

Victory: 03.20.2026

March 20, 2026 | PHX Arena - Phoenix, AZ

Introduction

The camera fades in from black.

A low, cinematic sweep glides across the outside of the PHX Arena in downtown Phoenix, Arizona. The night sky hangs over the city in deep shades of blue and black while beams of light from the arena roof cut upward into the desert air. Fans pour through the entrances in waves, many already wearing UTA merchandise, others clutching replica titles over their shoulders, and nearly all of them buzzing with the kind of anticipation that only comes when a major night feels like it could change everything.

The shot cuts inside.

A wall of sound slams into the broadcast as the packed PHX Arena comes into view. The crowd is on its feet. Some fans point toward the stage while others wave signs high above their heads. The camera catches a few of them in rapid succession: "HAKURYU FEARS NO ONE," "JARVIS STILL MY CHAMP," "GUNNAR WALKS THROUGH PAIN," and "KAIRO BEY FOR INTERNATIONAL CHAMP."

The stage erupts in a burst of pyro, red, gold, and white shooting skyward in timed waves as the giant video wall flashes the United Toughness Alliance logo. The hard camera captures the ring in the center of it all, ropes shining under the lights, the canvas pristine and waiting, the atmosphere thick with electricity. The fans do not settle. If anything, the noise only grows louder.

The camera circles the bowl of the arena, giving a full sense of the scale before landing at ringside where John Phillips and Mark Bravo sit at the commentary desk, headsets on, papers spread between them, both men leaning forward as if even they can feel the restless energy in the building.

John Phillips: "Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Victory! We are live from the PHX Arena in Phoenix, Arizona, and what a night we have ahead of us here tonight in the United Toughness Alliance."

John smiles into the camera with practiced professionalism, one hand resting on the desk while the other subtly gestures toward the ring beside him. Mark Bravo sits back for half a second, taking in the roaring arena around them before turning toward his broadcast partner with a grin that says he has been waiting all week for this.

Mark Bravo: "John, this place is already electric, and I don't blame these people one bit. We have championships on the line, big names all over this card, and by the end of the night we are guaranteed to crown the very first UTA International Champion."

The mention of the new championship draws another audible reaction from the crowd, as if the audience

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needed only the slightest reminder of what is at stake tonight. John nods, letting the moment breathe for a second before continuing.

John Phillips: "That alone would make this a monumental night, but there is so much more hanging in the air. Questions are swirling after Scott Stevens summoned Eric Dane Jr. to his office, and knowing Stevens, that is never something that happens without a reason."

Mark lets out a short, knowing laugh and shakes his head, one hand coming up as if to wave away the very thought of Stevens' motives.

Mark Bravo: "No, it doesn't. Scott Stevens doesn't call somebody in for a friendly chat and a cup of coffee. If Eric Dane Jr. got that message, then something is brewing, and I can promise you it isn't good for somebody."

The camera cuts from the desk to a few fans near the barricade chanting loudly, then pans across the front rows where supporters in Gunnar Van Patton and Jarvis Valentine shirts bark at one another from just a few seats apart. The tension in the building is not limited to the wrestlers.

Back at ringside, John glances down briefly at his notes before looking back up, his tone tightening as he shifts the focus to the evening's biggest matches.

John Phillips: "Let's talk about what is on deck tonight, because the UTA has brought one loaded lineup to Phoenix. In our main event, Gunnar Van Patton is scheduled to defend the WrestleZone Championship against former UTA Champion Jarvis Valentine."

Mark's eyebrows lift immediately at the word scheduled. He leans closer to the desk, tapping one finger against the tabletop as if underlining the point before he even says it aloud.

Mark Bravo: "Scheduled being the key word there. Gunnar Van Patton is one of the most dangerous men walking this planet, but the question isn't whether he can fight. The question is whether he should. If he isn't medically cleared, then Stevens may have set the table perfectly for Jarvis Valentine to swoop in and take that title."

John nods in agreement, his expression growing more serious as a graphic flashes on screen showing Gunnar Van Patton and Jarvis Valentine on opposite sides of the WrestleZone Championship.

John Phillips: "Jarvis Valentine has been looking for the road back to championship glory, and tonight might be the opportunity he has been waiting for. But if Gunnar is cleared, then Jarvis is stepping in there with a wounded animal, and sometimes that is the most dangerous version of a man."

Mark turns toward the camera now, speaking not just to John but almost directly to the audience at home.

Mark Bravo: "A wounded Gunnar Van Patton is still Gunnar Van Patton. That's like saying a lion with a limp

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is suddenly safe to pet. Jarvis better come in ready for a war, because if Gunnar shows up, he is not coming to survive. He is coming to hurt somebody."

The crowd pops for that line, and somewhere in the lower bowl a fan can be seen pumping a fist while another holds up a sign that simply reads "LET THEM FIGHT."

John Phillips: "Also tonight, the UTA Fighting Championship will be on the line as Hakuryu defends against Graham Keel. The stakes could not be clearer. Hakuryu is one win away from earning the right to cash in that championship for a shot at the UTA Championship."

A subtle murmur of excitement rolls through the audience at the implications of that statement. The camera briefly catches a young fan in a Hakuryu shirt bouncing up and down near the aisle before returning to commentary.

Mark Bravo: "And that is exactly why Graham Keel has to throw everything he has at him. Forget momentum. Forget pride. Forget trying to make a statement. If you're Graham Keel, this is about stopping the train before it leaves the station. Because once Hakuryu gets that win, the whole championship picture changes."

John points lightly toward Mark as if to say that is exactly the issue, then adds to it.

John Phillips: "Graham Keel also carries the motivation of redemption for his team. He has a chance tonight to do what his partner could not last week, and that is take the Fighting Championship away from Hakuryu."

Mark folds his hands together on the desk and nods once, his voice lowering just enough to add some gravity.

Mark Bravo: "Hakuryu is cold, methodical, and deadly inside those rules, but I keep coming back to one thing. Graham Keel knows exactly what this match means. He can stop a future title shot, win a championship, and put his name in lights all in one night. That's a dangerous combination."

The Fighting Championship match graphic fills the screen for a moment, both competitors staring ahead with the title belt centered between them. When the broadcast returns to the desk, John is already moving forward.

John Phillips: "Then there is the UTA Tag Team Championship match. El Fantasma defends against Velocity Vanguard in what promises to be one of the most explosive contests of the evening."

The crowd responds immediately at the mention of the tag title bout, a pocket of fans near the stage waving black-and-silver flags while others clap in anticipation. Tag team wrestling has long held a special place in UTA, and tonight's title fight clearly means something to this audience.

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Mark Bravo: "Explosive is right. These two teams haven't met in a standard tag team match since October of last year, and a lot has changed since then. Velocity Vanguard has been chasing the moment that puts them over the top, and tonight they finally get their shot."

John leans back slightly, one hand moving across the desk as if laying out the contrast between the two teams.

John Phillips: "But standing across from them will be a championship team that knows exactly how to navigate pressure situations. El Fantasma has proven time and again that when the spotlight gets brighter, they only get more dangerous."

Mark's grin widens.

Mark Bravo: "Velocity Vanguard has the speed, they have the chemistry, and they have the hunger. But El Fantasma has the belts, and champions don't give those up because the challengers had a good week. If Velocity Vanguard wants that gold, they are going to have to rip it away."

A quick cut shows a pair of fans in matching Velocity Vanguard shirts slapping the barricade and shouting toward the stage, while another fan behind them raises a replica Tag Team Championship high into the air.

John Phillips: "Emily Hightower will also be in singles competition tonight against Juno Sage. Two competitors with a lot to prove, and in a division that continues to evolve, every win matters."

Mark nods along, more measured here, giving the match its due rather than treating it like a footnote.

Mark Bravo: "Emily Hightower has been building herself into a serious problem for anyone across the ring from her, and Juno Sage has a chance tonight to change the conversation with one huge victory. These are the kind of matches people overlook until one of them steals the whole show."

John's expression shifts again as the conversation reaches the centerpiece of the evening. Even before he says the words, the crowd seems to know what is coming.

John Phillips: "And then, of course, there is the match everyone has been talking about all week. The inaugural UTA International Championship will be decided tonight in a six-person elimination cluster match featuring Troy Lindz, Selena Vex, Rosa Delgado, Trey Mack, Clovis Black, and Kairo Bey."

The arena volume spikes. A full-screen graphic explodes onto the broadcast, introducing each competitor one by one. Faces flash across the screen. Names hit with dramatic force. Then, finally, the new International Championship appears at the center of the image in all its prestige, drawing a louder reaction still.

Back at ringside, Mark spreads his hands wide, almost laughing at the sheer unpredictability of what is coming.

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Mark Bravo: "This is chaos waiting to happen, and I mean that in the best possible way. Six competitors. One title. Elimination rules. Three women, three men, all chosen because they have earned their spot through the rankings. That is pressure. That is opportunity. That is history."

John lets the final word settle before continuing, his delivery smooth and deliberate.

John Phillips: "The winner will forever be remembered as the very first UTA International Champion, a title designed to represent the rest of the world in competition here in the UTA. There is prestige attached to that before the first bell even rings."

Mark points toward the camera, his tone sharpening now as he starts to run through the field.

Mark Bravo: "Look at the field. Troy Lindz is desperate to remind the world who he is. Selena Vex is as dangerous and venomous as they come. Rosa Delgado has the grit to outlast people. Trey Mack has been surging. Clovis Black brings unpredictability every time he steps in the ring. And Kairo Bey might be the wildcard that changes everything."

John nods, but then adds the wrinkle that hangs over the match beyond pure talent.

John Phillips: "And there is another layer to it. With two tag teams represented in that elimination environment, alliances may only last until it is convenient for them not to. When gold is on the line, friendships and partnerships can be tested in a hurry."

Mark chuckles darkly and shakes his head.

Mark Bravo: "Tested? John, they might explode. When that championship is sitting there in the distance and you know only one person can walk out with it, all that teamwork talk gets real shaky. If teammates have to choose between loyalty and history, I think I know which way that goes."

The camera slowly pushes in on the desk, tightening the frame as the commentators bring the moment home.

John Phillips: "By the end of tonight, somebody will etch their name into UTA history forever. That is not hype. That is fact."

Mark glances out toward the ring, then back to the lens.

Mark Bravo: "Phoenix better buckle up, because this card is stacked, tempers are high, and something tells me this is one of those nights where the fallout will be just as important as the matches themselves."

John Phillips: "Championships on the line. Careers ready to pivot. Questions waiting for answers. Victory starts right now."

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The camera pulls back from the commentary desk just as another burst of pyro erupts from the stage. The ring sits ready in the center of the storm, the crowd roaring at full throat as the show surges forward into the night.

Sho' Nuff

The camera cuts away from the arena and fades into a quieter part of the backstage area, though even here the muffled roar of the crowd can still be heard through the concrete walls. The shot opens tight on the brand new UTA International Championship, resting on a black velvet podium beneath a focused white spotlight. The polished plates gleam under the light, every edge catching a sharp shine. The center plate reflects the surrounding hallway in warped gold and silver, giving the title an almost mythic presence as it sits untouched, waiting for the person who will make history by claiming it.

The camera slowly circles the podium, giving the audience a full look at the championship from every angle. It is pristine. Untarnished. Brand new. A symbol of opportunity, legacy, and ambition all wrapped into one. The kind of title that makes people dream bigger and trust less.

Footsteps echo from down the hallway.

The camera widens just enough as Trey Mack steps into frame, Clovis Black walking a step behind him. Trey is dressed for competition, shoulders loose but eyes sharp, and the moment he sees the championship his pace slows. His expression changes. The casual swagger stays, but now there is something deeper underneath it. Hunger. Focus. A sense that he already sees that belt as his, even before he has earned the right to touch it.

Clovis Black stops off Trey's shoulder, his face unreadable as always, dark eyes settled on the title. Trey steps closer to the podium, close enough that the reflection of his face now stares back at him from the center plate. He tilts his head slightly, admiring it, almost smiling to himself.

Trey Mack: "Now that's what I'm talkin' about."

He reaches a hand out, stopping just short of the championship, respecting the line enough not to actually put his hands on it. His fingers hover for a second before he lets them fall back to his side.

Trey Mack: "It's about time I added some gold to my waist."

Trey keeps his eyes on the title as he speaks, the words coming out with a smooth confidence that borders on entitlement. He nods to himself once, like the thought alone makes perfect sense.

Trey Mack: "And tonight? Tonight feels like the right time."

Only then does he turn his head slightly toward Clovis Black. Not enough to fully face him. Just enough to

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make it clear that the next part is meant for him. Trey's expression tightens into something more pointed, more calculated.

Trey Mack: "You know what that means, right?"

Clovis Black doesn't move much. He simply stands there, hands at his sides, calm and steady, listening. Trey takes one half-step back from the podium and finally turns more toward him.

Trey Mack: "It means when the time comes... you make sure this works out the way it's supposed to."

The implication hangs in the air. No elaborate speech. No need to spell it out. Trey has already said enough. In a match where only one person can leave with the title, Trey is making it very clear that in his mind, Clovis Black's role is not to win it for himself. It is to help Trey win it instead.

Clovis says nothing at first. He just stares at Trey for a moment, then shifts his gaze back toward the championship. The camera moves in slightly, capturing the tension in the silence, the uncertainty in what is not being said aloud.

Then, finally, Clovis Black gives the smallest nod.

Clovis Black: "Sho nuff."

Trey smirks, satisfied with the answer, and turns back toward the title one last time. His eyes linger on it, imagining the weight of it over his shoulder, around his waist, around his future. Beside him, Clovis Black remains still, his face impossible to read.

The camera holds on the two men and the championship between them for one more beat, the silence now carrying a little more tension than before, before the shot fades away.

Emerging

The scene cuts to another part of the backstage area, quieter and more polished than the loading hallways seen earlier. A brass nameplate mounted beside a heavy office door reads: SCOTT STEVENS. The camera lingers there for a moment, the weight of the name alone enough to suggest that whatever happens behind that door rarely happens by accident.

There is a brief pause.

Then the office door swings open.

Out steps Eric Dane Jr.

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He emerges with confidence. A broad smile stretches across his face, almost too satisfied to hide. He slows just outside the doorway and casually reaches up to adjust his collar, smoothing it into place with both hands like a man making sure he looks right after hearing exactly what he wanted to hear.

Dane glances down the hallway, then off to one side, still wearing that smug grin. He gives a small nod to himself, as if confirming something privately, before rolling his shoulders back and stepping forward with a renewed swagger in his stride.

Whatever was said inside Scott Stevens' office, Eric Dane Jr. clearly liked it.

The camera stays on him for a few seconds as he walks away down the hall, smile still plastered across his face, before finally cutting elsewhere.

El Fantasma vs. Velocity Vanguard

The camera returns from backstage to the inside of the PHX Arena, where the energy has only continued to rise. The crowd is loud, restless, and leaning forward in anticipation as the hard camera captures the ring from a wide angle. The UTA Tag Team Championships rest on a table at ringside for one last moment, the gold gleaming beneath the lights as a graphic flashes across the screen.

UTA Tag Team Championship

El Fantasma (c) vs. Velocity Vanguard

The camera settles at ringside with John Phillips and Mark Bravo.

John Phillips: "What a way to begin in-ring action tonight. The UTA Tag Team Championships are on the line right out of the gate as El Fantasma defend against one of the fastest, most exciting teams anywhere in this company today, Velocity Vanguard."

Mark Bravo: "This is the kind of opener that makes people spill their drinks on the way back to their seats, John. You blink, you miss something. And with these two teams? You might miss three things."

John Phillips: "Velocity Vanguard has been building momentum for months now. Tyler Cruz and Jet Lawson have become one of the most electric duos in the entire division, but tonight they step in against champions who have built their reign on pressure, presence, and outright psychological warfare."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, because wrestling El Fantasma isn't just about surviving moves. It's about surviving the feeling. The pace changes, the air changes, and before you know it you're fighting their match instead of your own."

John Phillips: "And standing with the champions tonight is Madman Szalinski, who we now know will headline next week's UTA Hall of Fame ceremony as the headlining inductee for the Class of 2026."

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Mark Bravo: "That part I love. Madman Szalinski is one of those names you can't tell the story of the UTA without. Former UTA Champion, absolute maniac, beloved weirdo, dangerous mastermind, and somehow still one of the most unforgettable figures this company has ever had."

John Phillips: "He was officially announced last week, and what a moment that was. From his own wild in-ring legacy to the work he's doing now beside the tag team champions, Madman Szalinski remains one of the most unique presences in all of professional wrestling."

Mark Bravo: "Hall of Famer next week. Manager of champions tonight. That's a pretty good stretch of life right there."

The lights in the arena begin to dim.

The crowd's tone changes almost instantly. The louder cheers and chatter begin to blend into a more uneasy buzz as shadows stretch over the entrance stage. A low, hollow hum rolls through the building, subtle at first, then more pronounced, vibrating in the chest more than in the ears. The giant screen flickers once. Then again. Then the entire stage drops into a suffocating gloom as fog starts to spill from the entranceway and creep down the ramp like it has been summoned from somewhere beneath the building itself.

John Phillips: "And just like that... it begins."

Mark Bravo: "Every single time. Every single time these guys come out, it feels like the temperature drops ten degrees."

A distorted metallic echo cuts through the darkness. Then a pale white flash erupts across the stage.

Standing in the center of the fog are El Fantasma Oscuro I and El Fantasma Oscuro II.

Side by side. Motionless. Perfectly aligned. Their masks catch the pale light just enough to create the illusion of faces where there are none, both men somehow looking identical and impossible to separate at a glance. They do not acknowledge the crowd. They do not posture. They do not play to the camera. They simply stare toward the ring as if the match has already begun in their minds and everyone else is late catching up.

John Phillips: "The champions have made this entrance into something beyond tradition. It is atmosphere. It is dread. It is a warning."

Mark Bravo: "And the worst part? Once the bell rings, they can back every bit of it up."

The camera slowly pushes in as the fog thickens around their boots. Then movement stirs behind them.

Out steps Madman Szalinski.

His eyes are wide. His body language is twitchy and alive in complete contrast to the stillness of the two men

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in front of him. He spreads his arms with theatrical pride, presenting the champions like a ringmaster unveiling his greatest creation. The crowd pops hard for him, a strange mix of reverence, affection, and anticipation washing over the arena.

John Phillips: "And there he is, the Hall of Fame headliner himself. Madman Szalinski, a former UTA Champion, still shaping this company in his own bizarre image."

Mark Bravo: "He is chaos in a necktie, brother. And somehow he fits perfectly with these two."

Szalinski paces behind the champions, whispering to himself, then laughing under his breath, then clapping once like some private rhythm only he can hear. In front of him, El Fantasma begin to move. Slow. Deliberate. Mechanical. They descend the ramp one step at a time, neither man rushing, both of them carrying the UTA Tag Team Championships over their shoulders like relics taken from a battlefield.

The fans nearest the barricade reach out, but the champions never turn their heads. Halfway down the ramp, Oscuro I tilts his head ever so slightly toward the crowd on his left, freezing a fan in place with one silent look before continuing forward. Madman trails behind, occasionally nodding, occasionally pointing toward the belts, occasionally playing to the crowd in flashes that feel almost comedic until you remember what team he is escorting.

John Phillips: "You talk about contrast, Mark. Szalinski brings this wild humanity and unpredictability, and yet El Fantasma remain so cold, so detached, so impossible to read."

Mark Bravo: "That's what makes it work. Madman's the storm siren. These two are the storm."

The champions reach ringside. Oscuro I suddenly slips beneath the bottom rope in one smooth, ghostlike motion. Oscuro II steps to the apron and enters with almost ceremonial calm. They rise in opposite corners, tag belts in hand, not posing so much as occupying space with complete authority. Outside, Madman grips the top rope, looking from one side of the ring to the other as if surveying land he already owns.

John Phillips: "El Fantasma are here. The champions look as unsettling as ever, and make no mistake, they have earned every ounce of that confidence. They have become one of the defining teams in this division, and tonight they are looking to turn back yet another hungry challenger."

The arena stays dim for a moment longer. Then, suddenly--

BOOM.

Electric-blue light explodes across the stage in a sharp pulse, immediately burning away the dread that El Fantasma left hanging in the air. The mood flips in an instant. A thumping beat kicks in over the speakers, CO2 jets blast upward, and the crowd erupts with the kind of reaction reserved for a team that has made excitement part of its identity.

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John Phillips: "And now here come the challengers!"

Mark Bravo: "Talk about a complete change of weather!"

Jet Lawson bursts through the smoke first at full speed, arms wide, grin on his face, blue light chasing every step. He races to the front of the stage, then cuts across it with a burst of athletic ease before throwing both hands skyward. The crowd answers immediately. A second later Tyler Cruz emerges through red-and-white strobes, dancing to the beat with effortless swagger before launching into a chain of handsprings that carries him nearly halfway down the ramp before he lands in stride and points to the crowd with a confident shout.

John Phillips: "Jet Lawson, the Blue Comet, all parkour agility and crisp striking. Tyler Cruz, the Red Rocket, a second-generation luchador blending showmanship with world-class athleticism. Together, these two absolutely redefine pace."

Mark Bravo: "They're not just fast, John. They're fun fast. Stylish fast. 'How did they even do that' fast."

Jet breaks to one side of the ramp to slap hands with fans while Tyler claps to the rhythm of the music, pulling more and more of the crowd into sync. Lawson points to the sky. Cruz points toward the ring. Their body language is loose, confident, and alive with momentum. There is nothing nervous about them tonight. If anything, they look thrilled to be in this spot.

John Phillips: "Velocity Vanguard has called themselves history in motion, and they have wrestled with that exact kind of energy. Every match feels like it could turn into a highlight reel in seconds."

Mark Bravo: "And they believe this is their time. You can see it all over them. No fear, no hesitation, just two guys who think the belts are finally about to catch up to the buzz."

Halfway down the ramp, Jet kicks it into another gear, hopping onto the barricade for a few balanced steps before flipping back down to the floor. Tyler answers with a sharp cartwheel into another handspring, landing with a flourish that gets an even bigger roar from the Phoenix crowd. The two meet at ringside, exchange a quick forearm tap, and then split in opposite directions around the ring like runners hitting assigned lanes.

They hit the apron at nearly the same time.

Jet slingshots over the top rope with a light roll and pops to his feet. Tyler vaults in a beat later, springboarding cleanly into the ring before landing in a crouch and spinning up to face the hard camera. The crowd rises with them. Jet points skyward again. Tyler starts a rhythmic clap overhead and the building follows along, chant after chant growing louder as the challengers feed off every bit of it.

John Phillips: "The energy has completely shifted. This is what Velocity Vanguard does. They don't just arrive for matches, they inject them with life."

Mark Bravo: "Meanwhile El Fantasma are in the corners looking like they want to snuff all that life right out."

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In the opposite corners, the champions never flinch. Oscuro I stares straight ahead. Oscuro II rests one arm over the top rope without expression. Outside, Madman Szalinski leans in with both hands on the apron, peering into the ring with that same wide-eyed excitement, his attention darting between Cruz and Lawson as if trying to study the timing of a machine that moves too quickly to fully understand.

John Phillips: "That contrast is remarkable. Velocity Vanguard are all motion, rhythm, crowd connection. El Fantasma are ice cold and surgical. One team wants to explode the arena. The other wants to suffocate it."

Mark Bravo: "And both approaches win matches. That's the scary part."

Jet Lawson steps onto the second rope and points around his waist. Tyler Cruz turns and points directly at the champions, then drags a thumb across his chest with a grin that says they came here for this exact challenge. Across the ring, Oscuro I slowly hands one of the tag belts through the ropes to the official without taking his eyes off the challengers.

John Phillips: "The champions are ready. The challengers are ready. And Phoenix is absolutely alive for this one."

Mark Bravo: "I love this already."

The referee steps into the center and signals both teams forward. Tyler Cruz and Oscuro I appear ready to start, while Jet Lawson and Oscuro II take their places on the apron. Madman Szalinski paces outside, muttering with nervous excitement as the official raises the UTA Tag Team Championships high above his head one final time.

John Phillips: "UTA Tag Team Championships on the line. El Fantasma versus Velocity Vanguard. And this opening contest is about to get underway."

The crowd rises as one.

The bell rings.

DING DING

Tyler Cruz bounces lightly on the balls of his feet, loose shoulders, chin up, hands moving in tiny feints as he starts to circle. Across from him, Oscuro I barely moves at all. He stands with that same eerie stillness, head slightly angled, eyes locked in, giving Tyler almost nothing to read except patience and threat.

John Phillips: "And there is the opening image of this match. Tyler Cruz all rhythm and energy. Oscuro I all composure and silence."

Mark Bravo: "It's like watching a fireworks display circle a gravestone."

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Cruz steps in once, then out, trying to draw a response. Nothing. He claps his hands once, nods to himself, and edges forward again. This time Oscuro I advances just a half-step, enough to make Tyler change his angle. The fans can feel the tension in even the smallest movement, the kind of opening minute where both men are measuring not just speed and reach, but temperament.

Tyler darts in for a quick wrist touch, then spins away before contact can become control. A few in the crowd cheer the audacity. Oscuro I follows with a sudden burst, lunging forward faster than his stillness suggested possible, but Tyler slips aside and rolls through, popping back up with a grin toward the audience.

John Phillips: "First real burst there from the champion, and Cruz had to respect it."

Mark Bravo: "Because that's the trick. He looks frozen right until he doesn't."

Now Tyler starts to push the pace. He shuffles left, then springs right, then snaps into a fast waist-level feint before coming back up high. Oscuro I tracks him, shoulders squared, eyes unblinking. The two finally close enough for contact--Tyler reaching for the arm, Oscuro shifting away from a traditional tie-up exactly as expected. Cruz tries to flow with it, spins through behind him, and catches a standing side headlock before the champion can fully turn.

John Phillips: "Cruz got him! Nicely done by the challenger, refusing to be thrown off by the mind games."

Tyler wrenches the hold, grinding in for just a moment before Oscuro I shoots him off into the ropes. Cruz rebounds. Leapfrog. The champion passes underneath. Tyler hits the far ropes again and comes back with a flying headscissors that snaps Oscuro I over onto the canvas. The crowd pops as Cruz lands on his feet and throws his arms wide.

Mark Bravo: "There we go! Now that's Vanguard speed!"

John Phillips: "Tilt-a-whirl style movement, lucha instincts, and perfect balance from Tyler Cruz!"

Oscuro I is already rolling back up, but Tyler doesn't let him settle. He races toward the ropes, springboards to the middle, and twists back with an arm drag that sends the champion tumbling again toward his own corner. The audience surges louder now, the challengers establishing that they are not here to be intimidated.

On the apron, Jet Lawson pounds the turnbuckle pad and points into the ring, urging Tyler to keep pressing. Outside, Madman Szalinski's expression twists from thrilled curiosity to sudden concern as he shouts something at the champions that is lost under the crowd noise.

John Phillips: "Velocity Vanguard said they would outpace, outsmart, and outclass people. So far, Tyler Cruz is making good on the first part of that promise."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, but don't get too comfortable. El Fantasma doesn't panic. They wait for one bad landing

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and then they make you pay rent on it."

Tyler motions for Oscurro I to rise. The champion does, slowly. Tyler sprints in, but this time Oscurro I cuts him off with a sharp kick to the ribs that folds the challenger in half. The momentum changes instantly. One strike. One opening. One reminder.

John Phillips: "And just like that, the champions steal the breath right back."

Oscurro I hooks Tyler by the arm and whips him hard toward the corner--

Tyler leaps to the middle rope, backflips over the incoming charge, and lands behind him to a huge cheer.

Mark Bravo: "Oh come on! That's stupid athletic!"

Tyler grabs the wrist, spins through, and lunges toward his corner--

John Phillips: "Looking for the tag--!"

The crowd rises as Jet Lawson stretches his arm out over the top rope, ready to explode into the match.

But before contact is made, Oscurro II springs off the apron and yanks Jet's arm down, breaking the moment and drawing a loud round of boos from the Phoenix crowd. The referee instantly turns to warn him, while inside the ring Tyler and Oscurro I square back up with the pace about to escalate again.

John Phillips: "Smart play by Oscurro II, but it buys the champions precious seconds."

Mark Bravo: "And now this thing's getting nasty. I love it."

The camera catches Madman Szalinski slapping the apron once and pointing wildly at both members of El Fantasma as the noise in the building swells.

We are only moments in, and already the opening match has the PHX Arena on edge.

Tyler Cruz and El Fantasma Oscurro I square up again in the center of the ring, but the disruption at the apron has bought the champions exactly what they wanted: a moment to reset the tempo. Jet Lawson is still arguing from the apron, pointing down at Oscurro II after having his arm yanked away, and the referee is forced to split his attention between the legal men and the illegal interference brewing at ringside.

John Phillips: "That one small moment may have changed everything. Tyler Cruz was inches away from bringing Jet Lawson into this match."

Mark Bravo: "And instead, El Fantasma gets to drag this right back into their kind of fight."

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Tyler tries to re-engage quickly, darting in with a sharp forearm aimed high, but Oscurro I slips just enough to the side to catch him on the rebound with a short knee to the midsection. Tyler doubles over. The champion immediately clubs him across the back, then snatches a handful of wrist and shoulder before whipping him hard into the neutral corner. Tyler hits sternum-first, stumbles back, and that is all the opening El Fantasma needs.

Oscurro I rushes in and drives a running back elbow into Tyler's jaw, snapping his head sideways before dragging him backward by the arm and planting him with a quick Russian leg sweep. Cruz bounces on impact and rolls toward the ropes, but not far enough.

John Phillips: "The champions are wasting no time now. That rhythm Tyler Cruz had early has been completely interrupted."

Mark Bravo: "Because once El Fantasma gets their hands on you, every second starts feeling heavier than the last."

Oscurro I floats over into a cover.

John Phillips: "First cover of the match!"

Referee: "ONE--"

Tyler kicks out quickly, but there is nothing casual about the way the champion stays on him. Oscurro I rises and immediately pulls Cruz up by the head, only to slam a hard forearm across the side of his face. Tyler tries to answer back with one of his own, then another, trying to build some momentum through pure fight, but the champion cuts him off again with a vicious throat-high upper strike that halts him cold.

On the apron, Jet Lawson slaps the top rope and leans in farther, trying to keep his partner focused, trying to call him home.

Jet Lawson: "Come on, Tyler! Bring it here! Bring it here!"

Outside, Madman Szalinski paces like a delighted scientist watching an experiment begin to produce results. He claps once, then twice, before pointing emphatically toward the challengers' corner.

John Phillips: "Madman Szalinski loving what he's seeing from his team right now."

Mark Bravo: "And why wouldn't he? Hall of Fame headliner next week, champions in control tonight. Madman's on a heater."

Oscurro I drags Tyler toward the wrong side of the ring and drives him shoulder-first between the top and middle turnbuckles. Tyler cries out and clutches at the joint as he stumbles backward. The champion does not rush. He simply reaches across the ropes and extends a hand toward his corner.

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John Phillips: "And now the tag."

Oscuro II steps through the ropes with that same eerie calm, the two men changing places almost seamlessly. There is no wasted motion. No extra flourish. Just precision. Oscuro II steps in and immediately twists Tyler's trapped arm into a standing hammerlock before yanking him backward and dropping a knee straight into the shoulder blade.

Mark Bravo: "There it is. That's championship tag wrestling. One guy softens it up, the next guy starts dissecting it."

Tyler grits his teeth and tries to force himself upright, but Oscuro II traps the wrist, stretches the arm outward, and stomps down on the upper bicep. Cruz drops to a knee, his face tightening in pain. The crowd rallies for him, sensing the danger, sensing the change in control.

John Phillips: "This is where El Fantasma are so dangerous. They can be eerie, they can be theatrical, they can be intimidating--but above all else, they are disciplined."

Oscuro II hauls Tyler back to his feet and sends him to the ropes. Cruz rebounds, ducks one clothesline, then tries to spring up off the middle rope on the return--but the damaged arm betrays him. The landing is off just enough. That is all Oscuro II needs. He catches Tyler out of the air and drives him down with a snapping powerslam in the center of the ring.

John Phillips: "Beautiful counter by Oscuro II!"

Mark Bravo: "And Tyler Cruz paid for trying to stay flashy on a bad wheel."

Another cover.

Referee: "ONE! TWO--"

Tyler kicks out again, this time with more force, but he immediately rolls toward his stomach and crawls for the ropes, protecting the arm and trying to create any kind of distance. Jet is practically hanging into the ring now, stomping the apron, urging him forward.

Jet Lawson: "You're right there! Come on, Ty! Come on!"

Oscuro II stalks in behind him and drives a boot between the shoulders, flattening him. Then, with chilling patience, he reaches down and drags Tyler by the ankle away from his own corner. The crowd boos loudly as the champion methodically erases the progress the challenger had fought for.

John Phillips: "That is a veteran move. Tyler Cruz was inching toward hope, and Oscuro II just snatched it away."

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Mark Bravo: "El Fantasma doesn't just beat you up. They make you feel how far away salvation is."

Oscuro II pulls Tyler up and whips him hard into the champions' corner. Cruz hits back-first this time, immediately followed by a tag to Oscuro I. The transition is crisp. Oscuro I steps in with a full head of steam and buries a running knee into Tyler's ribs, crushing him against the turnbuckles before he can even brace. Tyler spills out of the corner and staggers blindly into the center of the ring, where Oscuro I scoops him up and plants him with a backbreaker across the knee.

John Phillips: "Tag champions cutting the ring in half and punishing every inch of Tyler Cruz!"

Mark Bravo: "And Jet Lawson can do nothing but watch. That's the torture of tag wrestling right there."

Tyler arches in pain, one arm wrapping around his lower back while the other hangs tight to his side. Oscuro I stays seated for a second longer, pressing down across the chest and sternum before shoving Tyler forward to the canvas. Another cover follows immediately.

Referee: "ONE! TWO--"

Tyler again gets the shoulder up, and this time the crowd gives him a louder response. The resilience is there. The fight is there. But so is the damage.

John Phillips: "Cruz is hanging in, but you can feel this match starting to tilt dangerously."

Oscuro I grabs Tyler by the maskless hair and jawline, dragging him back to his feet. Cruz suddenly fires a forearm. Then another. A third. The crowd rises with each shot, sensing life. Tyler spins free, hits the ropes, and comes back with a flying forearm that staggers the champion. He doesn't stop. He leaps to the second rope, springboards backward, and catches Oscuro I flush with an enzuigiri that finally sends the champion stumbling down to one knee.

John Phillips: "There's the spark! Tyler Cruz with a huge answer!"

Mark Bravo: "Now move! Move now!"

The building comes alive. Tyler stumbles toward his corner, every step labored but urgent. Jet Lawson stretches as far as he possibly can over the top rope, his entire body practically entering the ring.

Jet Lawson: "Tag! Tag! Tag!"

Oscuro I lunges from behind and snatches at Tyler's boot--

Tyler kicks free.

The crowd jumps to its feet as Cruz dives the final step and reaches--

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John Phillips: "He's got him! Jet Lawson gets the tag!"

Jet Lawson explodes into the ring like he was fired from a cannon.

Oscuro I rises just in time to eat a flying forearm smash from the Blue Comet that knocks him flat. Oscuro II charges in from the apron side, but Jet spins and catches him with a lightning-fast dropkick that sends him crashing off the apron to the floor. The crowd erupts.

Mark Bravo: "Business just picked up!"

Jet pops back to his feet, hits the ropes, and launches into a running corkscrew body block that catches Oscuro I square in the chest as he tries to stand again. The champion stumbles into the corner. Jet sprints in after him, plants both boots on the middle rope, and rains down a rapid flurry of strikes from above, the crowd counting along with every blow.

Crowd: "ONE! TWO! THREE! FOUR! FIVE! SIX! SEVEN! EIGHT! NINE! TEN!"

Jet flips back to the mat, grabs Oscuro I by the wrist, and whips him across the ring. On the rebound, Lawson drops low, pops back up into a leaping calf kick, and sends the champion spinning to the canvas. The arena is roaring now, the challengers feeding directly off the surge.

John Phillips: "Jet Lawson changing this match with pure speed and timing!"

Mark Bravo: "That's what a hot tag is supposed to look like! Fast, reckless, beautiful chaos!"

Oscuro I rolls toward the ropes, desperate for a break, but Jet stays with him. Lawson races to the far side, springboards onto the middle rope, then vaults back with a twisting splash that crushes the champion near the ropes. He hooks the leg deep.

Referee: "ONE! TWO--"

Oscuro I kicks out.

John Phillips: "Very close! Very close right there!"

Jet sits up with a flash of frustration but doesn't waste time. He drags Oscuro I up and points toward Tyler, who is now recovering on the apron. The crowd rises again, sensing a double-team attempt. Jet whips the champion toward the challengers' corner--

Tyler slaps himself back into it and springboards over the top rope with a missile dropkick to the side of Oscuro I's head just as Jet catches him with a high knee from the front. The impact folds the champion to the mat in a heap and sends the PHX Arena into another frenzy.

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Mark Bravo: "Now that's a tag team highlight! That is exactly why these two are dangerous!"

John Phillips: "Velocity Vanguard firing on all cylinders now!"

Jet covers again, hooking both legs this time.

Referee: "ONE! TWO--"

Broken up.

El Fantasma Oscuro II dives through the ropes at the last possible moment and clubs Jet across the back of the head to save the titles. The referee immediately turns and tries to force him back out, but the damage is done. The crowd rains down boos as Tyler steps in to confront him.

John Phillips: "Saved by his partner! That may have been the match!"

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, and now we're about to lose order altogether!"

Tyler shoves Oscuro II. Oscuro II shoves back. Jet Lawson is back on his feet. Oscuro I is dragging himself up using the ropes. Outside, Madman Szalinski is shouting and pounding his palms together with manic delight as the official struggles to re-establish control.

The official gets between Tyler Cruz and El Fantasma Oscuro II, shoving the latter back toward the apron while barking for Tyler to return to his corner. The crowd is loud and fully invested now, the early nerves of the opening moments replaced by a constant roar as all four men teeter right on the edge of chaos.

John Phillips: "This one is getting harder and harder to contain. Velocity Vanguard nearly had the championships won, and El Fantasma know it."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, and now the champs are doing what good champs do. They are surviving the fire and looking for one opening to swing this right back."

Jet Lawson turns back toward the legal man, reaching down to haul El Fantasma Oscuro I off the canvas by the wrist. The champion comes up slower this time, the earlier burst from Velocity Vanguard clearly having rattled him, but the moment Jet tries to whip him into the ropes, Oscuro I plants his feet. Lawson tugs again. Still nothing. He tries to muscle the champion over with a second yank--

Oscuro I suddenly jerks Jet forward and drives him throat-first across the top rope.

John Phillips: "Counter! What a counter by the champion!"

Jet recoils instantly, stumbling backward and clutching at his throat. He hacks for air just long enough for Oscuro I to leap and make the tag.

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Mark Bravo: "That's the opening I was talking about!"

Oscuro II slingshots into the ring and blasts Jet from behind with a forearm between the shoulders that sends the challenger tumbling through the ropes and into the champions' corner. Tyler reaches out instinctively from the apron, but he is a step too far away. A step might as well be a mile in tag team wrestling.

John Phillips: "And just like that, Jet Lawson is trapped."

Oscuro II buries a series of hard shoulder thrusts into Jet's stomach while the referee counts, then backs off at four with both palms raised and no expression on his masked face. Jet folds over, still trying to suck air back into his lungs, and that is when Oscuro I reaches around the ropes and tags back in.

John Phillips: "Here comes the precision again. Fresh man in. No wasted movement."

Oscuro I steps between the ropes and immediately grabs Jet in a front facelock. He walks him away from the corner, twists his hips, and snaps him over with a vertical suplex that hangs for an extra moment at the top before dropping Lawson flat on his back. Jet bounces and rolls toward the ropes, but the champion is already on him, dragging him back by the ankle and dropping a knee into the chest.

Mark Bravo: "That's what makes these guys so dangerous. The second the pace changes, they make sure you feel every ounce of it."

Oscuro I hooks the leg.

Referee: "ONE! TWO--"

Jet kicks out and immediately tries to turn to his stomach, but Oscuro I clubs him across the upper back and traps him in a grounded chinlock, one knee digging between the shoulders. Lawson's hands grab at the wrist. His legs kick against the mat. The crowd starts clapping in rhythm, trying to will the challenger back up.

John Phillips: "Jet Lawson is one of the fastest men in the company, but all that speed means very little if El Fantasma can keep him flat on the canvas."

Mark Bravo: "And notice the body position. Oscuro I is not just squeezing the head and neck, he's making Jet carry the weight too."

On the outside, Madman Szalinski paces with increasing excitement, leaning low to the floor to shout encouragement toward the ring before suddenly popping upright and applauding like he is watching theater. The crowd gives him a mixed reaction, part cheers, part hostility, but all noise.

John Phillips: "Madman Szalinski has seen more big matches than almost anyone in this business, and you can tell he appreciates every little shift in control."

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Mark Bravo: "He appreciates pain, John. That's why this pairing makes so much sense."

Jet fights his way to one knee. Then two. He drives a short elbow into the ribs of Oscuro I. Then another. The hold loosens just enough for Lawson to spring forward toward the ropes--

Only for Oscuro I to catch him by the waistband and yank him backward into a rough, snapping back suplex.

John Phillips: "What ring awareness from the champion!"

Jet hits hard and arches up off the mat before collapsing back down, his hand slapping at the canvas in pain. Oscuro I rolls through to his knees and stares across at Tyler Cruz, almost taunting him with how far away his partner still is.

Mark Bravo: "That wasn't just physical. That was personal."

Oscuro I drags Jet to the corner and tags out. Oscuro II steps in and the champions immediately go to work together, using the count efficiently. Oscuro I pins Jet's arms back against the ropes while Oscuro II drives a sharp thrust kick into the midsection. Jet folds forward and the legal man follows with a short DDT that spikes Lawson into the mat near center ring.

John Phillips: "Beautifully executed double-team offense by the champions!"

Oscuro II covers.

Referee: "ONE! TWO--"

Jet shoots a shoulder up. The crowd roars in approval, appreciating the resilience, and Tyler pounds the top turnbuckle with both fists trying to keep the energy alive on his side.

Tyler Cruz: "Come on, Jet! Come on! Right here, brother!"

Oscuro II hears it and immediately shifts his attention. He steps over Jet, glares toward Tyler, and then bends down to drag Lawson up by the head. Jet suddenly fires a desperation shot to the stomach. Then another. Then a sharp kick to the thigh that buckles the champion for just a split second.

John Phillips: "Jet's fighting back!"

Lawson hits the ropes, springing off with a handspring to build momentum for a back elbow--

Oscuro II catches him in midair and turns the entire motion into a twisting side slam that plants Jet on his shoulders and upper back.

Mark Bravo: "Nope! Snatched him right out of the sky!"

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The Phoenix crowd groans at the counter, then immediately rallies again as Oscuro II scrambles into another cover.

Referee: "ONE! TWO--"

Jet kicks out again.

John Phillips: "Still not enough!"

For the first time, there is a faint sense of irritation in the body language of the champions. Nothing dramatic. Nothing wild. Just a touch more urgency. A slightly harder pull when Jet is brought up. A slightly sharper shove into the corner. Oscuro II tags back out, and Oscuro I steps in with a running strike aimed right at Lawson's chest.

Jet gets both boots up just in time.

The champion stumbles backward. Jet lunges out of the corner, leaps, and hooks the head with a jumping reverse DDT that drives Oscuro I down to a massive reaction from the crowd.

John Phillips: "There it is! Huge counter by Jet Lawson!"

Mark Bravo: "Both men are down! This is the race right here!"

The hard camera shows the whole arena rise to its feet. Tyler Cruz has one arm stretched so far over the top rope that he nearly falls into the ring. Across from him, Oscuro II is also reaching, shouting in clipped bursts at his partner to move. Madman Szalinski slaps the apron with both palms and paces in circles, his voice lost beneath the crowd.

John Phillips: "Jet Lawson has to move. Tyler Cruz is ready. The champions are vulnerable. This could be the turning point of the entire match."

Jet crawls. One forearm. Then another. Oscuro I does the same, slower, dragging himself inch by inch across the canvas. The crowd noise becomes one rolling wave, every fan in the building willing the next touch into existence.

Jet dives--

Tag to Tyler Cruz.

Oscuro I lunges--

Tag to Oscuro II.

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John Phillips: "Both sides make the tag!"

Tyler comes in like a bolt of electricity, ducking a running clothesline from Oscurro II before springing to the middle rope and flying back with a twisting crossbody. He pops right back up, catches the other champion charging in with a spinning heel kick, then whirls and clips Oscurro II with a standing dropkick to the side of the head. The crowd explodes with each strike.

Mark Bravo: "Tyler Cruz is all over this ring!"

Oscurro II stumbles toward the ropes and Tyler wastes no time. He sprints across the ring, rebounds off the far side, then launches into a tiger feint through the ropes that wipes out Oscurro I on the apron and sends him crashing to the floor. The fans erupt, but Tyler is already moving again, springing back into the ring as Oscurro II turns around into a leaping tornado DDT.

John Phillips: "Tornado DDT! Cruz planted him!"

Tyler stacks the legs for the cover.

Referee: "ONE! TWO--"

Oscurro II kicks out.

Mark Bravo: "That was close. Real close."

Tyler pushes to his knees, breathing hard but energized now, the crowd fully behind him. He motions to Jet, then points toward the corner, clearly thinking bigger than a cover. Lawson nods from the apron, still shaking out the damage but ready to contribute. Tyler pulls Oscurro II up and whips him toward the ropes--

But Oscurro II reverses.

Tyler rebounds. Jet slaps his own chest and vaults onto the top rope from the apron in one fluid motion. Tyler leaps as he meets the return path. For one breathtaking second both challengers are airborne at once--

Then El Fantasma Oscurro I reaches up from the floor and yanks Jet's ankle out from under him.

Jet crashes stomach-first across the top turnbuckle and spills awkwardly back to the apron. Inside the ring, Tyler's attention flickers for one split second toward his partner--and that is all Oscurro II needs to crack him with a running high knee flush to the jaw.

John Phillips: "Another interruption from the champions on the outside!"

Mark Bravo: "That's teamwork! Ugly maybe, but teamwork!"

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Tyler reels in place. Oscuro II grabs him from behind and drives him into the mat with a snap dragon suplex that folds him up on impact. The crowd groans as the momentum changes again, this match swinging violently from one side to the other.

On the outside, Madman Szalinski throws both hands up in triumph and starts shouting toward the ring, his face lit up with manic excitement as El Fantasma seize control once more.

Tyler Cruz folds onto his side, one hand instantly going to the back of his neck after the snap dragon suplex. Across the ring, Jet Lawson is still trying to shake the cobwebs loose on the apron after being knocked off balance on the ropes. El Fantasma Oscuro II does not waste a second. He scrambles forward and throws his body over Tyler for the cover as the crowd stomps and shouts in nervous anticipation.

Referee: "ONE! TWO--"

Tyler jerks a shoulder free.

John Phillips: "Tyler Cruz survives, but that was another brilliant momentum shift by the champions."

Mark Bravo: "And this is where title matches are won, John. Not always with the biggest move. Sometimes with the smartest interruption."

Oscuro II kneels over Tyler for just a second, staring through the mask as though trying to calculate exactly how much of the challenger is left. Then he grabs a fistful of hair at the crown and drags Cruz up to his knees. Tyler swats at the hand, trying to free himself, but the champion responds with a sharp clubbing forearm to the chest that knocks him backward into a seated position. Another forearm follows. Then a third, each one echoing through the building with a little more force than the last.

John Phillips: "Tyler Cruz is being worn down now. The speed is still there, but the accumulation of punishment is starting to mount."

Oscuro II pulls Tyler up and backs him into the champions' corner. A quick tag brings Oscuro I back into the match, and the handoff is as seamless as it has been all night. Oscuro II keeps Tyler upright just long enough for his partner to step in and drive a hard body shot under the ribs. Cruz doubles over and stumbles straight into a second shot from the apron side, a quick combination that leaves him gasping before the referee forces Oscuro II out.

Mark Bravo: "That's what makes them such a nightmare. One hit from one side, one hit from the other, and it always feels like you're standing in the wrong place."

Oscuro I hooks Tyler by the waist and launches him backward with a release German suplex. Cruz flips over and lands ugly, his boots kicking up over his head before he spills onto his stomach. The crowd gasps, then rallies immediately, refusing to let the challenger disappear under the champions' pressure.

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John Phillips: "Release German! Tyler Cruz was thrown halfway across the ring!"

Oscuro I stalks after him and bends to scoop him up again, but Tyler suddenly comes alive with a burst of desperation. A back elbow catches the champion in the ribs. Another clips the jaw. Tyler twists loose and fires a spinning forearm that catches Oscuro I high enough to make the champion stagger back a step. The fans rise, sensing a chance.

John Phillips: "Cruz is not done yet!"

Tyler hits the ropes, springs to the middle, and whips backward with a springboard back elbow--

Oscuro I catches him.

The champion snatches Tyler out of midair and transitions immediately into a crushing gutbuster across the knee. Tyler's body jolts on impact and he rolls to the side clutching at his abdomen, face twisted in pain.

Mark Bravo: "Good grief! He plucked him right out of the sky!"

John Phillips: "And every time Velocity Vanguard tries to reclaim their rhythm, El Fantasma finds a way to break it."

Outside the ring, Madman Szalinski claps wildly and paces a tight circle, the grin on his face nearly splitting it in half. He slaps the apron and points into the ring, shouting rapid-fire encouragement at the champions as they continue to dictate the flow. The crowd lets him hear it, but Szalinski only seems more energized by the hostility.

John Phillips: "Madman Szalinski has to love what he's watching. His team has bent time and again tonight without ever fully breaking."

Mark Bravo: "That's experience. That's patience. That's why they came in wearing the belts."

Oscuro I drags Tyler back toward center and makes another tag. Oscuro II enters, grabs Cruz by the arms, and deadlifts him just high enough for Oscuro I to step in and crack him with a rising knee to the sternum. Tyler crumples backward into Oscuro II, who finishes the sequence with a sit-out slam that drives him flat to the canvas.

John Phillips: "What a combination by the champions!"

Oscuro II hooks the far leg deep.

Referee: "ONE! TWO! THR--"

Tyler gets the shoulder up at the last possible instant and the building erupts.

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John Phillips: "No! Tyler Cruz kicked out!"

Mark Bravo: "That was close enough to taste! The champions thought they had him there!"

For the first time all match, there is visible frustration from one of the champions. Oscuro II rises from the cover a little faster, a little sharper, and turns toward the referee with his hands out as though demanding the count had been slow. The official insists it was two. Across the ring, Jet Lawson stomps the apron and points frantically, urging Tyler to keep breathing, keep moving, keep believing.

Jet Lawson: "Come on, Ty! Stay with me! Stay with me!"

Oscuro II turns back to the task at hand and drags Tyler toward the ropes, trying once again to keep him on the wrong side of the ring. He reaches for another tag, but Tyler suddenly drops his weight and falls through the champion's legs, rolling backward and creating just enough separation to leave both men lunging at empty space for a half-second. It is not much. It is barely anything.

But sometimes barely anything is enough.

Tyler scrambles to his feet and bursts toward his corner. Oscuro II dives and catches only air. Jet Lawson is stretched over the ropes again, fingers spread, every muscle in his body extended as far as it will go.

John Phillips: "This could be it! This could be the opening Velocity Vanguard needs!"

Tag to Jet Lawson.

The crowd detonates.

Jet slingshots over the top rope and lands with all the speed of a man who has been caged too long. Oscuro II rises into a rapid forearm from the right. Oscuro I steps in and catches a spinning heel kick to the side of the head. Jet rebounds off the ropes, ducks a wild clothesline, and launches into a springboard moonsault press that wipes both champions down at once as the arena comes unglued.

Mark Bravo: "Jet Lawson just wiped out everybody!"

John Phillips: "The Blue Comet is blazing through this ring!"

Jet kips up, the adrenaline of the moment overriding the punishment he took earlier, and immediately scoops Tyler up by the arm to pull him back into the fight. Cruz stumbles once, then straightens, and the challengers share a quick glance that says everything they need. No words. Just instinct. Just trust.

Oscuro I gets back to a knee first and eats a superkick from Tyler that snaps his head backward. Oscuro II turns into Jet's leaping knee strike from the side. The champions stagger in opposite directions. Velocity Vanguard hits the ropes together and returns in stereo, Tyler connecting with a flying forearm while Jet

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crashes in with a shotgun dropkick. Both champions hit the mat and the crowd is on fire.

John Phillips: "Velocity Vanguard are rolling! What a burst from the challengers!"

The referee tries to restore order, pointing Tyler back to the apron, but the legal men are still clear enough for now. Jet hauls Oscuro II upright while Tyler climbs to the top rope in the challengers' corner, still hurting but willing to take the risk. Jet hooks the champion from behind, setting him in place. Tyler launches--

Missile dropkick to the chest while Jet shoves from behind.

Oscuro II gets crushed from both directions and folds to the canvas. Jet immediately stacks him up for the cover while Tyler rolls out under the bottom rope just as the referee drops into position.

Referee: "ONE! TWO! THR--"

Broken up again.

El Fantasma Oscuro I dives across the ring at the last second and hammers Jet across the shoulders to save the championships. The crowd groans, then roars as Tyler springs back in and tackles Oscuro I from the side. All four men are in the ring again. The official is shouting. Madman Szalinski is losing his mind at ringside, slapping both hands against his temples before throwing his arms toward the heavens as the match slips out of neat control.

John Phillips: "This thing has completely come apart!"

Mark Bravo: "And I don't think anybody wants it put back together!"

Tyler and Oscuro I spill through the ropes to the apron trading forearms, each shot wobbling both men closer to disaster. Inside the ring, Jet and Oscuro II exchange strikes in rapid succession, Lawson gaining the edge with his speed until he hits the ropes one more time looking for another big finish--

Madman Szalinski grabs the bottom rope and jerks it downward from the outside.

Jet loses his footing just enough. Not a full stumble. Just enough.

John Phillips: "Wait a second! Szalinski just got involved!"

Jet turns toward ringside for one furious instant, and that instant costs him. Oscuro II lunges forward and drills him with a sudden jumping knee to the jaw that turns him inside out. Lawson crashes to the mat, dazed, and the boos rain down hard from every side of the PHX Arena.

Mark Bravo: "That's the break the champs needed!"

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On the apron, Tyler sees it happen and shouts in anger, but Oscuro I rakes a forearm across his face and sends him tumbling to the floor. That leaves Jet alone. Vulnerable. The champions strike immediately. Oscuro I slides back in as Oscuro II drags Lawson upright. The two men exchange one cold look through their masks, then move with practiced precision.

Oscuro II hooks the arms. Oscuro I hits the ropes and returns with a running strike as the setup is completed. Jet is driven down violently between them in a devastating double-team collision that leaves him sprawled near center ring.

John Phillips: "What a double-team! Jet Lawson may be out!"

Oscuro II stays on the cover while Oscuro I cuts off Tyler on the outside by dropping from the apron right into his path. The referee slides into place.

Referee: "ONE! TWO! THR--"

Jet Lawson kicks out.

The reaction is volcanic.

John Phillips: "He kicked out! Jet Lawson kicked out!"

Mark Bravo: "I thought it was over! I know El Fantasma thought it was over!"

Even the champions freeze for half a beat. Oscuro II remains over the body, staring down as though refusing to accept that the count stopped. Outside, Madman Szalinski's hands are already on top of his head, his jaw dropped in disbelief before his expression twists right back into manic fury.

Jet Lawson rolls weakly onto his side after the kickout, one arm draped across his ribs as he tries to gather whatever air and awareness he can. El Fantasma Oscuro II rises from the pin with a sharp snap of the head, disbelief turning almost instantly into cold anger. Across the floor, Tyler Cruz is dragging himself up using the barricade after being knocked from the apron, while Madman Szalinski paces in tight circles at ringside, jaw working, hands twitching, his whole body radiating agitation that the match is still alive.

John Phillips: "I still cannot believe Jet Lawson kicked out of that. This match has crossed over from athletic showcase into a fight for survival."

Mark Bravo: "And now the champions know they may need something extra. That's a dangerous realization for everybody else in the ring."

Oscuro II bends down and drags Jet up by the wrist and head, only for Lawson's legs to nearly give out beneath him. The champion keeps him upright anyway and shoves him toward the corner where Oscuro I is waiting on the apron. A quick tag is made, and the champions close in with the kind of measured confidence

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that comes from believing the end is finally close.

Oscuro I steps through the ropes and immediately drives a brutal knife-edge chop across Jet's chest. The sound cracks through the arena. Lawson's body jolts backward into the turnbuckles, his face contorting in pain. Another chop follows. Then a third. The crowd winces and groans with each one, and even from the desk the sting seems to linger in the air.

John Phillips: "Good lord, those are echoing through the entire building."

Mark Bravo: "And every one of them is taking something out of Jet Lawson. That's not just pain. That's punishment."

Oscuro I backs up two steps, then charges in with a running knee toward the midsection--

Jet drops away at the last second.

The champion's knee slams into the turnbuckles instead. He stumbles backward, turning and reaching for Lawson, but Jet is already moving on pure instinct. He springs to the middle rope and whips backward into a desperate twisting back elbow that catches Oscuro I flush across the side of the head. Both men collapse from the impact, and the crowd surges to its feet all over again.

John Phillips: "Counter from Lawson! Counter from Lawson!"

Mark Bravo: "He had nothing left but timing, and somehow it was enough!"

Jet flops onto his stomach and starts crawling. There is no explosion this time, no flashy burst of speed. Just a beaten man dragging himself inch by inch toward the only lifeline available. On the far apron, Tyler Cruz is back in position, hand outstretched, shouting with urgency that cracks through the surrounding noise.

Tyler Cruz: "Jet! Come on! Come on! Right here!"

Oscuro I crawls too, slower than before but still dangerous, reaching for the boot of his partner. The crowd volume swells into a wave of desperation as both teams near the edge of another momentum swing.

Tag to Tyler Cruz.

Tag to El Fantasma Oscuro II.

John Phillips: "Here we go again!"

Tyler vaults in and immediately ducks under a running strike from Oscuro II, springs off the second rope, and catches the champion with a flying forearm that rocks him backward. Oscuro I rises into a spinning back kick to the stomach. Tyler hits the ropes and returns with a springboard crossbody that wipes both champions

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down when they close in together. The Phoenix crowd erupts at the burst of offense, feeding Cruz every ounce of energy he can absorb.

Mark Bravo: "This kid is ridiculous when he gets space!"

Tyler kips up and points to the crowd, then to Jet, then to the belts at ringside. The message is clear. He is not letting this slip. Oscurro II gets to a knee and Tyler charges, planting a running knee to the jaw before snapping him over with a fast hurricanrana that sends the champion tumbling into the ropes. Oscurro I staggers up and eats a superkick that knocks him through the ropes and out to the floor right in front of Madman Szalinski.

John Phillips: "Tyler Cruz is cleaning house!"

Outside, Madman reaches toward Oscurro I, trying to help steady him, but his attention flickers too long away from the ring. Tyler sees it. The crowd sees it. So does Jet Lawson.

Jet springs from the apron and launches himself over the ropes with a breathtaking diving body press that crashes down onto both Oscurro I and Madman Szalinski at ringside. The impact sends all three men sprawling in a heap near the barricade, and the entire arena explodes.

John Phillips: "Jet Lawson just wiped out Oscurro I and Madman Szalinski!"

Mark Bravo: "Now that's paying somebody back with interest!"

Inside the ring, Tyler turns just in time to see Oscurro II rushing him. Cruz sidesteps, hooks the arm, and sends the champion crashing into the turnbuckles. Tyler follows with a running uppercut, then springs to the second rope and twists backward with a high-angle tornado DDT that plants Oscurro II near center ring. The crowd counts along with the motion before exploding once again as Tyler dives into the cover.

Referee: "ONE! TWO! THR--"

Oscurro II kicks out.

John Phillips: "So close! So close!"

Tyler sits up, frustration splashed across his face for the first time in the match. He slaps the canvas once, then twice, before forcing himself back into motion. He glances toward Jet on the outside, sees his partner dragging himself toward the apron, and nods. Tyler knows what comes next. The fans begin to rise in anticipation, sensing a bigger play on the horizon.

Mark Bravo: "They're thinking finish now. You can feel it."

Tyler drags Oscurro II toward the challengers' corner and makes the tag. Jet climbs to the apron, still winded,

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still hurting, but game. Tyler hooks Oscurro II from behind and holds him in place near the center of the ring while Lawson starts scaling the turnbuckles. The crowd is rumbling louder with every step Jet takes upward.

John Phillips: "Velocity Vanguard may be seconds away from new champions!"

Jet reaches the top rope and steadies himself. Tyler keeps the champion trapped. Lawson launches--

But El Fantasma Oscurro I is back.

He slides into the ring from the floor and shoves Tyler hard into the ropes. Tyler loses his grip on Oscurro II. That slight shift is enough to throw Jet's aim off by inches. Lawson still connects, but not cleanly, crashing across the champion instead of driving through him with full force.

John Phillips: "Not enough! The save from Oscurro I disrupted the whole thing!"

Jet tries to recover first, but Oscurro II pulls him up from the mat and shoves him toward Oscurro I. What follows is instantaneous. Oscurro I scoops Jet across the body while Oscurro II hits the ropes and comes back with a crushing strike into the held challenger, the collision driving Lawson downward and leaving him stunned on his knees.

Mark Bravo: "There it is! That's the opening the champs wanted!"

Tyler dives in to break it up, but Oscurro I cuts him off with a rising boot that rocks him backward into the corner. The referee is losing control again, trying to force one man out while another legal exchange turns violent in the opposite half of the ring. Szalinski is back outside now, pounding the apron and shouting like a mad prophet as El Fantasma closes around Jet Lawson for what feels like the final sequence.

John Phillips: "Jet Lawson is in terrible trouble here!"

Oscurro II tags out. The champions position themselves with chilling efficiency. Oscurro I drags Jet up from his knees and traps him. Oscurro II takes one quick step, then another, building just enough momentum before driving in with a devastating running strike that snaps Lawson's head and body backward at the exact moment Oscurro I drops him into the impact. Jet crumples to the canvas in a heap.

Mark Bravo: "That has got to be it!"

Oscurro I dives onto the cover while Oscurro II shoots across the ring and tackles Tyler Cruz off the apron to the floor before he can make the save. The referee drops into place in perfect position as the entire PHX Arena screams at once.

Referee: "ONE! TWO! THREE!"

John Phillips: "They got him! El Fantasma retain!"

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Mark Bravo: "What a war! What an opening match!"

The bell rings and the crowd unleashes a thunderous mix of boos, cheers, and stunned applause as the champions roll away from the cover and onto their knees, exhausted but victorious. Jet Lawson lies flat on his back, chest heaving, while Tyler Cruz slaps the apron in frustration from the outside after being cut off at the very last moment.

Madman Szalinski throws both arms into the air at ringside, then slides into the ring with manic joy as the official retrieves the UTA Tag Team Championships. Oscurο I rises first, then helps pull Oscurο II up beside him. The belts are handed over and the champions raise them high while the lights catch the gold overhead. Szalinski stands between and behind them, pointing wildly at the titles, shouting toward the hard camera and the crowd alike as if demanding everyone acknowledge what they have just witnessed.

John Phillips: "Give Velocity Vanguard all the credit in the world. They pushed the champions to the limit tonight."

Mark Bravo: "They absolutely did. But El Fantasma found a way. That's what championship teams do. They survive the best shot, then make sure their own lands last."

On the outside, Tyler Cruz reaches through the ropes to check on Jet Lawson as the crowd gives the challengers a strong round of respect even in defeat. Inside the ring, El Fantasma stand tall with Madman Szalinski, the UTA Tag Team Championships still firmly in their possession as Victory rolls on.

Don't Listen to Her

The camera cuts backstage once again, returning to the pedestal where the brand new UTA International Championship still rests beneath a focused white spotlight. The polished center plate gleams as the camera slowly pushes in, the title looking every bit as important as it did earlier in the night. It has already drawn the attention of one pair of competitors, and now another set of eyes comes into frame.

Selena Vex and Rosa Delgado step into the shot side by side.

Both women slow as they approach the podium, their attention immediately pulled to the championship. Rosa folds her arms as she studies it, a confident smirk tugging at one corner of her mouth. Selena tilts her head slightly, eyes narrowed, as if already picturing what it would look like around her waist. There is admiration there, yes. But ambition sits much closer to the surface.

For a moment, neither says anything. They just stand there, taking it in, the title between them like a promise.

Selena Vex: "It does look good, doesn't it?"

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Rosa lets out a small breath through her nose, never taking her eyes off the gold.

Rosa Delgado: "Yeah. Real good."

Selena nods slowly, stepping a little closer to the podium. The light from above dances across the front plate and reflects faintly in her eyes.

Selena Vex: "One of us could make history tonight."

Rosa glances toward her with a small grin.

Rosa Delgado: "Could?"

Before Selena can answer, another voice cuts into the scene from off-camera.

Amy Harrison: "You two really think either of you is walkin' out with that?"

The camera pans slightly as Amy Harrison steps into frame, already laughing to herself. She slows just enough to look from Selena to Rosa and then down at the title with a kind of amused disbelief, as if the very idea is entertaining to her.

Selena's expression hardens almost immediately. Rosa turns more fully toward Amy, her body language changing from relaxed confidence to visible irritation.

Amy Harrison: "Come on. Let's be honest here. That title's for championship material."

She gestures loosely between the two of them, the smirk never leaving her face.

Amy Harrison: "And I just don't see it."

Rosa lets out a short scoff and takes a half-step forward.

Rosa Delgado: "Funny. I seem to remember us already being champions."

Amy barely reacts. If anything, she looks less impressed than before.

Rosa Delgado: "Former tag team champions, in case you forgot."

Amy shrugs, unconcerned, almost bored by the point.

Amy Harrison: "Yeah. Tag team champions."

She puts a little extra emphasis on the words, making sure they land exactly the way she wants them to.

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Amy Harrison: "I'm not impressed."

Selena steps in now, her voice calmer than Rosa's but no less sharp.

Selena Vex: "Then why are you here?"

Amy smiles wider at that, like she had been waiting for the question.

Amy Harrison: "Oh, I'm not here to make fun of you."

She glances at the title, then points directly at it.

Amy Harrison: "I'm just here because I want a front row seat when you two implode."

The words hang there for a beat. Amy looks from Selena to Rosa and back again, enjoying every second of the tension she is creating.

Amy Harrison: "Because that is a singles title."

She taps one finger in the air for emphasis.

Amy Harrison: "And in an elimination match? There ain't no such thing as teams."

Amy lets out another laugh, this one lower and meaner, then shakes her head as she turns away.

Amy Harrison: "Have fun out there."

She walks off still laughing to herself, disappearing down the hall while the camera stays behind with Selena and Rosa. The silence she leaves behind is heavier than the conversation that came before it.

Rosa stares after Amy for a moment, jaw tight, before shaking her head and turning back toward Selena.

Rosa Delgado: "Don't listen to her."

Selena gives a quick nod.

Selena Vex: "I'm not."

Rosa gestures between them and the title, speaking with firm confidence, almost like she is trying to close the subject before it can breathe any further.

Rosa Delgado: "Nothing's comin' between us. Not her. Not that match. Not anything."

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Selena looks at Rosa and answers without hesitation.

Selena Vex: "Of course not."

But as the two women turn their eyes back toward the International Championship, something shifts. It is subtle. Almost invisible if you are not looking for it. The confidence is still there. The partnership is still being spoken aloud. Yet in the quiet between them, in the extra second each spends looking at the title before glancing at the other, doubt has crept in.

Neither woman says another word.

They do not need to.

Their eyes say enough.

Lots to Think About

The camera cuts to a long backstage hallway lined with black curtains, equipment cases, and production crew moving in practiced rhythm around the edges of the shot. The distant hum of the arena can still be heard, muffled by concrete walls and heavy doors, but this part of the building carries a different energy. Less spectacle. More tension. The kind of place where conversations can change the shape of a night.

Into frame walks Susanita Ybanez.

The newly recognized United States Champion carries the championship over her shoulder with calm confidence. The gold catches the overhead lights every few steps, flashing against the dark hallway as she walks with purpose, chin up, expression focused. There is a quiet pride in the way she carries herself. Not arrogance. Not uncertainty. Just the steady presence of someone who knows exactly what she holds and exactly what it means.

Susanita rounds a corner and nearly walks into Eric Dane Jr.

Dane slows to a stop the moment he sees her. Then he grins.

His eyes immediately drop to the championship on her shoulder, and that grin widens into something more self-satisfied, more deliberate. He takes one lazy step closer, like he has all the time in the world, and gestures toward the belt.

Eric Dane Jr.: "That new U.S. belt is lookin' mighty nice."

Before Susanita can answer, Eric reaches out and lets his fingertips brush against the faceplate. Susanita instantly shifts her shoulder back and away from him, pulling the championship just out of his reach without

ever breaking eye contact.

Her tone is flat. Direct. Not giving him an inch.

Susanita Ybanez: "What do you want, Eric?"

Dane actually looks taken aback for half a second, like the question itself is beneath him. He places a hand against his chest in mock offense and lets out a short laugh.

Eric Dane Jr.: "What do I want? Me?"

He shakes his head and starts pacing in a small semicircle in front of her, one hand smoothing down the front of his jacket while the other gestures loosely through the air. The grin never leaves.

Eric Dane Jr.: "Susanita, I want for nothin'."

He spreads his arms wide now, completely at ease in his own performance.

Eric Dane Jr.: "I got everything a man could possibly imagine. The name. The talent. The look. The money. The spotlight. I don't wake up wantin' things. Things wake up wantin' me."

Susanita does not react. If anything, her stare hardens further as he keeps going, his own ego feeding the speech one sentence at a time.

Eric Dane Jr.: "So no... this ain't about what I want."

He stops pacing and points a finger lightly toward himself, the smugness now sharpened into entitlement.

Eric Dane Jr.: "It's about what I'm entitled to."

Susanita gives him a sharp sideways glance, the kind that says she already does not like where this is going.

Eric Dane Jr.: "And you see... Scott Stevens says that I am entitled to..."

He lets the sentence hang for effect, then smiles bigger.

Eric Dane Jr.: "Another one-on-one championship title match."

Susanita remains unimpressed. She shifts the championship slightly higher on her shoulder and keeps her posture firm, refusing to give him the satisfaction of visible concern.

Eric Dane Jr.: "Now, me? I'm just tryin' to decide."

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He looks up and to the side dramatically, tapping one finger against his chin as if the choice before him is almost too rich to enjoy all at once.

Eric Dane Jr.: "Do I go and finally get that belt off Chris Ross and put it where it belongs..."

He points to his own waist, his expression smug beyond reason.

Eric Dane Jr.: "...around the waist of a Dane..."

Then he pauses, turns his head toward her title, and makes a little thinking motion again.

Eric Dane Jr.: "Or..."

He drags the word out, making sure it lands.

Eric Dane Jr.: "Do I make history and become the next United States Champion?"

Susanita finally steps forward.

Not aggressively. Not recklessly. But with enough force in that single step that the energy in the hallway changes immediately. The championship stays on her shoulder, but her body language says more than a shove ever could. Her eyes lock onto Dane's. Her jaw sets. The intensity coming off her is unmistakable now, radiating through the frame as if the air itself has tightened around them.

She is not afraid of him.

She is not intimidated by the threat.

But she is absolutely displeased.

Dane sees it. And he just smiles.

That same smug, infuriating smile spreads across his face as he takes one small step backward and lifts a hand to his chin once more, repeating the thinking gesture like he is genuinely weighing two delicious options in front of him.

Eric Dane Jr.: "Lots to think about."

He winks, then turns away before she can answer. A second later, he is whistling to himself as he heads down the hallway, completely pleased with the effect he has had. Susanita does not move. She simply watches him go, eyes narrowed, every muscle in her posture still tight with restrained irritation.

The camera stays with her as Eric Dane Jr. disappears out of frame, his whistling fading further and further

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down the corridor. Susanita remains standing there with the United States Championship on her shoulder, expression fixed, clearly knowing that whatever Scott Stevens said in that office may have just put a target directly on her back.

Something Bigger

The camera cuts to the El Fantasma locker room.

The UTA Tag Team Championships rest over the shoulders of El Fantasma Oscuro I and El Fantasma Oscuro II as the two champions stand near the center of the room like statues carved out of shadow. Neither man moves much beyond the slow rise and fall of breath. Their masks are still on. Their posture is still cold. Their energy is still as unreadable as ever.

The opposite can be said for Madman Szalinski.

Madman is absolutely beside himself.

He paces in front of the champions with wild excitement, clapping his hands, pointing at the titles, spinning in place, and laughing to himself between bursts of rapid-fire rambling. His suit jacket is half-open, his hair slightly disheveled from the adrenaline of the moment, and every word out of his mouth carries the manic joy of a man who feels like the world is finally seeing what he has always known.

Madman Szalinski: "Did you hear 'em? Did you hear that place out there? They thought they had us! They thought those belts were slippin' away, and then--BAM!--still your UTA Tag Team Champions!"

He points dramatically at Oscuro I. Then to Oscuro II. Then to both titles at once.

Madman Szalinski: "Still gold. Still dominant. Still draped in glory and nightmare and everything in between!"

The champions do not react. If Madman notices, he does not care. He is too high on the moment to need validation.

Madman Szalinski: "And next week? Next week!"

He presses both palms to his chest and laughs again, almost disbelieving his own fortune.

Madman Szalinski: "Headlining the UTA Hall of Fame! The Class of 2026! Me! Madman Szalinski! Hall of Famer, baby!"

He throws his arms wide like he is already standing at the podium, already hearing the applause, already basking in the immortality of it all.

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Madman Szalinski: "Still managing champions and about to take my rightful place in history? Oh, life is good. Life is real good."

He is still smiling when the locker room door opens.

The smile fades just a little.

Silas Grimm steps inside.

The room changes immediately.

Grimm says nothing at first. He just enters with that same disturbing calm, his face hard, his eyes dark, his presence carrying the kind of weight that makes a room feel smaller. He is not here to celebrate. He is not here to congratulate. He is here for something else entirely.

Madman's body turns toward him at once, the manic joy giving way to suspicion.

Madman Szalinski: "Why are you here?"

Silas lifts one hand, palm outward, stopping the question in its tracks before Madman can keep going.

Silas Grimm: "I am not here to speak to you."

His voice is low and steady, more unsettling for how controlled it is. Grimm's eyes slide past Madman and settle on El Fantasma. For the first time in the segment, even the motionless champions seem to feel like part of something heavier than a title celebration.

Silas Grimm: "No... I'm here for something bigger."

Madman immediately steps between Grimm and the champions, spreading his arms slightly as if to block the path, even though Grimm has not physically moved any closer.

Madman Szalinski: "I don't know what any of that means, but I think it's 'bout time you get out of here."

Grimm slowly turns his head toward Madman.

The movement is small, but sharp enough to cut. His stare fixes on Szalinski with open disdain now, his face unmoved except for the faintest hint of contempt pulling at one corner of his mouth.

Silas Grimm: "It is amazing to me..."

He takes one slow step forward, not enough to invade the space fully, but enough to make the tension tighten another notch.

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Silas Grimm: "...that a washed up clown like you can be envisioned to headline a Hall of Fame."

Madman's face hardens. The earlier excitement is gone now. What remains is something more grounded. More alert.

Silas Grimm: "More amazing still..."

His eyes shift past Madman again, landing back on El Fantasma.

Silas Grimm: "...that the forces of darkness surrounding them would allow your presence among them at all."

The room goes dead still.

Madman does not laugh this time. He does not posture. He does not turn the moment into theater. His voice drops lower, more serious now, as he keeps himself planted between Grimm and the champions.

Madman Szalinski: "I think you oughta leave."

Grimm studies him for a beat longer. Then, surprisingly, he smiles.

Not wide. Not warm. Just enough to make the expression feel wrong on his face.

He lifts both hands slightly, showing his palms as if to assure everyone that, for now, he has no intention of escalating it further.

Silas Grimm: "Don't worry..."

He takes a step backward toward the door.

Silas Grimm: "We'll finish this another time."

With that, Grimm turns and exits the locker room, disappearing through the doorway as suddenly as he arrived.

Madman does not move right away.

He just stares toward the open door, then toward the empty hallway beyond it, the wheels clearly turning in his head now. Behind him, El Fantasma remain just as still as before, their championships resting on their shoulders, their silence making the whole encounter feel even more unsettling in hindsight.

Finally, Madman lets out a breath and shakes his head.

Madman Szalinski: "God damn, son."

Emily Hightower vs. Juno Sage

The camera returns to ringside as the crowd continues to buzz from everything that has already unfolded tonight. The ring is bathed in white light, the atmosphere in the PHX Arena lively and restless as the next match graphic flashes across the screen.

John Phillips: "Up next, singles action in the women's division as Emily Hightower goes one on one with Juno Sage."

Mark Bravo: "And this one comes with a little extra attached to it, John. Emily Hightower is not making this walk alone tonight. Buck Hightower and Dakota Hightower are coming out with her, and after what we saw from the Hightower Clan last week, everybody's going to be watching real closely."

John Phillips: "They are expected to remain outside the ring by Emily, but even that alone changes the feel of this match. Emily Hightower has always been tough, self-reliant, and proud. The question is how much she truly wants that kind of presence hovering over her shoulder."

Mark Bravo: "And whether she wants it or not, Juno Sage is going to have to account for it."

A gritty, heavy country-rock riff erupts through the speakers and the crowd responds with a solid roar.

Emily Hightower steps onto the stage first, her expression focused and unsmiling, every bit the hard-nosed fighter the UTA crowd has come to know. She doesn't pause to pose. She doesn't waste motion. She just stares down the ramp and starts walking.

Buck Hightower emerges beside her, carrying himself with a quiet heaviness that makes him feel dangerous even while standing still. On Emily's other side, Dakota Hightower steps out with that softer, calmer expression that somehow feels no less intentional. The three walk in formation, giving the arena its first full look at the Hightower Clan entering together.

John Phillips: "And there they are. Emily Hightower flanked by Buck and Dakota."

Mark Bravo: "That is a whole lot of family business heading down that ramp."

Emily remains the centerpiece, but Buck and Dakota absolutely alter the visual. Buck looks like the kind of man who doesn't need to say a word to make his presence known. Dakota looks more composed, more understated, but her eyes are sharp and observant as she scans the ring and the crowd.

The three make their way down the aisle together. Emily's shoulders are squared and her breathing is steady, but there is the faintest flicker in her expression when she glances toward Buck, then Dakota, almost

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like she is still adjusting to the idea of them being there for her rather than with her.

John Phillips: "Emily Hightower is trying to keep her mind on the match. You can see it all over her. She wants this to be about what happens in that ring."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, but like it or not, the family is part of the package now."

Emily reaches ringside and slaps the apron once before pulling herself up. Buck moves to one side of the ring while Dakota drifts to the other, just as expected, staying outside. Emily steps through the ropes and gives a quick stretch of the neck and shoulders as she paces once across the ring, trying to stay locked in. She glances out at Buck and Dakota one more time, then turns her full attention toward the stage.

John Phillips: "Emily Hightower is here, and the Hightower Clan is in position."

The camera holds on Emily Hightower inside the ring for a moment longer as she paces once near center, then settles into her corner. Outside, Buck Hightower stands with his arms folded on one side of the ring while Dakota Hightower rests her hands lightly on the apron on the other, both of them present without saying a word, both of them impossible to ignore.

John Phillips: "Emily Hightower is ready, but you can already feel the added tension around this one. It is not just Emily versus Juno Sage tonight. It is Emily trying to stay focused while two very new and very significant presences hover just outside her world."

Mark Bravo: "And the tricky part is, even if Buck and Dakota don't physically do a thing, Juno still has to think about them. That's two extra shadows at ringside while you're trying to survive somebody like Emily Hightower."

The lights in the arena begin to cool, the warmer tones around the ring fading into a colder blue wash that immediately changes the mood. The crowd noise dips into a murmur as a low, minimalist electronic pulse begins to hum through the building.

John Phillips: "And now here comes Juno Sage."

Juno steps out onto the stage without fanfare.

She does not pose. She does not play to the crowd. She does not even glance around to take in the moment in the way most competitors do. Instead, she stands still for one brief second beneath the cold blue light, eyes fixed straight down the ramp toward the ring like she is already processing the geometry of the fight waiting for her.

Mark Bravo: "Every time I see Juno Sage make an entrance, I feel like a computer just booted up with bad intentions."

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John Phillips: "She is one of the most methodical competitors in the UTA, and that calmness can be unnerving in its own right. Emily Hightower is intensity you can feel. Juno Sage is the kind you almost don't notice until it's already cutting pieces off your game."

Juno starts walking.

Her stride is measured and smooth, each step placed with the same kind of economy she brings to her wrestling. There is nothing hurried about her, but nothing hesitant either. Her face remains unreadable, her posture loose, shoulders relaxed, hands flexing once at her sides before settling again. She looks less like a woman making an entrance and more like one entering a controlled environment she intends to master.

Mark Bravo: "She doesn't waste energy on the walk. Doesn't waste it on the crowd. Doesn't waste it on pretending she's anything other than exactly what she is."

John Phillips: "Which is dangerous."

Halfway down the ramp, Juno's eyes shift for the first time.

She looks to one side at Buck Hightower. Then to the other at Dakota. Then back up to Emily in the ring. There is no visible reaction, but there is a slight narrowing around the eyes, the kind of subtle tell that says she has acknowledged every variable around her and filed each one exactly where it belongs.

John Phillips: "And there it is. That quick scan tells you everything. Buck. Dakota. Emily. Juno Sage is already sorting the problem before the bell even rings."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, and she doesn't look impressed. She looks annoyed that she has to account for extra math."

The crowd gives Juno a mixed reaction as she nears ringside, some appreciative of her quiet menace, others fully behind Emily and the rough-edged momentum she has built in recent weeks. Juno doesn't acknowledge any of it. She stops at the foot of the ramp and lifts her eyes to Emily one more time.

In the ring, Emily has stopped pacing.

She stands in her corner with her hands on the top ropes, chin slightly raised, eyes locked on Juno. The two women hold each other's stare for a moment while Buck and Dakota remain stationed outside, motionless but present enough to make the picture feel just a little more crowded than it should.

John Phillips: "This is a really compelling contrast. Emily Hightower is all grit, force, and determination. Juno Sage is all timing, control, and calculation. Neither one is here to entertain the other. They are here to solve a problem in opposite ways."

Mark Bravo: "And if you're Juno, you've also got to wonder whether you're about to wrestle one opponent or

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deal with a whole family orbiting the ring."

Juno steps onto the apron with a smooth, almost effortless motion and slips through the ropes into the ring. She rises in her corner and rolls one shoulder before extending her arms across the top rope for a brief stretch. Even that feels precise. Deliberate. Measured down to the second.

Emily never takes her eyes off her.

Outside, Buck leans slightly closer on one side while Dakota stays poised on the other, her attention fully on Juno now that she is in the ring. The tension doesn't spike all at once. It tightens. Quietly. Gradually. The way it often does before a good fight.

John Phillips: "Juno Sage is in the ring now, and I think she understands exactly what kind of night this could become."

Mark Bravo: "Good. Because Emily Hightower is staring at her like she wants to find out right now."

The referee steps toward center ring and motions both women forward for final instructions as the camera moves in closer, capturing all four faces in the frame: Emily inside the ropes, Juno across from her, Buck and Dakota posted outside on opposite sides like silent warnings.

The referee stands between Emily Hightower and Juno Sage at center ring, giving the final instructions while both women keep their eyes on each other rather than on him. Emily's breathing is steady but heavier with anticipation now, shoulders loose and ready for contact. Juno remains composed, chin level, expression unreadable, absorbing every detail without giving one away in return.

John Phillips: "And now we get to the part that matters most. Emily Hightower and Juno Sage, one on one."

Mark Bravo: "And I love this setup already. Emily wants to drag this into deep water with fists and grit. Juno wants to turn it into a puzzle and make Emily frustrated enough to make mistakes."

The referee checks both women one last time, then steps back.

DING DING

Emily steps forward the second the bell rings.

Not reckless. Not wild. Just direct. She comes off her line with the kind of purpose that says she has no interest in letting Juno Sage settle into a rhythm. Across from her, Juno begins to circle, light on her feet, every movement quiet and economical as she looks for angles rather than collision.

John Phillips: "That is exactly what we expected. Emily taking ground. Juno giving just enough to gather information."

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Mark Bravo: "One's hunting. One's measuring."

Emily reaches for the first collar-and-elbow tie-up, but Juno slips away before the hands can fully connect. Emily pivots, follows, and cuts off the space quickly, not smiling, not playing to the crowd, just forcing Juno to feel the pressure of her presence. The crowd responds with a low buzz, sensing the tension in even the smallest movements.

They circle again. Juno gives a slight shoulder feint. Emily doesn't bite. Emily steps in once more and this time the lock-up happens hard in the center of the ring.

Emily immediately begins to walk Juno backward.

Juno plants and resists, but Emily's strength is obvious early. Another step. Then another. Juno twists at the last moment and slips free before she can be driven all the way into the ropes, creating separation and resetting the exchange before Emily can fully impose herself.

John Phillips: "Strong opening engagement there for Emily Hightower. Juno Sage felt that power right away."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, and Juno had the right answer. Don't fight force with force if you don't have to. Change the angle and make her do it again."

Emily nods once, almost like she respects the adjustment, then raises her hands and steps in again. Juno circles to her left, eyes fixed on the shoulders, the hips, the feet, trying to read what comes next before it arrives. Emily closes distance faster this time, reaching in with both hands.

Juno dips low and snatches for the wrist instead of the tie-up.

Emily jerks the arm free and answers with a stiff forearm across the upper chest that knocks Juno back half a step. The sound pops just enough to get the crowd a little louder. Juno absorbs it without expression, then immediately fires a low kick into Emily's lead thigh.

John Phillips: "There's that contrast. Emily going high and heavy. Juno going low and precise."

Emily exhales sharply through her nose and surges forward.

She drives straight through Juno with a hard shoulder block that sends Sage to the canvas for the first time in the match. The crowd gives a stronger reaction now, appreciating the force behind it. Juno rolls through on impact and starts to rise, but Emily is already right there, not allowing the technical wrestler any room to slow things down.

Mark Bravo: "That'll remind you in a hurry what kind of problem Emily Hightower is."

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Emily grabs Juno by the wrist and sends her into the ropes. Juno rebounds. Emily lowers her stance and catches her clean on the return with a scoop powerslam that rattles the ring and gets another pop from the Phoenix crowd.

John Phillips: "Beautifully done by Emily Hightower!"

Emily floats right into the cover, hooking the leg tight.

Referee: "ONE--"

Juno kicks out immediately.

Emily sits up, reaches for Juno again, and starts to pull her back to her feet. Outside the ring, Buck Hightower gives a small approving nod while Dakota taps the apron once from the far side. Emily's eyes flick in their direction for the briefest moment. Not long enough to become a distraction. Just long enough to show that she knows they're there.

John Phillips: "Emily has the early edge, but watch that ringside presence. Even a quick glance tells you those two remain part of the mental landscape here."

Mark Bravo: "And Juno Sage is exactly the kind of opponent who can take advantage of one extra thought."

Emily brings Juno up and backs her into the corner, pressing in chest to shoulder before driving one hard shoulder thrust into the midsection. Juno folds over against the buckles. Emily lands another. Then she steps back, grabs the wrist, and looks ready to drag Juno back out into open space and keep the pressure on.

Emily Hightower yanks Juno Sage out of the corner by the wrist and sends her skidding toward center ring. Juno tries to steady herself, but Emily is already moving, already closing the gap with that same rough-edged urgency she brought to the opening bell. The crowd stays with her, sensing that she is trying to keep the technical specialist from ever truly setting her feet.

John Phillips: "This is exactly the kind of start Emily Hightower wanted. Pressure early. Pressure often. Don't let Juno Sage get comfortable."

Emily reaches in, hooks Juno around the waist, and powers her up into a quick snap suplex that lands flush and leaves Juno bouncing lightly off the mat. Emily rolls through to a knee and stays on her, grabbing a handful of wrist and shoulder to keep the advantage rather than admiring her own work.

Mark Bravo: "That's smart. Every second you spend posing is another second Juno gets to think."

Emily drags Juno upright and leans in with a stiff forearm to the upper chest, then another. Juno gives ground, forced backward by the force of the shots, and Emily crowds her all the way to the ropes before trying to whip her across the ring. Juno plants her feet halfway through the motion and turns her hips, trying

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to resist the full launch.

Emily muscles through it anyway.

Juno hits the far ropes and comes back with more speed this time. Emily dips low, looking for another lift or power follow-up, but Juno adjusts in mid-stride and throws herself into a rolling front handspring that carries her just past the initial contact point. She lands light, spins, and catches Emily with a quick roundhouse to the ribs before slipping away again.

John Phillips: "Nice adjustment by Juno Sage!"

Mark Bravo: "There you go. Don't stand still and don't meet strength where strength lives."

Emily winces, more surprised than hurt, and turns back toward Juno with a harder edge in her eyes now. Juno has not taken over the match by any means, but she has just proven that even while being pushed around, she is collecting information and waiting for a better angle to present itself.

The two women circle again.

Emily steps in aggressively, looking to trap the arm and drag Juno back into another power exchange. Juno fakes high, drops low, and catches Emily with a quick toe kick to the knee. Emily's leg buckles just enough for Juno to grab the wrist and spin her over with an arm drag. Emily rolls through and pops right back to her feet, only to be met with a second arm drag that sends her nearer to the ropes than before.

John Phillips: "Juno Sage is beginning to find her timing now."

Emily comes up a little quicker this time, a little more irritated, and lunges in before Juno can fully capitalize. She catches Sage around the upper body and drives her backward into the corner, pinning her there for a moment with pure force. The referee immediately steps in with the count, and Emily backs out at four with both hands up, though the intensity in her face never dips.

Mark Bravo: "And that's the answer from Emily. Fine, you want to get cute? Here's a wall."

Juno exhales once and resets in the corner, shoulders rising and falling under the blue-white lights. Emily comes forward again, but this time Juno slips out along the ropes, ducks under the reaching arm, and cracks Emily with a short palm strike to the side of the head before snapping off a quick low kick to the thigh. Emily stumbles one step, just one, and that is enough to show the crowd that the balance of the match may be starting to shift a little.

John Phillips: "Emily Hightower still has the stronger hand overall, but Juno is getting more and more of a read every time they engage."

Outside the ring, Buck Hightower's posture remains calm, but his attention is unmistakably fixed. Dakota

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Hightower leans in just slightly from her side of the apron, following every exchange. Emily notices neither this time, too focused on Juno and too intent on keeping her from building momentum.

Emily storms in with another forearm. Juno ducks under it, pivots behind, and shoves Emily toward the ropes. Emily rebounds back and tries to blast through with a shoulder of her own, but Juno shifts off-line and clips her with a jumping knee to the jaw that snaps Emily's head back and stops her in place.

John Phillips: "Big knee from Juno Sage!"

The crowd gives a louder reaction as Emily rocks backward into the ropes, blinking hard and trying to shake the shot loose. Juno sees the opening and immediately closes distance, planting a second kick into the thigh and then reaching for the arm, looking to start tying Hightower up in the kind of control sequences that have made her so dangerous in the past.

Mark Bravo: "And now we're seeing the version of Juno Sage that can really make a match frustrating. A kick here. A knee there. One little interruption at a time until your whole game starts to break apart."

Juno twists at the wrist and starts to torque the shoulder, trying to turn Emily down toward the mat. Emily fights it, grinding through the pressure and planting both boots hard. The struggle becomes ugly and physical, exactly where Emily likes it, and after a brief tug-of-war she rips her arm free and drives a heavy forearm into Juno's chest that echoes through the arena.

John Phillips: "Emily Hightower refusing to let Juno fully drag her into that technical rhythm."

Juno backs off a step, but only a step. Emily comes after her again, and now the pace begins to quicken a little as both women realize the other has more to offer than just the first impression. Juno throws a low kick. Emily answers with a forearm. Juno flicks a palm strike high. Emily shoves her back and follows with a short-arm lariat that catches Juno across the upper chest and sends her sprawling near the ropes.

Mark Bravo: "That one hit like a truck."

Emily steps toward her fallen opponent, chest rising with effort now, and for the first time the match feels like it has truly settled into a competitive rhythm. Emily still has the edge on force. Juno is starting to find spaces to work. The crowd senses it too, the noise holding steady as both women prepare for the next phase of the fight.

Juno Sage rolls toward the ropes after the short-arm lariat, one hand instinctively going to the upper chest as she uses the bottom strand to steady herself. Emily Hightower stays on her feet and stalks forward, shoulders rising and falling a little heavier now, but still clearly the one trying to dictate where and how this match is fought.

John Phillips: "This is a good opening stretch right here. Emily Hightower has imposed a lot of force, but Juno Sage keeps sneaking in those little adjustments, those little reads, and that's what's keeping her alive."

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Mark Bravo: "Emily's winning the collisions. Juno's trying to win the spaces between them."

Emily reaches down and grabs Juno by the arm, trying to haul her upright before she can fully reset. Juno comes up reluctantly, using the ropes to keep her balance, and Emily immediately leans into her with a hard forearm to the chest that knocks her back against the cables. Emily follows with another, then grabs the wrist and sends Juno toward the far side.

Juno rebounds fast.

Emily drops her level, ready to drive through another impact exchange, but Juno reads it and short-hops over the line of contact just enough to avoid the full collision. She lands, spins, and clips Emily with a sharp kick to the back of the thigh before darting off to the side again. The crowd reacts with a low, appreciative murmur as the pattern becomes clearer.

John Phillips: "That's smart. Every time Juno can avoid the full force and still land something in return, she's making progress."

Emily turns quickly, annoyance starting to creep into the edges of her expression now. She storms in again, more direct this time, and manages to corner Juno with a rough shove into the buckles. The referee immediately steps in with the count, but Emily uses that window to drive one stiff shoulder into the midsection before backing away at four.

Mark Bravo: "Emily is making sure Juno pays a price every time she gets caught."

Juno folds for a moment in the corner, then steps out before Emily can fully line up another charge. Emily swings a forearm. Juno ducks under it, catches the arm, and snaps Emily down with a quick arm drag that sends her across the ring. Emily pops up again, but this time Juno is already moving, already ahead. A second arm drag sends Emily to a knee, and before Hightower can fully recover, Juno plants a precise kick into the shoulder.

John Phillips: "Now Juno Sage is starting to string things together."

Mark Bravo: "And that's where she gets dangerous. One move doesn't beat you. The next three after it might."

Juno reaches for the wrist and twists into standing control, trying to bend Emily down into her preferred plane of attack. Emily resists, planting her boots and gritting through the torque in the shoulder. Juno changes angles instead of forcing it, stepping through and using the trapped arm to spin Emily into a standing STO that drops her face and chest-first to the canvas.

John Phillips: "Very nice transition by Juno Sage."

Juno floats into the cover.

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Referee: "ONE! TWO--"

Emily kicks out firmly and rolls onto a knee. Juno doesn't let her breathe. She stays attached to the arm, twisting the wrist and folding the shoulder again before driving a knee into the upper back to keep Emily from rising cleanly.

Mark Bravo: "This is the first time in the match where Emily Hightower looks like she's having to answer questions instead of asking them."

Outside the ring, Buck Hightower straightens a little, his eyes narrowing as Juno settles into a more comfortable groove. Across the apron, Dakota leans in just a fraction more than before. Emily catches that much as she fights her way back up and barks toward ringside without fully taking her eyes off Juno.

Emily Hightower: "Stay out of it."

Buck doesn't respond. Dakota raises her hands in a small, almost innocent gesture. Juno, meanwhile, uses the tiny crack in Emily's attention to snap a low kick into the thigh and then crack her across the jaw with a short palm strike. Emily stumbles backward into the ropes.

John Phillips: "And that's exactly what Juno Sage needs. Even the briefest distraction can be turned into offense."

Juno hits the ropes and comes back with a jumping knee that catches Emily high enough to rock her into the corner. The crowd pops louder now as Juno rushes in after it, delivering a quick elbow in tight before pulling Emily out of the turnbuckles and dropping her with a clean swinging neckbreaker near center ring.

John Phillips: "Beautiful sequence from Juno Sage!"

Juno hooks the leg again.

Referee: "ONE! TWO--"

Emily gets the shoulder up.

Mark Bravo: "Closer now. Much closer."

Juno rises with that same cool, almost detached look in her eyes. She glances briefly at her own wrist, then back to Emily, and that little habit only seems to underline how comfortable she is becoming. Emily rolls toward the ropes and starts to push up, but Juno is right there, keeping the pressure on with another kick to the thigh and a yank on the arm that drags Hightower back into another exchange on Juno's terms.

Emily fires a desperation forearm. Juno slips to the side and answers with a spinning backfist that catches Emily flush and staggers her into the ropes again. The Phoenix crowd rises a little louder at the impact,

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recognizing that the balance of the match is shifting in real time.

John Phillips: "Juno Sage has absolutely fought her way into the driver's seat here."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, and now we're getting close to the part of the match where ringside starts getting very interesting."

Emily steadies herself with one arm hooked over the top rope, chest rising, jaw set, trying to fight off both the physical momentum Juno has built and the growing sense that Buck and Dakota are watching this with more and more concern. Juno takes a half-step back, eyes locked in, clearly measuring her next move as the tension around the ring tightens another notch.

Emily Hightower pushes off the ropes and tries to step back into center ring before Juno Sage can fully capitalize, but Juno is already there, already working off the rhythm she has built over the last few exchanges. She snaps a low kick into Emily's thigh, then another, forcing Hightower to reset her stance each time and giving the crowd the sense that the bigger, stronger woman is being slowly dragged into deeper and deeper water.

John Phillips: "This is where Juno Sage becomes especially dangerous. She's not overwhelming Emily Hightower in one big wave. She's shaving pieces off her balance, her timing, her comfort."

Mark Bravo: "And that gets real frustrating real fast when you're somebody who likes to settle things with force."

Juno steps in and catches the wrist again, twisting Emily into another standing arm control before yanking her forward into a quick knee to the midsection. Emily doubles over just enough for Juno to spin behind and drag her down with a neat, compact STO. Emily hits the canvas hard and rolls immediately, but Juno is attached before she can fully escape, keeping hold of the arm and driving a knee across the shoulder blade to keep her grounded.

John Phillips: "Juno Sage is really beginning to dictate every part of this match now."

Emily grits her teeth and tries to power up through the pressure, planting one knee and then one boot on the mat, but Juno shifts with her, changing angles and staying one step ahead, forcing Emily to fight not just pain but positioning too. On the outside, Buck Hightower has stopped folding and unfolding his arms and is now simply staring with a heavier intensity than before. Across the ring, Dakota Hightower leans in closer to the apron, her calm expression tightening ever so slightly as she watches Emily struggle.

Mark Bravo: "Buck doesn't look thrilled. Dakota doesn't either. And I promise you they're both thinking the same thing right now."

Emily manages to rip her arm free at last and fires a short elbow backward that catches Juno in the ribs. Then another. Juno gives one step. Emily tries to turn the opening into a full reset, but Juno answers with a

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toe kick to the knee that stunts the attempt and then whips her toward the corner. Emily hits back-first and stumbles out into a sudden jumping knee from Juno that snaps her head back and sends the crowd into a louder roar.

John Phillips: "Big knee by Juno Sage!"

Emily drops to one knee, blinking hard, and Juno wastes no time. She hooks the head, turns her over, and drives her down with a short cutter variation near center ring. Juno hooks the leg tightly, folding over the body for the cover.

Referee: "ONE! TWO--"

Emily kicks out, but the escape takes more out of her than the earlier ones did. She rolls toward the ropes, one arm instinctively wrapping around the middle strand while she tries to gather herself. Juno rises calmly, not smiling, not celebrating, just processing the next entry in the sequence.

John Phillips: "Another near fall, and right now Juno Sage looks more and more composed with every minute that passes."

Juno steps toward the ropes and reaches down for Emily, dragging her up by the arm and head. Emily resists, but Juno keeps turning the shoulder inward, forcing the rise on awkward terms. Then she drives a short palm strike into the side of the face and follows it with a snap kick to the ribs that sends Emily sagging against the cables.

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, this is Juno's match right now. Emily's still dangerous, but she's reacting now instead of controlling."

Outside, Buck takes one slow step along his side of the ring. Dakota mirrors with one of her own on the opposite side. Emily sees it while still trying to steady herself and barks toward them through clenched teeth.

Emily Hightower: "I said stay out of it!"

Buck stops. Dakota lifts her hands slightly as if to say they are doing nothing. But the tension is there now, visible and growing. Emily turns back just in time to see Juno already rushing in again. Sage lands a sharp corner elbow, then grabs the arm and tries to pull Emily out into another transition, perhaps looking to set up something even more damaging now that the momentum is fully hers.

John Phillips: "That frustration from Emily is real. She is trying to fight Juno Sage and keep her family at arm's length at the same time."

Juno wrenches the arm again and starts to bring Emily down into a tighter hold, trying to fold the shoulder and trap the upper body near the mat. Emily fights the hands, boots scraping against the canvas as she tries to keep herself from being dragged all the way in. The referee crouches in close to check the position and

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make sure everything remains legal.

Mark Bravo: "And this, right here, is the dangerous zone. Juno is in control, Emily's getting irritated, and Buck and Dakota are looking more and more like they may decide enough is enough."

Emily gets one hand free and plants it on the mat, straining to build back to a knee. Juno stays attached and stomps between the shoulders to keep her from getting up cleanly. The crowd buzzes louder, sensing that the match has reached a tipping point. Juno's control is firm. Emily's patience is thinning. And both Hightowers at ringside are now watching every second with a little too much interest.

Juno Sage keeps the pressure cinched in, one hand twisted around Emily Hightower's wrist while the other controls the shoulder, forcing Emily to carry awkward weight as she tries to rise. Emily gets to one knee, then halfway to her feet, but Juno immediately drives a sharp forearm across the upper back and shoves her down again before she can fully square herself.

John Phillips: "Juno Sage is doing an excellent job of keeping Emily Hightower from ever getting all the way back into this match."

Mark Bravo: "And now the family is really starting to feel it. You can see it on both sides of the ring."

The camera cuts briefly to Buck Hightower on the floor, his jaw set, eyes locked on Juno with a growing hardness. On the opposite side, Dakota Hightower has moved in closer to the apron than she was earlier, her calm expression still there on the surface, but the concern underneath it becoming easier to read. Neither has done anything yet. But both are clearly more involved now than simple spectators should be.

John Phillips: "That is the subtle shift right there. Buck and Dakota are no longer just standing at ringside. They are starting to react to every turn in this match."

Inside the ring, Juno drags Emily up by the arm and twists her sharply into another standing control. Emily winces and tries to yank free, but Juno steps through and lands a kick behind the knee that drops her right back down. Emily catches herself on both hands before going fully flat, but Juno is on top of the movement immediately, snapping a stomp into the shoulder and then stepping back to reassess.

Mark Bravo: "That's what Juno does so well. Every time Emily starts getting vertical, Juno just changes the answer."

Emily pushes back up with a grunt and throws a wild back elbow to create room. Juno leans away from it, then cracks her with a short backfist that sends Emily stumbling into the ropes yet again. Buck instinctively takes another step down his side of the ring. Dakota mirrors him from hers, both moving almost unconsciously now, drawn closer by the danger their family member is in.

John Phillips: "And now Buck is moving. Dakota too. They're inching closer and closer to this situation."

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Emily sees them as she catches herself on the ropes and instantly shoots an angry look to the floor.

Emily Hightower: "Don't."

Just that one word. Sharp. Clear. A warning more than a plea.

Buck stops where he is. Dakota raises her hands lightly, almost soothingly, but neither of them fully backs away. That detail matters. Emily turns back just in time for Juno to rush in with another knee toward the body. Emily manages to catch enough of it on the arms to blunt the impact, then shoves Juno backward and steps out of the ropes with a burst of aggression, trying to reclaim some space at last.

John Phillips: "Good answer from Emily Hightower! She needed that breathing room."

Emily surges forward with a forearm. Juno absorbs it and answers with a kick to the thigh. Emily fires another forearm. Juno lands a palm strike to the face. The crowd rises with the exchange, every shot making it feel like the match is balancing on a razor's edge now.

Mark Bravo: "Now we're talking. Emily's done being taken apart piece by piece."

Emily swings again, this time looking to blow straight through Juno's defense, but Juno ducks under and catches the arm once more, trying to spin her into another control sequence. Emily resists, muscles through, and drags Juno in close enough to drive a knee into the midsection. Juno folds for a split second, and the crowd pops as Emily grabs for a front facelock, perhaps seeing a chance to finally string some offense together.

John Phillips: "This could be the opening Emily Hightower has been searching for."

But even as Emily tries to capitalize, the camera shows Buck leaning toward the apron with growing impatience, while Dakota has crept close enough now that the referee notices her in his peripheral vision and glances out to the floor for just a moment. It is not a full distraction. Not yet. But it is the first time ringside has begun to tug at the official's awareness.

John Phillips: "And now the referee is starting to notice that ringside presence a little more."

Mark Bravo: "That's how it starts. Nobody has to do much at first. Just enough to change where the eyes are looking."

Emily manages to muscle Juno over with a rough snap suplex and both women hit hard. The crowd roars, relieved to see Hightower finally build something meaningful again. Emily stays down for a second after the impact, chest heaving, while Juno rolls toward the ropes, trying to create distance before Emily can fully reset the fight on her terms.

Outside, Buck slaps the apron once. Dakota leans in and calls out encouragement. Emily hears it and looks

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over, and the irritation is still there plain as day. She points toward them from one knee, still breathing hard, still angry.

Emily Hightower: "I got this!"

Buck says nothing. Dakota nods. But neither one moves back to where they started. They stay close. Too close. And now that fact is hanging over every second of the match.

Emily Hightower pushes up from one knee after the snap suplex, her chest rising and falling with heavier effort now, the frustration in her face mixing with the relief of finally halting some of Juno Sage's momentum. Across the ring, Juno rolls to the ropes and hooks an arm over the middle strand, using it to steady herself while she tries to regroup before Emily can get all the way back on top of her.

John Phillips: "That was important for Emily Hightower. She desperately needed something that let her reset this match on her own terms."

Mark Bravo: "And she may have needed it more mentally than physically. Juno was really starting to steer things for a while there."

Emily gets to her feet first and starts toward the ropes, clearly intending to keep the pressure on before Juno can fully recover. But the shot widens just enough to show Buck Hightower still posted too close on one side of the ring and Dakota Hightower still hovering on the other, both more active now than they were earlier, both reacting to each turn with growing investment.

John Phillips: "And the family is still there, still inching a little too close for comfort."

Emily sees it again and immediately throws a sharp look toward the floor.

Emily Hightower: "Back up."

Her voice is low this time, more controlled, but no less clear. Buck gives her a look without answering. Dakota nods lightly again, but neither truly retreats. That matters. That hesitation between command and obedience hangs in the air for a beat too long, and Juno uses it to her advantage.

As Emily turns back toward the ropes, Juno springs off them and catches her with a sudden running forearm to the side of the head. Emily stumbles sideways, surprised, and Juno follows immediately with a low kick to the thigh and a short palm strike to the jaw that sends the crowd into another louder reaction.

John Phillips: "And once again, Juno Sage takes advantage of even the smallest shift in Emily's attention."

Mark Bravo: "That is exactly why this ringside situation is so dangerous for Emily. Even if Buck and Dakota think they're helping just by being there, they're still adding noise to a match that doesn't need any."

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Juno hooks the wrist and twists Emily down into another arm control, folding her toward the mat and trapping her just long enough to stomp again between the shoulders. Emily grunts through the pressure and tries to muscle back up, but Juno is relentless now, staying attached and forcing Hightower to carry her own weight awkwardly while fighting for position.

John Phillips: "This is really becoming Juno Sage's kind of fight. The pace, the pressure, the body part targeting, the constant repositioning."

Outside, Buck slaps the apron again, harder this time. Dakota leans in closer and starts calling to Emily, trying to rally her back into the match. The referee glances toward ringside for just a fraction longer than before, not distracted enough to lose control, but aware now that the activity outside is increasing.

Mark Bravo: "See? That's the next step. Now they're not just standing there. They're making themselves part of the environment."

Emily hears them both and her face tightens further. She fights her way to one knee and turns her head enough to bark back without fully looking away from Juno.

Emily Hightower: "I said I got this!"

Juno responds instantly by yanking the arm and driving a knee into the shoulder, punishing the split-second of divided focus. Emily drops back to both knees and the crowd groans, sensing how close she is to losing the thread of the match again.

John Phillips: "Juno is making Emily pay for every outside glance, every word, every little break in concentration."

Juno stands and tries to haul Emily all the way up by the arm, likely looking for another transition into a more damaging sequence. Emily resists at first, then powers through just enough to fire a short forearm into Juno's chest. Juno answers with a kick to the leg. Emily throws another forearm. Juno lands another palm strike. The exchange gets rougher, faster, less polished now, both women too tired and too irritated to make everything pretty.

Mark Bravo: "Now it's getting ugly, and I don't mean that as an insult. I mean both of them are digging into the grime of this thing."

Emily finally catches Juno clean with a heavier forearm that rocks Sage backward into the ropes. The crowd pops. Emily surges in after her, trying to capitalize, but Juno drops the shoulder and sends her tumbling through the ropes to the apron instead of fully into the ring. Emily lands on her feet but has to steady herself with one hand on the top strand.

That is when Dakota takes one quick step up onto the apron near the corner.

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John Phillips: "Dakota's on the apron now--"

The referee immediately turns and motions her down, pointing emphatically to the floor. Dakota backs her hands off in that same calm, innocent way she's used all match, but the point has already been made. The official's attention has shifted. Emily sees it. So does Juno. So does Buck.

Mark Bravo: "And there it is. Now we're starting to push at the edges."

Emily angrily waves Dakota down from the apron, clearly unhappy with the move. Juno, meanwhile, charges toward the ropes looking to catch Emily as she comes back in and perhaps finally break her open for good. Buck Hightower steps closer on the opposite side, eyes locked on the exchange about to happen, the tension around the ring tightening another full turn.

Dakota Hightower drops back down from the apron, but not before drawing a full warning from the referee. Emily Hightower is still halfway through the ropes, one hand on the top strand, glaring down at Dakota with obvious irritation. It is only a second. Barely more. But Juno Sage has spent this entire match proving that a second is enough.

John Phillips: "Emily is furious with Dakota, and Juno Sage is absolutely the wrong opponent to have that kind of split focus against."

Juno charges.

She hits the ropes at full speed and drives a running forearm into Emily as Hightower is trying to re-enter, catching her high enough to send her tumbling awkwardly back into the ring. Emily hits shoulder and hip first, rolling toward center, and Juno is already on top of her before she can fully gather herself.

Mark Bravo: "There it is! Juno saw the door open and kicked it right off the hinges!"

Juno hooks the arm and folds Emily over into another tight control, torquing the shoulder and dragging her into a kneeling position where Hightower cannot plant her strength properly. Emily grits her teeth and tries to power upward, but Juno uses the angle against her, snapping a quick knee into the upper arm before spinning behind and dragging her down with another compact STO.

John Phillips: "Juno Sage is all over her right now!"

Cover.

Referee: "ONE! TWO--"

Emily kicks out.

Juno sits up from the cover without any visible frustration. If anything, she looks even calmer, even more

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certain that the process is working. She reaches down, drags Emily back up by the arm, and lands a low kick to the thigh before snapping a palm strike into the side of the head. Emily stumbles toward the ropes again, and now the crowd can feel the momentum leaning harder than before.

John Phillips: "Emily Hightower is in a very dangerous stretch here. Juno Sage has the pace, she has the positioning, and she has Emily reacting instead of dictating."

Mark Bravo: "And every time Emily starts to re-center herself, something at ringside drags her eyes away for just a beat."

Outside, Buck Hightower paces two deliberate steps down his side of the ring before stopping near the corner. On the opposite side, Dakota has not moved far from where the referee warned her away. She remains close. Close enough to be seen. Close enough to be felt. Emily clocks both of them as Juno grabs hold of her wrist again, and the anger flashes right back across her face.

Emily Hightower: "Back off! Both of y'all!"

Juno immediately yanks the arm and slams a forearm into the shoulder to punish the distraction, then whips Emily hard toward the buckles. Emily hits back-first and stumbles out, chest heaving, only to run right into a sharp jumping knee from Juno that snaps her head back and drops her to one knee near center ring.

John Phillips: "Another huge knee by Juno Sage!"

The Phoenix crowd rises a little louder now, sensing that Juno is pressing closer and closer to something big. Sage takes a half step back and watches Emily carefully, almost clinically, waiting for the exact right moment to strike again. Emily tries to rise. Juno darts in with a spinning backfist that catches her flush and sends her spilling to both hands and knees.

Mark Bravo: "This is turning into a bad night for Emily if it keeps going like this."

Juno doesn't rush the cover this time. Instead, she circles around Emily, grabs the arm, and starts pulling her into a tighter hold, trying to isolate the shoulder and upper body in a way that could set up a submission or at least leave Hightower too compromised to fire back with full force. The referee crouches in close to check positioning again.

John Phillips: "Juno may be thinking bigger than near falls now. She may be looking to finish this at the root."

Emily fights the hands, straining to keep from being folded all the way in. Outside, Buck's expression hardens. Dakota steps closer to the apron again, more assertive this time, one hand coming up to point into the ring while she calls out to Emily. The referee hears it and shoots a glance toward the floor.

Mark Bravo: "And here we go again. The family is getting louder. They're getting closer. They're getting

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harder to ignore."

Emily hears Dakota and barks back without looking fully away from Juno.

Emily Hightower: "I don't need it!"

That line earns a reaction from the crowd, many of them now understanding exactly how little Emily wants help in this match. But wanting and getting are becoming two very different things. Juno uses the moment to drag Emily another few inches toward center and cinch the hold deeper. Hightower groans, trying to keep herself from getting fully trapped, one hand searching for leverage on the mat.

John Phillips: "Emily is fighting two battles now. One with Juno Sage, and one with the family at ringside who clearly does not trust her to lose control of this situation."

Buck takes another step. Dakota moves closer too. Neither has touched the match yet. But both are now right on the edge of doing more than simply watching, and the tension around the ring has become impossible to ignore as Juno Sage continues tightening her control over Emily Hightower.

Juno Sage keeps the hold cinched in, one arm trapped around Emily Hightower's shoulder and wrist while the other hand fights for better leverage, trying to drag the bigger woman fully down into a position where strength matters less than pain and angle. Emily is still resisting, still planted on one knee and one boot, but the strain is obvious now in the tightness around her eyes and the way her free hand claws at the mat looking for anything to push against.

John Phillips: "Juno Sage has this match exactly where she wants it. Emily Hightower is not broken, but she is being controlled, and that is a dangerous difference."

Mark Bravo: "And every extra second this stays locked in is another second Buck and Dakota look more tempted to make this their problem."

The camera cuts to ringside for a moment.

Buck Hightower is no longer just hovering nearby. He has crept all the way down toward the corner, his eyes fixed on Juno with a hard, protective intensity. Across the ring, Dakota Hightower is close enough to place both hands on the apron now, leaning in and calling to Emily with increasing urgency. Their involvement still has not crossed the line into physical action, but visually, emotionally, they are all over this match.

John Phillips: "This is becoming a real issue now. They have not touched anything yet, but the atmosphere around ringside has changed completely."

Inside the ring, Emily grunts and forces herself another inch upward. Juno immediately answers by twisting the arm tighter and driving a short knee into the shoulder to halt the rise. Emily drops back down and the crowd groans, recognizing how effective Juno has been in draining the life and balance out of her opponent

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during this stretch.

Mark Bravo: "Juno is not just winning exchanges now. She's dictating whether Emily even gets to stand up."

Dakota slaps the apron once.

Dakota Hightower: "Come on, Emily!"

The referee turns his head toward the floor for a moment and gestures at Dakota to back up. Emily hears it and her face flashes with irritation again even while she is trapped.

Emily Hightower: "Stay out of it!"

Juno instantly uses that split-second of anger, yanking Emily's arm and rolling her more tightly into the hold, nearly taking her all the way flat this time. Emily catches herself just before she's fully dragged over, teeth clenched, legs shaking with effort as she fights to keep at least some base beneath her.

John Phillips: "And that is exactly what Emily cannot afford. Every word to the outside is one more opening for Juno Sage."

Buck starts pacing now, two short steps, then a stop, then two more, his body language no longer calm in the least. The camera catches him looking from Juno, to Emily, to the referee, clearly tracking where every set of eyes is landing. Across from him, Dakota points into the ring again, louder now, trying to rally Emily back up.

Mark Bravo: "Buck is done just watching. You can see it all over him. He hasn't moved yet, but he's thinking about it."

Emily finally muscles enough space to drive one short elbow backward into Juno's ribs. Then another. Juno's grip loosens just a fraction, and Hightower uses it to surge up toward both knees. The crowd comes alive, sensing a potential escape. Juno tries to stay attached, but Emily powers through and nearly gets to her feet--

Juno answers with a sharp toe kick to the knee.

Emily buckles right back down.

John Phillips: "What a response by Juno Sage!"

Juno follows immediately with a palm strike to the side of the head, then shoves Emily forward toward the ropes. Emily catches herself on the middle strand and tries to turn, but Juno rushes in behind her with a forearm to the upper back that leaves Hightower draped awkwardly across the cables.

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That's when Dakota takes another step up onto the apron.

John Phillips: "Dakota's back on the apron!"

The referee wheels toward her instantly, pointing and ordering her down again. Dakota lifts her hands with that same calm, almost innocent expression, but she stays there just long enough to keep the referee's attention pulled away from the far side of the ring.

Mark Bravo: "And now the eyes are exactly where Buck wants them."

Emily sees Dakota and twists her head enough to bark at her again, visibly furious.

Emily Hightower: "Get down!"

Juno reaches for Emily's arm, looking to drag her away from the ropes and perhaps finally finish the sequence--but on the opposite side, Buck has started moving.

One step. Then another. Then he is right there at the edge of the apron, close enough to matter, close enough that the entire building can feel what might be coming next.

John Phillips: "Buck Hightower is in position now, and this is exactly the danger Emily Hightower was trying to prevent."

Juno still hasn't seen him. The referee still hasn't seen him. Emily has, and the look on her face is no longer just frustration. It is alarm.

Emily Hightower is draped against the ropes trying to pull herself upright while Juno Sage reaches in from behind, still attached to the arm and still working with that same cold precision that has turned the second half of this match in her favor. Dakota Hightower remains on the apron just long enough to keep the referee's attention tied up on her side, hands raised, expression composed, playing innocent even as the official orders her back down once again.

John Phillips: "This is getting dangerously close to the breaking point now. Dakota has the referee occupied, Buck is lurking on the opposite side, and Emily Hightower can see exactly where this is heading."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, and the worst part for Emily might be that she's watching it happen in real time and can't stop it while Juno is still all over her."

Emily twists her head toward Dakota with open anger.

Emily Hightower: "Get down! I mean it!"

Juno uses the moment to tug Emily away from the ropes, trying to pull her back toward center and back into

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cleaner danger. Emily fights the motion, boots scraping against the mat as she resists. On the far side, Buck Hightower takes the final step in.

He reaches up from the floor, grabs Juno Sage by the ankle, and yanks hard.

Juno loses balance instantly and is pulled just enough off-line for Buck to drive her shoulder-first into the ring post from the outside. The impact is ugly, the kind that turns the whole crowd in an instant. Juno spills partly through the ropes and down to the floor in a heap, clutching at the shoulder and neck as the arena erupts in boos.

John Phillips: "There it is! Buck Hightower just attacked Juno Sage!"

Dakota drops off the apron as the referee spins back around, too late to catch the actual shot. Emily pushes herself up from the ropes and stares out at Buck in complete disbelief before the anger floods right back into her face.

Emily Hightower: "No! Damn it! What are y'all doin'?!"

Mark Bravo: "And that is not performative frustration. Emily Hightower is genuinely furious right now."

Buck backs away a step with the same heavy calm he has had all night, not looking apologetic in the least. Dakota says something from the floor, trying to smooth it over, but Emily isn't hearing any of it. She points at both of them from inside the ring, seething, while the referee begins the count on Juno outside.

Referee: "ONE! TWO! THREE!"

John Phillips: "Emily Hightower wanted no part of this. But the damage has been done, and now she is stuck with the choice."

Juno Sage crawls toward the apron, still fighting through the pain, one arm wrapped around the shoulder that collided with the post. Emily is still fuming, still glaring at her family, still clearly more upset with them than focused on the wounded opponent in front of her. That hesitation hangs there for a second too long.

Referee: "FOUR! FIVE! SIX!"

Juno drags herself up and rolls back under the bottom rope just before the count can get too dangerous. She makes it to one knee, hurt and disoriented, but not finished. Emily turns back toward her and the conflict is written all over her face. She does not want the help. She does not want the interference. But the match is still happening, and Juno is still in front of her.

Mark Bravo: "This is the moment right here. Emily either keeps arguing with her family... or she wins the match."

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Juno pushes up and tries to throw a weak strike with the good arm. Emily catches the wrist. For just a split second, she hesitates, the disgust still plain in her eyes. Then instinct and competition take over.

Emily hauls Juno up, powers her onto her shoulders, and drives her down with Total Loss in the center of the ring. The impact is emphatic. Emily folds over into the cover immediately.

Referee: "ONE! TWO! THREE!"

The bell rings.

John Phillips: "Emily Hightower gets the win, but there is no question this one turned on the involvement of the Hightower Clan."

Emily rolls off the cover and stays on her knees instead of rising in triumph. The crowd gives her a loud mixed response, some reacting to the finish, others reacting to the obvious fact that she never wanted it to happen this way. Juno rolls toward the ropes clutching at the shoulder, robbed of a match she had clearly begun taking over.

Mark Bravo: "And look at Emily. That's not satisfaction. That's irritation."

The referee steps in and raises Emily's hand, but she lets it happen only for a moment before pulling her arm down and turning sharply toward ringside. Buck Hightower stands there with that same stoic, unconcerned expression. Dakota tries to speak to her from the floor, but Emily is having none of it.

Emily Hightower: "I told y'all to stay out of it!"

John Phillips: "That says it all."

Emily steps through the ropes and drops to the floor, visibly upset, pointing back toward the ring and then toward Buck and Dakota as she continues arguing with them. Buck does not seem moved. Dakota tries to keep calm. Emily does not match that energy. She is angry, disappointed, and clearly not happy that her family has now attached themselves directly to one of her wins.

Without celebrating, Emily turns and starts up the ramp. Buck and Dakota fall in behind her anyway, the three leaving together physically, but emotionally looking further apart than when they came out. The camera lingers on the image as Juno Sage remains behind in the ring, pulling herself up with the ropes, knowing exactly what cost her the match.

Introducing CLASS

The camera cuts backstage to one of the polished interior hallways of the PHX Arena, the low hum of the crowd bleeding faintly through the walls while production crew and staff move in the deeper background. The

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atmosphere is busy, but the second these two step into frame, the space seems to shift around them.

A tall blonde woman walks confidently down the hallway beside an older, tall, bald man.

She carries herself with the kind of poise that does not ask for attention because it expects it. Every step is deliberate. Every look is measured. There is an easy arrogance in the way she moves, like someone who has never once questioned whether a room belongs to her the moment she enters it. Beside her, the bald man walks with equal confidence, though his role is clearly different. He is not here to share the spotlight. He is here to reinforce it.

The woman glances ahead, then toward the camera, her expression cool and self-assured before she finally begins to speak.

Bianca Page: "I've kept an eye on the United Toughness Alliance for a while now, and now we are here to take everything we could possibly want from the UTA..."

She turns her head slightly and looks over at the man beside her, a smug smile curling onto her face as if the answer to the unasked question should already be obvious to everyone watching.

Bianca Page: "Why, you might ask?"

She gives the faintest laugh under her breath.

Bianca Page: "It is really quite simple. Because my sisters and I have always taken what we wanted. That won't be any different now that I have arrived here."

Her tone sharpens just enough on the final line to make the message land more clearly. This is not a debut built on hope or ambition. It is a declaration. A warning. The kind of statement meant to put an entire locker room on notice before she has even stepped into the center of it.

Bianca Page: "So all the current champions should officially understand that I'll be picking up some gold sooner rather than later."

The man beside her nods with visible approval, almost admiring the certainty in the way she says it. He turns slightly toward her as they continue walking, his voice carrying the polished, affirming tone of someone who has clearly played this role for a long time.

Ace Andrews: "And it is my absolute pleasure to walk beside you, as always, Bianca. To watch as the Classy One claims another kingdom."

He gestures lightly with one hand as they continue down the hall, speaking not just to her but to the camera and, by extension, to the entire UTA audience.

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Ace Andrews: "UTA may think they have the best, but the true best is here now to show the world exactly what the best actually looks like."

Bianca's smile widens hearing that, clearly pleased, clearly used to that kind of praise and perhaps even expecting it as naturally as breath. She lifts her chin just a little higher and looks back toward the lens with all the confidence of a woman who already sees herself standing at the top of the mountain.

Bianca Page: "You're the absolute best, and everyone in the UTA will find out that we are the ones who will take this company..."

She slows just enough to let the final words breathe, making sure the names hit with all the importance she believes they deserve.

Bianca Page: "Ace Andrews and me... "Classy" Bianca Page."

She gives the camera a deliberate wink, equal parts charm and arrogance, before turning her attention forward again and continuing down the hallway without another glance back. Ace Andrews follows half a step behind, posture proud, expression smug, both of them moving like they have already decided the UTA is not something they are joining.

It is something they intend to take.

No Reason to Be Down

The camera cuts backstage once again to the now-familiar pedestal where the new UTA International Championship rests beneath a focused white spotlight. The hallway around it is quieter than the arena floor, but the title still seems to pull the weight of the night toward it all the same, its polished faceplate gleaming with every slight shift of the camera.

Kairo Bey stands alone in front of it.

He does not speak right away. He just stares at the championship, his expression caught somewhere between hunger and hesitation. There is no denying what this opportunity means. A brand new title. A chance to make history. A chance to be remembered. But behind his eyes sits something heavier too. The recent losses. The near-misses. The sting of momentum slipping away just when it looked like it might finally be his time.

Kairo steps a little closer to the podium, his gaze never leaving the gold.

Kairo Bey: "Wouldn't take much, huh?"

He gives a small, humorless smile, more to himself than to anyone else.

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Kairo Bey: "One win. One night. One moment... and suddenly none of that other stuff matters anymore."

His eyes harden for a second, but the confidence does not fully settle. Not yet. He exhales slowly and looks down, his jaw tightening like he is trying to talk himself into fully believing what he wants to believe.

Kairo Bey: "Problem is..."

He trails off, looking back up at the title.

Kairo Bey: "You start stackin' up losses, even a moment like this can feel a little different."

Before he can say any more, a hand settles onto his shoulder from behind.

Kairo stiffens and turns his head.

Standing there is Eli Creed.

And just behind him, quiet but unmistakable, is Troy Lindz.

Creed wears that same intense, controlled calm he always seems to carry now, the kind that makes every word feel like it is about to become a lesson whether you asked for one or not. Troy lingers just behind his shoulder, arms loose at their sides, eyes on Kairo, their presence lending extra weight to the moment without needing to say a word.

Eli Creed: "No reason to be down, Kairo."

Kairo turns more fully toward them, not pulling away from the contact immediately, but not welcoming it either. Creed eases his hand back and steps around just enough to stand between Kairo and the title, though not fully blocking the view of it.

Eli Creed: "That's the thing people keep getting wrong. They think a loss is the end of the story."

Creed shakes his head once, calm and certain.

Eli Creed: "It isn't. It's pressure. It's resistance. It's part of the process."

He gestures lightly between Kairo and the championship.

Eli Creed: "The Creed Method doesn't promise you comfort. It doesn't promise you an easy road. It promises that every time the world pushes down on you, you either break..."

He takes a half-step closer.

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Eli Creed: "...or you learn how to bend."

Troy remains quiet behind him, but there is a slight nod there, a visible sign that Creed's words are not just talk to them. Kairo notices that too. His eyes flick toward Lindz for just a second, then back to Creed.

Kairo Bey: "And what, this is the part where you tell me I need you?"

Creed does not flinch at the edge in Kairo's voice. If anything, he seems almost pleased by it.

Eli Creed: "No."

He lets the word sit for a beat before continuing.

Eli Creed: "This is the part where I tell you that what you're lookin' at..."

He turns his head slightly toward the International Championship.

Eli Creed: "...could be so much more than just a title match."

Kairo's expression tightens, skeptical but listening in spite of himself.

Eli Creed: "You and Troy are in that match. Two people who know what it feels like to hit the wall. Two people who know what it feels like to be doubted. Two people who know what it means to be one night away from changing everything."

Creed glances back toward Troy, then returns his full attention to Kairo.

Eli Creed: "That ring tonight? That can be more than six people chasing a belt. It can be a proving ground. It can be a rebirth. It can be the beginning of something bigger than either of you thought possible."

Kairo folds his arms now, still guarded, but not dismissing the pitch outright. Creed sees that and presses just a little more.

Eli Creed: "I've been trying to get you to understand this, Kairo. This isn't about joining hands and singing songs. This isn't about weakness. It's about structure. It's about purpose. It's about taking people with talent..."

He points toward Kairo's chest.

Eli Creed: "...and showing them how to stop wasting it."

The comment lands with just enough bite to make Kairo's jaw tighten. Troy shifts slightly in the background, still silent, but their presence matters here. They are proof that Creed is not making this pitch from nowhere.

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They are standing evidence of someone already inside the orbit.

Kairo Bey: "You got a funny way of trying to inspire people."

Creed gives the faintest hint of a smile.

Eli Creed: "Inspiration is cheap. Change costs more."

The hallway falls quiet for a second after that. Kairo looks back toward the title. Then at Troy. Then back to Creed. There is no answer yet. Not a yes. Not a no. Just more conflict settling into the space where confidence should be.

Eli Creed: "Think about it."

He steps back just enough to clear the view of the championship again.

Eli Creed: "Because tonight could be history. But history gets even louder when you stop walking into it alone."

Creed lets that final line hang in the air, then motions subtly for Troy to move with him. The two of them begin to walk off, leaving Kairo where they found him, still standing in front of the International Championship, only now with even more on his mind than before.

The camera lingers on Kairo's face for a moment longer. The hunger is still there. So is the doubt. And now, thanks to Eli Creed, so is the possibility of something else entirely.

Enjoy It While You Can

The camera cuts backstage to one of the wider production hallways inside the PHX Arena. Black curtains hang in sections along the concrete walls, road cases are stacked off to one side, and crew members move in the background with headsets on, careful to stay out of the path of the talent making their way through. The muffled hum of the crowd seeps through the building like a constant reminder that the night is still very much alive.

Walking into frame are the UTA Champion Chris Ross and Valentina Blaze.

Ross has the UTA Championship draped over his shoulder, the gold catching the overhead lights as he walks with the easy confidence of a man who knows exactly what he is carrying and why. Beside him, Valentina Blaze moves with the same sharp presence she always seems to bring into a room, focused but relaxed enough that this is clearly not an intense strategy meeting so much as a conversation between two people comfortable in each other's orbit.

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Valentina Blaze: "I'm just saying, if people are gonna keep lining up to take shots at you, at least make them earn the privilege before they start talking like they already did somethin'."

Chris lets out a small laugh under his breath, adjusting the title slightly on his shoulder as they continue down the hall.

Chris Ross: "They usually do all the talking first. Makes it easier to sort out who believes it... and who just likes hearin' themselves say it."

Valentina smirks at that, giving him a sideways look.

Valentina Blaze: "So basically half the locker room."

Chris shrugs, calm and unbothered.

Chris Ross: "Some nights more than half."

Before either of them can say anything else, another voice cuts into the hallway.

Maxwell Jett: "Oh, good. The champ can count. That puts you ahead of most of this place already."

Chris and Valentina stop walking.

The camera pans slightly as Maxwell "Max" Jett steps into frame.

MMJ is dressed like he knows the camera belongs on him the second he enters any room. The confidence is loud before he even opens his mouth again. His posture is casual in that very intentional way that only works when somebody thinks they are the smartest, most valuable person in every conversation they enter. His eyes drop almost immediately to the UTA Championship on Chris Ross' shoulder, and the smirk on his face grows sharper.

John Phillips: "Well now this is interesting."

Mark Bravo: "Interesting? This is combustible."

Valentina's expression tightens on sight, already unimpressed. Chris, by contrast, stays still and steady, his face not giving MMJ much to work with. That only seems to amuse Maxwell more.

Maxwell Jett: "You know, I was just thinking to myself..."

He gestures loosely toward the title.

Maxwell Jett: "...that championship looks nice."

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He tilts his head, studying the belt with exaggerated consideration.

Maxwell Jett: "Not as nice as it would look on me, obviously, but nice."

Valentina lets out a dry scoff and folds her arms.

Valentina Blaze: "You always walk around introducing yourself with stupid, or is tonight special?"

MMJ glances at her, then gives a theatrical little smile like he is indulging a child who interrupted adults talking.

Maxwell Jett: "First of all, sweetheart, if I was introducing myself, you'd know. Because unlike most of the talent around here, when Maxwell Jett enters a room, it means somethin'."

He looks back to Chris, clearly more interested in the champion than in trading with Valentina for very long.

Maxwell Jett: "See, Chris, that's the thing about that belt. It's not supposed to sit on the shoulder of somebody who's just good enough to hold onto it for a while."

He taps his own chest lightly.

Maxwell Jett: "It belongs around the waist of the best."

He takes one slow step closer, grin still in place, voice now carrying that sharp, self-satisfied edge that makes every word sound like both a boast and an insult.

Maxwell Jett: "And buddy, whether these people like it or not, whether this locker room wants to choke on it or not, I am the best in the god damn world."

Valentina rolls her eyes with open disgust. Chris remains composed, but there is the slightest shift in his posture now, not defensive, not threatened, just more directly engaged.

Valentina Blaze: "That's funny. Usually the best in the world don't gotta keep tellin' everybody."

MMJ lets out a soft laugh, never taking his eyes off Ross.

Maxwell Jett: "No, see, that's where people like you get confused. I don't say it because I need to hear it. I say it because idiots need to be reminded."

That line hangs there for a second before Chris finally answers, his voice calm and measured, the exact opposite of Maxwell's energy.

Chris Ross: "You done?"

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MMJ's smile widens at that, like this is exactly the response he wanted. He spreads his arms a little.

Maxwell Jett: "Done? No, no, no. I'm just gettin' started."

He points directly at the UTA Championship now.

Maxwell Jett: "That title? That title isn't a reward for surviving. It's a statement piece. It's proof. It's supposed to tell the world who the man is in this company. Who the draw is. Who the standard is."

He lowers his hand and smirks again.

Maxwell Jett: "And with all due respect, champ..."

The way he says it makes it obvious there is no respect at all.

Maxwell Jett: "...that belt is renting space on your shoulder when it should be living on mine."

Chris stares at him for a beat, then shifts the championship slightly higher on his shoulder, the smallest motion somehow saying more than a long speech would. When he does speak, it is still steady. Still controlled.

Chris Ross: "You talk a lot for somebody who ain't had to stand across from me yet."

That lands. The grin stays on MMJ's face, but there is a little more edge behind the eyes now. A little more challenge. Valentina notices it and smirks faintly, clearly liking that Ross is not giving Maxwell the type of reaction he probably prefers.

Maxwell Jett: "Oh, believe me, Chris, when that time comes, you'll know. And when it does? You're gonna find out somethin' real painful."

He leans in just a little, not quite invading Ross' space, but close enough to make the tension obvious.

Maxwell Jett: "Everybody loves a champion until the best man in the room decides he's tired of letting them pretend."

Valentina steps half a pace forward, not enough to escalate, but enough to make it known she is done listening to Maxwell inflate himself any further.

Valentina Blaze: "Then quit talkin' about it and do somethin'!"

MMJ finally looks at her again, smile curling at one corner.

Maxwell Jett: "Careful. I know I'm handsome enough to be distracting, but this conversation's bigger than

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your attitude problem."

Valentina looks ready to fire back immediately, but Chris slightly shifts in front of the moment, not blocking her, just controlling the temperature before it rises further. He keeps his eyes on Jett.

Chris Ross: "When you want to stop talkin', come find me."

There is no yelling in it. No theatrics. Just a simple statement from a champion who does not need to sell his own confidence because the belt already does it for him.

That calm answer gets the biggest reaction out of Maxwell yet. He lets out a breath through his nose and gives a slow nod, almost impressed, almost amused, definitely not backing down.

Maxwell Jett: "Oh, I will."

He steps aside then, creating just enough room for them to pass, but not before one more look at the title.

Maxwell Jett: "Enjoy carryin' it while you can."

Chris says nothing else. He just looks at Maxwell for one last second before continuing down the hallway with Valentina beside him. Valentina keeps her eyes on MMJ a moment longer, clearly unconvinced and entirely unimpressed, before finally turning to walk with the champion.

Maxwell stays where he is, watching them leave, that smug expression never fully fading from his face. The camera lingers on him for a beat, then on Chris Ross and Valentina disappearing down the hall with the UTA Championship still on Ross' shoulder, the tension between champion and challenger now very clearly planted where it did not exist before.

Hakuryu vs. Graham Keel

The camera returns to ringside as the energy inside the PHX Arena builds once again. The crowd is still humming from the last backstage confrontation, but there is a sharper edge to the anticipation now as the next championship graphic flashes across the screen and the stakes become impossible to miss.

John Phillips: "Up next, the UTA Fighting Championship is on the line as Hakuryu makes what could be the final defense of his reign against Graham Keel."

Mark Bravo: "And let's make sure everybody understands what that means, because this isn't just another title defense. If Hakuryu gets through Graham Keel tonight, he earns the right to cash that Fighting Championship in for another championship opportunity."

John Phillips: "That has added an entirely different kind of pressure to this match. Hakuryu is not just

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defending a championship. He is defending a path. A path that could take him directly into even bigger history."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, but first he's got to survive a man who doesn't care about mystique, ritual, or destiny. Graham Keel is the kind of wrestler who walks into a fight looking for a limb to ruin and a weakness to turn into a map."

The arena lights dim slightly.

Then, for five long seconds, there is no music at all.

A single white spotlight ignites at the top of the stage, clean and cold against the darkness, and standing inside it is Graham Keel.

John Phillips: "And listen to this. No music. No flash. No theatrics. Just that white spotlight and Graham Keel standing in it like an executioner waiting for permission to begin."

Mark Bravo: "That's because he doesn't need all the extra noise. He wants you looking at him. He wants you feeling how serious he is before he ever takes a step."

Keel stands motionless for that silent opening stretch, his eyes locked forward, his posture rigid without being tense. There is no pacing in place. No jawing to the crowd. No attempt to play to the cameras. He just stands there in the beam of light, all six-foot-two and nearly two hundred fifty pounds of disciplined menace, looking less like a man arriving for a wrestling match and more like one arriving to correct a mistake.

Then the slow orchestral theme begins to rise through the building.

The music does not swell in some dramatic heroic fashion. It creeps in. Strings layered over weight. Purpose over spectacle. And with the first true movement in the entrance, Keel begins his walk to the ring.

John Phillips: "Graham Keel calls himself The Hold Architect, and that title fits him perfectly. He is one of the most methodical technicians in this company. Every hold means something. Every attack connects to the next one."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, and if you give him one arm, he'll take the shoulder. Give him the shoulder, he'll take your neck. Give him the neck, he'll take the whole match."

Keel walks with no wasted movement, each step measured and deliberate, his eyes never leaving the ring. The crowd reaction grows as he comes farther down the ramp, a mix of respect and tension rolling through the building as people recognize exactly what kind of threat he represents in a match with Fighting Championship rules.

John Phillips: "And remember, under Fighting Championship rules, there are no pinfalls. No quick flash

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cover to steal one. You have to make a man submit, or you have to leave him so compromised that the referee steps in."

Mark Bravo: "Which makes Graham Keel even scarier, if we're being honest. This isn't a guy looking to catch you. This is a guy looking to systematically take away your options until quitting starts sounding smart."

Keel reaches the midpoint of the ramp and never once looks toward the crowd. He never gestures. Never acknowledges the noise around him. His whole presentation is built on restraint, and somehow that makes him feel even more dangerous. A man this calm walking into a fight usually has a very specific plan for how he wants the other guy to suffer.

John Phillips: "He looks completely locked in."

Mark Bravo: "He usually does. That's the creepy part. Some people get fired up before a title match. Graham Keel looks like he already ran the numbers on how this is supposed to go."

At ringside, Keel slows just enough to look up at the ring apron, then toward the far corner where Hakuryu will soon be standing. There is no visible emotion in his face. If anything, the lack of emotion is the statement. He climbs the steel steps without haste, one hand brushing the top of the ring post as he reaches the apron.

He steps through the ropes and enters the ring with the same careful economy he brought to the walk. Once inside, he moves to the center and then turns, not in a showman's circle, but in a survey. A measured scan of the building. The ropes. The corners. The floor. The exits. Every relevant detail taken in and filed away.

John Phillips: "There is not an ounce of wasted energy in Graham Keel. Everything he does feels chosen."

Mark Bravo: "And that's why he is such a dangerous challenger tonight. Hakuryu may be the Fighting Champion, but Graham Keel is built for a fight where there are no easy endings."

Keel backs into his corner and rests his arms lightly on the top ropes, eyes fixed now on the entrance stage as the orchestral theme fades away. He does not bounce in place. He does not loosen up dramatically. He just waits, breathing steady, looking like a man prepared to turn patience into pain the second the bell rings.

John Phillips: "Graham Keel is here. The challenger is in the ring. And now all eyes turn to the Fighting Champion."

The camera holds on Graham Keel in his corner for a moment longer, the challenger standing still beneath the lights with the same cold patience he brought down the ramp. The crowd noise swells and shifts, anticipation rising now that one half of this high-stakes championship collision is already in place.

John Phillips: "Graham Keel is ready, and you can feel the gravity of this one settling over the building. The challenger has made his statement without saying a word. Now we wait for the champion."

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Mark Bravo: "And this is where the whole mood changes, because Hakuryu doesn't just enter an arena. He kind of takes it over."

The lights dim further.

A low, ceremonial drum begins to pulse through the PHX Arena. Not loud at first. Just steady. Measured. Ancient. It feels less like entrance music and more like the opening steps of a ritual. The crowd quiets almost instinctively as the stage is bathed in a deep, shadowed red with streaks of white cutting through the haze.

Then the curtain parts.

Hakuryu steps into view.

The Fighting Champion is draped in a long, ornate robe that catches the light with every subtle movement, the kind of garment that feels regal without ever becoming gaudy. Over one shoulder rests the UTA Fighting Championship, its gold shining against the darker tones of his presentation. His expression is unreadable. Composed. Focused. Controlled in that unnerving way that has come to define him.

John Phillips: "And here comes the champion. Hakuryu, the UTA Fighting Champion, entering tonight with everything on the line."

Mark Bravo: "This guy always looks like he already knows something the rest of us don't."

A step behind Hakuryu is Sinja.

Moving with the obedient stillness of a devoted servant, Sinja follows at a respectful distance, eyes down for only a moment before lifting them toward the ring. There is no attempt to share the spotlight. No wasted performance. Sinja's role is clear in the presentation. To accompany. To observe. To serve. And somehow that only adds more mystique to the champion walking ahead of him.

John Phillips: "And Sinja, as always, accompanying Hakuryu to the ring. The servant, the follower, the ever-present figure at the Fighting Champion's side."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, and whether you call him a servant, manager, disciple, whatever, one thing's for sure. Sinja treats Hakuryu like he's more than just a wrestler. Like he's something to be protected. Something to be honored."

Hakuryu stands at the top of the ramp for one long beat as the drums continue beneath the faint rise of strings and low chanting. He does not pace. He does not posture. He simply looks down toward the ring where Graham Keel waits, and in that stare there is no hostility, no panic, no need to prove emotion. Only purpose.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu knows exactly what this match means. One more successful defense, and he earns

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the right to cash in that Fighting Championship for another opportunity at even greater gold."

Mark Bravo: "But first he's got to survive Graham Keel in a rule set that's practically designed for men who like to hurt people on purpose. That's the hard part."

Hakuryu begins his walk.

Every step is deliberate, controlled, and unhurried. He does not rush because he has no reason to. The championship on his shoulder is not carried like a prize. It is carried like proof. Behind him, Sinja keeps pace with disciplined precision, never too close, never too far, almost like a shadow trained to move in worship rather than in support.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu's reign with the Fighting Championship has been built on composure, discipline, and a frightening ability to stay calm under pressure. That may be his greatest weapon tonight."

Mark Bravo: "Because Graham Keel is going to try to make this ugly. He's going to try to make it painful, uncomfortable, desperate. If Hakuryu stays calm through that, then Keel's got a real problem."

Halfway down the ramp, Hakuryu adjusts the title slightly on his shoulder with one hand, his eyes never leaving the ring. Sinja follows with the same quiet devotion, one step behind the champion's line, occasionally glancing toward the ropes and corners like he is already measuring the battlefield in his own way.

The crowd reaction continues to build as Hakuryu nears ringside. Some fans call his name. Others simply watch in silence, pulled into the gravity of the entrance. Graham Keel remains in his corner, unmoving, his eyes fixed on the champion with the same serious intent he has shown from the start.

John Phillips: "And there is the stare from Graham Keel. The challenger is not intimidated. He is not impressed. He is waiting."

Mark Bravo: "Which makes this fun, because Hakuryu doesn't seem too interested in being impressed either."

Hakuryu reaches ringside and pauses at the foot of the steel steps, looking once toward Graham Keel and then once toward the title on his own shoulder, as if quietly acknowledging both the present danger and the future opportunity tied up in the same match. Sinja stops just behind him, head slightly bowed.

Hakuryu ascends the steps with elegant control, then steps onto the apron and turns toward the crowd for a brief second, the Fighting Championship glinting under the lights. He does not raise it high. He does not thrust it toward the camera. He simply exists with it, and that restraint somehow makes the belt feel even more important.

John Phillips: "Champion and challenger now under the same roof, under the same lights, and headed for a collision under Fighting Championship rules."

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Hakuryu steps through the ropes and enters the ring. Sinja remains outside, taking position at ringside with quiet obedience while the champion walks to his corner and slowly removes the robe. The official steps in to receive the Fighting Championship, and for the first time in the segment, Hakuryu and Graham Keel are shown in the same wide frame, both men still, both men ready, both men fully aware of what waits for them when the bell rings.

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, I like this. No wasted movement. No fake smiles. No nonsense. Just two dangerous men and a rule set that says somebody's got to suffer."

The camera widens to take in the full ring as Hakuryu and Graham Keel stand in opposite corners, both men stripped now of entrance spectacle and left with only the things that matter. The official holds the UTA Fighting Championship at center ring for one final look while Sinja remains outside the ropes, hands folded, posture attentive, eyes never drifting far from the champion he serves.

John Phillips: "There it is. The UTA Fighting Championship. And with it, an enormous opportunity hanging in the balance for Hakuryu."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, because if Hakuryu wins tonight, this isn't just another defense on the résumé. This is the last hurdle. This is the one that lets him cash that title in and chase something even bigger."

The referee presents the title toward Graham Keel first. Keel does not reach for it. He does not lean in. He just studies it with the kind of detached seriousness he has brought to every part of the night so far, as if the championship is not a prize to admire but a target to claim. The official then turns and presents it toward Hakuryu, whose expression remains steady and unreadable, the champion giving the belt only a brief glance before looking right back through the ropes at his challenger.

John Phillips: "Both of these men understand exactly what the title represents. But they understand the rules, too. Under Fighting Championship rules, there are no pinfalls. There are no sudden flash victories. You either force a submission, or you inflict enough punishment that the referee has no choice but to stop the match."

Mark Bravo: "Which means this is not about stealing one good moment. This is about proving you can break another human being down better than he can break you."

The referee hands the title to the timekeeper and then steps back in between both men for final instructions. Hakuryu takes one measured step forward from his corner. Graham Keel does the same. The official speaks, but neither man is looking at him now. Their eyes are locked squarely on each other, two very different brands of control about to collide.

John Phillips: "Look at the body language. Graham Keel wants this to become a technical dissection. Hakuryu wants it fought in his rhythm, under his discipline, under his calm."

Mark Bravo: "And one of those plans is about to get very uncomfortable very fast."

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The referee backs away.

DING DING

The bell rings and for a moment neither man moves.

The crowd, so loud just seconds earlier, settles into a low, tense murmur. Hakuryu stands tall, shoulders loose, hands half-raised, feet planted with elegant balance. Across from him, Graham Keel lowers his center of gravity slightly, not in a brawler's crouch, but in the poised readiness of a man looking for the first limb to isolate, the first angle to exploit, the first mistake to convert into a body part.

John Phillips: "And there is the opening image of this title fight. No rush. No flurry. Just two men understanding exactly how dangerous the first exchange could be."

Mark Bravo: "Because the first contact in a match like this isn't just contact. It's information."

Keel circles first, taking a slow step to his left. Hakuryu mirrors without overcommitting, his feet gliding rather than stomping, keeping his base under him and his chest squared. Keel gives a slight shoulder feint. Hakuryu does not bite. Hakuryu shifts his lead hand higher. Keel notes it. Both men continue circling, neither wanting to surrender the center for free.

John Phillips: "This is a battle of patience as much as anything else. Graham Keel is looking for the opening that leads to control. Hakuryu is trying to deny him that entry point completely."

Keel steps in low, reaching toward the wrist. Hakuryu slaps the hand away and angles off before Keel can connect fully. They reset. The crowd reacts lightly, appreciating the razor-thin margin already visible in the technique. Keel steps in again, this time showing high before dipping for the lead leg. Hakuryu sprawls just enough to avoid the full grab and turns his hips away, forcing Keel to release the idea before he can get tangled somewhere he doesn't want to be.

Mark Bravo: "See, that's what makes Hakuryu so hard to deal with. He doesn't panic. He doesn't overreact. He just gives you nothing clean."

Keel rises back up and nods once to himself, almost acknowledging the quality of the answer. He circles again, edging closer to center, and now Hakuryu makes the first true forward step of his own. The champion reaches for a collar tie, not fully committing, just testing reaction. Keel swats the hand aside and instantly tries to grab the elbow on the return. Hakuryu rotates the arm free and snaps a short, stiff kick into Keel's lead thigh before drifting out of range again.

John Phillips: "First meaningful strike of the match goes to Hakuryu."

Mark Bravo: "And you better believe Graham felt it. In a normal match, maybe that doesn't mean a lot. In a fight where body damage is the whole point, every clean shot starts building a case."

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Keel absorbs it without expression, but he does reset the lead leg slightly as he circles. Hakuryu sees that adjustment. Keel sees Hakuryu see it. That awareness alone adds another layer to the tension. Keel steps in again, quicker this time, and secures a brief collar-and-elbow tie-up. Both men lean, feeling for leverage, forearms pressed, shoulders turning, boots digging against the canvas as each searches for control without overextending.

John Phillips: "First real tie-up here."

Keel immediately begins working for the arm, trying to slide from the tie-up into wrist control, but Hakuryu keeps his elbow tucked and posture tall, refusing to be pulled down into Keel's preferred plane. The champion turns his hips and breaks the tie just enough to snap another kick into the same thigh, this one louder than the first. Keel gives a half step back and the crowd reacts more strongly now.

Mark Bravo: "Hakuryu's making a choice early. He's not just defending against Keel's entries. He's testing that base."

Outside the ring, Sinja remains still as a statue near the corner, watching every exchange with silent devotion. In the ring, Graham Keel rolls the leg once, then begins circling again, his expression no different than before, but his eyes a little sharper now, his calculations clearly updating in real time. Hakuryu stays composed, breathing steady, waiting for the next approach.

John Phillips: "Very measured opening to this Fighting Championship match, and exactly what you'd expect from two men this disciplined."

Keel feints high one more time--then suddenly shoots in deeper.

He catches Hakuryu around the upper body and tries to turn him sharply into a side control position near the ropes, looking to finally force the champion into a grappling exchange on less favorable terms. Hakuryu plants, resists, and the two men grind chest to shoulder in a hard, tense struggle for position as the crowd rises a little louder, sensing that the first real momentum swing may be about to arrive.

Graham Keel drives in deeper on the body, shoulder pressed tight against Hakuryu's side as he tries to turn the champion off his base and finally drag this match into the kind of grinding positional battle he has been hunting from the bell. Hakuryu plants both feet and resists, his posture still remarkably composed even as the challenger keeps forcing weight and angle into him.

John Phillips: "This is the first real attempt from Graham Keel to impose his kind of fight."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, because circling and feeling each other out is one thing. This? This is Keel trying to get hands on him and start the surgery."

Keel adjusts his grip and tries to turn the corner harder, working to spin Hakuryu toward the ropes and lower him into a compromised side position. Hakuryu answers by widening his stance and driving a forearm across

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the upper back, not enough to fully break free, but enough to keep Keel from getting clean control. The two men grind across half the ring in a slow, punishing struggle, boots digging into the canvas, neither one giving away the center of gravity the other needs.

John Phillips: "Excellent balance from the champion. Graham Keel has him tied up, but he still cannot turn Hakuryu where he wants him."

Keel abruptly changes tactics. He lets the upper body pressure go just enough to drop his hands lower and attack the lead leg, trying to scoop behind the knee and finally compromise the base he has been fighting all match. Hakuryu reacts instantly, posting a hand on Keel's shoulder and angling his hips away before snapping a short knee upward into the body. It is not flashy. It is not dramatic. It is efficient, and it creates just enough separation.

Mark Bravo: "There! That's the kind of little strike that buys your freedom in a match like this."

Hakuryu slips free and takes one quick step out. Keel follows immediately, refusing to let the break turn into a full reset. He reaches for the wrist, catches it this time, and twists sharply into standing arm control. The crowd reacts as the challenger finally secures something he can build from.

John Phillips: "Now Graham Keel has the arm!"

Keel cranks the wrist downward and steps through, trying to bend Hakuryu into his shoulder line and drag him into a deeper entanglement. Hakuryu resists by keeping his spine tall for as long as possible, but Keel's grip is precise and relentless. He twists again, folding the arm tighter, and for the first time in the match the champion is forced visibly downward into a less favorable posture.

Mark Bravo: "This is where Keel lives. Once he's got a joint talking to him, he starts speaking fluent pain."

Hakuryu's face remains composed, but there is a small tightening around the eyes now as he searches for an answer. He turns with the pressure instead of fully resisting it, trying to take some of the torque off the shoulder. Keel stays attached and snaps a short kick into the same thigh Hakuryu had been targeting earlier, a neat little act of repayment that also disrupts the champion's balance just enough to keep him from standing all the way back up.

John Phillips: "Smart answer by Graham Keel. Hakuryu worked that leg early, and Keel just gave some of it right back."

Keel keeps the wrist trapped and spins behind, looking to convert the standing control into a tighter top-side position. Hakuryu drops suddenly, rolling through the hold rather than letting himself be forced all the way into it. The motion pulls Keel forward a half-step, and as the challenger adjusts, Hakuryu lashes out with a sharp upkick to the ribs from the mat. Keel absorbs it, but it stops the advance long enough for the champion to scramble back to a knee.

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Mark Bravo: "Hakuryu's answers are so disciplined. Nothing wasted. Nothing wild."

Keel closes again before Hakuryu can fully rise and clubs a forearm across the upper back, then another. Not reckless strikes. Functional ones. Just enough to keep the champion from settling. He grabs the arm once more and tries to pull Hakuryu into a front head-and-arm position, thinking ahead to a snapdown or a grinding choke variation that could start testing the referee's tolerance.

John Phillips: "Keel is not letting Hakuryu breathe here. The challenger has really found his first sustained control of the match."

Hakuryu gets one boot back under him and then the other, refusing to stay bowed for long. Keel leans harder, chest over the back of the neck and shoulder, trying to increase the discomfort and force the champion into a worse angle. The crowd hums with appreciation for the technical ugliness of it all, this no longer feeling like a tentative opening but like two men finally beginning to make each other pay for every inch.

Mark Bravo: "And remember, there's no pin to bail you out here. If Keel starts trapping you in these miserable positions, you've just got to survive them and find your way out."

Hakuryu suddenly twists through the pressure, stepping across his own trapped arm and spinning inward to break the line on the shoulder. It is a beautiful, subtle escape, one that frees him just enough to crack Keel with a sharp back elbow to the sternum. Keel stumbles back one step. Hakuryu rises fully and fires a low kick to the lead thigh. Then another. The second lands even cleaner than the first and the crowd pops as the champion reclaims a little breathing room.

John Phillips: "What an escape by Hakuryu!"

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, but look at Keel. He doesn't look rattled. He looks annoyed, which might be worse."

Keel resets his stance, rolling the leg once and lifting his hands again. Hakuryu circles now with a touch more purpose, perhaps encouraged by the fact that he solved the first real puzzle the challenger put in front of him. Sinja remains motionless outside, head tilted slightly upward, following every movement with absolute focus.

Keel steps in again, this time showing high with the hands before shooting low for the leg a second time. Hakuryu sprawls partially, but Keel's persistence pays off more this time. He gets enough of the leg to force the champion hopping backward toward the ropes, and the crowd rises as the two men crash nearer to the cables with Keel finally threatening to put Hakuryu somewhere truly uncomfortable.

Graham Keel stays glued to the leg this time, his shoulder driven tight into Hakuryu's hip as he powers forward and forces the champion backward toward the ropes. Hakuryu tries to widen his base, but with one leg compromised and his balance now being dictated, the movement becomes a controlled retreat rather than a stand. The crowd rises louder as both men collide near the cables, Keel still attached and still driving.

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John Phillips: "Graham Keel has him in trouble here! Hakuryu is being forced backward, and that is exactly the kind of territory Keel has been hunting all match."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, because once Keel gets you near the ropes, the whole geometry changes. Less room to escape. Less room to turn. More room to get miserable."

Hakuryu reaches for overhooks, trying to smother Keel high and kill the challenger's angle before the takedown can fully finish. Keel adjusts immediately, shifting from the clean leg attack into a body lock around the waist, forehead pressed against the ribs as he keeps the champion trapped against the ropes. The referee steps closer, watching for any illegal use of the cables, but in Fighting Championship rules there is far more tolerance for grinding control than in a conventional bout.

John Phillips: "And Keel is doing a beautiful job of chaining one position into the next. Even when Hakuryu denies the first attack, the challenger has another ready."

Keel changes levels again and lifts just enough to off-balance the champion, then tries to sweep the standing leg out from under him. Hakuryu catches himself on the top rope with one hand, briefly posting to prevent the full collapse, but that also opens his body for the challenger. Keel answers with a short shoulder drive into the midsection, then another, each one less about spectacle and more about softening a target that may later need to submit or simply stop defending itself.

Mark Bravo: "This is ugly work, and I mean that as a compliment. Keel is making Hakuryu earn every inch of oxygen."

Hakuryu exhales sharply and finally answers with a series of short, chopping forearms to the upper back and neck. Keel absorbs the first. The second makes him adjust. The third gives the champion just enough room to pivot his hips. Hakuryu turns, slips off the ropes, and snaps a knee up into the body before spinning off the line again. Keel breaks away only a step, but it is the first real clean separation in several moments.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu keeps finding these tight little exits. He is refusing to let Graham Keel settle in for long."

Keel comes right back in with a reaching hand for the arm, but Hakuryu slaps it away and fires another low kick into the lead thigh. The strike lands with a sharper thud than the earlier ones and draws an audible reaction from the crowd. Keel resets his stance again, just slightly, but enough that the champion sees the effect accumulating.

John Phillips: "You can see Hakuryu's strategy taking shape now. He is investing in that leg every chance he gets."

Mark Bravo: "Because if you're dealing with a technician who wants balance and leverage, taking away the base is like stealing his toolbox."

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The two circle once more, but the feel is different now. The opening caution is gone. Keel steps in with quicker intent, looking to reclaim the body. Hakuryu meets him halfway and the two lock up in a harder collar-and-elbow tie-up than anything they've shown so far. Keel instantly hunts the arm again, trying to peel Hakuryu downward into the shoulder line. Hakuryu resists and answers with a hard stomp to the inside of the same lead leg. Keel's base wobbles for half a second.

John Phillips: "Big adjustment by the champion!"

Hakuryu capitalizes immediately, rotating off the tie-up and landing a sharp round kick to the body that folds Keel just enough to change levels. Then comes another low kick, this one to the outside of the thigh, and the challenger is forced back two steps in the clearest momentum swing the champion has had in several minutes.

Mark Bravo: "There you go. That's the first time Keel's looked like he got interrupted instead of just delayed."

Hakuryu advances with more authority now, not rushing, but clearly pressing. Keel sets to meet him, only to eat a feint high and a snapping kick low. Then Hakuryu darts in with a palm strike to the chest that drives the challenger back another half step. Keel swings a forearm in response, but the champion leans away from the full force and answers with a kick to the ribs that echoes in the arena.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu is putting combinations together now, and that has to concern Graham Keel."

Keel steadies himself and tries to change the rhythm with a sudden grab at the wrist, but Hakuryu circles out and clips him with yet another kick to the lead leg. Keel's expression remains composed, but he can no longer hide that the limb is becoming a factor. The stance is not as clean. The turn is not as smooth. The pressure forward is still there, but it is now being asked to operate through damage.

Mark Bravo: "Those kicks are adding up, Phillips. Maybe not enough to finish the match, but enough to make every next shot a little slower."

Keel knows it too. He suddenly surges forward with more urgency than before, trying to crowd the champion and keep him from freely targeting the leg again. He catches Hakuryu in a heavy tie-up and drives him backward toward the corner this time rather than the ropes, chest to chest and shoulder to jaw, trying to smother the kicking room out of the fight. Hakuryu braces, absorbs, and starts fighting for inside control with the arms as the crowd rises again, sensing the next battle for position beginning.

John Phillips: "Now Keel is changing the terrain. If he can't comfortably fight at distance, he is going to make this a clinch war in close quarters."

Sinja, still outside the ring, has not moved an inch from the champion's side of the floor, but their eyes are sharper now, more intent, as Hakuryu is forced back toward the corner and Graham Keel once again threatens to turn the champion's composed defense into a truly punishing grind.

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Graham Keel drives Hakuryu back into the corner and stays chest-to-chest on the champion, pinning him there with grinding pressure rather than a flashy burst. His forehead presses into the side of Hakuryu's face, one forearm wedged under the jawline, the other hand fighting for wrist and elbow position. It is ugly, efficient work, the kind of corner battle designed to sap energy and remove room rather than win applause.

John Phillips: "Smart adjustment by Graham Keel. Hakuryu was getting too comfortable at range, so Keel closes the space and makes this a clinch fight."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, if the kicks are bothering the leg, don't stand where kicks live. Drag the man into a phone booth and start chewing on him there."

The referee steps in close, watching the use of the corner but allowing the battle to continue. Hakuryu tries to frame his forearm across Keel's collarbone to create breathing room, but the challenger keeps digging in, shifting his weight from one angle to the next, trying to make the champion carry every pound of him. Keel then snaps a short knee into the thigh from inside the clinch, paying Hakuryu back yet again for the repeated leg attacks.

John Phillips: "And Keel is not forgetting what Hakuryu has done to that leg. He's working it back whenever he can."

Hakuryu absorbs it and answers with a short elbow over the top that clips the side of Keel's head. Keel stays on him. Hakuryu lands another, this one sharper, and then slides his hands inside, finally beginning to win the fight for arm position. The champion turns his hips and tries to pivot Keel out of the corner. The challenger blocks the first attempt, but the second one forces enough separation for Hakuryu to suddenly snap a knee up into the midsection.

Mark Bravo: "There. That's how you buy yourself space when a guy like Keel is trying to smother you."

Keel folds just slightly, and that slight bend is all Hakuryu needs. He slips off the corner line and whips a tight kick into the outside of the thigh again. The impact draws a stronger reaction now because it is landing on a target that has already been softened. Keel's base gives half a beat, and Hakuryu follows with a quick palm strike to the chest that bumps the challenger back toward center ring.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu escapes the corner and immediately goes right back to that lead leg."

Keel grits through it and surges back in before the champion can fully take over. He reaches for a collar tie and catches it this time, pulling Hakuryu into another hard upper-body struggle. Hakuryu answers by pummeling inside, fighting for underhooks and denying Keel the clean arm drag-down he wants. The two men grind in tight for another moment, forehead to forehead, each adjusting tiny details that could decide who gets the next clear advantage.

John Phillips: "This is such a fascinating fight. Every inch matters. Every little hand placement matters."

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Keel suddenly changes level and tries to run Hakuryu forward out of the tie-up, looking to fold him down into another body attack and maybe even drive him to the mat. Hakuryu sprawls just enough to blunt it, then latches onto the back of the head and cracks Keel with a short knee to the body as they turn. The crowd pops at the shot. Keel backs out two steps this time, not by choice but by consequence, and Hakuryu senses it immediately.

Mark Bravo: "That one got him. Keel's still in this, but Hakuryu is beginning to stack answers together."

Hakuryu advances with a little more confidence now. Keel sets to catch him, but the champion feints high and lands another low kick. Keel tries to answer with a reaching hand on the wrist. Hakuryu circles away and fires a second kick to the same leg before Keel can reset. This one lands even cleaner, and the challenger is forced to turn his stance slightly more square to protect the limb.

John Phillips: "That lead leg is becoming a real story in this match."

Hakuryu knows it. He steps in behind a quick palm strike to the chest, then another, using the hands not necessarily to damage as much as to occupy Keel's eyes and guard. Then comes a sharp body kick to the ribs that bends the challenger sideways and sends a visible jolt through the arena. Keel answers with a forearm, but it arrives a fraction slower than earlier, and Hakuryu leans away from the brunt of it.

Mark Bravo: "This is the danger for Keel. Once the leg starts going, every entry gets a little slower and every adjustment gets a little uglier."

Keel refuses to give up the initiative entirely. He steps back in through the pain and catches Hakuryu in a rough collar tie, then yanks at the arm, trying to drag the champion down into another shoulder-and-wrist problem. Hakuryu resists, but Keel finally manages to bend him enough to land a short clubbing forearm across the upper back. Another follows. Then Keel looks to turn the arm over and step behind for a more controlling hold.

John Phillips: "Good persistence by the challenger. Even with the leg giving him trouble, he is still finding ways to touch the structure he wants."

Hakuryu suddenly rolls through the arm attack again, slipping under and out before Keel can settle it, and comes up with a kick to the body that pushes the challenger back toward the ropes. Keel steadies himself on the retreat, jaw set now, the patience still there but the calmness starting to look more tested. The crowd can feel the pace inching upward, the match finally moving from measured control battles into something more openly punishing.

Mark Bravo: "We're getting there now. Both of these guys have had success. Both of them have made the other uncomfortable. The next clean stretch could be the one that really changes everything."

Hakuryu circles in front of the challenger, hands loose, eyes locked in, and Sinja watches from outside with total stillness as Graham Keel pushes off the ropes and readies himself to step back into the fire.

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Graham Keel pushes off the ropes and steps back toward center ring with the stubborn composure of a man refusing to let the fight drift away from him. The lead leg has clearly taken damage now, not enough to cripple him, but enough to alter the texture of every movement. Hakuryu sees it. The crowd sees it. And the challenger knows they see it, which may be the most irritating part of all.

John Phillips: "Graham Keel is still right there, but the wear on that leg is becoming harder and harder to hide."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, and Hakuryu's the kind of guy who doesn't need a huge opening. Give him one weak hinge and he'll keep kicking the door."

Keel reaches in first this time, not wanting to let the champion dictate another clean kicking sequence. He snaps onto the wrist and immediately tries to drag Hakuryu into another standing arm control, stepping across to torque the shoulder and bend the champion into his preferred line of attack. Hakuryu resists the first angle, but Keel does not stay married to it for long. He shifts, pulls down harder, and finally forces Hakuryu to one knee for a split second.

John Phillips: "Nice adjustment by Keel. He had to work for it, but he got Hakuryu down a level there."

Keel follows by clubbing a short forearm across the upper back, then another, each one meant to keep the champion from rising cleanly. He starts to circle toward the back, looking to turn the arm into a nastier shoulder bind, something that could pile pain on top of control and perhaps finally push Hakuryu closer to a stoppage scenario if it stays on long enough.

Mark Bravo: "This is what Keel wants. Not a wild exchange. Not a sprint. He wants you bent, trapped, and thinkin' about how much you like your own shoulder."

Hakuryu plants one foot and twists inward again, refusing to be led all the way into the hold. Keel stays attached, wrenching the arm and trying to force the issue, but the resistance opens the body. Hakuryu snaps a short kick backward into the inside of Keel's already-damaged leg. The challenger's base buckles for half a beat, and that half beat is enough. Hakuryu rips the arm free and turns with a sharp elbow to the chest that sends Keel retreating two steps.

John Phillips: "Another beautiful escape by the champion!"

Hakuryu does not waste the moment. He steps right in with a quick palm strike high to occupy Keel's vision, then drives a punishing low kick into the outer thigh. Keel grimaces for the first time all match, not dramatically, but enough that the camera catches it. The crowd reacts immediately, sensing the cumulative damage getting closer to something more serious.

Mark Bravo: "There it is. That's the first real crack in the wall from Keel."

Keel answers by firing a forearm over the top, but the shot lacks its earlier snap. Hakuryu leans away from

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most of it and comes back with a body kick to the ribs that folds the challenger sideways. Another low kick follows before Keel can fully reset, and suddenly the champion is no longer just matching the technical pace. He is accelerating it in his favor.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu is piecing him up now. Hands high, leg low, body in between. This is excellent championship offense."

Keel knows he cannot stay at this range much longer. He surges forward with renewed urgency, trying to crash the distance and jam the kicking game before it can get any worse. He catches Hakuryu in a heavy upper-body tie-up and bullies him toward the ropes again, chest grinding into chest, forearm digging, trying to turn the exchange from a striking problem back into a clinch problem.

Mark Bravo: "Good choice from Keel. If you're getting your leg chopped up, don't stand out there waiting for the next one."

But Hakuryu is ready for the entry this time.

As Keel drives in, the champion frames on the collarbone, shifts his hips, and fires a rising knee into the body from close range. Keel absorbs it and keeps coming. Hakuryu lands another, then turns and clips the same lead leg with a short inside kick from the clinch. Keel's pressure finally stalls. The two men remain locked together for a moment, breathing harder now, both working furiously for inches in tight.

John Phillips: "This is tremendous stuff. Keel trying to smother. Hakuryu damaging from inside the clinch. Neither man giving the other a clean answer."

Keel tries to convert the tie-up into a snapdown, yanking hard on the head and arm to pull Hakuryu forward. The champion braces just enough to avoid the full drag, but the effort does break posture for a moment. Keel immediately follows with a clubbing forearm across the back and another to the shoulder, then grabs for the arm again. He is desperate to re-establish sustained control before the leg gives Hakuryu too much freedom.

Mark Bravo: "You can feel the urgency now. Keel knows he needs to make this miserable again in a hurry."

Hakuryu slips one arm free, pivots off the line, and cracks Keel with a short backfist across the chest and jawline. The challenger rocks back a step. Hakuryu sees the opening and whips a round kick into the body, then another low kick into the thigh. Keel's stance finally gives more visibly this time, the leg not collapsing but failing him just enough that he has to catch himself before going fully off-balance.

John Phillips: "That leg is a major factor now!"

The crowd grows louder, sensing that the match may be tilting more sharply than at any point so far. Sinja, still outside the ring, remains eerily still, but their eyes are fixed on the challenger's base with almost reverent focus, as if watching the inevitable unfold one kick at a time.

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Keel, refusing to concede an inch of composure, sets his jaw and throws one more heavy forearm at the champion. Hakuryu blocks it high, answers with a palm strike to the sternum, and then rips a brutal low kick into the same lead leg again. This time Keel drops to a knee.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu drops Graham Keel to a knee!"

Mark Bravo: "And now we're entering dangerous territory for the challenger. In this rule set, if you can't defend yourself well enough, the ref starts thinking about stepping in."

Hakuryu does not rush recklessly. He circles in front of the kneeling challenger, measuring, watching, reading the pain and posture before choosing the next attack. Keel tries to rise, one hand posting on the mat for balance, but the damage has made the climb slower than before. The referee steps a little closer, not intervening, but definitely watching with a more careful eye as the champion lines up whatever comes next.

Graham Keel is down on one knee, one hand posted to the canvas, the other hovering near the damaged lead leg as he tries to force himself upright before Hakuryu can fully capitalize. The crowd inside the PHX Arena has risen another level, sensing that the defending champion has finally begun to carve open the kind of sustained advantage that can end a Fighting Championship match in brutal fashion.

John Phillips: "Graham Keel is in serious danger now. Hakuryu has systematically dismantled that leg, and you can see the challenger struggling just to get his base back under him."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, and in this rule set that is terrifying, because once a guy loses the ability to stand the way he wants, everything else starts getting taken away too."

Hakuryu circles in front of him with deliberate patience, not charging in blindly, not getting overeager. He is measuring. Choosing. Waiting for the exact moment that lets him do the most damage with the least wasted effort. Sinja remains still outside the ring, eyes fixed on the scene with that same unnerving devotion, while the referee edges in a little closer, clearly aware that the next sequence could force a decision.

John Phillips: "This is the discipline of Hakuryu on full display. He is not rushing because he knows he has Keel compromised."

Keel grits through the pain and pushes up from the mat, making it back to one foot and then the other, but the rise is uneven now. The lead leg does not want to carry him cleanly. Hakuryu immediately punishes the attempt with a snapping kick to the thigh. Keel buckles again, but stays upright this time, firing a hard forearm in response that catches the champion high enough to force a half-step back.

Mark Bravo: "Still dangerous. That's the thing. Even on one bad leg, Graham Keel is still dangerous."

Keel sees the tiny retreat and tries to press through it, limping forward with a grim determination and reaching for the arm once more. If he can just get hands on Hakuryu and drag him back into control, maybe he can erase the damage and steal the pace back one final time. He catches the wrist. Twists. Pulls the

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champion toward him--

Hakuryu spins free and blasts him with a body kick that folds him sideways.

John Phillips: "What a counter by Hakuryu!"

Keel stumbles, tries to right himself, and eats another low kick to the same battered leg. This one sends him dropping to both hands for just a second before he fights back up to one knee again, pure stubbornness keeping him in it. The crowd roars at the effort, appreciating the challenger's refusal to die quietly even as the fight turns against him.

John Phillips: "Graham Keel is hanging in on toughness alone right now."

Mark Bravo: "And toughness is admirable, but it doesn't always save you when the other guy's got a read on exactly where to cut."

Hakuryu steps in closer now. He lands a palm strike to the chest to keep Keel's guard occupied, then another low kick, then a sharp knee to the body as the challenger tries to rise. Keel answers with a desperate reach for the waist, trying to collapse the distance and make this ugly one more time, but the leg gives him nothing. The shot has no drive behind it. Hakuryu sprawls just enough to deny the body and shoves him back down.

John Phillips: "Graham Keel wanted the clinch. He wanted to smother this. He just couldn't get there."

The referee takes another step in, eyes moving from Keel's posture to his hands to his face, checking for the kind of compromised state that could justify a stoppage. Keel sees him there and snarls through clenched teeth, pushing himself up again out of pride more than stability. He gets one foot under him, then the other, swaying slightly, but still refusing to surrender the fight.

Mark Bravo: "He's not asking out. Not even close. But the ref is definitely starting to think about it."

Hakuryu waits until Keel is fully upright again, then snaps another brutal low kick into the leg. The sound echoes. Keel's base collapses. He drops back to a knee and this time cannot hide the pain on his face. He tries to stand immediately again, only for Hakuryu to step in with a sharp round kick to the body that bends him over and leaves him exposed in front of the champion.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu is turning this into a clinical dissection now."

Keel reaches instinctively for the leg, for the ropes, for anything that might help him buy another breath, another second, another chance to reset. But Hakuryu is already there, looming over him with complete composure, reading the challenger's struggle and preparing for the final stretch of this defense.

Graham Keel is bent forward on one knee, one arm wrapped instinctively around his midsection, the other

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reaching toward the canvas to keep himself from toppling all the way over. The damage is everywhere now. The leg. The body. The base. Hakuryu stands a step in front of him with the same unnerving composure he has carried all night, chest rising steadily, eyes fixed on the challenger like he is reading the exact point where endurance becomes collapse.

John Phillips: "This is the closest Graham Keel has come to the edge all match long. He is still trying to fight, still trying to rise, but Hakuryu has systematically taken so much away from him."

Mark Bravo: "And that's what makes this so brutal. Keel's not getting blown out. He's getting pieces of himself removed one at a time."

The referee is close now, crouched near enough to see Keel's eyes, his hands, the way the challenger's body is responding. Sinja remains outside the ring, still and reverent, watching as if this moment was always meant to arrive.

Hakuryu steps in and places a palm against the back of Keel's shoulder, not as a shove, not yet, but as a measuring point. Keel tries to swat the hand away and force himself up, and to his credit he does make it back to one foot. Then the other. The crowd roars at the effort. It is the roar people give a fighter when they understand he is hurt and still refusing to disappear.

John Phillips: "You have to admire the toughness of Graham Keel. He has taken a tremendous amount of punishment and he is still trying to stand and answer."

Keel gets upright enough to throw one more forearm. It lands. Not with the same force as earlier, but enough to turn Hakuryu's head and remind everyone in the building that the challenger is still there. Keel follows it with a second shot, trying to build momentum through sheer grit, trying to drag the fight back into ugly range one last time.

Mark Bravo: "He's got life in him! That's the thing about a guy like Keel. He'll crawl right back into your personal space even when common sense says don't."

Keel reaches for the body, clearly trying to tie Hakuryu up and smother him into another clinch. But there is no drive left in the leg now. No force behind the forward surge. Hakuryu frames against the collarbone, shifts half a step off the line, and drives a devastating knee into the midsection. Keel folds. The sound alone pulls a loud reaction from the crowd.

John Phillips: "Oh, what a knee!"

Hakuryu does not let him fall away. He controls the head just long enough to keep Keel in range and then whips another low kick into the damaged lead leg. The leg gives out completely this time. Keel drops hard to both knees, one glove slapping the canvas to keep him from crashing face-first.

Mark Bravo: "That leg is gone. It is absolutely gone."

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The referee steps even closer, his voice audible now as he asks Keel if he can continue. Keel snarls something back, shaking his head violently and trying to push himself up again, pride refusing to let the decision be made for him. He plants one foot under him. He rises halfway--

Hakuryu catches him with a crushing round kick to the body.

Keel crumples sideways from the impact, rolling to one hip and then trying to force himself upright again through instinct alone. The crowd is on its feet now, fully invested in the brutality of the moment and the champion's relentless precision.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu is pouring it on! Graham Keel is trying to survive, but he is being broken down in front of us!"

Keel pushes back to a knee one more time, his face twisted now, his breathing ragged, one hand clutching at the thigh as if he can will strength back into it. He reaches toward Hakuryu, not in surrender, but in defiance, still trying to come forward, still trying to make the champion deal with him. Hakuryu looks down at him for a beat, then steps in and fires another low kick to the same leg.

Keel collapses again.

This time he cannot rise immediately.

John Phillips: "And now the referee has seen enough!"

The official steps between them, waving both arms and signaling the stoppage before Hakuryu can land another shot. The bell rings as the crowd erupts into a huge response, a mix of shock, appreciation, and awe at the sheer clinical violence of the finish.

Mark Bravo: "That's it! That's it! The referee has stopped it!"

John Phillips: "Hakuryu retains the UTA Fighting Championship! And with that victory, he has completed the final defense he needed!"

Hakuryu immediately steps back rather than crowding the downed challenger, his breathing still steady, his face still composed. On the canvas, Graham Keel sits back against the ropes, furious and hurting, one arm draped over the middle strand while he glares at the official who has just protected him from further punishment whether he wanted it or not.

John Phillips: "Graham Keel was never going to quit. He was never going to verbally submit. But the official saw a man who could no longer properly defend himself, and under Fighting Championship rules, that is enough."

Mark Bravo: "And honestly? It was the right call. Keel was still tough. He was still proud. But he was getting

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carved apart."

Sinja enters the ring only after the bell, moving quickly but still with that same obedient precision. The official retrieves the UTA Fighting Championship and presents it back to Hakuryu, who receives it without outward celebration, only a slight closing of the eyes as the weight of the moment settles in. The title is his still. More importantly, the path remains open.

John Phillips: "Hakuryu has done it. He survives Graham Keel. He retains the Fighting Championship. And now, because of that final successful defense, he has earned the right to cash this title in for another championship opportunity."

Mark Bravo: "That is a massive development for the entire company. Hakuryu is still the Fighting Champion, and now he's got a decision that could shake up the whole title picture."

Hakuryu slowly raises the championship overhead as the crowd responds with a strong ovation. Sinja stands just behind and to the side, head slightly bowed, hands clasped, presenting the scene almost like a rite fulfilled. Across the ring, Graham Keel is still being checked on by the referee, anger etched across his face, clearly hating the stoppage but unable to hide the damage that made it necessary.

John Phillips: "What a fight. What a defense. What a statement from Hakuryu."

Mark Bravo: "And now the rest of the locker room better start paying attention, because a composed, dangerous Hakuryu with another title shot in his pocket is not a problem anybody wants."

The camera lingers on the champion standing tall with the Fighting Championship, Sinja at his side, before widening to show the full ring: Hakuryu victorious, Graham Keel still regrouping in the corner, and the consequences of this result already beginning to ripple outward across Victory.

Pinch Hitter

The camera opens on the Unholy Wolf Brigade's locker room. Gunnar Van Patton sits on a bench, his right leg locked in a heavy-duty brace, a thick bandage covering the forty-odd stitches across his skull. He chews tobacco slowly, spitting into a paper cup with deliberate contempt. Theron Tkachuk stands behind him like a silent glacier, a fresh bandage taped across his forehead.

In the background, Torunn Sigurjonsson and Arkady Bogatyr are locked in an arm-wrestling match atop a metal equipment case. Torunn is immovable, her expression calm and cold. Arkady is coiled energy - shifting his stance, rolling his shoulders, muttering to himself in Russian and English, eyes bright with feral focus. Their hands tremble in the center, deadlocked.

The door opens with quiet, controlled force. Avril Selene Kinkade enters, posture immaculate, expression glacial. She carries the unmistakable aura of someone who has just left a legal battlefield victorious.

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Avril Selene Kinkade: "Mr. Van Patton. I have concluded my meeting with UTA's legal team. They have approved the provision allowing one member of your faction to defend the WrestleZone Championship on your behalf, given your continued medical suspension."

Her eyes flick - involuntarily - to Theron. A flash of concern, quickly strangled beneath aristocratic discipline.

Avril Selene Kinkade: "However, this concession does not erase the fact that we are in this position because of your decision-making. Mr. Tkachuk should never have been placed against Maxx Mayhem. That match required chaos to counter chaos. Mr. Bogatyr was the logical choice."

Arkady's ears perk up mid-struggle. Torunn uses the moment to grind his hand down an inch.

Gunnar Van Patton: "Dire completed the mission, didn't he ?."

Avril Selene Kinkade: "He should not have had to. Mr. Bogatyr thrives in disorder. Maxx Mayhem thrives in disorder. That is where parity lies. Instead, you sent the one man in this room whose wellbeing actually matters."

Her eyes flick to Theron again - too long, too soft - before she forces them away.

Gunnar Van Patton: "Ah ain't here to make choices based on who yer sweet on."

The temperature in the room drops. Torunn stops moving with her and Arkady locking wide eyes, as if the cat has been finally let out of the bag.

Avril Selene Kinkade: "I beg your pardon?"

Gunnar Van Patton: "Ah ain't stutter."

Avril Selene Kinkade: "I have no such sentiment toward Mr. Tkachuk."

Torunn rolls her eyes so hard it's audible to which Arkady chuckles to himself.

Torunn Sigurjonsson: "Sure."

Avril's head turns sharply toward her, but Torunn doesn't flinch, Avril barely registering as a person let alone a threat.

Avril Selene Kinkade: "Your commentary is neither requested nor required."

Torunn Sigurjonsson: "What are you going to do about it, strigoi?"

Arkady snorts a laugh - then immediately refocuses as Torunn pushes his hand down another inch.

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Gunnar Van Patton: "Everyone pipe down. Point is, yer lettin' yer feelin's cloud your judgment."

Avril Selene Kinkade: "My judgment is the only reason you have a title to defend at all. And my judgment says Mr. Tkachuk was the correct choice for Jarvis Valentine - not for Maxx Mayhem. You mismatched the styles entirely."

Gunnar Van Patton: "Styles mismatched is how ya win. Ya don't fight a man where he's strong. Ya hit him where he's weak. That's fightin' 101."

Avril Selene Kinkade: "And yet here we stand, with your 'strategy' leaving your best option injured."

Theron growls, signing "Know your place, vampire". Arkady laughs, then immediately refocuses as Torunn pushes his hand down another inch.

Gunnar Van Patton: "Dire is takin' the night off. He deserves it after last week."

Avril Selene Kinkade: "Then whom, precisely, do you intend to send? That beastly, frostbitten troll you insist on calling a woman?"

Arkady nearly wins the battle of strength, as Torunn's distracted by Avril's snide remark. Yet, he loses his advantage when Gunnar directs attention to him with a simple jerk of the head.

Gunnar Van Patton: "Volkolak."

Arkady's head snaps toward Gunnar, upon hearing his codename - still arm-wrestling - eyes bright with dangerous excitement.

Arkady Bogatyr: "About time I see some action! If you want Temu Captain America off-balance, I'm your man. He won't know where the next strike comes from."

The moment he looks away, Torunn SLAMS his hand flat to the table with a thunderous crack.

Torunn Sigurjonsson: "Sigr."

Arkady shakes out his hand, grinning - not childish, but wild, alive, electric. He doesn't care in the slightest that he lost.

Avril Selene Kinkade: "This must be in jest. Mr. Bogatyr is not an appropriate choice."

Arkady Bogatyr: "Says who, you dirty bloodsucker ... "

Avril shoots him a quick, hate-filled glance, before turning back to Van Patton.

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Avril Selene Kinkade: "He is unpredictable, undisciplined, and entirely unsuitable for a match of this magnitude. He is not the same calibre of competitor as Valentine."

Gunnar Van Patton: "Ya better watch yer tone and speak a little nicer about one of mah wolves."

He rises slowly, painfully, the brace locking as he stands. He steps toward Avril, close enough that she must tilt her head up - though she refuses to yield an inch.

Gunnar Van Patton: "Pay close attention, prosecutor. Jarvis Valentine's rigid. Structured. Every step measured. Every strike timed. Every breath counted. Ya beat a man like that by takin' away the rhythm. By makin' him guess. By makin' him panic. And Arkady? Ah reckon he's a big ol' ball of havoc."

Arkady bounces lightly on the balls of his feet, shaking out his arm, eyes locked on the title belt.

Avril Selene Kinkade: "Your tactical philosophy is reckless. And your arrogance is insufferable."

Gunnar Van Patton: "And yer pride's gettin' in the way of seein' the truth."

Avril Selene Kinkade: "If this fails, Mr. Van Patton, the loss of that title falls solely upon your shoulders."

The pair lock eyes, Gunnar knowing very well what being the leader means and what comes with it, good and bad. He reaches into his bag, grabs the WrestleZone Championship - HIS championship - and tosses it across the room. Arkady catches it mid-air with a fluid twist. He clasps the ends of the belt together and drapes it around his neck like a huge necklace.

Arkady Bogatyr: "Major league ass-kicking is back in town."

Theron and Arkady tap fists and Torunn gives the Russian a hard smack on the bottom, before he sprints out of the locker room, vaulting over the equipment case he just lost on. Avril stands perfectly still, posture immaculate, expression glacial - but her eyes flick once more to Gunnar, her anger clearly boiling up inside her.

Gunnar Van Patton: "Let's see how that tight ass Valentine does when faced with a tried and true agent of chaos."

I Don't Panic

The camera cuts backstage to a long hallway leading toward gorilla position, the distant roar of the crowd bleeding through the walls as the next championship match looms closer and closer. Crew members move quickly in the background, headsets on, clipboards in hand, all of them feeling the tempo of the building quicken now that another title fight is only moments away.

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Jarvis Valentine strides into frame.

He is all focus.

There is no wasted motion, no glance toward the camera, no outward performance for the people watching at home. Every step is measured, every breath controlled, every inch of him carrying the kind of concentration that only comes when a man knows the next walk he takes could put championship gold back around his waist.

From behind, hurried footsteps close the distance.

Melissa Cartwright comes into the shot at speed, microphone in hand, doing her best to catch him before he disappears through the curtain.

Melissa Cartwright: "Jarvis! Jarvis, if I can get a quick word before you head out--"

Jarvis slows, but only just. He does not look irritated exactly. More like a man allowing the interruption because he knows he can spare a few seconds, not because he wants to. Melissa falls in beside him, matching his pace for a moment before he finally stops near a black curtain just short of gorilla.

Melissa Cartwright: "In just a few moments, you challenge for the WrestleZone Championship. Just moments ago, it was revealed that Gunnar Van Patton is still medically suspended from competing, and that Arkady Bogatyr will be defending the title on Gunnar's behalf. Does that change your mindset at all?"

Jarvis stares ahead for a second, eyes fixed somewhere beyond the curtain, beyond the hallway, beyond Melissa's question. Then he turns slightly toward her, calm and completely grounded in the moment.

Jarvis Valentine: "No."

He says it simply. No hesitation. No drama. Just certainty.

Jarvis Valentine: "A championship match is still a championship match."

Melissa nods, letting him continue.

Jarvis Valentine: "I came here tonight prepared to fight for that belt. That part hasn't changed. Doesn't matter if it's Gunnar Van Patton standing across from me. Doesn't matter if it's Arkady Bogatyr. Doesn't matter if they dragged a damn wolf out of that locker room and taught it how to wear boots."

There is a small reaction somewhere off-camera from the nearby crew, but Jarvis never cracks a smile. He means every word of it.

Jarvis Valentine: "What matters is that when I walk through that curtain, there is championship gold on the

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line. And I have spent too much time away from that feeling already."

Melissa lifts the mic a little higher, sensing that Jarvis is in no mood for filler tonight.

Melissa Cartwright: "Does the unpredictability of Arkady Bogatyr make this more dangerous?"

That gets the slightest change in Jarvis's expression. Not fear. Not concern. More like irritation at the idea that unpredictability itself should be enough to shake him.

Jarvis Valentine: "Dangerous?"

He gives a small nod.

Jarvis Valentine: "Sure. Arkady's dangerous."

He turns a little more toward Melissa now, voice still controlled, but with a firmer weight behind it.

Jarvis Valentine: "Unpredictable people are always dangerous. They throw wild shots. They move at strange tempos. They make stupid decisions because they think chaos is the same thing as control."

He pauses for a beat.

Jarvis Valentine: "But chaos only works if the person across from it panics."

Melissa's eyes sharpen slightly at that line, and Jarvis keeps going without needing another prompt.

Jarvis Valentine: "I don't panic."

The crowd noise swells faintly from behind the curtain as if to underscore it.

Jarvis Valentine: "I don't care what kind of game Gunnar thinks he's playing by putting Arkady out there for him. I don't care if the plan is to throw me off rhythm. I don't care if the idea is to make me uncomfortable."

His jaw tightens just a little.

Jarvis Valentine: "I've been uncomfortable before."

That line lands with more weight than the others. Melissa hears it too.

Melissa Cartwright: "A lot of people have said tonight feels like a major chance for you to reestablish yourself after losing the UTA Championship. Do you see it that way?"

Jarvis looks down for just a second, then back up. When he answers, the conviction is sharper now.

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Jarvis Valentine: "No. I see it as exactly what it is."

He takes a breath.

Jarvis Valentine: "A chance to become champion again."

Melissa lowers the microphone a fraction, drawn in by how plainly he says it.

Jarvis Valentine: "People keep talking about redemption like it's some emotional thing. Like it's about closure. Like it's about proving I still belong."

He shakes his head once.

Jarvis Valentine: "I don't need closure. I don't need reassurance. I need that championship."

Now there is real force in his voice. Not shouting. Not grandstanding. Just a man saying the most honest thing in the room.

Jarvis Valentine: "Because champions don't stand around asking for their moment back. They take it."

Melissa lets the silence sit for just a second before asking one final question.

Melissa Cartwright: "Any final thoughts before you head out there?"

Jarvis turns his head toward gorilla again. The curtain. The noise. The match. The title. The next step. When he answers, it is short and cutting in exactly the way it needs to be.

Jarvis Valentine: "Yeah."

He starts walking again, forcing Melissa to pivot with him for the final line.

Jarvis Valentine: "Tell Arkady if he wants to be chaos..."

He reaches up and adjusts the tape around one wrist.

Jarvis Valentine: "...he better survive control."

Jarvis disappears out of frame toward gorilla without another word. Melissa watches him go for a moment, the noise from the arena now louder than ever, before turning back toward the camera.

Melissa Cartwright: "Jarvis Valentine looks completely locked in, and now we know he will be challenging Arkady Bogatyr for the WrestleZone Championship on Gunnar Van Patton's behalf. That match is next."

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Hall of Fame

The screen fades up from black to a darkened arena shot, the kind filled with gold light, long shadows, and the unmistakable sense that something important is approaching. Slow piano notes begin to play as old clips flicker across the screen in quick flashes. Championships raised. Rivalries burning. Triumph. Chaos. Legacy. The UTA logo slowly fades in over it all before giving way to a deep gold-and-black Hall of Fame crest.

Voiceover: "Before the lights shine on Victory..."

The music swells slightly as the footage changes to the city skyline of Raleigh, North Carolina at night, the Lenovo Center glowing in the distance.

Voiceover: "Before the next chapter is written..."

Classic moments continue flashing across the screen. Some emotional. Some violent. Some unforgettable for all the right reasons. Others unforgettable because they changed the shape of UTA forever.

Voiceover: "The United Toughness Alliance pauses... to honor the names, the moments, and the legends who helped build its history."

The Hall of Fame logo fills the screen again, now brighter, more regal, more alive.

Voiceover: "On March 26th, the night before Victory takes over Raleigh..."

Voiceover: "Join us from the Lenovo Center in Raleigh, North Carolina..."

Voiceover: "For the 2026 UTA Hall of Fame Ceremony."

The music transitions into something broader and more triumphant as the first name appears in bold gold lettering across the screen.

Voiceover: "The Class of 2026 is stacked with legacy."

eGG Bandits appears on screen.

Voiceover: "The eGG Bandits."

A quick burst of highlight footage shows swagger, chaos, comedy, and brilliance all tied together in the unmistakable madness of Cancer Jiles, Doozer, and Bobby Dean.

Voiceover: "One of the most unforgettable groups to ever leave their mark on the UTA. Loud. Unpredictable. Irreplaceable."

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The name fades. A new one rises.

Voiceover: "Claude Baptiste Rainer."

The tone shifts slightly with more serious, powerful visuals filling the screen.

Voiceover: "A name synonymous with intensity, presence, and a career that demands remembrance."

Then another.

Voiceover: "Eric Dane Sr."

Vintage footage fills the package, giving the moment a heavier historic weight.

Voiceover: "A foundational name. A respected figure. A legacy that still echoes through the UTA to this very day."

The music lifts again as another graphic appears, this one more mysterious.

Voiceover: "Team Danger."

Voiceover: "But a place in history already earned."

The next graphic follows with another veil of mystery.

Voiceover: "MJ Flair - The Second Coming."

Voiceover: "And a moment that promises to be one of the most talked about of the entire evening."

The piano returns underneath the larger orchestral sound as the screen darkens slightly. Then, slowly, one final name appears in massive gold text.

Voiceover: "And the headliner..."

Voiceover: "Madman Szalinski."

The package now leans fully into Madman's strange brilliance. Wild eyes. Unpredictable moments. Championships. Violence. Genius. Chaos. The footage feels electric, impossible to contain, just like the man himself.

Voiceover: "One of the most unique minds... one of the most unforgettable personalities... and one of the most enduring names in UTA history."

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Voiceover: "Madman Szalinski takes his rightful place as the headliner of the Class of 2026."

The visuals begin cycling between all six inductee announcements, the Hall of Fame crest, the Lenovo Center, and a final elegant date-and-location card.

Voiceover: "March 26th."

Voiceover: "Lenovo Center."

Voiceover: "Raleigh, North Carolina."

Voiceover: "Before Victory..."

Voiceover: "Before the fight..."

Voiceover: "We honor the immortals."

The Hall of Fame logo fills the screen one final time in gold and black.

Voiceover: "The 2026 UTA Hall of Fame Ceremony."

Voiceover: "Be there for legacy."

Fade to black.

Gunnar Van Patton vs. Jarvis Valentine

The arena dims--not dramatically, not theatrically, but with the quiet precision of a venue preparing for something significant. The crowd's noise shifts from scattered conversation to a unified hum of anticipation. The WrestleZone Championship graphic pulses across the tron, a reminder that tonight's challenger is a man who once carried the UTA on his back and is fighting to reclaim that stature.

Then--

"American Flags."

The opening beat slams through the speakers, and the arena erupts in red, white, and blue light. The reaction is immediate and loud. Jarvis Valentine steps through the curtain with the presence of a man who has lived in the main event spotlight and refuses to be treated as anything less.

He doesn't rush. He doesn't strut. He walks.

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Measured. Heavy. Intentional.

Every step is a statement.

His shoulders are squared, his posture unshakable, his eyes locked straight ahead. There's no glance to the side, no acknowledgment of the cameras, no wasted motion. Jarvis Valentine moves like a heavyweight who expects to dictate the pace from the opening bell.

John Phillips: "Jarvis Valentine looks absolutely locked in tonight. This is a former UTA World Heavyweight Champion--one of the true standard-bearers of this company."

Mark Bravo: "And look at the size of him, John! Two hundred and seventy-four pounds of pure power. If he gets his hands on Arkady Bogatyr, that kid's gonna feel every bit of it."

Jarvis continues down the ramp as bursts of patriotic pyro fire upward behind him--sharp, vertical blasts that frame him in light. The crowd roars louder with each step, feeding off his presence. Halfway down, he pauses, raises his hand, and forms that subtle Q-shaped gesture. The arena responds with a wall of cheers, a sound that rolls across the seats like a physical force.

John Phillips: "But there's a story behind that focus. Ever since losing the UTA World Title, Jarvis Valentine has been searching for the momentum he once commanded. That loss didn't just cost him a championship--it disrupted his rhythm, his confidence, his trajectory."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, he's been fighting uphill. Happens to every great athlete. But tonight? He's walking like a man who's tired of hearing about setbacks."

Jarvis resumes his march, reaches the ring, and climbs the steel steps with deliberate precision. He wipes his boots, steps through the ropes, and moves to the center of the ring. He stands tall--broad, imposing, grounded. No theatrics. No pandering. Just presence.

The camera closes in on his face. There's no smile. No bravado. Just a steady, simmering intensity that says he's here to reclaim something that slipped through his fingers.

The crowd begins chanting his name--slow, rhythmic, powerful. Jarvis closes his eyes for a moment, letting the sound settle into him. When he opens them again, the fire behind them is unmistakable.

John Phillips: "Jarvis Valentine is a powerhouse, a strategist, and one of the most disciplined ring generals in the UTA. If anyone can impose structure on the chaos the Unholy Wolf Brigade brings, it's him."

Mark Bravo: "He better be ready, John. Because whoever Gunnar Van Patton picked to defend that WrestleZone Title... that's not gonna be a conventional opponent. Not by a long shot."

The music fades. The lights settle into a tense, expectant glow.

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Jarvis Valentine stands alone in the ring--steady, composed, and ready for whatever comes sprinting out of the shadows next.

The camera returns to Jarvis Valentine in the ring, rolling his shoulders and keeping his eyes fixed forward. The commentary tone shifts immediately, the weight of the situation settling over the broadcast.

John Phillips: "We need to address the unusual circumstances surrounding this title defense. The WrestleZone Championship is still officially held by Gunnar Van Patton, but after that vicious ambush by the Fatu Twins at No Love Lost--concussion, forty stitches--he is nowhere near cleared to compete."

Mark Bravo: "He got carved up, John. And he still refused to vacate the belt! So now somebody from the Unholy Wolf Brigade has to defend it for him."

John Phillips: "And Gunnar chose Arkady Bogatyr."

The arena lights suddenly die. Not a fade. Not a dim. A total blackout, as if someone severed the power line.

For a heartbeat, the arena is silent.

CLANG.

A single metallic crack detonates through the darkness--sharp, violent, unmistakable. The crowd jolts. Somewhere in the black, feet scuffle across concrete in frantic, animalistic bursts.

John Phillips: "What was that?!"

Mark Bravo: "That's him. That's the Brigade's scout."

The opening industrial stomp of "Death March" erupts through the speakers. A lone spotlight snaps on and sweeps across the crowd like a hunting beam.

It doesn't find Arkady.

It finds an empty aisle seat rocking violently, as if something launched off it with inhuman force.

The crowd turns. Another thud--this time against a railing. A blur of limbs. A flash of motion.

The spotlight whips left and catches him.

Arkady Bogatyr crouches atop a section divider, perched like a feral creature cornered but unbroken. Knees bent. One hand gripping the metal rail. The other dangling loose, fingers twitching. His bright blue eyes reflect the light with a wild, predatory sharpness.

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Strapped around his neck like an oversized collar is the WrestleZone Championship.

Mark Bravo: "He's wearing the title like a dog tag! This kid is out of his mind!"

John Phillips: "That is Arkady Bogatyr--Gunnar Van Patton's chosen defender of the WrestleZone Title tonight."

Arkady throws back the hood of his battered military jacket and yanks down his half mask. The war paint streaked across his face and torso looks jagged and savage under the spotlight.

He grins.

Then he moves.

He launches off the divider in a reckless, twisting leap, landing on the backs of two empty chairs before springing to the floor. Fans scatter as he darts between them, weaving through the crowd with parkour-sharp agility--bouncing off seats, sliding across railings, twisting his body in ways that look barely human.

John Phillips: "Look at that movement--he's not approaching the ring, he's ricocheting through the arena!"

Mark Bravo: "Jarvis better be ready. That's not a challenger, that's a live wire."

Arkady sprints toward the barricade, plants a foot on the metal edge, vaults up, twists mid-air, and lands on the other side in a low crouch. He scuttles to the apron, pops up in one fluid motion, and slides under the bottom rope like a bullet.

Inside the ring, he never stops moving.

Pacing.

Bouncing.

Twitching.

He circles the ropes in jagged lines, testing them, springing off them, dropping into sudden crouches, popping back up. The WrestleZone Title still hangs around his neck, swinging with every twitch.

Jarvis Valentine watches him carefully--curious, analytical, studying the footwork, the angles, the rhythm, trying to decode the chaos.

John Phillips: "Jarvis is trying to read him, but Arkady Bogatyr doesn't move like anyone else in the UTA."

Mark Bravo: "He doesn't move like anyone anywhere!"

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Arkady suddenly stops, unhooks the WrestleZone Title from around his neck, and slaps it into the referee's hands without looking at him. Then he drops into a low crouch, bouncing on the balls of his feet, eyes locked on Jarvis.

The referee raises the belt, presents it to all four sides, and hands it off.

Arkady twitches.

Jarvis sets his base.

The bell rings, and Arkady Bogatyr reacts like someone just fired a starter pistol. He doesn't take a step--he erupts. His entire body snaps into motion, circling Jarvis Valentine in jagged, twitchy arcs. His shoulders roll, his fingers tap against his thigh in rapid bursts, his feet bounce restlessly off the canvas. He never stays in one place long enough for the camera to settle on him. He's a blur, a constant shifting silhouette, eyes darting, head tilting, breath sharp and audible.

Jarvis Valentine doesn't move. Not an inch. He stands tall in the center of the ring, feet planted, shoulders squared, chin tucked, watching Arkady with the calm, disciplined focus of a man who has wrestled every style imaginable. His eyes track Arkady's footwork, the angles of his hips, the timing of his bounces--studying him, dissecting him, refusing to be drawn into the chaos.

John Phillips: "Jarvis is staying grounded. He's letting Arkady show his movement patterns before committing to anything."

Mark Bravo: "Movement patterns? John, that kid doesn't have patterns. He's like a malfunctioning pinball machine!"

Arkady darts in, then out, then in again--testing distance, feinting, twitching, bouncing. Jarvis doesn't flinch. He simply shifts his weight, subtle and controlled, keeping his center of gravity low and ready.

Finally, Arkady lunges forward, and Jarvis meets him head-on. They crash into a collar-and-elbow tie-up, and the difference in size is immediate. Jarvis digs his boots into the canvas and drives forward with raw heavyweight force. Arkady tries to twist out, but Jarvis clamps down, chest to chest, and powers him backward step by step.

Arkady's heels hit the turnbuckles. Jarvis keeps him pinned there, forearm pressed against his collarbone, the referee sliding in to call for a break.

John Phillips: "Jarvis Valentine using that size advantage early. That's nearly fifty pounds of leverage right there."

Mark Bravo: "And Arkady looks like he's vibrating in place! He can't stand still long enough to even be cornered!"

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The referee demands separation. Jarvis lifts his hands and backs away cleanly--no cheap shot, no hesitation, no games. He gives Arkady space.

Arkady immediately uses it.

He plants one foot on the bottom turnbuckle, springs to the second rope, and without warning flips backward in a tight, reckless arc--sailing over Jarvis's shoulder and landing on his feet behind him. The crowd pops instantly, the sound sharp and surprised.

Arkady doesn't pose. He doesn't celebrate. He just twitches once, shakes out his hands, and drops into a low, coiled stance, eyes locked on Jarvis with a wild, hungry brightness.

Mark Bravo: "He didn't need to do that at all! Which is exactly why he did it!"

John Phillips: "Jarvis Valentine is realizing quickly that Arkady Bogatyr is not going to give him a conventional opening."

Jarvis turns slowly, resetting his stance, studying the younger man with a mixture of caution and calculation. Arkady bounces in place, shoulders jerking, breath sharp, ready to spring again at any angle.

Jarvis turns slowly after Arkady's backward flip, resetting his stance, boots planted just outside shoulder-width, hands up, elbows tucked. Across from him, Arkady bounces in place like the canvas is too hot to stand on--knees flexing, shoulders twitching, head tilting in short, sharp jerks. His eyes never stop moving, flicking from Jarvis's feet to his hands to his shoulders, reading everything and nothing all at once.

They close the distance again, and this time Jarvis doesn't wait for Arkady to dictate the tempo. He snaps into the collar-and-elbow tie-up with authority, immediately shifting his hips and turning his body. In one smooth motion, he slips behind Arkady and wrenches his arm up into a tight hammerlock, grinding the point of pressure between Arkady's shoulder blades. Arkady's body jolts, his free hand clawing at the air for balance as Jarvis leans in, chest to back, using every pound of his weight to keep the smaller man grounded.

John Phillips: "Jarvis Valentine going back to fundamentals here. Hammerlock applied, and he's using that size and strength to slow Arkady down."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, but look at Arkady--he's not thinking about the pain, he's thinking about the exit."

Arkady's feet shuffle, his boots scraping against the canvas as he tries to twist free. Jarvis keeps the hold tight, jaw clenched, eyes focused, his expression calm and methodical. He's not rushing. He's not forcing. He's suffocating Arkady's movement, inch by inch.

Then Arkady drops.

He suddenly throws his weight forward, tucking his shoulder and rolling across the mat in a tight, fluid

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tumble. Jarvis is forced to follow the momentum or risk losing the arm entirely. Arkady pops out of the roll, his body snapping upright with a whip-like motion, and in the same breath he twists Jarvis's captured arm into a sharp wristlock. Jarvis's shoulder is yanked downward, his posture broken for the first time as Arkady cranks on the joint with a wild little grin.

The crowd pops at the slick transition, a ripple of appreciation for the improvisational escape.

John Phillips: "What a counter! Arkady Bogatyr rolling through the hammerlock and turning it into a wristlock in one motion!"

Mark Bravo: "He's like a human escape room, John. Every time you think you've got him figured out, there's another door."

Jarvis doesn't let the surprise linger. He plants his feet, rolls his body with the torque, and drops to a knee, using his leverage to yank Arkady off balance. Arkady stumbles forward a half step, and Jarvis seizes the opening--his free arm shoots low, scooping behind Arkady's leg. With a sharp pull and a twist of his hips, Jarvis executes a clean single-leg takedown, driving Arkady to the mat.

Arkady hits the canvas, but he doesn't stay there. Not even for a full heartbeat.

His body coils and snaps like a spring. He twists through the takedown, rolling across his shoulders, legs kicking up and over. In one fluid, gymnastic motion, he flips out of Jarvis's control and lands on his feet in a low crouch, one hand pressed to the mat for balance, his head snapping up with a wild, bright stare.

John Phillips: "That agility is unreal! Jarvis had him grounded, and Arkady just flipped out of a textbook takedown!"

Mark Bravo: "You can't wrestle that like a normal guy, John. That's not a blueprint, that's a glitch in the system!"

Jarvis pushes up from his knee, frustration flickering across his face for the first time. He surges forward, deciding to cut through the chaos with something simple and violent--a heavy lariat. His arm swings like a guillotine, his whole body behind it, aiming to take Arkady's head off and put him back on the mat the old-fashioned way.

Arkady sees it coming at the last possible second.

He ducks, folding at the waist with a sudden drop of his shoulders, the lariat whistling over his head. He doesn't just duck and reset--he keeps moving. His hands hit the canvas, and he cartwheels sideways, legs kicking high, body rotating in a blur. He lands on his feet, hits the ropes at full speed, and the ring ropes snap under his weight as he rebounds.

There's no pause. No setup. No telegraph.

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Arkady plants a foot on the middle rope and launches himself into a springboard, his body twisting in mid-air. He rotates backward, his torso turning, his elbow cocked and ready.

Jarvis turns just in time to eat it.

Arkady's flying back elbow smashes across Jarvis Valentine's jaw with a sharp, echoing crack. The impact sends Jarvis crashing to the canvas for the first time in the match, his back hitting the mat hard enough to make the ring shudder.

The crowd erupts, the noise swelling into a roar at the sudden shift--heavyweight power cut down by reckless, aerial precision.

John Phillips: "Flying back elbow connects! Arkady Bogatyr just took the former UTA World Champion off his feet!"

Mark Bravo: "If this is just the opening stretch, John, we're gonna need a replay machine on overtime tonight!"

Arkady pops back to his feet almost before Jarvis finishes landing, bouncing in place, shoulders twitching, eyes wide and wild as he paces in a tight circle. Jarvis lies on the mat for a moment, blinking up at the lights, feeling the sting of that elbow and the reality that this opponent is not going to give him a conventional, predictable fight.

The crowd keeps applauding, a sustained, appreciative buzz for the athletic opening--power versus chaos, control versus improvisation, already clashing in the first minutes of the WrestleZone Title defense.

Arkady Bogatyr pops back to his feet after the flying elbow, bouncing in place, shoulders twitching, breath sharp and uneven. Jarvis Valentine pushes up to one knee, shaking out the cobwebs, jaw tight, eyes narrowing. The crowd is buzzing--Arkady's speed has landed the first clean shot, but Jarvis is far from rattled.

Arkady suddenly bolts toward the ropes, sprinting with reckless acceleration. His boots hammer the canvas in rapid-fire bursts as he rebounds off the ropes with full momentum--body low, arms loose, ready to launch into another aerial attack.

Mark Bravo: "Here he comes again! Arkady's going airborne--"

He never gets the chance.

Jarvis steps forward and levels him with a shoulder tackle that sounds like a car crash. The impact is brutal--Jarvis's two-hundred-seventy-four pounds smashing into Arkady's wiry frame with unstoppable force. Arkady flips backward from the collision, hitting the mat hard and skidding across the canvas, his limbs momentarily limp from the shock.

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John Phillips: "Massive shoulder tackle! Jarvis Valentine just shut him down!"

Mark Bravo: "That's the difference, John! Arkady's fast, but Jarvis hits like a sledgehammer!"

Jarvis doesn't give Arkady a second to breathe. He reaches down, grabs a fistful of Arkady's snow-camo fatigues, and yanks him up with raw power. Arkady's legs barely find footing before Jarvis hoists him into the air--arching back with perfect heavyweight form--and drives him into the mat with a back suplex that rattles the ring.

Arkady bounces off the canvas, his back arching in pain, a sharp gasp escaping him. He rolls instinctively toward the ropes, clutching at his spine, his face twisted in a grimace beneath the streaks of war paint.

John Phillips: "That suplex landed high on the shoulders--Arkady felt every bit of that."

Mark Bravo: "He's gonna feel it tomorrow too. Jarvis is reminding him what happens when you fly too close to a heavyweight."

Jarvis rises slowly, methodically, his expression calm but predatory. He stalks Arkady with deliberate steps, cutting off his escape route. Arkady tries to pull himself up using the ropes, but Jarvis grabs him around the waist, lifts him clean off his feet, and plants him with a sidewalk slam that shakes the ring boards.

Arkady's body jolts violently on impact, his legs kicking once before falling still. Jarvis immediately hooks the leg, pressing his weight across Arkady's chest.

John Phillips: "Cover!"

The referee slides in--

ONE!

TWO--

Arkady kicks out, twisting his body sideways with a sharp, desperate jerk. Jarvis doesn't look frustrated--just focused. He sits back on his knees, nodding once, acknowledging the resilience but not impressed by it.

Mark Bravo: "That was close! Jarvis is in full control now, John. Arkady's gotta find space or he's gonna get steamrolled."

Jarvis grabs Arkady by the wrist and pulls him up again, refusing to let the pace slow. Arkady stumbles, his back still screaming from the suplex and slam, his breath ragged. Jarvis keeps hold of him, setting up for the next punishing sequence as the crowd buzzes with anticipation.

The power shift is unmistakable--Arkady's chaos has been halted, and Jarvis Valentine is asserting

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heavyweight dominance with every move.

Jarvis Valentine rises from the near fall with a steady, deliberate breath, his expression tightening into something colder, more focused. Arkady Bogatyr is still on the mat, one hand pressed to his lower back, the other clawing at the canvas as he tries to push himself upright. His body twitches involuntarily--pain mixing with adrenaline, movement mixing with instinct.

Jarvis doesn't give him the chance to reset.

He reaches down, grabs a fistful of Arkady's snow-camo fatigues, and yanks him up with a violent jerk. Arkady's boots barely scrape the canvas before Jarvis cinches his arms around the smaller man's waist. The crowd reacts instantly--they know what's coming.

John Phillips: "Jarvis Valentine has him--German suplex incoming!"

Mark Bravo: "This is where the power difference gets ugly!"

Jarvis plants his feet, dips his hips, and launches Arkady backward with a German suplex that sends the Siberian daredevil flipping high through the air. Arkady lands dangerously high on his shoulders, his legs snapping over his head in a brutal arc. The ring shakes from the impact, the sound echoing through the arena like a dropped anvil.

But Arkady doesn't stay down.

He rolls through the landing--painful, sloppy, but instinctive--and somehow, impossibly, ends up on his feet. His legs wobble. His back arches. His eyes are wide and unfocused, but he's upright, staggering forward like a man trying to outrun his own equilibrium.

John Phillips: "How in the world did he land on his feet?!"

Mark Bravo: "He didn't land--he survived!"

Jarvis Valentine doesn't admire it. He doesn't hesitate. He doesn't even blink.

He spins.

His right foot pivots hard into the canvas, his torso whipping around with violent precision. His arm cocks back, muscles tightening, and as Arkady stumbles toward him--still dazed, still twitching--Jarvis swings through with a devastating discus clothesline that nearly takes Arkady's head off.

The impact is catastrophic. Arkady flips inside-out, his body folding in mid-air before crashing to the mat in a heap. The crowd gasps, the sound sharp and collective.

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John Phillips: "Good lord! Jarvis Valentine just turned Arkady Bogatyr inside-out!"

Mark Bravo: "That wasn't a clothesline--that was a decapitation attempt!"

Arkady doesn't roll. He doesn't crawl. He doesn't twitch. The force of the blow sends him spilling under the bottom rope, tumbling to the floor in a limp, uncontrolled sprawl. His body hits the ringside mats with a dull thud, the WrestleZone Title defense suddenly looking far more dangerous than the opening minutes suggested.

Jarvis Valentine looms over Arkady Bogatyr at ringside, the heavyweight's shadow swallowing the twitching, crouched shape beneath him. Arkady is on all fours, breath sharp, shoulders jerking with that feral, restless energy that never fully leaves his body. Jarvis reaches down, intending to drag him up and ram him spine-first into the apron to keep the punishment rolling.

But Arkady moves first.

He snaps upward with a sudden, vicious headbutt to Jarvis's sternum, a sharp, jarring crack that forces the big man to grunt and stagger back a half step. It's not a big strike--it's a disruptive one, a shock to the system, a jolt that breaks Jarvis's rhythm and buys Arkady the sliver of space he needs.

John Phillips: "Arkady with a sudden strike! He's trying to create separation!"

Mark Bravo: "Trying? He did it! That was pure survival instinct!"

Jarvis clutches his chest, breath knocked crooked for a moment. Arkady doesn't waste a heartbeat. He plants a palm on the floor, kicks off with both feet, and vaults onto the barricade in one fluid, explosive motion. His boots land perfectly on the narrow rail--no wobble, no hesitation, no adjustment. He moves like the barrier is a natural extension of his body, like he's spent his entire life running rooftops and railings.

He doesn't slow down. He doesn't even look down.

Arkady sprints along the top of the barricade with effortless, predatory grace. His steps are light and precise, his body leaning into the run with the confidence of someone who knows exactly how much space he needs. Fans recoil as he blurs past them, but Arkady never breaks stride--his eyes locked on Jarvis with laser focus.

John Phillips: "Look at that! He's running the barricade like it's a flat surface!"

Mark Bravo: "That's not balance--that's instinct! That's muscle memory! That's Arkady being Arkady!"

Jarvis turns toward the sound of boots on metal--just in time to see Arkady launch.

Arkady leaps off the barricade, twisting his body sideways in mid-air, and drills Jarvis with a flying dropkick that detonates against the heavyweight's chest. The impact is violent and sudden, sending Jarvis stumbling

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backward into the apron, his spine slamming against the edge before he drops to one knee, breath ripped from his lungs.

John Phillips: "Flying dropkick off the barricade! Arkady Bogatyr just turned the momentum on its head!"

Mark Bravo: "Jarvis didn't even know where he was coming from!"

Arkady lands in a low crouch, sliding across the mats with perfect control. He pops up instantly, pacing in tight, twitchy circles, his fingers tapping against his thigh as adrenaline surges through him. His eyes flick from Jarvis to the ring, calculating the next angle, the next burst, the next strike.

Then he bolts.

Arkady sprints toward the ring, and dives over the bottom rope, seamlessly into a forward roll. His body becomes a blur as he rockets to the far ropes and back. He steps off the middle rope and executes a front somersault onto the off-balance Valentine.

John Phillips: "Tope con giro!"

He crashes into Jarvis Valentine with the plancha, sending both men tumbling across the ringside mats. Jarvis absorbs the full brunt of the collision, his back slamming into the floor, while Arkady rolls through the landing with catlike ease on his feet.

The crowd erupts, rising to their feet as Arkady ascends the barricade again with a single effortless hop. He stands tall on the barrier, looking around the arena, chest heaving, war paint streaked with sweat, the WrestleZone Title defense suddenly feeling like a live wire ready to snap.

Mark Bravo: "He's taunting the crowd! He's daring Jarvis to get up! This kid is absolutely unhinged!"

John Phillips: "Arkady Bogatyr is chaos in motion--and he just bought himself a massive opening!"

Arkady taps his temple with two fingers, grinning with a crooked, feral satisfaction before hopping down from the barricade, ready to drag Jarvis back toward the ring and continue the assault.

Arkady Bogatyr hops down from the barricade with a sharp, twitchy jolt of motion, the adrenaline still buzzing through every muscle. Jarvis Valentine is sprawled on the floor, trying to shake off the slingshot corkscrew crossbody that flattened him. Arkady doesn't give him a second to breathe. He grabs Jarvis by the wrist, yanks him upward with surprising strength for his size, and shoves the heavyweight under the bottom rope with a rough, impatient snap of motion.

Jarvis rolls into the ring, coughing, one hand pressed to his ribs. Arkady slides in after him, but instead of following directly, he veers toward the apron. He pops up onto the edge of the ring with a single smooth hop, landing light on his feet, shoulders twitching, eyes locked on Jarvis like a predator waiting for the perfect

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angle.

John Phillips: "Arkady's going high again--Jarvis is in trouble!"

Mark Bravo: "If Jarvis doesn't get his bearings right now, he's gonna eat something nasty!"

Arkady grips the top rope, crouches low, and springs upward with explosive force. His body snaps into a tight arc as he launches himself into the ring--and he fires a springboard missile dropkick straight into Jarvis Valentine's chest.

The impact is brutal. Jarvis is blasted backward, his body folding as he crashes onto the canvas with a heavy thud. Arkady lands on his side, rolls through the momentum, and pops up instantly, already diving across Jarvis's torso.

He hooks the leg, pressing his forearm across Jarvis's jaw.

John Phillips: "Cover!"

The referee slides in--

ONE!

TWO--

Jarvis powers out, shoving Arkady off him with a burst of raw strength. Arkady rolls backward from the force, landing on his knees, chest heaving, sweat streaking through the war paint on his face.

He doesn't celebrate. He doesn't appeal to the referee. He doesn't even look frustrated.

Instead, Arkady rises to his feet in a sharp, jerking motion--and starts hitting himself in the side of the head with a closed fist. Once. Twice. Three times. Hard enough that the sound carries. His jaw clenches. His eyes narrow. It's not self-harm--it's agitation, irritation, a feral attempt to snap himself into sharper focus.

Mark Bravo: "He's knocking the cobwebs out! Or knocking something in! I don't know what's going on in that kid's head!"

John Phillips: "Arkady Bogatyr is fired up, but that's a dangerous kind of fired up. Jarvis Valentine needs to get his bearings fast."

Arkady paces in a tight, twitchy circle, fists clenched, breath sharp, waiting for Jarvis to rise so he can unleash the next chaotic burst.

Jarvis Valentine rolls out of the ring with the instincts of a man who's been in too many wars to let

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momentum bury him alive. He drops to the floor, one hand braced on the apron, the other pressed to his ribs, trying to pull air back into his lungs after the missile dropkick that nearly folded him in half. The crowd murmurs--Jarvis isn't running, he's resetting, recalibrating, buying himself the seconds he needs to stop Arkady's avalanche of chaos.

Inside the ring, Arkady Bogatyr stalks toward the ropes with a twitchy, predatory gait, shoulders jerking, fingers tapping against his thigh. He's ready to pounce, ready to dive, ready to turn the outside into his playground. But the referee steps in front of him, arms out, blocking the path with a firm, authoritative stance.

Arkady's head snaps toward him, eyes narrowing, breath sharp.

John Phillips: "The referee has to maintain order--Jarvis is outside the ring, and Arkady can't just launch himself at will."

Mark Bravo: "Try telling him that. Arkady looks like he's about to chew through the ropes."

The referee leans between the middle and top ropes, shouting down at Jarvis, telling him to get back inside. His torso is halfway through the ropes, his attention fully on the heavyweight outside. He has no idea what's happening behind him.

Arkady backs up two steps.

Then he sprints.

He races toward the referee with blistering speed, boots hammering the canvas. The official hears the footsteps too late--he jerks back in alarm, expecting to be run over. But Arkady doesn't touch him. He leaps clean over the referee's shoulder, body twisting sideways in mid-air, clearing the official with inches to spare.

The crowd gasps--Arkady is already rotating.

He lands backward on the top rope, his boots finding the narrow cable with perfect, feline precision. No wobble. No adjustment. He sticks the landing like the rope is a steel beam and he's lived on it his entire life.

Mark Bravo: "HE JUMPED OVER THE REF! HE JUMPED OVER THE REFEREE!"

John Phillips: "How do you even train for that?!"

Arkady doesn't pause. He doesn't pose. He doesn't even breathe.

He bends his knees--and moonsaults off the top rope to the floor, his body flipping in a tight, controlled arc. The rotation is crisp, the angle perfect, the trajectory locked onto Jarvis Valentine like a guided missile.

Jarvis looks up--too late.

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Arkady crashes into him with the MiG-25, the impact detonating against Jarvis's chest and shoulders. The collision sends both men sprawling across the ringside mats, Jarvis absorbing the full force while Arkady rolls through the landing with chaotic grace, popping up to one knee with a wild, breathless grin.

The arena explodes.

John Phillips: "MiG-25 TO THE FLOOR! Arkady Bogatyr just wiped out Jarvis Valentine!"

Mark Bravo: "That wasn't a moonsault--that was a damn airstrike!"

Arkady scrambles to his feet, adrenaline surging through every twitch of his body. He grabs Jarvis by the wrist, yanks him upward with surprising strength, and shoves the heavyweight under the bottom rope with a rough, impatient snap of motion.

Arkady Bogatyr slides into the ring after the MiG-25, adrenaline still snapping through every nerve. Jarvis Valentine is sprawled on his back, chest rising and falling in heavy, ragged breaths. Arkady doesn't hesitate--he darts straight to the nearest corner, grabbing the top rope and climbing with a frantic, twitching urgency, as if the ropes themselves are pulling him upward.

He scales the turnbuckles in one fluid burst, boots finding each rung without pause. By the time Jarvis even rolls to his side, Arkady is already perched on the top rope, crouched low, shoulders rolling, eyes wide and wild.

John Phillips: "Arkady's going high again--he's not giving Jarvis a second to breathe!"

Mark Bravo: "He's going for broke! This kid only knows one speed!"

Arkady rises to full height on the top rope, arms spreading wide as he inhales sharply. Then he leaps--his body folding, rotating, spinning through the air in a tight, blistering arc.

A 450 Splash.

The crowd roars as Arkady flips once, twice--but Jarvis Valentine rolls away at the last possible heartbeat.

Arkady sees it mid-rotation.

He adjusts.

He tucks his knees, shifts his hips, and lands on his feet, the impact jarring but controlled. His boots hit the canvas with a heavy thud, and the momentum forces him into a forward roll. He tumbles across the mat, popping up on the opposite side of the ring with a sharp, twitchy jerk of motion.

John Phillips: "He landed it! He actually landed it!"

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Mark Bravo: "That's not landing--that's sorcery!"

Jarvis pushes up to one knee, shaking out the cobwebs, and Arkady snaps toward him like a predator catching scent. Both men lock eyes for a split second--just long enough to recognize the collision course.

Then they charge.

Arkady sprints with reckless speed, arms loose, shoulders twitching, ready to leap or twist or contort into whatever opening appears. Jarvis barrels forward with the force of a freight train, his boots pounding the canvas, his posture low and coiled for impact.

They meet in the dead center of the ring--and Jarvis spears Arkady out of the air.

The collision is catastrophic. Jarvis drives his shoulder through Arkady's midsection with enough force to fold him in half, lifting him clean off his feet and slamming him into the canvas so hard the ring frame shudders. Arkady's body bounces on impact, his limbs going momentarily slack from the shock.

John Phillips: "SPEAR! Jarvis Valentine just cut him in half!"

Mark Bravo: "That's the kind of hit that changes your blood type!"

Jarvis doesn't stay down. He rises immediately, chest heaving, eyes burning with renewed focus. Arkady is gasping, clutching his ribs, the wind completely torn from him.

And Jarvis isn't done--not even close.

He rises to a vertical base with a slow, ominous steadiness, the kind of movement that makes the entire arena tighten with anticipation. Arkady Bogatyr is sprawled on the canvas, ribs heaving, one arm wrapped around his midsection as he tries to pull breath back into his lungs. Jarvis doesn't give him the luxury. He reaches down, grabs Arkady by the wrist and the back of the neck, and rips him upright with a violent jerk that snaps Arkady's spine straight.

Arkady's boots barely scrape the canvas before Jarvis clamps his arms around the smaller man's waist, locking his hands together with crushing, immovable force. The crowd feels the shift--Jarvis isn't just attacking now. He's dismantling.

John Phillips: "Jarvis Valentine has him locked--this is where the power difference becomes terrifying."

Mark Bravo: "Arkady's about to take a trip he didn't buy a ticket for!"

Jarvis dips his hips, plants his feet, and launches Arkady backward with a German suplex that sends the Siberian daredevil flipping high through the air. Arkady lands brutally on his shoulders, his legs snapping over his head before he crashes onto the mat in a heap, the impact echoing through the arena.

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But Jarvis doesn't release.

His grip stays welded shut. His knuckles whiten. His boots dig into the canvas like anchors.

John Phillips: "He's maintaining the waist lock! Jarvis isn't letting him breathe!"

Mark Bravo: "This is the part where Arkady's soul tries to leave his body!"

Jarvis drags Arkady up again--no finesse, no hesitation, just brute, grinding dominance. Arkady's legs wobble, his head droops, his breath comes in ragged bursts, but Jarvis doesn't care. He dips his hips a second time and hurls him with another German suplex, this one even higher, even sharper, even more punishing. Arkady lands dangerously high, his body folding on impact before rolling limply onto his stomach.

Jarvis finally releases the grip, rising to his feet with a slow, predatory turn. Arkady tries to push up--one trembling hand on the mat, ribs screaming, vision swimming--but Jarvis is already stalking him, already lining up the next shot.

He steps forward, pivots on his heel, and whips his arm across Arkady's jaw with a Rainmaker-style clothesline that detonates like a thunderclap. The force of the blow nearly spins Arkady inside-out, his body collapsing flat onto the canvas, limbs splayed, eyes glassy and unfocused.

John Phillips: "RAINMAKER! Jarvis Valentine nearly decapitated him!"

Mark Bravo: "That wasn't a clothesline--that was a controlled demolition!"

Jarvis drops into the cover, hooking the leg deep, pressing his full weight across Arkady's chest. The referee slides in--

ONE!

TWO!

TWO-POINT-EIGHT!

Arkady kicks out with a desperate, twitching jerk of his shoulder, barely lifting it off the mat before collapsing again. The crowd erupts in disbelief, the noise swelling into a chaotic roar. Jarvis sits back on his knees, chest heaving, eyes narrowing--not frustrated, but calculating. Arkady survived the onslaught... but Jarvis Valentine is now fully, dangerously locked in.

Jarvis Valentine sits back on his heels for only a moment after Arkady's desperate kick-out, chest rising and falling, sweat dripping from his jaw. Arkady Bogatyr lies on the canvas, twitching, ribs screaming, vision swimming--but the spark in his eyes hasn't died. Jarvis reaches down, grabbing Arkady by the waist, preparing to hoist him for another crushing throw.

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He never gets the chance.

As Jarvis pulls him upward for a belly-to-back back suplex, Arkady suddenly twists mid-air, his body folding and rotating with impossible agility. He flips out behind Jarvis, landing on his feet with a sharp, catlike skid, boots scraping the canvas as he stabilizes. His shoulders twitch. His head jerks. His breath comes in sharp bursts.

John Phillips: "He flipped out! Arkady landed behind him!"

Mark Bravo: "How?! He was dead two seconds ago!"

Jarvis spins instantly, instincts firing, and swings for a discus lariat meant to take Arkady's head clean off. But Arkady ducks under it with a sudden drop of his shoulders, darting past Jarvis like a blur of motion. He hits the ropes at full sprint, the cables snapping under his weight as he rebounds.

Arkady plants his hands on the canvas--and fires into a handspring, his body flipping backward with perfect, fluid precision. Jarvis turns just in time to see Arkady's boots hit the mat and his torso twist sharply.

The strike comes a heartbeat later.

Arkady whips his leg around in a tight, spiraling arc--and cracks Jarvis across the side of the head with the Katyusha twisting enzuigiri.

The sound echoes like a gunshot.

Jarvis's head snaps sideways. His knees buckle. The heavyweight drops to one knee, dazed, blinking hard, equilibrium shattered.

John Phillips: "KATYUSHA! That kick nearly took Jarvis's ear off!"

Mark Bravo: "That's the first time tonight Jarvis Valentine has looked hurt! Arkady found the button!"

Arkady doesn't hesitate. He doesn't breathe. He doesn't think.

He closes the gap in a single, twitching burst of motion, sprinting toward Jarvis with reckless speed. He leaps--his body folding, rotating, somersaulting forward--and just as he gets to his feet, he explodes from the mat and drives his knee straight into Jarvis Valentine's jaw with a Muay Thai knee strike.

The impact detonates like a mortar blast.

Jarvis's head snaps back. His body whiplashes. He collapses flat onto the canvas, arms spread, chest heaving, eyes glassy.

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The crowd erupts--an explosion of noise that shakes the rafters.

John Phillips: "T-34-85! Arkady hit it flush! Jarvis Valentine is DOWN!"

Mark Bravo: "He just turned the whole match upside down!"

Arkady crashes onto Jarvis's chest, hooking the leg deep, pressing every ounce of weight he has into the pin.

ONE!

TWO!

TWO-POINT-TWO!

Jarvis kicks out--barely--but the arena is still shaking from Arkady's sudden, violent resurgence.

Arkady Bogatyr lies on the canvas after the T-34-85, chest heaving, sweat streaking through the war paint on his face. Jarvis Valentine is on his back as well, blinking hard, trying to reorient himself after the sudden, violent resurgence from the Siberian wild card. The crowd is still buzzing--half disbelief, half anticipation.

Arkady moves first.

He rolls to his stomach, pushes up on trembling arms, and then--because he only knows one direction--he heads straight for the corner. His movements are twitchy, frantic, but purposeful. He grabs the top rope, pulls himself upward, and begins climbing with that strange, feral urgency that defines him. His boots find the turnbuckles quickly, his shoulders jerking as he steadies himself on the top rope.

John Phillips: "Arkady's going high again! He's not slowing down for anything!"

Mark Bravo: "He's running on fumes and adrenaline, but he's still climbing!"

Arkady reaches the top rope, crouched low, ready to launch--and Jarvis Valentine suddenly comes to life.

The heavyweight surges upward with shocking speed for a man his size, pushing off the canvas and lunging toward the corner. He grabs the ropes, plants a boot on the bottom turnbuckle, then the middle, and charges up the buckles with a burst of raw, desperate power.

Arkady's eyes widen--just a flicker--but Jarvis is already there.

The two meet chest-to-chest on the top rope, the entire ring shaking beneath them as Jarvis clamps a hand around Arkady's waist. The crowd rises to their feet, sensing the danger, the height, the violence about to unfold.

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John Phillips: "Jarvis Valentine is up there with him! This is bad--this is very bad for Arkady!"

Mark Bravo: "Jarvis is about to throw him into the stratosphere!"

Jarvis adjusts his footing, muscles coiling, breath steadying. Arkady tries to fight--small, frantic shots to the ribs, a twitching elbow, a knee that barely lands--but Jarvis absorbs it all. He tightens his grip, dips his hips--and rips Arkady off the top rope with a superplex that detonates in the center of the ring.

The impact is monstrous. The ring frame shudders. The ropes vibrate. Arkady bounces off the canvas, his body folding on impact before collapsing flat.

But Jarvis doesn't let go.

He rolls through the landing, maintaining control, his arms still locked around Arkady's torso. The crowd gasps as Jarvis powers back to his feet, dragging Arkady up with him like dead weight.

John Phillips: "He's not done! Jarvis is still holding him!"

Mark Bravo: "He's going for it--he's going for the kill!"

Jarvis hoists Arkady vertically, holding him suspended for a heartbeat--and then drives him into the mat with a jackhammer, the ring exploding beneath them.

Arkady's body goes limp on impact, the air blasted from his lungs, the crowd roaring at the sheer brutality of the sequence.

Jarvis Valentine is back in control--and Arkady Bogatyr is in deep, deep trouble.

Jarvis Valentine rises from the jackhammer with a slow, deliberate breath, the kind of breath a man takes when he knows the match is his to finish. Arkady Bogatyr is sprawled on the canvas, twitching, ribs screaming, eyes glassy from the superplex-into-jackhammer combination. Jarvis pushes to his feet, wipes the sweat from his brow, and turns toward the hard camera with a cold, decisive gesture.

John Phillips: "Jarvis Valentine is signaling for the end!"

Mark Bravo: "He thinks he's got Arkady dead to rights--and honestly, who could blame him?!"

Jarvis reaches down, grabs Arkady by the wrist, and drags him upright with a rough, impatient yank. Arkady's legs barely hold him. His head droops. His breath comes in ragged, uneven bursts. Jarvis hooks him across the shoulders, plants his feet, and with one smooth, powerful motion--drives him into the mat with the Patriot Plunge.

The impact is catastrophic. Arkady bounces off the canvas, his body folding before collapsing flat,

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motionless.

Jarvis sprawls across him for the cover, hooking the leg deep.

ONE!

TWO!

TWO-POINT-SEVEN-FIVE!

Arkady kicks out--barely, desperately, a twitch of the shoulder that shocks the entire arena.

John Phillips: "He kicked out! Arkady Bogatyr kicked out of the Patriot Plunge!"

Mark Bravo: "That's not heart--that's insanity!"

Jarvis sits back on his knees, chest heaving, eyes narrowing. He doesn't argue. He doesn't shout. He just grabs Arkady by the scruff of his fatigues and drags him upright again, refusing to let the match slip away.

He shoves Arkady into the corner, propping him up like a ragdoll. Arkady's arms hang over the ropes, his head lolling, his chest rising and falling in shallow, uneven breaths.

Jarvis backs up to the opposite corner.

Then he charges.

He barrels across the ring and crushes Arkady with a running clothesline, the impact snapping Arkady's head back violently. Arkady slumps forward--but Jarvis catches him, spins, and drives him face-first into the mat with a running bulldog.

Jarvis hooks the leg again, pressing every ounce of weight he has onto Arkady's chest.

ONE!

TWO!

TWO-POINT-NINE-NINE-NINE!

Arkady kicks out at the last microscopic fraction of a second. The crowd explodes, half in disbelief, half in awe.

John Phillips: "HOW?! How did Arkady survive THAT?!"

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Mark Bravo: "Jarvis Valentine is doing everything short of dropping a piano on him!"

Jarvis rises slowly, frustration finally cracking through the stoic exterior. His jaw tightens. His nostrils flare. He wipes sweat from his brow with the back of his wrist, staring down at Arkady like he's trying to solve a puzzle that refuses to stay solved.

He drags Arkady up again--this time with a different grip, a different posture, a different intention.

Jarvis hooks Arkady's arm between his legs, cinches the other around his waist, and with a grunt of raw power, hoists him into a pumphandle position.

John Phillips: "This is new! Jarvis hasn't used this before!"

Mark Bravo: "He's digging into the vault! He's pulling out something we've never seen!"

Jarvis swings Arkady upward, rotates him across his chest, and drives him into the mat with a pumphandle powerslam that rattles the ring boards.

He covers immediately, hooking the leg deep.

ONE!

TWO!

TWO-POINT-NINE!

Arkady kicks out again.

Jarvis Valentine rises to his feet, hands on his hips, chest heaving, eyes burning with a mix of disbelief and irritation. The frustration is no longer subtle--it's written across every line of his face.

Jarvis Valentine drags Arkady Bogatyr off the mat, the smaller man barely conscious, legs trembling beneath him. Arkady's head hangs, breath ragged, but Jarvis doesn't let him fall. He forces him into the corner and hoists him upward, seating him on the top rope with a rough shove. Arkady slumps forward, arms dangling, looking like he's seconds from collapse.

John Phillips: "Jarvis Valentine is going for something massive. This is the kind of move that ends careers."

Mark Bravo: "He's not taking chances anymore. He wants Arkady gone."

Jarvis climbs to the middle rope, boots thudding against the buckles as he reaches up and locks his arms around Arkady's waist. The crowd rises, sensing the danger, the height, the violence about to unfold. Jarvis plants his feet, dips his hips, and pulls--going for a super belly-to-belly suplex that would erase Arkady from

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the match.

But Arkady explodes to life.

He twists with the motion, flipping through the air in a wild, impossible rotation. Jarvis crashes down onto his back, but Arkady keeps turning--keeps rotating--until his boots hit the canvas and he lands on his feet, perfectly balanced, shoulders twitching, eyes wide and feral.

John Phillips: "HE LANDED ON HIS FEET! HE LANDED ON HIS FEET! WHAT ARE WE WATCHING?!"

Mark Bravo: "That's not a counter--that's a miracle! That's Arkady defying gravity, physics, and common sense!"

Jarvis scrambles up, stunned and furious, and charges straight at him. Arkady drops low and snaps both boots out, drilling a dropkick into Jarvis's knee. The impact is sharp and surgical, cutting the big man down instantly. Jarvis's leg buckles, his momentum dies, and he pitches forward--slamming face-first into the middle turnbuckle with a brutal, echoing crack.

John Phillips: "Jarvis Valentine just went face-first into the buckle!"

Mark Bravo: "He didn't just hit it--he ate it!"

Arkady is already moving. He sprints toward the corner Jarvis just bounced off, plants a foot on the bottom buckle, then the middle, then the top, running up the turnbuckles in one fluid, impossible climb. He launches backward, twisting around Jarvis's head, catching him in mid-stagger, and spikes him into the canvas with a tornado DDT that drives the heavyweight skull-first into the mat.

Jarvis bounces on impact and collapses flat, arms spread, eyes glassy and vacant.

John Phillips: "TORNADO DDT! Arkady drilled him! Jarvis Valentine is down!"

Mark Bravo: "He's not just down--he's out of it!"

Arkady rolls through, pops to his feet in a twitching burst, and turns right back to the corner. He climbs again--no hesitation, no pause, just raw instinct and momentum. In one smooth motion he's on the top rope, crouched low, chest heaving, war paint streaked with sweat.

John Phillips: "Arkady's going for the kill shot!"

Mark Bravo: "If he hits this, Jarvis Valentine's streak is DONE!"

Arkady launches.

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He soars through the air, folding and extending in perfect rhythm before crashing down with the Gibel turgruppy Dyatlova, the high-altitude frog splash detonating across Jarvis Valentine's chest with violent, bone-rattling force. The impact is so severe that Arkady bounces off, clutching his own ribs in pain, rolling across the canvas from the shockwave.

John Phillips: "GIBEL TURGRUPPY DYATLOVA! HE HIT IT FLUSH!"

Mark Bravo: "He crushed Jarvis--and himself! That move is pure insanity!"

Arkady crawls, dragging himself back across Jarvis's body, draping an arm over the heavyweight's chest. The referee slides in, the crowd rising to their feet, but not cheering--just watching, breath held, waiting for the impossible.

ONE!

TWO!

THREE.

There is no eruption. No explosion of noise. No triumphant roar.

The arena freezes.

The sound dies instantly, replaced by a stunned, suffocating silence. Fans stare with wide eyes. The referee looks confused. Jarvis Valentine doesn't move. Arkady Bogatyr rolls off him, clutching his ribs, blinking in disbelief.

John Phillips: "...he... he got him."

Mark Bravo: "No. No way. That... that didn't just happen."

The crowd still hasn't reacted. It's too surreal. Too sudden. Too impossible.

Arkady Bogatyr has beaten Jarvis Valentine--and nobody knows how to process it.

The referee's hand hits the mat for the third time, and instead of an eruption, the entire arena collapses into a stunned, suffocating silence. It's not disbelief--it's something deeper. Something heavier. Something no one in the building was prepared to feel.

Arkady Bogatyr rolls off Jarvis Valentine, clutching his ribs, blinking through the pain and exhaustion. He doesn't celebrate. He doesn't move. He just lies there, twitching, breathing, trying to understand what he's done. The referee kneels beside him, almost hesitant, almost unsure, before finally reaching down and lifting Arkady's wrist.

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The crowd still doesn't react.

John Phillips: "I... I don't... folks, I don't know what to say. Jarvis Valentine has been pinned. Jarvis Valentine has been pinned... by Arkady Bogatyr."

Mark Bravo: "This... this can't be real. This has to be a dream. A glitch. A... something. Jarvis Valentine doesn't lose like this. Jarvis Valentine doesn't lose to-- to--"

He stops himself, staring at Arkady like he's seeing him for the first time.

Mark Bravo: "--to a kid we barely knew existed a month ago."

The referee retrieves the WrestleZone Title from ringside. Even he looks shaken. He holds it for a moment, glancing from the belt to Arkady, as if waiting for someone to correct him, to tell him this isn't how the night was supposed to go.

But no one does.

He hands the championship to Arkady Bogatyr.

Arkady clutches it to his chest, still on his knees, still trembling, still trying to breathe. A gigantic fanged grin stretches across his face. He did the unthinkable and once again, Van Patton drafted the right soldier.

John Phillips: "First Theron Tkachuk defeats Maxx Mayhem. Now Arkady Bogatyr defeats Jarvis Valentine. This... this is a pattern. This is a problem."

Mark Bravo: "This is a takeover. This is a hostile takeover happening right in front of us."

Arkady finally pushes himself to his feet, wobbling, leaning on the ropes for balance. The crowd still hasn't found its voice. They watch him the way people watch a car crash--unable to look away, unable to understand what they're seeing.

Arkady stumbles toward the ropes, clutching the title, and drops to the floor. He limps up the aisle, every step a reminder of the war he just survived. His music is the only sound, as thousands of people try to process the impossible.

John Phillips: "The Unholy Wolf Brigade... they're not just dangerous. They're not just unpredictable. They're... they're winning. They're winning the biggest fights in this company."

Mark Bravo: "Theron Tkachuk. Arkady Bogatyr. Two unknowns. Two nobodies. And they've just taken out Maxx Mayhem and Jarvis Valentine. Back-to-back. Clean. In the middle of the ring."

Arkady reaches the top of the ramp, turns back toward the ring, and lifts the WrestleZone Title with one

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trembling arm. The crowd still doesn't cheer. They just stare.

John Phillips: "And the most terrifying part... Gunnar is a gigantic threat alone..."

The camera cuts to Jarvis Valentine still motionless in the ring, the referee checking on him.

John Phillips: "...but now, we know he's backed by true blue killers, eager to do his bidding."

Mark Bravo: "I am at a total loss of words. All I can say is that the landscape did more than change. It has become a warzone."

Arkady disappears behind the curtain, the WrestleZone Title in his hands, leaving behind a silent arena and a shaken commentary team.

Introducing DEATH

The scene opens in a standard backstage interview area, a step calmer than most corners of the PHX Arena but never truly quiet. The backdrop is filled with repeating UTA logos and sponsor branding, the sort of polished setting meant to suggest order and professionalism. In WrestleUTA, that illusion rarely lasts long.

Into that calm steps Ace Andrews.

And behind him comes Samuel Scythe.

For anyone watching closely, Ace is immediately familiar now. After having already appeared earlier with Bianca Page, his face has become one the audience cannot ignore tonight. He is dressed in his usual dark custom-fitted Brioni suit, every line of it deliberate, every detail expensive. Tinted glasses sit across his face, and the overhead lights briefly shimmer across his bald head as he steps into position with the kind of smug ease that only comes from a man who believes every camera in the building should already know his best angle.

Behind him, the mood darkens considerably.

Samuel Scythe is dressed far more simply, sweatpants and a hoodie, but there is nothing casual about the figure standing there. The scowl on his mouth and the anger in his eyes do most of the work for him. He says nothing. He does not need to. His silence feels heavier than most men's shouting ever could. If Ace is polish and poison, Scythe is the threat that makes the poison worth fearing.

Ace settles in front of the backdrop with a cocky grin stretched across old and knowing lips. Scythe remains looming just behind his shoulder, staring ahead with that same dark, murderous intensity.

Ace Andrews: "Good evening, Phoenix... and HELLO UTA."

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He spreads his hands slightly, smiling as though he has arrived not to introduce himself, but to give the company the privilege of finally meeting him.

Ace Andrews: "My name is Ace Andrews, and tonight is my very first appearance on your television screens, allow me just a moment of self-flagulatory as I walk you through my illustrious career."

He takes a half step to the side, one hand adjusting the front of his suit coat while his grin grows more amused with every word.

Ace Andrews: "I am a fourteen-time World Champion, a three-time Hall of Fame member, richer than your local lotto winner, more handsome than your magazine model, and hung better than Danny D."

Ace pauses just long enough to let the line breathe and lets a sly little smirk pull at the edge of his mouth.

Ace Andrews: "And if you know who that is... then you and I can be friends."

The grin lingers, but only for a moment. Then Ace shifts gears ever so slightly, his tone still smooth, still arrogant, but now steering the spotlight somewhere else by design.

Ace Andrews: "But I'm not here to really talk about me. I'm here to talk about the scowling mountain of rage standing just behind my shoulder."

He tips his head slightly, indicating Samuel Scythe without fully turning around. The camera adjusts just enough to keep both men in frame. Scythe's eyes remain locked forward, burning straight through the lens.

Ace Andrews: "You see, a few years ago, I came to a realisation. As I woke up after another night sweating and grunting between the ropes, to an aching back and sore knee, I realised... why was I still getting between the ropes myself?"

He gives a small shrug, as if the answer should have always been obvious.

Ace Andrews: "I'd already beaten anyone I ever wanted. I'd already won world titles, married the hottest woman in the business, L--Lucky Lawliet..."

The line catches on the way out.

Ace pauses, looking away from the camera as though a memory has crossed his mind harder than he expected. The smugness does not disappear entirely, but it dims just enough for something real to flicker through. Behind him, Samuel Scythe's expression changes for the first time. He looks at Ace, then slowly reaches forward and places a hand on his shoulder.

It is only a small gesture. Brief. Quiet. But it says more than a speech would. Respect. Loyalty. Maybe even understanding.

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Ace glances back at him, then gives a slight nod before facing the camera again and clearing his throat. When he resumes, his voice is steady once more.

Ace Andrews: "I had done everything I set out to do, and yet there I was, still wrestling. Still getting hurt. Letting myself be tossed around on some thick wooden boards out of some blase love of the business."

He scoffs softly at the very thought.

Ace Andrews: "And that just wasn't good enough. A man like myself shouldn't be denigrating himself for some plebs in the crowd with barely two nickels to rub together."

His confidence returns fully now, smooth and venomous again.

Ace Andrews: "No. I was done getting between the ropes myself. So instead, I decided it was time to embrace the next generation. Find the next great talent, and let them wrestle while I educated and guided them from ringside."

Ace chuckles to himself, though there is no warmth in it.

Ace Andrews: "And I'll admit, my first few attempts weren't the best. I tried my flesh and blood first, and they failed me. Horrifically."

He lets the bitterness in that line linger for a beat before his smile returns.

Ace Andrews: "But then into my life stormed the man behind me... Samuel Scythe."

Ace shifts just enough to the side to fully open the shot for Scythe, almost presenting him like a masterpiece he personally commissioned. Samuel does not play to it. He just glares into the camera with an intensity that makes even the stillness uncomfortable.

Ace Andrews: "Samuel Scythe is not merely a man. He is anger defined. He is rage and strength and instinct."

Ace's smile grows thinner, nastier, more satisfied.

Ace Andrews: "He is my Reaper. A weapon so loyal and dedicated, that all it takes is a click of my fingers, and Scythe will destroy whatever I send him against."

The camera lingers on Scythe for a second longer. His eyes do not blink. His face does not soften. If anything, the malicious edge around his mouth only becomes easier to notice the longer the shot stays on him.

Ace Andrews: "And you, UTA? You signed the contract. You welcomed him into your front doors with a

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smile. You really do not understand what you have done."

Ace begins pacing just a little now, not enough to leave frame, but enough to let the monologue feel bigger, more theatrical, more dangerous.

Ace Andrews: "If you knew what this man was... what he could do... you would have barricaded those doors, locked yourselves in a bunker, and rocked yourself to sleep every night just PRAYING the next day wasn't the day he came knocking."

He turns back toward the camera, his voice lowering slightly, forcing attention rather than asking for it.

Ace Andrews: "But no. You signed him. Walked the wolf right into the hen house... and you left me holding the leash."

Behind him, Samuel Scythe's lips curl into a malicious grin, just enough to make the menace feel alive rather than posed.

Ace Andrews: "Samuel Scythe isn't here to play nice. To bow, or kneel, or cowtow to lesser beings. Samuel Scythe is MY Reaper. He is here to destroy... to wreck... to kill."

Ace Andrews: "Scythe is going to run through your entire roster, leaving just chaos and destruction behind him... and it's going to be all your own fault because YOU let him in."

That line lands heavy. Ace knows it. So does Scythe. The silence that follows feels deliberate, almost as though the segment is giving the audience a second to understand the warning before it sharpens one final time.

Ace Andrews: "I'm no clairvoyant. I can't say I can look into a crystal ball and tell you that my weapon Scythe is going to be a World Champion, or go into the Hall of Fame."

He gives a tiny, dismissive shrug.

Ace Andrews: "But I can tell you one thing with absolute certainty. Whomever gets put in front of Scythe going forward... you're going to regret it."

The grin returns.

Ace Andrews: "Titles are nice trophies, but Scythe prefers collecting hospital bills. They tell the true cost of going up against The Reaper."

Ace steps in a little closer to the camera now, the smugness on his face giving the final warning a more personal sting.

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Ace Andrews: "So whomever draws his name going forward? Consider this a warning. You will REAP what you SOW."

He pauses just long enough for the wordplay to settle in before delivering the final line with obvious satisfaction.

Ace Andrews: "And in the wheat fields that is the UTA ring? I'm the man holding the Scythe."

Ace laughs at that, pleased with himself in the way only Ace Andrews could be, then turns to head away. Samuel Scythe does not follow immediately. Instead, he remains standing in place for a few extra seconds, glaring into the camera with such raw hostility that it feels less like a stare and more like a threat.

Only then does Scythe turn and walk after Ace, the two men disappearing out of frame as the scene fades away.

John Phillips: Well folks, Ace Andrews making his presence known tonight as he introduces both Bianca Page and Samuel Scythe to the UTA.

Mark Bravo: A guy with that kind of background and influence, I'm going to be keeping an eye on him!

You Ruined It

The camera cuts backstage to a concrete service hallway that leads out toward the parking lot. The lighting is harsher here, colder, less polished than the inner parts of the PHX Arena. Production noise is distant now. What remains is the dull hum of the building's outer machinery, the echo of footsteps, and the sense that this is the kind of space where bad things happen when nobody is looking closely enough.

Dahlia Cross comes into frame.

She has her gear bag slung back over one shoulder and is dressed now in street clothes, clearly finished with whatever business she had inside the arena. Her expression is not relaxed, but it is settled, the face of someone walking with purpose toward the end of the night, toward the parking lot, toward departure. She is not looking for a fight. She is looking to leave.

John Phillips: "Looks like Dahlia Cross may be calling it a night."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, and back here that's usually when somebody decides to make it your problem."

Dahlia keeps moving down the hallway, passing stacked production crates, folded barricade pieces, and a rolling road case left near the cinderblock wall. She adjusts the strap on her bag and glances briefly toward the exit doors ahead.

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She never sees Amy Harrison coming.

Amy explodes into frame from the side and drives straight into Dahlia with a violent forearm to the side of the head that sends her crashing shoulder-first into the wall. The bag falls from Dahlia's shoulder and hits the floor as she stumbles, dazed, trying to catch herself before Amy is already on her again.

John Phillips: "Amy Harrison just ambushed Dahlia Cross!"

Amy grabs a fistful of Dahlia's hair and smashes her face-first off the top of a rolling road case. Dahlia recoils and reaches blindly for balance, but Amy clubs her across the back and drives her hard into a stack of folded metal chairs leaned against the wall. The chairs rattle and clatter violently to the ground around them, the noise filling the corridor like an alarm.

Mark Bravo: "This is a full-blown mugging!"

Dahlia tries to fire back with a desperate elbow, but Amy catches her with a sharp shot to the ribs and then hurls her into a dented black equipment trunk near the loading door. Dahlia bounces off the steel edge and drops to one knee, clutching at her side, and Amy wastes no time stalking in after her with the fury of someone who has been waiting too long for this moment.

Amy Harrison: "You think you can just walk outta here?"

Amy grabs Dahlia by the back of the jacket and hauls her halfway up before throwing her down across the concrete again. She looks around, spots a loose plastic utility bin near the wall, and kicks it hard into Dahlia's body. The bin cracks against her and skids off into the hallway.

John Phillips: "Amy Harrison is using anything she can get her hands on back there!"

Dahlia rolls, trying to crawl away, one arm dragging over the concrete as she reaches for the dropped bag like maybe she can use it to pull herself up. Amy catches her before she gets anywhere, stomping down hard beside her and then grabbing her by the hair again to sling her backward into the base of a steel hand truck. The metal frame rattles loudly as Dahlia slumps down against it.

Mark Bravo: "There is nothing controlled about this. Amy Harrison came back here to hurt her."

Amy does exactly that.

She drives Dahlia down flat onto the concrete, then drops on top of her and starts throwing punches. One. Two. Three. Four. Dahlia gets an arm up over her face, but Amy keeps hammering away, rage spilling out with every shot as the hallway becomes less a backstage exit and more a crime scene.

Amy Harrison: "There's no Rosa or Selena to help you now!"

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Another punch lands. Then another.

Amy Harrison: "You hear me?! No Rosa! No Selena!"

Dahlia tries to twist out from under her, but Amy keeps the mount and hammers her again, fury all over her face now.

Amy Harrison: "You ruined The Empire!"

That line comes out like an accusation she has carried in her chest for far too long.

Amy Harrison: "You ruined it!"

She lands two more shots before finally shoving herself up off Dahlia's body, breathing hard, eyes still burning as Cross lies crumpled on the floor near the wall, beaten and barely moving.

John Phillips: "Dahlia Cross has been absolutely destroyed back there!"

Amy stands over her for one last second, glaring down like she could keep going if she felt like it. Then, just as suddenly as the violence came, her body language changes. The rage cools into something almost casual. She straightens up, adjusts her jacket, smooths her hair back into place, and fixes what she is wearing with a cold, detached calm that somehow makes the whole thing feel even more vicious.

Mark Bravo: "That might be the iciest part of all. Look at her. Like she just handled business."

Amy gives Dahlia one final look, then turns and walks away down the hallway without urgency, without panic, without a backward glance. She leaves Dahlia Cross behind on the concrete floor near the loading area, surrounded by knocked-over equipment, scattered chairs, and the wreckage of an ambush that was clearly personal from the very first strike.

The camera lingers on Dahlia for a moment longer, beaten and motionless except for the faint rise and fall of breath, before the scene cuts away.

International Championship Match

The camera cuts back inside the PHX Arena as the buzz around the building remains high, but there is a different kind of anticipation now. The next championship match will not be contested under normal rules. It will not be about one pinfall. It will not be about one lucky opening. It will be about survival, strategy, and outlasting five other hungry competitors.

John Phillips: "Still to come tonight, we will crown the very first UTA International Champion in a six-person elimination match, and the stakes could not be more significant."

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Mark Bravo: "Yeah, this ain't just another belt, John. This is history. First one ever. Your name goes in the books forever, and everybody in that match knows it."

John Phillips: "And it is important to remember the emotional layers in this one too. Some of these competitors are walking into the biggest opportunity of their careers. Some are trying to prove they belong. Some are trying to shake off recent setbacks. Others may be carrying alliances into a match where, eventually, those alliances must crack."

Mark Bravo: "Because in the end, there is only one winner. Doesn't matter how friendly you are on the walk out. Gold changes people."

The lights in the arena dim.

Then the stage explodes into a wash of neon blue, pink, and white, the colors pulsing in time with a crisp, glossy beat that immediately changes the energy in the building. The crowd responds right away as the tron comes alive with quick flashes of color and motion, turning the entranceway into something bright, electric, and impossible to ignore.

John Phillips: "And we begin with a man who knows exactly how much this moment could change his life. Here comes Kairo Bey."

Kairo Bey steps through the curtain.

The Neon Ace pauses at the top of the stage, shoulders loose, his expression carrying that familiar calm confidence, but tonight there is something else layered underneath it. Something quieter. More serious. He looks out toward the ring, toward the championship waiting somewhere later in the match, and you can feel the importance of it written across his face.

Mark Bravo: "He still looks smooth, still looks stylish, still looks like the lights were built for him... but yeah, there's something different there tonight."

John Phillips: "There should be. Kairo Bey has all the talent in the world, but recent weeks have not gone the way he wanted. Opportunities have slipped. Momentum has faltered. And earlier tonight, we saw very clearly that this title match means something deeper to him because it represents a chance to erase all of that with one win."

Kairo starts down the ramp with that dancer's rhythm he always brings, light on his feet, every step naturally smooth, the kind of motion that makes him look like he hears a different beat than everyone else in the arena. He points toward the hard camera for a second, then rolls his shoulders and keeps moving, eyes constantly shifting between the ring, the aisle, and the atmosphere around him.

Mark Bravo: "And let's not pretend there isn't more rattling around in his head than just wins and losses. Eli Creed got to him earlier tonight. You could see it. Kairo may not like it, but Creed's voice is in there

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somewhere."

John Phillips: "That is absolutely fair. Kairo Bey was out there earlier looking at the International Championship by himself, and you could see the conflict. The desire is there. The belief is trying to be there. But doubt has started whispering at him, and Eli Creed made sure to speak right into that weakness."

Kairo continues down the ramp as the crowd gives him a strong reaction, many of them willing him toward a rebound moment tonight. There is no over-the-top showboating here, though. No extended posing. He looks focused. More focused than flashy. The usual swagger is still present, but it is tightened, sharpened, more deliberate than carefree.

John Phillips: "This is a huge night for Kairo Bey. He has the athletic gifts, the timing, the explosiveness, and the charisma. But tonight is about whether he can bring all of that together when the pressure is heavier than it has ever been."

Mark Bravo: "Because once that bell rings, it ain't gonna be enough to just look good. Six people. Elimination rules. One title. You get one bad read in that kind of match and somebody sends you packing."

Kairo reaches ringside and circles toward the near side of the apron, taking one more look at the ring before pulling himself up. He steps through the ropes in one smooth motion and pops to his feet immediately, the crowd responding as he climbs to the second rope and throws out a clean, confident salute toward the hard camera.

He lands softly and bounces in place for a moment, trying to stay loose, trying to stay centered, trying to keep all of the noise around this match from creeping too far into his head.

John Phillips: "Kairo Bey is in the ring, and whether he wants to show it or not, this may be the most important opportunity of his UTA career so far."

Mark Bravo: "Now let's see who joins him next."

Kairo Bey remains inside the ring, bouncing lightly on the balls of his feet, trying to stay loose and mentally settled as the noise in the PHX Arena continues to build. He glances once toward the stage, then away again, breathing through the moment and doing his best to stay centered with history looming over him.

John Phillips: "Kairo Bey is in position, but you can already tell this is going to be one of those matches where the mental game starts before the bell ever rings."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, and speaking of mental games, here comes a guy who loves planting seeds in other people's heads."

The lights shift again, this time into a darker, moodier blend of deep red and black. A harder, more deliberate beat punches through the arena, less flashy than Kairo's entrance and more like a march toward

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confrontation. The crowd reacts immediately as Eli Creed steps out first.

Creed does not come out like a manager trailing behind his athlete. He comes out like a man presenting a philosophy, a leader walking with purpose, eyes fixed on the ring and posture loaded with that same measured certainty that has made him impossible to ignore.

Just behind him comes Troy Lindz.

Troy's presentation has changed. The gear is leaner, sharper, more fight-oriented now, carrying clear Muay Thai influence in both style and attitude. Their movement reflects it too. Less wandering energy. Less drift. More coiled readiness. More forward pressure. More violence hidden inside discipline. Their shoulders roll once as they step through the light, jaw set, eyes locked ahead.

John Phillips: "And there they are. Troy Lindz accompanied by Eli Creed, and Troy continues to look more and more transformed every time we see them."

Mark Bravo: "That's because Creed's been getting his hooks in. The stance is different. The gear is different. The whole vibe is different. Troy looks like somebody who's been retooled for combat, not conversation."

Eli walks a half-step ahead, almost guiding the path to the ring without ever physically needing to touch Troy. He speaks to them briefly over one shoulder as they walk, calm and controlled, the kind of voice meant to keep a fighter locked in and pointed forward. Troy says nothing back, but their eyes never leave the ring.

John Phillips: "Earlier tonight, we saw Eli Creed trying once again to pull Kairo Bey into the Creed Method. Kairo has not made any decision yet, but Creed is clearly not done applying pressure."

Inside the ring, Kairo sees them. More specifically, he sees Eli. Kairo's body language changes just slightly, not enough to show fear or uncertainty, but enough to show irritation. He turns his head away and stretches his neck, doing his best to ignore what is coming down the ramp.

Mark Bravo: "And look at that. Kairo doesn't even want to look at him. He knows exactly what's coming."

Eli certainly does not help matters.

As he leads Troy down the aisle, he lifts his head toward the ring and begins calling up to Kairo with the smug certainty of a man who believes he is already in control of the conversation, even from a distance.

Eli Creed: "You don't have to keep standing alone, Kairo!"

Kairo rolls his shoulders and keeps his eyes toward the far side of the building, refusing to engage.

Eli Creed: "You know what this could be! You know what this could mean!"

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John Phillips: "Eli Creed not wasting a second. He is still working on Kairo Bey even as Troy Lindz heads to the ring."

Mark Bravo: "That's because Creed doesn't recruit in private only. He recruits in public too. He wants people thinking about him even when they're trying not to."

Troy keeps walking, expression hard, every bit the dangerous weapon Creed has been molding. Their hands flex once at their sides as they near ringside, and there is something about the way they carry themselves now that feels more direct than the Troy Lindz fans first came to know. More punishing. More willing to stand and trade.

John Phillips: "And while Eli Creed continues his campaign with Kairo, let's not lose sight of Troy Lindz themselves. This is one of the six competitors in this match, and tonight may be the biggest proving ground of their career."

Mark Bravo: "And they're not walking out here as the same Troy Lindz we've seen before. This version looks built for impact. Muay Thai stance, sharper edges, less wasted motion. That's Creed's influence all over them."

Eli stops briefly at the foot of the ramp and looks up at Kairo again. Troy remains just behind him, bouncing lightly once, focused on the ring and the fight ahead rather than the verbal game beside them.

Eli Creed: "Think about it, Kairo! You don't have to guess anymore!"

Kairo finally glances over, not because he wants to answer, but because ignoring Creed entirely is becoming impossible. Even then, he says nothing. His expression is tight, conflicted, annoyed. He turns away again and paces toward the ropes, trying to shut the noise out.

John Phillips: "And there is the conflict written all over Kairo Bey's face. He has not committed to Eli Creed, but Creed is making sure he feels the offer every step of the way."

Troy climbs the apron in one smooth movement and steps through the ropes, eyes immediately moving to Kairo and then around the ring, taking in the space like a fighter entering a striking pit rather than a traditional wrestling match. They shadowbox once with a compact knee-check motion and a subtle shift of stance that further underscores the Muay Thai influence now woven into their presentation.

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, Troy looks ready to chop somebody down and knee them into next week."

Inside the ring, Kairo stays clear on the opposite side, still doing his best not to get pulled into Creed's orbit before the match even begins. On the floor, Eli looks pleased with himself regardless, pacing just outside and nodding as though the choice is only a matter of time.

John Phillips: "Troy Lindz is in the ring. Eli Creed remains at ringside. And Kairo Bey is still trying to make it

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through this moment without giving Creed exactly what he wants."

Mark Bravo: "Good luck with that."

Kairo Bey remains in one corner of the ring, trying to keep his head clear while Troy Lindz stretches out on the opposite side, all sharpened edges and coiled striking energy. Outside, Eli Creed paces like a man fully convinced he already belongs in this match whether he was entered into it or not, his eyes still drifting toward Kairo every few seconds like he cannot help but keep applying pressure.

John Phillips: "Two competitors are in the ring now, but there are still four spots to fill, and this match is only becoming more layered by the minute."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, because once you start mixing history, alliances, and all these side tensions together, an elimination match can turn ugly real fast."

The lights shift again.

This time the atmosphere takes on a sleeker, cooler edge as the arena fills with a stylish, driving entrance theme. The crowd reacts immediately, a louder wave of recognition rolling through the building as two figures step through the curtain side by side.

Selena Vex and Rosa Delgado.

The former UTA Tag Team Champions walk out together with the kind of rhythm that only comes from shared history. There is no uncertainty in the entrance. No awkwardness. No hesitation. They move like women who have done this before, who know how to own a stage together, and who understand that whatever tension may exist beneath the surface, tonight they still present a united front.

John Phillips: "And here come Selena Vex and Rosa Delgado, former UTA Tag Team Champions and former members of The Empire."

Mark Bravo: "And let's not pretend this isn't fascinating, because all night we've been hearing the whispers. Amy Harrison already got in their heads earlier, talking about how there are no teams in an elimination match."

Selena walks with sharp, polished confidence, chin high and eyes forward, every bit the composed star who knows she belongs in a spotlight like this. Rosa, beside her, brings a different energy. Grit. Resolve. The kind of edge that feels earned instead of polished. Together, though, it works. It always has.

John Phillips: "Amy Harrison made sure to stir that pot backstage, reminding both women that while they may walk out together, only one person can leave as the inaugural International Champion."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, and they both said the right things after that. Said nothing would come between them."

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But saying it and living it are two very different things once the bell rings and gold is hanging over the whole thing."

Halfway down the ramp, Selena and Rosa exchange a quick glance. Not a suspicious one. Not yet. More like a silent acknowledgment that they both know exactly what the other is thinking without needing to say it out loud. Then they keep moving, staying in step.

John Phillips: "What matters right now is that they came out together, and that alone sends a message to the rest of the field. These two know each other. They trust each other, at least for the moment. And in a match this chaotic, that can be a major advantage."

Inside the ring, Troy Lindz turns their attention toward the ramp, eyes narrowing as the pair approach. Kairo Bey watches from the far side, expression focused, taking in another layer of complexity being added to the match. Outside the ring, Eli Creed folds his arms and studies the new arrivals with interest, clearly recognizing that partnership is the one thing he cannot directly manufacture once the bell rings.

Mark Bravo: "And here's the danger for everybody else. Selena and Rosa know how to move together. If they stay on the same page early, that could be a real headache for the rest of the match."

Selena and Rosa reach ringside and split naturally without ever fully separating, one moving toward one side of the apron and the other mirroring her on the opposite side. They step up and enter the ring almost together, timing the movement so smoothly it feels practiced rather than improvised.

Once inside, they take a moment to survey the field already present. Rosa's eyes move toward Troy, then toward Kairo. Selena glances toward Eli Creed outside, then back toward the ring interior. Neither looks overwhelmed. Neither looks hesitant. But the weight of what Amy Harrison said earlier still lingers in the background whether they want it there or not.

John Phillips: "Selena Vex and Rosa Delgado are in the ring, and just their arrival changes the tactical shape of this match. Former tag champions. Former Empire allies. Familiarity like that is hard to overstate."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, but let's say it plain. Unless the rules changed while I was eating my second hot dog, only one of them can win this thing. So eventually, all that sisterhood gets tested."

Selena and Rosa stand side by side for one more moment, not posing dramatically, not wasting time, just existing as a unit for as long as they still can before the match forces harder choices on everybody involved.

John Phillips: "Kairo Bey, Troy Lindz, Selena Vex, and Rosa Delgado are now in the ring. Two spots remain in this six-person elimination main event, and the road to crowning the first-ever UTA International Champion is getting more crowded by the second."

The camera sweeps across the ring once more, now containing Kairo Bey, Troy Lindz, Selena Vex, and Rosa Delgado, four very different energies sharing one space and one looming opportunity. The crowd inside

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the PHX Arena is alive now, fully aware that the field for the main event is nearly complete and that the final arrival is likely to bring even more tension with it.

John Phillips: "Four competitors are already in the ring, and you can feel the anticipation building with every second. The alliances, the rivalries, the possibilities... it is all starting to stack on top of itself."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, and now we're about to add one more combination that could make this thing real messy real quick."

The arena lights change again, this time bursting into a brighter, louder palette. Vibrant color splashes across the stage as a beat with swagger and bounce hits through the speakers, instantly changing the mood. The crowd gives a strong reaction as Trey Mack steps through the curtain.

Trey does not walk out like a man carrying silent tension.

He walks out like a star.

His energy is immediate, colorful, and impossible to miss. There is bounce in every step, confidence in every glance, and a smooth, easy charisma that seems to roll off him the moment he enters the light. He points out toward the crowd, then sweeps a hand across the arena like he is greeting a room that should already be thrilled to see him. Trey Mack looks alive in the spotlight, feeding off it, adding to it, turning the entrance into something bigger than just a walk to the ring.

John Phillips: "And here comes Trey Mack, a man who has made no secret of how badly he wants this moment."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, Trey Mack didn't come out here to act humble. He came out here looking like he already sees that title around his waist."

But behind him comes a drastically different presence.

Clovis Black follows in silence.

Where Trey is bright, animated, and expressive, Clovis is still, dark, and intimidating. He says nothing. He does not gesture. He does not play to the crowd. He simply walks behind Trey with a cold, unreadable focus, his presence casting a shadow over the entrance no matter how much color Trey brings into it. The contrast between them is sharp, but it works. It feels intentional. One man carrying the noise. The other carrying the threat.

John Phillips: "And there, as always, is Clovis Black. Silent. Ominous. Watching everything."

Mark Bravo: "That's what makes these two so weirdly effective together. Trey brings all the flash and all the personality. Clovis brings the feeling that if things go sideways, somebody's getting hurt."

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Trey keeps the pace lively on the walk down the ramp, nodding to the crowd, rolling his shoulders, staying loose and energized as if this is the kind of moment he has always expected to be in. Clovis, meanwhile, remains a half-step behind, eyes fixed ahead, his silence making every little move Trey makes feel even louder by comparison.

John Phillips: "Earlier tonight, Trey Mack made it very clear backstage that he sees this International Championship as his chance to finally add gold to his résumé. And he also made it very clear that he expects Clovis Black to help that happen."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, and that's the part everybody in the ring better remember. Unless something changes once the bell rings, Trey and Clovis are not about to go after each other. So right away, that's another built-in alliance everybody else has to deal with."

Inside the ring, Selena and Rosa both turn toward the stage. Troy Lindz shifts their footing. Kairo Bey watches carefully from his side, knowing exactly how much more complicated the numbers just got. Eli Creed, still on the floor near Troy, narrows his eyes and studies Trey and Clovis with obvious interest, aware that every entrance adds another set of political realities to a match that will eventually strip all of them away.

John Phillips: "That is now the second clear alliance walking into this match. Selena and Rosa together. Trey and Clovis together. And in an elimination environment, that can dictate the opening stretch in a major way."

Mark Bravo: "Until it doesn't. That's the beauty of this thing. Everybody can smile and work together right now, but once bodies start dropping and the title gets closer, all bets are off."

Trey reaches ringside and spins once toward the crowd, throwing his arms out like he is soaking in the moment for exactly what it is: history waiting to happen. Clovis does not react to any of it. He simply stops at ringside, turns his eyes toward the ring, and lets his silence speak louder than a promo ever could.

Trey climbs onto the apron and steps through the ropes with confidence, immediately moving into the ring as if he belongs there. Clovis follows more slowly, entering without flourish and taking his place just behind Trey, his presence acting almost like a wall at Trey's back. The two stand together for a moment, colorful energy in front and cold intimidation behind it.

John Phillips: "And now Trey Mack and Clovis Black are in the ring. Five competitors. Five very different paths to this moment. And only one championship waiting at the end of it."

Mark Bravo: "This thing is loaded, man. Absolutely loaded."

The camera widens to show the ring filling with personalities, alliances, tension, and ambition, the main event now nearly ready to begin as Trey Mack bounces lightly in place and Clovis Black stands like a looming shadow beside him.

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The camera slowly circles the ring, taking in the full field now assembled for the main event. Kairo Bey. Troy Lindz. Selena Vex. Rosa Delgado. Trey Mack. Clovis Black. Six competitors. Six very different roads to this moment. One championship waiting to be claimed.

The crowd inside the PHX Arena is no longer just loud. It is alive. The energy rolls through the building in waves, every fan knowing that the next bell will begin a match that can only end one way: with history made and somebody forever remembered as the first-ever UTA International Champion.

John Phillips: "Take a look at this ring. This is what a career-altering moment looks like. Six competitors standing shoulder to shoulder with the chance to become the inaugural UTA International Champion."

Mark Bravo: "And that means one thing, John. Somebody in there is about to have the best night of their life."

Kairo Bey stands near the ropes, jaw tight, trying to keep the noise outside from becoming noise inside his own head. Troy Lindz rolls their shoulders and keeps a Muay Thai bounce in their stance, locked in and visibly ready for a fight. Selena Vex and Rosa Delgado stand near each other, still together for now, still projecting that old tag team familiarity even with all the warnings hanging over them. Trey Mack looks energized, the spotlight feeding him exactly the way he always wants it to, while Clovis Black stands near him in complete silence, intimidating without needing to move much at all.

John Phillips: "You can feel the pressure written differently on each one of them. For some, this is about legacy. For some, this is about redemption. For some, this is about proving they belong. But all of them know the same truth. One of these six is walking out a champion."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, but not without paying for it. That's the part everybody feels right now. Elimination rules. No shortcuts. No one lucky break. If you want this thing, you're gonna have to survive the whole storm."

The camera cuts from face to face, catching the different ways each competitor absorbs the moment. Some stare across the ring. Some keep their eyes forward. Some shift with nervous energy. Others seem almost eerily calm. But none of them are untouched by it. The crowd is too loud. The stakes are too high. The moment is too big.

John Phillips: "That championship is no longer hypothetical. It's not a concept. It's not a future possibility. It's right here. And in a matter of minutes, somebody's life in this company changes forever."

The official steps into the center of the ring and looks from one side to the other, making sure all six competitors are in position. Around the building, the crowd rises even more, sensing how close this is now, sensing that the anticipation is about to break into violence.

Mark Bravo: "And that's the real question, isn't it? We know one of them can walk out with the gold. But at what cost? How much do you lose before you gain something like that?"

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The six competitors remain spread across the ring, each one standing in the gravity of the same dream, each one knowing that alliances can crack, bodies can fail, and friendships can disappear the second survival demands it. Above all of them hangs the same truth.

One of these six will leave as champion.

But nobody is getting there untouched.

John Phillips: "The inaugural UTA International Championship match is moments away."

The camera settles into a wide hard-cam shot, the six participants framed against the roaring PHX Arena as the tension peaks just before the bell.

The referee looks from one side of the ring to the other, making sure all six competitors are set. Around him, the PHX Arena is roaring, every fan on their feet, every eye fixed on the ring and the history waiting to begin. He takes one final glance around the field--then signals for the bell.

DING DING

And yet, for a moment, nothing explodes.

The tension does not break.

It tightens.

John Phillips: "Listen to this place."

The crowd is loud, but the ring itself remains frozen in a strange, electric stillness. No one rushes forward. No one throws the first reckless strike. No one wants to be the first one to commit and become the first one to be punished for it.

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, because this ain't some normal six-person sprint. Everybody in there knows one bad decision in the first thirty seconds could cost you the whole match."

Kairo Bey shifts his footing near the ropes, eyes moving from Troy Lindz to Trey Mack and then briefly toward the pair of Selena Vex and Rosa Delgado. Troy keeps their Muay Thai bounce, but even that movement is measured now, more about readiness than aggression. Selena and Rosa remain close enough to each other to make the alliance obvious, though neither is relaxed. Trey Mack's usual energy is there, but it has narrowed into focus, while Clovis Black remains almost unnervingly still behind him, his eyes tracking everything.

John Phillips: "This is six people all making calculations at the exact same time. Who do you trust? Who do you avoid? Who do you test first? Every one of them is weighing options right now."

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Mark Bravo: "And the alliances matter here. Trey and Clovis aren't lookin' at each other. Selena and Rosa aren't lookin' at each other. Troy and Kairo aren't looking to start with one another either. Everybody's reading the board."

The camera cuts from one face to the next, each expression carrying something a little different. Kairo is trying to stay centered. Troy looks ready to strike, but not without purpose. Selena's eyes are sharp and analytical. Rosa's jaw is set. Trey is alert beneath the flash. Clovis is unreadable.

For several long seconds, the only thing moving freely is the energy in the building.

John Phillips: "You can feel how much this title means. Nobody wants to waste themselves in the opening rush."

The six competitors slowly begin to circle, not in one unified motion, but in overlapping arcs, each one subtly repositioning, adjusting their angle, trying to improve the next decision before it has to be made. Selena and Rosa drift just slightly in tandem. Trey and Clovis do the same from another side. Troy's eyes flick toward Kairo, then away again. Kairo notices it, but neither makes a move.

Mark Bravo: "This is a standoff with footwork. Nobody's panicking. Nobody's lunging. They're all trying to be smarter than the other five at once."

The crowd begins reacting to every tiny shift as though it might be the one that finally sparks the fight. A step forward from Trey. A bounce from Troy. A shoulder turn from Rosa. A slight lean from Kairo. Clovis does not move much at all, which somehow makes him feel even more dangerous in the moment.

John Phillips: "The tension hasn't lessened one bit since the bell rang. If anything, it feels heavier now."

The camera settles briefly on the center of the ring, where all six are still within striking distance but none yet willing to fully open the floodgates. The match has started. The danger is real. The history is in motion.

But first, somebody has to make the decision that changes everything.

The six competitors continue circling in that tight, dangerous silence, each one waiting for someone else to make the first mistake. The crowd buzzes with anticipation, hanging on every shift of weight and every change in posture, fully aware that the first real move is going to open the floodgates.

And finally, someone makes it.

Kairo Bey takes a step forward.

Not a reckless lunge. Not a wild charge. Just one deliberate step out from his side of the ring, shoulders squared, chin lifted, eyes locked directly on Trey Mack. It is the kind of step that says enough without needing words. If this is where the match begins, then so be it. If the first test is going to be man to man, Kairo looks

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ready to take it head-on.

John Phillips: "And it's Kairo Bey who finally makes the first move."

Trey sees it and immediately smiles.

It is not a mocking smile exactly. More like the grin of a man who expected this. Who maybe even welcomes it. He nods his head slowly, eyes never leaving Kairo, his whole demeanor saying: alright then, let's find out. Beside him, Clovis Black still does not move, but the silence around him somehow becomes even more ominous as Trey steps just slightly forward in response.

Mark Bravo: "Trey Mack likes this. You can see it. He thinks Kairo just walked right into his kind of moment."

Kairo edges another half-step in, ready to meet him.

But before the first exchange between them can happen, Troy Lindz bursts into motion.

With sudden sharpness, Troy steps across and shoves Kairo off-line, not violently, but decisively, moving him out of the lane before Kairo can fully engage. The shift is quick enough to catch everyone off guard for a split second--including Trey.

John Phillips: "Wait--Troy just moved Kairo out of the way!"

And then Troy strikes.

They whip their hips through and drive a swift Muay Thai low kick into Trey Mack's lead leg with a sharp crack that echoes through the ring. The impact lands flush, the kind of shot meant not just to sting, but to immediately disrupt balance, rhythm, and confidence all at once.

Mark Bravo: "There it is! Troy Lindz kicks this whole thing off!"

Trey's smile disappears as the leg buckles just enough to break the posture he had settled into. He stumbles half a step and turns sharply toward Troy, more surprised than hurt in that first instant--but surprise is all a six-person elimination match needs to become chaos.

The ring explodes to life.

John Phillips: "And now the chaos begins!"

The second Troy Lindz's kick cracks against Trey Mack's leg, the careful tension that had held the ring together shatters all at once.

Trey stumbles half a step from the impact and immediately wheels toward Troy, the grin gone from his face

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now, replaced by sharp irritation. Clovis Black moves at the exact same moment, taking one hard step forward like a storm front finally deciding to break. Kairo Bey, shoved out of the original lane, turns back toward the action with his own instincts firing, while on the far side Selena Vex and Rosa Delgado stop waiting entirely and start advancing into the fray together.

John Phillips: "And that's all it took! One kick and this thing has broken wide open!"

Troy does not wait for Trey to recover. They chop another low Muay Thai kick into the same leg, doubling down on the opening they chose, but this time Trey is ready enough to partially absorb it and lash back with a forearm to the side of the head. Troy's head snaps to the side, but they answer instantly with a sharp elbow in tight that catches Trey high on the jaw and sends him backward into Clovis.

Mark Bravo: "Troy came in here lookin' to hurt people, not shadowbox!"

Clovis Black steadies Trey with one arm, then steps around him and lunges toward Troy with frightening directness. Before he can fully get there, Kairo Bey darts back into the lane and clips Clovis with a fast forearm to the side of the face, forcing the silent bruiser to turn his attention. That gives Troy room to stay on Trey, and suddenly the ring has split into multiple battles at once.

John Phillips: "Kairo Bey intercepts Clovis Black! That's a huge move, because if Clovis gets to Troy cleanly, that changes everything!"

On the opposite side, Rosa Delgado and Selena Vex work in tandem without even needing to say anything. Rosa steps into Kairo's blind side and catches him with a clubbing shot to the back while Selena bursts past her and drives a jumping knee into Clovis's chest. The two former tag champions move like memory given form, instinctively dividing the field and making sure neither man gets too comfortable.

Mark Bravo: "And here come Rosa and Selena! That's what tag chemistry buys you in a match like this!"

Kairo spins from Rosa's shot and fires back with a forearm, forcing her to absorb and answer. Selena and Clovis crash shoulder to shoulder near the ropes, the impact heavy enough to draw a roar from the crowd. Trey, still dealing with the leg attacks from Troy, lashes out with a sudden right hand that catches Lindz on the temple. Troy fires a knee toward the body in response, but Trey catches just enough of it to shove them off and create a breath of space.

John Phillips: "There are fights breaking out everywhere now!"

The camera catches the whole ring for a beat, six competitors colliding in overlapping bursts of violence and motion. No one is standing still anymore. No one is measuring options. That stage is over. Now they are all just trying to survive the first true wave.

Troy hits the ropes and comes back at Trey with another low kick in mind, but Trey cuts them off with a sudden high dropkick that catches Lindz in the upper chest and sends them skidding backward across the

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canvas. At the same time, Clovis absorbs Selena's second strike and answers with a brutal shove that sends her crashing backward into the turnbuckles. Rosa steps in to help, but Kairo jumps the lane and catches her with a springing forearm that knocks her into the ropes.

Mark Bravo: "This is mayhem now! Nobody's getting clean control of anything!"

Selena pushes out of the corner right as Clovis steps in again, and Rosa rejoins her. Without discussing it, the two women converge on Clovis together, Rosa hammering him with a forearm from one side while Selena catches him with a sharp kick from the other. Clovis staggers a step, absorbing both, his silence somehow making the exchange feel even meaner.

John Phillips: "Selena and Rosa are doing exactly what you'd expect them to do--working together to neutralize the biggest physical threat they can find!"

Kairo, meanwhile, catches Trey Mack turning and darts in with a quick one-two combination of forearm and body shot, trying to reclaim the opening he originally wanted. Trey answers with a kick to the midsection and a shove to the chest, sending Kairo backward toward Troy. Lindz instantly pivots and catches Kairo with a short Muay Thai-style knee to the body, not out of malice, but because in this kind of match there is no time to apologize for collisions.

Mark Bravo: "And that's the danger! Even the people who don't wanna fight each other can still end up catchin' smoke once the ring turns into this!"

The crowd is fully in it now, rising and falling with every impact, every near miss, every new exchange that erupts before the last one has even ended. Bodies are crossing paths too quickly for anyone to stay comfortable. Strategy is already being tested by momentum.

Troy recovers first from the brief collision with Kairo and whips around toward Trey again, but this time Trey sees them coming and snaps a fast back elbow that catches Lindz as they step in. Behind Trey, Clovis finally muscles through the combined pressure from Rosa and Selena, shoving both women apart with raw force and clearing just enough room to re-establish himself. The big man turns--and immediately locks eyes with Kairo Bey.

John Phillips: "Now Clovis Black and Kairo Bey are staring each other down in the middle of all this..."

Around them, Trey resets on one side, Troy bounces back into stance, and Selena and Rosa regroup near the ropes, all six participants now spread just far enough apart again that the next collision is about to choose itself.

For one brief second, the ring finds a strange, temporary shape again.

Not calm. Never calm. Just reorganized.

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Clovis Black stands near center ring, chest rising slowly, eyes locked on Kairo Bey after forcing his way out of the two-on-one pressure from Selena Vex and Rosa Delgado. Trey Mack has drifted a step to one side, resetting his stance and rolling out the leg Troy Lindz targeted at the start. Troy bounces lightly again, shoulders loose, ready to explode back into somebody. Selena and Rosa regroup near the ropes, side by side for the moment, while Kairo squares himself toward Clovis, fully aware that there is no more room for hesitation now.

John Phillips: "And there is that next decision point. The ring has reset just enough for the next wave to choose itself."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, and when Clovis Black starts staring at you like that, you better make a good choice quick."

Kairo makes it first.

He steps in on Clovis with a fast forearm to the jaw, looking to get in first before the bigger man can fully set his hands on him. The shot lands clean. Clovis barely gives ground. Kairo fires a second forearm, then tries to angle off and use his quickness to keep the exchange from becoming a straight-up power fight. Clovis reaches out for him--

Kairo slips under the grasp and clips him with a low kick to the side of the knee.

John Phillips: "Smart strategy by Kairo Bey. He is trying to fight Clovis Black with movement, not force."

Clovis turns sharply and catches Kairo on the follow-up with a heavy shove to the chest that sends him skidding backward. Before Clovis can pursue, Selena and Rosa crash back into the lane, the former tag champions once again recognizing the threat in front of them. Rosa hammers a forearm into Clovis's back. Selena follows with a sharp kick to the ribs. Clovis absorbs both and turns, forced to split his focus again.

Mark Bravo: "And Selena and Rosa go right back to work on the big man. They know exactly what happens if he gets too comfortable in this match."

On the opposite side, Trey Mack sees Troy Lindz stepping back toward him and raises his hands with a half-smile, nodding once like he appreciates the challenge even now. Troy does not smile back. They just chop another Muay Thai kick into the damaged leg and step inside with a tight elbow aimed high. Trey slips enough of it to answer with a quick right hand and then a short kick to the body, both competitors now fully committed to making each other miserable.

John Phillips: "And Troy Lindz and Trey Mack have picked up exactly where they left off. This has become one of the most direct rivalries in the early stages of this match."

Troy snaps a knee upward toward Trey's midsection. Trey turns his hip and catches part of it, then tries to come over the top with a forearm. Troy ducks under and answers with a brutal low kick to the same lead leg

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yet again, forcing Trey to catch his balance on the next step. The crowd reacts loudly to the sound of it.

Mark Bravo: "Troy is married to that leg now, and honestly? That's a good marriage. Every one of those shots matters."

Trey grimaces and tries to crowd Lindz before another kick can come, grabbing for the shoulders and driving forward. Troy gives just enough ground to keep their balance, then plants a hard elbow into Trey's collarbone and turns away to create space. It is not elegant. It is fight-ready. The Muay Thai influence is all over the rhythm now: step, check, knee, elbow, low kick, reset.

Back near center, Clovis finally catches Rosa Delgado by the wrist as she comes in for another forearm. He yanks her toward him and drives a heavy short-arm clothesline across her upper chest that drops her hard to the mat. Selena immediately rushes in to answer for it, landing a forearm of her own, but Clovis catches her around the upper body and muscles her backward toward the corner with frightening ease.

John Phillips: "Clovis Black is just a different kind of physical problem when he gets his hands on you."

Kairo sees Selena getting crowded and darts back in, springing off one foot into a quick flying forearm that catches Clovis on the side of the head and finally breaks the bigger man's grip. Selena stumbles free. Kairo lands, turns, and grabs Rosa by the arm to help her up--more out of match flow than friendship--and the second she's vertical, Rosa drills him with a forearm for his trouble.

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, don't get sentimental in an elimination match, brother!"

Rosa's shot staggers Kairo, and Selena follows with a quick kick to the body, the former tag champions now naturally pivoting from Clovis to Kairo without ever losing step with one another. The crowd rises as they begin to box him in, one woman on each side, Kairo trying to adjust on the fly to avoid getting trapped in exactly the kind of two-on-one sequence that makes alliances so dangerous early.

John Phillips: "This is where Selena and Rosa are so effective. They don't need to talk. They just know where the openings are and how to close them together."

Kairo slips a shot from Selena and ducks under Rosa's next forearm, then bursts through the gap with a shoulder between them, escaping the trap before it fully closes. He hits the ropes--

And Trey Mack catches him coming back with a dropkick.

Mark Bravo: "Wrong place, wrong time!"

Kairo tumbles to the mat and rolls hard under the bottom rope to the apron, hanging on there for a second to keep himself from dropping to the floor. Trey pushes up from the dropkick and immediately turns back toward Troy, but Lindz is already there with another chopping low kick, this one almost taking Trey's planted leg out from under him completely. Trey catches the ropes and stays up, but barely.

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John Phillips: "Troy Lindz is doing real damage to Trey Mack's mobility here!"

At the same time, Clovis Black storms out of the corner and flattens Selena Vex with a brutal shoulder block that sends her rolling across the canvas. Rosa steps in to fire back, but Clovis catches her with a back elbow and then lurches forward toward Trey's side of the ring, perhaps sensing his ally in trouble.

Mark Bravo: "And now here comes Clovis to bail Trey out. That's the danger. Trey doesn't have to survive Troy by himself if Clovis can get there."

Troy sees Clovis coming and turns their whole body toward him, bouncing in place for one beat as if deciding whether to stay on Trey or meet the bigger threat head-on. Around them, Selena is rising, Rosa is recovering, Kairo is pulling himself back through the ropes, and the main event is once again on the edge of breaking in six different directions at once.

Troy Lindz turns fully toward the oncoming Clovis Black, their stance tightening, shoulders rolling once as they make the decision to meet the larger threat head-on rather than keep carving at Trey Mack's leg. Trey, still catching himself on the ropes after the latest low kick, tries to shake life back into the battered limb while Clovis barrels forward like a man with only one intention left in his body.

John Phillips: "And now Troy Lindz is choosing to deal with Clovis Black directly. That is a bold decision."

Mark Bravo: "Bold, stupid, brave, all of the above. Clovis is a lot of man to just stand there and accept."

Clovis reaches first, looking to simply grab and crush through the space. Troy does not let that happen. They whip a fast Muay Thai kick into the side of the thigh as Clovis steps in, then a second one from the opposite angle before the bigger man can fully clamp down. Clovis absorbs both and keeps coming anyway, but the shots do enough to disrupt the line just slightly.

John Phillips: "Good leg attacks from Troy, even against a man that size."

Troy follows with a tight elbow toward the jaw. Clovis partially catches it on the shoulder and lunges through the contact, finally getting both hands on Lindz and shoving them backward with violent force. Troy skids across the canvas and nearly collides with the turnbuckles, but plants, stays upright, and comes right back with a sharp knee-check motion as Clovis closes again.

Mark Bravo: "That's the thing with Troy now. They don't just move pretty. They move mean."

Across the ring, Selena Vex is back on her feet and immediately checks on Rosa Delgado with one glance before both women turn their attention toward Kairo Bey, who is just re-entering through the ropes after Trey's dropkick sent him spilling to the apron. Kairo ducks under Selena's first attempt to catch him coming in, but Rosa meets him with a hard forearm across the upper chest that stops him cold.

John Phillips: "Selena and Rosa still working in sync, and Kairo Bey is having a hard time getting a clean

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foothold in this match because of it."

Kairo answers Rosa with a fast right hand, then snaps a kick into Selena's midsection as she steps in behind it. He tries to burst out through the middle again, but this time Selena catches him with a sharp knee to the body and Rosa follows with a forearm to the back, sending him stumbling toward the center where chaos is already waiting.

Mark Bravo: "And that's what teamwork looks like in a match where it technically shouldn't exist."

That stumble carries Kairo right into Trey Mack, who has finally pushed off the ropes and found his balance enough to rejoin the fight. Trey instinctively swings, clipping Kairo with a quick forearm to the side of the head. Kairo fires back immediately, and for the first time tonight those two get the direct exchange they nearly had before Troy stepped in and changed everything.

John Phillips: "And there it is! Kairo Bey and Trey Mack finally collide!"

Trey throws another forearm. Kairo slips just enough of it to answer with a body shot and a fast kick to the side. Trey tries to plant and return something heavier, but the leg Troy has been punishing all match is still betraying him just enough to keep the power from fully settling in. Kairo sees that and tries to turn the pace up, backing Trey two steps with quick strikes.

Mark Bravo: "Trey's still dangerous, but that leg damage is real. Troy did a number on him early."

Meanwhile, Clovis Black has finally cornered Troy near the ropes. Lindz lands another leg kick and a short elbow, but Clovis simply muscled through the contact, catches them around the upper body, and launches them across the ring with a raw, ugly throw that sends Troy crashing to the mat and rolling hard toward the far corner.

John Phillips: "Clovis just threw Troy Lindz across the ring!"

The crowd roars at the force of it. Clovis turns immediately, scanning for Trey, and sees his partner trading with Kairo near center. He starts moving that way. Selena sees it too and rushes in, trying to cut him off with a forearm. Clovis absorbs it and keeps walking. Rosa joins with a second strike. Clovis finally turns and catches Rosa under the arm, then hurls her backward into the ropes with startling ease.

Mark Bravo: "This guy is a wrecking ball with bad intentions."

Selena leaps onto Clovis's back from the side, trying to slow the freight train down before he can reach Trey and Kairo. Clovis staggers one step under the sudden weight, reaches back, and throws Selena off over his shoulder. She lands rough but rolls through, coming back up with her eyes locked on him and no fear in her posture.

John Phillips: "Selena Vex is not backing down from Clovis Black one bit!"

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In the middle of it all, Trey finally catches Kairo with a kick to the stomach and tries to follow with something bigger, but Kairo sidesteps and answers with a quick enzuigiri that clips Trey high enough to send him reeling sideways. The crowd pops. Kairo takes one step in to capitalize--

And Troy Lindz comes flying back into the lane with a running knee that smashes Trey square in the chest.

Mark Bravo: "Troy is back in it!"

Trey folds and drops to one knee, and suddenly Kairo and Troy are both standing over the same man. The crowd rises, sensing the odd little symmetry of it. Earlier, Troy shoved Kairo aside to attack Trey first. Now both of them are right there, both with a chance to pile onto the same target.

John Phillips: "And now Kairo Bey and Troy Lindz are sharing a lane, whether they planned to or not."

Neither attacks the other.

Kairo looks at Troy for the briefest moment. Troy looks back. Then both turn their eyes right back to Trey Mack, the temporary alignment holding exactly as expected. Around them, Selena and Rosa regroup once more after being swatted aside by Clovis, and the silent enforcer turns, realizing in the same instant that his partner is in serious trouble and he may be too late to stop what's coming next.

Trey Mack is down on one knee near center ring, chest heaving, one hand posted to the mat as he tries to recover from the running knee Troy Lindz just drove into him. Kairo Bey stands on one side of him. Troy on the other. For one brief, dangerous second, the shape of the ring becomes painfully clear.

Trey is in trouble.

John Phillips: "And this is exactly the kind of moment that can change an elimination match in a hurry. Trey Mack is trapped in the middle, and both Kairo Bey and Troy Lindz are looking at the same target."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, and Trey knows it too. This is the price you pay when the whole ring starts moving faster than your backup can get there."

Kairo and Troy glance at each other for the briefest beat, not in friendship, not in agreement spoken aloud, but in simple recognition. Neither one is looking to turn on the other. Not yet. Not here. Not when Trey Mack is sitting right between them begging to be punished.

Kairo moves first.

He snaps a quick kick into Trey's side, not a desperate shot, but a clean, opportunistic one meant to keep him folded and vulnerable. Trey grunts and curls tighter over the blow. Before he can even fully react, Troy steps in from the other side and drives a sharp Muay Thai knee into the upper chest, knocking Trey backward onto both hands.

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John Phillips: "And now Kairo and Troy are picking Trey Mack apart from both sides!"

The crowd comes alive at the sequence, recognizing the danger instantly. Trey tries to push himself up, but Kairo clips him with a fast forearm to the side of the head and then circles off, making room just as Troy cracks him across the body with another short, punishing kick. It is not coordinated in a formal way. It is not a double-team born of trust. It is simply two competitors seeing the same opening and understanding that there is no reason to waste it.

Mark Bravo: "This is nasty work. They don't even need to like each other. All they need is the same problem in front of them."

Clovis Black sees it and storms forward, finally trying to bulldoze his way into the lane to rescue his partner. But he never gets a clean path.

Selena Vex darts in from one side and catches him with a forearm to the jaw. Rosa Delgado follows a heartbeat later with a hard shot to the shoulder and upper back. The impact does not stop Clovis entirely, but it does slow him long enough to matter. He turns, swinging a heavy arm toward Selena. She ducks under it and slips past, while Rosa crashes into him from the side again, refusing to let him move freely.

John Phillips: "Selena and Rosa know exactly what they're doing. They are not letting Clovis Black get to Trey Mack cleanly."

Mark Bravo: "And that's smart. Because the second Clovis gets there, that little two-on-one tune changes real quick."

In the center, Trey finally manages to rise off both hands and tries to fire back at Kairo with a right hand. Kairo leans away and answers with a spinning back elbow that clips Trey across the cheekbone. Trey staggers sideways--right into another knee from Troy that folds him over once more. The crowd roars as Trey drops back to a knee again, clearly overwhelmed by the pace and positioning around him.

John Phillips: "Trey Mack is getting overwhelmed right now! The speed and striking from both sides are just too much in this moment!"

Kairo steps in and grabs a handful of Trey's wrist, looking to pull him upright and maybe finally string together the kind of offense he wanted from the opening bell. But before he can fully commit, Troy is already moving again. They whip another low Muay Thai kick into Trey's damaged leg, the same one they targeted from the very start, and the shot takes whatever stability he had left. Trey's base gives way and he spills backward onto the canvas.

Mark Bravo: "That leg is a mess now. Troy has been chopping it down all match long."

Kairo sees Trey flat on his back and dives into the first cover of the main event.

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John Phillips: "First cover of the match!"

Referee: "ONE--"

Troy breaks it up themselves.

Not violently. Not with malice toward Kairo. They simply shove Kairo off Troy before the count can go any farther, making it clear that if someone is going to score the first elimination here, it is not going to be gifted to someone else.

Mark Bravo: "And there you go! Temporary alliances are cute until somebody smells an elimination!"

Kairo rolls back to one knee and looks up at Troy, not angry so much as immediately reminded of the reality of the match. Troy stares right back, chest heaving, stance still tight, and for a brief second it seems like the moment might finally pull them into direct conflict.

But Troy is still right there.

And both of them know it.

John Phillips: "Still no shots between Kairo Bey and Troy Lindz. They're both too smart to lose focus with Trey Mack still down in front of them."

Across the ring, Clovis finally explodes through Selena and Rosa with a violent double shove that sends both women stumbling apart. The crowd gasps as the lane opens at last. Clovis lowers his shoulders and charges toward center ring, his silence somehow making the whole thing feel even more dangerous.

Mark Bravo: "Uh oh. Here comes the cavalry."

Kairo sees Clovis coming first and backs off instinctively, not wanting to be the man standing still in front of that train. Troy holds their ground a beat longer, perhaps too long, and Clovis crashes into them with a brutal body check that sends Lindz rolling across the canvas and creates the breathing room Trey Mack needed.

John Phillips: "Clovis Black just wiped Troy Lindz out!"

Troy drags himself up using Clovis as a shield for a second, limping now, the damage to the leg obvious every time he shifts weight. He points toward Kairo with a furious glare, then toward Troy, clearly wanting both of them before this is over. Clovis stands between Troy and the rest of the field, that silent, intimidating presence once again acting like a wall at his partner's back.

Selena and Rosa recover quickly and start circling in again from the sides. Kairo resets near the ropes. Troy rolls to one knee, shaking off the collision with Clovis. The ring is no longer frozen in one shape. It is breaking apart all over again.

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John Phillips: "We nearly had our first elimination right there, but this match just won't stay in one pattern for long!"

Mark Bravo: "That's because every time somebody gets an opening, three other people come crashing through it."

The crowd rises as all six competitors find each other again, bruised, breathing harder, and now fully aware that the first elimination is close enough to taste.

The six competitors reset in fragments rather than in formation, every one of them breathing harder now, every one of them carrying the marks of the opening chaos. Trey Mack leans against Clovis Black for just a second longer than he would ever want anyone to notice, the targeted leg clearly bothering him. Troy Lindz is up on one knee after getting blasted across the ring by Clovis. Kairo Bey hovers near the ropes, eyes tracking every movement. Selena Vex and Rosa Delgado circle in from the sides, both women recognizing the same thing at the same time.

John Phillips: "And that is the danger point now. Everybody has tasted how close that first elimination can be, and that changes the whole way you look at every opening."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, because the second somebody drops and stays down half a beat too long, the whole ring starts smelling blood."

Troy pushes up from one knee and storms back into the action, refusing to let Clovis Black's collision keep them out of the fight. They dart toward Trey Mack again, clearly wanting to go right back to the damaged leg and finish what they started. Kairo sees it too and moves at the same time, stepping into Trey's lane with a sudden burst, clipping him with a fast forearm that staggers him away from Clovis's protection.

John Phillips: "Kairo Bey and Troy Lindz both know Trey Mack is vulnerable!"

Troy whips a sharp low kick into Trey's leg. Kairo follows with a quick body shot. Trey lurches sideways, trying to protect the limb, and in the confusion Clovis gets momentarily screened off by Rosa Delgado stepping into his path with a hard forearm to the chest while Selena Vex flanks from the other side.

Mark Bravo: "And again, Clovis can't get there clean because the whole ring keeps throwing bodies in front of him!"

Troy lands another kick to Trey's leg and finally sends him down to a knee again. The second it happens, Troy drops into a cover, trying to steal the first elimination before anybody else can react.

John Phillips: "Troy Lindz with the cover!"

Referee: "ONE! TWO--"

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Kairo Bey dives in and shoves Troy off the pin.

Mark Bravo: "And Kairo gives it right back!"

The crowd reacts instantly, recognizing the callback without needing it explained. Earlier, Troy pushed Kairo off a pin attempt on Trey. Now Kairo has returned the favor, breaking up Troy's chance before it can become anything real.

John Phillips: "That is exactly what Troy did to Kairo earlier! Same situation, same instinct, same reminder that nobody is giving away the first elimination for free!"

Troy rolls through the shove and pops back up, eyes locking onto Kairo. For a brief second the tension between them spikes. Not because they want to fight each other. Not because the understanding between them has disappeared. But because in a match like this, even aligned instincts can breed resentment when opportunities are that close.

That tiny hesitation is all Selena Vex needs.

She bursts into the opening from the side, hooks Troy around the waist, and rolls them backward into a tight schoolboy-style cradle, stacking their shoulders down before Lindz can fully reset their balance.

John Phillips: "Selena Vex with the roll-up! Selena may steal this!"

Referee: "ONE! TWO--"

The crowd rises with the count.

Referee: "TWO--!"

Kairo sees it from two directions at once.

On one side, this is exactly the opening you want in an elimination match. Let Selena get the pin. Let the field shrink. Let somebody else disappear while you save your own energy and your own risk.

On the other side, it is Troy.

The one person in this ring Kairo has not wanted to attack. The one person whose lane has kept overlapping with his all match. The one person he knows he can trust, at least more than the others, not to come for him unless forced to.

The hesitation flashes all over Kairo's face.

Mark Bravo: "And now look at Kairo! This is the internal fight right here!"

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John Phillips: "Because if Kairo does nothing, Troy Lindz may be eliminated! But if he breaks it up, he is choosing a side whether he wants to or not!"

The referee's hand drops again.

Referee: "THR--"

Kairo commits.

He dives across the ring and throws himself into Selena Vex, breaking the cover up at two and three-quarters before the count can reach three. The crowd erupts as Troy's shoulder pops free at the very last heartbeat.

John Phillips: "Kairo Bey breaks it up! Kairo Bey saves Troy Lindz from elimination!"

Mark Bravo: "And there it is! He couldn't let it happen!"

Selena rolls away in frustration, slapping the mat once as the chance disappears. Rosa Delgado immediately steps in beside her, eyes flashing toward Kairo now, fully understanding what he just chose. Troy rolls backward out of the cradle, breathless, startled, and for a moment even they seem to register the significance of it.

John Phillips: "That was not just strategy. That was personal judgment in a split second. Kairo Bey had to decide who he was willing to let go, and he decided it was not going to be Troy Lindz."

Kairo pushes back to one knee, chest heaving, eyes flicking once toward Troy and then away again almost immediately, as if even he is not fully ready to sit in what that choice means. Across from him, Troy rises slower, still recovering, but now with a new awareness in their expression. The match keeps moving. The danger keeps coming. But that moment has changed something.

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, but now everybody else saw it too. Selena saw it. Rosa saw it. Clovis saw it. Trey saw it. Kairo might've just painted a target on both of 'em."

And right on cue, Trey Mack--still limping, still hurting, but still very much in this--lunges back into the center with Clovis Black close behind, while Selena and Rosa regroup with fresh irritation and Troy and Kairo find themselves side by side for one dangerous beat longer than before. The main event has not calmed.

It has only gotten more complicated.

The ring explodes back into motion the second Kairo Bey breaks up Selena Vex's cradle on Troy Lindz. Selena scrambles up with frustration written all over her face. Rosa Delgado is already there beside her. Trey Mack limps forward with a renewed edge in his eyes. Clovis Black follows like a storm cloud given shape. And right in the middle of it all are Kairo and Troy, still too close together after a choice that everybody in the

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ring just saw.

John Phillips: "That one decision has changed the whole shape of this match. Kairo Bey just saved Troy Lindz, and now the rest of the field knows exactly where the soft point might be."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, and in a match like this, the second people think you've got a preference, they start trying to use it against you."

Selena takes the first shot, driving a forearm into Kairo's back before he can fully rise. Rosa follows with a hard kick to the ribs that bends him sideways. Kairo tries to answer back, but Trey Mack darts in from the other side and clips him with a sharp forearm to the jaw, sending him stumbling backward into the ropes.

John Phillips: "And now they're swarming Kairo Bey!"

Troy sees it and steps in immediately, trying to cut the pressure off. They catch Trey with a brutal Muay Thai low kick to the leg, then turn and crack Rosa Delgado with a short elbow in tight. Selena moves in to stop them and eats a forearm for her trouble, but Clovis Black finally arrives with a purpose and levels Troy with a crushing body check that folds them backward and drives them toward the far corner.

Mark Bravo: "There's the isolation! Clovis just took Troy out of the picture!"

Clovis does not let Lindz bounce free. He follows them into the corner, burying a shoulder into the midsection and keeping them trapped there with raw force. Trey steps in beside him and throws a quick shot to the body, then another, the two men finally using their partnership to its fullest effect. Troy fires back with a desperate elbow and then a knee from close quarters, but there is no room to fully work. No room to breathe. No room to get back to Kairo.

John Phillips: "Troy Lindz is getting completely isolated in that corner, and that leaves Kairo Bey with nobody between him and the rest of the field!"

That is exactly what Selena and Rosa wanted.

Selena snatches Kairo by the arm and spins him around into a fast back elbow from Rosa. Kairo staggers. Selena lands a kick to the midsection. Rosa follows with a forearm to the back of the neck. Kairo drops to one knee as the two former tag champions operate in tandem with ruthless efficiency, the kind of teamwork they have spent too many years building to need words for.

Mark Bravo: "And now Kairo is the one getting picked apart. This is what happens when the ring decides you're the opening."

Kairo tries to fight up, throwing a forearm into Rosa's chest and then reaching for Selena, but Selena slips aside and catches him with a sharp knee to the body. That doubles him over just enough for Rosa to hook the head and drive him down with a snapping bulldog variation right near center ring. The crowd groans,

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sensing what might be coming.

John Phillips: "Kairo Bey is in real danger now!"

Selena immediately dives into the cover, hooking the far leg tight.

Referee: "ONE! TWO--"

Kairo kicks out.

The crowd pops for the survival, but the reaction is more hope than belief. Kairo rolls onto his side, gasping, trying to create distance, and instantly sees Troy still trapped across the ring, Clovis and Trey leaning on them like wolves keeping a door shut.

John Phillips: "Troy Lindz cannot get there! Kairo Bey is on his own now!"

Selena rises first, clearly annoyed the first cover did not finish it. Rosa drags Kairo up by the arm while Selena sets in front of him, both women making eye contact for a split second, deciding the next move in silence. Rosa whips Kairo toward Selena--

Selena catches him flush with a jumping knee to the face.

Kairo reels backward from the strike, barely remaining upright, and Rosa is there immediately to spin him and drive him down with a quick neckbreaker. The combination is smooth, fast, and punishing.

Mark Bravo: "That was nasty. Real nasty."

Selena covers again.

Referee: "ONE! TWO! THREE!"

The bell rings for the elimination.

John Phillips: "Kairo Bey has been eliminated!"

The reaction in the building is not explosive. It is the opposite. It is the air leaving the room.

Kairo lies flat on the mat for a beat, staring upward, and the disappointment settles over the arena like a weight everyone can feel at once. This was supposed to be a chance to turn it around. A chance to silence the losses. A chance to make all the doubt go quiet. Instead, it has happened again. Another opportunity gone.

Mark Bravo: "Man... you can feel that one. That's not just an elimination. That's another heartbreak for Kairo

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Bey."

Across the ring, Troy finally blasts free from the corner with a hard elbow to Trey Mack and a sharp knee into Clovis Black's midsection. They spin out of the trap and turn just in time to see Kairo eliminated, the look on their face shifting instantly from pure fight to something heavier. Not guilt. Not hesitation. More like the cold reality that the person they were trying not to leave behind just got left anyway.

John Phillips: "And Troy Lindz sees it. They fought to get free, but they were just a second too late."

Outside the ring, Eli Creed is already moving down the floor, eyes locked on Kairo as officials motion for the eliminated competitor to leave. Creed cups his hands and shouts toward the apron with intense certainty, as though he has been waiting for exactly this wound to reopen.

Eli Creed: "Kairo! Kairo, you can overcome this!"

Kairo rolls under the bottom rope and drops to the floor, one hand on the apron as he steadies himself, the frustration and disappointment all over his face. He hears Creed. Of course he hears Creed. The whole arena does.

Eli Creed: "You don't have to keep breaking like this! The Creed Method fixes this! The Creed Method changes this!"

Kairo shuts his eyes for one second, jaw tight, then grabs at his own hair in frustration before looking away from the ring entirely. Inside, the match is still going. Troy has already turned back to survive the next exchange. Selena and Rosa regroup after the elimination. Trey and Clovis reset with one target removed from the field.

But for a moment, the camera stays on Kairo.

Another loss. Another almost. Another chance that slipped away.

John Phillips: "And now Eli Creed is right there, trying to pull Kairo Bey deeper into that orbit at the exact moment Kairo is most vulnerable."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, because that's when those guys always sound the smartest. Right after the world punches you in the mouth."

Kairo finally pushes off the apron and starts toward the back, not looking at Creed, not answering him, not giving him anything. Creed follows just enough to keep talking, to keep the voice in Kairo's ear alive as the eliminated competitor walks away from the ring and away from another dream that did not become reality.

Inside the ropes, five remain.

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But the shadow of Kairo Bey's elimination lingers over the whole building as the match goes on.

Inside the ring, there is no time to mourn.

The second Kairo Bey disappears from the equation, the remaining five competitors seem to feel the shape of the match change all at once. More room. Fewer bodies. Greater risk. Greater reward. And for Troy Lindz, there is not even a full second to absorb what just happened before the rest of the field comes crashing back toward them.

John Phillips: "We are down to five, and you can feel the match immediately tightening around the people still left in it."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, because now every elimination matters even more. The breathing room gets better, but so does the danger."

Troy turns away from the ropes and gets caught instantly by Trey Mack, who drives a forearm into the side of the head before Lindz can fully reset. Clovis Black steps in right behind him, forcing Troy backward with his sheer presence alone, while Selena Vex and Rosa Delgado circle from the opposite side, clearly aware that Troy is now isolated and still a problem if left standing too long.

John Phillips: "And now Troy Lindz is the one in the crosshairs."

Trey snaps a kick into Troy's thigh, then another to the body, looking to pay back some of the Muay Thai punishment they dealt him earlier. Troy absorbs the first, checks the second partially, and answers with a vicious elbow in tight that catches Trey on the temple. The impact rocks Mack sideways and draws a sharp reaction from the crowd.

Mark Bravo: "Troy's still dangerous as hell. You don't just erase that because Kairo got bounced."

Clovis lunges the moment Trey is knocked off line, trying to flatten Lindz with a short-range shoulder drive, but Troy slips just enough to the side and clips Clovis with a brutal low kick to the leg. It does not stop the big man entirely, but it slows him enough that Troy can pivot out of the lane and avoid getting swallowed by his size.

John Phillips: "Excellent evasion from Troy Lindz. They know they cannot let Clovis Black get both hands on them cleanly."

Rosa Delgado steps in to change that, firing a forearm into Troy's upper back from the side. Troy turns and catches Rosa with a knee to the midsection. Selena immediately follows with a sharp kick to the ribs, and suddenly Lindz is once again being attacked from multiple angles, the ring collapsing inward around them in overlapping waves.

Mark Bravo: "That's the problem now. With Kairo gone, Troy doesn't have that unofficial pressure release

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point anymore. Every direction's live."

Troy hits the ropes to escape the cluster and comes back with a flying knee toward Trey, but Selena catches the movement first and clips them from the side with a forearm that throws the trajectory off. Troy lands awkwardly instead of cleanly, and that is all Clovis needs. He steps through the opening and clubs Lindz across the chest with a crushing lariat that nearly folds them in half.

John Phillips: "What a shot by Clovis Black!"

Troy crashes to the mat and rolls instinctively, but not far enough. Trey is already there, dropping into a cover with both hands pressing down across the shoulders.

Referee: "ONE! TWO--"

Rosa breaks it up.

Mark Bravo: "And now Rosa says no chance!"

She drives an elbow down across Trey's back and shoves him off the cover, making it clear that if someone is getting the next elimination, she has no intention of watching it happen from the side. Selena steps in right with her, the two former tag champions immediately turning the ring into another tactical puzzle. Trey rises angrily and shoves Rosa. Selena shoves him back. Clovis steps between them like a wall.

John Phillips: "Everyone is smelling the next elimination now. Nobody wants to give one away. Nobody wants to let one happen unless it benefits them."

Troy uses the confusion to roll toward the ropes and pull themselves back up, chest heaving, eyes still carrying the shadow of Kairo's exit even as instinct forces them to stay in the fight. Across the ring, the camera briefly catches Eli Creed still shouting up the aisle after Kairo, his voice faint now compared to the chaos inside the ropes, but present enough to remind everyone that the emotional fallout has not fully left the building.

Mark Bravo: "And Troy saw Kairo go. You know that's still in their head somewhere, even if they don't have the luxury of showing it."

Selena and Rosa decide first.

They split their attention rather than doubling down on one target. Selena darts toward Troy near the ropes while Rosa stays in Trey and Clovis's orbit, knowing the second one side gets too comfortable in this match, it can turn into a numbers problem fast. Selena leaps in with a knee to Troy's body, driving them back into the ropes again, but Lindz catches the top strand, absorbs, and answers with a slicing elbow across Selena's jaw.

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John Phillips: "Troy Lindz still fighting with those Muay Thai instincts--knees, elbows, low kicks, all of it still there under the pressure."

Selena stumbles back. Rosa turns her head just long enough to see it, and in that moment Trey Mack bursts past her with a limping but determined charge toward Troy. He swings for the head. Troy ducks and answers with another low kick to the leg. Trey nearly drops, catches himself on the ropes, and snarls through the pain.

Mark Bravo: "Troy is not letting Trey forget that leg. Not for one second."

But Clovis is there again. Always there. He storms in behind Trey and this time catches Lindz cleanly around the shoulders, driving them backward into the corner before they can slip away. Troy throws elbows, one after the other, but Clovis absorbs the first, powers through the second, and plants them hard against the buckles. Trey steps in beside him, breathing hard, and for a moment the two men look ready to finally unload without interruption.

John Phillips: "This is bad news for Troy Lindz. Clovis and Trey have them trapped."

Selena starts back toward that side of the ring. Rosa sees it and follows. The crowd rises again, sensing another collision of all remaining forces just as the five-way main event threatens to break apart and recombine all over again.

Clovis Black has Troy Lindz trapped in the corner, one massive forearm pressed across their upper chest while Trey Mack steps in beside him, the damaged leg slowing him but not stopping the hunger in his eyes. Across the ring, Selena Vex and Rosa Delgado see the danger and start moving fast, both knowing that if Troy gets trapped there for too long, the next elimination might come in a hurry.

John Phillips: "Troy Lindz is in serious trouble now. Clovis Black and Trey Mack have them pinned in the worst place possible."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, and this is the first time all match Trey and Clovis have had enough breathing room to really cash in on their numbers."

Clovis drives a shoulder into Troy's midsection, crushing them back into the turnbuckles. Trey follows with a sharp shot to the ribs, then another, each one less flashy than angry. Troy tries to answer with a short elbow over the top, catching Trey on the temple, but Clovis immediately buries another shoulder into the body and takes the wind right back out of them.

John Phillips: "They are suffocating Troy Lindz here. No room to strike. No room to breathe. No room to escape."

Selena gets there first and leaps onto Trey Mack's back, dragging him off the corner before he can add another shot. Trey stumbles away and turns, furious, swinging wildly. Selena ducks under and cracks him with a forearm that sends him limping sideways. Rosa follows a beat later and throws herself into Clovis with

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everything she has, trying to break the bigger man's hold on Troy.

Mark Bravo: "Good timing from Selena and Rosa. If they don't break this up now, Troy's done."

Rosa hammers Clovis across the back. Then again. Clovis finally peels himself away from Troy and turns, catching Rosa by the wrist and flinging her violently into the adjacent corner. Rosa hits hard, but bounces out fighting, only to be caught by a boot to the body from Trey, who has recovered enough to rejoin the lane.

John Phillips: "And there goes the rescue! Trey and Clovis regrouped fast!"

Troy stumbles out of the corner, bent over, one arm wrapping around the ribs as they try to create space. Selena reaches for them, perhaps to pull them clear of danger--but Trey cuts across the path and drills Troy with a hard forearm to the side of the head. Troy rocks back, dazed, and Clovis steps through with a brutal short clothesline that turns them inside out near center ring.

Mark Bravo: "Good grief! Clovis just folded Troy Lindz in half!"

The crowd gasps as Troy crashes to the canvas. Trey drops immediately into the cover, hooking the near leg, but Rosa dives in from the side and drives a forearm down across Trey's back to break it up at two.

Referee: "ONE! TWO--"

John Phillips: "Broken up by Rosa Delgado!"

Trey rolls off the pin attempt in frustration and shoves himself back up, only to eat a sharp kick from Selena that knocks him into the ropes again. Rosa grabs Troy by the wrist and tries to haul them toward safety, but Lindz can barely stay under themselves. The damage is starting to show now. The corner beating. The lariat from Clovis. The constant pressure from all sides.

John Phillips: "Troy Lindz is running on instinct right now. They are still fighting, but the body is starting to give them less and less to work with."

Clovis steps in again, and this time Selena is the one who tries to cut him off. She lands a forearm. Clovis absorbs it. Rosa adds another. Clovis takes that too, then storms through both women and catches Troy by the shoulder before they can be fully pulled away. He yanks Lindz back toward him and throws them into Trey Mack's waiting knee.

Mark Bravo: "There it is! That's the opening!"

Trey's knee catches Troy flush in the body, folding them over and dropping them right into Clovis's hands. In one brutal motion, Clovis hoists Lindz and drives them down with a crushing slam that leaves them sprawled and gasping on the mat.

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John Phillips: "What a combination by Trey Mack and Clovis Black!"

Selena rushes in to break it up. Rosa right behind her. Trey sees them coming and throws himself sideways, tackling Selena just enough to delay her path. Rosa tries to jump over the bodies to get to the pin, but Clovis rises into her with a shoulder block that sends her sprawling backward and clears the field for one clean chance.

Mark Bravo: "That might do it! Trey and Clovis just bought themselves the lane they needed!"

Clovis drops over Troy Lindz and hooks both legs this time, folding their shoulders down tight against the canvas while Trey sprawls himself across the path of Selena and Rosa like a human roadblock.

Referee: "ONE! TWO! THREE!"

John Phillips: "Troy Lindz has been eliminated!"

The bell sounds for the elimination, and the crowd gives a strong reaction--part disappointment, part appreciation for how much punishment Troy absorbed before finally being put away. On the mat, Lindz lies on their back for a second, chest rising sharply, eyes unfocused from the damage. Trey rolls away and slaps the canvas once, satisfied and exhausted, while Clovis rises slowly over the fallen body, expression unreadable as ever.

Mark Bravo: "That one took a lot to get. Troy Lindz was not easy to remove from this thing."

Selena gets to her knees with frustration all over her face. Rosa pushes herself up with a glare aimed squarely at Trey and Clovis. Across the ring, Eli Creed watches from the floor, saying nothing now, eyes narrowed as Troy starts to stir and realize what just happened. The one person Kairo Bey chose to save is gone anyway.

John Phillips: "And now we are down to four. Selena Vex. Rosa Delgado. Trey Mack. Clovis Black. Two alliances remain. Two former tag champions. Two dangerous running mates. And now this main event enters an entirely different phase."

Troy rolls under the bottom rope and drops to the floor, disappointed and hurting, while inside the ring the remaining four competitors slowly rise, staring across at one another, all of them knowing that the next choice may finally be the one that turns partner against partner.

On the floor, Troy Lindz rolls away from the ring on one knee, one hand pressed to their ribs, the other braced against the apron as they try to steady themselves after the elimination. The disappointment is obvious even through the pain. They made it deep. They fought through chaos, through traps, through numbers. And still, it was not enough.

That is when Eli Creed steps into their path.

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Not blocking them physically. Not yet. But there all the same, appearing with that same maddeningly controlled calm, the kind of presence that somehow feels louder than shouting. He walks beside Troy as they limp along the ringside floor, his voice low and certain, already turning failure into a sermon.

Eli Creed: "Don't you lower your head."

Troy keeps moving, jaw tight, breathing hard, but Creed stays with them, talking not like a friend trying to comfort, but like a man trying to seize the exact moment a crack appears.

Eli Creed: "This is what I keep telling you. This..."

He gestures back toward the ring with one hand.

Eli Creed: "...this is the opportunity."

Troy glances toward him, not agreeing, not arguing, just too exhausted and irritated to do either. Creed reads that look as permission to keep going.

Eli Creed: "You don't learn from comfort. You don't grow from easy nights. You learn right here. In the loss. In the frustration. In the moment where you either break down..."

He taps his own chest once.

Eli Creed: "...or you build."

Troy turns away from him and keeps walking, but Creed paces with them another step, another second, refusing to let the moment drift away without planting the thought deeper.

Eli Creed: "The Creed Method doesn't lie to you. It doesn't flatter you. It takes nights like this and turns them into something useful."

Troy finally stops and looks at him, frustration and pain still all over their face, but Creed doesn't flinch. He just nods once, like the emotion itself proves his point.

Eli Creed: "Good. Feel it. Remember it. Because this is how change starts."

Troy says nothing. They just shake their head once, not in acceptance, not in denial, then push on toward the back, leaving Creed behind on the floor with his philosophy still hanging in the air.

John Phillips: "And there is Eli Creed again, preaching the Creed Method at the exact moment a competitor is most vulnerable."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, because that's his whole game. Loss happens, and suddenly he's standing there talkin'

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like he sells salvation wholesale."

Inside the ring, the mood has changed.

With Troy gone, the last four remain standing in their corners of the battlefield: Selena Vex. Rosa Delgado. Trey Mack. Clovis Black.

The crowd senses it immediately.

The energy does not dip, but it tightens into something more focused. This is no longer a six-way scramble. No longer an endless flood of bodies and interrupted pinfalls. The ring now has a shape to it, and everyone inside it can see the same shape at the same time.

John Phillips: "And now look at this. Four left. Selena Vex and Rosa Delgado on one side. Trey Mack and Clovis Black on the other."

Mark Bravo: "Two on two. At least on paper."

Selena and Rosa drift closer together, not touching, not speaking, but naturally aligning from shared instinct. Across from them, Trey straightens slowly, still favoring the leg Troy beat on throughout the match, while Clovis steps up beside him in complete silence, looming and unreadable as ever.

For one long beat, nobody moves.

The four simply stare across the ring at one another, all of them recognizing the same reality. The alliances are still there. The history is still there. The familiarity is still there.

But so is the title.

John Phillips: "This is the moment where everybody in that ring understands exactly what the board looks like. Two former tag champions. Two running mates who came in together. But the same truth still hangs over all of it."

Mark Bravo: "Only one of them gets to leave with the gold."

Trey's chest rises and falls as he looks from Selena to Rosa and back again, clearly measuring whether he and Clovis need to strike first or wait for the other side to blink. Selena's eyes flick briefly toward Rosa, and Rosa's toward Selena, each one understanding the temptation and the danger of staying too close for too long.

Clovis says nothing, but the way he looks at Trey for one split second makes it clear even he knows the eventual truth. Partnership can carry you deep. It cannot carry both of you to the finish line.

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John Phillips: "This is no longer just survival. This is the point where trust becomes complicated."

The crowd buzzes louder with every passing second, sensing the significance of the image in front of them. Four people. Two alliances. One championship. And every person in that ring now has to decide not just how to win...

...but when to stop protecting the person standing beside them.

Mark Bravo: "Yeah. Two on two for the moment. But everybody for themselves in the end."

The camera settles into a wide shot of the ring, all four competitors locked in the same tense realization, the next decision waiting to blow the entire shape of the match apart.

The ring stays frozen for one more second.

Selena Vex and Rosa Delgado stand shoulder to shoulder on one side. Trey Mack and Clovis Black on the other. The crowd inside the PHX Arena can feel the shape of it now, can feel how close this main event is to turning from alliance warfare into betrayal, and that anticipation hangs over the ring like a storm about to break.

John Phillips: "You can almost see the thoughts happening in real time. Stay together a little longer? Strike first? Wait for the other side to crack?"

Mark Bravo: "And that leg on Trey Mack is still bothering him. That matters now. Every little weakness matters now."

Rosa glances once toward Selena. Selena gives the smallest nod.

Across the ring, Trey points toward them, jawing something off-mic, trying to keep the energy loud and confident even as the damage in the leg forces him to plant more carefully. Clovis does not say anything. He just starts forward.

That movement is enough to trigger the next collision.

Selena and Rosa charge together.

Rosa goes straight at Trey Mack, looking to overwhelm the damaged leg before he can get fully moving again. Selena takes the lane toward Clovis Black, clearly understanding that if they let him dictate the pace, the whole thing turns into survival instead of strategy.

John Phillips: "And we're off again! Selena and Rosa strike first!"

Rosa drives a forearm into Trey's jaw and follows with a kick to the same leg Troy punished earlier, forcing

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him to give ground immediately. Trey swings back with a right hand, but Rosa slips just enough of it to stay on him, throwing another shot to the chest and then another to the head, trying to keep him from ever setting his feet.

Mark Bravo: "Smart. If that leg is still weak, don't let him stand still long enough to use anything else."

On the other side, Selena attacks Clovis from an angle rather than straight on, firing a forearm to the side of the head and then circling before he can fully lock onto her. Clovis turns and reaches, but Selena is already gone from that lane, coming back with a sharp kick to the ribs before slipping away again.

John Phillips: "Selena Vex is doing exactly what she has to do against a man like Clovis Black. Hit, move, change the angle, don't let him catch you clean."

But Clovis only needs one opening.

He finally steps through one of Selena's angles and catches her by the upper arm, yanking her straight into him. Selena tries to throw a forearm on the way in, but Clovis absorbs it and shoves her violently backward into the corner. The impact shakes the ring and draws a gasp from the crowd.

Mark Bravo: "There it is. That's the danger. One grab and suddenly the whole fight feels different."

Rosa sees Selena driven into the buckles and starts to turn that direction, but Trey cuts her off with a desperate shot to the body. He follows with a forearm to the back and then limps in behind it, trying to swing momentum with grit rather than stability. Rosa absorbs the body shot, throws a back elbow into Trey's cheek, and then spins to catch him with a clothesline that nearly takes him off his feet. Trey stumbles into the ropes but stays up.

John Phillips: "Rosa Delgado is bringing the fight tonight. She knows exactly how important it is to keep Trey and Clovis from controlling the same stretch at once."

In the corner, Selena slips under Clovis's next attempt to crush her with another body shot and darts out to the side. Clovis turns--right into a running knee from Rosa, who has abandoned Trey for the bigger threat. The knee rocks Clovis back a step. Selena follows instantly with a forearm to the jaw, and just like that the former tag champions are together again, doubling the biggest physical problem left in the match.

Mark Bravo: "That's that chemistry again. They just feel when it's time to change lanes."

Selena lands a kick low. Rosa drives another forearm high. Clovis absorbs both and still tries to come through them, but now the combined pressure is enough to finally move him backward toward the ropes. The crowd rises, sensing a rare moment where the giant is being forced to give ground.

John Phillips: "Selena and Rosa have Clovis Black rocking!"

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Trey sees his partner in trouble and lunges in despite the leg, throwing himself toward Rosa with a forearm that catches her across the side of the head. Rosa stumbles just enough to create a lane, and Clovis uses it immediately, shoving Selena backward off him and then stepping through with a brutal short-arm lariat to Rosa that drops her flat.

Mark Bravo: "And that changed in a heartbeat!"

Selena charges back in, trying to save the moment, but Trey catches her coming with a kick to the midsection and a fast neckbreaker that plants her near center ring. The crowd erupts as Trey rolls through the move and dives over Rosa for a cover, seeing the window before anyone else can close it.

Referee: "ONE! TWO--"

Selena breaks it up.

John Phillips: "Broken up by Selena Vex!"

Selena drives a forearm down across Trey's back and shoves him off Rosa, then immediately reaches for Delgado to pull her up. Trey rolls away clutching at the leg again, frustration and pain written across his face, while Clovis steps in to keep Selena from fully resetting the alliance.

Mark Bravo: "Nobody's getting a clean elimination now. Not with four left and all this history in the ring."

Rosa gets to one knee with Selena's help, but the look they share this time is a little different. Still trust. Still understanding. But now with something heavier behind it. They both know how close that pinfall just was. They both know every save from this point forward brings one of them closer to a harder choice.

John Phillips: "That little hesitation matters. Every near fall is reminding these alliances that eventually, one of you has to let the other go."

Across from them, Trey has pulled himself back upright using the ropes while Clovis stands in front of him, silent and protective. The two sides reset once more, but the space between them feels thinner now. More fragile. One mistake from any of the four could become the next elimination.

The crowd hums with anticipation as the standoff forms again, all four competitors breathing harder, all four carrying damage, all four knowing the match has entered the stage where desperation starts whispering louder than loyalty.

The ring is still holding that fragile four-way shape when suddenly--

Amy Harrison's music hits.

The crowd absolutely loses it.

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Mostly with boos.

John Phillips: "What the hell is she doing out here?!"

Mark Bravo: "You've gotta be kidding me! After what she did to Dahlia Cross earlier tonight, now she's out here during the main event?!"

All four competitors in the ring stop what they are doing and turn toward the entranceway. Selena Vex and Rosa Delgado immediately look up the ramp, both women recognizing the music before the crowd has even fully processed it. Trey Mack turns next. Clovis Black does the same, his expression unreadable as ever.

And then Amy Harrison steps out onto the stage.

The boos somehow get louder.

Amy walks down the ramp with purpose, not sprinting, not panicking, just carrying that same poisonous confidence that has followed her all night. This is the woman who attacked Dahlia Cross before the match ever began. The woman whose toxic influence still hangs over the former members of The Empire. And now she is here, heading directly toward the ring while the main event is still very much alive.

John Phillips: "Selena and Rosa have to know exactly what this is. Amy Harrison is not coming out here for a better seat."

Mark Bravo: "No. She's coming out here because she wants to make this about her. That's what people like Amy do."

Inside the ring, Trey Mack looks over at Clovis Black. There is no panic there. No confusion. Just a quick exchange of glances. Trey shrugs, almost amused by the timing of it all. Clovis gives nothing back with his face, but the understanding is there all the same.

Without a word, the two men make the decision.

They drop down and roll out of the ring.

John Phillips: "Wait a minute--Trey and Clovis are leaving the ring!"

Mark Bravo: "Oh, they know exactly what this is. They want no part of standing in the middle of that history."

That leaves Selena Vex and Rosa Delgado standing inside the ropes as Amy Harrison reaches ringside.

The crowd is molten now, raining boos down from every direction as Amy circles once along the floor and never breaks eye contact with the two women in the ring. Selena stands tall, chin high, eyes hard. Rosa steps half a pace forward, jaw set, all fire and readiness. The former Empire members are not cowering. They are

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waiting.

John Phillips: "And now look at this. Selena Vex and Rosa Delgado, the women who broke away from Amy Harrison's grip, standing in that ring and staring down the woman who once controlled them."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, because that's the real story here. Selena and Rosa got out. They got away from the poison, the manipulation, the whole twisted empire Amy built around herself. And now Amy wants to come back and prove that she still owns a piece of them."

Amy slides into the ring.

She rises slowly, eyes locked forward, and the second she gets to her feet the moment becomes electric. Trey and Clovis remain on the floor now, hovering at ringside and wisely staying out of the emotional blast radius. Inside the ring, all that remains is the stare.

Amy Harrison.

Selena Vex.

Rosa Delgado.

No one speaks.

They do not need to.

John Phillips: "What a visual this is."

Mark Bravo: "Amy Harrison built The Empire around fear, ego, and control. Selena and Rosa finally broke free of that toxic grasp... and now Amy is out here trying to remind them that she still matters."

Selena's eyes never leave Amy's. Rosa's shoulders rise and fall with slow, angry breaths. Amy stands there with that same cold arrogance, the kind that says she still believes all roads should bend back toward her eventually.

John Phillips: "You can feel the history between these three women. You can feel the resentment. The betrayal. The need to prove something."

The crowd continues to boil as the three women stand in the center of the ring, the main event temporarily overtaken by a confrontation that feels years deep and far too personal to be ignored.

And for one long second, nobody moves.

The four remaining competitors are still locked in that tense, fragile standoff when suddenly the arena sound

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changes again.

From the first vocals of Billie Eilish's You Should See Me in a Crown, the entire PHX Arena erupts.

This time, it is not boos.

It is a wall of cheers.

John Phillips: "WAIT A SECOND!"

Mark Bravo: "NO WAY!"

The four in the ring all look sharply toward the entranceway at once, the match instantly forgotten for the moment as the crowd comes completely unglued. The lights shift, the atmosphere changes, and stepping out onto the stage is a woman the audience clearly knows immediately.

Valkyrie Knox.

John Phillips: "IT'S VALKYRIE KNOXX!"

Mark Bravo: "SHE'S BACK! VALKYRIE KNOXX IS BACK!"

The reaction only gets louder as Valkyrie steps fully into view, every bit the imposing, violent force the UTA audience remembers. She does not run. She does not play into the shock. She just starts down the ramp with that same heavy, cold purpose that makes every step feel like bad news for whoever is standing in front of her.

John Phillips: "Listen to this place! Valkyrie Knox has returned and she is heading straight for this ring!"

Inside the ropes, Selena Vex and Rosa Delgado do not know what to make of it.

The two women turn their full attention toward the ramp, confusion and tension flashing across their faces in equal measure. This was supposed to be Amy Harrison's moment of intimidation. Instead, the air has changed around all three of them in an instant.

Amy Harrison turns sharply toward the ramp.

And for the first time since she came out here, the expression on her face shifts in a way that cannot be mistaken.

She is not annoyed.

She is not simply angry.

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She is scared.

Mark Bravo: "Ohhh, look at Amy! Look at Amy Harrison! She is not happy about this at all!"

John Phillips: "Not happy? Mark, that's fear! Amy Harrison is staring down that ramp and she does not like what she sees one bit!"

Valkyrie keeps coming, eyes locked forward, never wavering, never glancing to the sides, her whole presence swallowing the moment as she draws closer to the ring. Amy does not move yet, but her posture has changed. The confidence has cracked. The poison has drained out of the smile that brought her here.

John Phillips: "And can you blame her? Valkyrie Knox is one of the most dangerous women this company has ever seen, and Amy Harrison knows exactly what kind of problem is walking her way right now."

Selena and Rosa both remain standing in place, caught between confusion and realization, their eyes moving from Amy to Valkyrie and back again, trying to understand exactly what this interruption means and why Amy suddenly looks like the one who has been cornered.

Mark Bravo: "Selena and Rosa didn't know what to make of Amy coming out here, and now Amy doesn't know what to make of Valkyrie Knox coming back."

The crowd continues roaring as Valkyrie reaches the bottom of the ramp, the ring now waiting for the next move, the confrontation having shifted yet again in a way nobody saw coming.

Valkyrie Knox reaches the apron and does not hesitate.

She steps through the ropes and into the ring with the kind of cold, violent purpose that makes the entire PHX Arena rise another level. The crowd is still roaring from the shock of her return, but inside the ropes, everything narrows immediately to one point.

Amy Harrison.

Valkyrie walks straight to her.

No circling. No hesitation. No grand pause. Just direct, dangerous movement until the two women are standing forehead to forehead in the dead center of the ring. The tension is immediate and ferocious, both of them yelling at each other so closely that their words blur together in the heat of the moment.

John Phillips: "Valkyrie Knox is right in Amy Harrison's face!"

Mark Bravo: "And Amy's giving it right back! These two are about to explode!"

Selena Vex and Rosa Delgado remain just off to the side, both women completely unsure what the next

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move should even be. A second ago, Amy Harrison was their problem. Now Valkyrie Knox has returned and thrown herself into the center of it, and neither Rosa nor Selena can quite read whether they are about to witness Amy get destroyed or something even stranger.

John Phillips: "Selena and Rosa don't know what to do here! Nobody in this building knows what to do here!"

Valkyrie and Amy keep shouting, forehead to forehead, neither one giving an inch. Then Valkyrie pulls her head back.

The motion is sharp enough that the entire arena reacts at once.

It looks exactly like she is winding up to headbutt Amy Harrison straight in the face.

Mark Bravo: "HERE IT COMES--!"

But Amy smiles.

And at the very last second, she slips to the side.

Valkyrie surges forward--

--and instead of headbutting Amy, she drives a massive boot straight into Rosa Delgado's face.

The kick lands with vicious force, snapping Rosa backward and dropping her to the canvas in a heap as the crowd gasps in one giant, horrified wave.

John Phillips: "OH MY GOD! VALKYRIE JUST TOOK ROSA DELGADO'S HEAD OFF!"

Mark Bravo: "NO! NO, NO, NO! THAT WASN'T AN ACCIDENT!"

Selena Vex freezes for one stunned second, absolute disbelief all over her face. Then instinct takes over. She charges Valkyrie in pure shock and anger, trying to take her down before any more damage can be done.

Valkyrie catches her.

She grabs Selena around the waist and upper body, powers her up, and drives her into the mat with an enormous spinebuster that rattles the ring and leaves Selena sprawled beside Rosa.

John Phillips: "Huge spinebuster! Selena Vex just got planted!"

Mark Bravo: "What the hell are we watching?!"

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Amy Harrison is laughing now.

Not smirking. Not just satisfied. Laughing.

The realization hits the commentary desk and the crowd all at once.

John Phillips: "It was a setup! It was a setup all along!"

Mark Bravo: "Valkyrie Knox didn't come out here to stop Amy Harrison--she came out here to join her!"

Inside the ring, Valkyrie stands over the fallen Rosa and Selena like an executioner reunited with the person who hired them. Amy circles beside her with open satisfaction, all the fear from moments ago now revealed for what it really was: a performance. A trap. A cruel, brilliant bait-and-switch.

John Phillips: "Valkyrie Knox has aligned herself with Amy Harrison! This was orchestrated!"

And it gets worse.

On the outside, Trey Mack and Clovis Black see the opening and immediately slide back into the ring.

Mark Bravo: "Oh, come on! Now Trey and Clovis are getting back in this too!"

Valkyrie begins stomping away at the downed former Empire members, driving heavy boots into Rosa and Selena with ruthless precision. Amy stands beside her, still grinning, then turns toward Trey and Clovis.

She looks at them.

And then, with all the authority of someone directing hired violence, she motions for them to finish it.

John Phillips: "Amy Harrison just gave them an order!"

Mark Bravo: "What's this? What is this?!"

Trey and Clovis do not hesitate.

They step forward.

John Phillips: "TRY MACK AND CLOVIS BLACK ARE ALIGNING WITH AMY HARRISON!"

Mark Bravo: "This is insane! Amy Harrison just turned this whole situation into a full-blown takeover!"

The ring is no longer a championship match.

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It is an ambush.

Rosa Delgado and Selena Vex are down. Valkyrie Knoxx is stomping them. Amy Harrison is smiling. Trey Mack and Clovis Black are stepping in to join the assault. And the PHX Arena is in total chaos as the scale of the alliance forming in front of them becomes horribly clear.

Selena Vex and Rosa Delgado are both down and vulnerable, the former Empire members left reeling by the betrayal they never saw coming. Valkyrie Knoxx stands over them like a wrecking force unleashed, while Amy Harrison watches with a cruel, satisfied smile that makes the whole thing feel even uglier. Trey Mack and Clovis Black step fully into the moment now, no hesitation left, no doubt about where they stand.

John Phillips: "This is sickening. This is absolutely sickening to watch."

Mark Bravo: "Nobody thought they'd see this tonight. Nobody. This is way beyond an alliance. This is a mugging in the middle of the main event."

Trey reaches down and drags Selena Vex up by the arm and the hair, yanking her off the canvas while she is still trying to shake the spinebuster out of her body. On the other side, Clovis Black hauls Rosa Delgado up with brutal ease, the force of it making her look almost weightless in his hands. Both women are barely able to defend themselves, and that is exactly how the four aggressors want it.

John Phillips: "Selena and Rosa never had a chance to prepare for this kind of ambush. This thing completely changed shape the second Valkyrie revealed herself."

Trey hooks Selena and pulls her in tight, talking at her, jawing in her face even as she tries to fight through the haze and swing back with something. Whatever she throws has no force behind it. Trey grins, then snaps her down hard with a huge move, driving her into the mat with a violent impact that leaves her bouncing once and then going still.

Mark Bravo: "Trey just planted Selena! Good lord!"

At nearly the same time, Clovis muscles Rosa up and absolutely crushes her with a devastating power move of his own, throwing all of his size and force into the impact. Rosa hits hard, her body jarring against the canvas before collapsing flat, and the crowd rains boos down even louder as the destruction becomes impossible to look away from.

John Phillips: "And Clovis Black just destroyed Rosa Delgado!"

Amy Harrison stands there watching it all unfold, arms folded, an ugly kind of pride all over her face. Beside her, Valkyrie Knoxx stares down at the wreckage with cold approval, every bit the enforcer Amy clearly wanted standing at her side for this moment.

Mark Bravo: "Amy and Valkyrie are just watching this like they're admiring their own work."

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Trey rolls over Selena. Clovis drops over Rosa.

Both men hook the legs.

The referee looks shaken, but he is there, in position, and the count begins.

Referee: "ONE! TWO! THREE!"

The eliminations happen at the same time.

John Phillips: "They're both out! Selena Vex and Rosa Delgado have both been eliminated!"

Mark Bravo: "At the same damn time! This is unbelievable!"

The boos are deafening now.

They pour down from every part of the PHX Arena as Trey Mack rises slowly from the pin over Selena and Clovis Black stands up from Rosa, both men having just benefited from an assault nobody in the building could have imagined coming into this match. Amy Harrison smiles wider. Valkyrie Knox does not smile at all. She does not need to. The destruction around her says enough.

John Phillips: "This is beyond anything anyone thought they would see here tonight. Amy Harrison, Valkyrie Knox, Trey Mack, and Clovis Black have just turned this main event completely upside down!"

Selena rolls weakly onto her side, barely aware of where she is. Rosa lies near the ropes, stunned and broken down by the ambush and the finish that followed it. The crowd continues to shower the ring with hate, outraged at what they have just witnessed and fully aware that this was not just a shift in one match.

This was a statement.

Mark Bravo: "Nobody came in expecting this kind of ending to the Empire story tonight. Amy Harrison just made sure the whole world saw exactly how far she was willing to go to send her message."

In the ring, only Trey Mack and Clovis Black remain officially alive in the match. Amy Harrison and Valkyrie Knox stand with them, the four of them framed against a wall of boos as the reality settles in.

The impossible has happened.

And the main event has become something far darker than anyone ever expected.

The ring is covered in the aftermath.

Selena Vex and Rosa Delgado are both down, both beaten, both eliminated. Trey Mack and Clovis Black

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remain standing as the only two competitors left in the match, but even that reality feels poisoned now. Amy Harrison is beside herself with satisfaction, pacing between the wreckage like a conductor pleased with the chaos she has orchestrated. Valkyrie Knox stands near her, cold and imposing, the perfect enforcer to complete the picture.

John Phillips: "This is disgraceful. This is a disgrace to the match, to the championship, to all of it."

Mark Bravo: "And the worst part is, they know exactly what they're doing. Look at Amy. She's loving every second of this."

Amy does not just stand and admire it.

She starts screaming at Selena and Rosa, her voice shrill and vicious, years of spite and bitterness pouring out all over them now that they have been completely taken apart.

Amy Harrison: "You wanted out? You thought you were better without me? Look at you now!"

She steps toward Rosa and uses the toe of her boot to begin rolling her toward the ropes, nudging and shoving her with open contempt, treating her less like a former ally and more like trash that needs to be cleared out of the way.

John Phillips: "Amy Harrison is literally kicking one of them out of the ring!"

On the other side, Valkyrie Knox bends down, grabs Selena Vex by the upper body, and with frightening ease hauls her up off the mat. Selena barely has enough awareness left to resist before Valkyrie simply tosses her out through the ropes and to the floor below.

The boos somehow get louder.

Mark Bravo: "More boos raining down, and rightly so! This whole thing is rotten!"

Amy watches Selena hit the floor, then turns sharply back toward the two men left standing in the ring. Trey Mack is breathing hard, leg still damaged from the punishment earlier in the match. Clovis Black stands beside him, silent as ever, looking out at the sea of hatred pouring down from the crowd.

Amy throws both arms out and screams at them.

Amy Harrison: "Well, go on... finish it!"

The crowd buzzes with disgust, waiting to see what this means. Trey looks at Clovis. Clovis looks back at Trey. There is no drama in the exchange. No grand speech. No visible conflict. Just understanding.

John Phillips: "No... no, don't tell me--"

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Clovis Black drops to one knee.

Then he lays down flat on the mat.

Mark Bravo: "You've got to be kidding me."

Trey stares at him for just a second, almost not believing how easy the decision has become. Then he limps forward, plants one foot on Clovis Black's chest, and looks out at the crowd as the boos become absolutely deafening.

John Phillips: "This is how they're going to do it? After everything we've seen, after everything that just happened, this is how they're going to crown the first International Champion?"

Amy Harrison throws her head back and laughs.

Not a chuckle. Not a smirk. A full, ugly laugh, the kind that says this ending is exactly the point. Beside her, Valkyrie Knox stands unmoved, arms at her sides, as though this grotesque coronation is simply the natural conclusion to the violence she came back to unleash.

Mark Bravo: "Listen to this place. They hate it. They absolutely hate it."

The referee looks sick about it, but there is no rule being broken now. The official drops to the mat and starts the count.

Referee: "ONE! TWO! THREE!"

The bell rings.

John Phillips: "It's over."

Mark Bravo: "And we have a new International Champion..."

John Phillips: "Trey Mack has won the UTA International Championship."

The crowd roars with fury as the referee calls for the belt. Trey steps off Clovis and stands tall, breathing hard, soaking in a moment that should have felt triumphant but instead feels drenched in bitterness. Amy is ecstatic. Valkyrie remains cold. Clovis slowly pushes himself up from the canvas after sacrificing himself to the cause without hesitation.

The referee brings the championship over, and Trey snatches it into his hands. He raises it high while the boos rain down from every corner of the PHX Arena, the first-ever UTA International Champion crowned not in glory, but in controversy, corruption, and calculated betrayal.

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John Phillips: "What should have been a celebration of history has turned into one of the most disturbing scenes we've seen in a long time."

Mark Bravo: "And now Trey Mack stands there with the gold while Amy Harrison laughs, Valkyrie Knox stands guard, and Clovis Black just handed him the whole thing. I don't even know what else to call it except a takeover."

The camera pulls back to show the full picture.

Rosa Delgado on the floor. Selena Vex on the floor. Clovis Black rising after laying down for Trey. Amy Harrison grinning like she owns the world. Valkyrie Knox beside her like the hammer that made it all possible. And in the center of it all, Trey Mack holding the International Championship high over his head while the crowd drowns the arena in boos.

History has been made.

But not the way anyone wanted.

The boos are already deafening as Trey Mack stands in the center of the ring with the UTA International Championship in his hands. Around him, the picture is one of complete disorder and complete control at the same time. Clovis Black has risen from the canvas. Valkyrie Knox stands cold and still. Amy Harrison is grinning like she has known this ending all along. On the floor outside, Selena Vex and Rosa Delgado can do nothing but watch from the wreckage.

John Phillips: "Trey Mack will go down in the history books as the first-ever UTA International Champion..."

Trey lowers the championship slowly.

He stares down at it, the gold reflecting back in his eyes, the moment settling over him. For one second, maybe two, it looks like the reality of what he has just done is finally landing. The arena noise stays white-hot, but there is a new kind of anticipation inside it now. A strange, dangerous curiosity.

Then Trey lifts his head.

And turns sharply toward Amy Harrison.

Mark Bravo: "Wait a second..."

The reaction in the building changes instantly.

For one suspended heartbeat, it looks like Trey Mack may be about to do something nobody saw coming. That maybe this whole thing--this entire ugly takeover, this whole disgusting stretch of interference and betrayal--was just his way of getting the title into his own hands so he could take control from Amy Harrison

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at the final second.

John Phillips: "Hold on... is Trey Mack thinking about turning on Amy Harrison right now?"

Amy's smile tightens ever so slightly. Valkyrie shifts her stance. Clovis says nothing, but his posture sharpens. The whole ring feels like it is one move away from changing all over again.

But Trey doesn't attack.

Instead, he looks back down at the title.

Then he walks toward Amy Harrison.

And with both hands, Trey holds the International Championship out to her.

John Phillips: "No... no..."

Mark Bravo: "OH, COME ON!"

The house comes down in a storm of boos so violent it feels like the building itself is shaking. It is not ordinary crowd noise anymore. It is disgust. Rage. Absolute rejection. The kind of hatred that echoes for miles.

John Phillips: "Can they even do this?!"

Mark Bravo: "Amy Harrison is being GIVEN the International Championship by Trey Mack! What are we witnessing here?!"

Amy Harrison takes the championship.

She does not hesitate. She does not act surprised. She receives it like it belongs to her, like this was always the ending she expected, like Trey was never the champion in spirit at all--just the man chosen to carry the belt to her.

John Phillips: "It's clear now... this is not just a moment. This is a declaration."

Mark Bravo: "It's a NEW Empire!"

Amy turns the title in her hands, admires it for only a brief second, then lifts it and places it around her own waist. Behind her, Valkyrie Knox steps in and clasps the championship shut with calm precision, fastening it into place like a coronation being completed. Trey Mack steps back. Clovis Black stands beside him. And Amy Harrison, now wearing the UTA International Championship, throws her arms wide and drinks in the hatred pouring down from every direction.

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The boos are apocalyptic.

Trash begins to fly into the ring.

Cups. Crumpled paper. Whatever the fans can get their hands on. The audience is revolted by what it is seeing, by the theft of the moment, by the image in front of them.

John Phillips: "The fans are disgusted! They're throwing trash into the ring!"

Amy does not flinch. She smiles wider. She wants this reaction. She wants this hatred. It feeds her. Behind her stand Valkyrie Knox, Trey Mack, and Clovis Black, the four of them aligned now in a picture that no one in Phoenix will ever forget.

Mark Bravo: "This is the new Empire, John. That's what this is. Amy Harrison at the front, Valkyrie Knox at her side, Trey Mack and Clovis Black behind her. This is organized. This is deliberate. This is terrifying."

Outside the ring, Selena Vex and Rosa Delgado are still down near ringside, both hurt, both stunned, both left with no choice but to watch the woman they broke away from build something new right in front of them. Rosa leans against the barricade, face full of fury. Selena stares at the ring in disbelief and heartbreak. They can do nothing but witness it.

John Phillips: "Selena Vex and Rosa Delgado can do nothing but watch from the outside... and the woman they escaped has just rebuilt herself into something even uglier."

Amy keeps her arms outstretched as the trash falls around her and the crowd roars in disgust. The International Championship sits at her waist, fastened there by Valkyrie, while Trey and Clovis stand behind her like soldiers who have chosen their side. The image is horrifyingly complete.

Mark Bravo: "It's a new era of The Empire..."

John Phillips: "And it started right here in Phoenix."

The camera pulls back wide one final time.

Amy Harrison in the center of the ring with the UTA International Championship around her waist.

Valkyrie Knox behind one shoulder.

Trey Mack and Clovis Black behind the other.

Trash raining into the ring.

Selena Vex and Rosa Delgado stranded outside, forced to watch.

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And the PHX Arena drowning the scene in hatred as Victory fades on the birth of a new Empire.

Show Credits

Segment: "Introduction" - Written by Ben.

Segment: "Sho' Nuff" - Written by Ben.

Segment: "Emerging" - Written by Ben.

Match: "El Fantasma vs. Velocity Vanguard" - Written by Ben.

Segment: "Don't Listen to Her" - Written by Ben.

Segment: "Lots to Think About" - Written by Ben, justin.

Segment: "Something Bigger" - Written by Ben.

Match: "Emily Hightower vs. Juno Sage" - Written by Ben.

Segment: "Introducing CLASS" - Written by Carlos, Ben.

Segment: "No Reason to Be Down" - Written by Ben.

Segment: "Enjoy It While You Can" - Written by Ben.

Match: "Hakuryu vs. Graham Keel" - Written by Ben.

Segment: "Pinch Hitter" - Written by tony.

Segment: "I Don't Panic" - Written by Ben.

Segment: "Hall of Fame" - Written by Ben.

Match: "Gunnar Van Patton vs. Jarvis Valentine" - Written by Ben, tony.

Segment: "Introducing DEATH" - Written by Ben, Ace.

Segment: "You Ruined It" - Written by Ben.

Match: "International Championship Match" - Written by Ben.

Results Compiled by the eFed Management Suite