

Black Horizon: 2025

December 13, 2025 | 2300 Arena - Philadelphia, PA

Introduction

Black screen.

A low, distant rumble of thunder rolls in. The first image is grainy, like it's been ripped from a worn-out VHS tape--old UTA logo, a younger ring, a crowd in another lifetime. Voices overlap--screams, bell rings, the echo of a classic call--but they're all buried, washed together under a steady, swelling heartbeat.

On screen, white text burns in slowly:

BLACK HORIZON

The letters flicker, glitch, and then split--half of the screen showing flashes of that first Black Horizon twenty-five years ago, half showing the new UTA logo and the golden shimmer of current championship belts.

We see Jarvis Valentine suplexing opponents, the UTA Championship glinting in slow motion; Amy Harrison hoisting the Women's Championship as The Empire looms behind her; Eric Dane Jr. driving a knee into B.R. Ellis; Tyger II standing in a wash of spotlight, mask tilted; Chris Ross and Maxx Mayhem brawling through a sea of bodies; Emily Hightower clutching the United States title; Marie Van Claudio and Hardcore Sandy staring each other down amid a storm of kendo sticks and barbed wire imagery; ten silhouettes staring up at the WrestleZone logo before it shatters into the WrestleZone Championship.

A narrator's voice cuts in over the storm of visuals, steady and low.

"Over twenty-five years ago... Black Horizon changed what a big fight night meant for the United Toughness Alliance."

Quick flashes of fists, blood, and the old UTA logo dissolving into the present-day branding.

"Tonight, in the heart of Philadelphia--inside one of the most storied buildings in wrestling history--the horizon turns black again."

Cut: an overhead shot of the 2300 Arena, lights burning through December night air, fans wrapped around the building in a line that seems to go on forever.

"The East Coast Invasion ends where so many revolutions began. The 2300 Arena. The WrestleZone Championship. The UTA Women's Championship. The UTA Championship. Careers made... careers ended... and futures decided."

Black Horizon: 2025

We cut rapid-fire through the key matches:

-- Eric Dane Jr. leaning against the ropes, WrestleZone Championship over his shoulder, smirking. Smash cut to Tyger II, mask in tight close-up, eyes burning.

"Second generation legacies collide, as Eric Dane Jr. puts the WrestleZone Championship on the line against the rising phantom of the East Coast--Tyger II."

-- Marie Van Claudio standing bathed in gold light, camera circling as she lifts her chin defiantly. A hard cut to Hardcore Sandy, wild-eyed, barbed-wire bat in hand, a faint grin on her lips.

"A Hall of Famer turns her back on The Empire for one last ride through hell. Marie Van Claudio. Hardcore Sandy. No rules. No mercy."

-- Ten quick silhouettes around a ring, each one flashing into full color for a heartbeat--Aaron Shaffer, B.R. Ellis, Brandon Henderson, Brick Bronson, Carter Durant, Dante Rivera, Graham Keel, Gunnar Van Patton, Malachi Cross, Silas Grimm--before they all lunge toward the ropes.

"Ten contenders. One ring. One shot at the WrestleZone Championship. The WrestleZone Rumble decides who stares across the ring at a champion on another night."

-- Chris Ross and Maxx Mayhem trading bombs, Ross bleeding but roaring back, Mayhem laughing through the punishment.

"For the last year, they've torn at each other's bodies and minds... and Scott Stevens has finally had enough. Tonight, Chris Ross and Maxx Mayhem meet one last time. No more running. No more excuses. No more second chances."

-- A dog collar laid neatly on a velvet cushion, the chain coiled like a snake. Amy Harrison's hand drops onto the leather, followed by Emily Hightower's, the chain jerking tight between them.

"Empire versus challenger. Champion versus Survivor. Amy Harrison anchors the UTA Women's Championship around her waist, while Emily Hightower looks to walk out of Black Horizon with not one... but two titles. They are bound together. They are chained. There is no walking away in a Dog Collar Match."

-- Jarvis Valentine hoisting the UTA Championship high as flashbulbs explode, then the image smashes to Sean Jackson's cold, smiling face, hands steepled, that familiar predatory stare boring straight into camera.

"And at the very top of the mountain sits the UTA Championship... and the man carrying it into the lion's den. Jarvis Valentine tries to complete his East Coast Invasion as champion... but the past has come calling in the form of a Hall of Famer. Sean Jackson dropped him at Survivor, and tonight, The Mental Rapist comes for the crown."

Black Horizon: 2025

The heartbeat turns into a rolling drumline. The screen fills with the words:

BLACK HORIZON

Then...

We smash cut into the 2300 Arena--wall-to-wall humanity. Fans are on their feet, signs everywhere: "EAST COAST INVASION," "BREAK THE EMPIRE," "JARVIS FEARS NO ONE," "MAXX LOVES VIOLENCE," "DOG COLLAR OR DIE," "WRESTLEZONE OR BUST," and a giant hand-drawn "WELCOME BACK BLACK HORIZON". Multi-colored lights sweep across the crowd as a barrage of pyro explodes off the stage and above the ring, rattling the rafters.

Camera whips across the floor-level faithful, who are pounding on the guardrails, chanting.

"U-T-A! U-T-A! U-T-A!"

We swing toward the hard cam as the final volley of pyro detonates behind the Black Horizon stage design--a jagged, obsidian-and-gold set piece with a digital "shattered sky" tron rolling behind it.

The ring comes into focus. The Black Horizon logo is printed under the ropes; the turnbuckles are wrapped in black and silver; the ring posts gleam under the lights. At ringside, John Phillips and Mark Bravo are already standing at their desk, headsets on, trying to talk over the roar.

John Phillips: "Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and welcome back to history! This is the 2300 Arena, this is the East Coast Invasion, and tonight... this is **Black Horizon!**"

The crowd roars again at the name of the show as the camera punches in for a tight two-shot at commentary.

Mark Bravo: "Johnny, I can't hear myself think and I don't want to! This building has seen wars, riots, careers born and careers buried--but it has never seen a night quite like this. We are sold out, we are loud, and the horizon... is about to disappear!"

John Phillips: "Over twenty-five years ago, the very first Black Horizon set the standard for what a UTA big event could be. Legends were made, reputations were shattered, and the name stuck. Tonight, that legacy comes roaring back to close out the East Coast Invasion in the most unforgiving building we could possibly pick."

Crowd shot--people chanting, holding up "I WASN'T HERE 25 YEARS AGO BUT I'M HERE NOW" and "BLACK HORIZON OR BUST".

Mark Bravo: "And we didn't just slap the name on this thing for nostalgia. Look at this card! We've got gold on the line, grudges finally settling up, and at least one career that might not look the same when the night's

Black Horizon: 2025

over."

Graphics flash on the screen: split image of Eric Dane Jr. and Tyger II with the WrestleZone Championship in the middle.

John Phillips: "We start with the shadow of the WrestleZone looming large. Eric Dane Jr., the reigning WrestleZone Champion, walks into Philly with a chip on his shoulder and a target on his back. But staring across from him tonight will be one of the fastest-rising stars we've seen in this new era--Tyger II. Second generation versus second generation, and by the end of the night we will know who carries the WrestleZone banner into the next chapter."

Mark Bravo: "You want pressure? Try making a name in the same breath as a wrestling icon and then doing it in *this* building. Tyger's got the mystique, the speed, the claws--but Eric Dane Jr., he's been proving week after week that the name 'Dane' still means you might wake up wondering what truck hit you."

New graphic: Marie Van Claudio and Hardcore Sandy face-to-face, barbed wire wrapped along the bottom of the frame.

John Phillips: "Also tonight, the Empire has lost one of its founding flames. Hardcore Sandy turned her back on Amy Harrison's machine, and she did it by pointing at the biggest target possible--Marie Van Claudio. She didn't ask for a technical classic. She demanded one last ride through the chaos, and MVC said yes. It will be a Hardcore Match between two women who know exactly how much this business can take from you."

Mark Bravo: "I'm gonna be honest, John, this one scares me. Sandy's a Hall of Famer who's decided the best way to sign the last page of her career is in blood. Marie Van Claudio has never seen a fight she didn't think she could win. You lock those two in with toys and no rules? Somebody's leaving a piece of themselves in Philly."

Graphic shift: ten faces around a ring-shaped logo for the WrestleZone Rumble.

John Phillips: "And if that wasn't enough, we've got ten hungry competitors entering the WrestleZone Rumble. Aaron Shaffer. B.R. Ellis. Brandon Henderson. Brick Bronson. Carter Durant. Dante Rivera. Graham Keel. Gunnar Van Patton. Malachi Cross. Silas Grimm. One of them leaves tonight as the number one contender for the WrestleZone Championship."

Mark Bravo: "Ten bodies, one over-the-top, last man standing situation. Rumbles do weird things to people, John. Friends become enemies, enemies become temporary besties, and giants get tossed because everyone decides they're sick of getting run over."

Graphic: a blood-red backdrop with Chris Ross on one side, Maxx Mayhem on the other, "FINAL ENCOUNTER" stamped beneath them.

John Phillips: "But for all the chaos on this card, it's hard to look past the grudge that's finally reached its

Black Horizon: 2025

breaking point. Chris Ross and Maxx Mayhem. The war that's stretched from show to show, city to city, Survivor to tonight. Scott Stevens has called it--this is their final match. No more rematches, no more runbacks. Whatever Ross has picked as the stipulation, whatever he's been waiting to reveal, the end of this feud happens on this canvas tonight."

Mark Bravo: "These two don't just dislike each other--they are obsessed with ruining each other's lives. Maxx Mayhem doesn't know the word 'enough.' Chris Ross doesn't know the word 'quit.' When that bell rings and we find out what Ross chose for the battlefield? Buddy, buckle your seatbelt."

Graphic: Dog Collar chain drawn tight between Amy Harrison and Emily Hightower, Women's Championship above them, United States Championship behind Emily.

John Phillips: "We then come to a match that could reshape the entire women's division. Amy Harrison, leader of The Empire, defending the UTA Women's Championship against the woman who survived it all at Survivor--Emily Hightower. Emily didn't just want a title shot... she wanted a Dog Collar Match. The United States Champion is willing to shackle herself to Amy Harrison and drag the Queen of the Empire into a fight she can't walk away from."

Mark Bravo: "You gotta be a special kind of brave--or a special kind of crazy--to willingly chain yourself to Amy Harrison. Every step that chain moves, somebody's getting yanked off their feet. If Emily pulls this off, she walks out holding two championships and the head of the Empire. If Amy survives? I don't know if anyone is going to be able to stop her."

Graphic: UTA Championship glowing center frame, Jarvis Valentine on one side, Sean Jackson on the other, Philly's skyline behind them under a blackened sky.

John Phillips: "And at the very top of Black Horizon, the UTA Championship hangs over everything. Jarvis Valentine, the man who's turned investigative instincts into in-ring instincts, puts his title on the line against a Hall of Famer with a history written in scars. Sean Jackson didn't ease into this. He walked into Survivor, dropped the champion, and pointed straight at Black Horizon. If Jarvis wants to walk into Season's Beatings as UTA Champion, he has to go through The Mental Rapist in a building that has never been kind to heroes."

Mark Bravo: "Jarvis has been grinding every night since he got that gold, and he's had a target on his back since day one. But Sean Jackson? That man knows how to take your body apart and your mind with it. This isn't just about who hits the harder move, John--this is about who breaks first. The champ can't afford even one mistake tonight, because Sean doesn't give you second chances."

The camera cuts back to the roaring crowd, then cranes up to show the full scale of the arena again. Chants swell and roll.

"UTA! UTA! UTA!"

John Phillips: "History began at a Black Horizon. Tonight, we write a new chapter. Titles, legacies, and the

Black Horizon: 2025

very future of the UTA are on the line, and we are thrilled you're with us around the world from Philadelphia!"

Mark Bravo: "Get your snacks, get your signs, turn your phone on silent--unless you're tweeting about us, then tag me--but don't you dare blink, because this thing is about to erupt."

The camera zooms toward the stage as the lights shift and the opening match's theme begins to rumble through the arena.

John Phillips: "Black Horizon: 2025 starts... **right now!**"

Eric Dane Jr. vs. Tyger II

The house lights dim in an instant, swallowing the 2300 Arena in shadow. A low, distant rumble rolls through the sound system--half thunder, half something else, something that sounds like a growl buried under static.

A single blood-red slash of light carves across the stage LED. Then another. Then a third. Each one claws across the screen, leaving behind glowing kanji and the outline of a tiger mask. Smoke begins to billow up from the stage, thick and creeping, spreading out across the entryway like fog rolling in over a graveyard.

The first taiko drum hits.

BOOM.

A pulse of deep, bass-heavy percussion rattles the guardrails. A shimmering, eerie flute line threads in over it, bending and twisting, almost off-key in a way that makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand up. Synths crawl in under the drums, like something neon and unnatural pushing up through the darkness.

The tron goes fully black. Then, in jagged white characters that tear themselves onto the screen, the words appear:

CLAW OF YOKAI

The beat drops properly, taiko and electronic drums colliding as "Claw of Yokai" roars to life. The house lights don't come back all at once; instead, strips of ultraviolet and deep midnight blue cut across the arena, casting the crowd in ghostly hues. Every reflective surface catches hints of purple and emerald green, like phosphorescent eyes blinking in the dark.

John Phillips: "And listen to this place in Philly come alive! We are starting Black Horizon: 2025 with the WrestleZone Championship on the line, and here comes the challenger..."

Mark Bravo: "This is the kind of entrance that makes the hair on your arms salute. You don't just walk to the ring when you're Tyger II--you *arrive* like an omen."

Black Horizon: 2025

A column of pale white light drops onto the center of the stage, a lone spotlight cutting through the smoke. In that column stands a figure, back turned to the ring, shoulders squared, head slightly bowed. The hood of his entrance jacket--black with gold tiger stripes that shimmer under the UV--covers the top of a sleek yellow-and-black mask with stylized fangs painted along the jaw.

The camera swings around to catch him from the side as he slowly lifts his head, the sculpted eyes of the mask catching the light in an almost otherworldly glow. The crowd pops, a wave of sound that rolls from the cheap seats to the front row.

"TY-GER TWO! TY-GER TWO! TY-GER TWO!"

John Phillips: "Kaito Watanabe. The son of Tatsumi 'Tyger' Tanaka. A legacy born on another continent, carried through Mexico, through Japan, and now standing here in one of the most famous wrestling buildings on earth, challenging for the WrestleZone Championship."

Mark Bravo: "There are ghosts in this arena, Johnny. Philly remembers every war that's been fought in this building, and Tyger II looks like he brought a few spirits with him tonight."

On the tron, the past and present blur: grainy footage of his father, Tatsumi Tanaka, connecting with a rolling elbow and a tiger suplex; then clean HD clips of Tyger II, exploding through ropes with a tope, snapping off the Yokai Driver, landing the Tiger Eclipse in a wash of strobe lights. Each impact on the screen syncs with the taiko hits in the music.

Tyger II slowly turns, now facing the ring. He stands perfectly still for a heartbeat, letting the noise wash over him. His chest rises and falls once, measured. He brings his hands together in front of him, fingers steeped, and then presses his palm over the center of his mask as the flute line in the song bends upward.

John Phillips: "He's not a showboat. He doesn't preen for cameras. This is ritual. For Tyger II, the ring is sacred ground, and this entrance is the walk of a warrior headed to his altar."

He steps forward out of the spotlight, and as he moves down the ramp, small, sharp bursts of white pyro shoot upward on either side--less explosions, more like claws raking the air in time with the drumline. The smoke clings low around his boots, swirling with each precise step, making it look like he's gliding over mist.

Fans along the aisle reach out, some with Tyger masks of their own, some with homemade signs--"SPIRIT OF THE TYGER," "YOKAI OVER WRESTLEZONE," and one big hand-painted banner reading, "FATHER'S LEGACY, SON'S NIGHT." He doesn't slap hands, but he turns his head just enough that you know he sees them.

Mark Bravo: "He's not out here to play to the front row for likes, but don't mistake that for indifference. Look at the way he scans the crowd, the way he takes in this building. That's someone who understands he's not just wrestling for himself tonight."

Black Horizon: 2025

Halfway down the ramp, Tyger II slows. The camera catches a tight shot of his boots coming to a stop at the edge of the light. He drops into a low crouch, fingertips touching the floor, head bowed again. The music dips, the drums sliding to the background as the eerie flute takes over, weaving a delicate, haunted melody through the arena.

He lifts his head slightly and fixes his gaze toward the rafters of the 2300 Arena. For a moment, everything narrows--the noise, the lights, the signs--it all fades behind that single upward look, a silent conversation with a man who isn't here but somehow is in every shadow of this building.

John Phillips: "That right there... that's for his father. Tatsumi 'Tyger' Tanaka may not be in this ring physically, but you can feel that legacy wrapped around Kaito like a second skin tonight."

He shifts his weight, then drives his palm into the mat with a sharp smack that the front rows can hear even over the music. As he rises from the crouch, the lights snap brighter--still blue and violet, but intensified--casting long, sharp shadows. The drums slam back in, harder than before, signaling the shift from ritual to war.

Tyger slides under the bottom rope in one fluid motion, pushing up to his feet in the center of the ring. The camera tracks him as he walks deliberately to the far corner, then steps up onto the second turnbuckle, standing tall as the lights in the arena swirl into a vortex above him.

He raises one hand slowly... fingers splayed... then curls them into a hooked, claw-like shape--the "Tiger Claw." The crowd roars back in recognition, a mix of nostalgia for those who knew his father and pure adrenaline for those who've only known the son.

"TY-GER TWO! TY-GER TWO! TY-GER TWO!"

Mark Bravo: "That's the pose. That's the moment. The silent hunter showing his claws at Black Horizon. Eric Dane Jr. better be watching every frame of this, because that's not just a fancy mask--that's twenty-five years of expectation bearing down on one man."

Tyger II lowers his hand, drops back down to the mat, and turns toward the hard cam. He takes three precise steps to the center of the ring, then sinks into a low, ceremonial crouch. One knee touches the canvas, his fingertips brush the Black Horizon logo at his feet.

He holds there, motionless, as the music begins to fade, only the faint echo of the flute lingering like a ghost around the rafters. The referee watches from the corner; the ringside camera zooms in close enough that you can see Tyger's chest rising and falling under the jacket, steady as a drumbeat.

John Phillips: "In this building, on this night, with this crowd, Tyger II is about to challenge for his first WrestleZone Championship. He's calm... he's focused... and he's treating this match like a ceremony that can't go wrong."

Black Horizon: 2025

As the last note of "Claw of Yokai" finally dies out, Tyger II rises from his crouch. He unfastens his jacket with a single smooth motion and shrugs it off, revealing his ring gear beneath--sleek, modern, but clearly paying homage to his father's iconic colors. He hands the jacket to the ringside attendant without looking away from the entryway, his body angling toward the stage like a predator waiting for prey to step into the clearing.

Mark Bravo: "The spirit's in the ring, John. Now we see if the so-called future of WrestleZone, Eric Dane Jr., is ready to walk through that smoke and try to put this phantom down."

The crowd buzzes, anticipation crackling in the air as the arena lights settle into a more traditional bright white over the ring, leaving a moody darkness draped over the stage.

Tyger II stands tall in the center, shoulders square, chin lifted just a fraction, waiting for the champion to appear.

The buzz in the 2300 Arena swells as Tyger II stands centered in the ring, body angled toward the stage, waiting. The lights over the entryway drop again, plunging the stage into near-black.

A record scratch tears through the sound system.

Beat.

Then the unmistakable opening of "Made You Look" by Nas punches through the speakers, the bassline swaggering across the arena like it owns the place.

John Phillips: "And here we go. You know that sound. You know that swagger. Love him or hate him, the WrestleZone Champion is about to make himself very, very visible."

Mark Bravo: "Turn the brightness on your TVs down, folks. Eric Dane Jr. is about to walk through that curtain looking like a peacock exploded in a Hot Topic."

As the first bar kicks in, a blast of gold confetti erupts from both sides of the stage, raining down over the entrance tunnel. Spotlights snap on in rapid-fire sequence--white, gold, electric blue--chasing each other around the arena before converging on the top of the ramp.

The tron flashes a massive, stylized logo: "EDJ" in blinding chrome letters, rotating over a backdrop of animated stars. Clips of Eric Jr. hitting various Shooting Star variations and posing over downed opponents play in chaotic, self-indulgent bursts--half of them in slow motion, all of them edited to make everything look way more epic than it was.

Through the curtain struts Eric Dane Jr., and he looks absolutely ridiculous... on purpose.

He's in his silver trunks with bold blue "ERIC DANE JR." script across the back, stars scattered over them like someone spilled a galaxy. Over that, however, he's layered an open, sequined royal-blue peacoat with

Black Horizon: 2025

oversized shoulder pads and fringe cascading off the sleeves. Around his neck? Not one, not two, but three feather boas--blue, silver, and white--that trail behind him like a comet tail. His hair is half slicked, half tousled, and his eyes are hidden behind giant wrap-around mirrored sunglasses.

In his right hand, because of course, is an ornate walking stick topped with a chrome star. In his left, slung casually over his shoulder like luggage, is the WrestleZone Championship, plates gleaming under the spinning lights.

Right behind him, smirking and clapping along to the beat, is Angus Skaaland--jeans, leather jacket, cigarette tucked behind his ear, eyes scanning the ring with that calculating glint.

John Phillips: "And there he is, the WrestleZone Champion, Eric Dane Jr., making sure that every single person in Philadelphia knows there's a belt on his shoulder and a spotlight with his name on it."

Mark Bravo: "This man woke up this morning and chose 'main character energy.' The boas, the coat, the stick, the shades--he looks like a walking lawsuit and I'm kind of obsessed."

Eric stops at the very top of the ramp, spreading his arms wide as if to embrace the chorus of boos cascading down from the stands. He tilts his head back, soaking it in, then points his walking stick out toward the ring like a scepter, directly at Tyger II.

The crowd answers him with a mixed reaction heavily leaning toward hostility.

"TY-GER TWO!"

"YOU STILL SUCK!"

John Phillips: "Listen to this crowd. They respect the legacy of the Dane name, but Eric Jr. has done everything in his power to make sure the respect goes to the belt and not necessarily the man."

Mark Bravo: "He doesn't want your respect, John. He wants your attention. Boos, cheers, middle fingers, love letters--doesn't matter. As long as it's about him, he's happy."

Eric starts a slow strut down the ramp, perfectly in time with the beat of "Made You Look." Every few steps, he stops to preen--running a hand through his hair, adjusting his sunglasses, shaking his boas out like he's on a runway.

He pulls his phone from the inside of the peacoat, flips the camera to selfie mode, and walks a few more steps while recording, pouting, and making exaggerated "Can you believe they're booing me?" faces into the lens. He swings the phone around to catch Tyger II in the ring in the background, then himself again, mouthing along: "Made you look."

John Phillips: "He's literally taking a live selfie video on his way to defend the WrestleZone Championship

Black Horizon: 2025

at Black Horizon."

Mark Bravo: "That's called content, John. That's branding. That's making sure your humiliation goes viral if you somehow blow this tonight."

A kid in the front row, wearing a homemade Tyger II mask, leans over the rail and yells something at him. Eric stops dead, looks down at the kid, then at the camera on his phone, and makes a big exaggerated "Awww" face. He pats his own star-covered trunks and mouths, "Championship, baby," before slowly panning the phone across the belt on his shoulder and winking.

The fans in that section boo him even louder.

"ED-JAY SUCKS!"

John Phillips: "This is the monolith of ego we've been talking about. Inexperienced? Yes. Overconfident? Definitely. But somehow, some way, he's still walking down that ramp as the WrestleZone Champion."

Mark Bravo: "That's the annoying thing about guys like this. They screw around, they pose, they post, they trend... and yet, when the smoke clears, somehow there's still gold on the waist. Or in this case, over the shoulder."

As he gets closer to the ring, the camera cuts to Tyger II's face--expression unreadable behind the mask, body perfectly still, eyes locked on the champion. No movement. No reaction. Just that quiet, ritualistic intensity.

Eric notices. He tilts his head, looks from Tyger to the hard cam, and grins. With a flick of his wrist, he tosses the walking stick back toward Angus, who snatches it casually. Eric then hops up onto the apron in one bounce--not graceful, but with enough energy that it looks like he thinks it was.

He leans back against the ropes, stretching his arms across the top strand like he owns it, and calls out toward the hard cam in a loud, over-enunciated voice that the nearby mics pick up.

Eric Dane Jr. (shouting): "Made you look at me, Philly!"

The boos rain down again.

John Phillips: "If there was any question where this crowd's allegiance lies, I think we've got our answer. Tyger II with the warrior's respect, Eric Dane Jr. with the showman's arrogance."

Mark Bravo: "Hey, if they're booing you, they're not ignoring you. That's a win in his book."

Eric steps through the ropes with exaggerated, almost theatrical care, making sure the camera gets a full view of the WrestleZone Championship as he ducks inside. Once in the ring, he walks a slow, wide circle

Black Horizon: 2025

around Tyger II, who doesn't turn to follow--just tracks him with his eyes, shoulders coiled, feet planted.

The contrast is striking: Tyger, still and deadly; Eric, moving like he's on a concert stage instead of in a fight.

Eric stops at the far corner, climbs up to the second rope, and shrugs his boas off one by one, tossing them down to the ringside attendant with a flourish. He unbuttons his peacoat halfway, then throws his arms wide, chest out, belt still slung over his shoulder as he basks in the bright overhead lights.

The production team times it perfectly--each time the beat drops in the song, stuttering star-shaped spotlights flicker around him, giving the illusion that the chrome "EDJ" letters from the tron are reflecting off his gear in real time.

Mark Bravo: "He's doing a full-on championship fashion show before the bell even rings."

John Phillips: "He says he plans on being a bigger star than his father ever dreamed of being. Nights like this are where you prove that inside the ropes... not just under the lights."

*Eric finally unclips the WrestleZone Championship from his shoulder and holds it high with one hand, leaning back over the top rope so the main camera can see the plates gleam right next to his smirking face. He taps the center plate with two fingers, then points directly down toward Tyger II without looking at him, as if the challenger is just another prop in *The Eric Dane Jr. Show*.*

The referee steps in and extends a hand. Eric looks at him like he's just interrupted an acceptance speech, then reluctantly passes the title over--kissing the center plate first with a theatrical, over-the-top pout.

Once the belt leaves his hands, the music begins to fade, "Made You Look" trailing off into the echo of drums and bass as the house lights even out to full brightness. Eric peels off the peacoat, drops it dramatically in Angus's direction at ringside, and then starts meticulously adjusting the tape on his fingers and wrists, like that's the most important thing in the world.

He finally turns fully toward Tyger II, stepping out of his corner. He raises his hands in front of him with a mock "fighting stance" and gives a little bounce on his heels--part warm-up, part show-off, the smirk never leaving his face.

John Phillips: "The boas are gone, the coat is off, the glasses are out of the ring, and the WrestleZone Championship is in the referee's hands. The challenger, Tyger II, stands ready. The champion, Eric Dane Jr., looks as confident as ever."

Mark Bravo: "Showboaty, flashy, obnoxious--check, check, and check. But behind all that, there's a kid who's willing to throw his body at you from any angle just to keep that belt. This might get wild in a hurry."

The referee lifts the WrestleZone Championship high for the hard cam, the crowd roaring at the sight. Tyger II dips his head slightly in respect to the title. Eric Dane Jr. just winks at it.

Black Horizon: 2025

The bell hasn't rung yet, but the stage is set--ritual versus ego, legacy versus brand, ghostly hunter versus human spotlight.

The bell rings and the noise in the 2300 Arena condenses into a low, electric hum. Tyger II steps out from his corner with that same measured pace from his entrance, hands loose at his sides, shoulders relaxed but ready. Across from him, Eric Dane Jr. bounces on the balls of his feet, shaking out his taped wrists, mouthing something to himself as he smirks at the crowd and then at the masked challenger.

John Phillips: "And we are officially underway here at Black Horizon! WrestleZone Championship on the line--Tyger II challenging Eric Dane Jr.--and you can feel the tension just in the way they're looking at each other."

Mark Bravo: "One man sees a sacred battleground. The other sees a spotlight. It's art versus content, Johnny, and I'm not entirely sure which one's more dangerous tonight."

Tyger steps into the center of the ring and raises his hands, fingers open, palms visible. He gives the slightest nod, then bows his upper body a few inches--just enough to be clear, just enough to be respectful. The crowd gives a small, appreciative swell for the gesture, recognizing the tradition.

Eric stares at him for a long beat, then dramatically looks left, then right, as if asking the crowd, "Is this guy serious?" He takes one step forward, leans in close... and instead of bowing, gives Tyger II an overacted, mocking golf clap right in his face.

Mark Bravo: "Yup. There it is. Respect meets reality TV."

John Phillips: "Tyger II offering the traditional bow, and Eric Dane Jr. making sure everyone knows he's not going to play by that particular script."

Tyger doesn't flinch. He straightens, hands still up, head tilting just slightly to one side as if recalibrating. Then he steps forward again and offers a traditional collar-and-elbow tie-up stance, legs set wide, center of gravity low.

Eric shrugs, bites down on his lower lip in that "fine, let's do this" way, and charges into the lock-up. Immediately, Tyger's control shows--he shifts his hips, funnels Eric toward the ropes, and turns at the last moment, pinning the champion back against the cables with a snug but clean grip.

The referee steps in, calling for the break. Tyger's hands open instantly; he backs off on the count of one, not even using the full five. He raises his palms to shoulder height and takes two respectful steps back to the center, not a hint of a cheap shot.

John Phillips: "That's the discipline we've heard about. Clean break, no wasted movement, no shortcuts. Tyger II wants this to be about who is the better wrestler, not who's the better rule-bender."

Black Horizon: 2025

Eric, for his part, stays in the ropes with his arms hooked over the top, staring out at the crowd like he's been grievously wronged. He mimes wiping sweat from his brow, then flicks it in Tyger's direction as he steps out, drawing a groan from the front row.

Mark Bravo: "You see that? He got muscled into the ropes and now he's gonna pretend it was some kind of major assault. Classic EDJ--lose the exchange, win the facial expression."

They circle again. This time, Eric feints a lock-up but ducks under at the last second, slipping behind Tyger into a rear waistlock. For half a heartbeat, he looks genuinely surprised that he pulled it off, then squeezes and tries to rip Tyger off his base.

Tyger widens his stance, drops his hips, and in a fluid motion he rolls his wrist over Eric's grip, switches under the champion's arm, and reverses into a crisp hammerlock. The sequence is smooth and sharp, and the crowd responds with a polite but noticeable pop for the technical display.

John Phillips: "There's that technical precision. Tyger II flowing from one counter to the next, taking the champion's momentum and just... folding it in on itself."

Eric grimaces and overreacts, stomping his foot a few times, then tries to reach back with his free arm. Tyger adjusts, shifts his weight, and turns the hammerlock into a snug side headlock, cinching down with just enough pressure to slow the champion. He walks Eric around the ring in controlled circles, keeping his base low.

Eric shoves at Tyger's back, trying to create space. He finally manages to push Tyger off toward the ropes. Tyger hits them, rebounds with speed--and Eric instinctively drops flat to the mat, expecting the challenger to leap over.

Tyger does exactly that, his boots whispering over Eric's back as he hurtles forward. He hits the opposite ropes, rebounds, and Eric pops to his feet for a leapfrog... but Tyger stops dead, sliding to a sudden, smooth halt just out of range, leaving Eric in the air with no one beneath him.

Eric lands awkwardly, stutter-stepping to catch his balance. Before he can fully reset, Tyger explodes into motion--snatching Eric's wrist, pivoting, and taking him over with a lightning-quick Japanese arm drag. Eric pops up on instinct and eats a second arm drag. The third time he rises, Tyger transitions into a deep armbar on the canvas, wrenching the shoulder with a surgeon's care.

John Phillips: "Beautiful chain wrestling from the challenger! Tyger II stringing those counters together--arm drag, arm drag, and right into the armbar, surgically working that joint."

Mark Bravo: "You can call it chain wrestling, I call it a highlight reel. He's treating Eric's arm like a practice dummy right now."

Eric flails, kicks his legs, and tries to drag himself toward the ropes. Tyger doesn't yank or wrench recklessly;

Black Horizon: 2025

he leans back just enough to keep pressure on the shoulder, his eyes focused, his breathing steady. The referee checks on Eric, who shakes his head furiously and snarls something inaudible, teeth bared.

With a burst of effort, Eric scoots and stretches until his boot catches the bottom rope. The official calls for the break. Again, Tyger releases immediately, standing and backing off with his hands raised. He even gives Eric a slight nod, acknowledging the escape.

John Phillips: "Another clean break from Tyger II. No gratuitous twisting of that shoulder, no extra second on the hold. He's making a statement here--he's going to out-wrestle Eric Dane Jr., not out-cheat him."

Eric uses the ropes to pull himself up, rotating his arm with a theatrical grimace. He looks out at the crowd, then back at Tyger, and his expression hardens from goofy smugness to something a little more annoyed.

He steps forward quickly and thrusts a hand out toward Tyger, palm open, fingers spread in invitation for a handshake. The crowd immediately buzzes in warning, a chorus of "No!" and "Don't trust him!" washing over the ring.

Mark Bravo: "Oh, now you want respect? Now that your shoulder feels like it's been auditioning for a pretzel ad?"

Tyger stares at the offered hand. You can sense the internal calculus even through the mask--warrior's honor versus common sense. After a long moment, he slowly raises his own hand and extends it, choosing the code he lives by.

They clasp hands in the center of the ring.

For about half a second.

Then Eric yanks Tyger forward into a sudden, sharp forearm strike right under the jaw. It's not illegal, but it's snug enough and cheap enough to earn an immediate wave of boos from the crowd. Tyger's head snaps back; he stumbles a step, caught more off guard by the betrayal than the impact.

John Phillips: "And there it is! Tyger II gives him the benefit of the doubt, and Eric Dane Jr. repays him with a forearm right to the face!"

Mark Bravo: "You don't stick your hand in the lion's mouth and then act surprised when it bites, John. That one's on Tyger--he knew who he was dealing with."

*Eric shakes out his arm dramatically, then lays in a series of knife-edge chops to Tyger's chest, each one punctuated by a crisp *CRACK* and a shower of sweat. The crowd "WOO!"s in reflex, even as they boo him between strikes.*

He backs Tyger into the corner, then whips him hard across the ring. Tyger hits the opposite buckles

Black Horizon: 2025

chest-first, staggers back--and Eric takes off, looking for a running knee. At the last second, Tyger pivots around him in a blur, catching the champion from behind and rolling him into a tight schoolboy with pristine technique.

The referee drops.

John Phillips: "Roll-up! Shoulders down!"

ONE!

TWO--Eric kicks out, popping up as if stung. Tyger is already on his feet, meeting him in the center. Before Eric can recover fully, Tyger snaps off a crisp low kick to the thigh, followed by a second and a third--sharp, fast, surgical. The crowd reacts to each with rising enthusiasm.

John Phillips: "Tyger II answering the disrespect with pure offense--low kicks to the leg, chopping away at the base of the champion!"

Mark Bravo: "That's how you hurt a flier. Take out the launchpad. No base, no altitude, no five different versions of the Shooting Star making your life miserable."

Eric staggers, leg buckling slightly. Tyger seizes the moment--he feints another low kick, drawing Eric's guard down, then whips up a flashing mid-kick to the ribs that lands with a satisfying thud. As Eric doubles over, Tyger hits the ropes, rebounds, and nails a smooth running front dropkick that sends the champion tumbling backward to the canvas and rolling out under the bottom rope on instinct.

The crowd pops as Eric collapses to the floor near the guardrail, clutching his ribs and thigh. Angus is immediately there, crouching next to him, talking a mile a minute into his ear, hands gesturing sharply as he points from Tyger, to the ring, back to Eric's head.

John Phillips: "Tyger II using that speed and precision--low kicks, body shot, and a picture-perfect dropkick sending the champion bailing to the floor!"

Mark Bravo: "That was a sporting decision by Eric. Totally. Clearly he just wanted to... have a strategy meeting. You know, talk brand direction. Maybe ask Angus if there's a filter that makes those kicks hurt less."

Tyger doesn't dive immediately. Instead, he stands in the center of the ring, watching Eric and Angus with calm focus. He walks to the ropes closest to them and, instead of trash talking, grips the top strand and gives a small, deliberate bow in their direction--a show of confidence and respect in his own ability rather than any particular deference to the champion.

The gesture is met with a big cheer from the crowd, who chant again:

"TY-GER TWO! TY-GER TWO!"

Black Horizon: 2025

John Phillips: "Even with the champion trying to embarrass him, Tyger II keeps bringing it back to a contest of skill. He's saying, 'Get back in here. Prove it.'"

Mark Bravo: "Meanwhile, Eric looks like a guy who came in expecting a cool action movie and realized he accidentally signed up for a documentary on getting your leg dismantled."

On the floor, Eric pushes himself up with Angus's help, limping slightly as he leans on the apron. He points up at Tyger, shouting something that sounds like, "You think this is your show?" before sliding onto the apron and demanding the referee hold Tyger back.

Tyger takes two steps to the center again, hands raised, giving him the space. The referee begins to count Eric in, the champion wiping imaginary sweat off his brow again as he slowly, theatrically, re-enters the ring.

The atmosphere tightens. The crowd buzzes. The first exchanges have clearly gone to Tyger II, and the champion knows it.

John Phillips: "Early going, it's the challenger controlling the pace--clean breaks, sharp counters, and targeted strikes. But we know Eric Dane Jr. can get wild and desperate in a hurry if he feels that title slipping away."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, enjoy the pretty wrestling while you can, Philly. Sooner or later, Eric's gonna turn this from a showcase into a car crash if that's what it takes to keep the belt."

Tyger II sinks low into his stance again, ready to meet whatever version of Eric Dane Jr. comes forward next as the WrestleZone Championship showdown continues.

Eric steps fully back into the ring, rolling his shoulders like he's shaking off the first few minutes as a warm-up. He flicks his wrist at the referee, demanding more space, then rolls his neck with an exaggerated crack, eyes locking on Tyger II.

John Phillips: "Champion back in, and you can see the frustration starting to creep in behind the bravado."

Mark Bravo: "If I got out-wrestled on live stream by a guy who looks like a ghost tiger, I'd be a little testy too."

They circle again. This time, Eric shoots forward faster, reaching for a single-leg. Tyger sprawls immediately, spreading his base and stuffing the attempt, then spins to the side and grabs a front facelock. Eric, however, uses his momentum--popping his hips and rolling through, turning Tyger's hold into a sudden inside cradle.

The referee drops.

ONE!

Black Horizon: 2025

Tyger kicks out cleanly at two, rolling backward and landing in a low crouch as Eric springs up with arms wide like he just won the title.

Eric Dane Jr.: "I almost had him! That close!"

He holds his thumb and forefinger half an inch apart toward the hard cam, walking in a little circle, milking the moment as if the near-fall had been a three-count.

Mark Bravo: "My guy, you barely got a two and you're doing post-game interviews already."

Tyger rises smoothly from the crouch, unbothered. He gives one small nod, acknowledging the attempt, then extends both hands in a classic grappling posture, inviting another exchange.

Eric lunges in, only to pivot and sling Tyger toward the ropes with a quick Irish whip. Tyger rebounds, and Eric drops his head too early for a back body drop. Tyger sees it, cartwheeling gracefully over Eric's lowered back and landing behind him. Before Eric can turn, Tyger snatches him into a waistlock, fluidly lifts, and plants him with a crisp, snap German-style takedown--not quite a suplex, more a controlled throw designed to rattle and humiliate.

The crowd pops at the smoothness of it, clapping and cheering for the challenger's technique.

John Phillips: "Once again, Tyger II turning basic wrestling exchanges into high art. That timing, that body control--every counter is deliberate."

Eric scrambles to his knees, a little wide-eyed now. Tyger backs up a step, then suddenly rushes forward, snapping a sharp low dropkick right to the champion's shoulder. Eric tumbles sideways, rolling out to the apron on instinct.

He grabs the middle rope and pulls himself upright on the apron, one hand clutching his shoulder. Tyger advances but stops just shy, giving Eric a lane back in, refusing to cheap-shot on the ropes.

Mark Bravo: "Tyger could've soccer-kicked him to the floor right there, but nope--stays inside the code. It's admirable. Potentially dumb, but admirable."

Eric, panting a little heavier now, pulls himself through the ropes--but instead of engaging, he walks right past Tyger and toward the nearest corner. He climbs up onto the middle turnbuckle facing the hard cam and throws his arms out, soaking in the chorus of boos like they're cheers.

Eric Dane Jr.: "I'm the champ! You're welcome!"

The reaction is immediate and hostile. A loud "You still suck!" chant breaks out, echoing off the old arena's walls.

Black Horizon: 2025

John Phillips: "Eric Dane Jr. right back to showboating, but he's spending energy on everything except actually wrestling the challenger."

Mark Bravo: "He doesn't know what 'cardio' is, John, but somehow he's found the wind to argue with three thousand Philadelphians at once."

He hops down from the corner--right into a lightning-quick arm drag from Tyger, who's been patiently waiting for exactly that opening. Eric hits the mat, pops back up on instinct, and Tyger takes him over again with a deep, classic Japanese arm drag, this time keeping hold of the arm and rolling with it, transitioning smoothly into a grounded wristlock.

Tyger leans his weight across Eric's chest, stretching the arm at a painful angle. His movements are precise, almost ritualistic--no wasted effort, just clean mechanics.

John Phillips: "Every time Eric turns his back to preen for the crowd, Tyger II punishes him with fundamentals. Arm drags, wrist control, joint manipulation--this is a masterclass."

Eric kicks his legs again, trying to kip up out of the hold. The first attempt fails; the second is sloppy but gets him to one knee. Tyger responds by shifting his grip, threading his leg over Eric's trapped arm and snapping him back down into a short arm scissor variation, extending the elbow.

The champion yelps, face contorting in pain, and immediately starts scooting his hips toward the ropes.

Mark Bravo: "That's the thing about thinking you've watched every 'Top 50 Suplexes' video on YouTube--you forget that sometimes a well-placed armbars is way worse than getting dumped on your head."

Eric manages to hook a boot on the bottom rope again. The referee calls for the break. As before, Tyger releases instantly, rolling backward and rising in one smooth motion, his mask never leaving Eric's direction.

The crowd claps appreciatively at the clean break; a few fans in Tyger masks perform the "Tiger Claw" hand gesture in the front row.

John Phillips: "Tyger II could push that five-count every time and maybe wear down the champion faster, but that's not who he is. He's playing the long game the honorable way."

Mark Bravo: "And Eric's playing the 'I hope my shoulder doesn't fall off' game."

Eric gets to his feet slowly this time, one arm hanging a little lower, chest rising and falling faster. Angus shouts from ringside, slapping the apron, urging him to stop letting Tyger dictate the terms.

Eric nods, then turns to Tyger with a suddenly serious look and taps his own chest twice.

Eric Dane Jr.: "Okay, okay. Let's go. You wanna go? Let's go."

Black Horizon: 2025

He raises his hands for another lock-up, this time stepping in with more aggression. Tyger meets him in the center. As they make contact, Eric suddenly drops low, hooks Tyger's leg, and pulls hard, sending the challenger down to his back in a modified drop toe hold. Eric pops to his feet, hits the ropes, and comes barreling back with a sliding dropkick that catches Tyger under the chin.

Tyger rolls to his side, stunned. Eric pops up and, smelling a shift in momentum, sprints to the corner. He jumps to the second rope, springboards up to the top in one fluid motion, and launches backward with a high, arcing moonsault--not a Shooting Star, but close enough to get the crowd howling.

Tyger, though, rolls toward the corner at the last split second. Eric crashes stomach-first onto the mat, bouncing and clutching his ribs.

John Phillips: "Nobody home on that moonsault! Tyger II with the awareness to roll out of the blast zone!"

Mark Bravo: "That's not how gravity's supposed to feel. He just learned the hard way that the canvas does not negotiate."

The sound of Eric's impact echoes. Tyger pulls himself up in the opposite corner, one hand on the ropes, eyes locked on the writhing champion. He draws a slow breath, then explodes into motion--sprinting across the ring. As Eric gets to all fours, Tyger launches, planting one foot on Eric's posted knee and snapping off a brutal-looking running single-leg dropkick right to the side of the head, using Eric's own body as a step.

Eric crumples to the mat, clutching the side of his skull. The crowd gasps, then roars.

John Phillips: "What a shot! Tyger II using Eric's base as a springboard and nearly taking his head off!"

Tyger doesn't immediately go for the cover. Instead, he grabs Eric by the wrist, drags him toward the center of the ring, and then hauls him upright with a firm grip. He steps in close, pats Eric on the chest once--almost respectful--and then whips him hard into the ropes.

As Eric rebounds, Tyger steps in with laser precision--a blur of motion as he pivots and snaps his leg up in a flash.

The Ghost Fang Kick whistles past Eric's jaw by an inch as the champion, running almost on panic, drops under it on instinct alone and tumbles to the side. The crowd lets out a collective "Ohhhh!" at how close it came.

John Phillips: "He went for the Ghost Fang Kick! If that had connected, we might've been looking at a new WrestleZone Champion right there!"

Mark Bravo: "Eric did not dodge that on purpose, I refuse to believe it. That was pure dumb survival instinct and maybe a little bit of slip on the sweat."

Black Horizon: 2025

Eric, realizing how close he came to disaster, bails again--this time rolling all the way under the bottom rope and dropping to the floor on his back. He sits up against the apron, eyes wide, chest heaving, one hand pressed to his jaw. Angus is in his face immediately, pointing to his temple, shouting that he needs to slow Tyger down.

The crowd hates it, booing the champion as he stalls on the outside.

John Phillips: "Every time Tyger II kicks into that next gear, Eric Dane Jr. takes a powder. The champion is rattled, and he knows one clean shot might end his night."

Mark Bravo: "Hey, if rolling out of the ring keeps your head attached to your shoulders after something called the Ghost Fang Kick, I'm not saying I wouldn't do the same."

This time, Tyger doesn't wait. He gauges the distance, then hits the ropes on the far side, building speed. The crowd rises with him, sensing what's coming. As Eric gets to his feet on the floor, turning back toward the ring, Tyger launches himself through the ropes in a smooth, soaring tope con hilo--body folding and unfolding mid-air like a spectral blur.

He crashes down onto Eric with perfect form, wiping out both the champion and himself in front of the guardrail. The impact sends them skidding into the barricade as the front row explodes in cheers.

John Phillips: "Tope con hilo to the floor! Tyger II taking flight and crashing into the WrestleZone Champion right here in the 2300 Arena!"

Mark Bravo: "That was not a dive, that was a missile. Somebody check if Eric's stars are still attached or if they're floating around the ceiling right now."

The referee immediately jumps to the ropes, beginning a count as both men lie on the floor. Tyger is the first to stir, rolling to one knee and bracing himself on the barricade. Fans slap his shoulder and mask, chanting for him. Eric is slower, clutching his ribs and shoulder at once, grimacing in pain.

Tyger pulls Eric up by the wrist, refusing to take a cheap count-out. He rolls the champion back into the ring under the bottom rope, then follows, sliding in and pushing himself upright with a determined focus.

John Phillips: "Tyger II could've taken the count-out advantage there, but that's not how he wants to win. He wants to pin the champion, make it definitive, here at Black Horizon."

He covers, hooking the far leg tight in the center of the ring.

ONE!

TWO!

Black Horizon: 2025

Eric jerks a shoulder up at two-and-a-half, barely escaping, eyes squeezed shut as he sucks in air.

Mark Bravo: "That was close enough I think I saw his life flash in front of his eyes--and most of it was him posing."

Tyger doesn't argue the count. He simply rises, bringing Eric with him. The challenger's breathing is still measured; the champion's is ragged. The difference in conditioning is starting to show.

Tyger backs Eric into the ropes with a forearm, then whips him across. On the rebound, Tyger ducks his head, then bursts upward, scooping the champion into the air across his shoulders in one smooth motion, setting up for the Yokai Driver. The crowd surges, recognizing the setup spot.

John Phillips: "He's got him loaded! Tyger II looking for the Yokai Driver!"

But before Tyger can sit out, Eric shifts desperately, hammering repeated, frantic elbows down onto the side of Tyger's neck and mask. The shots aren't pretty, but they're desperate and quick. Tyger's grip loosens just enough for Eric to slip down behind him, landing on his feet and stumbling forward into the ropes.

As Tyger turns, Eric fires off a wild, spinning back elbow. It connects flush with the side of Tyger's mask, rocking the challenger for the first real time in the match. Tyger stumbles back a step, arms dipping for balance.

John Phillips: "Big elbow from the champion! That one might've scrambled Tyger II's senses just enough!"

Eric, chest heaving, sees the opening and seizes it. He grabs Tyger by the wrist, yanks him toward the corner, and with a guttural yell climbs the ropes, dragging Tyger up with him, setting the challenger on the top turnbuckle.

The crowd buzzes, knowing exactly what lives in Eric Dane Jr.'s playbook up there.

Mark Bravo: "Oh no. Oh no. This is where all the 'flippy-doo bullshit' and the Stardriver talk comes back to haunt people. If he hits something big from up there, this whole match turns on a dime."

Eric climbs onto the second rope, then the top, hooking Tyger for something--maybe a superplex, maybe worse--his eyes wild, his mouth moving a mile a minute as he shouts in Tyger's face about being "the real star."

The 2300 Arena rises to its feet as both men teeter on the top rope, the fate of the WrestleZone Championship hanging in the balance.

High above the ring, both men teeter on the top rope, the noise in the 2300 Arena rising to a fever pitch. Eric Dane Jr. hooks Tyger II around the head, trying to muscle him into position, his feet shuffling for balance on the narrow strand of cable.

Black Horizon: 2025

John Phillips: "This is dangerous territory for both champion and challenger--Eric Dane Jr. looking for something huge from the top!"

Mark Bravo: "If he's thinking SD2 this early, he's out of his mind... which, to be fair, is very on brand."

Eric plants his boots and tries to haul Tyger straight up from the top rope--straining for that top-turnbuckle brainbuster configuration--but Tyger's center of gravity sinks. The challenger drops his weight, hooking a leg inside the turnbuckle for leverage, blocking the lift.

Tyger fires a short, compact forearm into Eric's ribs. Another. A third. They're not wild--it's all precision, each shot placed to loosen the champion's grip. Eric grits his teeth, holding on for dear life as the top rope wobbles under both men.

John Phillips: "Tyger II fighting for his life up there, using those tight, measured strikes instead of just trading haymakers!"

Eric answers with a pair of clubbing forearms across Tyger's back, then tries again to lift. The crowd gasps as Tyger's boots momentarily leave the turnbuckle--but he kicks his legs, forcing himself back down, one hand shooting to the top strand for extra balance.

Tyger adjusts, then suddenly snaps his head forward, driving a sharp, clean headbutt into Eric's chest rather than his face--a strike meant to dislodge, not maim. Eric's breath rushes out in a loud grunt. His arms slacken just enough.

Tyger seizes the moment. He snakes his inside arm under Eric's, turns his body, and pivots out from the corner, stepping down to the second rope. In one smooth motion, he shoves Eric backward off the top turnbuckle.

The champion crashes down to the canvas in a sprawled heap, the ring shuddering beneath him. The crowd erupts with a mammoth cheer at the escape.

John Phillips: "Huge counter from Tyger II! Eric Dane Jr. crashes hard from the top rope!"

Tyger doesn't hesitate. He quickly climbs up to stand tall on the top turnbuckle, facing the ring, arms slightly out for balance as "Claw of Yokai"'s echo seems to hang in the air even without the music playing.

The 2300 Arena rises with him, thousands of bodies leaning in the same direction as he steadies himself, measuring the distance to the downed champion.

Mark Bravo: "This is that momentum build we talked about--Tyger starting slow, then hitting that high-tempo, high-risk gear when he smells blood!"

Tyger launches, twisting in mid-air with a fluid grace that seems to hang for just a heartbeat--a high, flipping

Black Horizon: 2025

neckbreaker-style trajectory aimed to crash down across Eric's upper body, shades of the Feral Descent translated off the top.

But at the last possible second, Eric rolls, more survival instinct than strategy. Tyger lands hard on his back and shoulders, the whiplash sending a jolt through him. The impact thunders through the building.

John Phillips: "Nobody home! Tyger II crashes and burns from the top rope!"

Mark Bravo: "You live by the high risk, sometimes you splat by the high risk. That's just physics with extra pain."

Both men lie on the mat, the crowd buzzing with that low roar reserved for big collisions. The referee hovers, then starts a double count as each man clutches at their respective injuries--Tyger his back, Eric his ribs and shoulder.

ONE!

TWO!

Eric is the first to stir, rolling toward the ropes, dragging himself up to one knee. Tyger pushes up more slowly, his usually fluid movements now tight and deliberate, one hand pressed to the small of his back.

John Phillips: "That one landing might've jolted Tyger II's spine, and you know Eric Dane Jr. is going to take advantage if he sees that weakness."

Eric uses the ropes to pull himself up, eyes locked on the challenger's pained posture. Something in his expression shifts--less panic now, more nasty calculation.

He stumbles toward the center as Tyger rises, then suddenly explodes forward with a low, diving chop block right to the back of Tyger's knee. The masked challenger's leg buckles, sending him crashing to the mat.

The crowd boos loudly; it's legal, but the intent is viciously clear.

Mark Bravo: "There it is. There's the pivot. You see a guy land wrong on his back, you go for the leg. Not exactly respectful, but absolutely effective."

Eric grabs Tyger's ankle and drags the challenger toward the corner, smashing the back of his thigh against the canvas in the process. He threads Tyger's leg around the middle rope and yanks back, wrenching the knee, using the ropes for extra torque.

The referee immediately begins a count, admonishing Eric.

ONE! TWO! THREE! FOUR--

Black Horizon: 2025

Eric releases at four-and-three-quarters, throwing his hands up innocently as Tyger clutches at his leg and slides away from the corner.

John Phillips: "That's the difference in philosophy on full display. Tyger II breaks clean on one; Eric Dane Jr. milks every fraction of the five-count he can get."

Eric feigns a complaint with the official, then turns back to Tyger and starts stomping the back of the challenger's knee, each boot dropping with extra zeal. The boos get louder; Angus applauds at ringside, shouting for him to "keep carving him up!"

Eric grabs the targeted leg again, lifts it, and slams the knee into the mat, then repeats. On the third, he holds the ankle, steps over, and drops down into a crude but effective single leg crab, sitting back and wrenching the lower back and knee at once.

John Phillips: "Now the champion zeroes in--lower back, knee, everything that Tyger II uses for that explosiveness, that aerial assault."

Mark Bravo: "If you can't spring, you can't fly. If you can't fly, those fancy names in your move list start sounding like old stories instead of future highlights."

Tyger grits his teeth beneath the mask, hands clawing at the canvas as Eric sits low, yelling "Ask him!" at the referee, soaking in the moment like he's already survived certain doom.

Referee slides in, asking Tyger if he wants to give it up. Tyger shakes his head immediately, planting his free foot and kicking at the mat, trying to inch himself toward the ropes.

The fans clap in rhythm, chanting again.

"TY-GER TWO! TY-GER TWO!"

Slowly, he drags himself forward, arms shaking with strain. Eric leans back deeper, grimacing, trying to halt the challenger's progress. Sweat drips from his forehead onto Tyger's back.

After an agonizing crawl, Tyger's fingertips brush the bottom rope. He stretches just that extra inch and clamps down. The crowd explodes in relief as the referee orders Eric to release the hold.

ONE! TWO! THREE! FOUR--

Again, Eric breaks at the last permissible instant, then throws his arms wide like he's the aggrieved party.

Mark Bravo: "He's gonna ride that four-count like it's a rental car--floor it till you see the cops."

Tyger pulls himself toward the corner on instinct, trying to put some distance between them. Eric stalks after

Black Horizon: 2025

him, measuring his steps, then drives a stiff-looking knee right into Tyger's lower back as the challenger tries to stand. Tyger arches in pain, clutching the ropes.

Eric grabs him in a waistlock from behind and, with a grunt, hauls Tyger up and over in a release German suplex that sends the masked warrior skidding across the ring on his shoulders.

The crowd groans at the impact.

John Phillips: "Big German suplex from Eric Dane Jr.! Targeting that back with every move now!"

Eric scrambles over, shoves Tyger onto his back, and collapses into a lateral press, hooking the far leg--not quite as snugly as Tyger had earlier, but enough to force the issue.

ONE!

TWO!

Tyger kicks out at two, getting a shoulder up despite the damage.

John Phillips: "Tyger II out at two! The challenger is still in this, but the champion is starting to drag this match into his kind of ugly territory."

Mark Bravo: "The pretty wrestling part of tonight's program might be over, kids. Now we're at the 'my spine hurts' portion."

Eric sits up and stares into the hard cam, holding up three fingers and shouting at the referee, "That was three! You can't count!" The ref insists it was two. Eric slaps his own chest in mock outrage.

Then he turns, sees Tyger trying to push up, and drives a sharp elbow between his shoulders to flatten him again. The crowd boos louder; Eric seems to drink it in.

He yanks Tyger up by the mask, then shoves him back into the ropes. With a running start, Eric charges, leaping into a high running knee aimed at Tyger's face.

At the last second, Tyger ducks low, and Eric's knee slams into the top rope instead. The champion stumbles forward, jaw grinding in pain as his leg takes the shock.

Tyger responds on instinct--planting his good foot and snapping off a sharp back kick to the damaged thigh, then another. Eric yelps, his base wobbling.

John Phillips: "Even hurt, even slowed, Tyger II goes right back to precision striking--targeting that leg, answering every insult with exact technique!"

Black Horizon: 2025

But the back and knee damage have taken their toll; when Tyger tries to follow up with a quick spin into a roundhouse, his planted leg buckles slightly, costing him a split second.

Eric pounces on that opening, lunging forward with a sudden, brutal-looking headbutt to Tyger's face. The crack of skull on mask rings out in the arena. Tyger stumbles, clearly rattled.

Mark Bravo: "That's the other thing about Eric Dane Jr.--for all the posing and the nonsense, he will absolutely headbutt you into next week if it means keeping that title."

Eric grabs Tyger by the wrist and whips him hard into the corner. Tyger hits back-first, the pain in his spine evident. Eric charges in behind and leaps, smashing Tyger with a running cannonball into the turnbuckles that collapses both of them in a heap.

The champion pops back up, feeding off the rush, arms outstretched while he soaks in the mixed reaction. He points down at Tyger and yells "Highlight reel!" before dragging him out of the corner by the leg.

Eric backs into the adjacent corner, measuring the distance, then steps up onto the middle rope. He looks out at the crowd with a smug grin, then springs to the top rope in one fluid motion, turning his back to the prone Tyger II.

John Phillips: "Uh-oh. This is not where you want Eric Dane Jr. to be if you're Tyger II."

Mark Bravo: "He's got about seven different ways to throw himself at you from up there and zero concern for his own lifespan."

Eric takes a breath and launches--a gorgeous, high rotation Shooting Star Press, his body folding and unfolding like he's been doing this his whole life. The crowd can't help but gasp at the sight, boos mixing with awe in midair.

This time, he connects flush, crashing down across Tyger's torso with full force.

The ring shakes. Eric bounces, clutches his ribs for a beat--then crawls over Tyger and hooks the leg deep, pressing his weight down across the challenger's chest.

John Phillips: "Shooting Star Press! He hit all of it! Cover!"

ONE!

TWO!

Tyger II shoots a shoulder up at the last heartbeat, the crowd erupting into a roar of relief and disbelief.

Mark Bravo: "How?! How did he kick out of that? That's not just athleticism, that's stubbornness with a mask

Black Horizon: 2025

on!"

Eric rolls onto his back, eyes wide, chest heaving, staring up at the lights as if they've betrayed him. He pounds the mat with both fists, shouting "Three! Three!" while the referee holds up two fingers in his face.

John Phillips: "Tyger II survives the Shooting Star Press at Black Horizon! The WrestleZone Championship is still up for grabs, and both men are feeling every inch of this fight now."

Eric sits up, sweat dripping from his hair, looking from the referee to Tyger to Angus at ringside, searching for answers. Angus responds by tapping his temple, then making a quick, slicing gesture across his own throat--a clear signal to stop playing and end it.

Eric nods slowly, expression turning more serious than we've seen all night. He grabs Tyger by the mask and drags him upright, the challenger's legs unsteady, back screaming from the impact.

The champion guides Tyger toward the corner again, hooking him once more around the head, eyes flicking up to the top turnbuckle with something wild and dangerous in them.

John Phillips: "What is Eric Dane Jr. thinking here? The Shooting Star wasn't enough, and now he's looking to the heights again!"

Mark Bravo: "Whatever it is, it's bad news if you're Tyger II. When this kid starts thinking 'legacy' and 'Dad did it like this,' the SD2 and SD3 start creeping into the picture."

Eric hauls Tyger toward the corner, clearly setting up for something catastrophic from the top. The crowd swells with anxious noise, sensing that the next exchange could decide the fate of the WrestleZone Championship.

Tyger II, battered but breathing, tries to steady his legs as the champion drags him toward the ropes once more...

Eric drags Tyger II toward the corner again, sweat dripping from his brow, jaw clenched. He shoves the challenger back-first onto the second turnbuckle, then climbs up to the middle rope, hooking Tyger around the head with that familiar, dangerous intent.

John Phillips: "The champion's going back upstairs--after that Shooting Star Press didn't get it done, Eric Dane Jr. is looking for something even bigger!"

Mark Bravo: "This is where he lives, John. High risk, high ego, and sometimes... high consequences."

Eric steps up to the top rope, both men precariously balanced. He shifts his grip, clearly trying to maneuver Tyger into position--maybe for the SD2, maybe setting up something even more outrageous. The rope trembles beneath them, the air in the 2300 Arena thick with anticipation.

Black Horizon: 2025

Then it happens.

As Eric plants his left foot and tries to pivot, it slips just slightly on the turnbuckle pad. His knee twists at an ugly angle under his own weight. There's no big crash, no spectacular counter--just a sudden, sharp buckle.

Eric's face contorts instantly--not in overacted theatrics, but in a raw, involuntary grimace. His grip on Tyger loosens completely as he lets out a strangled shout.

Eric Dane Jr.: "Ah--dammit!"

He collapses forward, dropping off the ropes and landing awkwardly on his right side, clutching his left knee with both hands. Tyger, still on the second turnbuckle, instinctively grabs the top rope to steady himself, almost losing his own balance as the champion falls away beneath him.

The crowd reaction is confused at first--a murmur, then a hush, then a low wave of "Ohhhh..." that doesn't sound like the usual bump-pop. The audio in the building shifts from excitement to concern in a heartbeat.

John Phillips: "Oh--oh no. Eric Dane Jr. just crumpled off that top rope and he is grabbing at that knee... that did not look good."

Mark Bravo: "That didn't look like a bump, John. That looked... bad. Real bad."

The referee immediately drops to his knees beside Eric, asking him something that gets swallowed by the crowd noise. Eric's hands are buried into the joint, his face pale under the arena lights, teeth gritted as he tries--and fails--to straighten his leg.

Tyger II, still on the turnbuckles, looks down, frozen for a moment. This is not the way the story was supposed to go. He carefully steps back down to the mat, never taking his eyes off the fallen champion, and instinctively backs a couple of steps away to give the official room.

There's no music. No movement. Just the roar tapering into an uneasy buzz as the fans start to realize this isn't part of the usual showboating.

John Phillips: "The referee is checking on the WrestleZone Champion. Eric is grabbing at that knee, and there's a different kind of sound in this building right now."

Mark Bravo: "Tyger's backed off completely--he knows something's gone sideways here."

Angus Skaaland is halfway up on the apron already, eyes wide, cigarette gone, shouting down at Eric. The camera catches just enough to see Eric shaking his head, jaw clenched, clearly insisting on something, clearly not wanting this to be over like this.

The referee looks up at Tyger, then back to Eric, torn between ending the match and letting it continue. He

Black Horizon: 2025

leans in, says something to Tyger briefly--just a couple of quick words, a gesture to Eric's leg, then a subtle nod.

John Phillips: "You can see the official communicating with Tyger II here... this is one of those moments where everybody has to make a judgment call on the fly."

Tyger nods once, just enough to show he understands. He approaches slowly, not with predator's speed now, but with a careful, measured step. Eric is trying to get up, using his hands to push himself to one knee, that injured leg clearly not bearing any weight.

Tyger reaches out--not for a strike, but to get a grip, guiding Eric up just enough so they're both on their knees facing each other. For a brief second, there's eye contact--respect, frustration, pain all tangled together in that unspoken exchange.

Then, doing what professionals do when the plan has to change, Tyger carefully rolls Eric into a tight, simple cradle--no big spin, no high-impact spike. Just a safe, snug, inside cradle that keeps weight off the knee, shoulders flat without twisting.

The referee recognizes the moment and drops fast, counting with a firm, decisive slap.

John Phillips: "Shoulders down--cover!"

ONE!

TWO!

THREE!

The bell rings almost immediately, a little faster than usual, a little more urgent. There's a pop--because Tyger II has just pinned the WrestleZone Champion--but it's laced with confusion and concern, the adrenaline tempered by the sight of Eric still clutching his knee beneath the cradle.

Ring Announcer: "Here is your winner... and **NEWWW** WrestleZone Champion... TYGER!... TWOOOOO!"

"Claw of Yokai" doesn't hit right away; there's a palpable hesitation from production. The referee immediately reaches down, tapping Tyger's shoulder, signaling him to let go. Tyger releases the cradle and rolls away, not popping up to celebrate--just sliding to a seated position in the corner, chest rising and falling, eyes locked on Eric.

Eric doesn't move far. He's still on his side, one arm around his knee, breathing hard, face twisted in genuine pain.

John Phillips: "Tyger II has just become the new WrestleZone Champion, but... this is absolutely not the

Black Horizon: 2025

way he wanted it to happen."

Mark Bravo: "You can see it on his face, John. He's not even going for the belt, he's watching the champ on the mat. That was a smart, safe pin, but... man, this sucks."

Now the music hits, but it's much lower in the mix than usual, almost like the building itself isn't sure whether to celebrate. The referee walks to the timekeeper's table and grabs the WrestleZone Championship, then comes back toward Tyger--only to pause mid-step, looking back at Eric.

He makes a decision. The official turns away from Tyger and steps toward the ropes, facing the entrance. He raises both arms high and then crosses them in front of his head in a clear X.

The crowd reacts instantly--a ripple of realization followed by an uneasy hush.

John Phillips: "And there it is--the referee has thrown up the X. That's the universal sign that Eric Dane Jr. is legitimately hurt and needs help out here."

Mark Bravo: "You hate to see that, especially on a stage like Black Horizon. This kid talks a big game, he showboats, he drives everybody nuts... but nobody wants to see a knee go like that."

From the back, officials and medical personnel start hustling down the ramp. Angus meets them halfway, pointing frantically at Eric's leg, then dropping back to his knees at ringside, one hand braced on the apron.

Inside the ring, the referee finally turns back to Tyger II, who is slowly pulling himself to his feet, still favoring his own back and leg. The official places the WrestleZone Championship gently into Tyger's hands. There's no big raise of the arm yet--just that quiet, heavy handoff that feels more like responsibility than triumph.

Tyger looks down at the belt, then back at Eric. For a moment, he doesn't even lift the title. He walks over on his slightly shaky legs and stands a couple of steps away from the fallen champion, the gold hanging at his side.

Then, with a deliberate, solemn motion, he gives a short bow in Eric's direction--a warrior's acknowledgment, not of defeat, but of the fight they did get to share before things went wrong.

John Phillips: "That right there is respect. Tyger II knows he's the new WrestleZone Champion, but he also knows this is not how Eric Dane Jr. imagined losing that title tonight."

The med staff carefully roll Eric onto his back, then help him sit up slightly. He winces, jaw clenched, muttering something through gritted teeth. One arm is draped over a medic's shoulder as they help him scoot toward the ropes, that left knee visibly refusing to cooperate.

Tyger steps back, giving them room. As they guide Eric under the bottom rope, he pauses, looking up at Tyger with a mixture of frustration, pain, and--just for a flicker--a hint of grudging respect that sneaks through

Black Horizon: 2025

the bravado.

Tyger raises the belt just slightly, chest-level, and gives him a small nod. No taunting. No gloating.

Mark Bravo: "Tyger II did what he had to do when the situation changed. He secured the win, but he didn't take one extra shot, didn't try to make a moment out of somebody else's pain."

John Phillips: "And that's the mark of a true champion in my book. Circumstances forced an audible, and in that moment, both Tyger II and the referee did the right thing for Eric's knee and for the integrity of this match."

At ringside, Eric is helped to his feet by two med crew and Angus, his arms around their shoulders. He can't put weight on the leg. The fans, who booed him relentlessly on the way in, now give a smattering of applause and supportive shouts as he's escorted toward the ramp.

"E-RIC! E-RIC!"

It's not overwhelmingly loud, but it's genuine--a building that's seen plenty of careers altered by injuries offering the smallest bit of respect.

Back in the ring, Tyger finally turns to the hard cam. He lifts the WrestleZone Championship high for the first time--no hopping on the ropes, no big theatrical pose, just the belt raised overhead, his free hand curling into the familiar Tiger Claw gesture for a brief moment.

The crowd responds, a stronger cheer now that they've seen Eric on his feet, even if he's being helped.

John Phillips: "Like it or not, the era of Tyger II in WrestleZone has begun here at Black Horizon. He came in wanting a pure test of athleticism and respect, and even though fate had other plans, he leaves tonight as the new WrestleZone Champion."

Mark Bravo: "And whenever Eric Dane Jr. is healthy enough to come back, John? You know he's gonna have something to say about how this went down tonight. That rematch is going to be waiting for him on the other side of whatever rehab he's about to go through."

As Eric disappears through the curtain with the help of medical staff and Angus, the camera cuts back one last time to the ring--Tyger II standing in the center, belt resting against his chest, head slightly bowed under the lights of the 2300 Arena.

John Phillips: "We'll work to get you an update on the status of Eric Dane Jr.'s knee as soon as we can. For now, history has been made, in a way none of us expected. Tyger II is your WrestleZone Champion... and Black Horizon rolls on."

The shot lingers on Tyger's masked face and the newly-won title for a moment before fading toward a video

package teasing what's still to come on this massive night.

What's good for the goose...

The camera cuts backstage to the office of UTA General Manager Scott Stevens. Stevens sits at his desk, paperwork neatly stacked, a faint smirk on his face. Behind him, looming like twin shadows, stand two massive figures -- silent, broad-shouldered, and intimidating. Their presence is deliberate, not hidden, as if Stevens wants the world to see exactly who is guarding his back. The atmosphere is tense as the door opens. Avril Selene Kinkade steps inside, her heels clicking against the floor. She pauses deliberately, her sharp eyes scanning the room, evaluating the situation before speaking. Stevens doesn't bother to rise; instead, he leans back in his chair, folding his hands with mock politeness.

Scott Stevens: "What can I do for you, Avril?"

Avril Selene Kinkade: "I suspected your involvement in Sergeant Van Patton's attack from the very beginning. His enemies are numerous, but none matched the description of the men who struck him. So I had my people investigate. Their identities, their heritage, their connection to you -- all of it was uncovered. And now, seeing them here at your side, the matter is no longer speculation. It is fact."

Scott Stevens: "Avril, you are storming in here with accusations but not a shred of proof. And if memory serves, you warned me before about the supposed legal consequences of orchestrating something like this. Yet here you are, claiming I've done exactly what you cautioned me against. It's no secret that my mother remarried and yes, these two are my brothers, but that doesn't really prove anything. So let me tell you this one time and one time only -- I had zero control over what happened. None."

Avril Selene Kinkade: "Zero control? How exquisitely convenient. And yet, here they stand, positioned behind you like loyal sentinels. Graves was assaulted, and you sought to lay the blame at Sergeant Van Patton's feet, yet you produced not a shred of proof. And now, I see you attempting the same sordid game. Do not mistake me for a fool, Mr. Stevens. I recognise a pattern when it is laid bare before me, and the progeny of your bloodline standing at your back only solidifies it."

Scott Stevens: "Pulling strings? Avril, you give me far too much credit. I don't condone what they did, but there's nothing I can do about it. Now that they are officially on the payroll, as my personal security detail, I'll make sure they follow the rules. That's my promise to you. They'll enforce order, not chaos. You can trust me on that. Of course, trust might not be your strong suit."

Avril Selene Kinkade: "Trust is immaterial. What matters is accountability. Sergeant Van Patton does not require your sarcasm, he requires justice. And if you imagine that hiding behind family contracts will shield you, you are gravely mistaken."

Scott Stevens: "Justice? Let's talk reality. Gunnar Van Patton has damaged ribs. Possibly internal bleeding. Until the medical team clears him, he is not stepping into the WrestleZone Rumble. If he's not cleared, he'll

Black Horizon: 2025

be watching from the back. That's not me pulling strings, that's protocol. My job is to keep this company running, not chase shadows or conspiracy theories."

Avril Selene Kinkade: "Then you had best hope the medical team clears him. Because if Sergeant Van Patton is forced to sit idly by while the progeny of your bloodline are stationed at your back, the world will see precisely what game you are playing. And I shall make certain they do."

Scott Stevens: "Avril, you are wasting both of our time. Gunnar's fate is in the hands of the doctors, not me. Now, unless you've got evidence, I suggest you take that fire and point it somewhere else."

Avril glares at Stevens, then at the silent, looming figures behind him. She straightens her jacket, pivots sharply, and storms out of the office. The door slams shut behind her, leaving the atmosphere thick with tension. Stevens reclines back in his chair, the smirk returning as the two remain statuesque, their presence a wall of intimidation.

Scott Stevens: "That woman is the finest advocate money can buy. If there's a way to force Sergeant Van Patton into the Rumble, she'll find it -- even if that bastard were on his deathbed. And if that happens... you boys know what to do."

The Samoans exchange a glance, then grin evilly, their silence more menacing than words.

John Phillips: "That was venom, pure and simple. Avril Selene Kinkade just carved Stevens up with words sharper than any blade."

Mark Bravo: "And Stevens sat there smug, hiding behind the progeny of his bloodline. Now he's practically daring Avril to push Gunnar into the match. If Sergeant Van Patton does get cleared, those Samoans will be waiting."

John Phillips: "If he does get cleared, you can bet Sergeant Van Patton will be hunting for blood. Black Horizon just got a whole lot darker."

I'll Be Here

Backstage, the camera cuts to the familiar interview set just off the gorilla position--black curtain backdrop, Black Horizon logo glowing on a monitor behind. The noise of the 2300 Arena still hums faintly in the distance.

Melissa Cartwright stands in frame, microphone in hand, eyes bright but voice a touch softer than usual as she leans toward the camera.

Melissa Cartwright: "Ladies and gentlemen, we are backstage here at Black Horizon, and I am joined by the **new** WrestleZone Champion... Tyger II."

Black Horizon: 2025

The camera widens to reveal Tyger II stepping into the shot from stage right. His mask is still on, chest still glistening with sweat, and the WrestleZone Championship rests against his shoulder, held in place by one gloved hand. His posture is upright, composed, but there's a noticeable weight in the way he carries himself.

Melissa turns slightly toward him.

Melissa Cartwright: "Tyger... first of all, congratulations. You've just won your first WrestleZone Championship here at the 2300 Arena, on a night as historic as Black Horizon. Before we talk about what that means to you, I have to ask--everyone saw what happened. Eric Dane Jr. came down badly off that top rope, grabbed his knee, and things changed very quickly. What's going through your mind right now?"

Tyger II turns his head toward Melissa, then toward the camera. When he speaks, his voice is low, steady, and thoughtful.

Tyger II: "Tonight was supposed to be a test... a true fight between champion and challenger. Eric... he is loud, he is arrogant... but he stepped into the ring and put that title on the line. When I saw his knee go..."

He pauses, free hand tightening briefly on the edge of the title plate.

Tyger II: "That is not how any of us want to see a match end."

Melissa nods, clearly sharing the sentiment.

Melissa Cartwright: "You had already taken a lot of punishment. You'd crashed on that top-rope attempt, he'd hit that huge Shooting Star... and then suddenly, in the middle of that storm, everything stops. The referee talks to you, you roll him up, and we get the three-count. Some people are going to call that a strange finish. Can you walk us through that moment?"

Tyger glances down for a second, then lifts his head again, choosing his words carefully.

Tyger II: "When you hear something tear... when you see a man grab his leg like that... you know the night has changed. The referee asked me if I understood. I did."

He taps the center plate of the WrestleZone Championship once.

Tyger II: "I did what we needed to do to end the match safely. No more dives. No more high impact. Just... one pin. Shoulders down. Three."

He gives a small nod, as if reaffirming it to himself as much as explaining it.

Tyger II: "This belt should not cost anyone their career."

Melissa takes a small breath, clearly affected by the answer.

Black Horizon: 2025

Melissa Cartwright: "You could see the restraint in there. You could have gone after that knee, you could have tried to make a statement in a different way... but you didn't. Do you feel... conflicted at all, standing here as champion after what just happened?"

Tyger shifts the belt from his shoulder to both hands, holding it in front of him like something sacred.

Tyger II: "Yes."

He lets the simple answer hang for a moment, then continues.

Tyger II: "I dreamed of nights like this since I was a boy. My father wrestled in buildings with this kind of air. The 2300 Arena... Black Horizon... the WrestleZone Championship... it is everything I chased across oceans."

His fingers trace along the edge of the center plate.

Tyger II: "But I also respect the man who walked in with this title. Eric Dane Jr. is reckless, wild, maybe even foolish sometimes... but he showed up. He took the risk. For that, he deserves respect. I did not want his knee to be the story."

Melissa nods, then turns slightly back toward the camera as if addressing both Tyger and the audience.

Melissa Cartwright: "We are still awaiting a medical update on Eric Dane Jr., but we can confirm that he was helped to the back and is being evaluated as we speak. Tyger... if and when he's cleared to come back... is a rematch something you would welcome?"

The reaction from Tyger is immediate; he doesn't hesitate.

Tyger II: "Yes."

He steps a little closer to the camera, voice staying calm but gaining a quiet intensity.

Tyger II: "Eric... if you are watching this later... heal. Do the work. Come back whole. And when you are ready, if WrestleZone wants it... I will face you again. No slips. No injuries. No questions."

He raises the belt slightly between them, as if offering the visual of what's waiting.

Tyger II: "I don't run from fights. I don't run from ghosts. When you come back... I will be here."

Melissa lets that promise sit for a moment, then gently steers the conversation toward the bigger picture.

Melissa Cartwright: "Tonight isn't just about this match. Black Horizon continues. The WrestleZone Rumble will crown a number one contender later tonight. You now have a target on your back. How does it feel,

Black Horizon: 2025

knowing that somewhere in this building, ten people are about to fight for a chance to come after *you*?"

Tyger's shoulders square slightly, the weight of the championship shifting from burden to responsibility.

Tyger II: "I came to WrestleZone to be tested. To take on all challengers. Whoever survives the Rumble... they will have earned their shot. Aaron Shaffer. B.R. Ellis. Brick Bronson. Gunnar Van Patton... all of them. It doesn't matter which name comes out at the end."

He looks straight into the camera now.

Tyger II: "This belt belongs to WrestleZone. I am just the one carrying it right now. If they want it... they know where to find me."

Melissa allows herself the faintest smile, recognizing the quiet confidence beneath the humility.

Melissa Cartwright: "Final question, Tyger--tonight is Black Horizon. This is the same namesake event that started it all for the UTA more than twenty-five years ago. You walked into the 2300 Arena as the son of a legend... you're walking out of this interview as the WrestleZone Champion. What does *this* moment mean to you?"

Tyger takes a long breath. His free hand lifts, fingertips briefly touching the side of his mask where his temple would be.

Tyger II: "My father fought so that people would remember the name Tyger. Tonight... I showed them that the story did not end with him."

He glances upward, just for a heartbeat, as if he can see through the ceiling to the night sky over Philadelphia.

Tyger II: "Black Horizon is about what comes next... the future you cannot see yet. For WrestleZone... for me... this is only the beginning."

He raises the WrestleZone Championship fully now, holding it across his chest for the camera--no scream, no roar, just that silent, ritualistic pride.

Melissa turns back to the lens.

Melissa Cartwright: "Tyger II--your new WrestleZone Champion here at Black Horizon. We'll keep you updated on Eric Dane Jr.'s condition as we learn more, but for now, the landscape of WrestleZone has officially changed."

She looks back to Tyger, offering a respectful nod.

Black Horizon: 2025

Melissa Cartwright: "Tyger, thank you for your time."

Tyger responds with a small bow toward Melissa, then to the camera, before stepping out of frame, the gold still cradled in his hands. The shot lingers on Melissa's thoughtful expression for a moment before fading.

Loose Strings

Backstage, the camera slides into the private dressing room of The Empire. Black-and-gold gear, jackets, and custom merch are strewn carefully across open road cases. The UTA Women's Championship rests on the back of a steel chair, gleaming under the fluorescent lights as Amy Harrison laces up her boots in front of a mirror.

Rosa Delgado leans against a locker with her arms folded, jaw clenched, eyes tracking every movement in the room. Selena Vex sits on a bench, one leg crossed over the other, idly scrolling on her phone while occasionally glancing up. Dahlia Cross is in the corner, taping her wrists with slow, deliberate pulls, violet hair shadowing a sharp, assessing stare.

Amy pulls the laces tight, then looks up at her own reflection, a smirk spreading across her face as she grabs the Women's Championship and slings it over her shoulder. She turns to the rest of The Empire.

Amy Harrison: "You hear that out there? They're still buzzing about Tyger and Eric. Cute. They're about to remember what a *real* champion looks like."

Selena chuckles under her breath, locking her phone and tucking it beside her.

Selena Vex: "Trust me, they'll remember. Emily's out there looking for a miracle. You're walking into a dog collar match with an army."

Amy's smirk sharpens. She glances toward the monitor bolted high in the corner, where the Black Horizon graphic for Marie Van Claudio versus Hardcore Sandy flashes across the screen.

Amy Harrison: "Speaking of armies..."

She steps closer to the monitor, tilting her head as the faces of Marie Van Claudio and Hardcore Sandy cycle across the graphic, wires, trash cans, and weapon silhouettes framing them.

Amy Harrison: "They really act like something changed just because Sandy had her little... moment. One swing and suddenly everyone forgets who built this empire in the first place."

Rosa pushes off the locker, pacing a slow line behind Amy, eyes flicking between the belt and the screen.

Rosa Delgado: "She embarrassed us. In front of the world. In front of you. Walked away like she doesn't

Black Horizon: 2025

owe anybody an explanation."

Dahlia pulls the tape taut with her teeth, tears it off, then flexes her fingers, examining her own handiwork like an artist admiring brush strokes.

Dahlia Cross: "She didn't just walk away. She chose Marie Van Claudio over us."

Her lip curls faintly.

Dahlia Cross: "She chose... nostalgia over power. Sentiment over survival. People like that... they always pay eventually."

Amy turns back to them, eyes alight with something colder than anger--control. She adjusts the championship on her shoulder, letting it catch the light.

Amy Harrison: "Exactly. There's still unfinished business there. Hardcore Sandy thinks she's going to march out to that ring, swing some toys around, and ride off into the sunset. Marie thinks this is her little redemption tour."

She laughs softly, shaking her head.

Amy Harrison: "What they *don't* seem to understand is that nobody gets a storybook ending if I don't approve the script."

Selena leans forward, elbows on her knees, eyes narrowing with interest.

Selena Vex: "So what are you thinking, Empress? Because the way I see it... a Hardcore Match is a perfect place for accidents. For reminders. For... course corrections."

Amy looks from Selena to Rosa to Dahlia, weighing each of them as she speaks.

Amy Harrison: "My dog collar match with Emily Hightower is later tonight. She's strutting around with my United States Championship like she's already halfway to being double champ. The last thing I need is... noise. Loose ends. Ghosts from the past stealing focus while I'm making history."

She taps the face of the Women's Championship with the back of her hand.

Amy Harrison: "So maybe... before I go out there and drag Emily around this building by the throat... we take care of those loose ends."

Rosa's expression hardens into something predatory.

Rosa Delgado: "Say the word and Sandy doesn't make it out. Marie either. They want hardcore?"

Black Horizon: 2025

She shrugs, rolling her shoulders.

Rosa Delgado: "We can show them what hardcore really looks like."

Dahlia steps in closer, eyes glinting, voice low and clinical.

Dahlia Cross: "Sandy's joints are already held together by scar tissue and bad decisions. All it takes is one moment in the wrong place--knee against steel, shoulder into the edge of the apron--and she learns that crossing The Empire comes with... permanent reminders."

She flexes her taped hands, each finger curling slowly like a closing trap.

Dahlia Cross: "Marie can watch up close and decide if she still wants to play hero."

Amy smiles thinly at that, then turns her gaze back to the monitor. The production graphic lingers on Sandy's glare, Marie's defiant stare beside it.

Amy Harrison: "I want Sandy to *understand* that you don't walk out on The Empire. You don't spit on everything we've done and just... lace your boots up like nothing happened."

She steps away from the monitor and stands in front of her team, the Women's Championship glinting between them.

Amy Harrison: "And I want Marie Van Claudio to remember that this is not *her* era anymore. That all the history, all the nostalgia, all the old highlight reels in the world... don't mean a thing if I decide to shut the door on her comeback."

Selena tilts her head, smiling in that cool, almost amused way of hers.

Selena Vex: "So we go out there... we make sure the past doesn't get too loud... and then you go out later and make sure Emily learns what it's like to choke on the future."

Amy nods slowly, approving the phrasing.

Amy Harrison: "Exactly. Tonight is about *now*. Black Horizon. The East Coast Invasion. The Empire."

She shifts the belt higher on her shoulder.

Amy Harrison: "Sandy wants 'one last match'? Fine. Marie wants to prove she's still the First Lady? Fine. Let them have their little hardcore fairy tale."

The smirk returns, sharper this time.

Black Horizon: 2025

Amy Harrison: "Just make sure they don't forget who runs this division in the process."

Rosa cracks her knuckles, already stepping toward the door.

Rosa Delgado: "Say less."

Dahlia falls in behind her, rolling her neck, that venomous glint in her eyes turning more eager by the second.

Dahlia Cross: "Time to take out the trash... and the nostalgia."

Selena stands, smoothing her gear, casting a final glance at Amy.

Selena Vex: "You just keep that collar warm for Emily. We'll handle the pre-show adjustments."

Amy steps toward the door last, pausing just long enough to look back at herself in the mirror--the champion, the leader, the architect.

Amy Harrison: "Good. Because when I walk out there later... I don't want any distractions. No Sandy. No Marie. No ghosts."

She flicks a stray lock of hair out of her face and smiles coldly at her reflection.

Amy Harrison: "Only Emily Hightower... and the sound of a chain tightening."

She pushes the door open, and The Empire file out into the hallway together, a unified wave of controlled malice heading straight toward the chaos that awaits Marie Van Claudio and Hardcore Sandy.

Marie Van Claudio vs. Hardcore Sandy

The camera fades back in from a video package to the roar of the 2300 Arena. Trash cans, tables, and assorted hardware are already stacked near the aisle and ringside, the subtle visual promise of chaos to come.

John Phillips: "We are back here at ringside at Black Horizon, and there is a whole lot to unpack after what we just saw backstage with The Empire."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah. Amy Harrison's got a dog collar date with Emily Hightower later tonight, but before that? It sure sounded like she wants The Empire to... 'handle' Marie Van Claudio and Hardcore Sandy in this next match."

John Phillips: "Amy talked about unfinished business, about tying up loose ends before she defends the

Black Horizon: 2025

UTA Women's Championship. And now, with a Hardcore Match about to start, you have to wonder if The Empire is going to let this be about Marie and Sandy... or about themselves."

Mark Bravo: "And that's a scary thought, because tonight isn't just any match for Sandy. This has been billed as her possible last match ever. If this is the final chapter of Hardcore Sandy's career and The Empire decides to turn it into a hit job? That's a whole different kind of ugly."

John Phillips: "On the other side, you've got Marie Van Claudio--former UTA Women's Champion, the woman who helped build this division--and she's the one who asked for the hardcore stipulation. Not to steal Sandy's spotlight, but to honor her legacy, on a stage as big as Black Horizon."

Mark Bravo: "Marie is not a hardcore specialist. She's not barbed wire, light tubes, and thumbtacks. But tonight she's stepping into Sandy's world--on Sandy's possible last night--because that's what respect looks like in this business."

The house lights dim to a deep midnight blue, and a soft white spotlight pools over the entrance. The low hum of the crowd swells as a familiar violin line pierces through the sound system, delicate at first... then joined by a soaring electric guitar.

"Forever & Ever" by Lacey Sturm ft. Lindsey Stirling builds from quiet strings into a rising wall of sound, emotion threaded through every note. A gentle mist rolls across the stage, catching the light as the tempo picks up.

John Phillips: "Listen to this reaction..."

As the drums kick in and the violins climb, the tron blazes to life with a montage of Marie Van Claudio's history: her hoisting the old UTA Women's Championship, eliminating Zhalia Fears, face-to-face with La Flama Blanca, standing nose-to-nose with Amy Harrison in heated standoffs, and, finally, a still shot of her holding the deactivated Women's title close to her chest as the lights faded years ago.

The silhouette appears in the spotlight--tall, poised, unmistakable.

Marie Van Claudio steps through the curtain.

Her gear is a modern echo of her prime: white and hot pink, with sparkling accents that catch the light, maple leaf details along the sides, and "MVC" stylized down one leg in glittering script. Her hair is perfectly done, makeup on point--but what stands out most is what she's carrying.

In her right hand, Marie grips a kendo stick--its entire length wrapped in shimmering pink tape, catching the spotlight with every movement. Glittering bands spiral along it, and the handle is custom-wrapped in white and silver. It looks like a weapon and a statement piece all at once.

Mark Bravo: "Well, if you're gonna bring a stick to a Hardcore Match, that's one way to do it. Look at that

Black Horizon: 2025

thing--only Marie Van Claudio would show up with a *sparkly* kendo stick."

John Phillips: "That's not just a fashion choice, Mark. Marie chose this stipulation tonight to honor Hardcore Sandy's legacy. She's not known as a hardcore wrestler, but she's telling the world she's willing to step into that lane, get hit, and hit back, for Sandy... and for everything this division means."

Marie pauses at the top of the ramp as the chorus hits, lifting the pink kendo stick high overhead. The 2300 Arena responds with a thunderous cheer.

"M-V-C! M-V-C! M-V-C!"

She looks out over the crowd, eyes glistening under the lights, then taps the stick twice against her own shoulder like she's checking the weight of what she's about to do.

John Phillips: "From Montreal to Las Vegas, from the old UTA to tonight at Black Horizon--Marie Van Claudio has lived every high and low this company has had to offer. She became the first and only UTA Women's Champion before the title was deactivated. She left, started a family, built a life... and when the 25th Anniversary came around, she knew she had to come back."

Mark Bravo: "And now she's walking into what might be Hardcore Sandy's last stand. That's not just a match, that's pressure. That's legacy versus legacy."

Marie starts down the ramp, moving with purpose. The pink kendo stick bounces lightly against her shoulder with each step, sparkles catching camera flashes and arena lights. She reaches out occasionally, letting fans in the front row tap the shaft of the stick, sharing in the moment.

One fan holds up a sign: "FIRST LADY FOREVER." Another reads, "THANK YOU SANDY, WE LOVE YOU MVC." Marie sees them both and nods, a small, appreciative smile crossing her face before her expression settles back into focused determination.

John Phillips: "Marie Van Claudio knows what's at stake tonight. Not titles. Not rankings. This is about respect and closure. She hand-picked Hardcore rules because if this really is Sandy's final match, there's only one way it can happen--on Sandy's terms."

Mark Bravo: "And let's be real: Marie's not walking in here pretending to be some ultraviolent queen of glass and barbed wire. She's a wrestler who can get nasty if she has to, but she's also a mom, a vet, and somebody with a very expensive-looking face. If she's willing to put all that on the line tonight? That tells you how much this means."

Marie reaches ringside, stops for a moment, and looks at some of the hardware laid out--tables, a trash can, a coil of chain on the floor. She taps the side of the trash can twice with the kendo stick, the metallic clank echoing faintly, then turns and climbs the steel steps.

Black Horizon: 2025

She steps through the ropes slowly, giving the ring its due. Once inside, she walks to the center and raises the pink kendo stick high again, this time pointing it straight out toward the hard cam.

The tron behind her shows a split image: on one side, Marie in her prime as Women's Champion; on the other, Hardcore Sandy in a blood-soaked brawl from years past. The message is clear even before commentary spells it out.

John Phillips: "Marie Van Claudio... the only woman to ever hold the UTA Women's Championship... standing in a ring surrounded by weapons, about to face the woman whose name is literally 'Hardcore'--because she wants to make sure Sandy gets the sendoff she deserves."

Marie lowers the stick and paces to the ropes facing the entrance, leaning her forearms on the top strand for a moment. She stares up the ramp, the music still swirling around her, the crowd's noise ebbing and flowing.

Mark Bravo: "She asked for this. She brought the sparkles, she brought the respect, she brought the kendo stick... but in a minute, the bell's gonna ring, and Hardcore Sandy is going to walk down that aisle possibly for the last time ever."

John Phillips: "And with The Empire lurking somewhere backstage, vowing to tie up their 'loose ends'... this Hardcore Match has gone from emotional to unpredictable in a hurry."

"Forever & Ever" begins to fade as Marie steps back to her corner, spinning the pink kendo stick once in her hand and then resting it across the middle turnbuckle, eyes never leaving the entrance.

The crowd rises again in anticipation, waiting for the arrival of the woman whose name is stitched into the fabric of UTA's most violent memories.

The lights in the 2300 Arena dim again, Marie Van Claudio pacing slowly in her corner, one hand resting on the pink, sparkling kendo stick propped against the turnbuckle.

A low, dirty guitar riff grinds through the speakers--no pretty build, no elegant orchestration. Just grit. Just noise. Just attitude.

The tron snaps to life with a grainy, almost VCR-damaged montage: Hardcore Sandy crashing through tables, swinging chairs, wrapped in barbed wire, blood streaked across her face, screaming at the camera while fans reach for her from behind guardrails. Each impact is clipped together like a punch in the gut.

John Phillips: "There she is. If you've watched the UTA for any length of time, you've seen that face come out of more wars than we can count. And tonight... this could be Hardcore Sandy's last ride."

Mark Bravo: "Not 'hardcore' as a tagline. Not as a merch slogan. That woman *earned* it the hard way. Thumbtacks in the back, steel chair to the skull, tables, ladders, broken bones... she's lived it all."

Black Horizon: 2025

From behind the curtain, we hear the rattle before we see her.

A metal-on-metal clank, the squeal of old wheels, the unmistakable sound of something heavy being pushed over concrete.

Then she appears.

Hardcore Sandy bursts through the curtain, tall and imposing, a crooked grin carved across her face. Her ring gear is a throwback to her wildest days: black tank top emblazoned with a cracked skull logo, frayed denim shorts over torn black tights, heavy boots taped at the ankles. Her arms are scarred, banded with old memories and newer bruises.

In front of her, she's driving a beat-up metal shopping cart--the kind that should've been retired years ago. It shudders with every shove. Inside the cart sits a dented steel trash can, its lid hanging off to the side, and stuffed inside that can is pure chaos.

- A pair of steel chairs, the edges wrapped with black tape.*
- A length of chain coiled like a snake around the rim.*
- A stop sign with the paint scratched and scarred.*
- A wooden board peeking out with "THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES" spray-painted across it.*
- A handful of kendo sticks--plain white tape, no sparkles, just raw wood and intent. The crowd comes unglued.*

"SAN-DY! SAN-DY! SAN-DY!"

John Phillips: "Listen to this place! The 2300 Arena is on its feet for Hardcore Sandy, a woman whose entire career has been built on matches exactly like this."

Mark Bravo: "She brought the whole hardware aisle with her, John. Shopping cart, trashcan, toys... if this is her last night on the job, she's clocking out in style."

Sandy stops at the top of the ramp, hands gripping the cart handle. She looks out at the crowd--eyes scanning the sea of faces, the "THANK YOU SANDY" and "ONE MORE WAR" signs, the fans pounding on the rail.

For just a second, the crooked grin softens. She pounds a fist twice against her own chest, then points that same fist toward the ring where Marie waits, pink kendo stick in hand.

Then the grin is back.

Sandy shoves the shopping cart forward and it rattles down the ramp, wheels shrieking against the steel. Every few steps she gives it an extra jolt, like she's daring it to fall apart before she gets there.

Black Horizon: 2025

John Phillips: "This is the perfect visual, isn't it? Marie Van Claudio came out here with one custom weapon--a symbol, a tribute. Sandy... brought an entire career's worth."

Mark Bravo: "Marie brought heart and glitter. Sandy brought the noise and the receipts."

At ringside, Sandy parks the cart with a violent jerk, the trash can rattling against its frame. She reaches in and pulls out one of the plain kendo sticks, slapping it across her own shoulder twice before pointing straight at Marie.

Marie doesn't flinch. She steps forward between the ropes, setting one boot on the bottom strand, pink kendo stick resting against her own shoulder, and meets Sandy's stare dead-on.

John Phillips: "You're looking at two very different chapters of the UTA women's story right now. Marie Van Claudio--first and only UTA Women's Champion, back to see if she can finally get her flowers. Hardcore Sandy--the Hall of Famer who carved her name into this company with broken glass and bruised knuckles."

Sandy hops up onto the apron, leaving the cart and trash can jammed near the bottom of the ramp like a loaded checkpoint. She grips the top rope and steps through, towering over the center of the ring at her full height, eyes never leaving Marie.

The referee hangs back in the corner, wisely giving them space as the two women gradually walk toward the middle, weapons in hand--pink sparkle versus bare wood.

Mark Bravo: "And don't forget, this match doesn't just have nostalgia hanging over it. Amy Harrison and The Empire made it very clear they've got unfinished business with *both* of these women. Weapons in the ring, wolves in the back... this thing is a powder keg waiting for a spark."

Sandy stops just short of Marie, looming over her by a few inches. For a few long seconds, they just stand there--no trash talk loud enough for the mics, just an exchange of history painted across their faces.

Sandy lifts her kendo stick first and taps the tip lightly against Marie's pink one--clack--like a twisted, hardcore version of a fist bump.

Marie nods once, grips her stick tighter, and taps back, the two weapons crossing for a heartbeat like a crooked salute.

John Phillips: "That right there says it all. This isn't about hatred. This is about legacy... and about seeing just how far each of them is willing to go tonight."

Sandy takes a half step back, rolling her shoulders, her posture dropping into that unorthodox, anything-goes stance she's known for. Marie mirrors her, turning side-on, pink kendo stick raised, eyes blazing with determination.

Black Horizon: 2025

The referee finally steps in, glances around at the weapons inside and outside the ring, and then signals to the timekeeper.

The bell rings.

John Phillips: "Hardcore Sandy. Marie Van Claudio. Hardcore rules. Possible last match for a Hall of Famer... and a first step toward closure for them both. Black Horizon... let's see how far they're willing to go."

The bell's echo hasn't even faded before the chant rises again, rolling around the old walls.

"SAN-DY! SAN-DY!"

"M-V-C! M-V-C!"

In the center of the ring, Marie Van Claudio and Hardcore Sandy circle, each with a kendo stick raised. Pink sparkle versus bare wood, old scars versus new resolve.

John Phillips: "Remember, this is Marie's match stipulation. She picked Hardcore rules to honor Sandy's legacy. She's walking into Sandy's house, speaking Sandy's language."

Mark Bravo: "Question is, how fluent is she in 'getting hit with stuff?'"

Marie makes the first move. She darts in with a testing swing of the pink kendo stick, aiming low at Sandy's thigh. Sandy shifts her weight, letting it glance off, the shot more sound than substance.

Marie bites down, steps in again--this time firing a quick pair of shots across Sandy's side and upper arm. The strikes echo, the pink tape cracking against skin.

Sandy doesn't flinch.

She looks down at the faint red line starting on her bicep, then back up at Marie with a lopsided grin that borders on amused.

Hardcore Sandy: "That's cute."

The front row reacts like they heard it crystal clear, popping at the line.

John Phillips: "Sandy almost... amused by Marie's first shots here."

Marie's eyes narrow. She adjusts her grip and comes back again, this time with more snap--one hard shot to the ribs, another up across the shoulder, a third catching Sandy across the back as the veteran turns.

The sounds are nastier now, each impact sharp. The crowd responds with a few "Ohhh!"s as the sparkly

Black Horizon: 2025

stick does its work.

Mark Bravo: "Okay, that one wasn't so cute. She's swinging like she means it now."

Sandy staggers a half-step from the last shot, but instead of backing off, she deliberately offers her back again, arms slightly out, practically inviting another hit. She glances over her shoulder, smirking.

Hardcore Sandy: "Come on, First Lady. You wanted hardcore. Show me."

Marie doesn't hesitate. She cracks the stick down across Sandy's back once, twice, three times. The pink tape starts to fray, little flecks of glitter and fiber floating in the air under the lights.

The arena roars, the visual of the glamorous former champion laying in weapon shots landing harder than anyone expected.

John Phillips: "Marie Van Claudio is not here to play tourist in Hardcore Town. Those are real shots landing on the spine of a Hall of Famer."

On the fourth swing, Sandy suddenly turns into it, letting the shot glance across her shoulder instead of her back. She absorbs it, breathes out once, then straightens up to her full height.

The grin is gone now, replaced by that wild, dangerous glint that earned her name.

Mark Bravo: "And that... that might be the moment Marie just bought herself some trouble."

Sandy's hand flashes out, fast for her size. She snatches the pink kendo stick mid-swing, catching it just below the taped handle. The sudden stop jerks Marie forward a step.

For a second, they're locked there--Marie pulling, Sandy holding, the weapon quivering between them.

Hardcore Sandy: "My turn."

Sandy yanks the stick out of Marie's hands with a violent jerk, spinning it once in a flourish that looks far too natural. Marie, now empty-handed, instinctively backs up a step, hands coming up.

Sandy looks down at the pink tape, turns the stick in her hands, and actually chuckles.

Hardcore Sandy: "You made it pretty."

The chuckle dies mid-sentence as, with no further warning, she swings.

The sparkly kendo stick cracks across Marie's ribs with a sickeningly clean thud. Marie's body folds sideways, the breath leaving her lungs in a rush as she drops to one knee, arm instinctively wrapping around

Black Horizon: 2025

her midsection.

John Phillips: "Oh! Hardcore Sandy just turned Marie's own weapon against her!"

Sandy doesn't give her time to regroup. She steps in and brings the stick down across Marie's back, then again across her shoulder blades, each shot more vicious than the last. The crowd winces in unison.

Mark Bravo: "Welcome to Sandy's language class. Lesson one: if you bring a kendo stick to her fight, don't be surprised when she speaks it more fluently."

The pink tape starts to tear open under the force of Sandy's swings, the once-perfect weapon starting to look battered and ugly--like everything else in Sandy's world.

Marie crawls toward the ropes on instinct, hand outstretched. Sandy stalks her from behind, twirling the stick once before jamming it across the back of Marie's neck, pushing her throat down across the middle rope in a nasty grind.

The referee, under Hardcore rules, can only plead, not enforce.

John Phillips: "No disqualifications, no count-outs--Sandy can use that stick however she wants, as long as Marie can still move."

Sandy finally relents, stepping back just enough for Marie to drag herself upright with the ropes' help. Marie's face is flushed, eyes watering, hand still gripping her ribs--but she turns back into the ring, refusing to stay down.

Sandy watches her with that same fierce, almost proud look a veteran gives someone who actually keeps getting up.

Hardcore Sandy: "That's better."

Then, in one smooth motion, Sandy takes the pink kendo stick, flips it around, and snaps it clean across her own thigh. The sound echoes like a gunshot. The two broken halves fall to the mat at Marie's feet, bits of glitter and tape drifting down with them.

The crowd gasps, then erupts.

Mark Bravo: "That was Marie's tribute, her security blanket, and Sandy just snapped it like a breadstick!"

John Phillips: "Sending a very clear message--if Marie Van Claudio wants to honor Hardcore Sandy's legacy tonight, she's going to have to do it the hard way, with nothing pretty, nothing polished... just pain and willpower."

Black Horizon: 2025

Marie looks down at the shattered, sparkly stick, then up at Sandy, chest heaving. The Hall of Famer jerks her head toward the corner where the shopping cart sits outside and spreads her arms.

Hardcore Sandy: "Come on, First Lady. You wanted my world. Let's see if you can live in it."

Marie's jaw sets. She straightens as much as her battered ribs will allow, wiping her forearm across her mouth, and takes a step forward--no weapon, no glitter now, just fists and resolve--as the Hardcore lesson really begins.

Marie steps forward with nothing but her fists, ribs aching, back burning. Hardcore Sandy rolls her shoulders, eyes flashing with a wild kind of pride and cruelty. The broken halves of the pink kendo stick lay between them like a shattered promise.

Marie swings first--sharp slap across Sandy's face that echoes through the 2300 Arena. Sandy's head snaps to the side. The crowd pops.

Mark Bravo: "Okay, there's the slap. There's the Marie Van Claudio we remember."

Marie follows with a quick clothesline attempt, but Sandy barely budes. Marie hits the ropes, tries again, and this time Sandy rocks back a step but snarls right through it.

Third time, Marie charges--and Sandy surges forward, cutting her off with a brutal big boot that catches Marie square in the chest. Marie flips backward, crashing hard to the mat.

John Phillips: "Big boot from Hardcore Sandy, and the size, the power difference is front and center now."

Sandy doesn't go for a pin. Not yet. She yanks Marie up by the hair and trunks, dragging her toward the ropes. With a nasty smirk, she slings Marie through the ropes, sending her tumbling to the floor in front of the waiting shopping cart.

The crowd crowds in, the front row leaning over the rail as Sandy steps out onto the apron, then drops to the floor with a heavy thud.

Mark Bravo: "And now we're leaving 'wrestling match' territory and heading straight into 'Hardcore Sandy documentary.'"

Sandy shoves the shopping cart closer with her hip, then reaches in and hauls out the dented trash can from inside. She flips it easily, sending some of the weapons clattering out onto the mats--the stop sign, a loose chain, one of the plain kendo sticks.

Marie's on all fours, sucking in air. Sandy stalks behind her and, without ceremony, slams the upside-down trash can over Marie's upper body like a shell. The metal rings as it drops around her shoulders and head.

Black Horizon: 2025

The crowd pops, knowing exactly what's coming.

John Phillips: "Oh no..."

Sandy grabs a chair from the ground, folds it, and takes a few steps back. The 2300 Arena buzzes, half thrilled, half apprehensive.

Sandy charges and swings the chair like a bat, crashing it into the trash can-wrapped Marie with a deafening CLANG. The sound bounces off every wall in the building. Marie crumples sideways, the can dented around her.

Mark Bravo: "That sounded like a car wreck in a tunnel!"

Marie spills free as Sandy peels the trash can off of her, the metal warped. Marie's clutching her ribs and shoulder, blinking in pain but still moving, still trying to roll toward the apron.

John Phillips: "Marie Van Claudio is getting the full Hardcore Sandy experience right now, and it is not glamorous."

Sandy doesn't relent. She grabs Marie by the gear and hurls her into the steel steps. Marie hits shoulder-first, the steps exploding apart with a bang. She collapses next to them, writhing in pain.

The fans on that side of the ring lean in, some wincing, others pounding the barricade in support.

"M-V-C! M-V-C!"

Sandy hears it, looks back at them, and smirks.

Hardcore Sandy: "You wanna cheer for her? Watch this."

She drags Marie up, rolls her back under the bottom rope, and follows in slowly, taking her time like a predator that knows the prey isn't going anywhere.

Inside the ring, Sandy scoops Marie up effortlessly and plants her with a thunderous powerslam right onto one of the broken kendo-stick halves. Marie arches in agony, hand shooting to her lower back.

John Phillips: "Slammed right onto the splintered remains of that stick Marie brought to honor Sandy tonight."

Sandy finally drops into a lazy cover, forearm pressed across Marie's face.

ONE!

Black Horizon: 2025

TWO!

Marie kicks out, shoulder jerking up just in time.

Mark Bravo: "That was a 'you could stay down' pin. Marie just told her no."

Sandy shakes her head, almost impressed. She stands, grabs Marie by the wrist, and yanks her up again. This time, she hooks both arms and drills her into the mat with a double underhook suplex, rolling through for another, then another--each impact jarring the ring, wearing Marie down piece by piece.

On the third, Sandy doesn't release. She floats over, grinds her forearm into Marie's jaw, and hooks the near leg tight.

ONE!

TWO!

Marie kicks out again, weaker this time, but still defiantly slipping a shoulder off the canvas.

John Phillips: "Marie Van Claudio, battered and bruised, refusing to stay down. She knew what she signed up for when she asked for hardcore... but you can see every decision written on her face right now."

Sandy sits back on her knees, breathing a little heavier now. She looks down at Marie, then out at the crowd, who are split between "SAN-DY!" and "M-V-C!" chants, the noise swirling around the ring like a storm.

She rolls out under the ropes again, heading back to her arsenal. The stop sign catches her eye. She drags it into the ring, the metal scraping along the apron before she slides it under the bottom rope.

Mark Bravo: "Oh, that sign has seen some things. It's basically Sandy's old dance partner."

Back inside, Sandy props the stop sign in the corner between the top and middle turnbuckles, wedging it in tight. Marie is on all fours, fighting to stand, her hand slipping in the sweat and dust on the canvas before she finally makes it to a knee.

Sandy grabs her by the head and hauls her up, then whips her toward the sign. Marie stumbles, but at the last second, she drops to one knee and throws her arms out, catching herself on the ropes just before her face hits metal.

The crowd reacts with a collective gasp of relief.

John Phillips: "Marie just stopped herself inches away from eating that stop sign!"

Sandy charges in from behind--Marie spins and, out of pure desperation, catches her with a sudden spinning

Black Horizon: 2025

heel kick. It's not perfectly clean--more instinct than execution--but it connects enough to rock Sandy, sending her staggering sideways into the corner.

The arena pops, sensing the tiniest opening.

Mark Bravo: "There it is! That's the fire. That's the Marie Van Claudio that went toe-to-toe with the best in this company."

But the momentum is short-lived. Sandy bounces out of the corner with a wild clothesline that nearly decapitates Marie on the rebound. Marie flips inside out and lands flat on her back, the life seemingly driven out of her.

John Phillips: "And just like that, Hardcore Sandy cuts her off again!"

Sandy drops for another cover, this time hooking both legs, leaning all her weight across Marie's chest.

ONE!

TWO!

Marie kicks out again, just barely, her shoulder twitching up an instant before the referee's hand hits three.

The crowd roars in disbelief, half expecting that to be it.

"M-V-C! M-V-C! M-V-C!"

Mark Bravo: "How many times can she get up? Honestly?"

John Phillips: "As many as it takes. If this really is Hardcore Sandy's last match... do you think Marie Van Claudio wants to be the one remembered for just getting run over? She asked for this. She has to live with that. And she's not going to let this end without giving everything she has."

Sandy stares down at Marie, breathing harder now, sweat dripping from her brow. There's a flicker of respect in her eyes, buried under the violence.

She stands and points down at Marie, then at the stop sign in the corner.

Hardcore Sandy: "One more. You stay down... I walk out."

Sandy hauls Marie up, practically dead weight at this point. She hooks her arm, looking for a running bulldog or something equally nasty right into the sign. The crowd buzzes anxiously.

They take off together--Sandy leading, Marie stumbling behind her. At the last second, Marie plants her

Black Horizon: 2025

boots and shoves Sandy forward with everything she has left.

Sandy slams face-first into the stop sign with a sickening clang, the metal buckling around the impact. The crowd explodes.

John Phillips: "Sandy goes headfirst into the stop sign! Marie just bought herself an opening!"

Sandy staggers backward out of the corner, dazed, arms flailing for balance. Marie drops to one knee, every breath a struggle, vision swimming--but she forces herself back up, gripping the ropes for support.

She looks out at the crowd, at the tables and weapons scattered, at the dented trash can and broken stick, then back at Sandy, who refuses to fall.

This is the part she didn't really plan for--the part where it hurts so much she could just lay down and everyone would understand. The part where she has to decide if honoring Sandy's legacy means surviving it... or matching it.

John Phillips: "Marie Van Claudio is in deep water right now. She's taken chair shots, trash can shots, steel steps, that stop sign... but if she wants to win *this* kind of match, against *this* kind of opponent, she's going to have to dig deeper than she has in a very long time."

Mark Bravo: "You don't win hardcore matches with just heart, John... but without it? You don't even get up off the mat. Right now, we're about to find out how much Marie really has left in the tank."

Sandy turns, blood beginning to trickle from a small cut at her hairline where the sign crumpled. She wipes it with the back of her hand and laughs--a low, raspy sound that sends a shiver through the building.

Marie straightens up, chest heaving, fists clenched, eyes locked on the woman she chose to honor by stepping into hell with her. The crowd swells, sensing the turning point.

If Marie Van Claudio wants to win this... she's going to have to stop surviving and start fighting like Hardcore Sandy taught an entire generation to fight.

Sandy staggers out of the corner, a thin line of blood tracing down from her hairline. She wipes it with the back of her hand, looks at the smear, then at Marie... and starts to laugh.

Hardcore Sandy: "That it?"

She lurches forward and shoves Marie hard in the shoulder. Marie stumbles back, ribs screaming, one hand automatically clutching her side.

Hardcore Sandy: "Come on, First Lady! You wanted this!"

Black Horizon: 2025

Sandy shoves her again, this time sending Marie back into the ropes. Marie rebounds, barely keeping her footing.

Sandy steps right up into her face, crowd roaring at the visual--bloodied veteran towering over battered icon.

Hardcore Sandy: "Bring it!"

She punctuates it with a stiff, open-handed slap that snaps Marie's head to the side. The sound cracks through the arena. Marie's knees dip, hand going to her jaw.

Mark Bravo: "Ohhh, that was disrespectful on a whole different level."

Sandy doesn't stop. Another shove. Another slap, this one across the other cheek.

Hardcore Sandy: "THIS is hardcore! You asked for it, remember? So HIT ME."

She jabs a finger into Marie's forehead, pushing her back a step, daring her.

John Phillips: "Hardcore Sandy is pushing and pushing, trying to either break Marie Van Claudio... or wake her up."

Marie's chest heaves. Her eyes are glassy with pain, but something else flickers behind them now--anger, pride, something older and deeper than glitter and highlight reels.

Sandy goes for another slap.

This time, Marie catches her wrist.

The crowd explodes.

Mark Bravo: "Uh oh."

Marie's grip tightens. Sandy tries to yank free, but Marie steps into her, nose-to-nose now, eyes blazing.

Marie Van Claudio: "Tu veux que je le prenne au sérieux? OK."

Her voice is low, ragged, French slipping out like something that's been buried awhile.

Marie Van Claudio: "You want me to bring it? Fine."

Marie RIPS Sandy's arm down and unleashes with her free hand--a blistering slap of her own that turns Sandy's head. She doesn't stop. She fires another. And another. Rapid-fire, left-right-left, echoing through the 2300 Arena.

Black Horizon: 2025

The crowd surges to its feet as Marie just keeps swinging--forearms now, elbows, short punches to the jaw and chest, all the pent-up frustration of years crashing out of her at once.

John Phillips: "Marie Van Claudio FIRING UP! Those aren't pretty combinations, those are fists from somebody who is DONE being pushed around!"

Sandy stumbles backward under the barrage, hands coming up to cover up. Marie doesn't let her breathe. She drives her into the corner with a flurry of body shots--ribs, liver, midsection--each one punctuated by a furious shout.

Marie Van Claudio: "This!"

Marie Van Claudio: "Is!"

Marie Van Claudio: "MY!"

Marie Van Claudio: "RING!"

On the last word she nails Sandy with a high European uppercut that snaps the Hall of Famer's head back against the turnbuckle. Sandy slumps in the corner, stunned.

The crowd is roaring now, solidly behind the resurgent First Lady.

"M-V-C! M-V-C! M-V-C!"

Marie spins, sees the bent stop sign still wedged in the corner. She grabs it with both hands and yanks it free, the bolts squealing as the metal tears loose.

Sandy is pushing herself out of the corner when Marie swings low, driving the edge of the sign into Sandy's ribs like a battering ram. Sandy crumples to a knee, wind driven out of her.

Mark Bravo: "Okay, NOW she's speaking Sandy's language."

Marie hoists the stop sign overhead, the crowd volume rising, then brings it crashing down across Sandy's back. The metal warps further, the impact echoing like thunder.

Sandy groans, dropping to all fours. Marie tosses the mangled sign aside and staggers back to the ropes, sucking in air, adrenaline fighting with pain.

John Phillips: "We are watching Marie Van Claudio dig deep here at Black Horizon--past the glamor, past the nostalgia--into something raw and primal."

Sandy pushes up again, because of course she does. Marie meets her in the middle of the ring, hooks her

Black Horizon: 2025

around the waist, and with a roar that seems to start in her boots, rips her up and over with a nasty snap German suplex.

Sandy hits high on her shoulders and rolls through, ending up on her side, hand going back to that cut on her forehead.

Mark Bravo: "She just German suplexed a woman 6'1" and 220 pounds in the middle of a Hardcore Match after getting her ribs caved in. That's not just heart, that's madness."

Marie doesn't go for the pin. Not yet. Something's shifted in her. She rolls to the ropes and looks out at the chaos on the floor--the trash can, the chain, the chairs. Her face hardens.

She slides out under the bottom rope, grabbing the length of chain that had spilled earlier. She coils it in her hands, feeling the weight, the cold bite of the metal on her skin, and then slides back into the ring with it trailing behind her like a tail.

John Phillips: "Marie Van Claudio is making a choice here... she could have gone for a cover, but instead she's picking up the tools of Sandy's trade."

Sandy is on one knee when Marie steps behind her and loops the chain around her midsection, pulling hard. She threads it under Sandy's arm and across her throat--not choking, but using it to haul the bigger woman up and backward.

*With a guttural shout, Marie takes a step, plants, and **throws** Sandy down in a modified Russian legsweep, the chain snapping taut across Sandy's chest as they hit the mat together.*

The 2300 Arena erupts.

Mark Bravo: "Russian legsweep with the chain! That's hardcore Marie Van Claudio right there!"

Sandy rolls on the canvas, gasping, the chain sliding off her. Marie drops across her for a pin, hooking the far leg deep.

ONE!

TWO!

Sandy powers out at two-and-three-quarters, shoving Marie off with a burst of raw, desperate strength.

John Phillips: "Hardcore Sandy still in this! She's not going quietly into any sunset tonight!"

Marie sits up, breathing like she's run a marathon, sweat and stray glitter stuck to her skin, eyes wide and wild. The crowd is chanting her name again, louder than before.

Black Horizon: 2025

"M-V-C! M-V-C! M-V-C!"

She looks out at them, then down at Sandy, who's pushing up to a knee again, blood and sweat mixing as she grins through the pain.

Hardcore Sandy: "That's it... there she is."

Marie scrambles to her feet and grabs Sandy in a front facelock, dragging her up as well. She fires a knee into Sandy's midsection, then another, then snaps her down with a crisp snap DDT right onto one of the broken pink kendo-stick pieces.

Sandy's head bounces, the veteran rolling onto her back, staring up at the lights.

Mark Bravo: "All the old Marie Van Claudio signatures are coming out now, but with this twisted hardcore flavor. Every move has something extra behind it tonight."

Marie pushes up again--wobbling, holding her ribs--but she doesn't stop. She reaches down, grabs Sandy's legs, and steps through, beginning to turn her.

John Phillips: "Wait a second... Marie Van Claudio... Sharpshooter incoming!"

The fans know it immediately, the cheer cresting as she plants one boot, crosses Sandy's legs, and steps over, sitting down deep into the Sharpshooter right in the center of the ring.

Sandy roars in pain, hands clawing at the mat. The chain lies nearby, the warped stop sign a few feet away--symbols of the war they're fighting--but right now it's a wrestling hold, from a wrestler who's finally stopped apologizing for who she is.

John Phillips: "Sharpshooter locked in! In a Hardcore Match, no rope breaks, no mercy--Sandy's gonna have to find her own way out of this!"

Mark Bravo: "Marie Van Claudio, former Women's Champion, mom of two, First Lady of UTA... cinched in the middle of hell, screaming for Hardcore Sandy to tap out in her possible last match ever. This is primal, this is personal, this is EVERYTHING."

Marie leans back, face twisted in effort, yelling as she sits deeper, embracing every ugly, violent second of the match she asked for. The crowd is deafening, split down the middle but united in knowing they're watching two legacies crash into each other at full speed.

Hardcore Sandy claws forward, inch by inch, refusing to give in, even as Marie digs deeper than she has in years--maybe ever--determined to prove that if this is Sandy's last dance in the hardcore world... she can stand in it with her.

Black Horizon: 2025

Marie Van Claudio sits deep into the Sharpshooter, screaming with the effort, every muscle shaking. Hardcore Sandy's fingers claw at the canvas, her face contorted, teeth gritted, the chain and stop sign just out of reach.

John Phillips: "Marie Van Claudio has Hardcore Sandy trapped in the middle of the ring! In a Hardcore Match there's no rope break--Sandy has to find her own escape!"

Sandy pushes up on her hands, trying to relieve the pressure. Marie leans back even further, practically lifting herself off the mat to wrench Sandy's lower back.

With a desperate roar, Sandy twists hard to one side. It isn't pretty--more scramble than reversal--but she manages to roll her hips enough that Marie loses her base and stumbles forward, forced to release the hold.

Both women collapse--Marie onto her knees, Sandy onto her side, hands going straight to her screaming back.

Mark Bravo: "That wasn't a technical escape, that was pure survival. Hardcore Sandy is refusing to let this end on a submission tap-out in her last ride."

Marie is first to move. She crawls to the ropes and drags herself up, sweat-soaked hair clinging to her face, chest heaving. Across from her, Sandy uses the ropes to stand as well, hand dragging along her lower back, blood still trickling from her forehead.

They look at each other--no words, just that heavy, shared understanding. Then they walk straight to the center and start swinging.

Right hand from Marie. Right hand from Sandy.

Right from Marie. Right from Sandy.

Each shot stiffer than the last, each woman staggering but refusing to back up. The crowd reacts to every strike, a rising chorus of "YEAH!"s with each connection.

John Phillips: "We've gone beyond tribute, beyond nostalgia. This is a straight-up fight between two women who refuse to break!"

Marie fires a forearm. Sandy answers with one of her own. Marie goes low with a body shot to the ribs, Sandy answers with a clubbing blow across the shoulders that nearly drops Marie to a knee.

Marie rebounds off the ropes, catches Sandy with a running clothesline that sends the bigger woman stumbling back into the opposite ropes--but Sandy ricochets out with a wild lariat that folds Marie inside out.

Mark Bravo: "Both of them throwing bombs and eating bombs like this is their last night on earth!"

Black Horizon: 2025

Sandy drops onto Marie for a cover, hooking the leg.

ONE!

TWO!

Marie kicks out again, rolling a shoulder up just in time.

Sandy snarls and rolls off, then slaps the mat once out of frustration before sliding out under the bottom rope. The crowd buzzes as she digs under the ring apron, searching.

John Phillips: "As if there weren't enough hardware already, Hardcore Sandy is going shopping again..."

She pulls out a wooden table and the 2300 Arena roars in approval.

Mark Bravo: "Ohhhh, now we're talking."

Sandy slides the table into the ring and follows. She sets it up near a corner with practiced ease, legs snapping into place, wood creaking under her hands.

Marie is on hands and knees, trying to stand. Sandy grabs her by the hair and tights, dragging her toward the table. She slams Marie's face onto the tabletop once, then lays her across it, pressing down to make sure she stays put.

John Phillips: "If Hardcore Sandy hits something big through that table, Marie Van Claudio's dream of honoring Sandy's legacy with a win might end in splinters."

Sandy climbs up onto the table herself for a second, towering over Marie, then steps carefully onto the second rope in the nearby corner, turning to face her. She's maybe thinking legdrop, maybe elbow--whatever it is, the fans know it's going to hurt.

She starts to stand up on the second rope.

Marie rolls.

Sandy jumps down instinctively, avoiding crashing through the empty table. She lands on her feet but her knee buckles slightly from the impact, giving Marie a precious heartbeat.

Marie clutches the edge of the table and yanks it upright, tipping it into Sandy like a shield. The edge of the wood slams into Sandy's chest and face, sending her staggering backward into the corner she just vacated.

Mark Bravo: "Heads-up defense from Marie, using the table like a battering ram!"

Black Horizon: 2025

Marie catches her breath, then charges, driving the table fully into Sandy, sandwiching her into the turnbuckles with a sickening smack of wood against flesh and steel.

Sandy slumps, arms draped over the ropes, the table pinning her in the corner.

Marie lets the table drop forward, then drags it back to the middle of the ring, resetting it on its legs. It wobbles but holds. She glances down at it, then over at Sandy, who is dragging herself out of the corner again.

John Phillips: "If Marie Van Claudio connects on something here, she could change the entire complexion of this match."

Marie meets Sandy in the middle and fires a kick to the gut, doubling the bigger woman over. She hooks Sandy from behind--arms locked around the waist--and with a roar of effort, hauls her up.

The crowd stands, sensing what's coming--German suplex attempt through the table.

Sandy fights it. She throws wild elbows backward, catching Marie in the side of the head once, twice, three times. Marie's grip loosens just enough. Sandy snatches Marie's wrist, spins out, and in one fluid motion whips her toward the table.

Marie leaps, planting a boot on the edge of the table, springboarding off it instead of crashing through, and spins mid-air, catching Sandy on the turnaround with a desperation spinning heel kick that drops the Hall of Famer to one knee.

Mark Bravo: "Marie just used the table like a launchpad! That was pure instinct and experience!"

Both women sag to the mat again, drained. Marie crawls toward a corner and uses the ropes to stand. Sandy, shaking the cobwebs, uses the table to push herself up.

*Marie charges--Sandy scoops her up out of nowhere, turning, and **spinebusters** her straight down onto the table.*

The table explodes beneath them, wood bursting apart as the crowd erupts in a massive "HOLY S--" that gets swallowed in the general chaos.

John Phillips: "SPINEBUSTER THROUGH THE TABLE! Hardcore Sandy just drove Marie Van Claudio straight through the wood!"

Both women lie in the wreckage, bits of table scattered around them. Sandy's arm eventually drapes across Marie's chest, a weary, instinctive cover.

ONE!

Black Horizon: 2025

TWO!

Marie kicks out again, just barely rolling her shoulder off the splinter-covered canvas.

Mark Bravo: "How?! How is she still in this?!"

John Phillips: "Because this is what this match means, Mark. To both of them."

Sandy rolls onto her back, staring up at the lights, chest heaving. She can't help but laugh--a ragged, disbelieving chuckle that says she's loving every second of this war, even as it strips years off her body.

She pushes herself up, splinters stuck to her arms, and rolls to the outside again. This time, she pulls a second chair from near the cart and tosses it into the ring, then grabs the dented trash can and throws that in too.

Marie is slowly sitting up, wincing as she pulls a piece of broken table from under her arm. Sandy slides back in, chair in hand.

She raises the chair high--Marie lashes out with a quick dropkick to the knee, sending Sandy crashing to one side and the chair clattering away.

Marie scrambles forward, grabs the trash can, and with a wild shout, brings it down over Sandy's back and shoulders, denting it even further.

Mark Bravo: "Now Marie's got the trash can! This is just two women taking turns beating the hell out of each other at this point!"

Marie drops the can and snatches up the chair. She hesitates for half a second--just long enough for the weight of what she's about to do to hit her--then raises it high.

*Sandy gets to one knee, dazed. Marie takes a step and **cracks** the chair across Sandy's back. The sound is vicious. Sandy drops forward to both knees, arms hanging limp.*

Marie doesn't go for another shot to the head; instead, she flips the chair open and plants it in the center of the ring. She drags Sandy up by the hair, pulling her toward the open seat.

John Phillips: "What does Marie Van Claudio have in mind here...?"

She hooks Sandy's head, backing them both up a few steps. The crowd rises again as realization dawns.

Mark Bravo: "If she hits this..."

Marie runs forward, planting a foot on the chair seat and launching up...

Black Horizon: 2025

...but Sandy shoves her away in mid-air, and Marie crashes awkwardly to the mat instead, clutching her knee and hip.

Sandy stumbles, grabs the folding chair, and now sets it up in the corner, wedging it between the turnbuckles like a steel spike.

She turns back just as Marie is fighting to her feet again. Sandy grabs her, whips her hard toward that corner--Marie reverses, yanking Sandy toward it instead.

Sandy just manages to get a boot up onto the middle rope to stop herself from going face-first into the chair, balancing awkwardly.

*Marie charges in from behind and **dropkicks** Sandy square in the back, driving her chest-first into the wedged chair. The impact rings out, Sandy hanging over the corner, arms draped.*

John Phillips: "Dropkick into the chair! Hardcore Sandy might be out on her feet!"

*Marie drags her down from the corner by the waist, turning, and with a burst of energy she shouldn't still have, **snap Germans** Sandy backward onto the dented trash can.*

The trash can crumples under the impact. Sandy rolls off, clutching her back and midsection, eyes glassy.

Marie sprawls on the mat too, both women laid out among chairs, a crushed can, and table splinters.

Mark Bravo: "This is beyond a match now. This is a car crash in slow motion, and neither Marie Van Claudio nor Hardcore Sandy is willing to put the brakes on."

John Phillips: "No Empire. No run-ins. No distractions. Just two women in a Hardcore Match at Black Horizon--"

The arena lights flicker.

A jagged guitar riff tears through the sound system, followed by a familiar, ominous beat.

The WrestleZone tron flashes in black and gold: a crown, fractured glass, and a single word in bold letters--EMPIRE.

Mark Bravo: "Oh, you have GOT to be kidding me."

The crowd erupts in a fresh wave of boos as three silhouettes step through the curtain onto the stage.

Dahlia Cross leads the way, violet hair hanging wild, taped hands flexing like she's itching to grab something that screams. To her right, Selena Vex glides out, cool and composed, eyes already locked on the ring like

Black Horizon: 2025

she's calculating angles. To her left, Rosa Delgado stalks forward with her arms folded, jaw tight, that enforcer energy rolling off her in waves.

John Phillips: "Dahlia Cross... Selena Vex... and Rosa Delgado. The Empire is here."

Mark Bravo: "Remember that little conversation backstage? Amy Harrison talking about 'tying up loose ends' before her dog collar match with Emily Hightower? These three are the scissors."

On the stage, Dahlia stops dead center, staring down at the ring with a predatory smile. Selena leans in slightly toward her, saying something we can't quite hear but can definitely feel. Rosa cracks her neck, then starts walking slowly down the ramp.

In the ring, Marie has stopped crawling. She's rolled to her side, staring up the aisle with wide, exhausted eyes. Sandy, on a knee now, wipes blood from her face and glares toward the entrance like she's ready to swing at the first thing that moves.

John Phillips: "This was supposed to be about Marie Van Claudio and Hardcore Sandy--about legacy, respect, possibly Sandy's last match ever. But The Empire made it very clear earlier... they don't do loose ends."

Mark Bravo: "This is exactly what Amy wanted. Let Sandy and Marie beat each other half to death, then send the sharks down to finish whatever's left."

The music keeps pumping as the trio advances. Rosa walks front and center, pace unhurried, never taking her eyes off the ring. Selena trails a step behind, gaze bouncing between Marie and Sandy like she's picking which one to hurt first. Dahlia lags at the back just a hair, savoring every hateful scream from the crowd.

Inside the ring, Marie rolls to the ropes and uses them to drag herself up. Every movement looks like it hurts. She keeps one hand on the middle rope and the other pressed to her ribs, but she refuses to stay down with The Empire in view.

Across from her, Sandy does the same--one arm hooked over the top rope, back arching in pain, but her jaw is set. She looks from Marie to the approaching trio and then spits on the canvas in their direction.

John Phillips: "There is no love lost between Hardcore Sandy and The Empire. Sandy turned on them, walked away, made it very clear she was done taking orders."

Mark Bravo: "And Marie? Amy Harrison has been trying to write her out of this division's history since day one. These aren't 'opponents' to The Empire. These are problems."

The Empire's music finally fades as they reach ringside. Rosa stops at the foot of the ramp, staring up at the ring like it's already theirs. Selena circles to one side, Dahlia to the other, beginning that slow, predatory orbit that never means anything good.

Black Horizon: 2025

The referee steps to the ropes, shouting down that this is a match, not a mugging. Rosa just smirks up at him and spreads her hands innocently.

Rosa Delgado: "We're just watching, jefe."

The crowd doesn't buy it for a second, drowning her out in boos.

John Phillips: "Remember, this is a Hardcore Match--no disqualifications. If The Empire decides to get involved, the referee can't stop it."

Marie pushes off the ropes, turning so she can keep one eye on Sandy and one eye on the three sharks circling the ring. She calls out, voice hoarse but clear enough for a nearby camera to catch.

Marie Van Claudio: "This is our match!"

She points at Sandy, then at the mat between them.

Marie Van Claudio: "Not theirs."

Sandy lets out a rough laugh, nodding once despite everything.

Hardcore Sandy: "For once... I agree with you."

Dahlia slides up onto the apron behind Sandy, hands curled over the top rope, eyes gleaming. Rosa hops up on the opposite side, near Marie's corner. Selena stays on the floor, watching, waiting for the right opening.

Mark Bravo: "And now we've got a ring full of wreckage, two barely-standing warriors... and The Empire on every side like a pack of wolves. This just stopped being a fair fight, and it was never exactly fair to begin with."

Marie and Sandy both find themselves drifting closer to the center again, instinctively pulled away from the ropes and the threat looming on all sides. Neither of them trusts the other... but neither of them trusts the three women outside a whole lot more.

For a long, electric second, nobody moves. The crowd is roaring, but underneath it there's that buzzing tension--the sense that whatever happens next could change the entire night.

John Phillips: "Hardcore Sandy. Marie Van Claudio. The Empire on the outside. The question now isn't just who survives this match... it's whether The Empire lets either of them walk out of Black Horizon on their own two feet."

Sandy cracks her neck, never taking her eyes off Dahlia on the apron.

Black Horizon: 2025

Hardcore Sandy: "You want me to bring it..."

She turns her head just enough to glance at Marie.

Hardcore Sandy: "We might have to bring it to *them* first."

Marie's fingers curl into fists. Bruised, battered, and barely upright, she nods once, gaze flicking from Rosa to Selena to Dahlia.

One match. Two legacies. Three predators on the outside.

And Black Horizon watching as everything threatens to explode.

The 2300 Arena buzzes as The Empire circles--Dahlia Cross on one apron, Rosa Delgado on another, Selena Vex pacing the floor like a shark, occasionally hopping up to the edge of the third side. Only the hard-cam side of the ring is clear, like a single open door in a burning room.

Inside, Marie Van Claudio and Hardcore Sandy have both forced themselves to their feet. They're bruised, sweating, and barely upright, but they stand shoulder-to-shoulder now, each automatically taking half the ring--Marie toward Rosa and Selena, Sandy toward Dahlia.

John Phillips: "Three sides of the ring covered by The Empire. One side open. And in the middle--Marie Van Claudio and Hardcore Sandy, who've already beaten the life out of each other tonight."

Mark Bravo: "This is a trap. This looks like a nature documentary where the narrator says 'and this is where the gazelles realize it's over.'"

Dahlia leans over the ropes, eyes glittering, lips curling into a cruel smile.

Dahlia Cross: "Don't stop on our account."

Selena Vex casually hops up onto the apron on her side, one hand resting lightly on the top rope, head cocked in amused curiosity. Rosa Delgado slowly peels her arms from across her chest, gripping the ropes on her corner, muscles coiling.

Marie and Sandy exchange the quickest of glances. Years of very different careers have taught them the same lesson--waiting only makes it worse.

Sandy nods once.

Hardcore Sandy: "We swing first."

Marie answers with a weary, savage little smile.

Black Horizon: 2025

Marie Van Claudio: "Always."

Sandy suddenly lunges toward Dahlia's side, throwing a wild right hand that forces Dahlia to duck back on instinct. At the same moment, Marie spins and charges at Rosa, swinging a forearm that just grazes her jaw and knocks her off-balance on the apron.

The crowd explodes at the sight of the two tired warriors taking the fight straight to The Empire.

John Phillips: "Marie and Sandy aren't waiting to get jumped--they're going after The Empire first!"

Selena, always the opportunist, uses the chaos. She slingshots off the top rope on the open side, springboarding in with a low dropkick that clips Marie's knee from behind. Marie crumples to one knee with a sharp cry.

Mark Bravo: "There's the numbers game--Selena coming in from the blind side!"

As Marie drops, Rosa recovers and vaults over the top rope, crashing down on Marie's shoulders with a clubbing double axe handle. Marie goes face-first to the mat.

On the other side, Dahlia snatches Sandy's throwing arm over the ropes, jerking it hard across the top cable. Sandy's shoulder whips into the steel, and Dahlia slips smoothly through the ropes behind her, wrapping both arms around Sandy's waist.

She wrenches down and back in a vicious, modified backstabber, Sandy's spine arching over Dahlia's knees.

John Phillips: "Backcracker from Dahlia Cross! She went straight for that already-damaged back!"

Sandy bounces off her knees and sprawls across the canvas, clutching her lower back, teeth bared in agony.

And just like that, The Empire is in the ring. All three of them. The trap is sprung.

Selena Vex is up first, stomping down on Marie's exposed knee with surgical precision. Rosa joins her, dropping a heavy elbow across Marie's ribs at the same time. The double impact drives a pained shout out of Marie as she curls in on herself.

Mark Bravo: "Rosa attacking the ribs, Selena attacking the leg--The Empire is dissecting Marie Van Claudio piece by piece!"

Dahlia rolls through her landing and immediately targets Sandy again--two sharp soccer kicks into the spine, precise and venomous. Sandy jerks with each one, her hands pawing weakly at the mat.

John Phillips: "This is disgusting. Marie and Sandy already put each other through hell, and now The

Black Horizon: 2025

Empire is out here trying to make sure neither of them walks out of Black Horizon the same."

But the fight isn't gone yet.

As Rosa hauls Marie up by the hair, Marie suddenly explodes with a slap across Rosa's face that spins the enforcer's head to the side. She follows with a wild punch to Selena's midsection, doubling her over.

Marie wobbles but stays on her feet, eyes blazing.

Marie Van Claudio: "You want me gone? You better *finish* the job!"

The crowd roars in approval.

Across the ring, Sandy has fought to all fours again. Dahlia reaches down to grab a handful of hair--and Sandy surges up, driving a headbutt straight into Dahlia's nose. Dahlia staggers back, clutching her face.

Sandy grabs the nearest thing--one of the broken pink kendo-stick pieces--and swings it like a club, smashing it across Dahlia's ribs. Dahlia doubles over with a hiss.

Mark Bravo: "Hardcore Sandy, still swinging, still throwing bombs with whatever she can grab!"

Selena recovers enough to rush Sandy from behind--only to eat a back elbow that catches her flush in the jaw. She stumbles away, clutching her mouth.

For a fleeting, electric moment, Marie and Sandy are up, backs almost touching in the center of the ring--three Empire members surrounding them, but suddenly all three on defense.

John Phillips: "Look at this! Hardcore Sandy and Marie Van Claudio... after all that war, standing side-by-side against The Empire!"

Rosa charges first. Marie steps in and nails her with a spinning heel kick, catching her in the cheek and dropping her to one knee. Sandy follows up with a stiff knee strike to Rosa's jaw that sends her rolling under the bottom rope.

Dahlia rushes back in, grabbing Sandy from behind in a waistlock. Marie lunges, slapping Dahlia's hand away, and the Hall of Famer drives a short headbutt into Dahlia's temple. Dahlia stumbles, and Sandy hammers a forearm into her back for good measure.

Selena goes low, throwing a kick aimed at Marie's bad knee--Marie barely hops away from it, then snaps a quick slap into Selena's ear, disorienting her.

The crowd is losing its mind.

Black Horizon: 2025

"M-V-C! SAN-DY! M-V-C! SAN-DY!"

Mark Bravo: "They are FIGHTING, John! Two-on-three, bodies falling everywhere, and The Empire is actually on the back foot!"

But numbers don't lie for long.

As Marie turns to follow up on Selena, Rosa slides back into the ring behind her like a shadow. She barrels forward and smashes Marie with a brutal chop block to the back of the bad knee. Marie's leg buckles violently, and she goes down screaming, clutching her knee.

John Phillips: "Rosa from behind! Chop block to that already-damaged leg!"

Marie hits the mat hard, rolling on her side, hands locked around her knee. The crowd's roar turns into a low, horrified buzz.

Sandy whirls just in time to see Marie go down--and that's all the opening Dahlia needs. She launches herself at Sandy's back, driving both knees between her shoulder blades with a nasty backstabber that sends Sandy whipping to the mat, clutching at her spine.

Mark Bravo: "Double knees right into that destroyed lower back! Dahlia Cross just shut Sandy down!"

Selena, recovered now, comes in with surgical precision, stomping down on Marie's injured knee again and again, each stomp twisting it at a sick angle. Marie screams and tries to roll away, but Rosa pins her by the shoulders, holding her in place.

Dahlia mounts Sandy's back, wrenching her neck backward in a vicious, improvised hold, her fingers digging into Sandy's jaw as she torques the head and spine.

John Phillips: "The extra person... that third body... is the difference-maker. Every time Marie or Sandy fights one of them off, another Empire member is right there to pick the bones!"

Rosa finally drags Marie up by a fistful of hair and throws her into the corner. Marie hits the turnbuckles hard and slumps, barely able to stay upright. Selena backs up to the opposite corner, eyes locked in.

Mark Bravo: "This is bad, this is really bad..."

Selena sprints corner-to-corner, launching into a running high knee that crashes into Marie's face, snapping her head back over the top turnbuckle. Marie crumples, collapsing into a heap at the base of the corner.

In the center of the ring, Dahlia yanks Sandy up just enough to drive her face-first into the crushed trash can with a DDT, leaving her sprawled across the wrecked metal.

Black Horizon: 2025

The image is ugly and undeniable--Marie and Hardcore Sandy laid out amid the debris of their own war, The Empire standing over them.

John Phillips: "This is exactly what Amy Harrison talked about earlier--tying up loose ends. The Empire said they were going to take care of Sandy and Marie before the dog collar match, and right now... they are making good on that threat."

Mark Bravo: "Three-on-two, no rules, no disqualifications... Marie Van Claudio and Hardcore Sandy are being systematically dismantled by The Empire. And unless somebody does something about it... this is only going to get worse."

Rosa, Dahlia, and Selena regroup in the center of the ring, breathing hard but standing tall, staring down at the fallen legends. Their music isn't playing--but their message is deafeningly clear.

Hardcore Sandy lies sprawled over the crushed trash can, clutching her back. In the corner, Marie Van Claudio is a crumpled heap after Selena's running knee. The Empire stands tall over them, breathing hard but fully in control.

Rosa Delgado peels away from the center first. She stalks over to Marie and Sandy and starts stomping--heavy, methodical boots dropped across Marie's injured knee, Sandy's already-ruined lower back. Every shot keeps them from even thinking about getting up.

John Phillips: "Rosa Delgado just mercilessly stomping away--every time Marie or Sandy tries to move, she just shuts them right back down!"

Dahlia Cross and Selena Vex exchange a quick look. Selena nods once and slips out under the bottom rope, landing at ringside with a catlike ease. She immediately heads for the apron, lifting the skirt and digging underneath.

Mark Bravo: "If you've watched any wrestling in the last twenty years, you know nothing good ever comes from somebody going under that ring."

*After a moment, Selena's eyes light up. She drags a **table** out from under the ring to a loud, mixed reaction from the crowd--half horrified, half bloodthirsty.*

John Phillips: "Oh no... The Empire isn't just trying to win a statement, they're trying to end a career."

Selena slides the table under the bottom rope. Inside, Dahlia is already waiting. She pulls it to the center and begins snapping the legs out with crisp, practiced motions. Each click echoes like a warning.

All the while, Rosa keeps up the assault--boot to Marie's ribs, stomp to Sandy's spine, another heavy shot to the knee. Every time one of them twitches, she drives them back down.

Black Horizon: 2025

Mark Bravo: "Rosa's making sure there's no miracle comeback, no last burst of adrenaline. This is control. This is punishment. This is Amy Harrison's message being hand-delivered."

Dahlia and Selena finish setting the table, positioning it dead center in the ring. The wood creaks under their hands, the image stark: one pristine, unbroken surface in the middle of absolute wreckage.

Rosa finally relents on the stomps, wiping sweat from her brow as she steps back toward the other two. She nods to the table, then down at Hardcore Sandy, who is barely on hands and knees now, fighting through every breath.

Dahlia Cross: "Last match, right?"

Dahlia reaches down and grabs Sandy by the hair. With Rosa and Selena's help, they haul the Hall of Famer up, one woman on each side, one from behind. Sandy's legs are rubber, her arms hanging limp for a moment before she instinctively tries to fight--weak elbows, a staggered kick--but there's just too much damage. And too many hands.

John Phillips: "No, no, no... come on, not like this..."

The Empire drags Sandy onto the table, rolling her onto her back, then muscling her up again, this time into position--Rosa and Selena each hooking an arm, Dahlia anchoring at the legs. The crowd realizes what's coming and the sound shifts--boos, screams, a few desperate shouts for someone, anyone, to stop it.

Mark Bravo: "They're not just trying to send a message to Sandy, they're sending one to the whole women's division--this is what happens when you walk away... or when you stand against The Empire."

They hoist her higher--Sandy's boots leaving the mat, her body suspended just above the table, fully in their control.

John Phillips: "No disqualifications... nothing the referee can do about this..."

*For a split second, Sandy's eyes meet the hard cam--defiant even now, even with her body breaking down. Then The Empire **drives her down**.*

*Three sets of hands guide her through a huge, catastrophic triple powerbomb that sends Hardcore Sandy crashing straight through the table. The wood **explodes** underneath her, pieces flying, the ring shaking under the impact.*

John Phillips: "OH MY--TRIPLE POWERBOMB THROUGH THE TABLE! HARDCORE SANDY JUST GOT DRILLED STRAIGHT THROUGH THE WOOD!"

The 2300 Arena erupts--some fans screaming, some with hands over their mouths, others raining down furious boos at The Empire standing tall over the wreckage.

Black Horizon: 2025

Mark Bravo: "If this really is her last match, they are trying to make damn sure she remembers it every time she wakes up in the morning for the rest of her life."

Sandy lies motionless in the rubble, limbs sprawled, shards of table and the crushed trash can framing her like a twisted halo. The referee immediately drops to a knee beside her, waving toward the back, shouting for help.

Rosa, Dahlia, and Selena stand over her, breathing hard, eyes cold. Behind them, in the corner, Marie Van Claudio is barely conscious, dragging herself up by the ropes just enough to see what they've done to the woman she wanted to honor.

John Phillips: "Hardcore Sandy put her body on the line for UTA for years, and on a night that was supposed to be about respect and legacy... The Empire may have just powerbombed that legacy straight through a table."

Mark Bravo: "And they're not done. Not with Sandy... and sure as hell not with Marie Van Claudio."

Medical staff and officials begin streaming out from the back, but The Empire is still in the ring, still standing over what they've done, as Black Horizon watches in shock.

The Empire stands over the wreckage for a heartbeat longer--three silhouettes framed by splintered wood and a broken legend.

Then, in perfect sync, they turn their backs.

Dahlia steps through the ropes first, dropping to the floor with a cold little smirk. Selena follows, glancing once over her shoulder at the motionless body of Hardcore Sandy before hopping down beside her. Rosa lingers half a second longer, staring straight into the hard cam with a look that says this isn't over... then slips out to the floor and joins the others.

The three of them walk up the aisle together, never looking back, as a tidal wave of boos crashes down around them.

"BOOOOOOOOOO!"

"YOU SUCK! YOU SUCK!"

John Phillips: "The Empire... proud of what they've done... just leaving the scene of the crime."

Mark Bravo: "They didn't come out here to win a match, John. They came out here to erase people."

In the ring, Hardcore Sandy hasn't moved.

Black Horizon: 2025

The table is nothing but a jagged frame beneath her--splinters, chunks, the trash can crushed in around her shoulders. Her arms are spread at awkward angles, her chest rising and falling shallowly as the referee kneels beside her, frantic.

He flashes both hands toward the entrance and yells over the roar of the crowd. Within seconds, medical staff and officials pour from the back--black-shirted, gloved hands, carrying a backboard, a stretcher.

John Phillips: "We need help out here. Now."

The camera cuts to a low angle, almost on the mat, looking up past the wreckage.

In the far corner, framed by the ropes and washed-out arena lights, stands Marie Van Claudio.

She's clinging to the top rope with one hand, her other still wrapped protectively around her ribs. Her face is streaked with sweat and smeared eyeliner, a faint red mark blooming along her jaw where chair and fists met. Her chest heaves with each breath, but her eyes--her eyes are locked on Sandy.

The boos rattle the building, but up here it feels quiet. Just Marie, breathing, staring, trying to make sense of what she's seeing.

Mark Bravo: "Look at Marie, John. She asked for this match. She picked Hardcore rules to honor Sandy's legacy. And now she's watching medics pick Sandy out of a pile of broken wood."

The shot tightens on Marie's face.

*You can see everything flicker across it--rage at The Empire, guilt that she brought this stipulation into the conversation, horror at the idea that **this** might be the last image anyone ever gets of Hardcore Sandy in a ring.*

Down on the mat, the medics carefully roll Sandy onto her side, then onto her backboard. One of them braces her neck, another checks her eyes with a small penlight. The referee steps back, hands on his head, shaken.

John Phillips: "This started as a match--two women testing each other, trying to close out a career with respect in a Hardcore environment. It is not a match anymore."

The crowd keeps booing, some fans pounding the barricades, others chanting.

"SANDY! SANDY! SANDY!"

Marie's grip on the rope tightens until her knuckles go white. For half a second, she looks like she might crumble right there in the corner--knees buckling, head dropping. Then she forces herself upright, jaw clenched, eyes blazing with tears she refuses to let fall.

Black Horizon: 2025

The camera moves again--over the shoulder, behind Marie--looking down at the scene the way she sees it. The shattered table. The medics kneeling. Sandy, strapped to the board now, her eyes barely open, mask of pain and stubborn defiance even as they brace her neck.

Mark Bravo: "How do you go on after that? How do you call for the bell and just... keep wrestling?"

John Phillips: "You don't. You can't. This match... it can't continue. Not like this. Not after that."

The referee walks to the ropes and leans out, speaking urgently to the timekeeper, shaking his head, one hand slicing across his throat in the universal signal--it's over.

The ring announcer doesn't even try to make it theatrical. His voice is subdued when it hits the PA, just barely cutting through the boos and the chant for Sandy.

We don't even need to hear the exact words to know what it is: referee stoppage. No contest. Match waved off.

The story that was supposed to be told tonight--Hardcore Sandy's last war, Marie Van Claudio honoring a legend in the most brutal way possible--has been hijacked. Rewritten. Cut off in mid-sentence and dropped in a heap of splinters.

John Phillips: "Hardcore Sandy deserved to have her legacy decided by her own hand. By a three-count. By a tap-out. By something *between* those ropes with somebody who respected what she's done."

John Phillips: "Instead... it might be ending on a backboard. In a pile of broken wood."

The camera catches Marie again as the stretcher is lifted. Her lips move--no mic, no sound, but you can read it: "I'm sorry."

She doesn't leave the ring. She doesn't attack the medics, doesn't try to restart anything. She just stands there, one hand on the top rope, watching as they carefully wheel Hardcore Sandy out of the wreckage and toward the aisle.

The fans on that side of the building lean over the barricades, some with their hands out, some with signs raised: "THANK YOU SANDY," "ONE MORE WAR," "HARDCORE LEGEND."

Sandy's eyes flutter, trying to focus, her fingers twitching against the straps that keep her in place.

Marie's eyes follow her the whole way. Torn apart by the reality that the match she wanted to give Sandy as a gift... might have just become the moment everyone remembers as the end.

The Best at What She Does

The medical bay hums under fluorescent light. UTA's head physician stands over Gunnar Van Patton, carefully winding elastic tape around his ribs and abdomen. Gunnar's breath is shallow, controlled; the bruising blooms in deep plum tones. The door opens with quiet purpose. Avril Selene Kinkade enters, clipboard in hand, gaze razor-sharp.

UTA Head Physician: "He is injured. Broken ribs, Gunnar. There's a massive risk of further damage if you compete. I cannot clear you for the Rumble."

Avril Selene Kinkade: "Doctor Ellison, you will countersign this waiver. If you refuse, I will initiate proceedings with the state medical board. Your license will be revoked, your career dismantled, and your reputation reduced to ash. Sergeant Van Patton will compete, and you will not obstruct him."

She turns her gaze to Gunnar, her tone sharpened to a blade's edge.

Avril Selene Kinkade: "My investigation is complete. The men who assaulted you -- Kimo and Keanu Fatu -- are not mercenaries, not outsiders. They are Scott Stevens' half brothers, branches of his bloodline. He has installed them at his side as enforcers, and he will unleash them upon you again. That is not conjecture; it is inevitability."

Avril steps closer to the examination table, her heels clicking against the tile. She places the clipboard down with deliberate precision, her eyes never leaving Gunnar's. The physician pauses mid-wrap, glancing between them, the tension in the room thick enough to choke. Gunnar exhales sharply, the tape pulling against his ribs, his jaw tightening as Avril's words sink in.

Avril Selene Kinkade: "Consider the rules of the WrestleZone Rumble. No allies, no reprieve, no sanctuary. Every competitor is vulnerable, but you, Sergeant, are compromised. Broken ribs make you prey. For the first time in UTA, the odds are not merely against you -- they are engineered to destroy you. And remember this: the Stevens family is vast, sprawling, relentless. Their numbers seem to grow daily, each new branch another weapon, another obstacle, another hand reaching to drag you down."

Gunnar's jaw tightens as the physician finishes the wrap, securing the band and patting the tape flat.

Gunnar Van Patton: "Say it straight."

Avril Selene Kinkade: "Straight? Then hear it without varnish: Stevens has weaponized his family against you. He will not fight you himself; he will send his half brothers to do it. And if you enter that Rumble, you will be walking into their jaws."

Gunnar nods once, the acceptance cold and clean.

Gunnar Van Patton: "Get me what I need to get through it."

Black Horizon: 2025

The physician, cowed by Avril's threat, signs the waiver with a trembling hand, then passes Gunnar the pen. Gunnar scrawls his name, shoulders squared despite the pain.

UTA Head Physician: "I can't supply pain medication. It's not indicated, and it's too late for a pharmacy run."

Gunnar reaches for his West Point Hockey t-shirt, easing it over taped ribs. Avril's eyes drift to his open travel bag. She reaches in, draws out a bottle of Jack Daniels, and tosses it to him with surgical precision.

Avril Selene Kinkade: "Then you will dull the pain by other means. Drink, endure, and fight. That is the only prescription left to you. And perhaps, Sergeant, the very attitude that alcohol enables -- defiance without restraint, fury without hesitation -- is precisely what tonight demands."

Gunnar twists the cap and drinks hard--long, burning swallows that shock the air of the room. The physician recoils, horrified.

UTA Head Physician: "Gunnar--!"

Gunnar lowers the bottle, wipes his mouth with the back of his hand, and sets the cap with a snap. He stands, shoulders square, and heads for the door--focused, unflinching. He leaves his cell phone on the counter, forgotten.

It buzzes. Then rings. Avril picks it up without thinking. The caller ID reads a single word: "Volk." The color drains from her face.

Avril Selene Kinkade: "Volk--"

A voice, low and absolute, comes through the line.

Voice: "We're here."

Avril's fingers go slack. The phone drops, clattering against the tile. She stares at the door Gunnar just walked through, terror cutting through her composure as the segment ends.

Build

Black.

Then a slow fade-in to a wide shot:

A quiet training space. Not a UTA venue. No banners. No logos. Just exposed brick walls, high windows flooding the room with late-afternoon light, and in the center... a single ring.

Black Horizon: 2025

No crowd. No lights. No sound but the faint creak of ropes and the echo of footsteps on the wooden floor.

We catch the back of someone running the ropes. Long strides, practiced footwork. They rebound, drop down, pop up, pivot into a smooth turn that finishes dead-center in the ring.

The camera circles around.

It's Troy Lindz.

Their hair is tied back out of their face. They're in simplified gear: black and deep red training tights, boots, a sleeveless compression top. No sequins. No fringe. No glitter. The only hint of the old flamboyance is a faint red-and-black gradient along the sides.

Troy stands in the middle of the ring, breathing steady, eyes focused -- not on a crowd, but on a single figure just outside the ropes.

Eli Creed leans on the apron, arms folded, in his usual white shirt and rolled sleeves. He's not holding a microphone. He's holding a small notebook.

Eli Creed: "Again."

Troy nods once, no argument, and explodes into motion.

Run the ropes. Drop down. Leapfrog. Pivot. Snap into a discus line that stops an inch from an imaginary opponent's jaw. No pose at the end. No extra flourish. Just impact... then stillness.

Eli Creed: "Better. Where was your head that time?"

Troy turns, leaning on the top rope, sweat dripping down their temple.

Troy Lindz: "On the contact. On the footwork. On not overselling the wind-up."

They smirk a little.

Troy Lindz: "You've said 'economy of motion' so many times I'm hearing it in my sleep."

Eli jots something down in the notebook, amused.

Eli Creed: "Good. The ring is not a runway, Troy. It's a conversation. You were shouting. Now you're learning to speak."

Troy rolls their eyes slightly, but the protest is half-hearted at best.

Black Horizon: 2025

Troy Lindz: "Careful. If you keep complimenting me, people might think we actually like each other."

Eli's smile is small, measured.

Eli Creed: "I don't compliment. I acknowledge progress."

He steps up onto the apron.

Eli Creed: "Ropes again. This time, imagine the crowd's there. Not physically... but emotionally."

Troy's expression shifts. The name "crowd" still does something to their shoulders -- a familiar electricity. They bounce on their toes once, twice.

Eli Creed: "They're calling for you. They want the strut, the spin, the wink..."

He tilts his head.

Eli Creed: "...but this version of you doesn't need them to breathe. Go."

*Troy exhales and hits the ropes again. There's a hint of the old swagger in the way they move -- that natural rhythm -- but it's tighter now. Purposeful. They cut the corner sharper, they don't play to an invisible hard-cam, they explode into a **Center Stage** discus lariat motion that stops dead center instead of spinning out into a pose.*

The camera cuts to a close-up of their face as they land the step: eyes narrowed, focused, no performative smile -- just intent.

Silence. Then a slow clap.

Eli steps through the ropes and into the ring with them, still clapping softly.

Eli Creed: "There. That. For the first time since Survivor... that looked like you were chasing *impact*, not applause."

Troy circles him, hands on their hips.

Troy Lindz: "You say that like applause is a bad thing."

Eli Creed: "Applause is a drug. It feels good. It lies to you."

He taps his notebook lightly.

Eli Creed: "This? This is rehab."

Black Horizon: 2025

Troy laughs, genuinely this time, a short burst that echoes off the brick.

Troy Lindz: "You've got a metaphor for everything, don't you?"

Eli Creed: "It helps people understand what they're afraid to say out loud."

He flips a page.

Eli Creed: "Tell me something you wouldn't have admitted three weeks ago."

Troy raises an eyebrow.

Troy Lindz: "You want a list?"

Eli Creed: "I want one thing."

Troy looks down at the canvas. Their boot scuffs a faint line along the mat.

Troy Lindz: "Three weeks ago... if you'd asked me who I was without the jacket, the confetti, the song..."

They glance up, meeting his eyes.

Troy Lindz: "I would've given you a catchphrase and a pose."

A small, self-aware smile.

Troy Lindz: "Now?"

They take a breath.

Troy Lindz: "Now I know I didn't have an answer."

Eli watches them carefully, then nods once, writing something down.

Eli Creed: "Good."

Troy squints at the notebook.

Troy Lindz: "You gonna let me read that thing someday, or is that volume one of the 'Fixing Troy' memoir?"

Eli Creed: "It's not about fixing you. I told you that."

He closes the notebook and tucks it under his arm.

Black Horizon: 2025

Eli Creed: "It's about documenting the build."

The camera cuts to a closer shot: Troy standing across from Eli in the center of an empty ring in an empty building. No logos. No fans. Just the two of them and the ropes.

Eli Creed: "Do you miss it?"

Troy Lindz: "What?"

Eli Creed: "The noise. The adoration. The validation you got every time you stepped through the curtain and said, 'This is my spotlight.'"

Troy considers. A softer honesty has crept into their voice.

Troy Lindz: "Yeah. I miss it."

They shrug.

Troy Lindz: "But I think... I'm starting to hate how much I *need* it."

Eli's eyes flicker with something like victory... but he keeps his tone gentle.

Eli Creed: "Good. Need is leverage. When you need something, it owns you. You don't own it."

He steps closer, not invading, just sharing the same space.

Eli Creed: "When you walk back into UTA with this version of yourself..."

He gestures to their toned-down gear, their calmer posture, their laser focus.

Eli Creed: "...the spotlight will still find you. But it won't be holding you together anymore. You will."

Troy lets that sit. You can see the gears turning.

Troy Lindz: "And what does that look like? Out there. Am I supposed to... stop? No more glam? No more big entrances?"

Eli chuckles softly.

Eli Creed: "I would never steal that from you. The world needs color. It needs presence. What it doesn't need..."

He taps two fingers gently against Troy's temple.

Black Horizon: 2025

Eli Creed: "...is someone killing themselves to keep pretending the noise is the same thing as truth."

A beat.

Eli Creed: "You can still strut. You can still shine. But when the bell rings..."

He leans in slightly.

Eli Creed: "You won't be wrestling to validate Troy Lindz."

Troy Lindz: "What am I wrestling for, then?"

Eli answers without hesitation.

Eli Creed: "To prove that whoever you are when the lights go off... is enough."

Silence stretches between them. Not tense -- charged.

Finally, Troy breaks eye contact and looks around the building -- the emptiness, the rawness of it.

Troy Lindz: "You picked this place on purpose, didn't you?"

Eli Creed: "Every brick."

He smiles faintly.

Eli Creed: "No posters. No titles. No merchandise. Just work. Just truth. Just the build."

Troy nods slowly.

Troy Lindz: "So... what does this make me? One of your patients? A... disciple?"

There's a wary humor in the word, but also a genuine question.

Eli considers the question carefully, then offers a different word:

Eli Creed: "It makes you someone who stopped lying to themself long enough to change."

He extends a hand, not for a shake, but open -- an invitation.

Eli Creed: "It makes you... awakened."

Troy looks at the hand, at Eli, at the empty room... and then up at the ceiling, where imaginary arena lights

Black Horizon: 2025

would be.

They take a breath. Then, deliberately, they place their hand in his.

Not a full handshake. Just a grip. A choice.

Troy Lindz: "If I do this... if I stand next to you out there..."

They meet his eyes again.

Troy Lindz: "I'm not becoming your prop. I'm not your example. I'm still me."

Eli nods once.

Eli Creed: "I don't want your spotlight, Troy. I want you to control it... instead of letting it control you."

The camera slowly circles them, hand-in-hand in the middle of that empty ring, the build literally centered on the image.

We cut to a close-up of their hands, then to Troy's face -- still Troy, but calmer. Different. A spark of something new behind the eyes.

Eli Creed (V.O.): "Break. Bend. Build."

The screen fades to black.

TEXT ON SCREEN:

"THE MORNINGSTAR HAS A NEW AWAKENED."

Underneath, a second line flickers in:

"TROY LINDZ RETURNS TO UTA... CHANGED."

Fade out.

Breaking Point

We come back from black to chaos.

Concrete. Loading bay. Cold night air rolling in from an open dock door. Red and blue lights flash against cinderblock walls as EMTs hustle around an open ambulance.

Black Horizon: 2025

Hardcore Sandy is strapped to a backboard, neck braced, oxygen mask over her face. Medics lift in unison, sliding her carefully into the back of the rig.

EMT #1: "On three--one, two, three."

They guide her into place, locking the board in. One medic climbs in with her, checking vitals, adjusting the mask.

Just off to the side, Marie Van Claudio is sitting on the bumper of another truck, one knee wrapped hastily with a compression bandage, ribs half-taped, hair matted to her face. Two medics hover around her, one with a flashlight, the other reaching for her arm.

Medic: "Ma'am, you need to let us--"

Marie jerks her arm away, eyes wild.

Marie Van Claudio: "I said I'm fine!"

She tries to stand, her leg buckling for a second before she catches herself on the side of the ambulance. Pain flashes across her face, but she forces herself upright.

Medic: "You're not fine. You might have damage to that knee, your ribs--"

Marie snaps her head toward him, voice raw.

Marie Van Claudio: "She's in there."

She jabs a finger toward the open doors where Sandy lies under harsh fluorescent light.

Marie Van Claudio: "Help her."

The medic hesitates, then backs off a step, recognizing something in her expression that isn't going to be negotiated with right now.

The EMT inside the ambulance leans over Sandy, speaking low.

EMT #2: "Sandy, stay with me. You're at the arena. We've got you. You're going to Jefferson."

Sandy's fingers twitch against the straps, eyes fluttering. It's not clear if she hears him, but that stubborn fight is still there in the way she tries to move.

Marie steps closer to the doors, limping, swallowing around something lodged in her throat. She grips the frame with both hands, looking in at the woman on the gurney.

Black Horizon: 2025

For a second, everything around her--the shouting, the siren warming up, the radio crackle--drops into a dull roar.

Marie Van Claudio: "I'm sorry."

It comes out barely above a whisper, meant for no one but Sandy and herself.

Behind her, another official tries again, gentler this time.

Official: "Marie... you need X-rays. The doc wants a look at that leg and your ribs."

She doesn't turn around.

Marie Van Claudio: "Tell the doc he can get in line."

Her jaw clenches, shoulders shaking as the EMTs begin closing up the back doors. The last thing Marie sees is Sandy's hand--the same one that swung all those weapons, all those years--now slack against the side of the board.

The doors slam shut.

The sound echoes in the loading bay like a final bell.

Marie steps back, the motion stiff, like every joint is made of glass. She watches as the driver climbs in, confers with the EMT, then throws the ambulance into gear.

The engine rumbles. The siren chirps once, twice, then wails to life as the rig starts rolling forward, lights painting the concrete in violent color.

Fans pressed against a distant barricade--those who've circled around to the back--are shouting, some chanting "SAN-DY! SAN-DY!" into the night as the ambulance pulls away.

Marie doesn't move.

She stands there, weight uneven on her bad leg, ribs taped just enough to keep them from folding, eyes locked on the shrinking red lights as they disappear down the ramp and into the city.

The moment the ambulance turns the corner and vanishes from sight... something inside her snaps.

Her shoulders hitch once. Twice.

Then she throws her head back and lets out a sound that doesn't belong in a promo, or a highlight reel, or a Hall of Fame package.

Black Horizon: 2025

A primal, wordless scream rips out of Marie Van Claudio's throat--hoarse, furious, broken. It bounces off the loading bay walls, carries out into the cold air, drowns out the distant chant and the hum of generators.

Medics and staff nearby freeze for a second, not knowing whether to step in or stay away. Nobody does. This isn't something you treat with tape and ice.

Marie staggers forward a step, palms slamming flat against the closest wall. She leans her forehead against the concrete, breathing hard, shoulders trembling, knuckles whitening as she presses her hands into the rough surface like she's trying to hold herself together by force.

The scream dies out, but the feeling doesn't. It hangs in the air--rage at The Empire, guilt over a match that became a mauling, grief for a legacy that might have just been smashed through a table.

Behind her, the medic takes a tentative step forward again... then stops when Marie's fingers curl into fists against the wall.

Medic: "Marie..."

She doesn't look back. When she speaks, her voice is low, raw, and shaking with something dangerous.

Marie Van Claudio: "Don't."

She peels one hand off the wall, flexing it once, staring at the way it trembles.

Marie Van Claudio: "You patch me up..."

She turns halfway now, eyes red, mascara smudged, but there's steel under all of it.

Marie Van Claudio: "...because this? This doesn't end with Sandy."

The camera lingers on her face--a woman at her breaking point, not broken but bent to the edge.

Then we pull back: Marie framed small against the vast concrete of the loading bay, one figure shaking in the wake of an ambulance that's already gone.

Her scream still seems to hang there as we fade out.

WrestleZone Rumble

Nine men are already inside the ring, pacing and jawing, the anticipation thick enough to choke on. The camera sweeps across faces.

Black Horizon: 2025

Malachi Cross with tombstone eyes and a slow, cruel breath;

Dante Rivera bouncing on the balls of his feet, pointing skyward for family;

Graham Keel expressionless, fingertips flexing like a chessboard he can feel;

B.R. Ellis in crisp blue and gold, wrists taped to ritual, jaw locked;

Silas Grimm peeling away his mask with disdain carved into his scarred face;

Brandon Henderson stormborn, denim vest snapping with each breath;

Former UTA Champion Brick Bronson built out of rebar and boredom, knuckles grazing each other like callused thunder;

Carter Durant loose and smiling, a hurricane in waiting;

Former WrestleZone Champion Aaron Shaffer perched high, crouching like a gargoyle in the corner, hair caught in the house air, tasting the ropes like a surfer tasting the break.

John Phillips: "Nine men are already in there, and every one of them looks ready to explode. This is the kind of lineup that makes a Rumble legendary."

Mark Bravo: "And the tenth man changes everything. Gunnar Van Patton isn't just another entrant--he's walking in hurt, taped ribs, whiskey still burning in his gut. That's not courage, John. That's obsession. That's a man who would rather die swinging than sit out."

The crowd is loud a moment ago. Not anymore. Now there is a ripple. Not panic, not excitement. Something lower. A murmur that crawls up the backs of their necks and tells them to pay attention.

Then the music hits.

"Boots and Blood" by Five Finger Death Punch detonates from the speakers. A ragged scream, drums pounding heavy and fast. The lights die, strobe bursts cutting the darkness like gunfire in a thunderstorm. Gunnar Van Patton comes through the curtain without a word. He doesn't play to the audience. He doesn't wave. He doesn't look left or right. He walks. Straight ahead. Each step measured, every muscle quiet but loaded. He has the build of a man who trains because the world gives him no other choice.

John Phillips: "Listen to this reaction--half the arena is booing, half is cheering, but nobody is sitting down. Gunnar Van Patton is polarizing, but he is undeniable."

Mark Bravo: "He's not here for applause. He's here for war. Those ribs are broken, but he's still sliding into that ring like it's a foxhole. That's Gunnar Van Patton--he fights smarter, meaner, and longer than anyone

Black Horizon: 2025

else if it keeps him alive."

The ring is twenty feet away. He makes it feel like ten. He hits the apron low, one hand on the mat, and launches forward with a clean, fluid motion. No wasted movement. He slides beneath the bottom rope like sliding into cover. There's no handspring tonight. His arm is tucked in tight, as he looks over the others and slowly rises to a vertical base. Black t-shirt off and flicked to the crowd, trucker cap gone the same way. The referee approaches, standard procedure. Gunnar doesn't speak, just snarls upon holding his arms out. He lets the official do his job. Cleared, he backs into the corner, crouches, sits. His music is already trailing off into silence.

John Phillips: "All ten men now in the ring, and the air is thick enough to cut. The bell is seconds away."

Mark Bravo: "And Gunnar Van Patton isn't waiting for ceremony. He's waiting for the first shot. That's the difference--everyone else is pacing, Gunnar is hunting."

The camera lingers on Gunnar's single eye, the patch hiding the other, his breath slow, his posture coiled. Around him, nine men shift, each aware that the Rumble has just changed shape. The crowd buzzes louder, torn between jeers and cheers, but united in anticipation. The war is about to begin.

DING DING DING

The bell rings and the ring detonates into chaos. Ten men collide at once, fists flying, bodies slamming, the ropes trembling under the weight of the storm. There is no pause, no circling--every competitor is locked in combat from the opening second, the canvas shaking under the sheer volume of violence.

Brick Bronson barrels forward like a freight train, hammering Dante Rivera with a forearm that nearly takes his head off. Malachi Cross steps in to meet him, driving a knee into Bronson's midsection before following with a stalling spinebuster that rattles the mat. Henderson and Ellis are locked in a tug-of-war of suplex attempts, Henderson straining with raw power while Ellis counters with technical leverage, each man refusing to give ground. Graham Keel and Silas Grimm twist into a knot of holds and counters, Keel wrenching an arm while Grimm claws for leverage, their struggle a violent chess match in motion. Carter Durant sprints across the ring, springboarding into a dropkick that staggers Henderson, only to be met by Aaron Shaffer, who vaults into a cyclone clothesline that knocks Durant flat.

And Gunnar Van Patton is scouting--he is in the thick of it. He smashes Rivera with a Muay Thai knee, then whips into a spinning kick that clips Ellis across the jaw. Bronson swings heavy, Gunnar ducks, and fires a short elbow into Bronson's ribs before a grimace flashes across his taped side. Henderson tries to capitalize, charging in, but Gunnar pivots and cracks him with a lariat that drops him to the mat. Grimm lunges from behind, clawing for a choke, but Gunnar thrashes free with a back elbow and a sharp stomp to the foot. Keel steps in, looking to trap Gunnar in a hold, but Gunnar answers with a sharp sidekick to the knee that buckles Keel's stance.

John Phillips: "Every man is throwing bombs! No hesitation, no strategy--just raw survival instincts taking

Black Horizon: 2025

over!"

Mark Bravo: "Broken ribs or not, Gunnar's trading shots with monsters, and every strike looks like it's carved from spite."

Shaffer nearly gets dumped over the ropes by Durant, but he twists mid-air, lands on the apron, and slingshots back inside with a flying forearm that knocks Durant into Keel. Bronson crushes Cross into the corner with a running avalanche, only for Rivera to rebound with a flying enzuigiri that staggers the Concrete Fist. Henderson rallies with a thunderclap chop that echoes through the arena, while Ellis counters with a gutwrench lift that nearly sends Henderson over the top before Henderson claws back inside. Grimm slithers behind Durant, dragging him into a hammerlock, but Durant spins free and fires a sharp enzuigiri that drops Grimm to a knee.

John Phillips: "Look at the pace--every corner is a battlefield, every rope is a weapon. This isn't a slow build, this is a war from the opening bell!"

Mark Bravo: "And that's the danger. You can't pace yourself in a Rumble like this. One mistake, one slip, and you're gone. Gunnar knows it, Shaffer knows it, Bronson knows it. That's why they're all swinging like it's the last fight of their lives."

The ring shakes under the weight of ten men battling at once. Gunnar absorbs a shot from Ellis, snarls, and answers with a stiff forearm that drops Ellis to a knee. Bronson clubs Rivera again, only to be staggered by Henderson's shoulder block. Shaffer vaults into a whirlwind DDT on Grimm, popping the crowd with his aerial flair. Durant rebounds off the ropes, catching Keel with a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker that leaves Keel clutching his spine. Cross fires a Yakuza kick into Henderson's jaw, sending him sprawling, but Henderson drags himself back up, refusing to stay down. Every man is fighting, every man is surviving, and the crowd roars louder with each collision.

John Phillips: "Ten men, action everywhere. This is the kind of chaos that defines a Rumble."

Mark Bravo: "It's way too early to pick a winner."

The canvas is a storm of fists, boots, and bodies. No one is waiting, no one is hiding. Even Gunnar Van Patton, ribs screaming, is locked in the melee, striking, countering, and absorbing punishment. The crowd roars louder, sensing the brutality of the moment--the Rumble has begun, and every man is already fighting for survival.

The match is only minutes old, but already the ropes are being tested as lifelines. Brick Bronson drives Malachi Cross backward with raw force, his forearm grinding across Cross's jaw as he tries to muscle him over the top rope. Cross braces, boots digging into the canvas, his arms hooked tight around the strand as the audience rises in anticipation. Bronson snarls, pressing harder, but Cross refuses to break, his body straining against the weight of the Concrete Fist.

Black Horizon: 2025

On the opposite side, Brandon Henderson hoists Dante Rivera high, Rivera's legs kicking frantically as Henderson angles toward the edge. Rivera twists in mid-air, hooking Henderson's head and dragging both men down into a heap before either can spill out. Henderson slams the mat in frustration, while Rivera scrambles back to his feet, clutching the ropes to steady himself.

Aaron Shaffer vaults into a springboard, but his landing falters--he teeters on the apron, arms flailing, the crowd shrieking. At the last instant, he drops low, rolling back inside with improvisation that draws a cheer. Carter Durant charges, looking to capitalize, but Gunnar Van Patton intercepts with a knee to the ribs, halting Durant's sprint and forcing him to clutch his side. Gunnar doesn't linger--he pivots away, conserving his strength, leaving Durant doubled over near the ropes.

John Phillips: "We're already seeing men flirting with elimination--Cross hanging on by fingertips, Rivera nearly tossed, Shaffer balancing on a razor's edge."

Mark Bravo: "That's the nature of this match. One slip, one mistimed move, and you're gone. Shaffer's agility saved him, but Bronson's brute force nearly ended Cross before the bell's echo faded."

Silas Grimm drags Graham Keel toward the corner, trying to lever him over the top strand. Keel plants his feet, wrenching Grimm's arm into a counter hold, forcing Grimm to release with a hiss. Ellis barrels in, shoulder-driving Henderson against the turnbuckles, the impact rattling the steel. Henderson slumps but refuses to fall, clutching the middle rope to keep himself alive.

John Phillips: "Every rope is becoming a lifeline. You can see desperation already--men clawing, grabbing, anything to stay inside."

Mark Bravo: "And Gunnar Van Patton is watching it all. He's not wasting energy on failed eliminations. He's striking, retreating, and letting the chaos burn itself out."

The crowd roars as Shaffer vaults again, narrowly avoiding Bronson's grasp, his body twisting before landing safely inside. Durant staggers back to his feet, shaking off Gunnar's knee, only to be met by Rivera's flying forearm that knocks him into the ropes. Durant clutches the top strand, his body half-dangling, before pulling himself back in with sheer willpower. Grimm tries to capitalize, stomping Durant's hands, but Keel intercepts with a Russian leg sweep that drops Grimm flat.

Ellis attempts to suplex Henderson over the ropes, but Henderson hooks his leg around the middle strand, blocking the lift. Henderson fires back with a chop that echoes through the arena, forcing Ellis to release. Cross, still recovering from Bronson's assault, lunges at Shaffer, but Shaffer ducks and springs into a hurricanrana that nearly sends Cross tumbling out. Cross clings to the bottom rope, his body dangling, before dragging himself back inside.

John Phillips: "Close calls everywhere--Durant nearly out, Rivera nearly gone, Shaffer defying gravity, Cross hanging by a thread. This is the danger zone."

Black Horizon: 2025

Mark Bravo: "And it's only the beginning. Every second in that ring is survival. Gunnar's patience, Bronson's brute strength, Shaffer's agility--it's all colliding, and the ropes are the only barrier between glory and disaster."

The ring is a tangle of bodies, every corner alive with fists and grappling. Henderson drives Ellis into the buckles, Rivera peppers Durant with sharp forearms, and Shaffer vaults into a spinning kick that clips Grimm across the temple. Bronson swings heavy shots at anyone in reach, his shoulders crashing into bodies like battering rams. Gunnar Van Patton absorbs a strike from Keel, snarls, and answers with a stiff elbow that drops him to a knee. The crowd is roaring, the noise rising with every collision.

Malachi Cross tries to carve space, shoving Rivera aside and raising his arms in that unsettling crucifix pose. He barely gets a second before Bronson barrels into him with a clothesline that nearly takes his head off. Cross staggers, clutching the ropes, and Gunnar is right there--he drives a knee into Cross's ribs, then a forearm across the jaw. Bronson and Gunnar don't even look at each other, but their strikes land in rhythm, pounding Cross against the ropes. Henderson whirls past them, chopping Ellis across the chest, while Grimm claws at Shaffer's hair to drag him down. The melee doesn't stop, but the focus shifts as Cross teeters dangerously close to elimination.

Cross fights back, throwing desperate shots, but Bronson clubs him across the back and Gunnar stomps his foot. The crowd rises as Cross is lifted over the top strand, his fingers clawing for purchase. Rivera tries to intervene, but Bronson swats him aside with a backhand. Gunnar rips Cross's grip loose with a brutal elbow, and Bronson checks hard--Cross tumbles to the floor outside, crashing shoulder-first against the barricade. The referee signals the elimination, and the arena erupts. Some cheer the decisive teamwork, others boo the loss of Cross's mystique. Cross sits on the floor outside, glaring back into the ring, his ritual broken, his sermon silenced. He slams a fist against the barricade, furious at being the first man out.

John Phillips: "Malachi Cross is the first man eliminated! The chaos finally claims someone!"

Mark Bravo: "That's the difference between ritual and reality. Cross tried to impose his pace, but Gunnar and Bronson imposed punishment. He wanted control, they gave him consequence."

Inside the ring, the fight doesn't stop. Henderson drives Ellis into the corner with a shoulder block, Ellis answering with a snap suplex that rattles the canvas. Rivera shakes off Bronson's earlier assault, firing a dropkick into Durant's chest that sends him staggering. Shaffer vaults again, narrowly avoiding Grimm's grasp, his agility drawing another cheer. Gunnar backs into the ropes, clutching his taped ribs, while Bronson pounds his chest, daring anyone to step forward. Grimm slithers back to his feet, sneering at Keel as they circle again. The crowd noise surges, the first elimination raising the stakes without slowing the chaos.

John Phillips: "That's how fast it can happen. One moment you're fighting, the next you're gone."

Mark Bravo: "You have to keep your head on a swivel. You never know who is waiting to take advantage."

The audience feels the shift. With nine competitors still swinging, eliminations can happen in an instant--from

Black Horizon: 2025

any rope, any grip, any blindside. Every man knows the next fall could be theirs.

The match refuses to slow. Henderson and Ellis are locked in a tug-of-war near the ropes, each straining to muscle the other over. Henderson hoists Ellis halfway out, Ellis clings to the top strand, and with a desperate knee strike he forces Henderson to stumble back inside. Henderson shakes his head, frustrated, while Ellis smirks through the pain, knowing he just bought himself more time.

Rivera charges Bronson with a flying forearm, staggering the powerhouse. Rivera seizes the moment, trying to shove Bronson over the ropes. Bronson plants his feet, snarls, and answers with a thunderous headbutt that drops Rivera flat. Bronson shakes off the attack, pounding his chest, but the audience recognizes how close he came to disaster. Rivera rolls to the apron, clutching the rope, before springing back inside with a low dropkick that clips Bronson's knee, proving he's not finished yet.

Shaffer vaults into a springboard, catching Grimm with a hurricanrana that whips him toward the edge. Grimm tumbles across the canvas, his body sliding under the bottom rope, but he hooks the apron with one hand and drags himself back inside. Shaffer spins away, already looking for his next target, while Grimm snarls, furious at the humiliation of nearly being tossed. Grimm retaliates with a stiff clothesline attempt, but Shaffer ducks, rebounds, and nails him with a spinning heel kick that keeps the crowd roaring.

Keel and Durant collide near the corner, Durant trying to lever Keel over the top. Keel braces, firing a sharp elbow into Durant's jaw, then reverses into a short suplex that plants Durant back in the ring. Both men roll to their knees, exhausted but still alive. Gunnar Van Patton watches from a few steps back, his ribs heaving, before darting in with a sudden strike--he tries to dump Durant while he's dazed, but Durant clutches the rope and kicks Gunnar away. The crowd gasps, sensing how close Gunnar came to causing another elimination.

Ellis recovers quickly, grabbing Henderson by the waist and trying to hoist him over the ropes. Henderson fights back with a flurry of elbows, breaking free and spinning Ellis into a corner. Henderson follows with a running knee, but Ellis sidesteps, sending Henderson crashing into the turnbuckles. Henderson slumps, barely holding on, but manages to hook the middle rope to save himself. Ellis shakes his head, realizing he was inches away from scoring the second elimination of the night.

John Phillips: "Bodies are flying toward the ropes, but nobody's gone yet. Every escape is pure desperation."

Mark Bravo: "That's the beauty of this stage. It's not just offense--it's survival instinct. Henderson clawing back, Rivera nearly toppling Bronson, Durant refusing to be Gunnar's next victim. These men are proving they'll fight for every inch."

The ring remains a battlefield, competitors clawing, striking, and scrambling in all directions. Every rope is a lifeline, every counter a reprieve. Shaffer vaults again, narrowly avoiding Bronson's grasp, while Grimm tries to drag Keel over the top only to be shoved away. Gunnar steadies himself, scanning for another opening, but his ribs force him to pause. The audience knows the next elimination could erupt at any moment, but for now, every attempt has failed.

Black Horizon: 2025

Henderson and Keel battle near the ropes, trading chops. Shaffer vaults into a spinning kick that rattles Grimm, who stumbles but claws back with a wild swing. Bronson prowls like a predator, his shoulders crashing into clusters, scattering bodies with brute force. Gunnar Van Patton, ribs taped and jaw clenched, keeps himself circling--short elbows, low kicks, and sudden bursts that redirect traffic without wasting motion.

Rivera, desperate to shift momentum, climbs the ropes with fluid speed. The crowd rises as he springs into a high-risk maneuver, twisting mid-air with a plan to crash down on Gunnar. Gunnar is already reading it. He pivots aside, letting Rivera's arc collapse into empty space. Rivera lands awkwardly, his balance broken, and Gunnar coils his body, snapping into a spinning back kick that detonates against Rivera's ribs. The strike folds him violently, his breath ripped away, leaving him doubled over and vulnerable.

Bronson sees the opening. He storms forward, swinging a forearm that crashes into Rivera's chest. The impact jolts Rivera sideways, his weakened frame unable to resist. Gunnar doesn't even need to follow--the damage is done. Bronson's shove carries Rivera over the top rope, his body tumbling to the floor outside. Rivera clutches his ribs, writhing in pain, as the referee signals the elimination. The arena erupts, half cheering the teamwork, half groaning at Rivera's fall, but the noise is deafening.

John Phillips: "Rivera is gone! Gunnar's precision broke him, and Bronson's power sealed the deal!"

Mark Bravo: "That's Gunnar's craft--he turned Rivera's risk into punishment, and Bronson added the killing blow."

Inside the ring, the chaos doesn't pause. Henderson drives Keel into the corner with a shoulder thrust, Keel answering with a sharp elbow that staggers him. Durant shakes off Gunnar's earlier strike and fires back with a clothesline, forcing Gunnar to retreat a step. Shaffer vaults again, narrowly avoiding Grimm's grasp, his agility drawing another cheer. Bronson pounds his chest, daring anyone to step forward, while Gunnar steadies himself against the ropes, scanning for the next hinge point. Grimm stalks Shaffer, furious at being embarrassed, while Henderson braces for another collision. The melee is relentless, every man clawing for survival.

Durant tries to muscle Henderson toward the ropes, but Henderson hooks the middle strand and drags himself back inside. Gunnar slips behind Durant, hammering a short elbow into his spine before peeling away, forcing Durant to reset. Shaffer leaps again, this time catching Grimm with a flying knee that staggers him into the corner. Grimm snarls, clutching the ropes, refusing to let himself be toppled. Bronson barrels into Keel, driving him across the ring, while Henderson shakes off Durant's attack and fires back with a chop that echoes through the arena. Every exchange is frantic, every rope a lifeline.

John Phillips: "Eight men remain in this war."

Mark Bravo: "With Van Patton and Bronson being central to both exits."

The audience feels the escalation, as the pace only intensifies. Every strike, every rope grab, every blindside carries the threat of another fall. The match grows more dangerous with every heartbeat.

Black Horizon: 2025

The chaos shifts gears. The wild brawling of earlier moments gives way to a more deliberate rhythm, as competitors begin to test each other with skill rather than sheer force. Henderson and Keel lock up in the center, their clash unfolding like a wrestling clinic. Henderson shoots for a waistlock, Keel counters with a standing switch, Henderson rolls through into a hammerlock. Keel drops to a knee, spins out, and answers with a crisp arm drag. The crowd reacts with appreciation, applauding the sudden injection of pure technique into the storm. Henderson smirks, nodding, before lunging back in to continue the exchange. Their duel becomes a showcase of counters and reversals, a grind that slows the pace but sharpens the tension.

On the apron, Shaffer teeters precariously after Grimm's wild swing nearly sent him out. Grimm snarls, lowers his shoulder, and charges. The impact blasts Shaffer sideways into the barricade. Gasps ripple through the arena--Shaffer's body smashes against the rail, but his feet never touch the floor. He clings desperately, dangling for a heartbeat, before pulling himself upright. The crowd rises to its feet, noise swelling as Shaffer steadies himself on the narrow rail. Arms outstretched for balance, he begins to walk the barricade like a tightrope, each step deliberate, each wobble met with shrieks from the audience. Fans lean in, hands reaching, trying to touch him as he passes. Grimm stomps inside the ring, pointing and shouting, but Shaffer ignores the taunt, his focus locked on survival.

The tension builds with every inch forward. Shaffer reaches the midpoint of the barricade, crouches low, and pauses. The crowd is electric, chanting his name. Then he springs forward in a breathtaking leap, soaring through the air and landing cleanly on the steel steps. The arena erupts, the miracle save instantly becoming one of the night's defining images. From the steps, Shaffer vaults back into the ring, catching Grimm flush with a flying forearm that knocks him flat. Shaffer pops to his feet, arms raised, soaking in the roar of the audience. His barricade walk and steel-step return are not just survival--they are spectacle, artistry, and defiance rolled into one.

John Phillips: "Unbelievable! Grimm tried to finish Shaffer, but he turned disaster into a highlight reel!"

Mark Bravo: "That's survival elevated into theater. His feet never touched the floor, he walked the barricade like a balance beam, then leapt to the steps and came back swinging. That's guts, that's creativity, and that's why the crowd is losing their minds."

Meanwhile, Henderson and Keel continue their technical grind. Henderson cinches a front facelock, Keel rolls through into a single-leg takedown, and Henderson scrambles to the ropes to break the sequence. The crowd applauds again, recognizing the skill amidst the chaos. Gunnar Van Patton stays rib-protective, cutting angles with body punches and short lariats. He peppers Durant with a stiff shot to the midsection, then clips Bronson with a compact strike before peeling away. Gunnar avoids chaining holds, conserving energy, but every strike he throws lands with surgical intent. Bronson snarls, shaking off the blow, while Durant staggers back, clutching his ribs.

Shaffer, still riding the energy of his barricade walk, vaults again, narrowly avoiding Grimm's grasp. Grimm slams the mat in frustration, humiliated by Shaffer's escape. Henderson fires back at Keel with a chop that echoes through the arena, while Bronson barrels into Durant with a shoulder block that rattles the canvas. Gunnar steadies himself against the ropes, scanning for the next hinge point, his eyes cold and calculating.

Black Horizon: 2025

The ring is alive with contrasts--technical precision, aerial spectacle, brute force, and Gunnar's measured violence--all colliding in one relentless storm.

John Phillips: "This match has everything--chain wrestling, brute power, and Shaffer redefining survival."

Mark Bravo: "And Gunnar's still lurking. He knows his ribs can't take the grind, so he's cutting angles and landing shots instead. But Shaffer? He just stole the spotlight."

The audience is buzzing, the energy surging higher. No new eliminations yet, but the spectacle has shifted--the grind of Keel and Henderson, the fury of Bronson, the precision of Gunnar, and the miracle of Shaffer's balance act have all raised the stakes. The storm continues, every competitor clawing for survival, every moment threatening to tip into disaster.

The grind between Henderson and Keel stretches into a showcase of stubborn precision. Henderson clamps a side headlock, wrenching down with force, but Keel slips free into a wristlock, twisting Henderson's arm and forcing him to the mat. Henderson rolls through, counters with a snapmare, and Keel pops back up, refusing to stay down. The crowd applauds the exchange, appreciating the sudden injection of pure technique into the storm. Henderson smirks, nodding at the resistance, before lunging back in to continue the duel. Their battle is deliberate, a grind of counters and reversals, but the storm around them begins to close in.

Gunnar Van Patton stalks nearby, ribs taped, eyes narrowed. He's waiting for an opportunity. Henderson tries to muscle Keel toward the ropes, but Gunnar steps in with sudden violence. He drives a forearm smash across Keel's face, the blow landing flush, staggering him backward. Keel reels, arms flailing, his rhythm broken. Henderson recoils, catching his breath, while Gunnar pivots away, conserving himself, his strike precise and cold. Keel shakes his head, trying to reset, but the damage is done--his balance is gone, his footing compromised.

Bronson sees the opening. The monster barrels forward, shoulders lowered, and detonates a shoulder block into Keel's chest. The impact is thunderous, driving Keel violently into the ropes. His body whiplashes over the top strand, tumbling to the floor outside. The referee signals the elimination as the crowd erupts, some cheering the teamwork, others groaning at Keel's fall. Henderson leans against the ropes, glaring at Gunnar for the interruption, while Bronson pounds his chest, snarling at the audience.

John Phillips: "Keel is gone! Gunnar's forearm stunned him, and Bronson's shoulder finished the job!"

Mark Bravo: "I'm not sure the teamwork is intentional, but that's 3 in a row. Gunnar sets them up, Bronson knocks them down."

Inside the ring, the storm doesn't slow. Shaffer vaults past Grimm again, narrowly avoiding his grasp, his agility drawing another cheer. Grimm slams the mat in frustration, humiliated by Shaffer's escapes. Durant shakes off Gunnar's earlier body shot and fires back with a back elbow, forcing Gunnar to retreat a step. Henderson steadies himself, eyes locked on Gunnar, the tension between them simmering. Bronson roves like a predator, swinging heavy shots at anyone who dares step forward. The ring is alive with

Black Horizon: 2025

contrasts--technical precision, aerial spectacle, brute force, and Gunnar's measured violence--all colliding.

Keel sits outside the ring, clutching his jaw, furious at being dispatched. He slams a fist against the floor, glaring back at Gunnar and Bronson, knowing their combined strike ended his night. The audience buzzes, the energy surging higher, the storm inside the ropes growing more dangerous with every heartbeat.

The match grinds forward, the anarchy reshaping itself as Ellis begins to assert his presence. He zeroes in on Gunnar Van Patton, taped ribs exposed as a target. Ellis is deliberate, almost surgical--he drives a forearm into Gunnar's midsection, then another, forcing Gunnar to wince. The crowd reacts, sensing Ellis's strategy. He's not just throwing strikes; he's dissecting Gunnar's injury, trying to break him down piece by piece. Henderson watches from the corner, nodding at Ellis's focus, while Bronson prowls nearby, waiting for another body to smash.

Ellis presses harder, dragging Gunnar into the ropes and hammering down with repeated shots to the ribs. Each strike lands with cruel precision, Gunnar's jaw tightening as he absorbs the punishment. Ellis smirks, believing he's found the weakness that will end Gunnar's night. He pulls Gunnar forward, looking to snap him down with a short-arm clothesline. The crowd leans in, sensing the danger. But Gunnar explodes suddenly, driving his knee into Ellis's nose with a brutal strike. The crack echoes through the arena, Ellis staggering backward, clutching his face as blood threatens to spill. The audience gasps at the sudden violence, the tide turning in an instant.

Gunnar doesn't hesitate. He pivots, coils his body, and unleashes a high roundhouse kick. The strike connects flush against Ellis's jaw, the impact spinning him sideways. Ellis tumbles backward, crashing off the apron, his body slamming against the floor outside. The referee signals the elimination, and the arena erupts. Some cheer Gunnar's defiance, others boo the ruthless precision, but the noise is deafening. Gunnar staggers back into the ring, ribs heaving, his scowl deepening. He doesn't celebrate--he simply resets, eyes scanning for the next hinge point.

John Phillips: "Ellis is out! Gunnar just turned pain into fury--knee strike, then that roundhouse kick!"

Mark Bravo: "That whiskey is fueling him and it's gotta be taking the edge off what agony those ribs are causing him."

Inside the ring, Henderson shakes his head, realizing his ally has been dispatched. He slams a fist against the turnbuckle, glaring at Gunnar, the tension between them simmering. Bronson snarls, pounding his chest, while Durant circles Gunnar cautiously, wary of the sudden explosion. Shaffer vaults past Grimm again, his agility keeping the crowd alive, while Grimm slams the mat in frustration, humiliated by Shaffer's escapes. The storm doesn't slow--every strike, every rope, every blindside threatens another fall, but Ellis's elimination has shifted the rhythm once more.

Ellis sits outside the ring, clutching his jaw, furious at being dispatched so suddenly. He slams a hand against the floor, glaring back at Gunnar, knowing the roundhouse kick ended his night. The audience buzzes, the energy surging higher, the storm inside the ropes growing more dangerous with every heartbeat.

Black Horizon: 2025

The match surges into its next stage, the ring a mixture of desperation and survival.

Each competitor is battered, each exchange heavier than the last, but the fight refuses to slow. Silas Grimm, ever the ritualist, begins his eerie feint--arms raised, muttering under his breath as if summoning strength from unseen forces. The crowd buzzes, half mocking, half intrigued, their voices rising in anticipation of what strange theatrics Grimm might unleash. He spreads his arms wide, tilting his head back, the spotlight catching his pale features. For a moment, the chaos seems to pause around him, as if the ritual might actually take hold.

But Shaffer is already moving. He springs to the ropes, vaulting into a perfect arc, and explodes forward with a springboard enzuigiri. His boot cracks against Grimm's jaw, snapping him out of the trance and sending him staggering into the corner. The crowd roars, Shaffer's timing breaking the ritual before it can manifest. Grimm clutches the ropes, his face twisted in fury, humiliated by the interruption. Shaffer pops back to his feet, arms raised, soaking in the cheers, his agility once again stealing the spotlight.

Across the ring, Brandon Henderson tries to seize momentum. He barrels into the corner, crushing Durant with a running avalanche. The impact rattles the ropes, Durant slumping but clutching the strands to keep himself alive. Henderson wheels around, looking for another victim, but his rally stalls--he survives the crush but fails to convert it into an elimination. The crowd responds with a mix of cheers and groans, recognizing the close call but knowing the fight continues. Henderson slaps his chest, rallying himself, but the frustration is clear on his face.

Gunnar Van Patton is hurting, but still prowling. He doesn't waste motion--cutting angles, slipping between clusters, and hammering body punches into exposed ribs. A short jab to Durant's midsection, a low kick to Bronson's thigh, an elbow clipping Henderson's temple. Gunnar's strikes aren't flashy, but they keep the rhythm broken, forcing opponents to reset. Every shot is a reminder that even wounded, Gunnar dictates the pace in his own way. He moves like a predator circling prey, conserving energy but always ready to strike when the hinge point appears.

John Phillips: "Shaffer just shattered Grimm's ritual with that enzuigiri! He's keeping the crowd on fire."

Mark Bravo: "And look at Gunnar--he's not chasing eliminations here, he's cutting angles, throwing those compact shots. It's control through attrition."

Contrasts are apparent--Shaffer's aerial precision, Henderson's brute force rally, Gunnar's surgical striking, and Grimm's frustration at being denied his theatrics. Durant clings to the ropes, shaking off Henderson's crush, while Bronson prowls nearby, snarling at anyone who dares step forward. Grimm slams the mat in rage, his ritual broken, his aura cracked. Shaffer circles him, smirking, the crowd chanting his name. Henderson steadies himself, glaring at Gunnar, while Gunnar leans against the ropes, ribs heaving, eyes cold and calculating. No eliminations yet, but the storm grows heavier, every failed attempt tightening the tension for what's to come.

Silas Grimm staggers in the corner, still rattled from Shaffer's springboard enzuigiri that shattered his ritual.

Black Horizon: 2025

His pale face twists with fury, his hands clawing at the ropes as if trying to pull strength back into his body. The crowd buzzes, half mocking, half anticipating, sensing that Grimm's aura--the eerie theatrics he relies on--has cracked. He tries to steady himself, muttering curses, but his balance is gone, his theatrics broken.

Shaffer, riding the wave of momentum, doesn't let him recover. He vaults to the ropes again, springing into another aerial burst. His boot connects flush against Grimm's temple, snapping his head sideways. Grimm reels, arms flailing, his grip on the ropes slipping. The audience surges, sensing the danger. Shaffer lands gracefully, pointing to the crowd, feeding off their roar. Grimm stumbles forward, disoriented, his ritual now a memory replaced by humiliation.

That's when Gunnar Van Patton strikes. He's been circling, ribs taped, conserving energy, waiting for the hinge point. He explodes forward with sudden violence, charging across the ring. The taping struggles to keep him together, but he doesn't hesitate. Gunnar's arm swings through with a running clothesline, blasting Grimm across the throat. The impact is thunderous, carrying Grimm over the top rope. His body whiplashes, tumbling violently to the floor outside, crashing against the barricade. The referee signals the elimination, and the arena erupts in a mix of cheers and jeers. Grimm lies sprawled, clutching his jaw, his ritual erased by Shaffer's agility and Gunnar's brutality.

John Phillips: "Grimm is gone! Shaffer staggered him, and Gunnar finished the job with that clothesline!"

Mark Bravo: "Gunnar knows his body can't support his normal methods, so he's talking advantage of any opening he can to thin the herd."

Inside the ring, Shaffer pumps his fist, the crowd roaring at his aerial brilliance. Gunnar steadies himself, ribs heaving, his scowl deepening. Bronson snarls, pounding his chest, daring anyone to step forward. Henderson shakes his head, realizing another competitor has fallen, while Durant circles Gunnar cautiously, wary of the sudden explosion. Grimm slams the floor outside, furious at being dispatched, glaring back at Shaffer and Gunnar, knowing their combined assault ended his night.

The havoc inside the ropes doesn't slow. Shaffer vaults past Bronson, narrowly avoiding his grasp, his agility keeping the crowd alive. Henderson rallies with chops, Durant fires back with a spinning kick, and Gunnar leans against the ropes, scanning for the next hinge point. The audience buzzes, the energy surging higher, the storm growing more dangerous with every heartbeat. Grimm's elimination has shifted the rhythm once more--his theatrics silenced, his aura broken, leaving only the relentless grind of survival.

Brandon Henderson fights with visible defiance, his chest heaving as he tries to rally momentum. He drives a sharp chop into Durant's chest, the sound cracking through the arena. Durant staggers back, clutching at the sting, and Henderson spins to hammer Shaffer with a forearm smash. Henderson slaps his chest, shouting at the fans to recognize his fight. The crowd's reaction is split--half the arena applauds his grit, half jeers his arrogance--but Henderson thrives on the noise, feeding off the energy even as fatigue sets in.

From the opposite side, Gunnar Van Patton watches with cold calculation. His ribs are taped, his jaw locked, his eyes scanning for the moment to strike. Henderson wheels around, swinging wide, but Gunnar bursts

Black Horizon: 2025

forward with sudden violence. His boot arcs high, smashing Henderson square in the jaw with a standing sidekick. The impact is devastating--Henderson's head snaps back, his legs buckle, and he stumbles into the ropes, draped across the top strand. The crowd gasps, then surges into a roar, recognizing the danger.

Bronson doesn't hesitate. He barrels forward like a freight train, shoulders lowered, and slams into Henderson with a crushing shoulder tackle. The collision is overwhelming, carrying Henderson over the ropes. His body whiplashes, tumbling violently to the floor outside. The referee signals the elimination, and the arena erupts. Henderson lies sprawled, clutching his jaw, disbelief etched across his face. Gunnar steadies himself, ribs heaving, while Bronson thunders across the ring, pounding his chest and snarling at the audience, daring anyone to step forward.

John Phillips: "That's the end of Henderson! Gunnar's superkick rattled him, and Bronson's pounce made sure he didn't come back."

Mark Bravo: "Two very different weapons, perfectly timed. Henderson fought with heart, but he was outgunned."

Inside the ring, Shaffer vaults past Durant, springing to the ropes with fluid agility, drawing cheers from the crowd. Durant steadies himself, throwing a spinning kick that forces Gunnar to step back. Bronson prowls, swinging heavy shots at anyone who crosses his path, his presence dominating the ring. Gunnar leans against the ropes, scanning for the next hinge point, his eyes cold and calculating, conserving energy but ready to strike again.

Outside, Henderson slams his fist against the floor, pounding the barricade in frustration. He glares back at Gunnar and Bronson, knowing their combined assault ended his night. He shouts curses at the fans who jeer him, then storms up the aisle, his elimination leaving a bitter taste. The audience hums with energy, the match shifting again with Henderson's departure. Inside the ropes, the rhythm changes--Shaffer's agility, Durant's resilience, Gunnar's precision, and Bronson's brute force all colliding in a relentless contest for survival.

The eliminations have carved the field down to its core. The canvas is littered with sweat, the ropes trembling from the last impact, and the crowd is on its feet. Four men remain, each embodying a different path to survival. Gunnar Van Patton, taped ribs and whiskey-fueled scowl, leans against the ropes with a predator's patience. His eyes are cold, scanning the ring, every breath measured, every movement deliberate. Aaron Shaffer crouches low, bouncing lightly on his heels, his body language sharp and restless, the crowd feeding him energy as he smirks at the danger ahead. Brick Bronson looms in his corner, chest heaving, fists clenched, his sheer size and raw power radiating menace. Carter Durant steadies himself, jaw tight, his stance coiled, ready to unleash speed and precision at the slightest opening.

The arena hums with anticipation, a wall of sound rising from the fans. They chant names, pound the barricades, and wave signs, knowing the match has entered its defining phase. Every twitch of muscle, every subtle shift of stance is magnified. Gunnar adjusts the tape on his ribs but never breaks eye contact. Shaffer crouches lower, spring-ready, his eyes darting between Bronson and Gunnar. Bronson snarls through gritted

Black Horizon: 2025

teeth, pounding his fist into his palm, daring anyone to step forward. Durant shifts his weight, testing the canvas beneath his boots, his gaze locked on Shaffer, his rival in speed.

The silence inside the ropes contrasts with the roar outside, creating a crucible of tension. No one moves first, but the audience knows the eruption is imminent. The stare-down stretches, the energy building with every heartbeat. Gunnar's scowl deepens, Shaffer flashes a grin, Bronson growls, and Durant exhales slowly, his focus razor-sharp. The ring feels smaller, the corners closing in, the four men locked in a silent war of wills.

John Phillips: "We're down to four, and look at this picture--each man in a corner, each one a threat."

Mark Bravo: "It's a collision of styles. Gunnar's grit, Shaffer's agility, Bronson's brute force, Durant's speed. The crowd can feel it--this isn't just survival anymore, it's about proving who belongs at the very top."

The audience rises higher, the chants rolling across the arena like waves. The Rumble has boiled down to these four, and the next collision will decide who can endure and who will fall. The tension is unbearable, the anticipation electric. The final four stare each other down, knowing that the next move will ignite the battle that defines the night.

The final four break from their corners, the tension snapping into motion. The ring divides into two duels, each clash reflecting a different style. Brick Bronson storms toward Gunnar Van Patton, his massive frame swinging heavy shots with reckless force. Their previous teamwork a distant memory. Gunnar braces, ribs taped, absorbing the punishment with guarded arms. Bronson hammers forearms into Gunnar's shoulders, then drives a knee toward his midsection. Gunnar answers with compact strikes--short elbows to the jaw, knees angled into Bronson's thigh. The collision is raw power against cold precision, each man testing the other's limits.

Bronson snarls, swinging a clubbing fist that rattles Gunnar's jaw. Gunnar staggers but fires back with a stiff knee to the ribs, forcing Bronson to step back. Bronson tries to smother Gunnar against the ropes, but Gunnar slips aside, cutting angles and landing a sharp back elbow across Bronson's temple. The crowd reacts with a sharp gasp, recognizing Gunnar's ability to turn defense into offense even while battered. Bronson shakes it off, pounding his chest, his aura of dominance unbroken, but Gunnar's defiance is clear--he will not be overwhelmed.

On the opposite side, Carter Durant and Aaron Shaffer ignite a speed duel. Durant whips Shaffer into the ropes, catching him with a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker that rattles the canvas. Shaffer arches in pain but rolls away, springing back to his feet with a burst of agility. He counters with a hurricanrana, flipping Durant across the ring. The crowd roars at the exchange, the pace dizzying, each man trying to outmaneuver the other with speed and timing. Durant steadies himself, jaw tight, his eyes locked on Shaffer, determined to slow him down. Shaffer smirks, bouncing lightly on his heels, feeding off the energy of the fans who chant his name.

Durant lunges again, this time with a superkick, but Shaffer ducks low, rolling forward and popping up behind him. Shaffer leaps, catching Durant with a dropkick that sends him staggering into the corner. Durant slaps

Black Horizon: 2025

the turnbuckle in frustration, then bursts out with a running knee strike that nearly catches Shaffer flush. Shaffer narrowly avoids it, vaulting to the ropes and springing back with a crossbody that flattens Durant. The crowd surges louder, the duel becoming a showcase of agility and resilience.

John Phillips: "We've got duels breaking out--Bronson and Gunnar trading heavy shots, Durant and Shaffer racing for control!"

Mark Bravo: "It's power versus precision on one side, speed against speed on the other. This is the crucible--every strike, every counter matters now."

The ring becomes a split battlefield--two wars unfolding at once, each clash threatening to tip the balance of the Rumble. Gunnar and Bronson struggle against each other, neither giving ground, their strikes echoing like hammer blows. Shaffer and Durant spin through the ropes in a blur of motion, their aerial exchanges keeping the crowd on edge. The audience roars with every impact, every escape, every counter. The Rumble has fractured into pair-offs, each battle a different test of endurance, skill, and willpower. The anticipation builds--everyone knows that one mistake will decide the next elimination.

Durant shakes off Shaffer's last aerial burst, jaw tight, determination etched across his face. He steadies himself in the center of the ring, eyes locked on Shaffer, and signals for the Cyclone Kick. The crowd rises, sensing the attempt. Durant pivots sharply, his leg whipping around in a blur, aiming to take Shaffer's head off. Shaffer ducks at the last instant, the kick slicing through empty air. Durant spins awkwardly, momentum carrying him off balance, his body turning toward the wrong corner.

Brick Bronson is waiting. The monster steps forward and blasts Durant with a short, stiff back elbow. The strike lands flush against Durant's jaw, staggering him sideways. The audience gasps, the sudden impact cutting Durant's rhythm in half. Gunnar Van Patton sees the hinge point. He surges forward, ribs taped but fury unbroken, and hooks Durant around the waist. With a violent snap, Gunnar launches Durant with an Exploder suplex, hurling him over the top rope. Durant crashes to the floor outside, his body sprawled, the referee signaling the elimination.

John Phillips: "Durant is out! He went for the Cyclone Kick, missed, and Gunnar made him pay with that Exploder!"

Mark Bravo: "That's the danger of speed--you miss once, and the opening is fatal."

Inside the ring, Shaffer pumps his fist, the crowd roaring at his escape. Gunnar steadies himself on one knee, ribs heaving, his scowl deepening. Bronson roars, raising his fists high, his aura swelling as the field shrinks again. Outside, Durant sits against the barricade, clutching his jaw, disbelief written across his face. Mad at himself for the misfire that ended his night. The audience buzzes, the energy surging higher, the Rumble now down to three men--Gunnar, Shaffer, and Bronson.

Gunnar Van Patton instantly becomes the focal point. His taped ribs rise and fall with every breath, baring his teeth with every breath. The damage he's absorbed is obvious. Aaron Shaffer and Brick Bronson

Black Horizon: 2025

exchange a glance--no words spoken, just the recognition that Gunnar is the prime target. If they can smother him now, the path to victory opens wide.

Bronson attacks first, his massive frame crashing forward with clubbing forearms that hammer Gunnar's shoulders and chest, pinning him in the corner. Gunnar shells up, arms tight against his ribs, absorbing the punishment with guarded defense. Van Patton's training allows him to dodge a strike and free himself. Shaffer darts in from the side with a dropkick that sends Gunnar stumbling into Bronson's waiting hands. Bronson easily hoists him into the air and Gunnar's body shakes the ring upon impact.

John Phillips: "A vicious snap spinebuster by Bronson."

Mark Bravo: "That's not doing his ribs any favors."

Bronson hammers Gunnar with a heavy shot to the jaw, then drives a knee toward his midsection. Gunnar winces, ribs screaming, but he refuses to collapse. Bronson holds Gunnar up, as Shaffer presses the advantage. He peppers Gunnar with sharp strikes--quick jabs, a spinning heel kick that grazes his temple. Gunnar parries where he can, deflecting blows with short elbows and low blocks, but the numbers are against him. A leaping forearm from Shaffer sends Van Patton stumbling into the corner. Bronson crushes him with a shoulder thrust, pinning him against the turnbuckles, so Shaffer can come racing in with a picture perfect dropkick that tries to take Gunnar's head off. The audience surges louder, sensing Gunnar's defenses being stripped away piece by piece.

Gunnar staggers out of the corner, sweat dripping, his taped ribs heaving. He throws a desperate elbow that clips Shaffer's jaw, buying a second of space, but Bronson immediately closes the gap with a crushing clothesline that takes Gunnar off his feet. Shaffer recovers quickly, circling, looking for another aerial strike. Gunnar struggles to stand, his body giving up on him. The double-team has tilted the rhythm of the match. Every strike, every shove threatens to end Gunnar's night.

Shaffer vaults to the ropes again, springing into a flying forearm that staggers Gunnar sideways. Gunnar reels, crashing into the middle rope. A small section of the crowd chants his name, trying to will him back into the fight, but the double-team continues to suffocate him. Shaffer and Bronson keep the pressure relentless, their alliance temporary but effective, each strike pushing Gunnar closer to the brink.

Bronson grips Gunnar by the back of the head, holding him upright, while Shaffer climbs the turnbuckles, looking for a high-risk strike. Gunnar thrashes, throwing short punches into Bronson's ribs, but the monster absorbs them, growling through the pain. Shaffer leaps, catching Gunnar with a dazzling hurricanrana that sends him tumbling across the ring. Gunnar lays lifeless, his body battered, but his eyes glazed over. The crowd roars, sensing the danger, every heartbeat inside the ropes threatening to decide Gunnar's fate.

John Phillips: "Gunnar's in deep trouble--Bronson and Shaffer are working together, and he's got nowhere to go!"

Mark Bravo: "This is smart strategy. Wounded animals are the most dangerous, but two men pressing him

Black Horizon: 2025

at once forces him to fight rib-protective, and that limits his offense. The numbers game at its best."

Shaffer smirks, pointing to Gunnar as if to signal the end. Bronson nods and prepares to finish the job. After battering Gunnar with coordinated strikes, Shaffer springs to the ropes, looking to add another aerial burst. He launches with a flying knee aimed at Gunnar's jaw--but Gunnar ducks low. The strike misses its mark and instead collides with Bronson's nose, catching the monster flush across the face. The crowd erupts in shock as Bronson staggers backward, his balance broken by the unexpected blow.

Bronson reels, clutching at his face, his aura of dominance suddenly cracked. Shaffer's eyes widen, realizing the miscue, while Gunnar's instincts ignite. Gunnar shoves Shaffer down and surges forward, blindsiding Bronson with a running Claymore kick. The impact is brutal, Gunnar's boot colliding with Bronson's newly injured nose. Bronson's legs whip upward, his massive frame toppling over the top rope. He crashes to the floor outside, the referee signaling the elimination as the arena explodes in noise.

John Phillips: "Bronson is gone! Shaffer's knee misfired, and Gunnar capitalized in an instant!"

Mark Bravo: "Just like that the odds are even. It wasn't the elimination Shaffer was hoping for, but it's still one less enemy."

Inside the ring, Shaffer looks stunned, his hands on his head, realizing his miscue cost Bronson his place in the match. Gunnar leans against the top rope to stay upright, as he points toward Shaffer, the message clear: you're next. Outside, Bronson is a wrecking ball of rage, blood trickling from his nose, his roar echoing as officials try to guide him away. The crowd's focus is solely on the ring, as only the final two remain.

John Phillips: "Who's going to Seasons Beatings to take on Tyger II? Will it be Van Patton's first championship opportunity or Shaffer's chance to reclaim the title?"

With Bronson gone, the pace of the match changes instantly. Aaron Shaffer seizes the spotlight, his agility and aerial brilliance igniting the crowd. He darts across the ring, immediately going to work with forearm shots the the jaw, his body language sharp and confident. Gunnar Van Patton, finds himself vulnerable, his body in no shape to deal with the tempo change. He tries to defend against the onslaught, but the storm of speed is relentless.

The flurry leaves Van Patton dazed, as Shaffer vaults to the middle rope, springing backward with a moonsault that crashes across Gunnar's shoulders. Gunnar collapses, unable to catch his enemy. Shaffer pops back to his feet, feeding off the roar of the crowd, and sprints to the opposite ropes. He rebounds with a spinning wheel kick that clips Gunnar's jaw, sending him scrambling to the nearest corner. The audience surges louder, chanting Shaffer's name, the energy shifting in his favor.

Shaffer strings together a sequence that electrifies the arena. A Stinger Splash crushes Van Patton in the corner and he wobbles out towards the middle of the ring, where his is met by Shaffer with a running dropkick. Shaffer rolls through, pops up, and immediately ricochets off the middle rope with a springboard crossbody. Gunnar crashes to the canvas, his taped ribs absorbing the brunt of the impact. Shaffer kips up,

Black Horizon: 2025

arms raised, the fans roaring in approval. Gunnar crawls to the ropes, clutching at them for support, his instincts telling him to stand.

Shaffer vaults again, this time with a flying forearm that ricochets Gunnar against the turnbuckles. Van Patton is seeing star, as Shaffer tries to dump him over the top rope. Gunnar hooks the ropes desperately, refusing to be moved. Shaffer presses the advantage, peppering Gunnar with sharp strikes--quick jabs, before sitting atop the corner. A huge uppercut rocks Van Patton's head back and a Pele kick sends Van Patton tumbling. Gunnar digs deep, his vice like grip refusing to let go of the top rope.

John Phillips: "Shaffer is flying--every time Gunnar looks like he's finished, he just clings to the ropes!"

Mark Bravo: "That's the only thing saving him. Shaffer's pace is relentless, but Gunnar's survival instinct is keeping him alive. He's not fighting back--he's just refusing to fall."

Shaffer drives his boot into Gunnar's back repeatedly, but he just will not give in. Kicks and the stretching of his torso, compounding with the damage already done, Van Patton can barely hang on.

A quick look and Shaffer darts to the far ropes, feeding off the crowd's energy. He launches himself like a missile with Gunnar's back the target. Ribs screaming, sweat pouring, Gunnar sees it out of the corner of his eye. He swings his legs wildly, landing them upon the apron just in time to avoid Shaffer's attack. With Aaron's body hanging halfway out of the ring, Van Patton clocks him in the mouth with a stright right hand.

Aaron Shaffer checks his mouth for a possible split lip and syands back up, as Gunnar slithers back into the ring. Van Patton's arm is pinned to his side, in utter agony. Van Patton may have gotten a clean shot in, but he's in no shape to capitalize. Shaffer circles Gunnar Van Patton, allowing him to exert his own energy while trying to stand. A pair of rights wobbles Gunnar and a boot to the gut drops him back down to one knee. The audience rises, with Shaffer showing his cat-like agility by running up the ropes. The crowd rises to their feet, as they sense what's coming. Gunnar, battered and rib-protective, staggers forward, his lobe eye locked on the incoming threat.

John Phillips: "Shaffer's pulling out the high-risk play--he wants to end this with style."

Mark Bravo: "And that's the gamble. He's dazzled the crowd all night, but one miscalculation could be fatal."

Shaffer launches, body rotating, arms outstretched to hook Gunnar's head--but Gunnar explodes upward. With sudden violence, he detonates a Superman Punch that connects square to the temple. The impact is vicious. Shaffer's body crumples midair, collapsing to the canvas in a heap. The crowd erupts, the sound deafening, the mythic moment crystallized in an instant.

John Phillips: "FIST OF DEFIANCE! That's not just a counter--that's Gunnar turning survival into a statement."

Mark Bravo: "He's been absorbing punishment, clinging to ropes, barely hanging on. Then he finds that one

Black Horizon: 2025

strike, and suddenly the entire match pivots."

Gunnar staggers upright, his legs weak yet stable enough. He roars to the crowd, digging as deep as he can, then points down at Shaffer with a pistol-shaped hand gesture. The audience surges louder, chants rolling across the arena like thunder. Shaffer lies motionless, knocked out cold, his aerial brilliance shot out of the sky by Gunnar's patriot missile. The ring shakes with the energy, the fans recognizing the hinge point of the Rumble.

John Phillips: "Listen to this place--every fan is on their feet!"

Mark Bravo: "They've watched Gunnar endure, they've watched Shaffer soar, and now they've seen the collision of those stories. That's what makes this moment unforgettable."

The arena is alive, every fan on their feet. Gunnar steadies himself, his message clear: survival is not enough--he is here to conquer. Shaffer lies sprawled, unconscious, the duel reset by Gunnar's aerial counter.

Just as the growing section of the audience begins to chant his name in unison, the atmosphere shifts. A murmur ripples through the crowd, confusion spreading like wildfire. At the top of the ramp, two massive silhouettes emerge--bald heads gleaming under the lights, tribal tattoos visible even from a distance. The recognition is instant. Kimo and Keanu Fatu storm into view, their presence unmistakable. The crowd erupts in shock, the reaction split between outrage and awe.

John Phillips: "Oh no. We have big trouble coming down the ramp and we know who they are looking for."

Mark Bravo: "Kimo and Keanu Fatu, The Puipuiga A Stevens, and they're going to stomp out that fire growing in Van Patton."

The Twins march down the ramp in perfect sync, boots pounding to the rhythm of their entrance theme. Their tactical gear and tribal tattoos project the aura of protectors, but tonight they're assassins. The crowd's chants turn to boos, the atmosphere souring as they approach ringside. Gunnar turns toward the commotion, distracted and mouthing profanities. He points toward them, sneering, demanding clarity. Shaffer remains motionless, oblivious to the chaos unfolding around him.

John Phillips: "The timing couldn't be worse for Gunnar--he's just landed the biggest strike of his UTA career, and now this."

Mark Bravo: "And that's the danger of angering the guy in charge. 9 men and a broken body, weren't enough, so Stevens is making sure the job gets done."

The Fatus stop at ringside, glaring into the ring, their presence alone enough to shift the energy. Kimo pounds his chest with primal fury, roaring to the crowd, while Keanu points sharply at Gunnar like a hitman marking his target. The audience buzzes with speculation, the tension mounting. Officials hover nearby, uncertain whether to intervene, the spectacle unfolding too quickly to contain.

Black Horizon: 2025

John Phillips: "Look at Gunnar--his eye has targeted the intruders, and who can blame him? Those two are a tidal wave waiting to crash."

Mark Bravo: "Gunnar's got far bigger problems than Shaffer right now. These two left him in a pile and are looking to do it again. The Fatus are on a mission with a sole victim in mind, and the whole arena knows it."

The crowd roars louder, some chanting Gunnar's name in defiance, others booing the intrusion. The atmosphere is electric, the sense of impending chaos palpable. Gunnar's gaze remains locked on the Twins, not showing an ounce of fear. The PAS tear off their jackets, ready to engage.

Just as the tension peaks, another commotion erupts--this time from the audience itself.

Two figures escape from the crowd, vaulting the barricade in perfect sync. Each wears a hooded military jacket, camo fatigues, and a half mask covering their face, keeping their identities completely concealed. The crowd erupts in shock, recognizing only the silhouettes from a few weeks ago. Speculation, pointing and shouting, the atmosphere flips from outrage to uncertainty.

John Phillips: "Who the hell are these masked figures?! They look like the ones who jumped Gideon Graves."

Mark Bravo: "And now they're here, blocking The PAS's path to the ring"

The Fatus don't back down from anyone and these intruders would be no different. The masked duo collide with the Fatus at ringside, fists flying, bodies crashing against the barricade. The crowd roars louder with every strike, the spectacle escalating into a ringside brawl. Heavy shots echo, boots slam against the floor, the confrontation raw and violent. The Fatus snarl, pounding their chests, but the masked intruders stand firm, trading blow for blow.

Then, from the far side of the arena, another masked figure bursts out of the crowd. Sprinting through the sea of fans, weaving past security, the figure easily hurtles the barricade.

Mark Bravo: "I knew we were one short."

John Phillips: "Where did they come from?!?!"

They dive into the ring and immediately dash towards the warring quartet on the outside. Gunnar steps aside, watching as the masked combatant leaps into the air. The crowd gasps as a 180° rotation is completed mid-air, landing upon the top rope with back facing the outside. In an instant, the figure launches into a picture perfect moonsault that crashes down onto both Kimo and Keanu Fatu at once. The impact rattles the floor, both twins sprawled, the masked figure rolling to its feet with twitchy, chaotic energy. The arena explodes in disbelief, fans pounding the barricades, the sound deafening.

John Phillips: "Did you see that?! Straight out of the crowd--vaulted to the top rope, and then that

Black Horizon: 2025

moonsault wiped out both Fatus!"

Mark Bravo: "That's not instinct, that's training. Whoever these masked predators are, they've just made their alligence known."

The three masked figures regroup, standing tall amid the chaos. The crowd's chants rise to a fever pitch, speculation running wild. Then, in unison, they rip away their masks. The reveal is unmistakable: valkyrie Torunn Sigurjonsson, sub-zero sentinel Theron Tkachuk, and chaotic daredevil Arkady Bogatyr--a pack of bloodthirsty predators forged under his ruthless philosophy.

John Phillips: "It's the Unholy Wolf Brigade! Gunnar's own students have come to his aid!"

Mark Bravo: "Stevens brought family, but Gunnar brought the pack. And tonight, the wolves are on the hunt."

The fight splinters instantly. Theron squares off with Kimo alone, his blunt power and cold menace meeting the fiery Samoan's fury head-on. At ringside, Torunn and Arkady swarm Keanu together, the smaller members combining raw strength and reckless agility to overwhelm him. Torunn drives him back with stiff punches, her size and ferocity shocking the crowd, while Arkady darts in with sudden bursts, the moonsault only the beginning of his chaotic assault. Their chemistry is instinctive, a predator's rhythm honed under Gunnar's tutelage. The crowd surges louder, chants echoing through the rafters, the energy transformed into pure chaos.

Mark Bravo: "Chaos inside the ring and out!"

John Phillips: "It's pure bedlam at ringside."

The crowd is at fever pitch, every fan on their feet, the Rumble transformed into a war zone. The Brigade reveal has shifted the narrative--Gunnar no longer stands alone.

John Phillips: "Security finally on the scene."

Mark Bravo: "For get them, we need the national guard to break this up."

Security floods ringside, struggling to contain the eruption between the Puipuiga A Stevens and the Unholy Wolf Brigade. Officials wedge themselves between bodies, trying to peel Theron off Kimo as the two hammer each other with blunt, bone-shaking strikes. Torunn and Arkady are dragged back from Keanu, their tandem assault forcing referees to physically restrain them. The audience is deafening, half cheering the Brigade's ferocity, half booing the intrusion, the spectacle threatening to spill into the stands.

Inside the ropes, Van Patton drops to one knee, trying to growl away the pain, while watching his students do battle. He leans against the middle rope, watching like a proud papa would, but his focus is not on the goal at still at hand. That lapse opens the door for Aaron Shaffer.

Black Horizon: 2025

Shaffer claws his way upright, clutching the ropes for balance. The crowd reacts instantly, a wave of noise rising as he steadies himself, eyes narrowing on Gunnar. With the officials and the Brigade drawing all eyes to ringside, Shaffer seizes the moment.

John Phillips: "Shaffer's back in this! Gunnar's watching the fight outside, but Shaffer's about to strike!"

Mark Bravo: "That's the danger in a Rumble. One distraction, one lapse, and it can all turn."

Shaffer bursts forward, sprinting to the ropes with sudden speed. He swings his legs between the ropes, connecting with a perfect 619 that crashes into Gunnar's cheekbone.

The audience erupts, sensing the momentum shift. Gunnar's instincts tell him to stand, only to have Shaffer spring off the middle rope and spike him with a tornado DDT.

John Phillips: "Shaffer's going for broke!"

Mark Bravo: "That first step to reclaiming the WrestleZone Title is within his grasp."

Shaffer doesn't let up. He socks an off-balance Gunnar with a trio of punches, forcing him back to the ropes. As fast as his legs will carry him, Shaffer hits the opposite ropes and drives both feet into Van Patton's chest, sending him tumbling over the top rope.

Just not to the floor. Gunnar's right hand clutches the top for all it's worth.

John Phillips: "He's still in it! Gunnar's fingertips kept him alive!"

Mark Bravo: "That's survival instinct. He refuses to fall, even when gravity is against him."

Shaffer stomps Gunnar's taped ribs, trying to pry him loose from the ropes. Gunnar grimaces, roaring with each impact, refusing to let go. Van Patton manages to get his rear end on the apron, where his free arm wraps around the middle rope. Shaffer grabs him by the hair, pulling him up to his feet. A right hand by Shaffer is blocked, but Gunnar's lands flush. An enzuigiri like kick over the top sends Aaron stumbling backwards, allowing Van Patton to do little more than unceremoniously tumble between the ropes and back into the ring.

Not wanting the tempo to slow, Shaffer hurries towards Gunnar and tries for a running huricanrana. Van Patton uses the ropes to keep from being taken over, forcing them to bend, as Aaron dangles upside down over the apron. A pair of knees are driven into Shaffer's, forcing his legs to give way, and he tumbles onto the apron.

Gunnar tries to take control with a huge forearm, but finds only air. Shaffer jumps up and hooks a front chancery. The hold is clamped on tightly and Shaffer's bodyweight is too much for Van Patton to support. Shaffer drags Gunnar out onto the apron with him.

Black Horizon: 2025

John Phillips: "Shaffer saved himself, but now he's dragged Gunnar out with him!"

Mark Bravo: "This is the edge of the blade--one slip and it's over!"

Shaffer immediately delivers a heavy strike, only to have Van Patton return in kind, each blow echoing through the arena. Shaffer lands a sharp elbow, Gunnar answers with one of his own. Back and forth they go, neither gaining the upper hand. The crowd roars with every exchange, the suspense unbearable.

A knee to the Gunnar's torso finally stops him and Shaffer erupts with a flurry--elbows, knees, forearms--hammering Gunnar against the ropes. Gunnar reels, barely able to stay upright. Shaffer screams, striking harder, sensing Gunnar's collapse. The audience surges louder, sensing the finish. Gunnar clutches the rope, his body trembling, his face twisted in pain. His back pressing against the steel post.

Then something shifts. Gunnar's gaze narrows, his breathing deepens, and the scowl hardens into something primal. Shaffer's forearms keep coming, but Gunnar straightens, his body refusing to buckle. Each blow lands clean, but Gunnar shrugs them off, each one being met by a snarl that dares Shaffer to hit him again. The crowd rises to their feet, watching each shot adding fuel to the fire.

John Phillips: "What fuels this man? He isn't human!"

Mark Bravo: "The lycan in side is breaking loose! Shaffer's strikes don't matter anymore--this is feral defiance!"

Shaffer drives another knee into the taped ribs, but Gunnar simply roars back at him, eye blazing. The audience explodes, the sound deafening, as Gunnar catches an incoming right hand and unleashes a barrage of his own. Forearm after forearm slam into Aaron's jaw. Each impact is thunderous, forcing Shaffer backwards, arms flailing, balance gone.

That's the opening Gunnar needed. He explodes forward with the ONG BAK KNEES OF DEATH ~!!!, driving both knees into Shaffer's chest. The force sends Shaffer flying backwards into the steel post, ricocheting violently off it before tumbling to the floor. The referee signals the elimination, the arena detonating in response.

John Phillips: "Shaffer's out! Gunnar Van Patton has done it!"

Mark Bravo: "The Ong Bak knees launched him into the post--he had no chance to survive that!"

Gunnar collapses on the apron, chest heaving, ribs taped and battered, but victorious. He lies there for a moment, staring up at the lights, his body trembling from exhaustion. Slowly, he rolls back into the ring and drags himself upright, leaning against the ropes, his whiskey-burned scowl returning. The audience is a split chorus--three-quarters cheers, one-quarter jeers--but thunderous all the same. Gunnar Van Patton has survived the Rumble, standing tall as the last man remaining.

Black Horizon: 2025

Shaffer lies lifeless on the floor, wrecked from the high impact collision and the ricochet off the steel post. Gunnar Van Patton stares down at him, giving him a subtle nod of approval, respecting the fight.

The arena erupts in a fractured roar. The majority of fans thunder approval, their chants rolling like waves, while a vocal minority hurls venom, booing Gunnar's survival. The split is unmistakable--most of the building is behind him, but the dissenting voices cut sharp through the noise. The atmosphere is electric, a storm of divided passion.

John Phillips: "Listen to this place--love him or hate him, Gunnar Van Patton just conquered nine other men to win the Rumble."

Mark Bravo: "And now the battlefield widens. Stevens has blood in the fight, but Gunnar has unleashed his own pack. The Brigade versus the Fatus is far from finished."

The hard camera cuts to the championship graphic: Tyger II, the newly crowned king, his belt gleaming, his aura undeniable. The image flashes across the screen as Gunnar glares from the apron, his eyes burning with cold intent. The collision course is set--Tyger II versus Gunnar Van Patton, the unstoppable champion against the whiskey-scarred survivor.

John Phillips: "Tyger II may be the champion now, but Gunnar endured chaos, punishment, and Shaffer's aerial storm to earn this shot. At Seasons Beatings, it's destiny versus defiance."

Mark Bravo: "And with factions circling, this isn't just a title match--it's the opening salvo of a war."

With victory in hand, Gunnar doesn't linger. He doesn't bask in the spotlight. He pushes off the ropes, limps toward the exit, his taped ribs a reminder of the punishment endured. No theatrics, no pandering--just war focus. The camera follows him up the ramp, his silhouette framed against the lights, the crowd still roaring. The image freezes on Gunnar's scowl, the caption flashing across the screen: "Seasons Beatings - Gunnar Van Patton vs. Tyger II."

The Rumble closes not with celebration, but with anticipation. Gunnar has survived, but the true battle lies ahead. Tyger II waits, the championship gleaming, the collision inevitable. The mythic war is set in stone.

Amy Harrison vs. Emily Hightower

The camera fades back in to the live shot of the 2300 Arena. The buzz is different now--angry, rattled, raw.

John Phillips: "Ladies and gentlemen, we've just watched Hardcore Sandy loaded into an ambulance and driven out of the building after what The Empire did to her and Marie Van Claudio. We'll update you on Sandy's condition as soon as we know anything... but Black Horizon rolls on, and up next is a match that was always going to be violent."

Black Horizon: 2025

Mark Bravo: "We're about to chain two women together by the neck and tell 'em to fight for the top prize in this division. After what we've already seen tonight? This building's about to get even meaner."

The hard camera swings to the ring. A referee stands in the center, holding up the UTA Women's Championship for the crowd to see. Another ring hand is already clearing out the last stray bits of debris, leaving the canvas bare for what's coming next.

Ring Announcer: "The following contest is a **DOG COLLAR MATCH**... and it is for the **UTA WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP!**"

The crowd roars at the announcement.

Ring Announcer: "Per Scott Steven's ruling, The Empire--Selena Vex, Rosa Delgado, and Dahlia Cross--are **barred from ringside!**"

A huge pop erupts, a cathartic release after what they just watched.

Mark Bravo: "Finally, somebody with a brain! After that three-on-one mugging, you better believe these people don't want The Empire anywhere near this one."

The lights dip to a smoky, dusky blue. A low hum of anticipation starts to build.

Then--

The first chords of "The Outsiders" by Eric Church hit the speakers, that gritty country rock riff punching through the arena.

John Phillips: "And here comes the challenger... and the reigning UTA Women's United States Champion... Emily Hightower."

The crowd's reaction is immediate and loud--a rough, blue-collar cheer that feels right at home in the old ECW arena. Heads turn to the entrance as smoke rolls out along the floor.

Emily Hightower steps through the curtain.

She's in her fight gear, all battle-ready West Memphis grit: boots laced tight, taped wrists, eyes already narrowed. The UTA Women's United States Championship rides snug around her waist, glinting under the lights.

Over one shoulder... hangs a heavy length of steel chain.

At the end of that chain, looped in her free hand, are two thick leather dog collars. They clink and rattle with every step she takes--no props, no gimmicks. Weapons.

Black Horizon: 2025

Mark Bravo: "Well that answers that question. Emily didn't just pick this stipulation, she brought the hardware out herself."

She pauses at the top of the ramp, rolling her neck, looking around at the sea of fans. There's no big smile tonight. No playing to cameras. Just that Hightower stare--her father's stare--measuring the distance from here to the fight.

John Phillips: "Emily Hightower is already one of the toughest competitors in this company--reigning Women's United States Champion, born and raised in the scrap yards, daughter of David Hightower... and she's looking to walk out of Black Horizon with *two* titles."

Emily unhooks the U.S. title from her waist and drapes it over her opposite shoulder, chain on one side, gold on the other. She starts down the ramp with purpose, each step steady, boots thudding on the steel.

As she walks, some fans reach out. She doesn't slap hands; instead she nods to them, eyes still fixed on the ring. This isn't a victory lap. It's a march.

Mark Bravo: "You see that, John? That's a woman who didn't ask for pyro or confetti. She asked for a chain and a collar and Amy Harrison's neck on the other side of 'em."

Halfway down, Emily stops and lifts the chain in one hand, letting it dangle. She gives it a sharp jerk, the metal links snapping taut with a harsh, metallic clatter that echoes up the ramp.

The crowd responds with a guttural "OHHH," feeding off the sound.

John Phillips: "In a Dog Collar Match, both competitors will be strapped around the neck and connected by that chain. No running. No escape. Anywhere Emily goes, Amy Harrison goes with her."

Emily resumes her walk, head down for a moment like a bull lining up the target. At ringside, she steps to the hard-cam side and sets the U.S. title carefully on the apron, sliding it to the timekeeper's table with a quick tap of the plate--almost like a promise she'll be back for it.

Then she hops up onto the apron, chain still looped around her arm, dog collars in hand.

She turns to face the crowd again, back against the ropes, and raises the collars high--one in each hand, chain draped between them like a hanging threat.

Flashes pop. The noise spikes. The visual is stark: The Junkyard Bitch holding the leash on her own war.

Mark Bravo: "That's a picture right there. Emily Hightower saying, 'I brought the chain. I brought the collars. I brought the fight. Amy, all you gotta bring... is your neck.'"

Emily steps through the ropes, chain dragging behind her with a low scrape on the canvas. She crosses the

Black Horizon: 2025

ring, hands the collars and chain directly to the referee, then taps the center of her own throat twice, staring dead into the hard cam.

John Phillips: "Emily Hightower asked for this stipulation. She wanted Amy Harrison chained to her. She wanted to turn this into a brawl that Amy couldn't run from, couldn't hide behind The Empire in."

The referee drapes the chain over his arm, holding up the collars for the house to see. Emily backs into her corner, rolling her shoulders, gripping the top ropes on either side, bouncing lightly on the balls of her feet as "The Outsiders" starts to fade.

For the first time, her eyes flick up toward the entrance.

Her jaw sets.

Mark Bravo: "The Empire is barred from ringside. No backup. No safety net. Just Amy Harrison, the Women's Champion, and Emily Hightower, the Junkyard Bitch, about to be chained together in a fight you could've booked in a back alley."

John Phillips: "If Emily wins tonight, she leaves Black Horizon as a double champion. If Amy survives, she proves that this is still her division, with or without her pack at ringside."

Emily leans forward in the corner, fingers flexing around the ropes, eyes locked on the curtain--waiting for the woman whose neck she demanded to tie to that chain.

"The Outsiders" fades out, leaving a low rumble of anticipation rolling through the 2300 Arena. Emily Hightower stands in her corner, hands on the top rope, eyes locked on the entrance. The chain and collars hang from the referee's arms like a promise.

The lights drop.

For a heartbeat, darkness.

Then a slow, hellish red glow seeps over the entrance stage. White strobes pulse in time with an ominous, breathy build.

The opening notes of "Sanctify Me" by In This Moment roar through the sound system--sultry, dark, powerful.

John Phillips: "And here comes the champion."

Mark Bravo: "Get ready, Philly. You're about to get the full Amy Harrison production."

The tron comes to life in sharp, glamour-shot flashes--lips, eyes, high heels stepping on broken glass, shots of the UTA Women's Championship raised over her head. Then, bold text:

Black Horizon: 2025

"THE EMPRESS."

"YOUR WOMEN'S CHAMPION."

On the ramp, a narrow spotlight snaps on.

There she is.

Amy Harrison steps through the curtain like she owns the building.

UTA Women's Championship strapped tight around her waist, polished to a mirror shine. Gear on point--sleek, form-fitting, Belfast-meets-California glam, flashes of gold and black that catch every stray beam of light. Her hair is perfect, lips curled into a dangerous little smirk, eyes lined in that predatory cat-eye that has broken as many hearts as faces.

No Empire at her back tonight. No Dahlia, no Selena, no Rosa.

Just Amy.

Mark Bravo: "Listen to this place. They hate her, they boo her, they want her head on that chain... but they can't take their eyes off her."

The initial wave of boos rains down, thick and venomous. Amy stops at the top of the ramp and drinks it in like it's oxygen. She closes her eyes for a second, lifts her chin, extends her arms slowly to either side--presenting herself under the red light like some blasphemous saint.

John Phillips: "This is the same woman who walked into the Women's Division's resurgence and made it all about her. One of the most decorated, most manipulative, and most dangerous competitors this company has ever seen."

As the verse kicks in harder, Amy opens her eyes and starts her walk down the ramp. Each step is a strut--heels (or boots) hitting the steel with deliberate, rhythmic confidence. Her hips sway just enough to taunt, not enough to slow her down.

She doesn't rush. She doesn't acknowledge the booing directly. Instead, she picks out individual fans at the rail with predatory little smirks, a wink, a mock pout. Every reaction--middle fingers, shouts, signs--is just fuel.

Mark Bravo: "People forget: Amy Harrison didn't just stumble into this spot. She's scratched and clawed and seduced and backstabbed her way to championships all over the world. She knows exactly what she's doing out here."

A few fans in the front row lean over the barricade, chanting for Emily. One particularly loud guy in an Emily Hightower shirt points at the belt around Amy's waist and makes a throat-slicing gesture.

Black Horizon: 2025

Amy stops dead in front of him.

She tilts her head, taps two fingers against the center plate of the Women's Championship, then slowly runs her hand along her waist, over the gold, down her hip--turning the gesture into something shamelessly smug.

Then she leans forward just enough for the camera to catch the words on her lips.

Amy Harrison: "You don't get a vote, sweetheart."

The guy loses his mind, and the whole section boos even louder. Amy laughs--throaty, delighted--and sashays away from him, completely satisfied.

John Phillips: "She uses everything. The love, the hate, the catcalls. Every reaction is another layer of armor for Amy Harrison."

As she nears ringside, Amy changes. The playful arrogance sharpens into something colder. Her eyes flick to the ring... to Emily Hightower standing in the corner, watching her like a hunting dog on a short chain.

Amy slows, then deliberately walks around one side of the ring, never breaking eye contact with Emily. The camera tracks her on the floor-level, rope and apron cutting the frame as the champion circles.

Mark Bravo: "You feel that, John? You can *feel* the temperature in this place drop when these two lock eyes."

Amy stops near the steps, runs a hand across the apron like she's testing the canvas, then takes the bottom step with a slow, deliberate climb. Halfway up, she turns her back to Emily and the hard cam, popping her hips and looking out at the crowd over her shoulder with a smirk that says she knows exactly what she's doing.

Then she pivots, stepping fully onto the apron. She hooks one arm over the top rope, leans back, and arches in a long, theatrical stretch--head tilted, eyes closed, letting the camera admire the silhouette of the champion.

Beneath her, the chain on the referee's arm sways slightly.

John Phillips: "All that ego, all that theatrics... but tonight, Amy Harrison can't rely on distractions. She's going to be literally chained to Emily Hightower."

Amy finally turns to face the ring and sees the dog collars and chain up close. The smirk flattens just a fraction--enough to tell the story that she knows what she signed up for.

She steps through the ropes slowly, one leg at a time, making the entry look more like a catwalk than a climb into a fight. Inside the ropes, she crosses to the nearest corner and unhooks the Women's Championship

Black Horizon: 2025

from around her waist with a flourish.

She raises it high overhead with one hand, head tipped back, tongue against her teeth in a feral little grin as the red lights and white strobes dance around her.

Ring Announcer: "Introducing the champion... from Belfast, Northern Ireland... weighing in at 120 pounds... she is the **reigning UTA Women's Champion... AMYYYY HARRISONNNN!**"

The boos are volcanic, echoing off the 2300's low ceiling. A smattering of diehard Empire fans cheers, but they're swallowed by the hate.

Amy soaks in every decibel, then lowers the belt slowly, clutching it to her chest like a lover for a moment. She turns and deliberately locks eyes with Emily.

For a beat, they just stare at each other--the Junkyard Bitch, arms flexed over the ropes, ready to brawl... and the Empire's Queen, draped in gold, wrapped in ego and history.

Mark Bravo: "There it is. That's the shot. Double champion dreams versus empire supremacy. This is more than a dog collar match. This is a turf war."

Amy smirks first. She steps off the turnbuckle, walks to center ring, and hands the Women's Championship to the referee. As he turns to show it to the crowd, Amy leans just enough toward Emily to let the camera catch it.

Amy Harrison: "Hope you brought more than daddy's punch, pet."

Emily's jaw tightens, fire flashing in her eyes.

John Phillips: "Big entrance. Big ego. Big stakes. Amy Harrison might be barred from having The Empire at ringside, but she's still walking into this like she owns the division."

Mark Bravo: "And Emily Hightower's over there with a very simple plan: put this woman on a leash and drag her through hell."

The referee hands the Women's Championship to the timekeeper, then lifts the dog collars and chain between Amy and Emily.

The music fades, leaving only the roar and rumble of the 2300 Arena. Emily Hightower in one corner, hands flexing on the top rope. Amy Harrison in the opposite, adjusting her wrist tape, shaking out her arms like this is any other championship match... even though it isn't.

In the center of the ring, the referee drapes the steel chain across both hands. The two thick leather dog collars dangle at either end, their metal buckles and D-rings glinting under the lights.

Black Horizon: 2025

John Phillips: "This is what makes it a Dog Collar Match. Those collars are about to be strapped around the necks of the champion and the challenger, that chain connecting them wherever they go."

Mark Bravo: "No count outs. No running. You want to breathe, you're breathing in each other's space tonight."

The referee walks first to Emily's corner, the chain dragging behind him with a harsh scrape across the canvas. He raises one collar for her to see, giving her one last look, one last chance.

Referee: "Emily. You ready for this?"

Emily doesn't blink.

Emily Hightower: "Strap it on."

The crowd pops at the bluntness. Emily steps out of the corner, turning slightly so her neck is exposed, chin tilted high. If she's afraid, she doesn't show it. This is the yard. She's the dog.

The referee loops the thick leather around the front of her throat, pulling it snug around the back of her neck. The buckle clicks as he threads the strap through, fingers working carefully to make sure it's tight enough to stay, loose enough not to choke.

Emily's jaw flexes once as the leather settles against her skin. She reaches up, not to fight it off, but to tug it into place herself, making sure it sits where she wants it.

She gives the D-ring at the front a sharp tap with her knuckles. The message is clear: this isn't a leash, it's a weapon.

John Phillips: "Emily Hightower grew up in a scrap yard. Chains and collars aren't foreign to her. She picked this stipulation because she wanted Amy Harrison to feel every inch of this fight."

The referee takes a half step back, chain pooling between his hands again as he walks to the other corner.

Amy watches him come with that same infuriating calm, leaning back against the turnbuckles, one arm draped lazily over the top rope. The boos haven't stopped, but she treats them like background music.

The ref holds up the second collar. For just a heartbeat, Amy's eyes flick from the leather to Emily... then back to the collar.

Referee: "Champion... you ready?"

Amy steps forward, rolling her shoulders, tilting her head to one side, then the other, exposing her neck.

Black Horizon: 2025

Amy Harrison: "Do it."

She says it like she's agreeing to sign an autograph--lazy, confident, unbothered.

The ref wraps the collar around Amy's throat, the leather snug against her skin. As he pulls the strap tight, Amy's hands go to her hair, lifting it out of the way with practiced ease, like she's done this dance before.

The buckle snaps, metal on metal. The D-ring hangs at the hollow of her throat, gleaming.

Amy reaches up and runs two fingers along it, almost sensual, then flicks the metal lightly, making it ping like a bell.

Mark Bravo: "Look at her. Amy Harrison's out here turning a dog collar into jewelry. Only she could make this look like some kind of twisted fashion statement."

The referee steps between them now, chain stretched taut between his hands, collars secured around both women's necks. He lifts the center of the chain, holding it up for the crowd, for the cameras, for history.

The steel glints. The arena buzzes.

John Phillips: "And now they are chained together. Wherever Amy Harrison goes, Emily Hightower is right there with her. Wherever Emily tries to drag this fight, Amy can't escape."

The ref lets the center of the chain drop. It lands with a heavy clatter on the canvas between them, a coiled serpent waiting to strike.

Emily takes a step forward, testing the slack. The chain pulls, the collar at Amy's throat tugging her a half-step out of the corner.

Amy's eyes flash, but she doesn't stumble. Instead, she lets the momentum carry her forward, closing the distance with a slow, predatory walk, lips curling into a small smile.

Amy Harrison: "Careful, pet. You tug, I yank."

Emily answers by taking another deliberate step, shortening the distance even more, their faces now just a couple of feet apart. You can almost see the chain tighten in the air between them.

Emily Hightower: "That's the point."

The crowd roars at the standoff--double champ hopeful and reigning queen bound together, neither backing up, both testing the limits of that steel.

The referee backs away now, raising one hand toward the timekeeper, eyes flicking between both women to

Black Horizon: 2025

make sure they're locked in and ready.

John Phillips: "Collars secured. Chain attached. The Empire barred. UTA Women's Championship on the line."

Mark Bravo: "No running. No hiding. No help. This is about to get real ugly, real fast."

The ref points to the timekeeper and then steps to the side, giving them the ring.

The bell is a heartbeat away.

The referee signals, steps out of the way.

The bell rings.

DING DING DING!

Amy doesn't move at first.

She stands there with the dog collar snug around her neck, the chain pooling between them. Slowly, she lifts both hands and pats the leather like she's adjusting a necklace, then gives Emily a slow, exaggerated once-over.

Amy Harrison: "Look at you."

She takes a lazy half-step to the side, letting the chain drag with her, the slack sliding across the canvas.

Amy Harrison: "Scrap yard princess thinks a collar makes her dangerous."

She wrinkles her nose, mocking.

Amy Harrison: "Pet, I've spent sixteen years surviving worse than Halloween props."

She pantomimes a little tug on the chain, not hard enough to yank Emily, just enough to make the links rattle.

Amy Harrison: "You sure you don't want a bow on this?"

Emily's jaw works, eyes narrowing--but she doesn't rush, not yet. She rolls her shoulders, lets the chain go slack again, staring dead at Amy.

John Phillips: "Amy Harrison starting this off with mind games, mocking Emily Hightower like this is just another night at the office."

Black Horizon: 2025

Mark Bravo: "She's forgetting one little thing, John. Emily Hightower grew up in a world where chains weren't an accessory. They were part of the scenery."

Amy continues, strutting a small circle, chain dragging, her free hand gesturing toward the floor.

Amy Harrison: "You wanted this, remember? You wanted *me* on a leash. You really think you're gonna walk out of here with two belts just because you found daddy's favorite toy?"

She laughs--a sharp, dismissive sound that cuts through the noise.

Amy Harrison: "Be a good girl... and try not to embarrass yourself."

That's it.

Emily's done waiting.

In one violent burst, she yanks the chain hard, snapping Amy forward off-balance--no warning, no dramatic tell. Amy stumbles toward her, eyes widening.

John Phillips: "Oh! Emily just yanked her in!"

*Emily steps in and **BLASTS** Amy with a forearm shot right across the jaw.*

Amy's head snaps to the side, her body spinning halfway around from the impact. She tries to turn back, but Emily jerks the chain again like a lasso, reeling her in and nailing another stiff forearm, this time to the side of the head.

Mark Bravo: "That's not a chain to Emily, that's a handle! She just turned Amy into a tetherball!"

Amy staggers, disoriented, already grabbing at the collar like she didn't quite plan for this tight a fit. Emily doesn't give her an inch.

Emily wraps the chain once around her right fist, steel links biting into her taped knuckles. The crowd buzzes as she cocks the arm back.

John Phillips: "Uh oh--"

She drives that chain-wrapped fist straight into Amy's midsection, folding the champion over with a loud, ugly thud. Amy drops to one knee, clutching her stomach.

Emily plants a boot on the mat and yanks upwards on the chain, jerking Amy's head and shoulders up by the collar. You can see the leather tighten against Amy's throat, forcing her posture open whether she wants it or not.

Black Horizon: 2025

Emily snarls through her teeth.

Emily Hightower: "Welcome to my yard."

She charges, still gripping the chain, and swings a wild lariat that almost takes Amy's head off. Amy crashes to the canvas, rolling to her side, one hand flying to her neck, coughing.

Mark Bravo: "That's the difference right there! Amy came out here treating this like theater. Emily Hightower is treating it like a yard fight with a leash and a problem."

Emily doesn't waste the momentum. She stomps down on Amy's back, then grabs a handful of chain and drags her by the collar across the mat toward the corner, the champion scrambling on hands and knees, trying to keep up to relieve the pressure.

The crowd roars as Emily hauls Amy upright in the corner, the chain pulled taut between them. Emily steps in close and starts hammering short, heavy rights across Amy's face and chest, each one punctuated by the rattle of steel.

John Phillips: "Amy Harrison is getting mauled! Every time she tries to create space, the dog collar drags her right back into Emily's wheelhouse!"

Amy flails an elbow, catching Emily lightly in the side. It buys her half a step, that's it. Emily just grins--mean, all Hightower--and swings the chain low, wrapping it around Amy's waist from behind.

With a quick twist of her hips, Emily yanks backward, snapping Amy out of the corner and straight into a brutal short-arm clothesline that drops her flat.

Amy hits hard, back arching, hand going back to the collar again on instinct.

Mark Bravo: "You can see it already, John. Amy's instincts are built for rope breaks, rolls to the floor, powdering out to regroup. None of that exists in this world. You're chained up, you're in deep water, and Emily Hightower is the alligator."

Emily doesn't go for a cover. Instead, she steps over Amy's back, facing the hard cam, and starts to wrap the chain around her forearm and elbow, thickening the limb with steel.

The crowd buzzes, some of them wincing in anticipation.

She leans down, grips Amy by the hair, and hauls her up to her knees. Amy's eyes are unfocused, the world spinning, one hand pawing at the chain-wrapped collar.

Emily Hightower: "How's that collar feel, champ?"

Black Horizon: 2025

*She pulls Amy's head back just enough... then **drives** that chain-wrapped elbow straight down across Amy's upper back and shoulder blades, sending the champion face-first to the mat again.*

John Phillips: "Good lord! That steel is cutting into Amy's back with every shot!"

Amy cries out, rolling to her side, fingers raking at the mat, the reality of this match sinking in fast.

Emily doesn't give her time to adjust. She grabs the chain again, steps toward the ropes, and with a vicious yank sends Amy sprawling under the bottom rope to the floor--only she doesn't get to fall all the way.

The chain snaps tight mid-slide, catching Amy by the neck and shoulders and jerking her awkwardly against the apron. She groans, half-hanging against the edge of the ring.

Mark Bravo: "That's the thing about these matches--you don't just bump, you get snapped. Amy Harrison is learning tonight what it means to have your opponent literally attached to you."

*Emily follows, stepping through the ropes and onto the apron, keeping a tight grip on the chain to control the slack. She hops down to the floor and immediately uses that position to her advantage--wrapping the chain once around her forearm and then **whipping** it across Amy's back like a lash.*

The steel links leave a welt almost instantly. Amy arches forward with a strangled sound, eyes wide.

John Phillips: "Emily Hightower is fully in her element now--this no rules, no distance, no escape environment. This is what she wanted, and Amy Harrison is paying for underestimating just how different a Dog Collar Match really is."

Emily glances briefly at the camera, sweat already beading on her brow, that all-American smile nowhere to be found--replaced by something tougher, meaner, pure Hightower fight.

She gives the chain another sharp jerk, dragging Amy upright against the apron, lining her up for more punishment.

Mark Bravo: "If Amy Harrison doesn't adjust fast, we might be looking at the beginning of a very long night for the Women's Champion... and the birth of a double champion in Emily Hightower."

On the outside, Amy staggers along the barricade, one arm draped over the top, the other instinctively clutching at her sore throat. Red marks from the chain are already blooming across her chest and shoulder.

Emily stalks after her, chain threaded through her hands like she's wrapping a tow cable, not a weapon. She yanks once, sending Amy stumbling back toward her.

John Phillips: "Emily Hightower is just manhandling the champion here! Every time Amy tries to create distance, she forgets that chain's only--what--ten, twelve feet long at most?"

Black Horizon: 2025

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, this isn't a runway, this is a radius. And Emily owns every inch of it."

Emily grabs Amy by the back of the head and slams her face-first into the apron. The thud echoes sickeningly. Amy reels backward, clutching her nose, eyes watering.

Before she can recover, Emily hooks her arm and whips her shoulder-first into the steel steps. Amy hits hard, the top step popping off and skittering away. She crumples beside the stairs, groaning.

John Phillips: "Shoulder-first into those steel steps! That'll mess up your arm, your collarbone, your whole game plan!"

Mark Bravo: "And that's *if* you had a game plan for a Dog Collar Match. I don't think Amy did much homework past 'look good and win.'"

Emily stalks over, breathing heavy but controlled. She plants a boot on Amy's chest and shoves her flat to the floor, then drops to a knee and starts raining down stiff right hands--short, ugly punches, more bar fight than wrestling hold.

The crowd counts along as each one lands.

"ONE! TWO! THREE! FOUR! FIVE!"

Emily cuts it off at six, switching gears. She grabs the chain, wraps it once around her fist, and grinds the steel across Amy's forehead, sawing it back and forth.

John Phillips: "Oh, come on! That chain is tearing at the champion's skin!"

Mark Bravo: "Welcome to the junkyard, John. Nothing out here is OSHA-approved."

Amy shrieks and shoves at Emily's arm, finally managing to roll to her stomach and crawl toward the apron--anything to get away from the grinding metal. Emily lets her go just long enough to stand, watching the champion drag herself forward like she's trying to slither out of a trap.

Amy reaches the edge of the ring and rolls under the bottom rope, pulling herself back inside on pure instinct.

John Phillips: "Amy Harrison trying to get back in the ring, trying to reset, anything to put a barrier between herself and Emily Hightower."

She rolls once, twice, then keeps going--right back out the other side.

The crowd pops in surprise as Amy drops to the floor on the far side, landing awkwardly on her feet and then collapsing to a knee. She stumbles forward toward the barricade, one hand extended like she's reaching for

Black Horizon: 2025

sanctuary.

Mark Bravo: "She's bailing! Champion's instinct--take a walk, slow it down, make the challenger come to you."

Amy staggers a few steps along the floor, boots scraping, hand slipping along the rail.

Then--

The collar bites.

She jerks to a sudden stop.

The chain goes from slack to taut in an instant, snapping her head back. Her eyes go wide as the reality hits her: she can't actually leave.

John Phillips: "And there it is--Amy Harrison just remembered what kind of match she's in!"

She slowly reaches up, fingers trembling, and touches the leather around her neck like she's feeling it for the first time. The D-ring at her throat jingles faintly as the links tighten from somewhere behind her.

The camera cuts to the inside of the ring.

Emily Hightower is standing dead center, both fists wrapped around the chain like she's holding the reins on a wild animal. Her stance is solid, boots planted, eyes locked on Amy's back.

Mark Bravo: "Look at Emily. She's the one holding the leash. That's not a challenger, that's a handler."

*Emily leans back, putting her weight into it, and **pulls**.*

The chain snaps taut. Amy's body whips backward as the collar yanks at her throat, jerking her off-balance.

She stumbles, clawing at the air, then crashes spine-first into the edge of the apron, the wood slamming between her shoulder blades as the chain digs into the front of her neck.

John Phillips: "Oh my--Amy's being dragged straight back into the ring apron!"

Emily doesn't relent. She takes another step back inside the ring, hauling on the chain like she's trying to win a tug-of-war against the champion's air supply.

On the outside, Amy's heels skid on the floor as she's pulled tighter and tighter against the apron, her throat pinned by the collar and chain, her back arched painfully over the edge.

Black Horizon: 2025

Amy Harrison: "Ggkh--!"

Her hands scramble at the leather, at the chain, trying to wedge fingers underneath to relieve pressure. Her face flushes red, eyes bulging, mouth open in a strangled gasp.

Mark Bravo: "She's choking her out, John! Emily Hightower is literally hanging the champion on the edge of the ring!"

The referee slides out of the ring to check, but he can't call a disqualification. He can only shout at Emily to be careful, to watch the choke.

John Phillips: "No disqualifications in a Dog Collar Match, but the official's trying to make sure Amy Harrison can still breathe!"

Emily grits her teeth, sweat dripping down her temples, muscles in her arms and shoulders standing out as she pulls harder. The chain is fully taut now, humming with tension, every inch of it connecting her will to Amy's suffering.

Emily Hightower: "You wanted to run? *Run!*"

*She gives the chain a savage **snap**, jerking Amy's neck again. Amy's legs kick uselessly against the floor, fingers clawing at the apron for leverage that doesn't exist.*

John Phillips: "Amy Harrison is caught--nowhere to go, nothing to grab, just leather around her neck and that chain dragging her right back into the fire!"

Mark Bravo: "This is what Emily Hightower wanted. Strip away The Empire, strip away the exits, strip away the glamour... and see how the champion handles a straight-up choke on cold, hard wood."

The crowd is roaring--some shouting for Emily to keep going, some screaming for the ref to stop it, all locked into the brutality of the visual: the Empress, gasping against the apron, jerked back and forth by the collar around her throat while the Junkyard Bitch stands tall in the ring, hands tight on the chain.

Emily finally eases up just enough for Amy to sag down the apron, coughing violently, clutching at her neck.

But she doesn't let go of the chain.

John Phillips: "Amy Harrison wanted to walk away, to reset... and Emily Hightower reminded her why you don't pick a Dog Collar Match unless you are absolutely ready to breathe in the same air as your own destruction."

Emily finally lets the chain slacken just enough for Amy to drop to one knee on the floor, hacking and sucking in ragged breaths. The champion's clutching at the collar, eyes glassy, face flushed and damp with sweat.

Black Horizon: 2025

John Phillips: "Amy Harrison is in serious trouble here. That choke against the apron might've taken a whole round out of her lungs."

Mark Bravo: "Good. Maybe she'll stop talking and start surviving."

Emily doesn't give her long.

She steps to the ropes, wraps the chain around her fist again, and gives it a sharp yank upward, dragging Amy by the neck to her feet. Amy stumbles, half-collapsing against the apron, hands flying to the ropes for balance.

Emily grabs the top rope with her free hand and hauls, using the chain like a winch to reel Amy up onto the apron. The champion rolls under the bottom rope on instinct just to stop the pressure, landing in a heap near the edge of the ring.

John Phillips: "Emily dragging Amy back inside--this brawl is coming back to the center where she can try to finish it!"

Emily follows her in, sliding under the bottom rope and popping to her feet with that purposeful, junkyard stride. She gives the chain a quick shake, making the links clatter ominously as she stalks the champion.

Amy pushes up to hands and knees, coughing. Her hair is a mess, makeup smudged, fingers trembling as she tries to get her bearings.

Mark Bravo: "Look at the champ now. Makeup running, clutching her neck, no Empire at ringside. This is the reality underneath all that theater."

Emily steps in and buries a boot in Amy's ribs, rolling her onto her back with a grunt of pain. She then plants one boot beside Amy's head, grabs a fistful of chain and lifts it high, ready to bring it crashing down.

John Phillips: "Emily going right back to the chain--she has absolutely no problem carving Amy Harrison up with that steel!"

She swings down--

At the last second, Amy rolls to the side on pure instinct. The chain-wrapped fist slams into the canvas where her shoulder was a heartbeat ago.

Emily's knuckles jar on impact, the shock running up her arm. She hisses and shakes her hand out, just a little off-balance.

Mark Bravo: "Emily missed! That is the kind of mistake that can turn a match around--your own momentum betraying you."

Black Horizon: 2025

Amy, still on the mat, feels the opening more than she sees it.

*She scrambles forward on her knees and **grabs** the chain, both hands locking around a section near Emily's hip. Emily instinctively tries to yank it away--only to feel herself pulled forward instead.*

Amy drops to her side and scissor-kicks Emily's ankles at the same time she tugs the chain. Emily's feet are swept out from under her and she hits the mat hard on her back, chain snapping taut between them.

John Phillips: "Trip with the chain! Out of nowhere, Amy turns Emily's weapons against her!"

Emily groans, rolling to a hip--and Amy is already crawling, desperate, dragging herself toward the nearest corner using the chain as a lifeline.

Emily reaches for her, but the sudden slack in the chain gives Amy just enough room to surge ahead. She throws herself into the corner, grabbing the middle rope to pull herself up, chest heaving.

Emily pushes to her feet and comes charging in--anger flashing, hungry to pick up where she left off.

Mark Bravo: "Emily's not gonna let one slip-up ruin this. She smelled blood, she's coming right back--"

Reflex takes over.

Amy sees the blur of motion out of the corner of her eye and, without thinking, she yanks the chain upward using both hands, looping it under the top rope as she does.

The chain tightens at a sharp angle. Emily hits that tension mid-charge.

Her neck and chest slam full-force into the top rope, clotheslining herself on the steel-reinforced cable. Her head snaps back, arms flailing as her feet leave the mat for a moment.

John Phillips: "Oh! Emily just got slingshotted off her own collar!"

Emily bounces off the rope and crashes backward to the canvas, clutching at her throat, coughing now just like Amy was moments before.

Mark Bravo: "That was sheer survival! Amy tightened that chain on instinct and Emily ran right into a short leash!"

Amy slumps in the corner for a moment, eyes wide, almost surprised she pulled that off. One hand goes to her bruised neck; the other still grips the chain wrapped over the top rope.

She looks out at the crowd--most of whom are stunned to see Amy not just surviving, but suddenly with a little room to breathe--and something flickers in her expression. Pain, yes. Panic, definitely. But underneath

Black Horizon: 2025

it... a spark of that vicious ring IQ that made her a champion in the first place.

John Phillips: "For the first time in this match, Emily Hightower is down and Amy Harrison has a chance to catch her breath!"

Emily rolls to all fours, coughing, fingers digging into the mat. She tries to stand... and Amy, still braced in the corner, gives the chain a sharp jerk backward.

Emily's neck snaps straight again, her body whip-lashing down to a knee.

Mark Bravo: "There you go. That's how Amy stays in this--by turning Emily's own aggression into a noose."

Amy's breathing hard, but her eyes are focused now. The initial shock of the Dog Collar environment is giving way to calculation. She wraps the chain around the top rope a second time, anchoring it.

Emily tries to stand again, but the angle of the chain pulls her back down. She pawns at it, realizing she's been tethered to the corner by more than just the collar.

John Phillips: "Look at this--Amy using the ropes as an anchor, limiting Emily's movement. This is the kind of desperation-born strategy that can keep a championship around your waist."

Amy takes one long breath, then pushes herself up out of the corner, chain still wrapped in her hands. She steps toward Emily, who's trapped at half-height, straining against the rope-bound chain.

For the first time since the bell rang, the champion has a tiny sliver of control... and she knows it.

Mark Bravo: "It might've been luck, it might've been instinct, but whatever it was, Amy Harrison just found the first crack in Emily Hightower's domination. Now we see if she can drive a wedge into it... or if the Junkyard Bitch rips her head off for trying."

Emily claws at the chain, trying to free it from the top rope, but Amy yanks it tight again, jerking her down to a knee. The champion's eyes are wild now--part fear, part fury, all survival.

John Phillips: "Emily's stuck! Amy's got that chain looped over the top rope, and the challenger is caught in the noose she set!"

Amy steps in close and snaps a stiff kick into Emily's ribs. The impact echoes, sending Emily slumping sideways, still trapped by the collar and chain.

Mark Bravo: "The tide's turned, John. The champion finally found a way to weaponize that chain that doesn't involve her getting strangled."

Amy grabs the chain just beneath Emily's collar and twists, wrenching it sideways. Emily's head whips

Black Horizon: 2025

around with it, her body dragged up to her feet by the neck. She's bent at an awkward angle now, half-hanging from the rope, half-held up by Amy's grip.

Amy Harrison: "Thought you had me, did ya?"

*She hisses the words into Emily's ear, just loud enough for the ringside camera to catch. Then she **drives** an elbow into the back of Emily's neck, forcing her forward again.*

Emily drops to both knees, coughing, fingers scraping at the mat as she tries to steady herself.

John Phillips: "Short, nasty shots to the neck--Amy going after the same area she was just having trouble breathing with. That's vicious, but that's also championship experience."

Amy unhooks the chain from the top rope with a sharp tug, then immediately wraps it around Emily's face from behind, looping it across the mouth and under the chin. She plants a knee between Emily's shoulder blades and hauls back, using the chain like a cruel bit and bridle.

Mark Bravo: "She's trying to tear Emily's jaw off! That chain is cutting across her face!"

Emily's fingers fly to the links, trying to dig them away from her mouth, but Amy wrenches harder, bending her backward in a grotesque arc. The collar at Emily's throat and the chain across her face turn her head into a fulcrum.

John Phillips: "No rope breaks, no disqualifications--Emily Hightower is at the mercy of whatever the champion can dream up with that steel."

With a grunt, Amy lets the chain go and shoves Emily face-first to the mat. The challenger hits hard, rolling to her side, hand pressed to her jaw, lip already swelling.

Amy takes a step back and runs a hand through her sweat-damp hair, sucking in air, the collar rising and falling with each breath. For a long beat she just stares down at Emily, chest heaving, the crowd's hatred washing over her.

Mark Bravo: "You can see the gears turning, John. Amy Harrison might've been caught off-guard early, but she's adapting. She's taking this junkyard chaos and turning it into something meaner, smarter."

She saunters forward and drops a knee straight into Emily's spine. Emily jerks, a sharp cry ripped from her throat. Amy stays seated on her lower back, grabs the chain near the collar, and threads it under Emily's chin again--this time leaning back, almost in a camel clutch variation with added steel.

John Phillips: "Modified camel clutch with that chain digging under the chin! Emily's neck and jaw are being torqued every which way!"

Black Horizon: 2025

Emily's boots drum against the mat, muscles in her shoulders standing out as she tries to push up. Amy grins, eyes alight with cruel satisfaction as she leans back further, showcasing Emily's trapped form to the hard cam.

Amy Harrison: "Smile for 'em, sweetheart!"

Emily claws at the chain, finally managing to twist her body just enough to roll them both sideways. The move breaks Amy's leverage, forcing her to release the hold and roll away.

*They both scramble to their feet, but Amy is up just a hair faster. She surges forward and **yanks** the chain, pulling Emily into a sharp knee strike to the gut. Emily folds over with a grunt.*

Mark Bravo: "Right back into control! Every time Emily tries to rise, that chain turns into a handle for Amy to drag her back down."

Amy grabs Emily by the hair and drags her toward the center of the ring, the chain snaking across the mat behind them. She shoves Emily's head between her thighs and hooks one arm, then the other, crossing them tight behind her back.

John Phillips: "We've seen this before--Amy might be looking for a big pedigree-style facebuster here!"

She hesitates just long enough to sneer down at Emily.

Amy Harrison: "Double champ, yeah? Not tonight."

She plants her feet, ready to drop--

Emily kicks her legs, deadweighting just enough to stall the lift. Amy snarls and tries again, this time getting Emily a few inches off the mat before the challenger twists a shoulder free and drops back down.

Mark Bravo: "Emily's still in this! That Hightower grit won't let her go up easy!"

Amy abandons the double underhook for the moment and instead uses the chain again--wrapping it around Emily's forehead from behind and leaning back, using it like a garrote to pull her upright.

Emily yells, forced painfully to vertical. Amy spins her around and, in the same motion, blasts her with a sharp European uppercut that snaps her head back.

John Phillips: "That uppercut might've just rung Emily's bell!"

Emily staggers, feet unsteady. Amy sees the opening and rushes to the ropes. She bounces off, chain trailing, and comes flying back with a running bulldog that plants Emily face-first in the canvas.

Black Horizon: 2025

The crowd groans at the impact.

Mark Bravo: "Right now, this is exactly what Amy Harrison needed--stringing together offense, making Emily question if this is really her playground after all."

Amy pushes up to her knees, hair hanging in her face, chest heaving. She shoves it back with one hand and crawls over Emily, grabbing the chain again and wrapping it once around Emily's throat from behind, crossing it like an X.

She leans into Emily's ear, voice low and venomous.

Amy Harrison: "I don't need The Empire to hurt you."

She yanks back, tightening the cross-chain choke while shoving a knee between Emily's shoulders, turning the hold into a vicious wrench.

John Phillips: "Another choke! That chain is biting into the arteries on both sides of Emily's neck!"

Emily's hands fly to the links again, face turning a deeper shade as she scrabbles for any kind of escape. The ref drops down beside them, checking Emily's arm, her eyes, but again--no disqualifications. All he can do is ask if she wants to quit.

Mark Bravo: "You know the answer to that. She's a Hightower. They'd rather pass out than tap out."

The camera angle widens suddenly, pulling back to show more of the arena--the ring, the crowd on their feet, the red glow of the set.

Behind Amy and Emily, looming above the stage, the massive Black Horizon screen flickers.

For a moment, it's showing the same live feed of the ring.

Then it cuts.

Static. A quick stutter of black. Then--a new image fills the tron.

A handheld camera, shaky, running down a narrow concrete hallway somewhere in the back. The shot bobs with each step, fluorescent lights whipping past overhead.

John Phillips: "Wait, what--are we... are we seeing this live from the back?!"

On the big screen, voices shout over one another--a jumble of panicked tones and barked instructions. The camera whips around a corner, catching a blur of crew members and officials moving in the same direction, some sprinting, some carrying gear, others just trying to get out of the way.

Black Horizon: 2025

Mark Bravo: "Something's happening backstage--look at the tron!"

In the ring, Amy cinches the chain tighter, completely focused on Emily, unaware that the entire building's attention is starting to split. Emily's fingers dig at the links, eye-line drifting up past Amy's shoulder, seeing the chaos on the screen even as she fights not to pass out.

The image on the tron jostles again as the cameraman barrels through a set of double doors, the noise in the arena rising--half at the brutality in the ring, half at the sense that something very wrong is happening just out of sight.

John Phillips: "We've got a Dog Collar Match for the Women's Championship tearing each other apart in the ring, and now this--something's gone sideways in the back, and we're watching it unfold in real time while Amy Harrison is trying to choke out Emily Hightower!"

The shot becomes almost surreal: foreground, Amy wrenching back on the chain, Emily fading, teeth clenched... background, towering above them, a shaky handheld racing deeper into the bowels of the building toward a growing commotion we can't quite see yet.

Mark Bravo: "Black Horizon just turned into a horror movie, John. Two women chained together in the ring, and the big screen's showing us a camera sprinting toward God-knows-what in the back. Something's about to break, and I don't know if it's in here... or back there."

The tron feed takes over the entire screen now, the in-ring picture shrinking to a small box in the corner as the handheld camera barrels down the hall.

It swings around one last corner and bursts into a chaotic scene.

We're in a concrete locker-room hallway--doors half-open, gear crates pushed against walls. The air is filled with shouting.

Dead center of the frame:

Marie Van Claudio, bruised, bandage half-wrapped around her knee, hair wild, mascara streaked, is mid-swing with a **steel chair**.

*The chair CRACKS across the back of **Rosa Delgado**, who's on her knees, arms instinctively flying up too late. Rosa pitches forward onto her hands and then collapses to the floor, groaning.*

*Behind them, **Dahlia Cross** is already sprawled out against a row of lockers, clutching her midsection, a dent in the metal behind her where she clearly hit hard. **Selena Vex** lies near a toppled equipment cart, one boot tangled in a pile of cables, eyes half-lidded, breathing but dazed.*

John Phillips: "That's The Empire! That's Rosa, that's Dahlia, that's Selena Vex--The Empire is down!"

Black Horizon: 2025

Marie doesn't stop.

She snarls--an animal sound--and raises the chair again over Rosa's prone body.

Official #1: "Marie! Marie, that's enough! Drop the chair!"

*She brings it down with another sickening **SMASH** across Rosa's shoulder blades. Rosa cries out, body writhing.*

Official #2: "Drop it! Drop it now!"

Two referees and a cluster of agents rush in, grabbing for the chair, reaching for Marie's arms. She spins away, wild-eyed, yanking the chair out of their grasp.

Her face is a mask of rage and grief--eyes red, lip split, chest heaving as she swings the chair in a defensive arc to keep anyone from getting too close.

Mark Bravo: "Marie Van Claudio has snapped! Marie Van Claudio is absolutely *broken*--this is a woman who just watched her friend get stretchered out of here, and she is taking it out on The Empire with interest!"

One more official steps in, hands raised.

Official #3: "Marie! That's enough! We need medics in here! Put the chair down!"

Marie's chest heaves. For a second, the chair trembles in her hands.

She looks down at Rosa--then over at Dahlia clutching her ribs, then at Selena trying to push herself up the wall and failing.

Her expression hardens.

Marie Van Claudio: "You don't get to walk away from what you did."

She tightens her grip on the chair and takes one last step toward Rosa--

But the crowd of officials surges as one, finally swarming her. They grab her arms, her wrists, the chair, wrestling it free. One ref yanks the weapon out of her hands and flings it aside, where it clatters against the cinderblock.

Marie fights them for a moment, screaming wordless fury, but there are too many bodies. They wedge themselves between her and The Empire, some turning to check on the fallen, others trying to usher Marie away.

Black Horizon: 2025

John Phillips: "Security and officials stepping in before Marie Van Claudio does permanent damage--but look at what she's already done! The Empire is laid out backstage!"

Marie's breathing like she just went twelve rounds, shoulders shaking. One last time she looks over the sea of stripes and suits at the wreckage of The Empire on the floor.

Whatever fragile dam was holding her together is gone.

She shoves past the outstretched hands, barreling toward the door. The camera is in her path; she shoulders through it, sending the shot spinning sideways for a moment as we catch a tilted glimpse of medics rushing to Rosa, Dahlia, and Selena.

The last thing we see before the tron feed cuts is Rosa trying to push herself up and collapsing again as a medic holds her down.

The screen snaps back to the standard live feed of the ring.

Back in the 2300 Arena, the image over the stage is gone, but the crowd is still buzzing, some on their feet, some screaming, some chanting Marie's name.

Mark Bravo: "The Empire is in *shambles*, John! That was a one-woman reckoning with a steel chair!"

In the ring, Amy Harrison still has the chain hooked under Emily's chin, but her eyes are glued to the tron that's just gone back to normal. She's frozen, lips parted, watching phantom leftovers of the chaos that just played out.

For the first time all night, the swagger is gone. What's left is raw shock.

John Phillips: "Look at the champion's face--Amy Harrison seeing her empire crumble in real time! Dahlia down, Selena down, Rosa down, Marie Van Claudio on a rampage..."

Amy's grip on the chain loosens just a fraction. Her brain is split--half in the match, half in the hallway where her lieutenants are strewn across the floor.

Her eyes go wide, haunted.

Amy Harrison: "...Marie...?"

Her voice is barely audible over the crowd, but the cameras catch it. For a heartbeat, the UTA Women's Champion looks less like a tyrant and more like someone standing on collapsing ground.

Mark Bravo: "That's the look of a queen who just realized the castle's on fire."

Black Horizon: 2025

And in that heartbeat... Emily Hightower moves.

The moment Amy's grip slackens, Emily wrenches both hands up, fingers hooking the chain and jerking it sideways, breaking the choke. She drops to one knee, sucking in a ragged, desperate breath, lungs burning.

Amy blinks, snapping back to the present just in time to feel the chain rip through her hands.

John Phillips: "Emily got free! Amy took her eye off the ball for just a second, and that might be the opening the Junkyard Bitch needed!"

Emily coughs hard, lays a forearm across her bruised chest... then plants her other hand on the mat and forces herself upright. Her jaw is set, eyes still glassy--but there's fire behind them again.

Amy stares at her, then at the stage, then back to Emily--the conflict written across her face. Protect the empire that's already been shattered... or protect the championship that might be about to slip away.

Mark Bravo: "You don't get to be in two places at once, Amy. Marie Van Claudio just took a sledgehammer to your foundation, and Emily Hightower is right in front of you, still chained to your neck."

Emily hauls in one more breath, shoulders rising and falling. Then she wraps a fist around the chain and takes a step forward, yanking Amy toward her.

The champion stumbles, still rattled, dragged off-balance and right back into the reality of the Dog Collar Match she thought she was controlling.

John Phillips: "The Empire is down. The Empress is shaken. And the challenger just found new life. Amy Harrison's world is falling apart--inside the ring and out--and Emily Hightower smells blood."

Emily yanks the chain with a sharp jerk, dragging Amy toward her. The champion stumbles, still rattled by what she saw on the tron, and walks right into a stiff forearm smash that snaps her head back.

John Phillips: "Big shot from Emily! The challenger's back on her feet and back on the attack!"

Amy reels, but doesn't go down. She staggers to one side, hands out, trying to catch her balance.

Emily doesn't give her the chance.

She yanks the chain again and drills another forearm into Amy's jaw. This one sends the champion crashing to a knee, hair flying in front of her face.

Mark Bravo: "You can feel the mood change, John. Emily's breathing, Emily's swinging, and Amy Harrison's whole world is falling apart."

Black Horizon: 2025

Emily grabs a handful of chain and whips it across Amy's back with a brutal lash. The steel kisses skin and Amy arches in pain, a sharp cry ripping out of her throat.

John Phillips: "Another shot with that chain! Emily Hightower taking chunks out of the champion!"

Emily hauls Amy up by the collar, then shoves her into the ropes. The chain goes taut between them. Emily takes a step back, measures her distance, and charges--arm cocked for a lariat.

Amy ducks.

Emily hits the ropes chest-first, the rebound turning her around--and Amy, on pure instinct, snaps a low kick into Emily's thigh as she turns.

Mark Bravo: "There it is! Champion's instinct! Even rocked, Amy's still swinging back!"

Emily stumbles, leg buckling for a beat. Amy grabs the chain and yanks it hard, pulling Emily in close--and fires off a desperate European uppercut that crushes into Emily's jaw.

Emily's head snaps back, spit flying. She staggers, but stays upright.

John Phillips: "That might've knocked a tooth loose! Amy Harrison fighting like she knows this might be her only window!"

Amy doesn't even check if it landed clean--she just keeps throwing. Another uppercut. Then a sharp elbow to the side of the head. Then a short knee into Emily's ribs, all while keeping the chain short, refusing to let Emily get space to brawl.

Mark Bravo: "She saw The Empire get wrecked. She knows nobody's coming. This is Amy Harrison wrestling like it's *her* neck on that stretcher instead of Sandy's if she fails."

Emily lurches back toward the ropes, sucking wind, eyes clearing. She snarls and surges forward with a wild right hand--

Amy slips it and snaps the chain up, cracking it under Emily's chin like a steel uppercut.

Emily drops to both knees, clutching at her jaw.

John Phillips: "Good grief! That chain just popped Emily's head straight up!"

Amy stumbles backward into the ropes, hand on her own throat, chest heaving. For a second she looks over her shoulder toward the entrance, as if expecting someone--anyone--from The Empire to appear.

No one comes.

Black Horizon: 2025

Her eyes harden.

Amy Harrison: "Fine. I'll do it myself."

She wraps the chain once around her right forearm, tightening it until the links dig into her skin. Then she steps in behind Emily, hooks an arm around her neck, and drops backward into a Russian legsweep, driving Emily's head and shoulders into the mat.

Mark Bravo: "Chain-assisted neckbreaker! Amy landing on it too, but she doesn't care--she just wants Emily on the mat and not moving!"

Both women hit hard, bouncing off the canvas. Amy rolls to her side, grimacing, but forces herself back over Emily, draping an arm across her chest for a cover.

Referee: "ONE! TWO--"

Emily kicks out, shoulder jerking up off the mat.

John Phillips: "Emily Hightower stays alive! But you can see it--the damage is stacking up on both sides now."

Amy sits up, teeth gritted, yanking at the chain as if she could somehow strangle the three-count out of it.

Amy Harrison: "Stay down!"

She slams a forearm across Emily's face, then another, then pushes to her feet, dragging Emily up with her via the collar. The chain clinks and rattles as she hauls, each inch a struggle.

Emily sways, legs unsteady, but swings blind with a body shot that thuds into Amy's side.

Mark Bravo: "Emily's still firing, even on instinct."

Amy winces but responds with a knee straight to Emily's gut, doubling her over again. She cinches the chain around Emily's neck from the side, almost like a sideways guillotine grip, and drags her toward the nearest corner.

John Phillips: "Amy's got something in mind here--she's not just trying to hurt Emily, she's trying to end this before the wheels come completely off."

*In the corner, Amy shoves Emily chest-first against the turnbuckles and steps up onto the middle rope behind her, looping the chain over the top strand. The dog collar bites into Emily's throat as Amy leans back, using the higher leverage to **hang** Emily over the middle turnbuckle.*

Black Horizon: 2025

Mark Bravo: "Oh, come on! She's hanging her in the corner!"

Emily's feet scramble for purchase, boots kicking at the mat--but the chain is tight, the angle ugly, her hands clawing at the leather and steel around her neck.

John Phillips: "The referee can't disqualify her, but he's got to be ready to step in if Emily fades here! That collar is choking the life out of the challenger!"

The official is in Amy's face immediately, yelling for her to break, to ease up, to show some restraint. Amy glares down at him, veins standing out in her neck, knuckles white on the chain.

Amy Harrison: "You want this stopped? Call the match!"

She leans back even more, forcing Emily's shoulders into the top turnbuckle, collar digging so deep it looks like it might cut. Emily's face is turning crimson, eyes squeezed shut.

Mark Bravo: "This is desperation, John. The Empire's on the floor in the back, Marie's on a warpath, and Amy's trying to choke this one out before she loses control of everything."

Finally, Amy's own arms tremble, the effort burning her muscles. She snarls, kicks off the middle rope, and drops back into the ring, letting the chain go slack. Emily collapses down into the corner like a marionette with its strings cut, coughing violently.

Amy lands on her knees, gasping, one hand pressed to her chest, the other still tangled in the chain.

John Phillips: "Both women are wrecked--Emily from repeated chokes and chain shots, Amy from the punishment early and the weight of this whole night bearing down on her."

Amy glances up at the stage again, just for a second--as if expecting that tron to come back to life with another nightmare. It stays dark.

Her expression hardens into something close to panic-fueled resolve.

Amy Harrison: "No. No. Not tonight."

She forces herself up, dragging Emily out of the corner by the chain, leaving the challenger trailing in her wake. Emily crawls, grabbing at the mat, trying to get her feet under her.

Mark Bravo: "Amy knows if this goes long, it favors Emily. The longer this stays a brawl, the more the Junkyard Bitch thrives. The champion has to shut it down, and she has to shut it down *now*."

At center ring, Amy jerks Emily up to a vertical base and, in one sharp motion, blasts her with a straight kick to the midsection. Emily doubles over.

Black Horizon: 2025

Amy cinches in a front facelock, chain draped over her own shoulder now, and hooks Emily's arm. She glances around the arena--this battered little Queen of a crumbling Empire--and then tries to muscle Emily up for a snap suplex variation, chain pulling tight as she lifts.

Emily's feet leave the mat, but she kicks, fighting it, deadweighting again.

John Phillips: "Amy going for something big--maybe that's the mistake, trying to end it all in one shot instead of just grinding Emily down!"

Amy grunts, adjusts, tries again, this time getting Emily halfway up--only for Emily to twist, bringing them both crashing awkwardly back down in a tangle of limbs and chain.

They hit hard. The chain snaps taut between their collars, both women whiplashing from the impact.

Mark Bravo: "Swing and a miss! Amy wanted that one big bomb, but Emily's still got enough left to fight the lift!"

They lie there for a heartbeat, both staring up at the lights, chain stretched between them, chests rising and falling in ragged sync.

John Phillips: "We're at the point in this Dog Collar Match where every move hurts *both* women. Every bump yanks that steel, every fall pulls at their throats. But Amy Harrison knows if she doesn't find a way to end this soon, Emily Hightower might drag her into a kind of fight she can't survive."

And as they start to push up again--one on each end of the chain, both desperate, both exhausted--the next chapter of this war is waiting just one mistake away.

Both women lie on the mat, chests heaving, chain stretched taut between their collars. The roar of the 2300 Arena swells into a restless hum as the ref hovers, hands on his knees, checking on them.

Then--

"Forever & Ever" by Lacey Sturm ft. Lindsey Stirling hits the sound system.

The place comes unglued.

John Phillips: "Wait a second--"

Mark Bravo: "Oh no. Oh *no*. That's Marie Van Claudio's music!"

Cameras whip to the entrance way.

There's no spotlight flourish. No smoke. No pose.

Black Horizon: 2025

Marie Van Claudio steps through the curtain like a storm given human form.

No robe, no signature spin, no playful smirk. Just taped wrists, ring gear still scuffed and stained from earlier, hair disheveled, eyes red-rimmed and burning.

*In her hands: a **pink and sparkly kendo stick**, held low but tight, the same one she brought to her own match--only now it looks less like a tribute and more like a weapon of judgment.*

John Phillips: "We just saw what Marie did backstage--The Empire laid out, Rosa Delgado getting destroyed with a steel chair--and now she's coming out here?!"

Mark Bravo: "Stevens barred The Empire from ringside. He didn't say a damn word about Marie Van Claudio."

Marie doesn't play to the crowd. She doesn't acknowledge the chants that swell up--half for her, half just raw noise from people who don't know whether to cheer or get out of the way.

Her stride is steady, deliberate, almost eerie in its calm. The kendo stick taps against her thigh with each step down the ramp.

In the ring, Amy Harrison rolls to a hip, one hand clutching at the chain between her and Emily, the other going to the ropes to pull herself up.

Then she hears it.

Her head snaps toward the stage.

John Phillips: "Look at Amy--look at the champion's face!"

Amy's eyes go wide. For a second, everything else--the chain, the title, the dog collar digging into her neck--fades under the weight of what's marching toward her.

Marie keeps coming.

Behind her, there are no Empire shadows. No Dahlia. No Selena. No Rosa.

They're all somewhere in the back on the floor.

Mark Bravo: "Earlier tonight, The Empire powerbombed Hardcore Sandy through a table and left her in a heap. Marie watched Sandy get loaded into an ambulance... and then she went hunting for The Empire with a steel chair."

John Phillips: "And she *found* them. We saw the aftermath. Dahlia down. Selena down. Rosa getting

Black Horizon: 2025

brutalized. Marie Van Claudio has snapped--and now, here she comes with a kendo stick."

Emily Hightower pushes herself up to her knees, coughing, following Amy's gaze to the ramp. The chain between them clinks and shifts as both women orient toward the threat walking toward the ring.

Marie reaches ringside. She stops at the base of the ramp, eyes locked on Amy Harrison in the ring.

No smile. No shout. Just that simmering, hollowed-out intensity--the kind that comes after something has finally broken.

Mark Bravo: "This isn't the Marie that danced with Sandy at the start of the night. This is the Marie who watched her friend get stretchered out and decided somebody was going to pay. The only question now is *who*."

The referee steps to the ropes nearest Marie, hands up, shouting down.

Referee: "Marie, you're not in this match! Don't do it! Don't come in here!"

Marie doesn't answer. She lifts the kendo stick slowly, resting it across her shoulder, eyes never leaving Amy.

Inside the ring, Amy staggers to her feet, one hand instinctively rising between them as if she could wave Marie off from a distance.

Amy Harrison: "Marie... don't you dare."

Her voice wavers just a little. Not in fear--at least not that she'd admit--but in the realization that the empire she built out of manipulation and control might finally be collapsing in on her.

John Phillips: "You can feel it in the air. Amy Harrison's Empire is in ruins in the back, and now Marie Van Claudio--bloodied, broken, and carrying a kendo stick--is at ringside with nothing left to lose."

Marie takes one step toward the apron.

The crowd swells.

Crowd: "MA-RIE! MA-RIE! MA-RIE!"

Emily Hightower glances between the two women--the champion she's chained to and the veteran storm on the floor. She tightens her grip around the chain, feeling an opportunity and a complication arriving at the same time.

Mark Bravo: "We saw what she did backstage. We saw her put The Empire down hard. And Stevens only

Black Horizon: 2025

barred The Empire from ringside, John. Marie Van Claudio, legally, can walk right into this Dog Collar Match if she wants to--no disqualifications, no count outs, nothing stopping her but her own conscience."

Marie reaches up with her free hand, grabbing the bottom rope. The kendo stick stays balanced across her shoulder, glitter catching the light in sharp, fractured flashes.

Her eyes never leave Amy Harrison... and whatever happens next is about to change the fate of this match and the entire Women's Division.

Marie takes a slow step back from the apron, jaw clenched, fingers tightening around the pink kendo stick. For the first time tonight, there's intent in her posture--not wild, not flailing. Cold. Focused.

Inside the ring, Amy Harrison and Emily Hightower have both pushed to their feet, still linked by the chain, still reeling.

John Phillips: "This is a powder keg. Marie Van Claudio on the floor with that kendo stick, the champion and challenger chained together in the ring... nothing good is coming out of this."

Mark Bravo: "Remember--Stevens only barred The Empire. Marie? She's operating in a loophole right now."

Emily staggers toward Amy, hand wrapped around the chain, ready to yank her in for another shot. Amy sees her coming and, in a flash of survival instinct, shoves Emily's shoulder and spins, turning so that her own back hits the ropes.

The chain goes taut, Emily pulled off-balance, stumbling forward toward the same side of the ring where Marie stands.

*On the floor, Marie takes one more step back, plants her feet, and **cocks** the kendo stick over her shoulder like a batter at the plate--eyes locked on Amy.*

John Phillips: "Oh, no. No, no, no--Marie's lining up Amy Harrison!"

Emily reaches for Amy, trying to drag her out of the corner.

Amy's eyes flick from Marie to Emily and back again--and in that split-second, the cunning cuts through the panic.

*She wraps both hands around the chain and gives it a **violent** yank.*

Emily is ripped forward, chest slamming into the ropes, upper body spilling between the top and middle strands. Her face and head snap out over the apron, directly into Marie's line of fire.

Mark Bravo: "Wait--NO!"

Black Horizon: 2025

Marie swings.

*The kendo stick **CRACKS** across Emily Hightower's face with a sickening, echoing shot.*

The sound ricochets around the 2300 Arena. Emily's body goes slack, her head snapping sideways, hair flying, legs giving out beneath her as she slumps against the ropes.

Crowd: "OOOOOOHHHHH!"

John Phillips: "OH MY GOD! MARIE JUST CAUGHT EMILY HIGHTOWER FULL FORCE!"

Marie's eyes go wide the instant it lands.

Her hand loosens on the stick. Her whole body recoils like she's the one who got hit.

Marie Van Claudio: "...No. No, no--Emily--"

She drops the kendo stick, hands going up toward the ropes as if she could somehow grab the moment and rewind it.

Mark Bravo: "She didn't mean it! She was aiming for Amy, and Amy *used* Emily as a shield!"

In the same heartbeat, Amy releases the chain, letting Emily's limp body spring back into the ring. The challenger falls to her knees, then face-first to the canvas, arms splayed.

Amy doesn't hesitate.

She dives in, hooked by instinct and opportunism, grabbing Emily's waist and rolling her into a tight, desperate schoolgirl pin--pressing all her weight down across Emily's shoulders, chain tangling around them both.

John Phillips: "Amy with the roll-up! Not like this! Not like this!"

The referee drops to the mat, the arena roaring in fury.

Referee: "ONE!"

Marie stares up from the floor, hands in her hair, too stunned to even move.

Referee: "TWO!"

Emily twitches under the pin, body trying to respond... but the shot with the kendo stick scrambled everything. Her shoulder barely lifts an inch before collapsing back down.

Black Horizon: 2025

Referee: "THREE!"

DING DING DING!

Crowd: "BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!"

John Phillips: "She stole it! Amy Harrison just *stole* that win on the back of Marie's mistake!"

Mark Bravo: "Mistake? That was a chess move from Amy Harrison and a nightmare for everybody else! Emily Hightower just got blasted by friendly fire and lost her shot at double gold!"

Amy bails off the pin as soon as the three hits, rolling to her side and immediately clawing at the collar around her neck like it's on fire.

Amy Harrison: "Get it off! GET IT OFF ME!"

She shrieks at the referee, scrambling to her knees, grabbing his shirt with both hands.

Amy Harrison: "The collar! Take it off! Now! Now!"

The official rushes to unbuckle her collar, fingers fumbling with the clasp as Amy fights like she's trapped in a noose. The chain is still attached to Emily, who lies motionless on the mat, one hand twitching near her face.

On the floor, Marie finally moves.

She slides under the bottom rope in a rush, eyes glistening--part rage, part horror, part guilt.

The ref just gets Amy's collar loose when Marie barrels into them.

John Phillips: "Marie's in the ring! Marie Van Claudio is in the ring!"

Marie shoves the referee aside with both hands, sending him stumbling into the ropes.

*Amy barely has time to turn before Marie **pounces**.*

She tackles Amy to the mat, fists flying, raining down wild, furious punches to the champion's head and shoulders.

Mark Bravo: "She snapped again! Marie Van Claudio is unloading on the Women's Champion!"

*The chain, still attached to Emily's collar and lying across the mat, snakes between them in the chaos. Marie's hand finds it without thinking. She grabs a length of steel links and **wraps** it around her fist.*

Black Horizon: 2025

She hammers a chain-wrapped shot down across Amy's shoulder, then another across her ribs. Amy screams, curling, trying to shield herself.

Amy Harrison: "Get her off me! GET HER OFF ME!"

The crowd explodes, half in approval, half in shock.

Crowd: "MVC! MVC! MVC!"

More officials hit the ring--two, four, six--some grabbing Marie around the waist, some pushing at her arms, others checking on Emily.

John Phillips: "We've got a swarm of officials out here! They're trying to pry Marie off Amy Harrison!"

Marie snarls, jerking against the grip of two referees as she swings one last chain-wrapped fist that glances off Amy's shoulder.

Marie Van Claudio: "You did this! YOU DID THIS!"

She kicks at Amy's legs as they drag her back, boots thudding against the champion's shins. Amy rolls away, clutching her ribs, hair in her face, eyes wide in raw panic and fury.

Another ref finally gets to Emily, fumbling with the buckle of the collar around her neck. Emily groans, touching her face where the kendo stick cracked her--fingers coming away red.

Mark Bravo: "Emily Hightower has no idea what just happened--she's bleeding, she's chained, and the match is over before she even got the chance to finish what she started."

As the collar comes free from Emily's neck, she blinks hard, looking around in confusion at the chaos: Marie being dragged back by three officials, Amy screaming at the referee and clutching her championship to her chest, the chain coiled like a discarded serpent between them.

Emily Hightower: "...What... what the hell...?"

She pushes herself to a seated position, wincing, one hand still pressed against her jaw. Her eyes find the Women's Championship clutched in Amy's arms... then drift to Marie, who's still fighting through officials to get at the champion again.

John Phillips: "Emily Hightower was on the cusp of becoming a double champion. She had Amy Harrison on the ropes in every sense of the word... and then this night spiraled into vengeance and friendly fire."

Amy rolls under the bottom rope, clutching the title like a shield, snapping at anyone who comes near.

Black Horizon: 2025

Amy Harrison: "Keep her away from me! You hear me?! Keep her away from me!"

Marie breaks loose just enough to lunge toward the ropes, pointing the length of chain she's still holding directly at Amy.

Marie Van Claudio: "This isn't over! You don't get to walk away from this, Amy!"

Security finally swarms in, adding muscle to the pile, hauling Marie back toward the opposite side of the ring while a different cluster forms a human wall between her and Amy on the floor.

Mark Bravo: "It may say 'Amy Harrison retains' in the history books, but don't get it twisted--this chapter isn't done, not between Amy and Marie, and sure as hell not for Emily Hightower."

Emily pulls herself up using the ropes, unsteady but upright. She looks from Marie--still struggling against security--to Amy backing up the ramp clutching her title... and you can see the realization hit her.

She lost. Not because she got out-fought. Not because she tapped.

Because she got caught in the crossfire.

John Phillips: "The Junkyard Bitch fought her way through hell tonight. She turned this Dog Collar Match into her kind of fight... and in the end, one mis-timed swing from Marie Van Claudio and one moment of opportunism from Amy Harrison took it all away."

Mark Bravo: "Hardcore Sandy in an ambulance. The Empire wrecked backstage. Marie Van Claudio waging a one-woman war. Emily Hightower robbed of a golden chance. And Amy Harrison? She walks out still Women's Champion... but with a target on her back that just got a whole lot bigger."

The last image as we pull back: chaos all over the frame--officials restraining Marie, Emily staring daggers out of a bruised face, and Amy on the stage clutching her title, screaming back down toward the ring as Black Horizon's logo pulses above it all.

None of this is over.

Gotta Kill Me

*Backstage, the camera opens on the Black Horizon interview set -- the logo glowing behind a familiar figure. **Melissa Cartwright** stands center frame, mic in hand, the low murmur of the arena rumbling under her voice.*

Melissa Cartwright: "Ladies and gentlemen, we are moments away from what Scott Stevens has promised will be the final chapter between Chris Ross and my guest at this time... the man who thrives on blood, broken bones, and bad decisions -- **Maxx Mayhem.**"

Black Horizon: 2025

*The camera widens to reveal **Maxx Mayhem** at her side. Wild eyes, crooked grin, hair half-draped across his face. He's already in his gear, fists taped to the elbow, a few old scars visible on his arms. He bounces on the balls of his feet, that barely-contained energy radiating off him.*

Melissa Cartwright: "Maxx, in just a few minutes, you step into an **I Quit Match** with Chris Ross. No pinfalls. No submissions, unless the words are 'I quit'. How far are you willing to go?"

Maxx tilts his head, that twisted smile stretching wider. He leans in toward the mic without really looking at Melissa -- eyes fixed instead on the middle distance, like he's already picturing the carnage.

Maxx Mayhem: "Melissa... you've seen what I do when there *ain't* any stakes. When it's just a regular ol' night at the fights, I'm out there turning bones into confetti just because it makes me giggle."

He chuckles, low and unsettling.

Maxx Mayhem: "Now you take all that... and you tell me the only way this one ends is when somebody says the magic words?"

He finally turns to the camera, eyes wide, grin gone flat.

Maxx Mayhem: "I ain't ever gonna say 'I quit'."

Beat. His jaw flexes, voice dropping darker.

Maxx Mayhem: "You hear me, Ross? I've set people on fire... I've driven folks through tables wrapped in barbed wire... I've taken years off my own life just for the sound the crowd makes when they think I'm dead. I've done a lot of things... but I ain't never quit. And I ain't startin' tonight."

He taps his temple with two fingers.

Maxx Mayhem: "You wanna win an I Quit Match with me? You're gonna have to *kill* me, Chris. You're gonna have to rip the words outta a corpse, 'cause as long as I'm breathin', the only thing comin' outta my mouth is laughter."

Melissa starts to raise the mic again--

???: "Speaking of Mayhem and chaos!"

*The camera whips to the side as **Amy Harrison** storms into frame, UTA Women's Championship clutched tight in one hand. Her hair's a mess, collar burns raw along her neck, a faint smear of Emily's blood still on her gear from the chain and kendo stick fiasco.*

She's breathing hard, eyes wild with adrenaline and fury. She all but shoulder-checks Melissa out of the way

Black Horizon: 2025

to get into the center of the shot.

Amy Harrison: "You wanna talk about chaos? You wanna talk about *mayhem*? Look at this!"

She yanks the title up between them, the plate catching the backstage lights.

Amy Harrison: "Everybody saw it! Everybody saw Marie Van Claudio lose her mind, everybody saw Emily Hightower drag me into *her* yard, and everybody saw me walk out of a Dog Collar Match still--"

She slaps the main plate twice.

Amy Harrison: "--your UTA Women's Champion."

Maxx lets out a low, approving whistle, stepping closer so they share the frame.

Maxx Mayhem: "Gotta say, Ames... that was beautiful. Using Marie's rage like that? Turning her little revenge tour into your get-outta-jail-free card?"

He nods, almost reverent in his own warped way.

Maxx Mayhem: "You didn't just survive chaos. You weaponized it. That's art."

Amy shoots him a sideways glance -- not impressed, not grateful, just... done.

Amy Harrison: "Save the flowers, Maxx."

She jabs the center plate of the title with a finger.

Amy Harrison: "I don't need approval from somebody who thinks 'almost dying' is a personality trait. I don't need a pat on the head from Maxx Mayhem, from Marie Van Claudio, from Emily Hightower, from *anybody*."

She turns fully to the camera now, shoulders squared. The first words are a yell, sharp and jagged.

Amy Harrison: "You all wanna paint me as the villain? Fine! Emily brings chains, Marie brings chairs, The Empire gets jumped in the back, and somehow I'm the problem because I'm smart enough to survive it?!"

Her voice cracks at the edge, not from weakness but from how hard she's forcing it out. She catches herself, takes a breath, closes her eyes for a second.

When she opens them again, the fire is still there, but it's focused now -- blade instead of wildfire.

Amy Harrison: "Here's the truth."

Black Horizon: 2025

She lifts the title up beside her face, cradling it against her cheek for a moment before holding it high, just above her shoulder.

Amy Harrison: "I walked into Black Horizon as the UTA Women's Champion. I walked through an ambulance siren, a Dog Collar Match, Marie's breakdown, Emily's best shot... and I am walking *out* of Black Horizon still UTA Women's Champion."

She leans in, eyes locked dead into the lens.

Amy Harrison: "You don't have to like it. You don't have to clap for it. But you're gonna *live* with it."

Amy Harrison: "Because no matter how many chains you throw on me, no matter how many kendo sticks you swing, no matter how many ex-champions crawl out of the woodwork..."

She gives the belt one last sharp raise, almost defiant.

Amy Harrison: "...*no one* is ever going to take this away from me."

A beat -- the weight of the words hanging in the air.

Amy snorts, shoulders past Melissa, and stalks out of frame, title clutched tight.

Maxx watches her go with a crooked grin, then turns back toward Melissa and the camera, almost amused.

Maxx Mayhem: "See what I mean? Black Horizon's a beautiful place. Everybody's breakin'... and me?"

He taps his chest with two fingers, grin widening.

Maxx Mayhem: "I'm just gettin' warmed up."

He walks off toward gorilla as Melissa looks after him, then back to the camera, the hum of the crowd swelling as we transition toward the I Quit Match.

It Happens Tonight

GRAPHIC: "LAST TIME WE SAW SEAN JACKSON..." -- quick static glitch into footage

Slow-motion: the Triple Tier Circus of Fun towering over the stripped ring, cinder blocks, bricks, and barbed wire mesh where the canvas used to be.

John Phillips (V.O.): "The last time Sean Jackson stepped into a WrestleUTA ring... we didn't think we were watching a match. We thought we were watching the end of a career."

Black Horizon: 2025

Clips: Sean's "In the Air Tonight" entrance from WrestleUTA: 25 -- the fog rolling in, the slow walk, the long look up the scaffold. Crossfade to The Spectre's "Memphisto" entrance, eyes burning under the cold lights.

Mark Bravo (V.O.): "No ropes. No padding. No pinfalls. Just steel, barbed wire, and gravity waiting to make a decision."

Montage: Tier one brutality -- Sean driving a chained elbow into The Spectre's spine, Spectre raking barbed wire across Sean's back, blood hitting rusted metal in harsh color.

John Phillips (V.O.): "Every rung they climbed was another chapter ripped out of twenty-five years of WrestleUTA history."

Quick flashes: Derek Park's music hitting and distracting Spectre. Sean Jackson pouncing. Later, Brad Batee stepping out, turning karma on its head. Johnny the Hyena at ringside, the crowd in absolute disbelief.

Mark Bravo (V.O.): "Promoters, ghosts, hyenas... that night wasn't just violence. It was every ghost Sean Jackson and The Spectre ever left in this company coming back at once."

Tier two: Spectre smashing light tubes across Sean's back; Sean DDT'ing Spectre onto a thumbtack-covered chair; both men somehow crawling back up.

John Phillips (V.O.): "They bled on the steel, they bled on each other, and they still kept climbing."

Camera tilts up the final ladder. The third tier waits: narrow, rusted, swaying above the cinderblock-and-barbed-wire hell.

Mark Bravo (V.O.): "One last climb. One last level. Nowhere else to run... and nowhere else to land but disaster."

Slow-motion: Sean and Spectre trading shots on the top platform, boots skidding near the rusted railing. Their fingers knot in each other's gear as they strain at the edge.

John Phillips (V.O.): "Two Hall of Famers, twenty-five years of history... standing on the edge of oblivion."

The railing snaps. Time slows as both men tumble together off the third tier, locked in a violent embrace, spinning through the air.

Mark Bravo (V.O.): "They didn't fall as enemies... they fell as legends."

Impact: both men crash through the barbed-wire-and-cinderblock pit. Blocks explode. Wire bites into flesh. The arena falls into stunned silence.

John Phillips (V.O.): "We didn't know if either one of them would ever walk again... let alone wrestle again."

Black Horizon: 2025

EMTs trying to cut barbed wire away from their limbs, Spectre howling as a barb is pulled from his shoulder, Sean shoving medics off of him. Then, slowly, both men forcing themselves upright in the debris.

Mark Bravo (V.O.): "They refused the stretchers. They refused the end."

Center of the ruined ring: Sean Jackson and The Spectre staggering toward each other, barely standing, then collapsing into a raw, exhausted embrace as the crowd roars.

John Phillips (V.O.): "After thirty feet of hate and history... they chose respect."

Audio swells with the crowd.

Crowd (V.O.): "THANK YOU SEAN! THANK YOU SPECTRE!"

Wide shot from the rafters: the broken structure, the broken ring, two icons kneeling together as the screen slowly desaturates to black and white... then fades to black.

John Phillips (V.O., softer): "That night at WrestleUTA: Twenty-five... we thought we had witnessed Sean Jackson's final fall."

Beat of silence on a black screen.

A familiar drum machine pattern faintly echoes under the black. The first haunting notes of "In the Air Tonight" begin to swell.

Fade in: Survivor. The main event. Jarvis Valentine stands alone in the middle of the ring, chest rising and falling, eyes tracking the brawl spilling into the stands. Around ringside, Kaida, Malachi, and Silas regroup; the Fantomas are still down near Madman Szalinski.

John Phillips (V.O.): "But some ghosts don't stay buried."

The lights dim. That soft, familiar drum pattern rolls over the PA in real time.

John Phillips (live V.O.): "...No way."

The crowd erupts -- half disbelief, half instinct. A single white spotlight hits the stage.

Out from behind the curtain steps Sean Jackson. Suit jacket, open collar, that cold, predatory smile. UTA Hall of Famer. Dynastic poison. A man we haven't seen since he turned WrestleUTA: 25 into a psychological hostage situation.

Mark Bravo (live V.O.): "That's... that's Sean Jackson. That's Sean Jackson!"

Black Horizon: 2025

John Phillips (live V.O.): "The three-time UTA World Champion, NeWA legend, Dynasty alumnus -- what in the hell is he doing here at Survivor?!"

Jackson stands at the top of the ramp, soaking in the reaction. Some cheer for the star power, others boo on reflex. Slowly, he raises his arms, index and pinky fingers extended in the familiar Hook 'Em symbol, eyes locked dead ahead on the ring.

Inside the ropes, Jarvis Valentine goes completely still. The champion turns from the chaos in the crowd and looks up the aisle, jaw tight, eyes narrowed, knuckles flexing around the top rope.

John Phillips (V.O.): "Jarvis Valentine is standing in the middle of the ring watching a ghost from UTA's past walk down that aisle."

Mark Bravo (V.O.): "Last time we saw Sean Jackson here, he was rewriting history and stabbing backs. If he's back in the building, it's not to shake hands and sign autographs."

Replay clip: Jackson's slow, deliberate walk down the ramp at Survivor, eyes never leaving Jarvis, the music swelling through the iconic drum fill.

Mark Bravo (live V.O.): "Is he here for Chris Ross and Maxx Mayhem, is he here for Jarvis Valentine, or is he here for something even worse?"

In the ring, Jarvis steps out from the corner into dead center. The UTA Championship glints on his shoulder like a target as he stares down the ramp.

Cut to ringside: Kaida, Malachi, and Silas all looking back toward the stage, the entire building turning its attention to the oncoming storm.

John Phillips (V.O.): "Hall of Famer. Dynasty architect. Career killer. Sean Jackson is at Survivor... and nobody in this arena has any idea whose side -- if any -- he's on."

Jackson reaches the foot of the ramp, pauses, then ascends the steps and steps through the ropes, never breaking eye contact with the champion.

John Phillips (live V.O.): "Sean Jackson is in a UTA ring again... and he's walking straight toward the UTA Champion."

Center ring: Jarvis doesn't back down. He steps right up, chest heaving from the war he's been fighting. The title is framed between them.

Jackson glances down at the belt, then points directly at the center plate. He looks Jarvis dead in the eye and mouths two clear words.

Black Horizon: 2025

Sean Jackson (on-cam): "Black Horizon."

Mark Bravo (live V.O.): "Oh, you've got to be kidding me. Is he... is he challenging Jarvis Valentine for the UTA Championship?"

Jarvis' eyes widen. He clutches the championship tighter.

Jarvis Valentine (on-cam): "This isn't the time or the place, Sean! We're in the middle of Survivor! What the hell are you doing?!"

Jackson tilts his head, that smug, infuriating smirk spreading. He lifts both hands, palms out, like he's just here to talk.

John Phillips (V.O.): "Sean Jackson acting like he's here to talk, but I don't trust that man as far as I could throw him."

Jarvis jabs a finger toward the corners, toward the chaos at ringside, toward the upper bowl where Ross and Mayhem are still brawling.

Jarvis Valentine (on-cam): "I've got a team hanging on by a thread, I've got Mayhem's psychos circling, and you pick now to--"

He never finishes.

Sean's hands drop in an instant.

Super slow-motion replay: Jackson's right knee pistons up, drilling the back of Jarvis Valentine's skull with surgical precision.

John Phillips (live V.O.): "MENTAL BREAKDOWN! Sean Jackson just took Jarvis Valentine's head off!"

The champion crumples face-first to the canvas, arms splayed, body motionless. The crowd explodes into a storm of boos and shocked screams.

Mark Bravo (live V.O.): "That snake! He didn't come out here to talk contracts, he came out here to line up a title shot and cash it in on Jarvis' skull!"

Multiple replays: the Mental Breakdown from different angles -- the launch, the impact, the snapback of Jarvis' head, the way he folds into the mat.

Jackson stands over the fallen champion. He looks down at Jarvis, then at the UTA Championship nearby.

John Phillips (V.O.): "The man who fell thirty feet through barbed wire and brick... now standing over the

Black Horizon: 2025

man who carries WrestleUTA on his shoulders."

Clip: Jackson backing toward the ropes, eyes never leaving the championship, then stepping out of the ring and up the ramp, that smirk carved on his face.

John Phillips (live V.O.): "Sean Jackson just sent a message to the entire UTA locker room: he wants Black Horizon, and he wants Jarvis Valentine."

Quick flash: Malachi Cross sliding into the ring behind Jarvis, dropping into the cover on the unconscious champion as the referee counts three. Jarvis Valentine eliminated from Survivor because of Sean Jackson's knee.

Mark Bravo (V.O.): "Survivor changed in one strike. The champion was taken out... and the target on his back got bigger."

Cut back to full-color graphic: Sean Jackson on one side, Jarvis Valentine on the other. The UTA Championship glows between them, the Black Horizon logo lurking in the background, then burning away to "TONIGHT."

John Phillips (V.O.): "The last time we saw him wrestle, we thought Sean Jackson had taken his final fall."

Mark Bravo (V.O.): "At Survivor, he came back with one knee and one message -- aimed straight at the UTA Champion."

John Phillips (V.O.): "Tonight... there are no distractions. No hyenas. No ghosts. Just the standard-bearer of today... and the career killer who refuses to stay gone."

Mark Bravo (V.O.): "Sean Jackson versus Jarvis Valentine... for the UTA Championship."

Both (V.O., overlapping): "And it happens... tonight."

Music hits its drum fill as the graphic pulses: "UTA CHAMPIONSHIP MATCH - TONIGHT" with the WrestleUTA logo. Fade to black.

End the Empire

Backstage, the camera catches up with Marie Van Claudio in motion -- still in her gear, hair a mess, sweat and mascara streaks down her face. She's storming down the hallway with purpose, shoving a rolling crate out of her way, eyes scanning every doorway.

Marie Van Claudio: "Where is she? Where is she?! Amy!"

Black Horizon: 2025

Crew members flatten themselves against the wall as she stalks past, the echo of her boots sharp against the concrete. She rips open a locker room door, finds it empty, slams it shut hard enough to rattle the frame, and keeps going.

She rounds a corner--

*And nearly runs straight into **Scott Stevens**.*

The UTA authority figure plants a hand on her shoulder, firm enough to stop her in her tracks. His eyes go wide for just a second, taking in the barely-contained fury.

Scott Stevens: "Whoa, whoa, whoa... Marie... Marie... *calm down.*"

Marie jerks her shoulder, trying to tear free, but he holds just long enough to make her listen.

Marie Van Claudio: "Get out of my way, Scott. I'm not done."

Scott Stevens: "You've caused enough damage tonight."

Her eyes flare.

Marie Van Claudio: "Oh, that's rich. It's fine when The Empire runs all over everyone, puts Sandy through a table, jumps people three-on-one, but the second we fight back, *that's* when it's a problem?"

Stevens shakes his head, the grip on her shoulder loosening but not leaving.

Scott Stevens: "I never said that. Don't put words in my mouth."

He jabs a thumb back toward the arena.

Scott Stevens: "There's a time and a place. And tonight? You blew a hole in half my women's division in about twenty minutes."

Marie scoffs, taking a step back, but she doesn't walk away. Her hands ball into fists at her sides.

Marie Van Claudio: "Yeah? Well, maybe somebody needed to. Somebody had to put a stop to Amy Harrison and The Empire. Sandy's on a stretcher because of them. They've been walking around here like they own everything."

Stevens' expression softens just a touch at the mention of Sandy, but his voice stays firm.

Scott Stevens: "And I get that. I *do*. There's a lot of bad blood there, and yeah--"

Black Horizon: 2025

He nods once, conceding the point.

Scott Stevens: "--maybe The Empire had it coming."

Marie's jaw tightens, like she wants to say "you're damn right they did," but he doesn't give her the chance.

Scott Stevens: "But look at what happened, Marie. Look at the collateral. You didn't just go after Amy. You didn't just go after Dahlia and Selena and Rosa."

He leans in a little.

Scott Stevens: "You caused your *friend*, Emily Hightower, to lose maybe her only chance at the Women's Championship."

The words hit like a body shot.

Marie looks away for the first time, staring down the hallway, jaw working. Her shoulders rise and fall with a sharp breath.

Marie Van Claudio: "You think I don't know that?"

Her voice cracks just enough to betray everything under the surface.

Marie Van Claudio: "You think I wanted it to happen like that? I watched Emily get her face caved in because Amy pulled her in front of me. I watched that ref count three while I was standing on the floor holding a damn kendo stick like an idiot."

She drags a hand through her hair, anger and guilt twisting together.

Marie Van Claudio: "I hate that it happened like that. I hate that Emily got caught in it. But somebody has to put a stop to Amy Harrison and The Empire. Somebody has to make her pay for what she's done to this division, to Sandy, to--"

Stevens lifts a hand between them, a calm but firm barrier.

Scott Stevens: "Then let's do it *right*."

Marie blinks, thrown off stride.

Marie Van Claudio: "What?"

Stevens squares up, full promoter now, making sure the camera catches every word.

Black Horizon: 2025

Scott Stevens: "I'm not gonna let you tear the building down looking for her. I've already got medics stretched thin tonight. But I hear you. The fans hear you. Amy Harrison hears you."

He points toward the Black Horizon logo on the wall, then past it -- down the road.

Scott Stevens: "So here's what we do. December thirty-first. Illinois. **Season's Beatings.**"

Marie's eyes narrow, breathing still heavy.

Scott Stevens: "You want to put a stop to Amy Harrison? You want to make her pay for what she did to Sandy, what she's done to this division... what she did to you?"

He jabs a finger toward her chest.

Scott Stevens: "Then you do it on the biggest stage we've got left this year."

Beat.

Scott Stevens: "Marie Van Claudio versus Amy Harrison... at Season's Beatings... for the **UTA Women's Championship.**"

The hallway buzzes -- crew members turning to look, a couple of refs actually stop in their tracks. Marie stares at him, like she's making sure she heard it right.

Marie Van Claudio: "You're serious."

Scott Stevens: "Dead serious."

Another beat. Marie's eyes drop for a second, the weight of everything -- Sandy in an ambulance, Emily on the mat, The Empire on the floor -- flickering across her face.

When she looks back up, the guilt is still there... but it's wrapped in steel.

Marie Van Claudio: "Fine."

She steps in closer, right into Stevens' space, so there's no mistaking her intent.

Marie Van Claudio: "You give me Amy Harrison at Season's Beatings... you put that title on the line... and I promise you, Scott, I won't need a steel chair, a kendo stick, or a dog collar to end her little empire."

Her voice drops, quiet but lethal.

Marie Van Claudio: "I'll take everything she built... and I'll rip it out from under her in the middle of that ring."

Black Horizon: 2025

Stevens nods once, satisfied.

Scott Stevens: "Then it's official."

He turns slightly to the camera.

Scott Stevens: "At Season's Beatings: Amy Harrison defends the UTA Women's Championship against Marie Van Claudio."

He looks back at Marie, voice softening just a little.

Scott Stevens: "You want to fix what happened tonight? You want to make this right--for Sandy, for Emily, for yourself? Do it there. Do it the right way."

Marie swallows hard, then nods -- once, sharply.

Marie Van Claudio: "Season's Beatings."

She steps around him, headed toward the locker room instead of the arena now, a storm redirected but far from spent.

The camera lingers on Stevens for a moment -- the weight of another massive match just added to the card -- before we fade back toward ringside.

You Got This

Backstage. Away from the noise.

A simple folding chair. A beat-up crate for a table. On it: a roll of white tape, a bottle of water, and the Black Horizon logo flickering faintly from a nearby monitor.

Chris Ross sits forward on the chair, elbows on his knees, head down. The only sound is the soft rip of tape as he winds it around his wrist, layer by layer, methodical. No music. No hype. Just the ritual.

*Behind him, standing just off his shoulder, is **Valentina Blaze**. Her hands move slowly, firmly over his traps and shoulders, thumbs digging into old knots, tracing the familiar map of a man who's been in too many wars.*

She leans in just enough that he can hear her without her voice needing to rise above a whisper.

Valentina Blaze: "You got this, Chris."

The tape stops mid-wrap.

Black Horizon: 2025

Ross doesn't answer. Doesn't crack a joke. Doesn't turn it into a moment.

He just lifts his head a little, eyes shifting to the side, catching her in his peripheral. There's a beat of silence -- a shared breath, a thread pulled tight between them.

He gives her a small, simple nod.

No smile. No stare-down. Just acknowledgement.

Then his gaze drops back to his hands. The tape pulls again with a soft rip, circling his wrist, then his palm, then his knuckles. Valentina returns to her work, hands steady on his shoulders, grounding him as the storm outside their little pocket of quiet continues to build.

The camera lingers on the contrast: his taped fists, her steady touch... and the weight of an I Quit Match that doesn't need to be spoken out loud.

Fade back toward the arena.

Chris Ross vs. Maxx Mayhem

Back at ringside, the camera sweeps over a roaring 2300 Arena - fans on their feet, some holding homemade "I QUIT OR I DIE" signs, others waving "WELCOME TO HARRISBURG" and "MAXX LOVES MAYHEM" posters above their heads.

John Phillips: "We are back live at Black Horizon, and folks, strap in. This next one is not for the faint of heart. This is an **I Quit Match** between Chris Ross and Maxx Mayhem - and Scott Stevens has made it crystal clear: this is it. One and done. When this is over, this war ends."

Mark Bravo: "And let's underline this - neither of these lunatics has ever said the words 'I quit' in their entire careers. These are two men who would rather break bones than break their pride."

John Phillips: "Chris Ross, the man who thinks a three-count doesn't mean a thing if you're leaving in an ambulance... Maxx Mayhem, who said earlier tonight he'd rather die than give up. Something's gotta give."

The house lights dip suddenly, plunging the arena into a murky darkness. A greenish strobe flickers across the crowd, and the opening riff of "Holiday" by Green Day rips through the speakers.

Mark Bravo: "Oh, here we go. Here comes walking, talking catastrophe."

*On the stage, a burst of white pyro pops, and through the haze strides **Maxx Mayhem**. Leather vest half-zipped, taped fists, wild grin already plastered across his face. He pauses at the top of the ramp, licking his thumb and dragging it across his eyebrow in a mock "war paint" streak before throwing both arms wide.*

Black Horizon: 2025

John Phillips: "Maxx Mayhem, an unpredictable force of nature out of Detroit, Michigan. Hardcore antics, trash-can mayhem, flying into the crowd... and tonight, no pinfalls, no submissions - the only way out is to make your opponent say 'I quit'."

Mark Bravo: "Which means we might be here until New Year's, because this guy would rather set himself on fire than admit he's done."

Maxx starts down the aisle, jawing at fans on both sides. He snatches a "ROSS 25 TO LIFE" sign from one fan, squints at it, then rips it clean in half and stuffs a piece down the front of his vest.

Maxx Mayhem: ""I'm keepin' this as a souvenir, sweetheart!""

He leans into the hard-cam, tongue out, practically licking the lens before flipping it off with both hands, laughing loud enough to cut through his own theme.

Mark Bravo: "There it is. Licks the camera, flips off the world. Classic Maxx. The man treats every entrance like it's a dare."

As he reaches ringside, Maxx grabs the timekeeper's chair and slams it against the barricade three times, the clang echoing through the building. He doesn't sit - he just leaves it there, a promise waiting.

John Phillips: "Already furnishing the environment, Mark. In an I Quit Match, the referee's job is basically to hold a microphone and try not to get maimed. Anything not nailed down is legal, and Maxx Mayhem is the kind of man who checks how tight the nails are."

Maxx slides under the bottom rope, pops to his feet, and sprints to one corner, hopping onto the middle turnbuckle. He pounds his chest, then points down at the canvas, mouthing, ""You're gonna have to kill me!"" before cutting his thumb across his throat in a theatrical gesture.

Mark Bravo: "He said it earlier with Melissa - he ain't ever gonna say 'I quit'. You're gonna have to kill him. I don't know if that's bravado or a cry for help."

He hops down, pacing, bouncing off the ropes once, testing the give. His grin fades just a bit as he looks toward the entrance, that manic energy settling into something darker, more focused - a man who likes to joke, but knows the bill is coming due.

John Phillips: "You can see it in his eyes, Mark. For all the jokes and the sarcasm, Maxx Mayhem knows what an I Quit Match really is. It's not about pinning someone. It's about breaking them so badly they have to say out loud, 'I can't take any more.'"

Mark Bravo: "And on the other side of that equation is Chris Ross, a man who has built an entire second career on proving he can take more than he gives. Scott Stevens said it: this ends tonight. No rematches. No rubber match. Somebody's pride gets cracked in half, and the other one walks away with the last word."

Black Horizon: 2025

Maxx leans back against the ropes nearest the entrance, fingers drumming on the top strand, eyes locked on the stage as "Holiday" begins to fade out. The crowd hums with anticipation, knowing the storm that's about to collide in the center of the ring.

John Phillips: "Maxx Mayhem is in the ring and waiting. The table is set for carnage. Up next... the man from Harrisburg makes his way to Black Horizon for what might be the ugliest, most personal fight of his career."

The camera tightens on Maxx's face - the grin returning, just a little - as we cut toward the stage, waiting for "Black Flame" to hit and bring out Chris Ross.

The lights in the 2300 Arena drop again, this time to a cold, dim blue. A low rumble rolls through the speakers like distant thunder.

On the tron, grainy black-and-white footage flickers to life: backstreets, chain-link fences, a lone streetlight flickering over a cracked sidewalk. Then, in big, rough font:

"WELCOME TO HARRISBURG."

The opening riff of "Black Flame" by Bury Tomorrow detonates through the sound system.

John Phillips: "And here comes the other half of this car crash waiting to happen -- Chris Ross is on his way to the ring!"

Mark Bravo: "Hide the screwdrivers, say a prayer, and kiss your loved ones goodnight, because when this guy shows up, paperwork gets filed and someone usually winds up in a hospital."

*Smoke billows up from the sides of the entrance as **Chris Ross** steps out onto the stage.*

No pose. No theatrics. Just that hard, dead-eyed stare down the ramp. The camera closes in: jaw clenched, beard damp with sweat, a strip of fresh white tape running along one fist, the other still being flexed as if he's testing how far it'll stretch before something breaks.

The reaction is a thunderous mix -- loud cheers from the violence junkies, scattered boos, and a steady chant trying to rise up from one corner:

"BOSS IS GON-NA KILL YOU! BOSS IS GON-NA KILL YOU!"

John Phillips: "Listen to this place. They remember every brutal thing this man has ever done. From Harrisburg street fights to DEFIANCE bloodbaths, Chris Ross has never once tapped out, never once uttered the words 'I quit.'"

Mark Bravo: "He doesn't even think a three-count means anything. In his mind, the only scoreboard that

Black Horizon: 2025

counts is who needs stitches at the end of the night. And tonight, the scoreboard has a microphone attached to it."

Ross starts his walk down the ramp, slow but purposeful. No slaps of hands, no acknowledgment of the crowd. He walks dead center, shoulders square, eyes locked on Maxx Mayhem in the ring.

Halfway down, he stops and looks at the steel chair Maxx left leaned against the barricade. The camera catches a faint, humorless smirk.

He reaches over, taps the chair with two fingers... then just keeps walking, as if to say "later."

John Phillips: "You can feel it in the air, Mark. This doesn't feel like an entrance, it feels like a march. Chris Ross is walking into this like a man going to settle a debt."

Mark Bravo: "He said it from day one, John -- three-counts don't mean a thing if you're leaving in an ambulance. Well, tonight, the only way out is to say 'I quit' into a microphone. Either someone's career pride dies tonight... or the referee's gonna have to stop this for them."

Ross reaches ringside and stops at the foot of the ramp. He looks up at Maxx in the ring, who's draped over the top rope, laughing and yelling something inaudible over the crowd noise.

Chris tilts his head just slightly, expression flat. Then, without breaking eye contact, he steps to the ring steps and climbs them one deliberate foot at a time.

At the top of the steps, he pauses, hand on the ring post. He takes one slow breath, looks out over the crowd -- first to hard cam, then around the bowl -- soaking in the noise but not feeding it.

He wipes his boots on the edge of the apron, then ducks between the ropes and steps into the ring.

Inside, he walks to the center, not rushing, not flinching. The music begins to fade as he rolls his taped wrists, shoulders tightening, eyes never leaving Maxx Mayhem, who has pushed off the ropes and now meets him halfway, a wild little grin tugging at his mouth.

John Phillips: "Look at this, center of the ring now -- Maxx Mayhem and Chris Ross nose to nose. Two men who have carved their names into the word 'violence'... and neither of them has ever muttered 'I quit.'"

Mark Bravo: "Scott Stevens said this is it. No more sneak attacks, no more run-ins, no more brawls through the crowd. One match. One microphone. One of these men leaves Philadelphia tonight knowing, deep down, that he had to say the words he swore he'd never say."

The referee steps between them, holding up the small black microphone that will decide the outcome of the match, then motions them to their corners.

Black Horizon: 2025

Ross backs into his side, never turning his back fully on Maxx. He bounces once on the balls of his feet, shakes out his arms, and lowers his chin.

Across the ring, Maxx hooks his arms over the top rope, stretching, eyes wide and hungry.

John Phillips: "Chris Ross is ready. Maxx Mayhem is ready. The referee has the mic in hand. The I Quit Match... is about to begin."

The referee checks both men one last time, lifts his free hand... and calls for the bell.

DING DING DING.

John Phillips: "And here we go! I Quit Match is officially underway!"

Maxx Mayhem doesn't circle. He doesn't test the waters. He just charges.

Ross steps straight into him and the two collide in the center of the ring, trading wild right hands. No collar-and-elbow, no feeling-out process -- just fists thudding into jaw and cheek, shoulders colliding like two cars on a one-lane road.

Mark Bravo: "No wristlocks. No chain wrestling. Just two guys who hate each other punching each other in the mouth. Merry Black Horizon."

Maxx rocks Ross with a right, then another, then a quick eye rake that twists Ross' head aside. The crowd boos as Maxx spreads his arms, soaking it in, then snaps into a sharp snap DDT, drilling Ross' head into the mat.

John Phillips: "Maxx Mayhem with the early cheap shot, that eye rake turning the tide, and Ross goes skull-first into the canvas!"

Maxx kips up, laughing, and immediately drops down, mounting Ross with a flurry of forearm shots. Ross covers up, arms tight, absorbing as much as he can, but a couple slip through, snapping his head back.

Mark Bravo: "You see that grin? Maxx isn't trying to win points, he's trying to get under Ross' skin right out of the gate."

The referee drops to a knee beside them, mic in hand, more out of habit than expectation.

Referee: ""Ross, you wanna quit?""

Ross shoves Maxx's face away with one taped hand, snarling.

Chris Ross: ""Ask me that again and I'll break your arm!""

Black Horizon: 2025

Mark Bravo: "There's your answer!"

Ross heaves his hips, rolling them over. Now Ross is on top, raining down his own mounted forearm shots, short and brutal, the sound of tape-on-skin echoing in the small arena. Maxx covers up, then reaches up and digs fingers into Ross' eyes, forcing separation long enough to slide out from under.

John Phillips: "Both men going straight to the ugliest tools in the box. Eye rakes, mounted shots, no thought of pacing themselves."

They scramble to their feet at the same time. Ross steps in first, catching Maxx with a stiff knee to the gut, then another, then spins him and snaps off a quick German suplex that dumps Maxx on the back of his neck.

John Phillips: "German suplex! There's that throwing power you talked about, Mark -- Ross can hit every suplex in the book and some that aren't written down."

Maxx rolls to his side, clutching the back of his head, but keeps moving, instinctively trying to roll toward the rope.

Ross doesn't let him breathe. He grabs Maxx by the waist and hauls him up again, this time deadlifting him into a release belly-to-back suplex that sends Maxx flipping and crashing onto his chest.

Mark Bravo: "That's two on the bump card and we're not even two minutes in. Somebody call a chiropractor."

Maxx sprawls, gasping. Ross kneels beside him, shoving the referee's arm aside and grabbing Maxx by the jaw, forcing his face up toward him.

Chris Ross: ""You wanted this, remember? You love the chaos, right?""

Maxx wheezes a laugh, even as blood starts to trickle from the corner of his mouth.

Maxx Mayhem: ""Best... Christmas... ever.""

Ross' response is a straight, grinding forearm across the bridge of Maxx's nose, pressing down until Maxx yells more in anger than in pain.

Referee: ""Maxx, do you wanna quit?""

Maxx Mayhem: ""Do you wanna shut up?!""

Mark Bravo: "Referee's gonna take verbal abuse tonight along with everyone else."

Ross drags Maxx up by the hair, whips him into the corner. Maxx hits hard, chest first, staggering. Ross

Black Horizon: 2025

charges in and crushes him with a running clothesline, then grabs him around the waist, spins, and hurls him overhead with a release overhead belly-to-belly that sends Maxx sailing nearly halfway across the ring.

John Phillips: "Suplex city, Harrisburg edition! Chris Ross is turning Maxx Mayhem into a crash test dummy!"

Maxx lands hard, arches his back, rolling toward the ropes. This time, Ross lets him go, following at a measured pace. Maxx gets a hand on the bottom rope, starts to pull himself up... and Ross stomps his fingers, grinding a boot into them.

Maxx Mayhem: ""AH-- okay, okay, that actually sucks!""

Mark Bravo: "Say 'I quit' and he might stop stomping your hand into paste!"

The ref slides close again.

Referee: ""Maxx, you wanna quit?""

Maxx Mayhem: ""You quit! Your job! Get a new one!""

He swings a desperate back elbow that clips Ross in the side of the knee. Ross staggers, giving Maxx enough time to scramble out under the bottom rope to the floor.

John Phillips: "And here we go, right where Maxx Mayhem is most comfortable -- outside the ring where there are no pads and too many toys."

Maxx staggers along the apron, shaking out his hand, grimacing. He glances up at the front row, spots a fan with a "USE THE TRASH CAN" sign, and gives them a wink.

Ross slides out after him on the hard camera side. As soon as his feet hit the floor, Maxx spins and snaps off a swinging neckbreaker, both of them crashing onto the thin mats.

Mark Bravo: "That's the thing about Maxx -- you beat him up, you throw him around, and he just keeps looking for a way to turn the fall into offense."

Maxx lies on his back for a second, breathing hard, then rolls to his knees and crawls toward the timekeeper's area.

John Phillips: "Oh no. Oh no, I don't like where this is going."

He grabs the steel chair he propped earlier and slaps it closed with a wicked grin. The crowd buzzes as he turns back toward Ross, who's pushing himself up to all fours.

Black Horizon: 2025

Mark Bravo: "First foreign object of the night and we all knew it was coming. Maxx Mayhem, chair in hand -- this is where the 'hardcore antics' start paying dividends."

Maxx raises the chair high, yelling, "'HOLIDAY HEADACHE!'" as he brings it down.

Ross rolls just in time. The chair smashes into the floor with a metallic CRACK, reverberating through Maxx's arms. Ross lunges, tackles Maxx at the waist, and drives him back-first into the edge of the apron. Maxx's spine bows around the corner of the ring.

John Phillips: "Spine-first into the apron! That's the hardest part of the ring, and Chris Ross just turned it into a battering ram!"

The chair clatters out of Maxx's hand. Ross grabs him by the arm and whips him, hard, sending Maxx crashing shoulder-first into the steel steps. The top half explodes off, skidding away as Maxx crumples beside them, clutching his shoulder and laughing through gritted teeth.

Maxx Mayhem: "'...kay... that one's on you...'"

Mark Bravo: "He's laughing. The man just ate a set of steps and he's laughing. That's not bravado, that's a wiring issue."

Ross doesn't laugh. He stalks over, grabs Maxx by the wrist and yanks his arm straight, then SLAMS his hand down onto the ring steps, pinning it there.

John Phillips: "Oh no. Oh no, we've seen this look before."

Ross looks down at Maxx's trapped hand, then back at the steel chair lying nearby. The crowd murmurs, recognizing the setup. The referee scrambles outside, mic still in hand, shouting for Ross to think about it.

Referee: "'Chris, don't--'"

Chris Ross: "'Get out of my way.'"

He snatches up the chair. The arena rises as one, some cheering, more shrieking. Ross raises the chair over his head, eyes burning.

John Phillips: "He's gonna crush Maxx Mayhem's hand! He's gonna crush his hand on those steps!"

Referee: "'Maxx, do you wanna quit? Say it now! Say it!'"

Maxx stares up at Ross, sweat and spit on his face, breathing ragged. For a second -- just a second -- there's a flicker of doubt in his eyes as he looks at his trapped hand.

Black Horizon: 2025

Then he spits toward Ross' boots.

Maxx Mayhem: ""Do it... you coward.""

Mark Bravo: "Of course he said that."

Ross doesn't hesitate. He brings the chair down.

CLANG.

Maxx lets out a howl that cuts through the entire arena, jerking his arm back instinctively, cradling his hand to his chest, rolling away from the steps. The chair bounces off the metal and clatters to the floor, leaving Maxx curled on his side, fingers already swelling.

John Phillips: "Good lord! Steel chair right across the back of the hand! Maxx Mayhem may have just lost the ability to make a fist!"

Mark Bravo: "Say it, Maxx! Say 'I quit' before you gotta relearn how to hold a fork!"

The referee is on him again, dropping to a knee.

Referee: ""Maxx, do you want to quit? Say it!""

Maxx's face is twisted in pain, teeth bared, eyes squeezed shut. He rocks back and forth, clutching his hand... and then he starts laughing again, a broken, wheezing sound.

Maxx Mayhem: ""Can't... can't flip you off anymore... but I ain't sayin' it...""

John Phillips: "He still refuses! Maxx Mayhem refuses to say 'I quit' even with his hand just smashed between steel and steel!"

Ross stands over him, chest heaving, staring down with that cold, empty hate. He drops the chair beside Maxx's head, then leans down and grabs him by the hair.

Chris Ross: ""You wanna be the chaos? You wanna be the funny guy? I'm gonna show you what real violence looks like.""

He hauls Maxx up and shoves him under the bottom rope, rolling him back into the ring like discarded trash. Ross follows, sliding in after him.

Mark Bravo: "We're back in the ring but this thing is already way past wrestling. Maxx Mayhem's hand might be broken, and Chris Ross looks like he's just getting started."

Black Horizon: 2025

Ross drags Maxx to the center, steps over his arm, and drops down, torquing Maxx's injured wrist in a sickening angle, sitting back in a modified armbar, using his whole body weight to hyperextend the damaged hand and fingers.

John Phillips: "Ross now targeting that hand, that wrist, turning this into a dissection! Maxx Mayhem may not have a choice much longer -- his body might make the choice for him!"

Maxx thrashes, screaming, his good hand clawing at Ross, at the mat, at anything. The referee is right there again, mic under his chin.

Referee: ""Do you quit, Maxx? Say it! Say the words!""

Maxx shakes his head violently, eyes wild.

Maxx Mayhem: ""NO! NO! I DON'T QUIT! I DON'T-- AH--""

Mark Bravo: "He's screaming, he's writhing, but he still won't say it! How far is Chris Ross willing to take this? How far is Maxx Mayhem willing to let him go?!"

Ross leans back even further, wrenching the arm in a way that makes half the front row turn away, unable to watch.

John Phillips: "Ross is trying to rip that arm out of its socket! He said a three-count doesn't mean anything -- the only thing that matters to him is if Maxx Mayhem leaves here tonight in an ambulance!"

The camera zooms tight on Maxx's contorted face, veins popped, sweat flying as he thrashes, hand trapped, nerves screaming...

...and still, no "I quit."

We hold on that agonizing image as the crowd roars and Ross cinches in harder, the I Quit Match already teetering on the edge of something much darker as Black Horizon rolls on.

Maxx's body jerks, his boot pounding the mat as Ross hangs off his arm like a vulture. The referee looks ready to stop it himself if he hears even the hint of resignation.

Referee: ""Maxx! Say it! Do you quit?!""

Maxx's good hand claws blindly at Ross' face -- finds his beard, his cheek -- and in pure desperation, he rakes his fingers across Ross' eyes.

John Phillips: "Eye rake! Desperation move from Maxx Mayhem!"

Black Horizon: 2025

Ross jerks back, arm breaking loose as he clutches his face. Maxx rolls away, cradling his ruined hand to his chest, sucking in ragged breaths.

Mark Bravo: "Look at that hand, John. It looks like somebody slammed it in a car door. And he still chose to claw the guy's eyeballs rather than say two little words."

Ross blinks through the blur, teeth bared. He shoves the referee aside as he gets to one knee. Across from him, Maxx uses the ropes to drag himself upright, his injured hand hanging uselessly at his side.

John Phillips: "Both men back to their feet, but Maxx Mayhem is essentially wrestling one-handed at this point."

Ross charges first, going for a lariat. Maxx ducks under with a stumble-step, hits the ropes as best he can and comes back with a wild discus elbow -- thrown with his bad arm out of muscle memory.

Pain rips across his face mid-spin, his body betraying him, and the elbow lands sloppy across Ross' shoulder instead of his jaw.

Mark Bravo: "He tried to swing the bad arm! His body's on autopilot, but the pain just pulled the plug!"

Ross eats the glancing shot, staggers but doesn't fall. Maxx grimaces, clutching the arm, and Ross answers with a stiff headbutt right between the eyes.

John Phillips: "Headbutt by Ross! No finesse, just skull on skull!"

*Maxx drops to a knee, eyes glassy. Ross grabs a handful of vest and hair, jerks him up, and muscles him over into a snapping **spinebuster** that rattles the ring.*

John Phillips: "Spinebuster! Maxx Mayhem driven straight through the canvas!"

Ross doesn't bother with a cover -- there is none. Instead, he rolls off to the side, slides under the bottom rope, and drops to the floor again.

Mark Bravo: "Oh no. When Chris Ross leaves the ring in an I Quit Match, he's not taking a break -- he's going shopping."

Ross flips the apron skirt up and starts digging, the crowd buzzing as they wait to see what comes out. First, a kendo stick. He tosses it aside. Then, a trash can. Another toss. Finally, he pulls out...

...a long, familiar-looking screwdriver.

John Phillips: "Oh, come on! We knew it was only a matter of time before that damn screwdriver showed up!"

Black Horizon: 2025

Mark Bravo: "Company executives everywhere just sat bolt upright on their couches. Chris Ross with a screwdriver in an I Quit Match is like giving a chainsaw to a lumberjack with anger issues."

He holds it up, the hard-cam catching the gleam of steel. Ross doesn't smile, doesn't gloat -- his expression is frighteningly calm as he rolls back into the ring, weapon in hand.

Inside, Maxx is pushing himself up, one knee under him, the other foot planted. He sees the screwdriver... and for the first time tonight, the laughter dies out of his face completely.

John Phillips: "Maxx Mayhem has watched the tapes. He knows exactly what Chris Ross has done with that screwdriver in the past."

Ross stalks across the ring, raising the screwdriver like a surgeon about to make an incision. The referee gets between them, hands up.

Referee: ""Chris, put it down! Put it--""

Ross grabs the front of the referee's shirt with his free hand and shoves him back into the corner, crowd gasping.

Chris Ross: ""You wanna stop this? Make him quit.""

He turns back to Maxx, who suddenly lunges forward with a burst of desperation, kicking the screwdriver out of Ross' hand with a last-second It.

Mark Bravo: "There goes the hardware! Maxx booted the screwdriver halfway to Jersey!"

The screwdriver skitters across the mat and slides under the bottom rope to the floor, out of reach. Ross barely has time to react before Maxx barrels into him, driving him back-first into the corner with a tackle.

John Phillips: "Maxx Mayhem knew that might've been his only shot to avoid a free piercing!"

With only one usable arm, Maxx starts throwing shoulder thrusts into Ross' midsection, ramming over and over again, breath whooshing out of Ross with each hit. The crowd gets behind the surge.

Mark Bravo: "Look at him go! One arm, a busted hand, and he's turning himself into a human battering ram!"

Maxx backs up, then fires one last shoulder into Ross' ribs before stumbling back, clutching his side. Ross stumbles out of the corner, gasping.

*Maxx hits the ropes, favoring his bad arm, and comes roaring back with a **running cannonball** that crashes into Ross' chest and sends both of them tumbling through the ropes to the floor!*

Black Horizon: 2025

John Phillips: "Running cannonball sends both men to the outside! Maxx Mayhem sacrificing what's left of his body to keep this fight alive!"

They crash to the mats in a heap, Ross clutching at his ribs, Maxx groaning, his hand trapped under his own body.

Mark Bravo: "That's the problem with Maxx's offense -- even when it lands, it hurts him too. This is the definition of mutually assured destruction."

The referee slides out after them, frantically checking both men. He puts the mic near Ross.

Referee: ""Chris, you wanna quit?""

Ross laughs once, a short, bitter sound, then spits to the side.

Chris Ross: ""You gonna have to kill me, too.""

John Phillips: "There it is. Neither man willing to be the first one to blink."

Maxx drags himself to the barricade, using it to climb upright, gasping. A fan in the front row holds out an empty plastic beer cup and yells something unintelligible. Maxx snatches the cup, looks at it... then turns and cracks it over Ross' head anyway, because why not.

Mark Bravo: "He just hit him with an empty cup. That did nothing but make a very sad noise."

Maxx looks at the crumpled cup, then at the fan, then shrugs exaggeratedly.

Maxx Mayhem: ""You bought the cheap seats *and* the cheap beer!""

*Ross answers that with a straight shot to the gut, doubling Maxx over, then grabs him by the back of the neck and **whips** him full-speed into the guardrail.*

John Phillips: "Mayhem meets steel again! That lower back has to be screaming!"

Maxx slumps against the barricade, half draped over it. Ross backs up a few paces, clutching his ribs... then charges, looking for another running shot.

At the last second, Maxx throws himself sideways, and Ross barrels past, colliding chest-first into the barricade instead.

Mark Bravo: "Nobody home! Ross just speared the guardrail!"

Ross staggers back, arms flailing. Maxx, with about three functioning limbs and sheer spite, climbs onto the

Black Horizon: 2025

bottom half of the steel steps, giving him just enough elevation to launch.

*He leaps off with a wild **flying crossbody**, colliding with Ross and taking both of them over the guardrail into the front row!*

John Phillips: "Flying crossbody into the crowd! Maxx Mayhem has no regard for his own body or anybody else's!"

Fans scatter as chairs topple, security rushing in to form a barrier. The referee is shouting at them to move as he climbs over the rail too, still carrying the mic.

Mark Bravo: "We are in no-man's land now. There are no pads, no give, no good ideas beyond that barrier."

Maxx rolls off Ross, grabbing at his ribs, coughing. Ross is sprawled on his back between two folded chairs, eyes blinking up at the ceiling.

Referee: "'Chris! Chris, can you continue? Do you wanna quit?'"

Ross pushes the mic away weakly, then sits up with a grimace, forcing himself through the pain.

Chris Ross: "'...you're gonna get tired of askin' me that...'"

John Phillips: "Still no give from Chris Ross. He is hurting, but his pride is louder than his ribs right now."

Maxx uses a fan's vacated chair to pull himself up, then folds it and holds it in his good hand, knuckles white around the handle. He wobbles over to Ross, who's getting to one knee.

Mark Bravo: "Maxx has got hardware again, and whatever's left of that right hand is gonna have to hold up long enough for one good swing."

Maxx lifts the chair high -- the crowd buzzes -- and brings it down across Ross' back with a sickening CRACK. Ross arches, teeth clenched.

John Phillips: "Steel to spine! That echo told you everything you need to know!"

Maxx staggers, the impact sending a jolt up his own arm. He shakes out his hand, hissing, then lines up another shot and brings the chair down again, this time across Ross' shoulders.

Referee: "'Ross! Do you quit?!'"

Ross shoves the mic away again, this time with more force.

Chris Ross: "'I told you... I don't quit... I *don't quit!*'"

Black Horizon: 2025

Mark Bravo: "You're gonna break your jaw before you break this guy's will, Maxx."

Maxx drops the chair, chest heaving, and grabs Ross by the hair again. He drags him back toward the barricade, muscling him up to his feet and throwing him back over to ringside.

Ross lands awkwardly on his side, rolling toward the apron. Maxx climbs over after him, almost falling as his legs tangle with the rail, but he catches himself on the apron with his good hand.

John Phillips: "These two are absolutely tearing each other -- and everything around them -- apart. And we are still no closer to hearing those two words from either man."

Maxx pulls himself up onto the apron, wincing. Ross is on his knees beside the ring, head resting against the edge, using the apron skirt to pull himself upright.

Mark Bravo: "We've seen Maxx use that apron before. Jumping senton, ring-edge crashes... he might be thinking something big here."

Maxx steps along the apron, balancing on the narrow ledge. He looks out at the fans, raises his good arm -- then looks down at Ross, who's just getting to his feet, half-turned away.

Maxx Mayhem: ""You don't quit, I don't quit... let's SEE WHAT BREAKS FIRST!""

*He launches off with a **jumping senton**, twisting his body in mid-air, crashing down onto Ross' shoulders and upper back. Both men slam hard into the floor, the impact echoing through the arena.*

John Phillips: "Jumping senton off the apron! Maxx Mayhem just turned his body into a weapon again and might've shattered both of them on that landing!"

They lie in a heap, neither moving for a long, alarming moment as the crowd buzzes with awe and concern.

Mark Bravo: "Referee might be the only guy in the building right now praying one of them actually *does* say 'I quit.' He may have to make a judgment call if neither man can answer."

The referee crouches between them, looking left, then right, then brings the mic toward Maxx first.

Referee: ""Maxx... do you quit?""

Maxx coughs, groans, rolls onto his side... and flips the ref off with his good hand.

Mark Bravo: "There's your answer."

The ref turns to Ross, who's starting to stir, clutching his ribs.

Black Horizon: 2025

Referee: "Chris! Do you quit?!"

Ross pushes himself up onto one elbow, eyes unfocused, breathing ragged.

Chris Ross: "...you're gonna... you're gonna die askin' me that..."

John Phillips: "Still no give. Still no surrender. These two maniacs are tearing years off their careers and we are nowhere near those words being said."

The camera pulls back, capturing the wreckage at ringside -- scattered chairs, the dented steps, the abandoned screwdriver on the floor. In the center of it all: Maxx Mayhem and Chris Ross, both struggling, both stubborn, both refusing to break...

...as Black Horizon's I Quit war rages on.

Ross crawls toward the apron, using it to pull himself up. Maxx rolls onto his stomach, then slowly pushes to all fours, gasping and coughing, his busted hand pressed tight against his chest.

John Phillips: "Both men somehow, some way, still moving after that senton off the apron. I don't know how much either one of them has left."

Ross is the first fully vertical, leaning against the apron, ribs screaming. He looks down at Maxx, eyes narrowed... then glances over at the nearby barricade.

Decision made.

He staggers to Maxx, grabs a handful of hair and vest, and starts dragging him toward the guardrail.

Mark Bravo: "Oh, we're going walkabout again. If you're in the first few rows, now is the time to move anything fragile and/or beloved."

Ross shoves Maxx chest-first into the barricade, then hooks an arm around his waist and tries to haul him up and over. Maxx, on instinct more than strength, mule-kicks backward, heel catching Ross in the knee.

John Phillips: "Kick to the knee, buys Maxx a second!"

Ross stumbles, grabbing at his leg. Maxx throws his shoulder back, ramming Ross into the rail instead. The two exchange short, ugly punches -- no wind-up, just knuckles slamming into ribs and jaw in close quarters.

Mark Bravo: "No room to wind up, just dirty little pocket punches. This is what a fight looks like when both guys are running on fumes."

Maxx lands one clean right hand -- the good one -- and Ross' head snaps aside. Maxx then grabs Ross by

Black Horizon: 2025

the ears and rakes his eyes across the top of the barricade, using the rail like sandpaper.

John Phillips: "Face across the steel! Maxx Mayhem turning the guardrail into a weapon again!"

*Ross snarls, blinded, swinging wild. Maxx ducks under, then hooks Ross' waistband and **shoves** him up and over the barricade into the front row, chairs toppling beneath him.*

Mark Bravo: "And now Chris Ross is back in the cheap seats!"

The crowd parts, security trying to keep a buffer as Ross scrambles among the fallen chairs. Maxx, limping and clutching his bad hand, hauls himself over the rail and drops down after him, almost stumbling into a fan as he lands.

John Phillips: "This I Quit Match is spilling deeper into the 2300 Arena. This is turning into the kind of fight that building was built for."

*Ross gets to one knee and grabs a loose folding chair by the legs. As Maxx steps in, Ross **swings low**, cracking the chair into Maxx's shin. Maxx's leg buckles and he drops to a knee with a howl.*

Mark Bravo: "That was right on the bone! You ever caught metal to the shin, John?"

John Phillips: "Not like that and I'd like to keep it that way."

*Ross plants the chair on the concrete, unfolding it roughly. He grabs Maxx by the head and **bounces** his face off the seat once, twice, three times, the last one sending Maxx sprawling over the chair and onto his back amid a semicircle of fans.*

John Phillips: "Face first into the seat! Maxx Mayhem busted open off that, you can already see the blood starting on the forehead."

The ref scrambles over the barricade as well, mic still in hand, navigating the minefield of chairs and fans.

Referee: ""Maxx! Do you wanna quit? Say it! I can stop this!""

Maxx blinks up at him, a thin line of red trickling down into his eye. He spits red, laughs in a ragged wheeze.

Maxx Mayhem: ""Nah... gonna ruin *more* furniture first...""

Mark Bravo: "He's bleeding, his hand might be broken, his leg just took a chair shot, and he's still cracking jokes. Maxx Mayhem is not right."

*Ross yanks Maxx up again and starts dragging him **up the aisle** between the bleachers, fans scrambling to get out of the way. He clubs him with forearms as they go, each blow echoing off the concrete and metal.*

Black Horizon: 2025

John Phillips: "They're moving deeper into the crowd now, headed toward the back of the arena. This is chaos. This is not a wrestling match anymore."

Maxx stumbles along, catching himself on railings, boots trying to find purchase on the steps. Halfway up, he suddenly throws his body sideways, slamming Ross into the concrete wall that lines the corridor.

Mark Bravo: "Maxx with a desperation side slam into the wall! You could hear Ross' shoulder bounce off the concrete!"

Ross winces, teeth gritted. Maxx, barely upright, grabs the back of Ross' head and rams him again into the wall for good measure.

The camera follows them into a narrow concourse area at the back, where a small merch table is set up - shirts, posters, and an empty cooler now shoved aside by panicked staff.

John Phillips: "We've left the seating bowl, we are in the concourse! This is dangerous territory -- hard floors, hard walls, not a single thing designed to break a fall."

*Maxx spots the merch table, eyes lighting up. He grabs Ross by the neck and trunks and **throws** him across the table, sending shirts and posters flying like confetti.*

Ross slides across, crashing off the far side and landing on his back, colliding with the legs of the table and sending it tilting.

Mark Bravo: "There go somebody's commemorative Black Horizon shirts! Sorry, folks, they're 'ring used' now."

Maxx hobbles around the side of the table, breathing heavy, blood streaking his face. He grabs the edge and shoves, flipping the table onto its side to clear the space.

John Phillips: "Maxx Mayhem rearranging the furniture! This concourse just turned into his own personal playground."

*Ross is trying to get up when Maxx charges -- as much as he can manage -- and **tackles** him, driving him back-first into a concrete support pillar. Ross' head snaps back against it with a sickening thud.*

John Phillips: "Good God! Head into the pillar! That could've knocked him out cold!"

Ross slumps to one knee, eyes glassy. Maxx sways on his feet, using the pillar itself to keep from falling.

Mark Bravo: "If this were any other match, the doctor would be checking for a concussion right now. Instead, the only person checking anything is the referee with a microphone and a question."

Black Horizon: 2025

Right on cue, the ref squeezes between them and brings the mic to Ross' face.

Referee: ""Chris! Do you quit? Say it and this is over!""

Ross' eyes focus, blurry but burning. He grabs the mic cord, yanks it closer.

Chris Ross: ""I... don't... quit...""

He then shoves the mic away and, from his knees, delivers a vicious low blow straight up between Maxx's legs.

Mark Bravo: "OH! Right in the mistletoe!"

John Phillips: "Low blow by Ross! No rules, anything goes -- that's legal in an I Quit Match!"

Maxx doubles over, face screwing up in a soundless scream, stumbling backward and collapsing against the half-tilted merch table.

Ross takes a moment, hand on the pillar, sucking in air. Then he spots something on the floor -- the empty merch cooler, lid off, lying on its side.

John Phillips: "Oh no. He found something."

Ross picks up the hard plastic cooler, hefting it once to test the weight. Maxx is on his knees, one arm guarding his groin, the other pushing off the table to try to stand.

Mark Bravo: "Nothing in there but melted ice and regret, but that shell is solid."

*Ross swings the cooler like a battering ram and **slams** it into Maxx's ribs. Maxx is knocked sideways, sprawling across the concourse floor, sliding on discarded flyers and torn posters.*

John Phillips: "Cooler to the ribs! Maxx Mayhem might have a cracked rib to go with the smashed hand and shot shin!"

Ross drops the cooler and stalks after him, grabbing Maxx by the hair again and dragging him toward a short staircase that leads up to another seating section.

Mark Bravo: "No. No, no, no, I know that look. I do not like that look."

*Ross hauls Maxx to his feet at the base of the stairs and starts dragging him **up** one step at a time, Maxx's boots scraping, fans backing away from the railings above as they realize what's happening below them.*

John Phillips: "They are heading up towards the second row of bleachers now, on the far side of the arena."

Black Horizon: 2025

If Ross throws him down those stairs, forget 'I quit', we might be talking about 'I can't walk.'

Halfway up the short flight, Maxx drops his weight, dead-fishing, forcing Ross to hold him up or let him tumble. Ross snarls, shifting his grip, trying to force him the rest of the way.

Maxx suddenly grabs the railing with his good hand and, using it as leverage, kicks both feet backward, slamming his boots into Ross' face.

Mark Bravo: "Boots to the face! Maxx using the handrail like a jungle gym!"

Ross stumbles back down a step, clutching his nose. Maxx swings around the rail, half-spinning, and manages to land one solid right hook -- again with the good hand -- that snaps Ross' head to the side.

Ross drops to one knee at the base of the stairs. Maxx, shaking, climbs up onto the lowest step rail, balancing dangerously over the concrete below.

John Phillips: "What is he thinking? What is he-- Maxx, don't do this!"

Maxx looks down at Ross, then out at the fans clustered nearby, holding their breath.

Maxx Mayhem: ""YOU WANT MAYHEM, PHILLY?!"

The nearby fans erupt in a chant.

Crowd (local section): ""MAY-HEM! MAY-HEM! MAY-HEM!"

*Maxx takes a breath, then **jumps** off the side of the stairs, twisting his body in mid-air and colliding with Ross in a chaotic, half-formed crossbody that sends both men crashing back to the concrete floor of the concourse!*

John Phillips: "MAXX MAYHEM JUST LAUNCHED HIMSELF OFF THE STAIRS! BODIES CRASHING ON THE CONCRETE!"

The sickening impact draws a collective gasp from everyone in earshot. Both men are laid out, neither moving for several long, awful seconds.

Mark Bravo: "That might be it. I don't know how either man gets up from *that*."

The referee drops to his knees between them, eyes wide, concern etched all over his face. He looks from one to the other, then lifts the mic toward Maxx first, who is staring blankly at the ceiling, chest rising shallowly.

Referee: ""Maxx... do you quit?""

Black Horizon: 2025

No answer. Just a groan.

Referee: ""Maxx, do you quit?""

Maxx forces his jaw to work, blood bubbling at the corner of his mouth.

Maxx Mayhem: ""...still... ain't... sayin' it...""

John Phillips: "He still won't say it! Even after crashing his entire body onto the concrete!"

The ref swallows and turns to Ross, who is clutching his ribs again, eyes squeezed shut in agony.

Referee: ""Chris! Do you quit? I can stop this right now!""

Ross opens his eyes, stares at the ref like he's speaking another language.

Chris Ross: ""...you stop it... I'll start with you...""

Mark Bravo: "Even half-broken on the floor, he's still threatening violence. Neither man is giving an inch."

The camera pulls back again, showing the wrecked merch area, the stairs, the scattered fans and security trying to hold the perimeter. In the middle of it all, Maxx Mayhem and Chris Ross lie amid the debris -- both battered, both bleeding, both still refusing to utter those two words...

...as the war continues to escalate, with the worst still to come.

The camera stays tight on the wreckage around the stairs and shattered merch table... then slowly pulls back as both men start to move again.

Maxx rolls onto his side, clutching his ribs with his good hand. Ross drags a knee under himself, one palm flat on the concrete, breathing like there's glass in his lungs.

John Phillips: "I don't know how in the hell either of these men are still moving, but somehow, some way, Chris Ross and Maxx Mayhem are trying to get up."

Security and staff keep a ring of distance around them, shooing fans back. The referee hovers, unsure whether to stop this or keep it going, mic still in hand. Ross grabs the edge of the tilted table, uses it to haul himself vertical.

Across from him, Maxx crawls toward a wall, fingers smearing a red streak as he uses the cinderblock to push to his feet.

Mark Bravo: "We left the ring, we left the seats, we trashed the merch. Where do you even go from here?"

Black Horizon: 2025

The parking lot? South Philly?"

Ross staggers toward Maxx, swinging a short, ugly right hand into his jaw. Maxx's head snaps sideways, but he doesn't fall -- he answers with a body shot that sounds like it hurts them both.

John Phillips: "They're not doing moves anymore, they're just throwing everything they've got left into each other."

Ross grabs a fistful of Maxx's vest, jerks him away from the wall, and shoves him toward a nearby doorway marked with an EXIT sign and a small "Concessions / Restrooms" placard.

Mark Bravo: "Oh, good. Because what we really needed was to endanger the nachos."

Maxx stumbles through the doorway and into a wider corridor -- the main concourse. Fluorescent lights hum overhead. Rows of food vendors, soda fountains, and merch stands line the walls. Fans part like a wave as the two bloody wrecks stagger into view.

John Phillips: "And here we go -- the fight has hit the main corridor of the 2300 Arena! If you're in line for popcorn, you might be about to become part of Black Horizon history!"

Ross follows, shoving Maxx into a rolling trash bin. The bin shoots forward, wheels squealing, and crashes into the side of a concession cart with a hollow clang. Maxx slumps over it, hanging on by his elbows.

Mark Bravo: "Maxx Mayhem just got Irish whipped into a week's worth of empty beer cups."

Ross stomps him once in the lower back, then yanks him upright and bounces his head off the metal cart. Maxx slumps, hands splayed against the side of the stand, leaving bloody fingerprints.

John Phillips: "Every surface is a weapon out here -- steel carts, concrete floors, those rails are unforgiving. This is a lawsuit waiting to happen."

Ross reaches over the counter, grabs a plastic pitcher from a soda fountain setup, and hurls the half-melted ice into Maxx's face. Cubes and water splash everywhere; Maxx recoils, blinded and shivering.

Mark Bravo: "Refreshing! That's one way to wake a guy up."

Ross doesn't give him time to reset. He hooks Maxx's head and arm, looking for a suplex on the hard floor--but Maxx hooks his leg around Ross', blocking it. Ross grits his teeth and tries again.

John Phillips: "Ross maybe looking for a suplex on the concrete--"

*Maxx suddenly grabs a ketchup dispenser pump with his good hand and **slams** it into Ross' forehead. The bright red stream that splatters isn't all condiment.*

Black Horizon: 2025

Mark Bravo: "He just hit him with a family-sized ketchup bomb! Somebody call OSHA!"

Ross staggers back, blinking red from a mix of ketchup and blood. Maxx, half-laughing, half-coughing, pumps one more time and sprays a line across Ross' chest for good measure.

Maxx Mayhem: ""You needed some color, Boss!""

John Phillips: "Maxx Mayhem literally painting the town red out here!"

With Ross distracted, Maxx lunges, wrapping his good arm around Ross' waist and bulldozing him into the side of a closed merch shutter. Steel rattles violently as Ross' back collides with it.

John Phillips: "Back into the shutter! This whole building just rattled!"

Maxx hits a couple of short shoulder thrusts to the midsection, each one echoing. Ross doubles slightly with each shot but fires back with a clubbing forearm across Maxx's shoulders, then rakes his fingers across Maxx's already-bloodied forehead.

Mark Bravo: "At this point, that cut is just an open invitation. Ross doesn't care if it's ketchup, mustard, or plasma, he's gonna make it worse."

*Maxx stumbles away, wiping at his eyes. Ross lunges, grabs him by the hair and trunks, and **throws** him sideways into a row of plastic stanchions and rope dividers.*

Maxx crashes through them, bodies and poles tangling, and lands in front of a popcorn stand where a terrified worker ducks behind the counter.

John Phillips: "Those stanchions are not meant for 235 pounds of flying mayhem!"

Maxx grabs the edge of the counter and pulls himself up. Without looking, he reaches behind the glass and blindly snatches something -- a cardboard tray loaded with popcorn. He turns and flings it full-force at Ross, kernels exploding everywhere.

Mark Bravo: "Popcorn bomb!"

Ross shields his face, more annoyed than hurt. Maxx uses the moment to vault onto a low ledge next to the stand, wobbling as his bad leg protests.

John Phillips: "Maxx Mayhem still trying to turn anything into a launchpad!"

*He throws himself off with a half-formed crossbody again--but this time Ross catches him mid-air, barely, arms straining, and drives him straight down with a **modified spinebuster** onto the corridor floor!*

Black Horizon: 2025

John Phillips: "Spinebuster on the concrete! That might've just broken Maxx Mayhem in half!"

Maxx's body bounces once and then lies still, his good hand twitching. The entire corridor gasps as one. Ross rolls off, clutching his own back and ribs, gritting his teeth through the pain.

Mark Bravo: "Chris Ross just sacrificed his own spine to make sure Maxx's hit first and harder."

The referee drops to his knees beside Maxx, mic hovering.

Referee: ""Maxx! Do you quit? Say it and it stops! Come on!""

Maxx's eyes flutter open, unfocused. He sucks in a shaky breath, tries to roll to his side, fails.

Maxx Mayhem: ""...I quit... takin' your advice...""

He weakly flips the ref off again, barely lifting his middle finger.

Mark Bravo: "He can't even stand, but he can still be disrespectful. That's commitment."

Ross pushes himself upright, swaying. He looks around the corridor, at the fans pressed against the walls, at the vendors peeking out from their stands.

John Phillips: "Chris Ross is looking for his next weapon... his next bad idea."

His gaze lands on a wheeled condiment cart parked near the end of the row--covered in bottles, napkin dispensers, and a metal tray.

*He limps over, shoves it into motion, and sends it **rolling** straight toward Maxx, who's still down.*

Mark Bravo: "Oh you gotta be kidding--"

The cart rattles across the concrete, napkins fluttering off. At the last second, Maxx gets one knee under him and kicks at the cart. It tips, flips, and crashes just beside him instead of into his ribs, mustard and napkins exploding like a crime scene at a hot dog contest.

John Phillips: "Maxx narrowly avoids getting steamrolled by the condiments!"

Ross curses under his breath and comes in on foot, grabbing Maxx by the head. Maxx, still on one knee, fires a short headbutt into Ross' gut. Ross doubles over; Maxx shoves off the floor and rams him backward into a concrete support beam.

Mark Bravo: "Maxx Mayhem is basically taped together with spite and arena food at this point, and he's still fighting back!"

Black Horizon: 2025

They trade more blows in front of a soda stand, fists thudding, heads snapping. Ross swings big and misses, fist slamming into the side of a soda machine instead. Pain shoots up his arm; he shakes his hand out, cursing.

John Phillips: "Ross just punched the soda machine, and I don't think it paid out!"

*Maxx sees his opening. He grabs Ross by the back of the neck and **slams** his face into the machine, then again, each impact ringing metallic.*

Mark Bravo: "He's trying to get him that free drink the hard way!"

Ross slumps to a knee, leaving a smear of red on the machine. Maxx leans on him, barely upright himself.

John Phillips: "The corridor is a warzone. Food, drinks, merch, debris everywhere--and in the middle of it, two men who refuse to say two small words."

Security and officials start waving them, shouting to bring it back toward the arena floor, clearly worried about losing control closer to the exits. The ref gestures frantically back in the direction of the doorway.

Referee: ""Back toward ringside! Let's go, bring it back!""

Ross shoves off Maxx's chest, glaring at the referee but moving anyway, one hand on the wall as he staggers down the corridor toward the door. Maxx limps after him, dragging that ruined hand, refusing to let him create distance.

Mark Bravo: "They're headed back toward the arena, John. After wrecking the concourse, the merch, the soda, and my faith in humanity, they're actually going to bring this back where it started."

John Phillips: "And you know if they're coming back toward the ring after all of *that*? They aren't coming to wrestle. They're coming to finish this."

Camera tracks behind them as Ross and Maxx stagger through the doorway, back toward the roar of the crowd--bloodied, limping, leaving a trail of chaos in the corridor behind them as the I Quit Match lumbers into its next, even darker chapter.

The roar of the crowd swells as Ross and Maxx stagger back through the entryway curtain and out into the arena bowl. The camera catches them emerging between two sections of fans, both men bloodied and barely upright.

John Phillips: "And after turning the concourse into a crime scene, Chris Ross and Maxx Mayhem are back in the 2300 Arena proper -- and somehow this I Quit Match is still going!"

Ross is a step ahead, one hand on the railing, the other wrapped in the back of Maxx's vest, dragging him

Black Horizon: 2025

down the steps toward ringside like a piece of luggage he hates.

Mark Bravo: "Look at the way Ross is hauling him. That's not an opponent -- that's a problem he's trying to erase from his life."

Maxx's boots bang down each step. He tries to brace himself, grabbing at fans' shoulders, the rail, anything, but Ross just jerks harder, refusing to let him stall.

*They reach the floor level and Ross **hurls** Maxx face-first into the side of the barricade. Maxx bounces off and sprawls onto his back, clutching his ribs.*

John Phillips: "Face into the rail again! Maxx Mayhem might not know what city he's in after all this."

*Ross doesn't pause. He grabs Maxx by the ankle and **swings** his leg into the steel steps. Maxx howls, his already tender shin ringing off metal.*

Mark Bravo: "That leg got smoked with a chair earlier and now it's getting introduced to the stairs! Ross is systematically going after every broken piece."

Maxx scrambles away on instinct, but Ross follows, stalking him like a predator. He stomps on the injured leg once, twice, pinning the knee to the floor.

John Phillips: "Targeting the leg, targeting the hand -- Chris Ross is dissecting Maxx Mayhem out here."

Ross drops to a knee, grabs Maxx's mangled right hand, and pins it palm-down on the floor. The camera zooms in on the swelling, the discoloration.

Mark Bravo: "Oh no. Don't do this. You don't need to be a doctor to know that hand is already wrecked."

Ross looks up at the referee, who is hovering close with the mic.

Chris Ross: ""Ask 'im. Right now.""

Referee: ""Maxx, do you quit? He's got that hand--""

Maxx, sweat and blood running down his face, shakes his head violently.

Maxx Mayhem: ""You... break it... then ask me again...""

Mark Bravo: "That is the dumbest, most Maxx Mayhem answer I have ever heard."

*Ross doesn't smirk. He doesn't gloat. He just **stands** up, keeping Maxx's right hand trapped under the heel of his boot... and then **stomps** down with everything he's got.*

Black Horizon: 2025

John Phillips: "Oh my God!"

Maxx screams, a raw, animal sound that cuts through the building. He jerks, tries to pull back, but Ross grinds his boot down, twisting cruelly.

Referee: ""MAXX! SAY IT! SAY 'I QUIT!'""

Maxx is almost sobbing, biting down so hard on his lip it starts to bleed again. He slams his good fist on the mat, over and over.

Maxx Mayhem: ""I--! I--! I... AIN'T... QUITTIN!'""

Mark Bravo: "He'd rather let that hand turn to dust than say it!"

Ross finally lifts his boot. Maxx cradles the right hand instantly, curling around it, body shaking.

Ross reaches down, grabs a handful of hair, and jerks him upright just enough to sling him under the bottom rope and back into the ring.

John Phillips: "After all that punishment out in the crowd, out in the corridor, we're finally back inside the ring -- but this might be the worst place Maxx could be with Chris Ross in this mood."

Ross follows him in, rolling under the bottom rope, moving slower now but with a grim, methodical purpose. He grabs Maxx by the legs and yanks him to the center of the ring, the injured hand still clutched to his chest.

Mark Bravo: "Ross looks like a man about to write the final chapter. The only question is how ugly that chapter gets."

*Ross drops down into **mounted forearm shots**, raining blows onto Maxx's forehead. Each one snaps Maxx's head sideways; blood spatters across Ross' taped fists.*

John Phillips: "Those forearms connecting flush! There is nothing left resembling defense from Maxx Mayhem!"

*After a barrage, Ross wraps one big hand around Maxx's throat and **chokes** him, squeezing, eyes wild, lips pulled back in a snarl.*

Referee: ""Ross, let go of the choke! Come on!""

Chris Ross: ""Make 'im quit then!""

Maxx's legs kick weakly, boot heels thudding against the mat. His good hand flails, searching for anything -- rope, arm, salvation -- and finds nothing.

Black Horizon: 2025

John Phillips: "Referee has almost no authority here. He can't disqualify Ross, he can only beg him to stop or beg Maxx to quit."

Ross finally releases the choke, letting Maxx suck in ragged gasps. He wastes no time, though -- he rolls to the side, slides under the bottom rope, and grabs something he'd abandoned earlier at ringside.

That long, ugly screwdriver.

Mark Bravo: "Oh no. It's back. We thought we'd seen the last of that thing when Maxx kicked it away earlier. Nope. The Boss went back to the toolbox."

Ross rolls back into the ring, the screwdriver gleaming under the lights. The crowd's buzz turns to a rumble of fear and outrage.

Crowd: ""NO! NO! NO! NO!""

Maxx is on his side, coughing, barely aware. Ross kneels behind him, grabs a handful of hair, and presses the flat of the screwdriver's tip against Maxx's temple.

John Phillips: "Oh, come on, not like this--"

Referee: ""Chris, no! No! Put it down!""

Chris Ross: ""Ask him. One more time.""

The ref is shaking as he brings the mic to Maxx's mouth.

Referee: ""Maxx... do you quit...?""

Maxx's eyes flicker open. He feels the cold steel at his temple, feels Ross' hand in his hair, forcing his head still.

Maxx Mayhem: ""...I quit...""

Ross' eyes widen a fraction -- then narrow.

Chris Ross: ""Say it louder.""

Referee: ""Maxx, the people need to hear it--""

Maxx coughs, a grotesque mix of blood and spit, then snarls, voice cracking.

Maxx Mayhem: ""I QUIT... LETTIN' YOU THINK YOU'RE SCARIER THAN ME!""

Black Horizon: 2025

With that, he suddenly jerks his head sideways, driving his own skull into the screwdriver and Ross' hand, knocking the weapon loose as both men tumble.

Mark Bravo: "He just headbutted the screwdriver out of his own face! I don't know if that's bravery or a concussion talking!"

*The screwdriver skitters across the mat and out under the bottom rope to the floor again. Ross snarls and lunges, mounting Maxx and **pummeling** him with short, brutal punches, all pretense of technique gone.*

John Phillips: "Ross is just beating the hell out of Maxx Mayhem now! These aren't wrestling holds, these are mugging shots!"

Maxx covers up as best he can with one arm, the other useless, his leg barely moving. Ross grabs him by the hair again, drags him up to his knees, then up to his feet by sheer brute force.

*He hooks the arm, traps the head, and snaps Maxx over with a vicious **suplex**, dumping him on the back of his neck. Maxx folds up and flops onto his side.*

Mark Bravo: "Every time Maxx almost quits, Ross finds another way to make us wish he had."

*Ross doesn't release the hold -- he rolls his hips, drags Maxx up again, and hits a **second suplex**, this one high-angle, landing Maxx more on his shoulders.*

John Phillips: "Multiple suplexes now, just stacking damage on already broken parts!"

Still not satisfied, Ross rolls again and muscles Maxx up for a third, but his ribs seize and he collapses to a knee, clutching his side, breathing ragged.

Mark Bravo: "Even Ross' own body is saying, 'hey, maybe stop throwing full-grown men around like lawn darts.'"

Ross snarls through the pain, shoves Maxx away, and waves the referee in.

Chris Ross: ""Ask him again. Right now. Or I'm gonna end him.""

The ref drops to Maxx's side, sweat and panic on his face.

Referee: ""Maxx... do you quit? Just say it, please!""

Maxx is flat on his back, eyes half-lidded, chest barely rising. There's a long, awful silence.

Then, slowly, he lifts his left hand -- the good one -- and curls his fingers into a shaky middle finger, raising it toward the rafters.

Black Horizon: 2025

Maxx Mayhem: "...you... first..."

John Phillips: "I... I don't even know what to say anymore. How much more can Maxx Mayhem *take*?"

Ross stares down at him, chest heaving, blood running down his face in streaks of red and dried ketchup. Whatever tiny sliver of patience went out with the last suplex is gone.

He shoves the referee aside, grabs Maxx by the legs, and starts dragging him toward the ropes with grim intent.

Mark Bravo: "Wherever he's taking Maxx now, John... it's not anywhere good. Ross has done everything short of end his career. I'm scared of what 'next level' looks like."

Ross threads Maxx's legs around the ring post, eyes fixed on the steel and the broken man he's about to weaponize it with...

...as the I Quit Match teeters on the edge of truly unforgivable violence.

Ross drags Maxx to the corner like a hunter hauling fresh roadkill, the crowd buzzing with a low, anxious rumble.

John Phillips: "Chris Ross has something nasty in mind here. He's threading Maxx Mayhem's legs around that ring post and I don't like where this is going one bit."

*Ross steps out to the floor, grabs Maxx's right leg -- the one he's been punishing all night -- and **yanks** it sideways, slamming the knee into the unforgiving steel.*

CLANG!

Maxx Mayhem: "AAAHH--!"

Mark Bravo: "Straight into the post! That leg's one good chair shot away from being held together with duct tape and prayer!"

Ross does it again. And again. Each impact echoes, each one dragging another scream out of Maxx's throat. The crowd winces in unison.

John Phillips: "Three times into that steel! That knee might be completely destroyed!"

Ross finally lets the leg drop, Maxx's boot sliding off the post and hanging limp off the edge of the apron. Ross doesn't give him a second -- he reaches under the ring and pulls out a steel chair.

Mark Bravo: "Oh no. Oh, absolutely not. We've seen what Chris Ross does with hardware."

Black Horizon: 2025

*Ross slides the chair into the ring, then follows. He drags Maxx's broken body away from the corner, out to center ring, and starts **wrapping** that same leg in the chair -- threading the shin and ankle between the seat and the back.*

John Phillips: "This is bad. This is very, very bad. Ross is looking to Pillmanize that leg -- to end Maxx Mayhem's career right here at Black Horizon."

Maxx is barely coherent, groaning, trying to pull his leg free, but every twitch sends a shock of pain up his body.

Maxx Mayhem: ""No-- no-no-no-- get-- get off--""

Ross cinches the chair tighter around the limb, then stands. He looks down at Maxx... then up at the nearest corner.

Mark Bravo: "Do *not* climb that turnbuckle, man. Don't even *think* about it."

*Ross **walks** to the corner. Every step is deliberate. Methodical. He grabs the top rope, feels the crowd's panic wash over him... and starts to climb.*

Crowd: ""DON'T DO IT! DON'T DO IT!""

John Phillips: "Chris Ross is heading to the high rent district with a chair wrapped around Maxx Mayhem's leg! If he jumps, that knee is done!"

The referee is in a full panic now, hands flailing.

Referee: ""Chris! Don't do this! Get down! I'll stop it, I swear to God I'll stop it!""

Ross stands, balanced on the second rope, one hand on the top, staring down at Maxx and that trapped leg. His chest rises and falls like a piston.

Chris Ross: ""You wanna quit, Maxx? Or you wanna leave in a chair to match that one?""

Mark Bravo: "That's not a threat, that's a promise. Ross has ended careers before. He will do it again."

The ref drops to his knees by Maxx's head, shoving the mic almost against his lips.

Referee: ""MAXX! DO YOU QUIT?! SAY IT! SAY 'I QUIT' AND I'LL STOP THIS! COME ON!""

Maxx stares up at the lights, sweat and blood in his eyes, breathing like his lungs are on fire. He looks down at his leg, at the chair. He tries to move it, and a howl rips out of him, body jerking.

Black Horizon: 2025

Maxx Mayhem: ""AAHH--!""

John Phillips: "You can see it -- he knows. If Ross comes down on that chair, his knee might *never* be the same again."

Ross lifts one foot onto the top rope now, crouched, ready to drop all his weight down on that metal-wrapped limb.

Mark Bravo: "He's not bluffing, John! If he jumps, that's ligaments, tendons, everything gone! Tapout Terror's gonna be a *memory*, not a move!"

Maxx shakes his head, tears mixing with sweat, jaw clenched so hard it trembles. The mic is practically shoved into his teeth.

Referee: ""Maxx, please! Say it! Say you quit! I'll call it, I swear!""

Maxx tries to push himself up on his elbows, staring at Ross on the ropes. For a second, there's that familiar wild glint -- that "screw it, jump" madness we've seen a hundred times.

Then his gaze drops back to his leg. To the chair. To the reality of it.

John Phillips: "You can see the war in his eyes. Pride on one side. Survival on the other."

Maxx swallows hard. His voice is shredded when it comes out.

Maxx Mayhem: ""I... I... I QUIT!""

The words tear out of him like they're poisoned.

Referee: ""HE SAID IT! HE SAID 'I QUIT!' RING THE BELL! RING IT!""

DING DING DING!

John Phillips: "Maxx Mayhem said it! Maxx Mayhem said 'I quit!' This I Quit Match is over!"

For a heartbeat, Ross doesn't move.

He stays perched there on the ropes, looking down, the crowd roaring, the bell echoing in the rafters.

Mark Bravo: "Get down, Ross. It's done. You got what you wanted."

The referee is screaming up at him now.

Black Horizon: 2025

Referee: ""IT'S OVER! HE QUIT! GET DOWN, CHRIS! GET DOWN!""

Ross' jaw flexes. You can see him thinking about it -- that one last stomp, that one last line he can't uncross.

Then, finally, he steps down from the ropes to the mat.

John Phillips: "Thank God. For once, Chris Ross listened to somebody."

*He stalks over, grabs the chair, and **rips** it off Maxx's leg, tossing it aside. Maxx yells again as the metal scrapes his skin, then curls around the limb instinctively, clutching his knee.*

Ring Announcer: ""Ladies and gentlemen... as a result of Maxx Mayhem *verbally* saying 'I quit'... your winner... **CHRIS! THE BOSS! ROSS!**""

Ross stands over Maxx, chest heaving, face a mess of blood and smeared ketchup. He doesn't raise his arms. He doesn't play to the crowd. He just looks down at the man who finally said the words he swore he never would.

Mark Bravo: "Maxx Mayhem went everywhere in this building, bled all over Philly, and it still took Chris Ross threatening to snap his leg in half to make him say it."

John Phillips: "You don't have to like Maxx Mayhem to respect what it took to rip those words out of him tonight."

EMTs and officials slide into the ring now, swarming Maxx, gently prying his hands away from the injured knee, starting to brace it. One checks his hand; the grimace says enough.

Ross watches for a second longer... then drops down and rolls out of the ring, collapsing to a seat against the apron as his music hits faintly under the crowd's conflicted reaction.

Mark Bravo: "Look at Ross. He won... but that doesn't look like satisfaction. That looks like a man who just proved a point and maybe doesn't like what that turned him into."

John Phillips: "Chris Ross promised Scott Stevens that this would be the end. He promised this was one and done. After what we've just witnessed... I don't know how either man *could* come back from this and ever be the same."

Camera focuses on Maxx Mayhem, surrounded by medics, eyes glassy, jaw tight. He hears his own words replayed over the speakers in his head -- "I quit" -- and you can see the sting of it in his expression.

Then it cuts to Ross on the floor, head tipped back against the apron, eyes shut, listening to the boos rain down on him like a familiar, bitter rain.

Black Horizon: 2025

In the middle of the violence, the noise, and the broken bodies... one truth hangs heavy over Black Horizon:

Tonight, in the 2300 Arena, Maxx Mayhem finally said "I quit."

And Chris Ross was willing to be monstrous enough to make it happen.

A New Path Begins

*Backstage, the camera comes up on the Black Horizon interview set. The WrestleZone Championship glows under the lights, resting across the shoulder of **Tyger II**. His mask is slightly scuffed from earlier, but his posture is straight, composed -- a calm predator at rest.*

*At his side stands **Melissa Cartwright**, microphone in hand, the Black Horizon logo pulsing on the screen behind them.*

Melissa Cartwright: "Ladies and gentlemen, joining me at this time is the brand new WrestleZone Champion -- **Tyger II**."

The crowd in the arena can be faintly heard reacting through the walls, a pop rolling in as his name is heard over the feed.

Tyger inclines his head slightly, one hand resting on the faceplate of the title, fingers spread like a quiet claim.

Melissa Cartwright: "Tyger, earlier tonight you defeated Eric Dane Jr. in a hard-fought opening bout to become WrestleZone Champion. Later on, Gunnar Van Patton survived nine other competitors to win the WrestleZone Rumble and earn a title opportunity at Season's Beatings."

She turns toward him, eyes bright with the question everyone wants answered.

Melissa Cartwright: "You've barely had time to breathe as champion and already your path is set. What are your thoughts on Gunnar Van Patton becoming your first challenger?"

Tyger's hand lifts from the belt and clasps at the strap, grounding himself. His voice, when he speaks, is low but clear.

Tyger II: "Tonight... a new path began for me."

He glances down at the title for a moment, then back to Melissa.

Tyger II: "I walked into Black Horizon as a son carrying a legacy... and I walked out of the opening match as WrestleZone Champion. I did not expect the night to end the way it did for Eric Dane Jr. -- a real injury is

Black Horizon: 2025

nothing to celebrate."

He gives a subtle, respectful nod toward the camera.

Tyger II: "He is arrogant. He is reckless. But he is still a man who climbed through those ropes. I hope he heals. I hope that when he does... he comes back stronger, and wiser."

Tyger shifts the belt on his shoulder, the mask turning more directly to the camera now.

Tyger II: "But the ring does not stop moving because one man falls. Black Horizon kept turning. And in the Rumble... the storm chose its next shape."

He exhales slowly.

Tyger II: "Gunnar Van Patton."

There's no fear in the way he says the name -- just acknowledgment.

Tyger II: "A man who enjoys the sound of bone on steel. A man who looks at chaos and smiles. He outlasted nine others to reach me. That earns respect... and a promise."

Melissa tilts the mic a bit closer.

Melissa Cartwright: "A promise?"

Tyger nods once.

Tyger II: "My father, Tatsumi Tanaka, taught me that a champion must never run from the fight... and never insult the fight by taking it lightly."

His free hand lifts, fingers curling into the familiar "Tiger Claw" gesture for just a moment.

Tyger II: "Gunnar is bigger. Stronger. He has made a career out of breaking people who think speed and heart will be enough. At Season's Beatings, he will walk into that ring believing he can crush me like all the others."

Tyger's head cants slightly, almost like a predator studying an oncoming hunter.

Tyger II: "My promise is this..."

Tyger II: "I will not run. I will not panic. I will not let this title become a trophy for someone who treats the ring like a playground for his violence."

Black Horizon: 2025

He taps the faceplate of the WrestleZone Championship twice, deliberate.

Tyger II: "This is not just metal. It is every wrestler who steps into The WrestleZone, every match fought under those lights. Gunnar Van Patton wants to turn this into another battlefield of broken bodies."

His tone hardens, that supernatural edge creeping into the calm.

Tyger II: "I will turn it into a *hunt*."

Melissa's eyes widen slightly at the intensity behind the mask.

Melissa Cartwright: "You've talked before about the ring being sacred ground, about honoring your father's legacy while building your own. Does facing someone like Gunnar... someone who thrives on brutality... change the way you fight as champion?"

Tyger takes a moment, considering, the crowd murmur in the distance underscoring the pause.

Tyger II: "I adapt. That is what a hunter does."

He lifts his chin slightly.

Tyger II: "Against Eric Dane Jr., I wanted to show what this championship could look like in the hands of an aerial striker, a disciplined warrior. Against Gunnar, I will have to prove that the tiger's claws are not just for show... they are for *survival*."

He glances off, as if seeing the future match laid out in front of him.

Tyger II: "The fans saw what he did tonight. They know what he is capable of. At Season's Beatings, they will see what *I* am capable of when someone tries to tear down what I consider sacred."

He turns back to the camera, voice steady, almost ritualistic.

Tyger II: "Gunnar Van Patton..."

Tyger II: "You survived the Rumble. You earned the right to stand across from me. For that, I bow to you."

He gives the slightest, formal bow of his head.

Tyger II: "But at Season's Beatings... when that bell rings and the noise falls away... you will understand something my father understood, something I am still writing in my own blood."

The "Tiger Claw" returns, held up beside the glinting title.

Black Horizon: 2025

Tyger II: "The tiger does not back down. The tiger does not break. And the tiger does not surrender his territory."

Melissa nods, taking a half-step back to give him the final frame.

Melissa Cartwright: "Tyger II, WrestleZone Champion, now officially on a collision course with Gunnar Van Patton at Season's Beatings."

Tyger rests his hand on the title one more time, eyes fixed on the lens -- a silent warning to the man coming for him -- as we fade out from the interview set and back into the rhythms of Black Horizon.

Probably My Last Shot

Backstage, away from the chaos and noise, there's a small, dim locker room.

Two folding chairs. A beat-up bench. A duffel bag half-open on the floor.

David Hightower sits hunched forward on one of the chairs, forearms braced on his knees, staring at the concrete like it insulted him. His knuckles are still taped, knotted and scarred. On the bench beside him, **Emily Hightower** sits sideways, one leg up, an ice pack pressed against her jaw where Marie's kendo stick caught her.

The UTA Women's United States Championship sits between them on the bench, almost awkwardly -- a reminder of something that hasn't gone away even as everything else feels like it's slipping.

Silence hangs for a long beat.

David Hightower: "Ya know, kid..."

He doesn't look up. His voice is gravel, worn down by too many wars.

David Hightower: "I've been in this for so long... what do I got to show for it?"

He snorts, but there's no humor in it.

David Hightower: "I ain't held a single belt anywhere. Not Skyfall. Not DEFIANCE. Not UTA. Nowhere. Just a trail of stitches and some folks sayin' 'yeah, he was tough'."

He finally looks over at her, eyes tired but still sharp.

David Hightower: "Last week... that was probably my last shot at gold. Jarvis in my sights. Crowd screamin'. Then Sean Jackson strolls in. And that's it. Curtain closes."

Black Horizon: 2025

He leans back, palms rubbing over his face.

David Hightower: "Whole career, and the story ends with me layin' there starin' at the lights while somebody else gets their hand raised."

Emily looks at him over the ice pack, eyes rimmed red from more than just the shot she took. She lowers the pack a little.

Emily Hightower: "You done feelin' sorry for yourself, old man?"

David's eyebrow ticks up. It's not angry -- more surprised she fired that shot.

David Hightower: "'Scuse me?"

Emily sighs, drops her foot to the floor, elbows resting on her knees to mirror his posture.

Emily Hightower: "Look, I get it. It sucks. You got robbed. I got robbed. Tonight felt like the universe decided the Hightowers were the punching bag segment of the show."

She gestures toward the bench where the U.S. Title sits.

Emily Hightower: "But don't sit there and act like you ain't got nothin' to show for it. You see that belt? I don't get that without you. I don't get out of West Memphis without you. I don't learn how to turn a scrap into a career without sittin' in scrapyards watchin' you bleed for fifty bucks and a handshake."

David's jaw shifts. He looks away, but he's listening.

Emily Hightower: "You didn't hold gold? Fine. You held the door open. For me. For folks like me. That count for somethin'."

She swallows, the frustration bubbling back up.

Emily Hightower: "And yeah, tonight..."

Her voice tightens.

Emily Hightower: "Tonight I had Amy. I know I did. I could feel her slippin'. Crowd could feel it. Then Marie's music hits, Amy yanks that chain, and I eat a kendo stick I never saw comin'."

She presses the ice pack back to her jaw for a second, hissing at the sting.

Emily Hightower: "I ain't mad at Marie... not really. I know where she was at. I'm mad that I let somebody else's war blow up in my yard."

Black Horizon: 2025

David looks back at her, studying his daughter's face. The frustration. The hurt. The grit under all of it.

David Hightower: "You feel like that was your only shot."

Emily shrugs, but it's small.

Emily Hightower: "Kinda feels that way, yeah. Double champ at Black Horizon? Would've been a hell of a chapter."

She taps the face of her U.S. Title with two fingers.

Emily Hightower: "Instead I'm sittin' here holdin' one belt wonderin' if that's as high as I'm ever gonna climb."

Silence. The kind where two stubborn people are both staring at the same truth from different angles.

Then David snorts again -- this time with a little more life in it.

David Hightower: "Ya know somethin'?"

She looks over at him.

David Hightower: "You sound just like me, and that scares the hell outta me."

Emily blinks, caught off guard. He pushes on.

David Hightower: "I been tellin' myself for years I was one break away. One match away. One chance away. And every time it didn't happen, I sat somewhere like this, starin' at concrete, talkin' about 'final shots' and 'what I got to show for it'."

He jabs a calloused finger at her belt.

David Hightower: "Difference between you and me is you already proved you can finish the climb."

Emily opens her mouth, but he cuts her off with a raised hand.

David Hightower: "You're the one who turned a U.S. Title into your yard. You're the one who dragged Amy Harrison into a dog collar match and damn near broke her. You're the one who got up after takin' a stick to the face and still tried to fight."

He leans back, eyes on the ceiling for a second.

David Hightower: "Me? Maybe that was my last shot. Maybe. But you?"

Black Horizon: 2025

He looks at her again, and this time there's something proud, even if it's wrapped in exhaustion.

David Hightower: "You're just gettin' started."

Emily lets that sit. The tension in her shoulders eases a fraction.

Emily Hightower: "Doesn't feel like it tonight."

David Hightower: "It never does on nights like this."

He shifts his chair a little closer, elbows on his knees again.

David Hightower: "You know what folks *do* remember me for? Not belts. Not banners."

He smirks faintly.

David Hightower: "They remember that when someone picked a fight with me, I didn't go away. I didn't *quit*. 'Toughest Dog in the Yard' wasn't a gimmick, Em. It was a warning."

He nudges the U.S. Title toward her with his knuckles.

David Hightower: "You call yourself the Junkyard Bitch, right?"

Her mouth twitches into the smallest ghost of a grin.

Emily Hightower: "Damn right."

David Hightower: "Then act like it. You got robbed tonight. You got dragged into somebody else's mess. You got your shot stolen. So what?"

He leans in closer, voice dropping low.

David Hightower: "A dog from where we come from doesn't just whine at the gate 'cause someone snatched a bone. She jumps the fence and goes and gets another one."

For the first time since the bell rang, Emily actually laughs -- short, rough, but real.

Emily Hightower: "That your way of tellin' me to stop mopin'?"

David Hightower: "That's my way of tellin' you... you don't let tonight be 'the one that got away'. You make it chapter one of why Amy Harrison shoulda finished the job when she had the chance."

He sits back, the weight in his eyes still there, but now carrying something else -- resolve.

Black Horizon: 2025

David Hightower: "I might never hold gold. That's fine. I can live with that. But I'll be damned if I'm gonna sit here and watch my kid talk like she's already at the end of her rope when she's barely hit her stride."

Emily looks at him for a long moment. Then she reaches over and picks up the U.S. Title, resting it across her lap. Her fingers drum lightly on the plate.

Emily Hightower: "So what you're sayin' is... we're not done."

David Hightower: "We ain't never done."

She nods slowly, jaw setting again -- the hurt still there, but now riding shotgun with something sharper.

Emily Hightower: "Alright then."

She glances toward the door, toward the arena she just left.

Emily Hightower: "Let Amy have tonight. Let Marie chase her at Season's Beatings. When the dust settles... I'll still be here. Still swingin'. Still bitin'."

She looks back at her father, a small, dangerous smile forming.

Emily Hightower: "Dog still runs this yard."

David grins back, tired but proud.

David Hightower: "That's my girl."

The camera lingers on the two of them -- beaten, bruised, but not broken -- as we fade out of the room and back toward the chaos still unfolding at Black Horizon.

Season's Beatings

Snow falls over a dark screen. Jingle bells start... then abruptly get drowned out by a CRASH of guitars and a big, red-and-green UTA logo slamming onto the screen.

GRAPHIC: SEASON'S BEATINGS: 2025

December 28, 2025 - Allstate Arena - Rosemont, Illinois

Cut to: A wrestling ring set up in the middle of a cozy, over-decorated "North Pole" set. Candy cane ring posts. Tinsel on the ropes. In the corner, a giant sack of presents... all with little UTA logos on the tags.

The bell DINGS.

Black Horizon: 2025

*From the hard-cam side, a very jacked, very over-the-top **Santa Claus** steps through the ropes. Red-and-white tights. Black boots. Big white beard. Santa hat cocked to the side like a bandana.*

He tosses his sack into the corner and grabs a candy cane-striped microphone.

Santa: "HO! HO! HO! MERRY... BEATINGS!"

Canned crowd pops, sleigh bells punctuating the cheer.

Santa: "This year, big man in red's checkin' his list... and he's seein' nothin' but *grudges!*"

Quick cut: Snow wipes transition into in-ring clips.

FLASH: Tyger II holding up the WrestleZone Championship.

FLASH: Gunnar Van Patton staring dead into the camera, cracking his neck.

Santa (V.O.): "You got a lionhearted new WrestleZone Champion..."

Tyger II's mask framed under falling "snow."

Santa (V.O.): "...and a very naughty Van Patton comin' to collect!"

FLASH: Marie Van Claudio screaming at Amy Harrison, officials holding her back, chain still wrapped around her fist.

FLASH: Amy Harrison clutching the Women's Championship, shrieking at ringside.

Santa (V.O.): "You got a First Lady that's *furios*... and a Queen of Mean who's been runnin' her own Empire."

Back to Santa in the festive ring. He pulls a giant scroll from his sack, lets it unroll all the way across the mat and half out of the ring.

Santa: "I checked the list, kids. Lotta names in the *naughty* column this year..."

He scrolls down with a gloved finger.

Santa: "Harrison. Van Claudio. Valentine. Jackson. Mayhem. Ross. Van Patton. And that's just page one!"

He grins, eyes twinkling.

Santa: "But at Season's Beatings... there's only one kind of gift we hand out."

Black Horizon: 2025

He drops the list and cocks a red-and-green steel chair onto his shoulder like it's a candy cane.

Santa: "PURE. UNWRAPPED. VIOLENCE."

SMASH CUT: A stylized montage under a heavy, metal version of "Carol of the Bells."

- *A silhouette of Jarvis Valentine with the UTA Championship over his shoulder, snow swirling around him.*
- *Sean Jackson's smirk under a Santa hat, the Mental Breakdown knee shown in stark black-and-white replay.*
- *Emily Hightower dragging a chain behind her like a twisted holiday garland.*
- *Maxx Mayhem laughing in front of a burning Christmas tree made of broken tables.*
- *Chris Ross wiping blood from his mouth and smearing it across a Season's Beatings logo like finger paint.*

John Phillips (V.O.): "On December twenty-eighth... the Allstate Arena doesn't get carolers..."

Quick shot: a ring bell morphs into a sleigh bell, then back into a ring bell as it DINGS.

Mark Bravo (V.O.): "It gets Season's Beatings!"

Back to Santa in the ring. He's now got a "Season's Beatings" steel chair in one hand and a big sack in the other.

Santa: "So be good..."

He smirks.

Santa: "...or be *there*."

He looks off-camera.

Santa: "Hit my music."

A wild mashup of sleigh bells and heavy guitar kicks in. Pyro bursts from candy-cane cannons at the stage as a Season's Beatings logo slams onto the screen with a thunderclap.

GRAPHIC:

WRESTLEUTA PRESENTS

SEASON'S BEATINGS: 2025

LIVE SUNDAY, DECEMBER 28 • ALLSTATE ARENA • ROSEMONT, ILLINOIS

John Phillips (V.O.): "Season's Beatings. 'Tis the season... to get your bells rung."

Black Horizon: 2025

One last jingle-and-guitar sting as the graphic holds, then we smash-cut back to Black Horizon.

Sean Jackson vs. Jarvis Valentine

The camera settles on the Black Horizon logo at mid-ring, lit in a harsh white glow. The hum in the 2300 Arena turns into a rising chant as the ring announcer steps to the center, title belt glinting in his hands.

Ring Announcer: "The following contest is your **MAIN EVENT** of the evening... and it is scheduled for one fall... with a sixty-minute time limit... and it is for the **UTA CHAMPIONSHIP!**"

The crowd comes unglued, a wall of noise bouncing off the old ECW walls.

Crowd: "U-TA! U-TA! U-TA!"

The lights around the arena dim, leaving only a soft wash of white over the ring. The big screen flashes through quick black-and-white clips: Jarvis Valentine hoisting the title at WrestleUTA: 25, Jarvis trading bombs with Brick Bronson, Jarvis staggering on his knees at Survivor right before Sean Jackson's knee scythes him down.

John Phillips: "Jarvis Valentine came into tonight knowing the man who ended his Survivor run with one Mental Breakdown was waiting at the end of the Black Horizon. Now it's time for the champion to walk into the storm."

The screen slams to black.

Then--

*A single snare hit cracks through the sound system, followed by the pounding, defiant opening of "**American Flags**".*

John Phillips: "And there he is."

Red, white, and blue lights strobe across the 2300 Arena as a stylized stars-and-stripes pattern ripples over the stage. When the lyrics hit, a burst of red pyro shoots up on either side of the entrance, followed by white sparks raining down in the center.

*Through the haze, **Jarvis Valentine** steps out onto the stage.*

He's in full big-fight gear tonight: navy trunks with subtle silver striping, white kickpads with a faint star motif, and a sleeveless ring jacket in deep midnight blue trimmed in silver. The UTA Championship is strapped tight around his waist, center plate polished to a mirror shine under the lights.

Black Horizon: 2025

But it's his eyes that sell it--no smile, no showboating, just focused intensity, jaw set as he scans the sea of fans in Philly.

Mark Bravo: "You look at that man right now, you don't see the guy who got blindsided at Survivor. You see a champion who walked into Black Horizon knowing Sean Jackson's trying to write his obituary... and he said, 'Print this after I kick his ass.'"

*Jarvis steps to the edge of the stage as the chorus swells. He unhooks the title, holds it with both hands for a beat, and then **raises it straight overhead**. The lights snap to a full red-white-and-blue wash as a smaller volley of fireworks pops behind him like Fourth of July mortars.*

Crowd: "JAR-VIS! JAR-VIS! JAR-VIS!"

John Phillips: "From the Lincoln Journal Star to the main event of Black Horizon, with the UTA Championship in his hands and the single most dangerous opportunist in WrestleUTA history gunning for him."

Jarvis lowers the belt, drapes it over his shoulder, and starts down the aisle. He doesn't parade; he walks with a measured, unhurried pace, like a man heading into a very serious appointment. Every few steps, he reaches out to slap a forearm or tap knuckles with an outstretched hand, but his eyes always drift back toward the ring.

The hard cam catches a close-up as he reaches ringside -- sweat already beading at his temples under the heat, the faint line of the scar at his hairline from Survivor's knee shot visible when he turns his head.

Mark Bravo: "That mark right there? That's Sean Jackson's signature. That's the receipt from Survivor -- and you better believe Jarvis Valentine has been replaying that moment in his mind every night since."

Jarvis pauses at the foot of the ramp and looks up at the squared circle, then over his shoulder at the big screen where a static Black Horizon logo looms. The sound in the building swells around him.

Crowd: "LET'S GO JAR-VIS! *clap clap clapclapclap*"

He steps to the steel steps, runs his hand along the top rope once -- feeling the give, grounding himself -- then climbs up onto the apron. With one smooth motion, he turns to face the crowd, raises the title high again, and leans back against the ropes, letting the camera catch the shot: champion framed against the packed 2300 Arena, stars-and-stripes lighting pulsing across a sea of faces.

John Phillips: "Jarvis Valentine has carried this company on his back from the moment WrestleUTA lit the lights again. Through Survivor, through East Coast Invasion... he has been the standard-bearer. But tonight, at the event that launched it all twenty-five years ago... he's not just defending a championship. He's defending an era."

Black Horizon: 2025

He steps through the ropes, slow and deliberate, and walks straight to the center of the ring. He lays the title flat on the Black Horizon logo, resting both hands on the center plate, head bowed for a moment like a man saying a quiet prayer... or promising himself he won't leave without it.

Mark Bravo: "That right there is a man telling the world, 'This is mine. If you want it, come earn it.'"

Jarvis straightens, picks the belt up, and hands it to the referee, never taking his eyes off the hard cam. The ref holds it high for the crowd, turning to each side of the arena before passing it to the timekeeper.

Jarvis backs into his corner, rolling his shoulders, gripping the top rope and leaning forward to stretch, eyes locked on the entrance way now. The music fades, the lights shift back to a neutral, ominous tone.

John Phillips: "The champion is in the ring. Black Horizon's main event is moments away. All that's left..."

Mark Bravo: "...is for the ghost of WrestleUTA's past to walk through that curtain."

The camera pushes in on Jarvis' face -- focused, unblinking, ready -- as the 2300 Arena buzzes, waiting for the first eerie notes of "In the Air Tonight"... and the man who refuses to stay buried.

The lights in the 2300 Arena dim again... then dim further... until the only glow is a soft, sickly blue over the ring and a faint halo around the entrance stage.

The crowd noise shifts. Not cheers, not boos--just a low, uneasy murmur. Everybody knows what's coming.

John Phillips: "We showed you earlier tonight the last time Sean Jackson stepped into a WrestleUTA ring... and the last time he stepped into Jarvis Valentine's life."

Silence hangs for a heartbeat too long.

Then, from the speakers... that faint, cold drum machine pattern starts to pulse. A heartbeat in the dark.

*The first haunted notes of "**In the Air Tonight**" slide in like a fog under the door. The 2300 Arena is bathed in a pale, icicle-blue light as a single white spotlight drops onto the stage.*

Mark Bravo: "There it is. That song. That sound. I've got goosebumps and not the good kind."

For several long seconds, the stage is empty. The music builds, low and patient, running fingers along every nerve in the building.

*Then the curtain parts--just a little--and **Sean Jackson** steps out.*

He's in a tailored black suit jacket over a dark dress shirt, top buttons undone, no tie. The jacket catches the light with a faint, almost oily sheen. His hair is slicked back, the years etched into the lines around his eyes

Black Horizon: 2025

only making the cold stare sharper.

That same predatory smile is there. Not wide. Not cartoonish. Just a thin, knowing curve that says he's three moves ahead of everyone.

John Phillips: "Three-time UTA World Champion. Multiple-time NeWA World Champion. The man who threw himself and The Spectre off the top of the Triple Tier... and then walked back into Survivor just to take Jarvis Valentine's head off."

Crowd: "BOOOOOOOOOOO!"

Mixed in with the boos, though, are pockets of people standing, staring, phones up, a few even clapping on reflex. Star power is star power, even when it's poisonous.

Mark Bravo: "Half this crowd hates him, half this crowd is in awe, and the other half--yeah, math's dead tonight--doesn't know if they should be cheering or saying a prayer for Jarvis."

Sean stands at the top of the ramp, shoulders relaxed, soaking in every decibel. He never looks at the hard cam. He never plays to the crowd. His gaze is locked in one direction only:

Down the aisle. Through the ropes. Right at Jarvis Valentine.

In the ring, Jarvis grips the top rope in his corner and leans forward, eyes narrowed, lips pressed into a hard line. There's no blink, no flinch -- just a simmering tension as past and present lock eyes.

John Phillips: "That stare... that line from the stage to the champion... you could lay the entire last twenty-five years of WrestleUTA history on it."

Sean slowly raises his arms, extending index and pinky fingers in the familiar Hook 'Em horns symbol, angling it toward the ring. The spotlight intensifies, casting long shadows behind him like hooked claws reaching down the ramp.

Crowd: "YOU STILL SUCK! *clap clap clapclapclap*"

The chant doesn't faze him. If anything, his smile twitches just a little wider.

Then he starts to walk.

Not a strut. Not a rush. A slow, deliberate, measured walk down the ramp, each step in time with the steady, stalking pulse of the music. He doesn't look side to side. If fans reach out, he doesn't slap the hands away--he just ignores them completely, as if they aren't even real.

Mark Bravo: "That's the thing about Sean Jackson, John. He doesn't come out here to soak in adoration or

Black Horizon: 2025

hate. He comes out here like a man going to sign a contract that says, 'Somebody's life changes tonight.'"

The cameras catch fans leaning over the rail, middle fingers raised, shouting every name in the book. Sean's eyes never leave the ring.

Halfway down the ramp, he pauses. The music hangs in that eerie build right before the famous drum break.

He lifts his head just enough to let the hard cam catch a three-quarter profile: the smirk, the dead-calm eyes, the faint scar at the corner of his mouth from some long-forgotten war.

Up in the ring, Jarvis steps out from his corner, just to the edge of the ropes, championship now out of his hands but still very much in his posture.

John Phillips: "No flinch from the champion. Jarvis Valentine isn't backing up a single inch."

*Sean chuckles under his breath--barely visible, but the cameras catch the twitch of shoulders--and continues the walk. When the iconic drum fill finally slams into the track, a ring of white pyro **erupts** in bursts along the sides of the ramp, like landmines going off as he passes.*

Crowd: "BOOOOOOO!"

Mark Bravo: "The last time this song hit in a WrestleUTA main event, the ring didn't survive the night. Now it's just ropes, turnbuckles, and one man who's never met a career he didn't think he could ruin."

Sean reaches ringside. He slows even more, taking the last few steps around the corner to the steel stairs. He pauses at the bottom and finally looks away from Jarvis--to the title belt in the timekeeper's hands.

He studies it, head tilted, like a predator eyeing a piece of meat someone else is holding for now.

John Phillips: "That look says it all. He sees the UTA Championship and he doesn't see Jarvis Valentine. He sees something that used to belong to men like him."

Sean taps the center plate with two fingers, slow and almost affectionate. The timekeeper recoils a half step, clutching it tighter. Sean smirks and turns away, climbing the steel steps one at a time.

At the apron, he wipes his boots carefully, one then the other, more ritual than respect. Then he ducks between the ropes, stepping into the ring with the same unhurried grace he had on the ramp.

The house lights stay low, giving the ring a surreal, almost underwater feel as the blue wash lingers. The music begins to taper, fading into the background as Sean drifts toward the center.

Jarvis leaves his corner to meet him there, the two men stopping with inches between their foreheads. The camera dives in tight: champion and challenger, nose-to-nose under that cold light.

Black Horizon: 2025

Mark Bravo: "This is the shot right here. Today's standard-bearer... and the career killer who doesn't know how to leave well enough alone."

Sean finally breaks eye contact--not to look away, but to let his gaze drop, very deliberately, to the faint Survivor mark near Jarvis' hairline. He studies it for a beat... then lets that callous little smile bloom again as he looks back into Jarvis' eyes.

No words yet. Just that expression: 'I did that. I can do it again.'

John Phillips: "Jarvis might as well have the words 'Survivor' and the date printed on his skull. Sean Jackson knows exactly where he hit... and exactly where he wants to aim tonight."

The music finally cuts. Full arena lights snap back on, drowning the ring in brilliance. The 2300 Arena erupts in a split reaction--deafening boos for Sean, thunderous cheers trying to drown them out for Jarvis.

Crowd: "LET'S GO JAR-VIS! / SEAN JACK-SON SUCKS!"

The referee wedges himself carefully between them, one hand on each chest, forcing a half-step of distance. He looks from one to the other, eyes wide with the weight of what he's about to preside over.

Ring Announcer: "Introducing first, the challenger... from Dallas, Texas... weighing in at two hundred and twenty pounds... he is a three-time UTA World Champion... **SEAN... JACKSON!**"

The boos crash down like a tidal wave. Sean basks in them, raising one hand lazily in acknowledgment, that smirk never leaving his face.

Ring Announcer: "And his opponent... from Lincoln, Nebraska... weighing in at two hundred and seventy-four pounds... he is the reigning and defending **UTA CHAMPION... JARVIS... VALENTINE!**"

The building explodes for the champion. Jarvis doesn't raise his arms. He just stares straight through Sean Jackson, breathing slow, ready.

John Phillips: "The ghost of Black Horizon past. The standard-bearer of WrestleUTA present. One championship... one main event."

Mark Bravo: "Sean Jackson took Jarvis Valentine's Survivor moment away with one knee. Tonight, Jarvis is trying to make sure that was a preview... not a prophecy."

The referee takes the belt from ringside, holds it high between them for all four sides of the arena to see, then hands it off and signals to the timekeeper.

Sean Jackson. Jarvis Valentine. Black Horizon.

Black Horizon: 2025

The entire arena holds its breath.

DING DING DING.

The bell's echo barely fades before the two men start to circle, slow and wary, their boots scuffing the Black Horizon logo at center ring.

John Phillips: "UTA Championship on the line, Black Horizon main event, and listen to this crowd--"

They lunge into a collar-and-elbow tie-up. Jarvis uses his size to drive Sean back a step, then another, forcing him toward the corner.

Mark Bravo: "Jarvis with the power edge early. If he can make this a grind, that's bad news for Sean's neck and back after Triple Tier."

Sean's heels touch the turnbuckles. The referee counts, Jarvis gives a clean break at four, raising his hands--

*--and Sean **instantly** buries a thumb into Jarvis' eye as the ref steps between them.*

John Phillips: "Oh, come on!"

Referee: ""HEY! Open the hand! Back it off!""

Jarvis staggers back, clutching at his eye. Sean slides along the ropes and follows, smirking.

Mark Bravo: "That's Sean Jackson in a nutshell. Give 'em the clean break they ask for, then jab 'em in the socket when they're feeling honorable."

Sean grabs Jarvis by the wrist and snaps him into a short arm drag, then another, using leverage and suddenness to send the bigger man skidding across the canvas. On the third, he hangs on, transitioning into a tight, grinding side headlock.

John Phillips: "Side headlock now, and Sean's already putting torque on the neck--"

He wrenches down, knuckles grinding into Jarvis' temple. The champion grimaces, planting a knee, trying to rise.

Sean Jackson: ""How's the head, champ? Still ringing?""

Jarvis fires a forearm into Sean's ribs, then another. He shoves at Sean's back, trying to shoot him off into the ropes--

Black Horizon: 2025

Sean clamps down and **snaps** Jarvis over into a crisp side headlock takeover, landing on top and cranking back, forcing Jarvis' cheek into the mat.

Mark Bravo: "Picture-perfect headlock takeover and he is squeezing that skull like a vice. The entire Survivor replay lives in that hold right now."

Jarvis kicks his legs, searching for leverage, finally turning his hips and stacking Sean up for a quick pin.

Referee: ""One! Two--""

Sean pops his hips, rolls them back to the mat, headlock still cinched. The crowd buzzes--annoyed at the control, rattled by how calm Sean looks.

John Phillips: "Simple, effective, suffocating. Sean Jackson doesn't have to throw Jarvis off balconies to hurt him. He'll squeeze the fight out of him one nerve ending at a time."

Jarvis claws at Sean's clasped hands, then plants his feet and slowly rolls them both to their knees, then to their feet. The headlock stays on, but Jarvis starts walking--driving Sean back-first into the ropes.

He shoves Sean off--this time the hold breaks--and Sean hits the far ropes. On the rebound, Jarvis drops a shoulder to tackle him, but Sean halts, grabs the top rope, and Jarvis hits nothing but air, stumbling forward.

Mark Bravo: "Veteran stop on a rookie mistake. Sean let him shoot him off, but he didn't give him the collision he wanted."

Jarvis catches himself on the opposite ropes--

--and Sean is already there, sprinting in and **cracking** a high kick into the side of Jarvis' head. The big man reels, hanging on to the top strand.

John Phillips: "OHH! Right on the ear!"

Jarvis stumbles out of the corner, dazed, and Sean snakes in behind him, grabbing a handful of tights and the back of the neck. With a nasty little hop, he **throws** Jarvis forward--

--right into the top rope, throat-first.

Mark Bravo: "Eyes of Texas early! Snake eyes on the rope!"

Jarvis bounces back choking, clutching at his windpipe. Sean darts to the side, springs off the ropes, and blasts Jarvis with a running forearm shiver to the back of the skull, sending him face-first to the mat.

John Phillips: "And immediately back to the neck and head! Every shot is a message: 'I remember Survivor,

Black Horizon: 2025

do you?"

Sean rolls Jarvis over and hooks a tight lateral press, forearm grinding across Valentine's face.

Referee: "One! Two--"

Jarvis powers out at two, shoving Sean away.

Crowd: "LET'S GO JAR-VIS! *clap clap clapclapclap*"

*Sean doesn't argue the count. He slides to Jarvis' side, snags a front facelock, and starts **driving short knees** up into the champion's forehead and collarbone, each one a sharp, snapping blow.*

Mark Bravo: "You can feel him building a roadmap to Shattered Reality. Head, neck, shoulders--put 'em all in red and you're one combo away from the lights going out."

Jarvis' arms go up to block the knees. As Sean adjusts his grip, Jarvis plants a knee and uses his size to surge upward, powering them both vertical. Sean hangs on, but Jarvis shoves him back into the corner, burying a shoulder into Sean's midsection once, twice.

John Phillips: "There's the raw power of the champion! Jarvis Valentine turning defense into a battering ram!"

He drives a third shoulder into Sean's ribs. The hold finally breaks. Sean gasps for air, leaning against the turnbuckles--

--and Jarvis rears back for a big right hand.

*Sean ducks under it and **slams** an elbow into the back of Jarvis' neck, then hooks him and snaps off a quick, nasty neckbreaker, dropping the champion flat in the center of the ring.*

Mark Bravo: "Jarvis went for the home run and Sean turned it into whiplash. Every time the champ tries to explode, Jackson's got a counter waiting for his neck."

Jarvis rolls to his side, one hand on the back of his head, blinking hard. Sean sits up slowly, that thin smile returning as he watches the champion struggle.

Sean Jackson (quiet, to Jarvis): "You feel that? That's not Black Horizon. That's gravity. I just help it along."

He pushes back to his feet, then drops a measured, pinpoint elbow right into the base of Jarvis' skull. The champ jolts and flattens out again.

Black Horizon: 2025

John Phillips: "Sean Jackson is picking Jarvis Valentine apart in the early going of this main event. This isn't flashy. This is clinical."

Sean gets up, takes a slow lap around Jarvis' fallen body, then plants a boot between his shoulder blades and wrenches back on a tight chinlock, bridging his own hips to pour pressure into the neck.

Referee: ""You wanna give it up, Jarvis? You wanna submit?""

Jarvis Valentine: ""Never... never...""

Mark Bravo: "Jarvis Valentine said he would never submit, but Sean doesn't have to make him tap. All he has to do is knock him cold long enough to count three."

Jarvis' hands claw at Sean's wrists, his boots shifting, searching for some kind of anchor as the main event of Black Horizon begins with the ghost of UTA's past grinding the present into the mat... one nerve, one vertebra at a time.

Jarvis digs a boot into the canvas, then another, the strain written all over his face as Sean's chinlock grinds into the back of his neck.

John Phillips: "Jarvis Valentine trying to fight up from the mat, but Sean Jackson has that hold cranked in deep, cutting off air, cutting off blood flow... cutting off momentum."

The crowd claps in rhythm, the sound swelling around them.

Crowd: "LET'S GO JAR-VIS! *clap clap clapclapclap*"

Jarvis gets one knee under him, then the other, forcing them both to a crouch. Sean shakes his head, shouting over the noise.

Sean Jackson: ""You're not getting up, champ--""

Jarvis surges, muscles straining, and forces himself to a standing base. The hold stays on, but he drives an elbow back into Sean's ribs. Then another. The third elbow loosens the grip enough for Jarvis to twist his body.

He shoves Sean off toward the ropes--this time successfully. Sean rebounds--

--and Jarvis buries him with a big shoulder block that sends Jackson tumbling to the mat.

John Phillips: "Shoulder block from the champion! That's the power we talked about!"

Sean rolls to a knee, blinking, not expecting the impact. Jarvis shakes out his neck, wincing, but charges the

Black Horizon: 2025

ropes. He rebounds, building steam--

--and Sean suddenly drops to his stomach. Jarvis hurdles over him, hits the opposite ropes. Sean pops up for a leapfrog--

Jarvis snatches him out of the air, spins, and plants him with a textbook powerslam.

Mark Bravo: "There we go! Big-time powerslam by Jarvis Valentine and Sean Jackson just got all of two-seventy-four driven through his spine!"

Jarvis hooks the leg, leaning all his weight across Sean's chest.

Referee: "'One! Two--'"

Sean shoots a shoulder up at two, rolling to his side.

John Phillips: "First real near-fall of the match for the champion, and you can feel this crowd rallying behind him."

Jarvis sits up, rubbing his neck for a moment, then grabs a handful of Sean's hair and hauls him upright. He snaps off a stiff forearm to the jaw that staggers Jackson into the ropes.

Mark Bravo: "And that's Jarvis answering some of that headhunting with a little of his own."

*Jarvis grabs Sean by the wrist, whips him across the ring, and as Sean bounces back, Jarvis ducks under and pops his hips, sending the challenger overhead with a **back body drop** that scrapes the rafters.*

Crowd: "OHHHHH!"

John Phillips: "Back body drop with hang time! Sean landed hard on those same shoulders he's been using to throw knees and elbows all night."

*Sean arches in pain, clutching his upper back. Jarvis wastes no time--he steps behind Sean, hooks him around the waist, and with a grunt of effort, **German suplexes** him straight back, bridging for the pin.*

Referee: "'One! Two--'"

Sean kicks out again, this time twisting his body just enough to roll onto his stomach, avoiding another bridge.

Mark Bravo: "Even when he's getting thrown around, Sean Jackson's got the ring sense to land where it hurts the least."

Black Horizon: 2025

Jarvis sits back on his knees, breathing hard but feeling the momentum shift. He slaps his own chest, nodding along with the crowd as they roar their approval.

Crowd: "VAL-EN-TINE! VAL-EN-TINE!"

The champion pulls Sean up once more and muscles him into a front facelock. The crowd volume swells--knowing that from this position, Jarvis could be thinking neckbreaker slam, DDT, or any number of high-impact options.

John Phillips: "Jarvis Valentine with a front facelock--maybe thinking about that neckbreaker slam he loves to use to set up the Patriot Plunge."

Jarvis hoists Sean vertical for a suplex--

--but as he lifts, Sean kicks his legs, shifting his weight just enough to drop back to his feet behind Jarvis.

*Before the champion can turn, Sean rams a forearm into the back of his neck, then another, then **chop blocks** him low at the base of the skull with a short lariat that sends Jarvis stumbling into the ropes.*

Mark Bravo: "And just like that, the pendulum swings back. Sean went right back to that bullseye on Jarvis' neck."

Jarvis leans against the ropes, trying to shake the cobwebs. Sean backs up a step, eyes narrowing, and then charges in--

*--only for Jarvis to duck and drop his shoulder, sending Sean sailing **up and over** the top rope.*

But Sean manages to snatch the top rope on his way over, landing on the apron instead of the floor. He jabs an elbow into Jarvis' head as the champion thinks he's sent him spilling out.

John Phillips: "Sean didn't go all the way down! He's on the apron!"

*Jarvis staggers sideways from the elbow. Sean grabs the top rope with one hand, springboards up, and slingshots in with a crisp **clothesline** that takes Jarvis off his feet.*

Mark Bravo: "Slingshot clothesline! That's the burst of athleticism people forget Sean's got until he pulls it out."

Sean drops into a quick cover, hooking the far leg.

Referee: ""One! Two--""

Jarvis powers out at two, shoving Sean off with authority. The crowd pops for the resilience.

Black Horizon: 2025

Crowd: "LET'S GO JAR-VIS!"

Sean sits up, jaw tightening, the smirk slipping just a fraction. He gets to his feet and stomps down across the back of Jarvis' neck, once, twice, three times, forcing the champion to cover up.

John Phillips: "You can see the frustration starting to creep in. Sean Jackson thought he had the champ rocked, and Jarvis is stubbornly refusing to stay down."

*Sean hauls Jarvis upright by the head, then snaps him back down with a quick **neckbreaker**, dropping to a seated position as Jarvis crumples beside him. Instead of going for another pin, Sean spins around, threads his legs around Jarvis' arm and head, and transitions into a grounded head-and-arm hold, cranking the neck sideways.*

Mark Bravo: "No wasted motion. Every time Jarvis gets a step, Sean sits him back down and twists that neck like he's trying to screw it off the shoulders."

The referee drops down, checking Jarvis' condition. One of Jarvis' feet drums against the mat in protest, his free hand reaching, searching for ropes that are just out of reach.

Referee: ""Jarvis, you wanna give up?""

Jarvis Valentine: ""No! No, never--""

Sean leans back further, arching his hips, smiling grimly as he feels the strain in the champion's neck and shoulder.

Sean Jackson: ""You'll sleep before you tap, huh, Jarvis? I can work with that.""

John Phillips: "Sean Jackson doesn't need a submission. He'll take a knockout, he'll take a ref stoppage, he'll take anything that sends that belt out of here around his waist."

Jarvis grits his teeth, plants his heels, and begins to inch them both toward the nearest side of the ring. The crowd realizes what he's doing and picks up the clap again.

Crowd: "VAL-EN-TINE! VAL-EN-TINE!"

Half a foot. Another half-foot. Sean shakes his head and tries to drag them back to center, but Jarvis rolls his hips, shifting their center of gravity just enough to flop them both sideways toward the ropes.

Jarvis stretches his legs as far as they'll go and just barely hooks his boot over the bottom rope.

Referee: ""ROPE! ROPE! Break it, Sean, he's in the ropes! One! Two! Three! Four--""

Black Horizon: 2025

Sean holds the crank until four, then releases with a theatrical, innocent raise of both hands as he backs away, leaving Jarvis clutching at his neck on the bottom strand.

Mark Bravo: "Give him credit--Sean Jackson rides that four-count like a pro. He's going to make the referee earn every breath Jarvis Valentine gets tonight."

Jarvis pulls himself up with the ropes' help, blinking hard, jaw set. Sean hangs back in the opposite corner, resting his arms on the top ropes like he's lounging there, but his eyes are sharp and calculating.

John Phillips: "Basic or not, what we're seeing right now is main event wrestling at its core: one man trying to build momentum, the other man doing everything in his power to cut it off."

Mark Bravo: "And somewhere down the line, John, one of these basic exchanges is going to open the door to something a whole lot uglier. Because Sean Jackson didn't come to Black Horizon to win pretty. He came to take Jarvis Valentine's era apart piece by piece."

Jarvis rolls his shoulders, takes a breath, and steps back out of the corner, motioning with one hand for Sean to come on.

Sean peels himself off the buckles slowly, that thin smile resurfacing as they move back toward center ring--two men in a main event rhythm, trading control, each waiting for the opening to land the one shot that changes everything.

Sean launches.

He explodes out of the ropes, that right knee cocked, the entire 2300 Arena sucking in a breath as he zeroes in on the back of Jarvis Valentine's skull--

*--and Jarvis **throws himself forward**, collapsing into a roll at the last possible second.*

John Phillips: "HE MISSED IT! HE MISSED IT!"

Sean's knee whiffs through empty air. His momentum carries him past the champion, and he staggers, catching himself awkwardly on the turnbuckles to keep from crashing face-first.

Mark Bravo: "That's ring awareness saving Jarvis Valentine's whole reality right there! If that knee lands, we are talking about a whole different Black Horizon!"

Sean turns, eyes wide for just a heartbeat--

*--and Jarvis is already up, surging out of the roll with a roar from the crowd. He **smashes** a running clothesline into Sean, crushing him back into the corner.*

Black Horizon: 2025

Crowd: "OHHHHH!"

John Phillips: "Jarvis Valentine still has enough left to turn defense into offense in the blink of an eye!"

*Sean slumps in the buckles. Jarvis backs up a half-step and drives a series of **body shots** into Sean's ribs--short hooks, digging uppercuts--each one snapping the challenger's torso sideways.*

Mark Bravo: "Hit the lungs, champ. Make that man *feel* his age!"

The referee starts a count, but Jarvis breaks at four, throwing his hands up. Sean stumbles out of the corner, clutching his midsection.

*Jarvis hooks him and **snaps** him over with a quick side suplex. Sean lands hard and bounces, rolling to his side, one arm hugging his ribs.*

John Phillips: "Suplex! Jarvis Valentine chaining it together now!"

Jarvis doesn't go for the cover. He gets to his feet, feeling the adrenaline rush, and yanks Sean up again, this time slipping behind him and locking in a tight waistlock.

*With a grunt, he **German suplexes** Sean straight back, dumping him high on his shoulders and neck. Jarvis bridges as best he can, the pain clear but the determination overriding it.*

Referee: "'One! Two--'"

Sean barely kicks out, flopping onto his stomach, gasping for air.

Crowd: "THIS IS AWE-SOME! *clap clap clapclapclap*"

Mark Bravo: "Every time Jarvis hits one of those suplexes, he's paying Sean back for every knee and every neck crank in this match."

Jarvis lies on his back for a second, staring up at the lights, breathing hard, then rolls to a knee. He rubs the back of his neck, winces, and forces himself upright. He stalks Sean, who's crawling toward the ropes, and grabs his ankle, dragging him back to center.

John Phillips: "Champion refusing to let the challenger escape. Jarvis Valentine wants this decided right in the middle."

Jarvis pulls Sean up by the head, snapping a quick knee into his gut. He snaps on a front facelock, the crowd rising with him.

Mark Bravo: "We back around to that neckbreaker slam again--"

Black Horizon: 2025

*Jarvis hoists Sean vertical and **drops** him with a crisp neckbreaker slam, driving him into the canvas. Sean's body jerks, both hands flying to the back of his head.*

Crowd: "OHHHHH!"

John Phillips: "Neckbreaker slam! Right into the bullseye Sean's been painting on Jarvis all night, and the champion just cashed in with interest!"

Jarvis doesn't cover. Instead, he rolls to his knees, eyes flashing, and looks out to the crowd. They know what that setup means.

Crowd: "PLUNGE! PLUNGE! PLUNGE!"

Mark Bravo: "You know what they're calling for! Patriot Plunge, Q Drop--whatever you want to name it, Jarvis is gettin' that look like he's ready to end it!"

Jarvis pushes to his feet and stalks behind Sean, waiting for the challenger to rise. Sean, groggy, rolls to all fours, then to one knee, shaking his head as if trying to reboot his senses.

Jarvis steps in, hooking Sean across his shoulders in a fireman's carry position--

John Phillips: "He's got him up! Patriot Plunge incoming!"

*--but Sean **thrashes** wildly, driving elbows into Jarvis' temple, again and again, as if pure panic just kicked in.*

Mark Bravo: "There's the desperation! Sean Jackson knows if he gets planted, we're measuring him for another highlight reel fall!"

Jarvis' grip slips. Sean slides down behind him, almost collapsing, but has just enough presence to shove Jarvis forward--straight toward the referee.

Jarvis collides with the official, who stumbles, tangles up, and drops through the ropes to the floor, hitting awkwardly.

John Phillips: "Referee down! Referee down!"

Crowd: "BOOOOOOO!"

Jarvis freezes for a half-second, eyes wide, immediately checking on the ref's status as he leans over the ropes.

Mark Bravo: "I don't know if that was deliberate or just survival instinct, but that zebra just crashed and

Black Horizon: 2025

burned and now we've got no law in this main event!"

Jarvis turns back toward Sean--

*--and Sean lunges in with a **low blow**, an ugly, desperate shot that doubles the champion over instantly.*

Crowd: "OHHHHHHH!"

John Phillips: "Come on, now! There's no call for that!"

Jarvis crumples to his knees, both hands between his legs, face twisted in agony. Sean drops to a knee himself, one hand on the mat, sucking in air, the other hand braced on Jarvis' shoulder, keeping him close.

Mark Bravo: "There's your desperation, John. Sean Jackson went for the weapon he always carries: his brain and no conscience."

Sean pushes himself up, still wincing from the beating he's taken, and stumbles backward into the ropes, eyes darting out to ringside.

He spots the UTA Championship belt on the timekeeper's table. The crowd feels the shift and starts to boo even harder.

John Phillips: "Don't you dare. Don't you--"

Sean steps through the ropes, drops to the floor, and snatches the title belt up, weighing it in his hands. He glances at the fallen referee, still struggling to sit up, then back at Jarvis, who's slowly trying to push to his feet inside the ring.

Mark Bravo: "This is what I meant when I said 'a lot uglier,' John. Sean Jackson sees an open door and he doesn't care how much blood is on the handle."

Sean slides back into the ring, belt tucked low against his leg as he stalks behind the champion. Jarvis gets to one knee, then the other, still doubled over. The booing swells into a chaotic roar.

Crowd: "NO! NO! NO! NO!"

Sean raises the championship, aura of desperation and malice all over him--a man who couldn't finish it clean, now ready to steal the era with a steel-cold shortcut...

...just as the official at ringside starts to pull himself up onto the apron, blinking through the fog.

Sean launches.

Black Horizon: 2025

He explodes out of the ropes, that right knee cocked, the entire 2300 Arena sucking in a breath as he zeroes in on the back of Jarvis Valentine's skull--

*--and Jarvis **throws himself forward**, collapsing into a roll at the last possible second.*

John Phillips: "HE MISSED IT! HE MISSED IT!"

Sean's knee whiffs through empty air. His momentum carries him past the champion, and he staggers, catching himself awkwardly on the turnbuckles to keep from crashing face-first.

Mark Bravo: "That's ring awareness saving Jarvis Valentine's whole reality right there! If that knee lands, we are talking about a whole different Black Horizon!"

Sean turns, eyes wide for just a heartbeat--

*--and Jarvis is already up, surging out of the roll with a roar from the crowd. He **smashes** a running clothesline into Sean, crushing him back into the corner.*

Crowd: "OHHHHH!"

John Phillips: "Jarvis Valentine still has enough left to turn defense into offense in the blink of an eye!"

*Sean slumps in the buckles. Jarvis backs up a half-step and drives a series of **body shots** into Sean's ribs--short hooks, digging uppercuts--each one snapping the challenger's torso sideways.*

Mark Bravo: "Hit the lungs, champ. Make that man feel his age!"

The referee starts a count, but Jarvis breaks at four, throwing his hands up. Sean stumbles out of the corner, clutching his midsection.

*Jarvis hooks him and **snaps** him over with a quick side suplex. Sean lands hard and bounces, rolling to his side, one arm hugging his ribs.*

John Phillips: "Suplex! Jarvis Valentine chaining it together now!"

Jarvis doesn't go for the cover. He gets to his feet, feeling the adrenaline rush, and yanks Sean up again, this time slipping behind him and locking in a tight waistlock.

*With a grunt, he **German suplexes** Sean straight back, dumping him high on his shoulders and neck. Jarvis bridges as best he can, the pain clear but the determination overriding it.*

Referee: ""One! Two--""

Black Horizon: 2025

Sean barely kicks out, flopping onto his stomach, gasping for air.

Crowd: "THIS IS AWE-SOME! *clap clap clapclapclap**"

Mark Bravo: "Every time Jarvis hits one of those suplexes, he's paying Sean back for every knee and every neck crank in this match."

Jarvis lies on his back for a second, staring up at the lights, breathing hard, then rolls to a knee. He rubs the back of his neck, winces, and forces himself upright. He stalks Sean, who's crawling toward the ropes, and grabs his ankle, dragging him back to center.

John Phillips: "Champion refusing to let the challenger escape. Jarvis Valentine wants this decided right in the middle."

Jarvis pulls Sean up by the head, snapping a quick knee into his gut. He snaps on a front facelock, the crowd rising with him.

Mark Bravo: "We back around to that neckbreaker slam again--"

*Jarvis hoists Sean vertical and **drops** him with a crisp neckbreaker slam, driving him into the canvas. Sean's body jerks, both hands flying to the back of his head.*

Crowd: "OHHHHH!"

John Phillips: "Neckbreaker slam! Right into the bullseye Sean's been painting on Jarvis all night, and the champion just cashed in with interest!"

Jarvis doesn't cover. Instead, he rolls to his knees, eyes flashing, and looks out to the crowd. They know what that setup means.

Crowd: "PLUNGE! PLUNGE! PLUNGE!"

Mark Bravo: "You know what they're calling for! Patriot Plunge, Q Drop--whatever you want to name it, Jarvis is gettin' that look like he's ready to end it!"

Jarvis pushes to his feet and stalks behind Sean, waiting for the challenger to rise. Sean, groggy, rolls to all fours, then to one knee, shaking his head as if trying to reboot his senses.

Jarvis steps in, hooking Sean across his shoulders in a fireman's carry position--

John Phillips: "He's got him up! Patriot Plunge incoming!"

*--but Sean **thrashes** wildly, driving elbows into Jarvis' temple, again and again, as if pure panic just kicked*

Black Horizon: 2025

in.

Mark Bravo: "There's the desperation! Sean Jackson knows if he gets planted, we're measuring him for another highlight reel fall!"

Jarvis' grip slips. Sean slides down behind him, almost collapsing, but has just enough presence to shove Jarvis forward--straight toward the referee.

Jarvis collides with the official, who stumbles, tangles up, and drops through the ropes to the floor, hitting awkwardly.

John Phillips: "Referee down! Referee down!"

Crowd: "BOOOOOOOO!"

Jarvis freezes for a half-second, eyes wide, immediately checking on the ref's status as he leans over the ropes.

Mark Bravo: "I don't know if that was deliberate or just survival instinct, but that zebra just crashed and burned and now we've got no law in this main event!"

Jarvis turns back toward Sean--

*--and Sean lunges in with a **low blow**, an ugly, desperate shot that doubles the champion over instantly.*

Crowd: "OHHHHHHH!"

John Phillips: "Come on, now! There's no call for that!"

Jarvis crumples to his knees, both hands between his legs, face twisted in agony. Sean drops to a knee himself, one hand on the mat, sucking in air, the other hand braced on Jarvis' shoulder, keeping him close.

Mark Bravo: "There's your desperation, John. Sean Jackson went for the weapon he always carries: his brain and no conscience."

Sean pushes himself up, still wincing from the beating he's taken, and stumbles backward into the ropes, eyes darting out to ringside.

He spots the UTA Championship belt on the timekeeper's table. The crowd feels the shift and starts to boo even harder.

John Phillips: "Don't you dare. Don't you--"

Black Horizon: 2025

Sean steps through the ropes, drops to the floor, and snatches the title belt up, weighing it in his hands. He glances at the fallen referee, still struggling to sit up, then back at Jarvis, who's slowly trying to push to his feet inside the ring.

Mark Bravo: "This is what I meant when I said 'a lot uglier,' John. Sean Jackson sees an open door and he doesn't care how much blood is on the handle."

Sean slides back into the ring, belt tucked low against his leg as he stalks behind the champion. Jarvis gets to one knee, then the other, still doubled over. The booing swells into a chaotic roar.

Crowd: "NO! NO! NO! NO!"

Sean raises the championship, aura of desperation and malice all over him--a man who couldn't finish it clean, now ready to steal the era with a steel-cold shortcut...

...just as the official at ringside starts to pull himself up onto the apron, blinking through the fog.

Sean's breathing grows shallow and sharp, his eyes never leaving the referee as he backs into the corner, both hands on his hips.

Sean Jackson: ""You don't know how to count to three? You want me to slow it down for you?!""

Referee: ""It was two! Shoulder was up!""

Sean whirls back toward Jarvis, the smirk long gone now. What's left is something rawer, meaner--frustration curdling into rage.

John Phillips: "We are seeing the calm crack, Mark. Sean Jackson just hit Jarvis Valentine in the head with the UTA Championship and still couldn't keep him down."

*Jarvis pushes to all fours, swaying. Sean stalks over and **stomps** on his hand, pinning it to the canvas. Jarvis snarls, trying to pull away.*

Sean Jackson: ""Stay down, Jarvis! Don't make this worse!""

He drills another stomp between the shoulders, then grabs Jarvis by the hair and drags him up to his knees. The champion's eyes are glassy but burning underneath the haze.

Mark Bravo: "That's the problem, John. Guys like Jarvis Valentine don't know how to stay down. They only know 'keep going' and 'keep getting hurt.'"

*Sean hauls Jarvis upright and **snaps** him over with a sharp snapmare. Jarvis lands sitting, his back to Sean.*

Black Horizon: 2025

Without hesitation, Sean hits the ropes and blasts a sliding forearm into the back of Jarvis' head, snapping his skull forward.

Crowd: "OHHHHH!"

John Phillips: "Another direct shot to the back of the head, and Sean Jackson is trying to erase Jarvis Valentine's title reign one nerve ending at a time!"

Jarvis topples sideways, nearly out. Sean pounces, hooking both legs tightly this time, stacking Jarvis as much as he can.

Referee: ""One! Two--""

Jarvis kicks out again--sloppy, desperate, just enough to roll a shoulder and twist his hips.

Crowd: "YEAHHHH!"

Mark Bravo: "There's no technique left in those kick-outs, it's just pure survival instinct!"

Sean sits back on his heels, breathing hard, then shoves Jarvis onto his back and straddles his chest, raining down wild forearms and fists. The referee immediately starts counting.

Referee: ""Hey, watch the closed fists! One! Two! Three! Four--""

Sean finally pulls back at four, both hands slick with sweat, staring down at Jarvis with something close to disbelief.

Sean Jackson: ""Why... won't... you... die?""

John Phillips: "Because Chris Ross isn't the only one who believes three counts don't mean much in a fight, Mark. Jarvis Valentine didn't come here to get pinned, he came to survive Sean Jackson."

Sean gets to his feet and stalks to the nearest corner, gripping the top rope tight, knuckles white. His chest rises and falls, sweat dripping from his chin as he looks back at the fallen champion.

Mark Bravo: "This is where he's dangerous. Not when he's cold and clinical, but when he's mad and cornered. He starts thinking about combinations, about ending careers."

Sean rolls his neck, then stomps once in the corner, signaling to the crowd. Boos rain down as he drags his thumb across his throat and points to Jarvis' motionless body.

John Phillips: "Oh no. Oh no. I don't like that signal at all."

Black Horizon: 2025

Mark Bravo: "He's not just thinking about one move anymore. He might be thinking Shattered Reality... the whole chain."

Slowly, Jarvis starts to move--first a hand pressing to the mat, then an elbow, then pushing up to his knees like he's climbing out of quicksand. Sean steps in behind him, grabs him by the waistband and collar, and muscles him up.

*With a grimace of effort, Sean turns and **hurls** Jarvis into the turnbuckles with a vicious buckle bomb variation, the champion's spine and neck snapping off the pads.*

Crowd: "OHHHHHH!"

John Phillips: "Houston Hangover! Buckle bomb from Sean Jackson and Jarvis just ricocheted out of the corner!"

Jarvis stumbles forward out of the corner, legs rubber, barely upright. Sean doesn't let him fall. He scoops him onto his shoulders in a fireman's carry with a snarl, the crowd screaming in protest.

Mark Bravo: "Step two! Hook 'Em Horns coming if Jarvis doesn't find a miracle!"

*Sean swings Jarvis off his shoulders into a **Hook 'Em Horns Driver**, drilling him into the mat. Jarvis bounces and then lies flat, arms spread, eyes closed.*

John Phillips: "Hook 'Em Horns Driver! That's two-thirds of Shattered Reality!"

Sean doesn't cover.

He kneels there for a second, staring down at Jarvis, chest heaving, sweat pouring off him. Then, slowly, he crawls to the nearest corner.

Mark Bravo: "He's not done. That's the desperation. That's the insanity. Hitting two moves that would finish almost anybody, and not being satisfied."

Sean pulls himself up by the ropes, backing into the opposite corner, eyes locked on Jarvis' unmoving form.

John Phillips: "The last time he hit all three, we thought we'd seen a career die at WrestleUTA: Twenty-Five. If he connects with Mental Breakdown now after all that, we might be having the same conversation."

Sean slaps the top turnbuckle once, twice, then starts that slow, predatory stalk out of the corner, measuring the distance as Jarvis, somehow, begins to stir.

The champion rolls to his side, then to his hands and knees, head hanging. The crowd roars at even the

Black Horizon: 2025

slightest movement.

Crowd: "LET'S GO JAR-VIS! *clap clap clapclapclap*"

Sean lines up just behind him, lightly bouncing on the balls of his feet, the whole building holding its breath.

Sean Jackson: ""Stay down and I'll make it quick!""

Jarvis doesn't stay down. He plants one foot, then the other, dragging himself to a wobbly vertical base, back turned.

Sean surges forward--

--and swings the knee again.

John Phillips: "MENTAL BREAKD--"

*Jarvis, on pure instinct, **spins** at the last second. The knee catches him, but not flush--glancing across his shoulder and chest instead of the back of his skull. Jarvis spins with the impact, using the momentum to swing a wild, desperate **discus clothesline** that catches Sean flush on the jaw.*

Crowd: "OHHHHHHH!"

Mark Bravo: "He turned into it! He turned with the shot and turned Sean Jackson inside out!"

Both men crash to the canvas--Jarvis on his stomach, Sean on his back. The crowd is molten, the noise a wall of sound.

John Phillips: "You want resilience? Jarvis Valentine just took two-thirds of Shattered Reality, a belt shot, a knee that barely missed decapitating him--and somehow found enough left in the tank to swing for the fences!"

The referee looks from one man to the other, then starts a ten-count as both lie motionless.

Referee: ""One! ... Two! ... Three!""

Jarvis stirs first, fingers clawing at the mat. Sean's arm twitches, reaching for a rope that isn't there.

Crowd: "VAL-EN-TINE! VAL-EN-TINE!"

Mark Bravo: "Sean Jackson is getting more desperate with every second. Jarvis Valentine is getting more stubborn with every breath. Something's gonna give, and it's not going to be pretty."

Black Horizon: 2025

Jarvis plants a hand, then an elbow, dragging himself toward Sean instead of the ropes. At five, he drapes an arm across Sean's chest in a ragged, half-conscious pin.

Referee: ""One! Two--""

Sean jerks a shoulder up at two, the arena groaning with the near fall.

John Phillips: "So close! Even running on fumes, even after everything that's happened, neither man is willing to let this era-defining main event end without squeezing every last drop of fight out of the other."

Jarvis rolls away, both hands pressed to his head, while Sean lies on his back, staring up at the lights, chest heaving, the realization sinking in...

...that every shortcut, every combination, every ghost he's tried to unleash tonight hasn't been enough to put Jarvis Valentine down for three.

For a long moment, both men just lie there.

Sean stares up at the lights, chest heaving, sweat and frustration mixing into one raw, exhausted mask. Jarvis is on his side, one arm wrapped around his ribs, the other clutching the back of his neck.

John Phillips: "I don't know what's keeping either one of these men going right now except pride and pure stubbornness."

Slowly, Jarvis rolls to his knees. The crowd surges with him, a tidal wave of sound trying to lift him the rest of the way.

Crowd: "JAR-VIS! JAR-VIS! JAR-VIS!"

Sean turns over, pushing himself up on all fours. He looks across the canvas and sees Jarvis doing the same. Something ugly and determined flashes in his eyes.

Mark Bravo: "Look at Sean Jackson's face. That's a man who's realizing the old tricks aren't enough... and he's still tryin' to find a way to steal time from Father Clock."

They crawl toward each other and start swinging from their knees--Jarvis with short, clubbing right hands; Sean with sharp jabs to the jaw.

John Phillips: "We're down to trench warfare in the middle of the ring at Black Horizon!"

Jarvis' head snaps to the side with each jab, but every time it does, he fires back with a heavier shot. The crowd chants along with each of his blows.

Black Horizon: 2025

Crowd: "YAY! ... BOO! ... YAY! ... BOO! ... YAY!"

Jarvis' last right hand rocks Sean back onto his heels. Both men stagger to their feet, leaning into each other like they're the only things holding the other up.

Sean suddenly rakes Jarvis' eyes, the referee on the wrong side to see it. Jarvis reels away, blinded.

Mark Bravo: "And there's one more shortcut from the so-called career killer."

Sean stumbles back into the ropes, uses them for just a second of balance... and then pushes off, that right knee cocking again.

John Phillips: "He's going for it *again!* He's going for that knee!"

Sean charges, closing the distance--

Jarvis, sensing rather than seeing, drops flat to the mat.

*Sean's knee sails over where Jarvis' head just was, his leg tangling awkwardly as he can't pull up in time. He clips the middle rope with his shin, **stumbling** hard, crashing chest-first across the top strand and bouncing back off-balance.*

Crowd: "OHHHHH!"

Mark Bravo: "The ring just took a bite out of that knee! Sean Jackson got a whole lotta rope and a whole lotta regret!"

Sean lands on his feet but his leg buckles for a second. He grits his teeth, trying to shake it off, turning--

*--right into Jarvis **exploding** up from the mat, scooping him onto his shoulders in one desperate, guttural effort.*

John Phillips: "HOW? HOW DID HE GET HIM UP?!"

Jarvis wobbles under the weight, knees trembling, the entire arena roaring as Sean pounds elbows into his temple.

Sean Jackson: ""Let! Me! Down!""

Jarvis clenches his jaw, adjusts his grip, and snarls through the pain.

Jarvis Valentine: ""You first!""

Black Horizon: 2025

*He plants his feet, pivots--and **SPIKES** Sean Valentine head-first with the **Patriot Plunge**, driving him down in a thunderous fireman's-carry DDT.*

Crowd: "*NUCLEAR POP*"

Mark Bravo: "PATRIOT PLUNGE! PATRIOT PLUNGE! HE HIT ALL OF IT!"

Sean's body folds and sprawls out, limp. Jarvis lands on his stomach and just lies there for a second, too spent to move.

John Phillips: "If Jarvis can cover him... if he can just throw an arm..."

The champion digs deep. Really deep. With a guttural shout only the first few rows can even hear over the noise, he rolls onto his side, then drapes an arm across Sean's chest, forehead pressed into the challenger's shoulder.

Referee: ""ONE!""

Crowd: "ONE!"

The ref's hand hits the mat. Sean doesn't move.

Referee: ""TWO!""

Crowd: "TWO!"

Sean's leg twitches... but there's nothing behind it.

Referee: ""THREE!""

Crowd: "*ERUPTION*"

John Phillips: "HE GOT HIM! HE GOT HIM! JARVIS VALENTINE JUST BEAT SEAN JACKSON AT BLACK HORIZON!"

Mark Bravo: "AFTER A BELT SHOT, AFTER TWO-THIRDS OF SHATTERED REALITY, AFTER EVERY KNEE AND EVERY SHORTCUT--THE CHAMPION *STILL* STANDS!"

The bell rings, barely audible over the roar.

Ring Announcer: ""Ladies and gentlemen... here is your winner... and STILL... U! T! A! CHAMPION! JARVIS... VALENTINE!""

Black Horizon: 2025

The referee rolls off to the side, then crawls back to Jarvis, gently tugging at his shoulder. Jarvis slowly pushes up onto his knees, swaying, eyes half-open.

The official holds the UTA Championship out to him. Jarvis stares at it for a heartbeat, then reaches with a shaking hand and pulls it to his chest, hugging it tight.

Crowd: "VAL-EN-TINE! VAL-EN-TINE! VAL-EN-TINE!"

John Phillips: "Black Horizon. Twenty-five years after the first one... and Jarvis Valentine just survived one of the most dangerous men to ever step into a WrestleUTA ring."

Jarvis uses the ropes to stand, draping the title over his shoulder. The referee raises his free hand and the camera catches his face--bruised, dazed, but defiant.

Mark Bravo: "Look at him. That is not a pretty win. That's not a clean, shiny, poster-boy moment. That's a man who walked into a fight with a ghost and walked out still holding the era on his shoulder."

On the mat behind him, Sean Jackson has rolled to his side, one hand pressed to his head, eyes narrow slits as he watches Jarvis in the corner, belt held high for the Philly crowd.

John Phillips: "Sean Jackson threw everything he had at him--past, present, and every demon in between--and Jarvis Valentine still found a way to put him down for three."

Jarvis climbs the second rope, leaning heavily on the top strand, but still managing to hoist the UTA Championship into the air. Red, white, and blue lights dance around the arena as flashbulbs pop.

Crowd: "*DEAFENING CHEERS*"

Mark Bravo: "Tonight, Sean Jackson didn't fall off a structure... he fell to the man who carries WrestleUTA into the future."

John Phillips: "Jarvis Valentine walks out of Black Horizon... still UTA Champion."

The camera pulls back to a wide shot: Jarvis on the ropes, belt aloft; Sean curled on the canvas in the shadows; the Black Horizon logo glowing on the screen above them as the noise of the 2300 Arena shakes the rafters.

The copyright appears and we fade to black.

Show Credits

Segment: "Introduction" - Written by Ben.

Match: "Eric Dane Jr. vs. Tyger II" - Written by Ben.

Segment: "What's good for the goose..." - Written by tony.

Segment: "I'll Be Here" - Written by Ben.

Segment: "Loose Strings" - Written by Ben.

Match: "Marie Van Claudio vs. Hardcore Sandy" - Written by Ben.

Segment: "The Best at What She Does" - Written by tony.

Segment: "Build" - Written by Ben.

Segment: "Breaking Point" - Written by Ben.

Match: "WrestleZone Rumble" - Written by Ben, tony.

Match: "Amy Harrison vs. Emily Hightower" - Written by Ben.

Segment: "Gotta Kill Me" - Written by Ben.

Segment: "It Happens Tonight" - Written by Ben.

Segment: "End the Empire" - Written by Ben.

Segment: "You Got This" - Written by Ben.

Match: "Chris Ross vs. Maxx Mayhem" - Written by Ben.

Segment: "A New Path Begins" - Written by Ben.

Segment: "Probably My Last Shot" - Written by Ben.

Segment: "Season's Beatings" - Written by Ben.

Match: "Sean Jackson vs. Jarvis Valentine" - Written by Ben.

Results Compiled by the eFed Management Suite