

Proving Grounds: Season 1 - Episode 4: "Work With Someone You Hate"

April 14, 2026 | Proving Grounds House - Las Vegas, NV

Episode 4: "Work With Someone You Hate"

PROVING GROUNDS: EPISODE FOUR

Episode Title: "Work With Someone You Hate"

OPENING MONTAGE

Black screen.

We hear overlapping sound before we see anything.

SCOTT STEVENS (V.O.): "Everybody looks good alone."

CHRIS ROSS (V.O.): "Teams expose people fast."

JACE VAN ARDENT (V.O.): "If I get paired with Silas, somebody in production owes me money."

ROXIE RAZE (V.O.): "I am not here to babysit anybody."

BOONE MERCER (V.O.): "If they pair me with Darren, that's not a team. That's an experiment."

SILAS VALE (V.O.): "There is a difference between teamwork and being chained to dead weight."

Quick flashes hit in rhythm.

Darren and Boone nose-to-nose in the ring.

Jace shoving past Silas on the apron.

Roxie shouting at Lena to speak up.

Malik and Tatum standing in opposite corners, both waiting for the other to say something first.

Scott Stevens holding four envelopes.

A pair collapsing after a conditioning carry.

A microphone dropping to the mat.

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A recruit crying alone in the bathroom.

Scott staring down at someone off camera.

SCOTT STEVENS (V.O.): "One of you is going home because this business does not wait for you to become easy to work with."

Hard cut to black.

ON SCREEN: PROVING GROUNDS

SCENE ONE - MORNING AFTER PHYSICAL WEEK

The house is bruised.

Not metaphorically. Literally bruised. Ice packs in the freezer. Tape wrappers on counters. Slow steps down stairs. People wincing when they sit. Physical week left marks, and now partner week is waiting for them before they've even fully recovered.

In the kitchen, Boone stands at the sink filling a shaker bottle. Jace sits at the island with an ice pack tucked against his ribs. Darren walks in, still a little stiff, and immediately clocks both of them.

JACE VAN ARDENT: "Good news. I can still breathe."

BOONE MERCER: "That's the good news?"

JACE VAN ARDENT: "The bad news is I can feel all the places I'm doing it from."

Darren opens the fridge and takes out water.

DARREN VALIANT: "I'm hoping partner week is less 'carry another adult human through fire' and more 'demonstrate chemistry.'"

BOONE MERCER: "You better hope it ain't."

DARREN VALIANT: "You say that like you want me in pain."

BOONE MERCER: "I say most things like that."

Confessional.

BOONE MERCER: "Everybody knows what's coming. They're gonna pair the people who clash. The people who irritate each other. The people who don't trust each other. That's reality TV. That's also wrestling, if we're

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being honest."

Upstairs, Roxie is doing makeup at the mirror while Lena carefully rewraps her hip from the day before.

LENA LUX: "You think they'll let us choose?"

ROXIE RAZE: "No."

LENA LUX: "You answered that way too fast."

ROXIE RAZE: "Because if they let us choose, there's no episode."

LENA LUX: "That is the most evil producer sentence I've ever heard."

ROXIE RAZE: "And yet accurate."

Lena looks over at her.

LENA LUX: "If they pair us together..."

ROXIE RAZE: "Then keep up."

LENA LUX: "Wow."

ROXIE RAZE: "What? You want me to say it'll be fun?"

LENA LUX: "No. I just wanted one sentence without the knife in it."

Roxie looks at her through the mirror.

ROXIE RAZE: "If they pair us together, I won't let you drown. Better?"

Lena pauses. That was almost kind.

LENA LUX: "Slightly."

In Malik and Silas's room, Malik is stretching on the floor while Silas sits upright on the bed, already dressed, jaw set.

MALIK STEELE: "You're expecting Jace."

SILAS VALE: "You say that like it's a gift."

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MALIK STEELE: "I say it like it's obvious."

SILAS VALE: "He talks too much."

MALIK STEELE: "And you act like words cost money."

SILAS VALE: "That's because most of the ones said in this house aren't worth buying."

Malik smirks despite himself.

In Darren and Tatum's room, Tatum zips up her gym bag while Darren sits on the edge of the bed taping his wrist.

DARREN VALIANT: "If I get Boone, I assume this is where you tell me to breathe through my rage."

TATUM QUINN: "No."

DARREN VALIANT: "No?"

TATUM QUINN: "I'd tell Boone the same thing. You both enjoy reacting to each other way too much."

DARREN VALIANT: "That felt targeted."

TATUM QUINN: "It was."

SCENE TWO - ARRIVAL / THE PAIRINGS

The recruits enter the training facility. The ring is set. Two cameras at ringside. Four tables are laid out with clipboards and folded black t-shirts. Scott Stevens is already in the ring, holding four envelopes. Melissa Cartwright stands nearby, observing.

SCOTT STEVENS: "You've all had a chance to show me what you look like individually. Today, I care about something else."

He looks over the group.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Because nobody in this business works in a vacuum. You work with opponents. With partners. With producers. With agents. With camera people. With commentators. With trainers. With people you love, people you tolerate, and people you would never choose if it were up to you."

SCOTT STEVENS: "So today, it's not up to you."

He opens the first envelope.

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SCOTT STEVENS: "Darren Valiant. Boone Mercer."

The whole room reacts. Boone just nods once, like he expected it. Darren closes his eyes for the briefest second and smiles like he finds this annoying, but survivable.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Jace Van Ardent. Silas Vale."

Jace exhales a laugh that is half disbelief, half "of course." Silas doesn't move.

JACE VAN ARDENT: "Unbelievable."

SILAS VALE: "Highly believable."

SCOTT STEVENS: "Roxie Raze. Lena Lux."

Roxie raises an eyebrow. Lena suppresses the world's most nervous smile.

ROXIE RAZE: "Well. Content."

LENA LUX: "That's one word for it."

SCOTT STEVENS: "Malik Steele. Tatum Quinn."

The quiet pair. The analytical pair. The pair with maybe the least chemistry and maybe the most competence.

MALIK STEELE: "All right."

TATUM QUINN: "Okay."

SCOTT STEVENS: "You're being judged on teamwork, communication, adaptability, leadership, and performance. Winning today matters. But so does how you lose. One team will fail worst. And one person on that team is going home."

That lands like a brick.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Put your shirts on. Meet your partner at your station. This starts now."

SCENE THREE - THE FIRST TASK: BUILD A SEQUENCE

Each pair is assigned a corner of the gym and a producer's table with a simple directive on a card:

ON CARD: Build a 90-second tag sequence. Must include: double-team setup, hot tag, comeback,

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believable conflict, clean finish. You have 25 minutes.

The task is not just about moves. It's about listening, timing, compromise, and structure.

Darren and Boone are already arguing within ten seconds.

BOONE MERCER: "No, because that looks fake. Nobody turns that slow."

DARREN VALIANT: "Nobody turns that slow because your version has no rhythm. It's all impact and no transition."

BOONE MERCER: "Because fighting ain't dance."

DARREN VALIANT: "And wrestling isn't bar brawling in a parking lot."

Nearby, Jace and Silas are worse in a different way. No yelling yet. Just contempt.

JACE VAN ARDENT: "We need a flow. Entrance, cut-off, comeback."

SILAS VALE: "I know what a structure is."

JACE VAN ARDENT: "Then try sounding like part of one."

SILAS VALE: "Try having an idea deeper than 'let's make it exciting.'"

Roxie and Lena, unexpectedly, start best. Not easiest, but best. Roxie is decisive. Lena is responsive. The friction is real, but functional.

ROXIE RAZE: "You take heat first. I cut off. Then we get sympathy back on you before the tag."

LENA LUX: "You want me getting beat up that long?"

ROXIE RAZE: "I want the tag to matter."

LENA LUX: "Okay. But if I'm in there that long, I need one hope spot before the cut-off or it's just me dying politely."

Roxie stops, then nods.

ROXIE RAZE: "That's actually right."

Lena blinks. Roxie said she was right.

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Malik and Tatum are quiet, but efficient.

TATUM QUINN: "You anchor the cut-off. I'll handle the comeback transition."

MALIK STEELE: "You want clean or aggressive?"

TATUM QUINN: "Both."

MALIK STEELE: "That isn't a real answer."

TATUM QUINN: "It is if you're good."

Malik stares at her for a second, then smirks. Fine.

SCENE FOUR - FIRST RUN-THROUGH

Scott and Melissa walk station to station as the teams run their rough versions.

Darren and Boone go first. The sequence has energy, but no trust. Darren moves like he expects Boone to miss timing. Boone moves like he's daring Darren to miss it.

SCOTT STEVENS: "You two are performing at each other, not with each other."

DARREN VALIANT: "That's because he's not listening."

BOONE MERCER: "That's because he won't stop narrating himself."

SCOTT STEVENS: "And there it is. You both want to be right more than you want to be good. Fix it."

Jace and Silas run next. Technically, it's better than Darren/Boone. Emotionally, it's dead.

MELISSA CARTWRIGHT: "This is efficient. It is also cold as a morgue."

JACE VAN ARDENT: "Because I'm working with a refrigerator."

SILAS VALE: "And I'm working with a motivational poster."

SCOTT STEVENS: "Enough. Jace, stop trying to pull charm out of contempt. Silas, stop acting like connection is beneath you."

Roxie and Lena go next. Their run has mistakes, but life. Lena's sympathy spots connect. Roxie's cut-offs are sharp. The hot tag has actual momentum.

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MELISSA CARTWRIGHT: "That's something."

SCOTT STEVENS: "Not clean enough yet. But at least you're trying to build each other instead of burying each other."

Roxie glances at Lena. Lena hears it too. That mattered.

Malik and Tatum are last. Cleanest of the four. Mechanically sound. Smart transitions. But something is missing.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Best structure so far."

MELISSA CARTWRIGHT: "And still somehow no pulse."

TATUM QUINN: "We're not done."

MELISSA CARTWRIGHT: "Good. Because right now you look like two excellent people filing taxes together."

That gets a laugh from Jace. Even Tatum almost smiles.

SCENE FIVE - CONFESSIONALS / MIDPOINT TRUTH

DARREN VALIANT: "Boone thinks compromise is weakness. It isn't. It's structure. If we fail today, it won't be because of skill. It'll be because neither of us likes giving the other an inch."

BOONE MERCER: "I can work with anybody who's honest. Darren's problem is he's always halfway aware of how he looks while he's doing something. That's exhausting."

JACE VAN ARDENT: "Silas is like trying to do chemistry homework with a haunted bookshelf."

SILAS VALE: "Jace confuses energy with meaning. I do not. Apparently, that makes me the villain in every room."

ROXIE RAZE: "Lena listens. That helps. She also doubts herself every five minutes. That does not help."

LENA LUX: "This is weird, because Roxie is somehow the harshest person here and also currently the person giving me the clearest notes."

MALIK STEELE: "Tatum's not warm, but she's honest. I can work with honest."

TATUM QUINN: "Malik's easier to work with than most people here because he doesn't need attention every time he has a thought."

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SCENE SIX - TASK TWO: PROMOTE YOUR TEAM

Scott brings all four pairs into the ring.

SCOTT STEVENS: "You built the sequence. Fine. Now sell it."

SCOTT STEVENS: "Each team gets sixty seconds live on camera to explain why your partnership works and why you're the most dangerous team in this room. If the in-ring part is mechanics, this part is chemistry."

He points toward the hard camera.

SCOTT STEVENS: "And if your team doesn't feel believable on a microphone, I don't care how clean your sequence is."

Boone visibly hates this development.

SCOTT STEVENS: "You go in the same order."

Darren and Boone first.

They step up side by side, and immediately the problem is obvious. Both are trying to lead.

DARREN VALIANT: "Today, you're looking at--"

BOONE MERCER: "What you're looking at is--"

They both stop. The room snickers.

DARREN VALIANT: "Please."

BOONE MERCER: "No, please, keep rehearsing yourself."

SCOTT STEVENS: "Clock's running."

Darren grits his teeth and pivots.

DARREN VALIANT: "What you're looking at is a team nobody would choose, which is exactly why it works. Boone brings force. I bring control. He hits like a wrecking ball, and I know how to aim one."

Not bad. Boone takes over.

BOONE MERCER: "And if you think we need to like each other to beat people, you don't understand what this business is. Sometimes the ugliest teams are the hardest ones to stop."

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It finishes stronger than it started, but the lack of trust is still visible.

Jace and Silas next.

JACE VAN ARDENT: "We don't agree on much. Basically anything. But if you need a team that can beat you in two different languages, here you go."

SILAS VALE: "He improvises. I calculate. He opens the space. I close it."

JACE VAN ARDENT: "See? That was almost cool."

SILAS VALE: "Don't ruin it."

Unexpectedly, the room responds. Because for one second, it feels real. Not warm. But real.

Roxie and Lena next.

ROXIE RAZE: "Why do we work? Because she makes people care and I make people pay for it."

LENA LUX: "And because she thinks sharp means strong, but she actually knows how to read a room. Which means if I survive the opening, she knows exactly when to cut it off and take over."

ROXIE RAZE: "You say that like I should be flattered."

LENA LUX: "You should."

Roxie hides a smile. It plays very well on camera.

Malik and Tatum last.

MALIK STEELE: "We work because neither of us wastes time."

TATUM QUINN: "And because if the job is execution, we're the pair least likely to make it about our emotions."

MALIK STEELE: "That sounded colder out loud."

TATUM QUINN: "A little."

It's solid. Still not dynamic, but more human than before.

SCENE SEVEN - HOUSE-STYLE LUNCH BREAK

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The recruits eat boxed lunches in the back area of the facility. The pairings have started changing the emotional map of the house.

Jace and Silas sit apart from the others, mostly because neither wants to perform partner harmony in front of the room.

JACE VAN ARDENT: "You know what your biggest issue is?"

SILAS VALE: "I assume you're about to tell me."

JACE VAN ARDENT: "You think showing people something real is the same as giving something away."

SILAS VALE: "And you think being open means you've automatically said something important."

JACE VAN ARDENT: "Maybe. But people still feel something."

Silas actually takes that in. Doesn't agree. But takes it in.

At another table, Roxie is circling things on the sequence card while Lena eats.

ROXIE RAZE: "Your hope spot needs to come half a beat earlier."

LENA LUX: "I know. I'm just gassed by the time I get there."

ROXIE RAZE: "Then stop looking tired before you are tired."

LENA LUX: "Do you ever hear yourself?"

ROXIE RAZE: "Usually with admiration."

Lena laughs and shakes her head.

At the far end of the room, Darren and Boone sit in silence until Darren finally speaks.

DARREN VALIANT: "We were better the second time."

BOONE MERCER: "Because you stopped trying to sound like the captain."

DARREN VALIANT: "And you stopped treating every shared sentence like surrender."

BOONE MERCER: "Don't get too encouraged."

DARREN VALIANT: "Wouldn't dream of it."

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Malik and Tatum sit side by side, each with a clipboard.

MALIK STEELE: "We're good."

TATUM QUINN: "We're competent."

MALIK STEELE: "That sounded insulting."

TATUM QUINN: "It was diagnostic."

MALIK STEELE: "You ever get tired of sounding like a lab report?"

Tatum glances at him. Then, finally:

TATUM QUINN: "Sometimes."

That's the most human answer he's gotten out of her all season.

SCENE EIGHT - FINAL TASK: LIVE EXHIBITION

Scott brings the four teams back into the ring area. A few invited trainees and staffers are now seated in folding chairs around ringside to create a small live audience. John Phillips and Mark Bravo are not here; this is still an internal test. But it feels more like a performance than a drill now.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Final task. Live exhibition."

SCOTT STEVENS: "Each team will perform the sequence you built. We are judging timing, teamwork, communication, recovery from mistakes, and whether I believe you'd trust each other in a real match."

SCOTT STEVENS: "And because this is Proving Grounds, the twist is simple: you're not only being judged against the other teams. You're being judged against your own tension. If your issues show, they count."

SCOTT STEVENS: "Mercer. Valiant. You're first."

Darren and Boone enter the ring. Across from them, local trainees stand in as their mock opponents.

The sequence starts rough. Boone comes in hot, maybe too hot. Darren's timing on the first feed is a fraction cautious. But then something clicks. Boone starts trusting the momentum. Darren stops trying to steer every beat. The hot tag lands. Darren flies in with speed. Boone follows with brutal weight. The finish connects hard and clean.

The audience responds. Not huge. But real.

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SCOTT STEVENS: "Better."

Jace and Silas are next.

Technically, it may be the sharpest performance. Jace's movement gives it lift. Silas's precision gives it structure. But the whole thing lives on a wire. It feels like two talented people refusing to blink first.

Then the mistake comes. Jace reaches for the tag a step early. Silas doesn't meet him on the exact beat. There's a visible hitch.

MARKED SILENCE FROM THE ROOM.

Jace recovers fast. Silas recovers faster. They finish strong. But the trust break was visible.

SCOTT STEVENS: "You recovered. Good. Doesn't mean I didn't see it."

Roxie and Lena go third.

Their sequence starts with Lena taking heat. She sells the isolation well, and for the first time, she does not look like someone waiting for permission to matter. Roxie's cut-offs are mean and crisp. Lena fires the hope spot at exactly the right point. The hot tag hits. Roxie explodes in and changes the pace. The finish is not perfect, but the team has emotional logic. The audience feels it.

Melissa Cartwright nods at ringside. That team works.

Malik and Tatum are last.

As expected, they are the cleanest. It is difficult to find a technical flaw. Their spacing is smart. Their tags are crisp. Their finish is secure. But compared to Roxie/Lena, there is less feeling. Compared to Darren/Boone, there is less edge. Compared to Jace/Silas, less danger.

MELISSA CARTWRIGHT: "That was very good."

And somehow that sounds like it might not be enough.

SCENE NINE - PRE-DELIBERATION TENSION

The recruits are sent to separate corners while Scott and Melissa confer privately.

Boone and Darren stand with sweat running down their faces, both pretending not to care too much.

BOONE MERCER: "You didn't screw me."

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DARREN VALIANT: "High praise."

BOONE MERCER: "Don't make it weird."

DARREN VALIANT: "A little late for that."

Jace and Silas are in the opposite corner, post-performance irritation simmering.

JACE VAN ARDENT: "You hesitated."

SILAS VALE: "You reached early."

JACE VAN ARDENT: "Because you were supposed to be there."

SILAS VALE: "Because you assumed I would adjust to you."

JACE VAN ARDENT: "That's what working with someone is."

SILAS VALE: "No. That's what you want it to be."

Roxie and Lena stand near the ropes.

LENA LUX: "We were good."

ROXIE RAZE: "We were useful."

LENA LUX: "That means good."

ROXIE RAZE: "Don't get cocky."

LENA LUX: "That sounds more like your thing."

Roxie looks at her, then almost smiles. Lena caught one back.

Malik and Tatum remain calm, but each knows the problem.

MALIK STEELE: "We were too clean."

TATUM QUINN: "Yes."

MALIK STEELE: "Never thought I'd hear that sentence."

TATUM QUINN: "Reality TV is a disease."

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SCENE TEN - DELIBERATION

All eight recruits stand in the ring.

Scott Stevens holds the room. Melissa stands just behind his shoulder, arms folded.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Today was not about friendship."

SCOTT STEVENS: "It was not about whether your personalities match. It was about whether you can function, communicate, and elevate another person when the job requires it."

SCOTT STEVENS: "Some of you did. Some of you almost did. Some of you made it way too obvious that your own ego is still the most important voice in your head."

He takes a breath.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Best team today..."

The room tightens.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Roxie Raze and Lena Lux."

Lena's eyes widen in shock and joy. Roxie looks proud, but like she'd rather die than show too much of it.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Not perfect. But the clearest example of a team building each other. Roxie, you led without suffocating. Lena, you followed without disappearing. That matters."

MELISSA CARTWRIGHT: "You were the first pair today that actually felt like you understood what each other added."

Roxie glances at Lena. Lena beams despite trying not to.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Safe team: Boone Mercer and Darren Valiant."

Both men nod. The rivalry didn't sink them.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Messy. Combative. But when it counted, you adjusted. That's the point."

That leaves two teams.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Bottom teams: Jace Van Ardent and Silas Vale. Malik Steele and Tatum Quinn."

No one is shocked. For opposite reasons.

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SCOTT STEVENS: "Malik. Tatum. You were good. Very good. But too careful. Too calculated. No life."

SCOTT STEVENS: "Jace. Silas. You had edge. You had structure. You also had a visible failure point because neither of you trusts the other to bend."

He lets the words sit.

SCOTT STEVENS: "One of these four is going home."

SCENE ELEVEN - INDIVIDUAL PLEAS

The four at-risk recruits step forward.

SCOTT STEVENS: "You each get one chance. Tell me why it shouldn't be you."

TATUM QUINN: "It shouldn't be me because I have been consistent in every phase of this competition. I haven't disappeared, collapsed, or let my emotions wreck the work. Today wasn't our best connection day, but I can fix connection faster than some people here can fix who they are under pressure."

Clear. Cold. Effective.

MALIK STEELE: "It shouldn't be me because I'm still growing and still getting better week to week. I know I haven't fully broken through yet. But I haven't broken down either. I can be built into something dangerous here."

Honest. But maybe too familiar.

JACE VAN ARDENT: "It shouldn't be me because even on a bad team day, I still adjusted. I still fought to make it work. I'm not afraid of friction. I'm not afraid of pressure. I'm not the problem when things get difficult -- I'm usually the reason they keep moving."

Strong. Confident.

SILAS VALE: "It shouldn't be me because I am better than the worst version of my last few weeks. I know how that sounds. I know I keep making the same argument in different clothes. But I also know what I am. I'm disciplined. I'm serious. I am not shallow. And if this process wants somebody who will actually become excellent instead of merely likable, then sending me home now would be a mistake."

For the first time, it almost sounds like there's something underneath the armor.

MELISSA CARTWRIGHT: "That was the closest you've come all season."

Silas hears it. So does everyone else.

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SCENE TWELVE - THE ELIMINATION

Scott paces once, then stops.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Jace Van Ardent..."

Jace stands steady.

SCOTT STEVENS: "You're safe."

Jace exhales through his nose and steps back.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Tatum Quinn..."

SCOTT STEVENS: "You're safe."

Tatum nods and steps back with almost no outward reaction at all.

That leaves Malik Steele and Silas Vale.

The room goes very still.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Malik..."

Malik looks straight ahead.

SCOTT STEVENS: "There is still too much potential and not enough presence. But you haven't stopped listening."

SCOTT STEVENS: "You're safe."

Malik shuts his eyes for half a second, relief breaking through, then steps back.

Silas is alone in front of Scott now.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Silas Vale..."

Long pause.

SCOTT STEVENS: "You are one of the smartest people in this competition. You are one of the most disciplined. You are also the person who has fought this process the hardest every single week."

SCOTT STEVENS: "You keep treating connection like compromise. Vulnerability like weakness. Partnership

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like inconvenience. And the truth is, this business will keep forcing you to do all three."

SCOTT STEVENS: "Your time on Proving Grounds is over."

The room stays quiet. No shock. But there is weight to it. Silas had ability. Everybody knew it.

Silas nods once. He does not argue. That says more than any protest would.

SILAS VALE: "Understood."

Scott steps closer.

SCOTT STEVENS: "There's something in you. But until you stop treating people like obstacles to your self-image, it won't matter as much as you think."

Silas swallows that hard.

SILAS VALE: "Maybe."

It is the softest thing he has said all season.

Silas turns, steps through the ropes, and walks up the aisle without looking back. Jace watches him go. Malik does too. Roxie folds her arms. Lena looks unexpectedly sad. Darren's expression is thoughtful. Boone just stares. Tatum, as ever, reads the whole room.

SCENE THIRTEEN - GOODBYE INTERVIEW

Silas sits alone for his exit confessional, bag beside him.

SILAS VALE: "I know how I came off. I'm not stupid. I know people thought I was cold, difficult, arrogant, detached. Most of the time, they were right."

He exhales slowly.

SILAS VALE: "What they didn't know is that when you spend enough time trying to be the smartest one in the room, eventually you forget how to just be in the room. I thought seriousness would protect me. Maybe it just kept people away."

He looks down, then back up.

SILAS VALE: "I'm not done. But I am done here."

SCENE FOURTEEN - HOUSE FALLOUT

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Back at the house that night, there is an empty-room feeling now. Seven is different from eight. The game got real.

In the kitchen, Lena sits on the counter swinging her feet while Roxie makes tea.

LENA LUX: "Best team."

ROXIE RAZE: "Don't say it like a Disney movie."

LENA LUX: "You were good with me today."

ROXIE RAZE: "That's disgusting phrasing."

LENA LUX: "You know what I mean."

Roxie finally looks at her.

ROXIE RAZE: "You stopped shrinking. That makes you easier to work with."

That is, in Roxie language, nearly a hug.

In the living room, Boone drops onto the couch and Darren sits in the chair opposite him.

BOONE MERCER: "We survived."

DARREN VALIANT: "We did better than survive."

BOONE MERCER: "Don't make me compliment you."

DARREN VALIANT: "I'd never force you into something unnatural."

BOONE MERCER: "You listened more today."

Darren pauses. That one is real.

DARREN VALIANT: "So did you."

That's as close as they get to mutual respect. For now.

Upstairs, Malik is unpacking in a quieter room now. Tatum lingers at the doorway.

TATUM QUINN: "You all right?"

Proving Grounds: Season 1 - Episode 4: "Work With Someone You Hate"

MALIK STEELE: "Yeah."

TATUM QUINN: "That sounded automatic."

MALIK STEELE: "It was."

Tatum leans against the frame.

MALIK STEELE: "I keep surviving weeks by sounding like I'm on the verge of becoming something."

TATUM QUINN: "Then stop being on the verge."

Malik laughs once.

MALIK STEELE: "You really have one gear."

TATUM QUINN: "No. I just use it well."

In the backyard, Jace stands alone for a moment under the patio lights. Melissa steps out quietly beside him.

MELISSA CARTWRIGHT: "You liked him more than you let on."

JACE VAN ARDENT: "I didn't say that."

MELISSA CARTWRIGHT: "You didn't have to."

JACE VAN ARDENT: "He made me crazy."

MELISSA CARTWRIGHT: "Those are not mutually exclusive."

Jace smiles despite himself, then looks back toward the dark yard.

JACE VAN ARDENT: "He was good."

MELISSA CARTWRIGHT: "Sometimes good isn't the same thing as ready."

That lands.

FINAL CONFESSIONALS

DARREN VALIANT: "Today mattered. Not just because I stayed. Because I proved I can work inside chaos without needing it to be my version of perfect."

Proving Grounds: Season 1 - Episode 4: "Work With Someone You Hate"

BOONE MERCER: "I still don't like Darren much. But I trust him more than I did yesterday. That's probably enough for this place."

JACE VAN ARDENT: "Silas getting cut makes sense. That doesn't mean it feels good. There was something there. He just couldn't let people get close enough to see it."

ROXIE RAZE: "Best team. You're welcome. Also, Lena was useful. Let's not make a ceremony out of it."

LENA LUX: "Best team with Roxie Raze was not on my bingo card. But I'll take it."

MALIK STEELE: "Safe again. I'm grateful. I'm also tired of 'again.'"

TATUM QUINN: "Silas leaving was predictable. That doesn't make it unimportant. We all just watched what happens when someone refuses to bend."

FINAL TAG

Black screen.

Then flashes from next week.

A camera rig. Headshots being taken. Melissa doing sit-down media questions. Jarvis Valentine walking into frame. Darren adjusting a jacket. Boone looking miserable in front of a backdrop. Roxie thriving. Lena trying to find confidence. Malik freezing under a direct lens. Scott's voice over all of it.

SCOTT STEVENS (V.O.): "Looking like a wrestler isn't enough. Can you represent the company when the lights are clean and the pressure is different?"

ON SCREEN: NEXT WEEK -- "CAMERA TEST"

Proving Grounds: Season 1 - Episode 4: "Work With Someone You Hate"

Show Credits

Match: "Episode 4: "Work With Someone You Hate"" - Written by Ben.

Results Compiled by the eFed Management Suite