans carry it. Anyone who was close to the man and who cares enough to honor Monty carries it. We carry Monty's torch, and I have no intention of letting that fire die out.

This is what it means to keep moving forward.