

East Coast Invasion: Baltimore, MD

November 7, 2025 | Chesapeake Employers Insurance Arena - Baltimore, MD

Introduction

The red-and-gold strobe lights rip through the darkened Chesapeake Employers Insurance Arena as a wall of pyro erupts on the stage. The crowd erupts with it -- fans on their feet, signs waving, camera flashes popping like stardust over the sea of humanity. A massive UTA banner descends from the rafters as the roar crescendos into thunder.

John Phillips: "We are live in Baltimore, Maryland -- and the streets outside may be dangerous, but tonight it's the ring that's the war zone! This is the East Coast Invasion, and this is the United Toughness Alliance!"

Mark Bravo: "You can feel it in the air, JP. It's thick. It's loud. And it's looking like chaos from the jump. Five matches on tap and every single one could shift the foundation of this tour."

The camera pans ringside as the commentary team sits front and center -- John Phillips in a slate-blue blazer, headset on and focused; Mark Bravo, shades on indoors, smirking like he knows something we don't.

John Phillips: "Velocity Vanguard welcomes the debuting Next Level. Tyger II and Dante Rivera are set for one-on-one action. Gideon Graves and Gunnar Van Patton -- a collision that's been brewing since Graves was attacked last week. And the Empire's presence looms large as Dahlia Cross takes on Angela Hall."

Mark Bravo: "And yet somehow none of that is the weirdest part of tonight."

John Phillips: "You're referring, of course, to the main event -- the UTA Championship on the line. Jarvis Valentine defending... against Jack Hunter."

Mark Bravo: "That's not a typo, folks. Not a rib. Not a fever dream. Jarvis Valentine, the top guy in the company, the undefeated, undisputed UTA Champion... is facing Jack Hunter. Yes, that Jack Hunter. The guy most of us assumed retired, or vanished into a cloud of vape smoke after that last forgettable run."

John Phillips: "It's certainly raised eyebrows. Jack Hunter was never considered a serious contender in his previous time with the UTA. He never even sniffed the main event. And yet tonight, he's here -- with a golden opportunity."

Mark Bravo: "Opportunity? He must've won a radio contest. Or maybe there's a 'Feel Bad for Me' initiative happening backstage. Either way, Jack Hunter's getting a chance he never earned, and if I'm Jarvis Valentine? I'm insulted."

Cut to a quick teaser: Jarvis Valentine pacing backstage, UTA title slung over his shoulder. Cut again -- Jack Hunter seated on a production crate, staring at the floor. Alone. Silent. Focused. Or broken.

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John Phillips: "Hunter says he's coming back to prove he belongs. That everyone who doubted him was wrong. That this -- this match tonight -- is the beginning of his redemption."

Mark Bravo: "Redemption? No. This is a public execution. And Jarvis is going to sharpen his blade in front of a sold-out Baltimore crowd."

The arena begins to stir as the lights shift and a spotlight hits the stage ramp. The energy is thick. Palpable. The first match of the night is moments away.

John Phillips: "Love him or hate him, Jack Hunter has found himself in the biggest spotlight of his career. But before we get there -- it's tag team action coming up first as Next Level makes their UTA debut against the ever-dangerous Velocity Vanguard."

Mark Bravo: "Let's find out if Next Level lives up to their name -- or if they're about to get download-crashed by the fastest duo in the game."

John Phillips: "Strap in, everyone. UTA is taking over Baltimore. The East Coast Invasion continues... right now."

Next Level vs. Velocity Vanguard

The arena lights cut to black. A soft mechanical hum pulses through the Chesapeake Employers Insurance Arena. On the massive LED screen above the stage, a retro boot-up screen flickers to life -- loading bars, glitching pixels, a blinking cursor typing across digital code:

>> SYSTEM ONLINE

>> INITIATE PLAYER ONE

>> INITIATE PLAYER TWO

>> PRESS START

8-bit chiptune bleeds into modern EDM as "Press Start" by MDK erupts across the speakers. A colorburst of electric green and neon violet strobes rips across the stage. The crowd turns, drawn by the light show and the pounding bass.

John Phillips: "Welcome to Level One. The co-op kings of the indie scene have arrived in the UTA."

Mark Bravo: "Oh great, we're being invaded by Twitch streamers."

*Through the fog, **Theo Sparks** bursts onto the stage like he was launched from a respawn point. Arms wide,*

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headset mic around his neck, bomber jacket flaring behind him, he yells into the crowd with manic enthusiasm.

Theo Sparks: "BALTIMORE... ARE YOU READY TO PLAY?!"

*The fans respond with a pop -- partly genuine excitement, partly curiosity. Sparks darts to one end of the stage, then the other, hyping both sides of the crowd. Behind him, **Dex Raines** emerges slowly -- hoodie pulled low, head bowed, calm as a sniper.*

John Phillips: "You talk about contrasts -- Theo Sparks is the volume. Dex Raines is the silence. Together? They're a rhythm. A pattern. A strategy. This is more than flash. These two live and breathe tag-team chemistry."

Mark Bravo: "They better be ready for lag spikes. Because tonight's not a tutorial."

Theo jogs in place at the top of the ramp, then holds up a single finger: "Player One." Dex stands behind him and slowly raises two fingers: "Player Two." The camera catches a smirk from Sparks -- then they fist bump and bolt down the ramp together.

Theo high-fives fans the whole way, even stopping to sign a handmade "NEW GAME+" sign. Dex doesn't acknowledge the crowd, but his eyes never leave the ring -- focused on the calculations ahead.

At ringside, Theo sprints ahead, leaps onto the apron, and springboards into the ring with a smooth forward roll into a taunt pose. Dex takes the steel steps, wipes his boots, and enters clean.

Inside the ring, Sparks climbs the middle rope and shouts back into the crowd:

Theo Sparks: "Tonight we don't fight for a win -- we grind for perfection!"

The crowd chants with him -- imperfectly at first, then building:

CROWD: "NEXT! LE-VEL! NEXT! LE-VEL!"

Dex kneels in the corner, pulling his wrist tape tighter, never looking up. Theo paces the ropes, nodding with confidence. This isn't just their debut. It's a launch. The screen above the stage flashes:

OBJECTIVE LOADED: WIN YOUR DEBUT MATCH

The lights fade back to neutral. The screen clears. Their music fades out as Theo and Dex settle into their corner.

The lights drop again. A burst of synthwave surges from the speakers, slicing through the darkness with retro-futuristic flair. White and teal lasers ripple across the ceiling as a single word pulses across the screen

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in bold chrome font:

VELOCITY VANGUARD

*There's no pause. No hesitation. **Jet Lawson** sprints out through the curtain like he's already mid-race. He jumps to the side rail and high-fives three fans in a row without breaking stride. Behind him, **Tyler Cruz** appears with a wide grin and a running leap into a twisting backflip at the top of the ramp -- sticking the landing to a solid crowd pop.*

John Phillips: "And here come the veterans in this one. Velocity Vanguard. They've dazzled crowds across every stop of the East Coast Invasion. High-speed. High impact. High risk."

Mark Bravo: "And Cruz is barely old enough to rent a car -- but he moves like a ten-year vet. Lawson? That guy's the parkour prophet. No ropes are safe when he's in the ring."

Cruz and Lawson slap hands at the base of the ramp, then launch themselves forward -- Jet slides under the bottom rope while Tyler vaults onto the apron with a rope-assisted arm drag into a landing pose inside the ring.

Jet hits the ropes and rebounds into a roll before popping up and pointing toward the lights. Cruz claps in rhythm -- the crowd joins in instantly.

CROWD: "LET'S GO CRUZ! *clap clap clap-clap-clap*

Jet pulls off his jacket, flings it toward the timekeeper, then crouches low in his corner like a coiled spring. Cruz paces the apron rope, looking across at Theo Sparks, who returns the stare with a knowing nod.

John Phillips: "This is a test for Next Level. And a chance for Vanguard to reestablish dominance. Debuts are electric. But experience? Experience writes the code."

Mark Bravo: "We got glitch energy on one side, and precision processors on the other. Let's see whose system crashes first."

The referee checks both teams. The crowd is at full attention. No music. Just the building hum of two teams staring each other down, just before the bell...

The referee checks with both corners one final time... then signals for the bell.

DING DING DING!

Tyler Cruz steps forward for Velocity Vanguard. Theo Sparks answers for Next Level. The crowd cheers simply at the visual -- two of UTA's flashiest fan favorites facing off for the first time.

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John Phillips: "There's the bell! And you can feel the electricity already -- Theo Sparks and Tyler Cruz, two men who could probably trade highlight reels all night long."

Mark Bravo: "No bad blood, no cheap shots. Just two teams that want to prove who's sharper, faster, better. These are the ones I love, JP. Pure competition."

Theo circles to his right, light on his feet, mouthing something to Cruz across the ring. Tyler smirks, gives a small bow of the head, and they lock up center-ring.

The tie-up is brief -- Cruz transitions into a quick go-behind, but Theo cartwheels out, lands in a crouch, and flashes finger guns. Cruz claps and nods with a grin, then lunges in again -- only to be met with a lightning-fast arm drag from Sparks!

Cruz hits the mat, rolls through, and comes up -- only to eat a springboard crossbody! Theo lands on top for a surprise cover!

ONE!

Cruz kicks out and both men pop to their feet. The crowd claps hard as the two fan favorites reset, smiling.

John Phillips: "Clean, crisp, and competitive. Sparks using that springboard momentum to keep Cruz guessing."

Mark Bravo: "I'll give it to Theo -- he's not just style. He's got timing, and he doesn't blink in the spotlight."

They circle again. Another lockup. This time Cruz grabs a side headlock -- Theo pushes him off to the ropes. Tyler rebounds -- leapfrog from Sparks -- Cruz ducks under a spinning heel kick -- handspring off the ropes -- and nails a beautiful back-flip dropkick that sends Sparks staggering!

The crowd erupts!

John Phillips: "And that's Cruz with a flash of brilliance! Sparks just got caught mid-animation."

Theo grins and points at Cruz as if to say "nice shot." Tyler nods and motions for more. Theo tags in Dex.

The crowd perks up as the tone shifts slightly. Dex Raines steps through the ropes without a word. Cruz makes the tag to Jet Lawson -- and the two quiet killers square off.

Mark Bravo: "Now it's about to get surgical. Dex is the type of guy who can break you down without breaking a sweat. But Jet Lawson? That dude flies like physics are optional."

They lock up -- Jet slips under into a hammerlock. Dex rotates out, hooks the arm, spins into a takedown -- but Jet backflips free before Dex can transition to an armbar. Jet hits the ropes, rebounds -- Dex ducks the

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lariat -- Jet springboards--

--and Dex CATCHES him mid-air into a tight waistlock, rolling straight into a grounded hold!

John Phillips: "Look at that counter! Dex didn't just catch him -- he downloaded him."

Mark Bravo: "That's muscle memory, JP. Raines didn't react. He predicted."

Jet claws his way toward the ropes. Dex lets go clean at the four-count and backs away with surgical calm. Jet nods in appreciation before tagging Cruz back in.

Next Level nods across the ring -- Theo claps as Dex steps back, allowing his partner to retake position. Mutual respect, but the tempo is rising.

John Phillips: "So far, this is everything we hoped it would be -- fast-paced, high-precision tag wrestling with two fan-favorite teams pushing each other to their limits."

Mark Bravo: "But it won't stay polite forever. Sooner or later, someone's going to find a crack -- and that's when the real game begins."

Tyler Cruz and Theo Sparks circle again, this time quicker, more intent in their footwork. The early feel-out phase is over. This time, Cruz fakes a lock-up and instead launches into a rope-walk arm drag -- clean, fluid, and sharp. Sparks pops up -- eats a tilt-a-whirl headscissors -- flips through -- lands on his feet -- dropkick from Cruz! Sparks stumbles back into the ropes, grinning through the impact.

John Phillips: "Cruz is picking up speed now -- and Sparks loves it. You can tell he thrives in these back-and-forth stretches."

Theo bounces back with a standing dropkick of his own, then darts under a second rope-walk attempt and counters with a springboard crossbody! Both men crash, both scramble -- and tag!

Dex Raines and Jet Lawson re-enter, and the crowd swells as they square off again. Lawson darts in fast -- rolling savate kick -- Dex blocks, spins him into a standing switch, goes for a back suplex -- Jet flips out, lands on his feet -- rebound off the ropes -- Sling Blade!

Jet hits the mat and rolls through, pointing to the sky before hitting a standing shooting star -- but Dex rolls out at the last second!

Mark Bravo: "That was milliseconds from lights out. You blink against Jet Lawson, you eat sky."

Dex shakes it off, grabs Jet, snapmare into a stiff kick to the spine -- then tags Theo. Sparks vaults over the ropes with a senton to Jet's back before Dex even lets go of the hold. Seamless.

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John Phillips: "Now that's what Next Level brings -- combo transitions. They're not just tagging in -- they're optimizing every exchange."

Theo pulls Jet up -- hits the ropes -- running dropkick to the chest! He tags Dex back in immediately. Dex charges -- rolling armbar takedown -- "Patch Note"! Jet screams as Dex torques the arm!

Mark Bravo: "Smart strategy. They're slowing down the fastest man in the match. If Jet can't fly -- Vanguard can't function."

Jet claws his way toward the corner. Tyler leans in, hand outstretched. Dex drags him back once -- twice -- but Jet rolls through, uses his momentum -- and kicks Dex off!

Hot tag -- Tyler Cruz springs in and immediately catches Dex with a flying forearm! Sparks charges -- Cruz ducks -- ducks again -- DOUBLE arm drag to both members of Next Level!

The arena pops huge as Cruz sprints to the ropes and launches into a picture-perfect Spiral Tap that crashes onto both Sparks and Raines!

John Phillips: "Tyler Cruz lighting this place up! This is a clinic on execution!"

Mark Bravo: "We're not watching tag wrestling, JP. We're watching tag evolution. These teams are rewriting the rulebook."

Tyler covers Theo!

ONE!

TWO!

Kickout!

The match resets briefly, both teams breathing heavy, all four men showing signs of wear. The crowd breaks into a chant:

CROWD: "THIS IS AWE-SOME!" *clap clap clap-clap-clap*

John Phillips: "And we're not even at the final stretch yet. Something's got to give!"

Tyler Cruz tags Jet Lawson back in. Theo Sparks is still legal for Next Level, but clearly worn from the Spiral Tap moments earlier. Jet slingshots in and immediately connects with a rope-skip enzuigiri that rocks Theo backward into the ropes.

Jet charges -- slingshot spear through the middle rope!

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John Phillips: "Jet Lawson is in a different gear now! That slingshot spear nearly split Sparks in half!"

Jet wastes no time -- he pulls Theo to his feet, transitions smoothly -- pop-up fireman's carry --

-- Meteor Lift!

Jet spins him down and spikes him with the Ion Driver!

Mark Bravo: "THAT'S IT! That's the Ion Driver! Game over!"

Cover!

ONE!

TWO!

THR--

Theo kicks out at the last possible second!

CROWD: "OOOOHHHH!"

John Phillips: "Sparks survives! I don't know how, but he kicked out of one of Jet's deadliest finishers!"

Mark Bravo: "That was a split-frame animation cancel. Unbelievable."

Jet tags Cruz -- they're going for the double-team. Tyler ascends the turnbuckle while Jet hoists Sparks up again. Tyler leaps -- double stomp to the chest as Jet powerbombs Theo down!

Tyler hooks the leg!

ONE!

TWO!

THREE--NO! Dex Raines breaks it up with a diving forearm!

John Phillips: "Dex saves the match! Just in time!"

The crowd's on their feet now as all four men are involved. The ref tries to restore order as Dex drags Theo toward their corner, holding the tag rope and shouting for his partner to crawl.

Theo crawls -- Cruz grabs a leg -- but Sparks lunges and makes the tag!

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Dex Raines explodes into the ring with a flurry -- discus elbow to Cruz! Rolling arm trap into a suplex! Jet runs in -- Dex sidesteps -- redirects him chest-first into the corner!

Dex spins Jet around and nails a brutal Snap Brainbuster!

Mark Bravo: "I don't care if he doesn't talk -- that man speaks violence!"

Dex grabs Cruz, pulls him in -- Sparks is back on his feet now on the apron -- Dex hoists Cruz high in a torture rack position -- Theo springboards in -- superkick to the face while Dex drops Cruz into a cutter!

John Phillips: "That's the Power-Up Sequence! Their signature combo!"

Theo dives to cut off Jet -- Dex hooks the leg!

ONE!

TWO!

THREE--NO!! Cruz kicks out!

CROWD: "HOLY SH*T! HOLY SH*T!"

Mark Bravo: "That would've dropped a lesser man! Cruz is running on pure willpower now!"

Dex nods once, expression unchanging. Sparks slaps the turnbuckle in frustration -- but also awe. Both teams are running on empty.

John Phillips: "You can feel it now -- we're entering endgame. And no one's hit the final combo yet."

All four men lie on the mat or ropes, exhausted, heaving, eyes flickering. The crowd begins clapping in rhythm again --

CROWD: "FIGHT FOR-E-VER!" *clap clap clap-clap-clap*

Jet Lawson and Theo Sparks have spilled out to the apron, both down, clutching ribs. In the ring, Dex Raines and Tyler Cruz are legal, both staggering to their feet, drenched in sweat, faces bruised but eyes still locked.

John Phillips: "This has been a sprint. A war. A chess match. And somehow, these two are still standing."

Mark Bravo: "For now."

Cruz stumbles in with a desperation elbow. Dex absorbs it. Fires back with a forearm. Cruz hits again. Dex again. Back and forth. The crowd roars with every shot.

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Suddenly, Dex ducks a spinning heel kick -- grabs Tyler by the waist -- deadlifts him into a high-angle backdrop -- and slings him toward the corner.

THEO IS BACK ON THE APRON.

Dex tags Sparks and immediately hoists Cruz again -- fireman's carry position. Theo springboards from the top rope --

-- SUPERKICK! RIGHT ON THE BUTTON! Dex spins and plants Cruz with a cutter out of the carry position!

John Phillips: "That's it! That's the full Power-Up Sequence!"

Dex rolls out as Theo dives on top for the cover, hooking both legs tight.

ONE!

TWO!

THREE!

DING DING DING!

The crowd erupts as "Press Start" hits the speakers again. Theo falls off the cover and rolls onto his back, arms spread wide like he just beat the final boss. Dex kneels beside him, nodding once with approval before offering a hand.

John Phillips: "What. A. Match. A thrilling contest from bell to bell -- and Next Level scores the clean victory in their debut!"

Mark Bravo: "That wasn't just a win, JP. That was a statement. These guys didn't sneak one out -- they earned it. They outplayed Vanguard in a straight-up fight."

Theo and Dex stand in the center of the ring as the crowd chants:

CROWD: "NEXT! LE-VEL! NEXT! LE-VEL!"

Across the ring, Jet helps Cruz to his feet. Both men look disappointed -- but not bitter. Jet approaches the winners... and offers a fist bump. Theo glances at Dex. Dex gives a small nod. They accept.

John Phillips: "That's what this sport is all about. Mutual respect. No shortcuts. Four of the best showing what tag team wrestling should look like."

Velocity Vanguard exit the ring first to a round of applause. Inside, Theo hops onto the second rope,

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pounding his chest and shouting to the crowd:

Theo Sparks: "LEVEL ONE -- CLEARED!"

Dex raises two fingers -- a subtle signal. Level Two is coming.

Mark Bravo: "If I'm the tag division? I'm saving my progress right now. Because Next Level just powered up."

The camera fades on the duo standing tall in the center of the ring as the HUD on the screen above them flickers again:

ACHIEVEMENT UNLOCKED: TAG DEBUT VICTORY

Reinforcements

*The camera fades into the backstage hallway of the Chesapeake Employers Insurance Arena. Fluorescent lighting hums overhead as we see a nameplate: **CHRIS ROSS** stuck crookedly on a locker room door. From inside, the muffled sounds of locker slams and pacing boots can be heard.*

Chris Ross stands shirtless, sweat still fresh from training, his knuckles wrapped. The last few weeks have been brutal. Maxx Mayhem. The attacks. The blood. And now... Survivor on the horizon. He looks up at the door when--

Knock. Knock.

Ross doesn't answer. The door creaks open anyway.

*In walks **Madman Szalinski**, calm and collected in a black hoodie with the hood down, a subtle grin on his face. Behind him, stepping into frame like a ghost from another world, is **El Fantasma**, the mysterious masked men now draped in gold -- the **UTA Tag Team Championships** shining across both of their shoulders.*

Madman Szalinski: "Don't worry, Ross. We're not here to fight you."

Ross smirks. Doesn't move.

Chris Ross: "That'd be the dumbest mistake you've made all year."

Madman Szalinski: "Relax, man. I actually came to say... thanks."

Ross raises an eyebrow.

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Madman Szalinski: "What you did last week? That chaos you caused? That disruption? That opened the door. Because of you... because of the way you handled your business..."

Szalinski steps to the side and gestures toward the silent figures behind him.

Madman Szalinski: "El Fantasma is now the *UTA Tag Team Champions*."

Ross looks from Szalinski to the Fantasmas. No words. Just a snort -- the faintest hint of a satisfied smile curling at the edge of his mouth.

Madman Szalinski: "You've got Mayhem crawling up your back. You've got Survivor coming. Looks to me like you're building a team."

He leans against the wall, arms folded. Neither of Fantasma speaks. They simply lift the belts from their shoulders and holds it out, showing the shine -- not as a boast, but as a symbol.

Madman Szalinski: "Consider this our way of saying... we owe you one. So when the time comes? You can count on El Fantasma to be in your corner."

Ross lets the silence hang a moment. Then he steps forward -- nose to nose with Madman -- not confrontational, but eye-to-eye. He gives a single sharp nod. Then turns to El Fantasma and does the same.

Chris Ross: "Two down."

He smirks again. Steps back. Fist bumps his own palm.

Chris Ross: "Two more to go."

Szalinski claps Ross on the shoulder once before turning to leave. El Fantasma follows silently, the gold gleaming behind them.

The camera lingers on Chris Ross as he watches them leave. His breathing slows. His focus sharpens. The war for Survivor has just shifted.

John Phillips (V.O.): "That's big news, folks! Chris Ross officially has his first two allies for Survivor -- the new tag champions."

Mark Bravo (V.O.): "Ross. El Fantasma. That's already a dangerous foundation. Maxx Mayhem better start recruiting yesterday."

Cross Examination

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The camera opens in Gunnar Van Patton's locker room. The light is dim, the hum of a flickering bulb droning over the sound of creaking leather. Gunnar sits forward on a bench, lacing his boots with slow, deliberate pulls. Across from him stands Avril Selene Kinkade--poised, pristine, and cold--her tablet held like a dagger of glass and steel.

Avril Selene Kinkade: "You know, Sergeant, I find it most inconvenient to be kept uninformed. Last week, Gideon Graves was discovered unconscious--bloodied, broken, and, quite frankly, humiliated. Yet not a single word from you. Tell me, was that your doing, or did someone else borrow your particular brand of barbarism?"

Gunnar doesn't look up. He exhales through his nose, slow and heavy.

Gunnar Van Patton: "Darlin', if Ah'd done it, there wouldn't be no mystery. Would've left his teeth in the drywall and his pride in a puddle. Hell, they'd be mopin' up pieces of him with a prayer and a sponge."

Avril Selene Kinkade: "Picturesque as ever. But forgive me if I remain skeptical--impulsiveness is, after all, your defining trait. I don't object to the violence; I object to being kept ignorant of it."

Gunnar rises, cracking his neck, that single good eye catching the light.

Gunnar Van Patton: "Ah told ya. Weren't me. Ya want proof? Pull the damn footage. Ah don't do sneak attacks. If Ah want someone hurt, Ah do it loud, center stage, and with enough force to make the crowd gasp."

Avril Selene Kinkade: "Already done. I requested the footage this morning. We can review it together--unless, of course, you'd rather feign innocence a while longer."

Before Gunnar can reply, the locker room door slams open. Gideon Graves storms in--jaw taped, bruised, fury radiating from every movement. Avril exhales sharply through her nose, muttering under her breath.

Avril Selene Kinkade (muttering): "How terribly convenient..."

Gideon Graves: "Ya think yer clever, tough guy?! Think ya can cheap-shot me and walk around like some kind of badass?! Ya crossed the wrong bastard!"

Avril tilts her head slightly, expression dripping with disdain.

Avril Selene Kinkade: "How delightfully rude. Then again, restraint was never a hallmark of American breeding."

Graves ignores her, stepping forward and jabbing a finger at Gunnar's chest.

Gideon Graves: "Don't hide behind yer mouthpiece, Van Patton! Ah know ya did it!"

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Gunnar stands to his full height, boots planted, shoulders squared. His voice drops low, but the heat behind it could melt steel.

Gunnar Van Patton: "Boy, ya ain't even stitched up right, and ya come limpin' in here flappin' yer gums like a rooster in a thunderstorm. Ya ain't worth the sweat it'd take to knock ya out again. Go get patched up before ya bleed on my damn boots. 'Cause if ya keep yappin', Ah'll put ya back in that infirmary myself, and this time they'll need a mop, not a stretcher."

He turns to walk past him, but Graves grabs his arm and yanks him back.

Gideon Graves: "Coward! That it? Yer scared to face me straight up 'cause ya can only do it from behind?! Big bad 'Lycan,' huh? Yer all bark."

Gunnar stops mid-stride. His head turns slow. The grin fades. What's left is pure venom.

Gunnar Van Patton: "Ya'll are beatin' a dead horse. It weren't me. But you and that partner of yers? Ain't exactly popular. Let me ask ya somethin', jackass. Did ya keep track of just how many boots were stompin' ya that night? Don't go thinkin' too hard. Ah know ya can't count that high."

Avril's eyes flick toward Gunnar--sharp, surgical. For the briefest moment, her composure fractures, giving way to something colder, more calculating. That wasn't bravado. That was detail. Specific. Remembered.

Avril Selene Kinkade: "Curious choice of words, Sergeant. Almost as if you weren't guessing... but recalling."

Gunnar shoots her a look--just a flick of the eye, but it lands like a thrown knife. Not defensive. Not guilty. Just a warning. Then his attention snaps back to Graves, who's already stepped in close, fury burning through the bandages.

Gideon Graves: "Enough talk! You and me, tonight! Ah'm gettin' even for what ya did and this time, ya won't walk away smilin'."

Gunnar chuckles--a low, ugly sound that rolls out like thunder. His voice drops, slow and lethal.

Gunnar Van Patton: "Think what ya want. Say what ya will. But ya better be ready to die on that hill."

He steps forward, nose to nose with Graves.

Gunnar Van Patton: "Ya want a match, ya got it. Tonight. Just make sure the medics bring a shovel--'cause when Ah'm done, they ain't patchin' ya up... they're plantin' ya."

Graves shoves him hard in the chest. Gunnar barely moves.

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Avril Selene Kinkade: "This entire ordeal is becoming intolerably tedious."

Gunnar glances her way with a half-smirk.

Gunnar Van Patton: "Don't get yer knickers in a bunch. It's under control. That ring's 'bout to look like a Waffle House bathroom, scattered and splattered."

Avril's eye roll is of epic proportions.

Avril Selene Kinkade: "Absolutely rancid..."

That earns a low chuckle from the Texan. He pivots toward the door, boots heavy, shoulders loose. Down the hall, the vending machine full of energy drinks is calling his name. Avril watches him go, eyes narrowed, calculating.

Avril Selene Kinkade: "This doesn't excuse you from our discussion, Sergeant."

Gunnar pauses at the threshold, that familiar rasp curlin' into a dry laugh.

Gunnar Van Patton: "Didn't figure it would."

He leaves without another word. The door swings shut behind him, leavin' Avril alone--expression thoughtful, eyes distant, the gears clearly turnin' as the camera lingers on her face.

The scene fades, bringing attention to another section of the arena...

Level One: Cleared

We cut to the backstage interview area where **Melissa Cartwright** stands with a bright smile, microphone in hand. Behind her, the LED-lit UTA backdrop pulses faintly -- but it's not the lights that catch your attention. It's the animated overlay on the screen: a pixelated "**ACHIEVEMENT UNLOCKED: DEBUT VICTORY**" graphic appears as **Next Level** steps into frame.

Melissa Cartwright: "Joining me now are the two men who just logged a major win in their UTA debut -- Theo Sparks and Dex Raines, collectively known as **Next Level**. Gentlemen, congratulations!"

Theo Sparks -- aka *Player One* -- practically bounces with energy. He's still catching his breath, brushing damp bangs out of his face, but the grin never fades. He leans into the mic like he's streaming live to thousands.

Theo Sparks: "Thanks, Melissa! First off -- shoutout to the crowd. That 'Next! Le-Vel!' chant? Music to my ears. You know, people said we'd freeze in our debut. Said we were just gamers playing wrestler. Well guess

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what? **Level One: Cleared.**"

Melissa: "You faced a seasoned team in Velocity Vanguard -- and came out with a decisive victory. What's your message to the rest of the tag division?"

Dex Raines -- silent until now -- steps forward. Calm. Collected. Analytical. He looks straight into the camera like it's a live webcam feed. If Theo is the hype, Dex is the system debug.

Dex Raines: "Every team is just a different boss fight. We watch. We analyze. And we find the **exploit**."

Theo: "Oof. That one gave me chills. Seriously though -- this isn't a fluke. This isn't early access. Me and Dex? We've been co-op partners for years. You put us in that ring and we don't just compete -- we **optimize**."

Dex: "No lag. No ego. Just patch-perfect execution."

Melissa: "Do you think this win puts you in the conversation for a shot at the UTA Tag Team Championships?"

Theo takes a beat. He nods -- not arrogantly, but confidently. Then lifts two fingers.

Theo: "Player One? Ready. Player Two? Synced. And if the tag champs are watching? Let's just say we've already started grinding XP. They might be top of the leaderboard *for now*... but we've got our eye on the endgame."

Dex simply taps his wrist -- an invisible timer. Theo laughs.

Theo: "Time's ticking, boys. **Next Level's coming**. And we don't fight for wins -- we *grind for perfection*."

*Another achievement-style pop-up graphic appears on-screen: "**NEW OBJECTIVE: Tag Gold**". The two fist bump and walk off-frame, leaving Melissa grinning.*

Melissa Cartwright: "You heard it here -- Next Level has arrived, and they're not slowing down. Back to ringside."

Tyger II vs. Dante Rivera

The house lights go out. Total darkness falls over the Chesapeake Employers Insurance Arena. A hush moves through the crowd -- not confusion, but reverence. They know what's coming.

A lone spotlight cuts through the dark, glowing crimson. A low, deep drumbeat begins -- slow and deliberate. Then, the sound of taiko drums joins in, echoing like thunder rolling across a distant mountainside. The faint wail of a Japanese flute cuts through, ghostly and melodic.

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The video screen flickers with static, then bursts into an artistic swirl of red and black kanji that fade into a single phrase:

"THE SPIRIT LIVES ON."

A guttural tiger's roar pierces the silence, and the drums quicken into a battle rhythm as a blood-red mist pours across the stage. Out of that mist steps a lone figure -- calm, controlled, head lowered beneath a flowing black-and-scarlet hood.

*As the haunting intro of "**Claw of Yokai**" begins, Tyger II slowly raises his head, revealing the mask -- the fusion of legacy and legend. It's a modernized version of his father's iconic yellow tiger design, now evolved into something darker, fiercer. Red streaks form a claw mark across the right side, glowing faintly beneath the lights. The eyes behind it burn with quiet fire.*

John Phillips: "There he is. The son of the Hall of Famer, the late Tatsumi 'Tyger' Tanaka. A name that defined an era in both Japan and the United States -- and tonight, that legacy continues right here in Baltimore."

Mark Bravo: "It's more than just legacy, JP. Tyger II nearly shocked the world in his debut -- almost winning the UTA Championship on his first night in. This isn't some nostalgia act. This is a generational talent stepping into his own shadow and refusing to be consumed by it."

Tyger begins his walk to the ring -- measured, ritualistic, never breaking eye contact with the squared circle. The fans lean forward as he descends the ramp through the swirling fog. Halfway down, he drops to one knee, pressing two fingers against the steel of the ramp, then bringing them to his mask -- a quiet, spiritual salute to his father and to the fight ahead.

John Phillips: "That gesture -- that's the Tanaka ritual. A sign of grounding, of respect to the spirits of combat. It's something his father did before every major match, and now Tyger carries that same reverence into a new era."

Mark Bravo: "The crowd knows it too. You can feel the difference when he walks out. Nobody chants, nobody jeers -- they just *watch* him. Because they know what he represents."

Tyger reaches ringside, steps onto the apron, and wipes his boots before entering. Once inside, he moves directly to the center, drops into a crouch, and places a palm flat against the canvas. The crowd grows silent again as he bows his head for a few seconds -- honoring the ring as sacred ground.

He rises smoothly, walking to the ropes. He looks up to the rafters for a long, still moment -- the faint ghost of a smile beneath the mask. Then, with a sharp exhale, he grips the ropes, pulling them taut, and the camera zooms tight on his face as the lighting transitions to deep crimson.

John Phillips: "Every time Tyger II steps into that ring, he carries the weight of expectation -- the son of a

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Hall of Famer, a man who's already stood toe-to-toe with Jarvis Valentine and nearly left as champion. But make no mistake -- tonight, this is about proving he belongs here, not just as a legacy, but as his own man."

Mark Bravo: "He's got the blood, he's got the instincts, and he's got that Tanaka precision. The kid is the future -- and tonight, we see just how bright that future burns."

Tyger backs into his corner, crouching low with one hand on the middle rope, completely still as his music fades. The arena lights return to neutral... and then the guitars hit.

The red fades to gold. A sudden blast of pyrotechnics erupts from the stage as the familiar opening riff of "Rise Today" by Alter Bridge tears through the air. The crowd instantly comes alive -- a wall of cheers and clapping fills the arena.

Dante Rivera bursts through the curtain with infectious energy, pounding his chest and shouting to the Baltimore faithful. His white-and-gold gear gleams under the spotlights, the stylized "R" insignia glinting on his kick pads. He slaps his forearm and points to the sky -- a silent tribute to his father watching above -- before motioning for the fans to make noise.

John Phillips: "Here comes El Paso's own, Dante Rivera -- a man fueled by heart, heritage, and the belief that hard work can outshine pedigree. Every time this kid steps through that curtain, you feel his energy light up the whole building."

Mark Bravo: "He's not a second-generation story built on privilege, JP. He's the one who had to claw his way out of the shadow. He's the type who still trains in the same old garage where his dad taught him to bump on cardboard. And it shows. He wrestles like the world's watching and the rent's due tomorrow."

Dante makes his way down the ramp, stopping halfway to greet a young fan wearing a homemade "Borderline Breaker" T-shirt. He gives the kid a fist bump, then jogs the rest of the way, sliding into the ring on one knee and popping up fast.

He sprints to one corner, leaps to the second rope, and raises his fist high -- eyes wide, smile genuine. He points to the crowd and mouths, "We rise together!" before hopping down and pacing the ring, psyching himself up.

John Phillips: "Two very different paths -- but the same respect for this business. Dante Rivera may not have Tyger's legacy, but he's earned his place through fire, grit, and resilience."

Mark Bravo: "And don't forget -- he's the kind of guy who makes everyone else raise their game. You step in the ring with Dante Rivera, you're either proving something or you're getting left behind."

Dante stops mid-ring as Tyger steps out from his corner. The crowd senses it -- the hush before something pure. Both men stand still, center-ring, eyes locked.

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Tyger II slowly bows -- a deep, disciplined display of respect. Dante doesn't hesitate. He bows back, then steps forward and offers his hand.

Tyger looks down at it... and shakes. Firmly. No theatrics, no hesitation. Just respect.

John Phillips: "This is what makes the UTA so special. Two warriors. Two lineages. No need for words -- the ring will do the talking."

Mark Bravo: "And it's going to get loud. These fans know they're about to witness something special."

Dante steps back to his corner. Tyger returns to his crouch, hands gripping the ropes.

With both men in their corners, the tension in the Chesapeake Employers Insurance Arena is palpable. The energy isn't frenzied -- it's focused. The kind of energy reserved for something the fans know is going to matter.

John Phillips: "You can feel it, Mark. Neither of these men has to say a word. This crowd already understands the stakes -- not titles, not grudges, but pride. Evolution. Legacy."

Mark Bravo: "Tyger II's already shown he can hang with the absolute best -- let's not forget, he nearly *won* the UTA Championship in his *debut*. He took Jarvis Valentine to the edge and came out with the respect of the entire locker room. And Dante? He's been doing this the hard way for years. No shortcuts. No favors. Just fights."

The referee calls for the bell --

DING DING DING!

Both men step forward slowly. No sudden movement. Just quiet intensity. They circle -- eyes locked -- then close in. The first lock-up is strong and centered, neither man giving ground.

Dante shifts into a side headlock. Tyger counters with a wristlock. Dante rolls out, cartwheels through, spins behind -- waistlock. Tyger drops to a knee, grabs the ankle, sweeps Dante down -- but Rivera kips up and breaks clean.

The crowd claps in appreciation of the chain wrestling clinic. Both men reset. They nod to each other -- a spark of mutual admiration.

John Phillips: "Beautiful exchange. These two aren't just athletes -- they're technicians. They're storytellers. And this is the first chapter."

They lock up again -- this time, Tyger II slides under and takes Dante down with a lightning-fast drop toehold, floating into a front facelock. Dante rolls out and both pop up again at the same time.

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The crowd's already invested -- they know they're watching something deliberate. Patient. Surgical.

Mark Bravo: "This isn't fast food wrestling, JP. This is fine dining. Every movement means something. Every hold is earned."

Tyger backs to the ropes briefly, crouching again in his corner -- not out of exhaustion, but out of ritual. Dante paces, nodding to the crowd, rallying them as he raises his fists.

CROWD: "LET'S GO DAN-TAY!" "TY-GER! TY-GER!"

They lock up for a third time -- this time, Dante gets the better of it, transitioning into an arm drag. Tyger rolls through, lands on his feet -- quick snapmare from Dante! He hits the ropes -- flying forearm! Tyger ducks -- bounces off the opposite ropes -- springboard spinning neckbreaker--

Dante dodges at the last second and both land on their feet, facing each other mid-ring.

John Phillips: "Back and forth -- strike for strike, counter for counter -- this is a masterclass in movement!"

Both men step forward, and this time, they meet nose-to-nose. There's no tension. Just intensity. Dante extends a fist. Tyger hesitates -- then returns it. The crowd roars.

Mark Bravo: "They both want it. They both *deserve* it. But only one of them walks out with the win."

The energy in the building swells as the two warriors break from the stalemate. Tyger II crouches low, his hand brushing the mat as he circles Dante, eyes sharp and unblinking behind the mask. Rivera shakes out his arm, loosening up -- smiling, nodding, knowing he's found a worthy test tonight.

John Phillips: "There's a rhythm to Tyger's movement that's just uncanny. Every step, every shift in weight -- calculated. The influence of his father, but the execution of his own design."

Mark Bravo: "It's like watching a chess player who already knows the next three moves you're going to make. He's not chasing Rivera -- he's guiding him."

Dante darts in for another lock-up, but Tyger slips behind and lands a sharp forearm to the upper back. Rivera grimaces and spins, only to get caught by a lightning-quick spinning back kick to the ribs. The impact echoes through the arena like a gunshot.

John Phillips: "Oh! That kick connected flush -- that's the striking precision Tyger inherited straight from the Tanaka dojo."

Tyger whips Dante into the corner and follows with a running elbow smash to the jaw, immediately transitioning into a snapmare takeover. He sprints off the ropes and drills a low dropkick right between the shoulder blades. Rivera arches his back in pain as Tyger pops to his feet, standing over him -- composed,

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steady, breathing evenly.

The fans applaud the precision. Tyger doesn't acknowledge them -- his focus never leaves Dante. He waits until Rivera pushes up to a knee... then nails a crisp shoot kick to the chest. Then another. Then a third. Each one sharper than the last.

Mark Bravo: "That's not brutality -- that's discipline. Every strike's placed exactly where it should be. He's not trying to knock Rivera out -- he's trying to wear him down, break the balance, and control the space."

Tyger pulls Rivera up by the wrist and executes a flawless rolling back elbow to the side of the head -- a direct callback to his father's old signature. The crowd reacts instantly with a respectful cheer.

John Phillips: "That's a Tanaka classic! You can almost hear the echoes of the Hall of Famer in that strike!"

Tyger hooks Dante and drops him with a picture-perfect snap suplex, rolling through into a second, then a third. The final suplex drops Rivera dead-center in the ring. Tyger sits up slowly afterward, the mask glistening under the lights, the calm of a man who treats every hold as ceremony.

He crawls forward -- hooks the leg.

ONE!

TWO!

Dante kicks out!

Tyger doesn't argue. He nods once -- just once -- and stands. His body language is that of a man who expected the fight to continue. Rivera drags himself upright, holding his back, shaking his head to clear the cobwebs.

Mark Bravo: "Rivera's toughness is unmatched, but Tyger's control is suffocating right now. It's like fighting smoke -- he hits you, vanishes, then hits you again before you even find your footing."

Dante stumbles into the corner. Tyger advances, delivering two fast open-hand chops to the chest. The crack echoes through the arena. A third one follows, and the crowd winces audibly.

CROWD: "WOOO!"

Tyger grabs Dante's wrist, whips him to the opposite corner -- Rivera reverses! Tyger hits the turnbuckle -- pops up onto the middle rope -- and launches off with a flying forearm! Both men go down!

John Phillips: "That's the burst we talk about! Calm one second -- lightning the next!"

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Tyger rolls through and lands on one knee, crouched low again. The camera zooms in as he lowers his head -- then tilts it just slightly, that masked snarl visible under the light. The predator's rhythm begins again.

Mark Bravo: "You can see it -- that shift. The Yokai inside him's waking up. Rivera better find some space, or he's getting hunted down."

*Tyger whips Dante off the ropes -- leapfrog -- drop down -- pops up -- roundhouse to the gut -- springboard flip -- connects with the **Feral Descent** flipping neckbreaker! The crowd gasps at the seamless speed!*

John Phillips: "Feral Descent! That's the precision and artistry of Tyger II on full display!"

Tyger covers again.

ONE!

TWO!

Kickout by Rivera!

Mark Bravo: "Rivera's still got fight in him, but Tyger's dissecting him piece by piece. Every motion's a setup. Every pause's a trap."

Tyger steps back, crouched again, the faint growl of the crowd building behind him. He slowly raises his hand -- spreading his fingers into the familiar "Tiger Claw." The camera zooms close as the audience begins to buzz.

John Phillips: "That gesture means only one thing -- Tyger's getting ready to end this."

Tyger II crouches low, mask aimed directly at Rivera, hand raised in the shape of the Tiger Claw. The crowd buzzes in anticipation, sensing something cinematic about to unfold. Dante is still down, holding the base of his neck, teeth clenched, breathing hard.

John Phillips: "Tyger II has been in total control for the last several minutes -- targeting the neck, breaking down Rivera's balance... but something tells me Dante's not done yet."

Mark Bravo: "He never is, JP. You can't count out a guy who fights like he's got a whole generation behind him."

*Tyger moves in slowly, reaching for Dante's arm to pull him up -- but Rivera **surges up** with a sudden burst and cracks Tyger across the jaw with a forearm!*

The crowd explodes as Dante fires a second shot -- then a third -- then hits the ropes and blasts Tyger with a flying forearm that sends the masked warrior reeling backward!

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John Phillips: "Rivera's ALIVE!"

Dante fires up, pounding his chest and rallying the crowd, who erupt into full voice.

CROWD: "DAN-TAY! DAN-TAY! DAN-TAY!"

Tyger staggers to his feet -- Dante charges -- running enzuigiri to the temple! Tyger drops to one knee. Dante hits the ropes -- SPRINGBOARD CROSSBODY!

He hooks the leg!

ONE!

TWO!

Tyger kicks out!

Mark Bravo: "That comeback came out of nowhere! Tyger had this thing locked down -- but Rivera just flipped the whole damn script!"

Dante wastes no time -- he grabs Tyger by the wrist, whips him to the ropes -- tilt-a-whirl -- BACKBREAKER! The crowd groans in appreciation as Tyger arches in pain.

John Phillips: "That one landed clean across the spine! Dante's finding his rhythm -- and Baltimore knows it!"

Dante plays to the crowd briefly -- clapping overhead, motioning for them to rise -- and they answer. The volume is growing with every strike he lands.

Tyger pulls himself to the ropes -- Dante runs -- clotheslines him over -- Tyger lands on the apron! Dante turns -- DROPKICK INTO THE CORNER! Tyger crashes to the outside!

The crowd roars as Dante steps through the ropes, steadies himself on the apron -- and LAUNCHES -- SLINGSHOT CROSSBODY to the floor! He hits Tyger flush, and both men land hard on the outside!

CROWD: "HOLY SH*T! HOLY SH*T!"

Both men lie motionless for a moment as the referee begins to count.

ONE!

TWO!

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Dante rolls to his knees, holding his ribs. Tyger clutches his neck.

THREE!

Dante uses the barricade to pull himself up and throws an arm in the air -- the crowd surges with him. He grabs Tyger and rolls him back in just before the count of eight.

Rivera climbs to the apron, breath ragged. He looks to the top rope -- and the crowd knows what's coming. He ascends slowly, eyes locked on Tyger as the masked warrior stirs on the mat.

John Phillips: "He's going high-risk now. This is Rivera's moment!"

Dante steadies himself, points to the sky -- a nod to his father -- and launches:

STANDING MOONSAULT--

Tyger ROLLS OUT OF THE WAY!

Dante crashes chest-first to the canvas!

Mark Bravo: "He missed! Tyger baited him -- and now the opening's wide open again!"

The crowd gasps. Both men are down. Tyger slowly begins to stir, crawling toward the ropes, pulling himself up by one arm -- the momentum is shifting again.

John Phillips: "Rivera got too caught up in the emotion, and Tyger just turned the tide again. This thing is swinging back and forth like a pendulum!"

Tyger II pulls himself up in the corner, chest rising and falling with heavy breaths. Dante Rivera is crawling toward center-ring, coughing, hand pressed to his ribs after crashing hard on the missed moonsault.

John Phillips: "Both men have emptied their tanks and somehow keep reaching deeper. We've gone beyond strategy now -- this is about pride, instinct, survival."

Tyger stalks Dante from behind -- calm, composed. He grabs Rivera by the wrist -- spins him -- snapmare into a fast low kick to the spine! Rivera yells out, arching his back -- but Tyger's already running the ropes.

*SPRINGBOARD NECKBREAKER! The **Feral Descent** connects a second time!*

Tyger floats into the cover, hooks both legs!

ONE!

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TWO!

THR--NO! Dante gets the shoulder up!

The arena explodes in relief. Tyger doesn't react -- he just adjusts his wrist tape and slowly rises to one knee, that quiet growl from behind the mask returning.

Mark Bravo: "There's something unreal about his focus. Like every kickout is just part of the ritual. He doesn't question it -- he just keeps hunting."

Tyger steps back... raises the Tiger Claw... and signals it's time.

He grabs Rivera and whips him to the ropes -- pop-up -- spins -- TYGER ECLIPSE--

*NO! Rivera **twists mid-air** and lands on his feet behind Tyger!*

Tyger turns -- BOOM! Snap powerslam from Dante Rivera out of pure reaction! The ring shakes!

Both men are down!

CROWD: "THIS IS AWE-SOME!" *clap clap clap-clap-clap*

Rivera crawls toward the ropes, gripping his ribs. Tyger starts to rise again, slower this time, the stiffness of the battle setting in.

Dante sees him coming -- ducks a roundhouse -- springboards off the ropes--

John Phillips: "Borderline Breaker?!?"

HE HITS IT!

Tyger II's neck snaps backward from the cutter impact. Rivera scrambles to cover -- desperate -- he hooks the leg!

ONE!

TWO!

THREE--NOOO!

The referee throws up two fingers. Tyger kicked out at 2.99.

CROWD: "LET'S GO TY-GER!" "LET'S GO DAN-TAY!"

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Dante can't believe it. He rolls to his knees, hands in his hair, gasping for air. But there's no time to second-guess -- he grabs Tyger's leg and transitions --

John Phillips: "Rivera Lock! He's going for the Rivera Lock!"

Dante tries to hook the cross-leg stretch, but Tyger slithers out -- rolls through -- both men pop up --

GHOST FANG KICK! OUT OF NOWHERE!

The flash superkick drops Rivera flat. Tyger collapses on top of him.

ONE!

TWO!

THREE--NO! NO!

Rivera kicks out by a thread! The fans are going wild, pounding the barricades, screaming in disbelief.

Mark Bravo: "This is incredible! They're not just surviving each other -- they're redefining what it means to fight with honor!"

Tyger slowly rolls away, kneeling in the corner, head bowed. Not in frustration -- in respect. He nods once. The mask turns toward Dante... and the crowd begins chanting again.

CROWD: "FIGHT FOR-E-VER!" *clap clap clap-clap-clap*

Tyger II crouches low in the corner, fingertips brushing the mat, his chest heaving beneath the red-and-black mask. Across the ring, Dante Rivera clutches the ropes, pulling himself up one agonizing inch at a time. Both men are running on instinct now. Heart. Breath. Will.

John Phillips: "There's nothing left to prove -- and still neither man is backing down."

Mark Bravo: "This isn't just competition. This is identity. It's blood. It's legacy. And someone's about to break the silence."

Dante is up. He turns -- Tyger strikes.

Quick whip into the ropes -- Dante reverses -- Tyger rebounds, ducks a clothesline, springs onto the second rope--

SPRINGBOARD ROUNDHOUSE connects!

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*Tyger grabs Dante before he can fall -- scoops him up -- and plants him with the **Yokai Driver**! The sit-out spinebuster snaps the ring!*

But Tyger doesn't go for the pin. He crouches again... breathes deep... and flashes the Tiger Claw to the hard cam.

John Phillips: "He's calling for the finish. That was the setup -- now comes the finale."

Dante groggily stumbles to his feet... barely upright. Tyger grabs the wrist... spins... launches--

TIGER ECLIPSE!

The corkscrew cutter drops Dante flush in the center of the ring. Tyger hooks the leg -- deep, tight, final.

ONE!

TWO!

THREE!

DING DING DING!

The crowd leaps to their feet as "Claw of Yokai" floods the arena again. Tyger remains on his knees for a moment, head bowed, hands still gripping Rivera's wrist gently. The referee raises his arm -- and the ovation rolls like thunder.

John Phillips: "What a war. What a *fight*. Tyger II gets the win tonight -- but both men earned something greater than a number in a column."

Mark Bravo: "That was a battle of legacy vs fire. Of ancient spirit vs rising flame. And I'd pay to see it again. Hell, I'd pay to see it *five more times*."

Tyger stands slowly. The mask tilted downward in respect. He looks out over the crowd, then turns -- Dante is sitting up, wincing but conscious.

Tyger walks to him... and extends a hand.

Without hesitation, Dante takes it.

The crowd roars again.

CROWD: "UT-A! UT-A! UT-A!"

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Tyger helps Dante to his feet. They stare at each other for a moment -- two warriors from different lineages who just forged a bond through battle.

Dante raises Tyger's arm in the air.

John Phillips: "Honor. Sportsmanship. Artistry. This is what WrestleUTA is all about."

The camera lingers on Tyger's masked face, then fades slowly as both men exit the ring together -- side by side -- to a standing ovation.

The Monster's Circle Forms

*The scene opens in a dimly lit locker room -- no logos, no banners, just peeling paint, exposed pipes, and silence. The camera shot is low and behind two figures: **Kaine** and **Maxx Mayhem**, standing shoulder to shoulder with their backs to the lens.*

Mayhem's head is tilted downward slightly, hair hanging loose, knuckles wrapped in black tape. Kaine stands motionless beside him, arms crossed, a phantom presence in the flickering light. The camera slowly creeps forward, still behind them. We can't yet see who they're speaking to -- but the energy is tense. Dangerous.

Maxx Mayhem: "I don't need friends. I don't need alliances. What I need... is chaos. The kind of chaos that leaves people broken. Questioning everything they thought they knew about this place."

He shifts slightly, not turning around, just adjusting his stance -- like a man sharpening a blade in his mind.

Maxx Mayhem: "Survivor isn't a match. It's a statement. And this... *this* will be the match that puts **both of you** on the map."

The camera starts to slowly pan to the side, revealing the two shadowed figures standing silently in front of them -- one tall and gaunt with a twisted grin just starting to form beneath a hood, the other with cold eyes, arms folded across his chest like a statue carved out of wrath.

Silas Grimm. Malachi Cross.

The four men stand now in full view -- an unholy assembly. No handshakes. No formalities. Just silence. Just intent.

Maxx Mayhem: "I know you don't owe me anything. I know you don't trust me. Hell, I don't want you to."

He steps forward slightly, eyes locked on the two new additions.

Maxx Mayhem: "That's what makes it perfect. Because this isn't about loyalty -- this is about *annihilation*."

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You want to carve your names into the bones of this place?"

He pauses, then grins -- wide, menacing, sincere.

Maxx Mayhem: "Then join us. And be a part of the team that *ends* Chris Ross."

Silas Grimm just smiles wider -- lips curling like he's already picturing the carnage. Malachi Cross doesn't say a word, but he gives a slow, deliberate nod.

Kaine: "They're in."

Fade out on the image of all four men standing in that dim room, silent but unified -- shadows stitched together by hate.

John Phillips (V.O.): "Oh my god... Silas Grimm. Malachi Cross. Maxx Mayhem. Kaine. That's not a team -- that's a nightmare waiting to happen."

Mark Bravo (V.O.): "Four of the most dangerous men in this company just joined forces... and Chris Ross might've finally picked a fight even he can't survive."

The Champion Arrives

*The low rumble of a luxury vehicle engine echoes through the parking garage of the Chesapeake Employers Insurance Arena. A matte black SUV rolls to a smooth stop near the rear entrance. The camera pans down to catch a license plate that simply reads: "**TRUTH1**".*

*After a moment, the rear passenger door swings open -- and out steps **Jarvis Valentine**, the reigning **UTA Champion**.*

Dressed sharply in a tailored charcoal suit, his signature glasses resting on his face, Jarvis carries the championship belt over his shoulder like a statement piece. He pauses for a moment, breathing in the cold Baltimore air, before adjusting the title and walking forward with a calm, focused determination.

A crew member quickly jogs up beside him.

Crew Member: "Mr. Valentine, welcome back. Anything you need?"

Jarvis Valentine: "Just clear the way. The main event doesn't walk through side doors."

He continues down the hallway, the gold of the UTA Championship glinting under the fluorescent lights. Each step echoes with authority. Staff and talent alike turn their heads as he passes. Some nod. Others whisper.

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*He doesn't stop. Doesn't look back. Doesn't acknowledge the whispers. Tonight, there's only one thing on his mind -- **retaining the crown**.*

John Phillips (V.O.): "There he is -- the UTA Champion, Jarvis Valentine. Cool. Collected. Dangerous."

Mark Bravo (V.O.): "He's got that 'big game' walk, JP. I don't care if it's Jack Hunter or a ghost from UTA's past -- Jarvis is comin' to *win* tonight."

Can of Worms

*We cut backstage to the familiar UTA interview set -- deep blue lighting, UTA logo emblazoned on the backdrop, and the ever-professional **Melissa Cartwright** standing by with a confident smile.*

Melissa Cartwright: "Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome my guest at this time... the UTA Women's United States Champion -- **Emily Hightower!**"

*The crowd pops as **Emily Hightower** steps into frame, championship over her shoulder, wearing a no-nonsense expression and her signature blue denim vest. There's a steelworker's grit in her posture -- humble, but unshakable.*

Melissa Cartwright: "Emily, first off -- congratulations on your huge win over Valentina Blaze at *IN THE ZONE*. That was one for the books. The question on everyone's mind now is -- what's next for you?"

Emily Hightower: "Appreciate that, Melissa. Y'know, I ain't fancy. I don't wear tiaras or talk like I'm above anybody. I'm a blue collar woman raised by a blue collar man. And just like my daddy taught me -- you clock in, you do the work, and you never back down from a challenge."

She adjusts her grip on the championship. The crowd reacts with cheers -- but that reaction is suddenly drowned out...

...as the camera jerks slightly and five women burst onto the scene like a wave of aggression and attitude.

Amy Harrison, flanked by **Dahlia Cross**, **Selena Vex**, **Hardcore Sandy**, and **Rosa Delgado** -- the full force of **The Empire** -- storms into the shot. Amy strides front and center, mock applause dripping from her fingertips.

Amy Harrison: "Yeah, yeah, we get it. Hard work. Emily Hightower this and that. Spare us the heartwarming speech and move outta the way so *The Empire* can say something that actually matters."

Emily blinks, unimpressed. She lowers her title slightly, jaw tightening.

Emily Hightower: "Y'all always gotta roll in deep just to feel important, huh?"

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Amy gives a look of pure disgust.

Amy Harrison: "And who exactly do you think you are?"

Emily doesn't flinch. Instead, she raises her title high -- eyes locked on Amy.

Emily Hightower: "I'm the **United States Champion**. And you better put some respect on that when you're talkin' to me, little girl."

The crowd in the arena lets out a collective "oooh," as Amy takes half a step back -- caught off guard by the fire in Emily's voice.

Amy Harrison: "The United States Champion? Please. Is that even a *real* title? This ain't the county fair, sweetheart. You're looking at the *Empress* of the UTA -- the **Women's Champion**. Learn your place in the pecking order, because I promise you -- it ain't above me."

Emily takes a slow, deliberate glance across the five women surrounding her. She knows she's outnumbered, but she doesn't blink. Instead, she smirks -- like someone holding a loaded hand she hasn't played yet.

Emily Hightower: "Yeah... I might always be ready for a fight. But I ain't stupid."

She turns back to Amy, a sly confidence brewing beneath her calm exterior.

Emily Hightower: "But you? You're *real* dumb, Amy. 'Cause you just opened a can of worms you *ain't* ready for."

She nods slowly -- like she knows something Amy doesn't -- then turns and walks off screen, title still slung over her shoulder. The camera lingers on The Empire, who exchange confused, narrowed glances as Amy scoffs loudly.

Amy Harrison: "Whatever. Let her walk. Tonight, the *newest* member of The Empire -- **Dahlia Cross** -- is gonna handle business. Angela Hall's getting put down *for good*."

The segment fades with the five women looming like vultures, The Empire asserting dominance -- but Emily Hightower may have just sparked something bigger than any of them anticipated.

John Phillips (V.O.): "Did... did Emily just threaten The Empire without actually threatening them?"

Mark Bravo (V.O.): "Oh she did. And I think Amy Harrison might've stepped on a hornet's nest with that interruption."

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Gideon Graves vs. Gunnar Van Patton

The arena lights fall to a hard, industrial darkness. A low siren-like drone hums through the speakers. Then --

"I Stand Alone" by Godsmack hits.

John Phillips: "Here we go. That's Gideon Graves' music and he does not look in the mood to play tonight."

Mark Bravo: "Would you be? Last week he was supposed to team with Magnus Wolfe and somebody dropped him in the back before the match. He's been steaming about it all week."

At the top of the ramp, a shower of sparks rains down, framing the entrance. Gideon Graves strides through it like he walked out of a furnace -- broad shoulders, taped wrists, that heavy gauntlet on his right arm. He doesn't smile. He doesn't stop. He just walks.

He stops halfway down the ramp and pounds the gauntlet once with a hammer-fist -- a thick, echoing thud.

John Phillips: "That right there -- that's him saying, 'I remember. I didn't forget. And I'm here to pay it back.'"

Mark Bravo: "And in his head? That guy is Gunnar Van Patton. 100 percent."

Gideon continues to the ring, shoulders rolling, neck flexing. He walks up the stairs, steps over the top rope in one stride, and goes straight to the ropes facing the stage.

He points up the ramp and barks off-mic: "You did it. Come own it."

No posing. No taunts for the crowd. Gideon Graves is in the ring to fight the man he thinks jumped him.

John Phillips: "Gideon's not here to entertain anybody tonight. He's here to find out if Gunnar really blindsided him."

Mark Bravo: "And if he did? We're about to watch a mugging."

The arena stays dark -- and then it blows wide open.

"Boots and Blood" by Five Finger Death Punch detonates through the PA.

John Phillips: "And here comes the Lycan!"

Mark Bravo: "And look at Graves -- he wants him bad."

White strobe lights start snapping like gunfire. Gunnar Van Patton pushes straight through the curtain -- black t-shirt, backwards trucker cap, black fatigues tucked into kneepads, tactical gloves, eye patch. No

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playing to the crowd. No detours. Just a straight, marching line toward the ring.

John Phillips: "That is a man who lives for this. He's not spooked. He's not defensive. He's not even explaining himself."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah because in Gunnar's head? 'Prey...' This wolf's on the hunt."

The crowd reacts loud -- some cheers for the coming violence, some boos because Gunnar's a prick -- but he doesn't acknowledge a single one. His lone eye locked on Gideon the whole way down.

He reaches ringside, plants a hand on the apron, and slides under the bottom rope in one clean motion, popping to his feet like he's rolling into cover.

He strips off the t-shirt, slings it into the crowd, yanks off the trucker cap and tosses it the other way. The referee steps in to check him -- Gunnar just holds his arms out, never breaking eye contact with Gideon Graves.

John Phillips: "Look at that. Gunnar's not backing off. He's done saying, 'I didn't do it.' He's just looking to beat it into him."

Mark Bravo: "Which to a guy like Gideon? That's a confession."

Cleared, Gunnar backs into his corner and drops into that low, coiled squat -- adjusting his glove straps, rolling his shoulders, waiting.

Across from him, Gideon Graves is pacing, daring him to start.

John Phillips: "Referee's calling for the bell--"

DING! DING! DING!

Gideon Graves doesn't wait.

He CHARGES straight across the ring and fires off a running forearm, finding Gunnar's forearm defending against it. Graves unleashes a barrage -- lefts and rights from all angles. Van Patton can only cover up and absorb the flurry.

Mark Bravo: "Yeah! That's everything from last week coming out right now!"

Graves barks right in his face.

Gideon Graves: "You jumped me! You did it!"

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That slight opening gives Van Patton just enough room to retaliate with a headbutt square to the bridge of Gideon's nose.

John Phillips: "OHH that rocked Gideon's head back."

With Graves stumbling back, Gunnar is on him in a flash -- Muay Thai kick to the outer thigh, left hook to the jaw, and that trademark Van Patton roundhouse to the chest. Graves's left leg buckles.

Mark Bravo: "Textbook Gunnar -- precision strikes with both hands and feet."

Graves swings a heavy lariat from a knee -- Van Patton deflects it and rattles his brain with an elbow to the very top of Gideon's skull. A second thunderous roundhouse puts Graves horizontal.

John Phillips: "That's the problem with fighting a guy like Gunnar -- he knows ten ways to throw you and none of them are soft."

Gunnar mockingly scrapes the bottom of his combat boot against Graves's face, as Gideon crawls towards the nearest corner.

Gunnar Van Patton: "Ah told ya -- Ah ain't need to Pearl Harbor yer fat ass."

That sets Gideon OFF.

Graves powers up to both knees, grabs Gunnar by the waistband and YANKS him violently into the middle turnbuckle, sending his face crashing into it. Gunnar clutches at his jaw and props himself up in the corner, only have Graves come stampeding at him, BLASTING him with a corner lariat that folds him.

Mark Bravo: "There's the corner lariat! That's one of Gideon's go-tos!"

Graves doesn't stop -- he grabs Gunnar by the wrist, yanks him out, and DRIVES him down with a pendulum backbreaker, holding him there over the knee like he wants to break him in half.

John Phillips: "Graves is trying to make him pay for last week -- he's not going for a quick win, he's going for punishment."

Gunnar's free boot finds his foe's temple -- once, twice, three times -- Graves has to release. Gunnar rolls to the apron to create space...

...and Gideon follows.

He reaches over the ropes, hauls Gunnar in by the head -- and Gunnar spirals into a back elbow. Showing surprising agility, Van Patton shoots himself over the top rope and ricochets off the middle rope to deliver a Sagat-like tiger knee to Gideon's chin.

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Mark Bravo: "He caught him! Gunnar just rattled that big steel mill skull!"

Noticing Gideon's refusal to stay down, Van Patton dashes to the ropes. With Graves on a knee, Gunnar races to him -- and drives a PK right across the chest.

THWACK.

Crowd: "OHHHH!"

John Phillips: "Listen to the sound off that kick!"

Gunnar hits the ropes -- looking for another --

-- but Gideon SNATCHES him on the return and HOISTS him into the air!

Two-hand lift --

John Phillips: "IRON DROP--"

-- but Gunnar wallops him in the mouth with a Superman punch! Gideon stumbles back into the ropes, only to have them propel him back towards the middle of the ring and a waiting Van Patton.

Mark Bravo: "OHH that'll scramble a man!"

Gunnar doesn't waste the opportunity. Flatliner! But he holds on -- and looks like he's about to set up a Koji Clutch.

John Phillips: "He might be looking for a submission!"

Graves knows it. He struggles wildly to break Gunnar's grip, rolls to the floor, and slams a fist on the apron.

Mark Bravo: "Smart. Real smart. You let Gunnar cinch something in deep and you're not getting out."

Gunnar stands in the ring, staring down at him -- and now he smirks.

Gunnar Van Patton: "Yer ass ain't escaping the butcher, Wilbur."

Graves SLAMS the apron again and shouts back:

Gideon Graves: "I KNOW IT WAS YOU!"

Gunnar Van Patton: "Quit yer yappin' and fight."

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The ref begins a count...

Ref: "One! ... Two! ... Three!"

John Phillips: "We've got a fight on our hands and neither man's actually trying to win yet -- they're trying to PROVE something first."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah. This ain't done. Not even close."

Gideon Graves rolls back under the bottom rope at the ref's five-count, staying close to the ropes, so the referee has to be positioned between him and his opponent. Van Patton's impatience costs him. He brushes the ref to the side and is immediately caught in the throat with a chop.

John Phillips: "Gideon doesn't know a rule he won't break."

Graves throws a heavy forearm across Gunnar's back, then another, then posts up and drops a big, meaty elbow right between the shoulder blades. Gunnar grits his teeth, trying to push up -- Graves grabs him around the waist from the side and with a grunt heaves him up and over with a nasty gutwrench suplex.

Mark Bravo: "That's 285 pounds of Pittsburgh steel tossing you around. You don't walk that off."

Gunnar rolls to his stomach, instinctively trying to get to a knee -- Graves is RIGHT there. He plants a knee in Gunnar's spine and wrenches back on a chinlock, forearm grinding across the bridge of the nose.

Gideon Graves: "SAY IT WAS YOU!"

Referee Isaac Martin is right there, checking the hold. Gunnar doesn't tap -- he just snarls through his teeth.

Gunnar Van Patton: "Ah ain't done shit."

Not the answer he wants, so Graves clubs him. One. Two. Three forearms to the side of the head. Then he shifts and traps Gunnar's right arm, threading it up behind his own head -- turning the chinlock into more of a crossface-style grind, forcing Gunnar to carry his weight.

John Phillips: "Graves said it earlier -- he wants to punish Gunnar, not outwrestle him. This is personal."

Mark Bravo: "And that's not a bad strategy, either. You don't want Gunnar stringing offense -- you slow him down, mash the lungs, make him fight from underneath."

Gunnar starts to power up. He plants a boot. Graves leans in, adding more weight -- Gunnar's sharp elbow finds his ribs. Then another. The third one breaks the hold and letting Van Patton dart to the ropes. He is barely a step from the ropes when Gideon flat out runs him over.

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John Phillips: "BOOM! That Vader attack is like getting hit by a truck."

Two handfuls of hair pull Gunnar up and launch him into the corner. Graves follows him in with a running corner lariat -- CRUSHES him -- then snatches him by the head and spins him out into a short-arm clothesline that nearly decapitates him.

Mark Bravo: "That's the brawler Gideon right there. Big man, short space, don't let him breathe."

Graves, breathing heavy but in control, drops down across Gunnar's chest and rains down right hands. The ref starts a count -- 1! 2! 3! 4! -- Graves gets off at four, stands up, and glares at the official.

Gideon Graves: "You didn't stop him last week."

He turns back to Gunnar, grabs him by the wrist, and yanks him up -- OVERHEAD BELLY-TO-BELLY -- and Graves tosses Gunnar halfway across the ring!

John Phillips: "What a throw! Graves just LAUNCHED Gunnar Van Patton!"

Mark Bravo: "A taste of Gunnar's own medicine right there."

Gunnar rolls to the corner, clutching his lower back. Graves stalks in, boots him in the ribs once, twice, three times, using his size to keep him grounded. Then he drags Gunnar up to a vertical base and props him up in the corner.

Machine-gun body shots. Shoulder to the gut. Ref has to warn him again.

Mark Bravo: "Graves doesn't care if he gets fined, John. He wants the confession."

Graves seats Van Patton on the top rope and climbs up to the middle rope. He drapes Gunnar over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes -- one of his most impactful moves in mind --

John Phillips: "He might be thinking Avalanche Powerslam here--"

-- but not tonight.

Gunnar FIRES a trio of elbows into Gideon's cheek. Van Patton leapfrogs Graves and executes a forward roll. Gideon tries to stop the rapidly approaching Gunnar with his boot, but he's one step ahead--

-- DRAGON SCREW LEG WHIP!

John Phillips: "Incredible torque on the knee joint pulling Graves off the corner!"

Gideon hits the mat clutching his knee. Gunnar brutally kicks him in the ribs before snatching the leg by the

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ankle. Graves struggles to no avail, as Van Patton violently spirals to the mat -- Mandala Hineri!

Mark Bravo: "And now we're back in Gunnar territory -- target, dissect, dismantle."

Gunnar maintains control of the leg, steps over -- looks like he's going his Nagata/Ankle blend, Jigsaw's Deathtrap--

-- but Graves powers out, shoving him off with both legs. Gunnar allows the momentum to push him into the ropes, exploding off of them and driving his forearm into Gideon's mouth -- SLIDING D!

John Phillips: "Gunnar just won that exchange -- but he had to burn through a lot of fuel to do it."

He doesn't go for the cover. Instead, Gunnar forces Gideon to stand and locks his arms around his head. A Muay Thai clinch allows Van Patton to control the situation and deliver knee after knee to the ribs without any resistance. An upward elbow stands Graves up, but he's on spaghetti legs.

Gunnar Van Patton: "Talk shit now, porky."

That makes Graves swing wild.

Gunnar ducks -- hooks the waist -- GERMAN SUPLEX!

Gunnar hangs on.

Rolls the hips.

SECOND GERMAN SUPLEX!

Mark Bravo: "He said he can hit every suplex ever -- he's proving it!"

John Phillips: "Gideon is by no means a small man, but Gunnar's technique is beyond textbook, making these suplexes look easy."

He goes for the third --

-- but Graves throws back a donkey kick to the knee to break it!

A wild right is all Gideon can muster but it makes contact. Both men are down to a knee now, breathing hard.

John Phillips: "We're at the point now where whoever hits the next big move might swing this whole thing."

Mark Bravo: "And don't forget -- Graves still wants the truth, and Gunnar still kinda looks like a guy who'd jump you just because he was bored."

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Both men push up off the canvas, sweat beading, breathing heavy. The pace slows for a half-second -- just long enough for the crowd to start buzzing -- and then Gideon Graves SURGES first.

John Phillips: "Graves is up first -- he's not done!"

Graves fires off a combination of clubbing shots, no aiming just fury -- then he HOISTS him up with both hands!

Mark Bravo: "IRON DROP!"

Graves PLANTS Gunnar with the Iron Drop -- that big two-hand lift into the sit-out spinebuster. The ring shakes. Gideon puts his ankles across Van Patton's shoulders and holds his legs tight.

Ref: "One! Two--"

Gunnar kicks at two.

John Phillips: "Gunnar Van Patton kicks out! Graves got a lot of it, but not all of it!"

Graves SLAPS the mat in frustration, then grabs Gunnar by the throat and pulls him back up, going nose to nose.

Gideon Graves: "Just say it was you!"

A defiant middle finger is all he gets in reply. An infuriated Graves delivers a boot to the gut, doubling Van Patton over, so his head can be positioned between Gideon's massive thighs. Graves motions to the crowd with a thumbs down.

Mark Bravo: "Grave Maker coming--"

-- but Gunnar violently rolls, driving the heel of his boot right between Gideon's eyes with a KOPPO KICK!

In a flash, Gideon's becomes a blur and staggers backwards into the nearest corner. Van Patton roars and delivers a step up knee in the corner. Landing safely on his feet, he immediately darts to the ropes while Graves falls to his bottom. Gunnar tries to rip Gideon's face clear from his head -- BOOT WASH!

John Phillips: "The Devil's Rejects! What a brutal combo! Gideon's face is going to be a complete and utter mess tomorrow!"

Gunnar doesn't go for the pin.

He stands over him, uses his thumb to wipe some snot from his nose, and leans down close, grabbing Gideon by the beard.

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Gunnar Van Patton: "Ya shoulda let it go, but yer dumb ass just couldn't. Now, both you and yer sheep buddy are gonna die on that there hill."

Then he hauls Graves up -- arms crossed in front of him -- hoists him up into a fireman's carry --

Mark Bravo: "Gideon's path to the truth is about to hit a..."

-- and SPIKES him.

Mark Bravo: "Dead End."

Van Patton keeps complete control of his opponent's head. He rolls the pair to the stomach and drapes Gideon's arm across his shoulders, before forcing Graves to stand. He looks around the arena, letting the tension build.

John Phillips: "There's no way he can get him up. Graves outweighs him by 40 lbs."

Van Patton grips Gideon by his singlet and the crowd erupts, as Gunnar takes him vertical. Even holding him a few moments longer than he normally does.

There's only one way to go from here.

Mark Bravo: "Rest in peace, Gideon Graves."

Gunnar PLANTS Gideon Graves with the nastiest, straight-down brainbuster in the business. Graves bounces, then goes limp.

John Phillips: "FUKSZ! That's it! That's it!"

Gunnar rolls over, forearm across the face, hooking the far leg.

Ref: "ONE! TWO! THREE!"

DING! DING! DING!

"Boots and Blood" hits again as Gunnar Van Patton pushes up off Graves and gets to a knee, breathing hard. He doesn't celebrate. He doesn't pose. He just looks down at Gideon like he was a job that needed doing, before looking into the nearest camera.

Gunnar Van Patton: "Stevens, Ah know yer eyeballs are glued to that monitor. Accuse me again, and Ah'll make sure yer next stop's the morgue, right next to that poor bastard."

With that said, Van Patton points a pistol-shaped hand at the camera and fires. He starts his march back to

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the locker room, making sure to step over the still lifeless

John Phillips: "Gunnar Van Patton wins it. No shortcuts. No weapons. No outside help."

Mark Bravo: "Which -- if you think about it -- probably makes Gideon Graves even madder, because now he's gotta sit there and ask himself, 'If he can beat me clean like that... why WOULD he jump me last week?'"

John Phillips: "And if it wasn't Gunnar, who was it?"

Jack Attack™

*We cut backstage where **Melissa Cartwright** stands in front of the UTA banner. The camera slowly zooms in as she raises the mic with her signature composed energy.*

Melissa Cartwright: "Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome my guest at this time -- the number one contender for the UTA Championship, returning to action tonight -- **Jack Hunter**."

Jack Hunter steps into frame. He's wearing a faded leather vest with "STREETFIGHTER" spray-painted on the back, a half-tied bandana around his head, and a smug, twitchy grin on his face. The crowd watching in the arena lets out a mix of chuckles and confusion. Jack looks like he just wandered off a gas station roof and into the biggest match of his life.

Jack Hunter: "Well, well, well... here we are again, huh, Missy? Back in the ol' stompin' grounds of the U. T. A.!"

Melissa glances at the camera briefly as Jack holds up a bent metal pipe -- not threateningly, just like it's part of his outfit. He tosses it behind him with a loud clatter.

Jack Hunter: "Tonight, Baltimore's gonna bear witness to the biggest *whoopin'* this side of the Appalachian Mountains, darlin'. 'Cause your boy... **Jack's back**, baby!"

He throws his arms out like a man expecting applause at a flea market talent show. He doesn't get it -- but that doesn't bother him one bit.

Jack Hunter: "Jarvis Valentine? Hoo-boy... that fella walks 'round like he's got a Pulitzer in one hand and the world in the other. But lemme tell ya somethin' 'bout the real world -- it don't care how many bowties you iron or how many podcasts you host."

Jack Hunter: "Tonight ain't about exposés or ethics in journalism. Nah, tonight's a good ol' fashioned **streetfight** -- and where I come from, we don't print retractions... we print *receipts*!"

He wipes his nose with his wrist and leans closer to the mic like he's about to reveal a big secret.

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Jack Hunter: "I may not be the sharpest crayon in the shed, but I *am* the meanest one in the box. Jarvis is gonna find that out when he's pickin' gravel outta his teeth, courtesy of Jack Attack™ street justice."

Melissa blinks, unsure if Jack's just made up a trademark or genuinely believes it exists.

Jack Hunter: "So if yer watchin', champ, polish that pretty little belt up real nice. 'Cause in about an hour, I'mma pry it off your waist and slap a 'Property of Jack Hunter' sticker on it faster than you can say 'underdog redemption story!'"

He winks, tongue half out like he's posing for a gas station scratch-off ticket, then throws up devil horns and makes a "BOOM!" sound with his mouth.

Jack Hunter: "Time to play, Jarvis. And buddy... I *don't* play fair. You're bout to get streetfought."

With that, Jack Hunter struts out of frame in a zig-zag walk, nearly tripping over the same pipe he tossed earlier. Melissa stares after him, blinking slowly.

Melissa Cartwright: "Back to you at ringside..."

John Phillips (V.O.): "Did he say 'Jack Attack™' like that's a real thing?"

Mark Bravo (V.O.): "I don't know what I just watched, but I'm oddly fired up. This man might actually believe he's about to win the UTA Championship... and that's *terrifying*."

Team Ross Just Got U.S.A Stronger

*The camera picks up **Chris Ross** walking briskly through the backstage hallway, fresh from his earlier conversation with Madman Szalinski and El Fantasma. He's focused, fists clenched at his sides, jaw set. You can feel the storm brewing inside him after everything Maxx Mayhem has put him through.*

Suddenly, from just off-camera--

Voice: "Hey Chris... Chris!"

*Ross slows his stride and turns as **Jaxson Ryder** steps into the frame. One half of Team U.S.A., Ryder looks calm but sincere, sporting a bomber jacket over his wrestling gear, the stars-and-stripes stitched proudly across his sleeve.*

Jaxson Ryder: "I just wanted to say... I may not agree with how you came back to the UTA."

Ross raises an eyebrow but says nothing. Ryder continues, honest and straightforward.

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Jaxson Ryder: "But ever since you and Dane hashed things out, I've seen the shift. You're not just fightin' for yourself anymore. What Maxx did to you... that wasn't just dirty -- it was *cowardly*."

There's a pause. Ross tilts his head slightly, listening, evaluating. Ryder steps in closer, lowering his voice.

Jaxson Ryder: "Next week at Survivor... Carter won't be there. He's out. But me? I'm wide open. If you're still lookin' for someone to watch your back -- someone you can *trust* in that war -- I'm right here."

The moment hangs for a second. No witty comebacks, no sarcasm. Just two men -- two warriors -- understanding what's at stake.

Chris Ross looks Jaxson Ryder up and down. He doesn't smile. He doesn't nod immediately. But after a long beat, he gives a short, deliberate nod. That's all that needs to be said.

Jaxson nods back with quiet respect and walks off, leaving Ross alone in the hallway again... but not alone in the fight.

John Phillips (V.O.): "That's huge! Chris Ross just picked up another ally -- Jaxson Ryder -- one of the toughest, most respected men on the roster."

Mark Bravo (V.O.): "El Fantasma and now Ryder? That's three. Ross is building a unit for war at Survivor -- and Maxx Mayhem better be ready for hell to march through his door."

The Mayhem Express

*Backstage at the Chesapeake Employers Insurance Arena, we find **Maxx Mayhem** and **Kaine** standing by a water cooler. The chaotic brawler fills a little paper cup and downs the whole thing with theatrical flair.*

Maxx Mayhem: "Mmmm... nice and cold. You should have some."

Kaine, silent and ominous as ever, raises one gloved hand with a subtle 'no thanks' gesture. Maxx shrugs, wiping his mouth with the back of his wrist.

Maxx Mayhem: "We're about there, Kaine ol' boy. One more -- just one more soldier of chaos. One more soul who wants to bathe in violence and leave ashes in their wake. One more anarchist to help burn this place *down*!"

Kaine just stares -- no words, no reaction, just that cold, calculating gaze.

*That's when a presence enters from the left. Dark hair. Sharp eyes. Quiet rage. **Kaida Shizuka** walks into frame.*

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Maxx Mayhem: "Well well well... what do we have here? You come to try the water, lil' lady? It's pretty good."

He dramatically raises his eyebrows, over-exaggerating his enjoyment of the beverage as he slurps another sip. Kaida doesn't smile. She doesn't blink.

Kaida Shizuka: "No. I come... for answer."

Maxx tilts his head, intrigued. Kaida steps closer, her accent thick, her words chosen with intent.

Kaida Shizuka: "Since I here... I used. I put over women... not half as good as me. Then... thrown away. Like trash."

She clenches her fist at her side.

Kaida Shizuka: "Amy Harrison. Marie Claudio. Pretty girls. They get TV. They get title. I... I get silence."

Maxx takes a slow sip of water and nods like a condescending therapist.

Maxx Mayhem: "Yeah... that kinda sucks. I'd say."

Kaida steps even closer now, her voice rising just slightly with conviction.

Kaida Shizuka: "I join. Your team. Survivor. I prove I belong. I prove... I am toughest!"

Maxx's eyes go wide like a kid on Christmas morning. He looks to Kaine.

Maxx Mayhem: "You... want to join my team?"

Kaida nods once. No games. No hesitation.

Kaida Shizuka: "Yes."

Maxx throws his hands up and spins dramatically toward Kaine again.

Maxx Mayhem: "Well hell, Kaine! There we go! That's five! Who woulda thought it'd be a skirt?"

Suddenly, Kaida steps forward and pokes her finger dead center in Maxx's chest. Her glare cuts through him like a blade.

Kaida Shizuka: "I join. But... you disrespect me again... I end you."

Maxx freezes. Then... he smiles. Broad. Wild.

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Maxx Mayhem: "No disrespect, sweetheart. Welcome aboard the Mayhem Express!"

He offers a mock salute with his water cup. Kaine finally nods -- a silent sign of approval as the final ember falls into place.

John Phillips (V.O.): "Whoa! Kaida Shizuka... just joined Team Mayhem? That's huge!"

Mark Bravo (V.O.): "Maxx Mayhem's team is full, and that is one scary squad! Ross better be payin' attention -- Survivor just got DEADLY."

Future Stakes

John Phillips: "Business is really picking up here in Baltimore tonight, and I think it's about to get even more serious, Mark."

Mark Bravo: "That's one way to put it, Johnny. I just got word--we're heading to the ring. Chris Ross is on his way out!"

The house lights dim. A tense hush rolls over the Chesapeake Employers Insurance Arena. Then, the opening riffs of "Black Flame" by Bury Tomorrow rumble through the speakers. The video wall flickers with flashes of fire and iron, while red strobes pulse with the music's tempo.

John Phillips: "Listen to this crowd. The Boss is in the building."

Chris Ross steps out onto the stage with a slow, deliberate stride. He's in no rush--every motion is calculated, like a man who knows the weight he carries. Dressed in a custom black and silver leather jacket with "THE BOSS" stitched boldly across the back, he pauses at the top of the ramp, soaking in the energy.

Mark Bravo: "That's not just swagger, John--that's battlefield confidence. Chris Ross doesn't move fast because he doesn't need to. When he walks into a room, everyone else slows down."

Ross lowers his chin, eyes laser-focused on the ring ahead. His jaw clenches, nostrils flare. The camera zooms in on his expression--intensity and purpose carved into every inch of his face.

John Phillips: "That stare right there? That's not just a look. That's a warning to anyone who thinks they can stand in his way."

He begins his descent down the ramp. The fans lean over the barricades, chanting his name, some reaching out in vain for a slap of his hand. He ignores them--not out of disrespect, but discipline. Tunnel vision.

Mark Bravo: "You don't see a guy like Ross doing TikTok dances or selfie waves. This guy is cut from a different cloth. Old school, new rules."

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He circles the ring slowly, locking eyes with the hard camera for a moment before climbing the steel steps. Once on the apron, he wipes his boots--another sign of his unshakable discipline--and ducks between the ropes.

Ross walks to the far turnbuckle, ascends the second rope, and raises both fists high in the air. Red lights cascade around him like embers as the fans erupt. He takes it all in, eyes closed for a brief second, then hops down and paces the ring with slow, deliberate steps.

He motions for a microphone as "Black Flame" fades out. No wasted motion. No performative hype. Just raw presence.

Chris Ross: "Looks like Survivor's shaping up to be one hell of a blowout, huh?"

Pop from the crowd.

Chris Ross: "One little detail makes it even juicier--the winning team's captain? They get to pick the match and the stipulation at Black Horizon. Me or Mayhem... one of us is setting the rules for the end of this madness."

He paces.

Chris Ross: "Maxx Mayhem's already locked in his chaos cult--Silas Grimm, Malachi Cross, Kaine... hell, even Kaida Shizuka jumped aboard the pain train. It's a murderers' row of destruction. I respect that... but I don't fear it."

Another pop.

Chris Ross: "And I'll tell you this right now... I want to thank El Fantasma and Jaxson Ryder. They didn't have to step up. This war? It ain't their battle to fight. But they saw what's happening, and they said, 'Ross, we're with you.'"

He nods with gratitude.

Chris Ross: "That means something. I don't want anyone in my corner... but if I gotta have allies in this war... I'm damn glad it's them."

Chris Ross: "But we still need one more. One last soldier to complete the team. I don't know who that is yet... but you better believe, Maxx... I'll have him next week."

The arena lights dim, casting the Chesapeake Employers Insurance Arena in near darkness. A hush falls over the Baltimore crowd... and then --

"American Flags" by Tom MacDonald blasts through the sound system, shaking the rafters.

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John Phillips: "That music says it all -- the UTA Champion has arrived!"

Mark Bravo: "And business is about to pick up in a big way!"

Red, white, and blue lights pulse and swirl around the arena, bathing the crowd in a wave of patriotic color. On the stage, smoke machines blast plumes upward as a coordinated pyro sequence explodes in rhythm with the beat -- like fireworks celebrating Independence Day.

Out steps Jarvis Valentine.

The UTA Champion stands tall at the top of the ramp, the championship belt snug around his waist, his presence commanding. He's dressed in a sleek, custom-made patriotic ensemble -- rich navy base with subtle red accents, white trim, and intricate stitching that weaves faint impressions of the letter Q and the number 17 into the pattern. It's tasteful, but intentional -- a quiet message to those who know.

John Phillips: "Every detail about this man is deliberate. From the message in his gear to the fire in his eyes -- Jarvis Valentine is locked in."

Mark Bravo: "He doesn't need a posse or some flashy gimmick. Just give him the belt, the moment, and a reason to fight -- and he'll deliver every time."

He begins his slow walk down the ramp, each step resonating with the gravity of a man who carries the weight of a company on his shoulders. As he nears the halfway point, he stops -- and raises his right hand.

His fingers form a subtle "Q."

The crowd, already on their feet, catches it instantly -- an audible wave of cheers and whistles rolling through the building.

John Phillips: "That symbol may not mean something to everyone... but to the people who believe in Jarvis Valentine? It's everything."

Mark Bravo: "And tonight, he's not just fighting for the title -- he's fighting for the truth. His truth."

Pyro erupts behind him once more -- a dazzling vertical display that mirrors a Fourth of July celebration, trailing sparks as Jarvis continues forward, undeterred.

He climbs the steel steps with patience, wiping his boots on the apron before stepping between the ropes. In the center of the ring, he unfastens the championship and raises it high overhead. Flashbulbs erupt. The chants grow louder.

John Phillips: "That right there -- that's the symbol of excellence in the United Toughness Alliance. That's the top prize. And Jarvis Valentine holds it with honor."

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Mark Bravo: "You better believe Jack Hunter is somewhere pacing right now, wondering if he just made the biggest mistake of his life picking a fight with this man."

Jarvis hands removes his title belt, sets it down gently in front of Ross, and looks him dead in the eyes.

Jarvis Valentine: "Chris... you're the number two guy in the rankings--right behind me."

Big crowd pop.

Jarvis Valentine: "We SHOULD be having a match at Survivor. You've earned that. You've earned the chance to sit at the big table."

Ross tilts his head, intrigued, unsure where this is going.

Jarvis Valentine: "But just like when you were gunning for the belt against Eric Dane Jr... you've been dragged into another mess. Another feud that's stopping you from getting what you rightfully deserve--a clean shot at the UTA Championship."

Fans explode with cheers.

Jarvis Valentine: "This fight with Maxx? It ends at Black Horizon. One final match. One last chapter. Then it's over."

Ross nods slowly, processing it all.

Jarvis Valentine: "So, I got to thinking... if Jack Hunter is the last 'legacy challenger' management's got lined up for me--and after I beat him tonight... I got nothing on my plate for Survivor."

He pauses... then smirks.

Jarvis Valentine: "How about I take that last spot on your team?"

The arena erupts. Ross looks out to the sea of fans, nodding with a sly grin. The crowd begins chanting "LET'S GO ROSS! LET'S GO JARVIS!"

Chris Ross: "You ready to go to war with us?"

Jarvis Valentine: "I was born ready."

The two shake hands firmly.

Chris Ross: "Then it's done."

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Fans cheer louder than ever.

Jarvis Valentine: "But Chris..."

Chris Ross: "Yeah?"

Jarvis Valentine: "When you finish Mayhem off at Black Horizon... keep December 28th open."

Ross narrows his eyes.

Jarvis Valentine: "Because this is me... telling you... I want you. Main event. Season's Beatings. No interference. No chaos. Just me and you... for this."

He lifts the UTA Championship into the air as the fans explode. Standing ovation. Chris Ross nods, mouthing, "You got it."

John Phillips: "Holy hell! Jarvis Valentine just joined Team Ross AND set the table for Season's Beatings!"

Mark Bravo: "That's the UTA Champion laying down a challenge to the most dangerous man in the company. Business just went nuclear!"

Ross and Valentine stand eye to eye. Two warriors. The Survivor war is now locked in... and so is a main event for the ages.

Healing

Black screen.

A slow inhale.

Then -- soft piano keys begin to play. A calm, composed voice speaks over the darkness.

Eli Creed (V.O.): "Most people think healing feels good."

The screen fades in -- a sterile white room. A single chair. Eli Creed sits perfectly still, hands folded in his lap, wearing a white dress shirt and a faint smile. Behind him, the wall is covered in faint motivational phrases, hand-written in neat script: 'BE HONEST WITH YOURSELF.' -- 'PAIN IS PROGRESS.' -- 'SUBMIT TO GROW.'

Eli Creed: "But healing... hurts. Growth hurts. Enlightenment isn't soft light through stained glass."

He leans forward, eyes piercing the lens.

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Eli Creed: "It's the fire that burns away everything fake inside you."

Quick flashes -- a hand gripping a turnbuckle. Sweat hitting canvas. A lightbulb flickering over a silhouette delivering a snap DDT in slow motion. The audio stays calm -- but unsettlingly quiet.

Eli Creed (V.O.): "For years, I helped lost people find themselves. I gave them truth... and they hated me for it. They called me a monster. But monsters don't tell the truth. They hide it."

He rises from the chair. The camera follows his steps as he walks barefoot across the white floor, the echo of each footfall unnaturally sharp.

Eli Creed: "The United Toughness Alliance is full of good people. Hard workers. Dreamers. Fighters."

He pauses -- that faint smile returns, controlled, almost sympathetic.

Eli Creed: "But they're broken. They're angry. And they don't even know why."

The piano fades under a growing low hum, like a heartbeat. Eli turns his back to the camera, looking toward a large mirror on the wall. His reflection seems slightly distorted -- stretched, blurred -- but his voice stays calm.

Eli Creed: "They'll learn. Pain is the teacher. I'm just the guide."

He faces the camera again, hands folded behind his back, posture straight like a pastor preparing to bless a congregation.

Eli Creed: "I don't fight to win. I fight to enlighten. Every opponent I touch will walk away a better version of themselves..."

He leans close to the lens -- voice dropping to a whisper that's both gentle and chilling.

Eli Creed: "...or not at all."

*The screen flickers -- brief flashes of him hitting the **Ascension Driver**, a hand reaching up from the mat, then static.*

TEXT ON SCREEN: "THE MORNINGSTAR IS COMING."

The piano fades. The last sound is Eli's calm voice -- distant, echoing like a sermon in an empty hall.

Eli Creed (V.O.): "You can't stop the dawn."

Fade to black.

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Angela Hall vs. Dahlia Cross

The arena lights shift to a cool electric blue as "Tempest's Eye" hits the sound system. The crowd in Baltimore perks up -- they know that theme. The tron flashes with surging storm graphics, crackles of lightning forming the name "Angela Hall."

John Phillips: "Here we go -- Angela Hall was laid out a couple weeks back and tonight she finally gets her hands on the newest member of The Empire, Dahlia Cross."

Mark Bravo: "Yeah, if -- and that's a big if -- she actually makes it to the ring. You heard what Amy Harrison said earlier -- they want to end her."

Angela Hall steps out onto the stage, all business. She's in her purple gear, ponytail high, that track-sprinter focus in her eyes. She points to the ring -- no wasted motion -- and starts down the ramp with long, athletic strides.

John Phillips: "Angela Hall is one of the most explosive athletes in the women's division -- she can hit you from anywhere, with pace. And she's not intimidated by The Empire."

Mark Bravo: "She should be tonight."

Angela gets about a third of the way down --

-- and Dahlia Cross slides in from the side of the entranceway, blindspot, low angle -- and BLASTS Angela from behind with a chop-block to the back of the knee!

John Phillips: "Oh, come on!"

Angela goes down to all fours on the ramp, clutching her leg. Dahlia pops up with that cold, wicked little smile, violet hair spilling, and immediately grabs the back of Angela's head and BOUNCES her face-first off the ramp.

Mark Bravo: "That's the venom right there -- Dahlia was never planning to wrestle a straight match. She was planning to dissect."

Dahlia stays on her -- palm thrust to the throat to stun her, then a snap kick to the bad leg to put Angela back down. She grabs Angela's right arm and YANKS it down against the edge of the ramp in a nasty arm-jolt.

John Phillips: "She's trying to take away both the speed and the leverage -- classic Dahlia Cross."

And then -- right on cue -- "The Empire" arrives.

Hardcore Sandy is first, striding out with a "we planned this" energy. Right behind her, Selena Vex, smirking,

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clapping slowly like this is theater. Rosa Delgado follows, jaw set, rolling her shoulders -- the workhorse muscle. They fan out across the top of the ramp like a formation.

John Phillips: "Oh no... this isn't a match. This is a setup."

Mark Bravo: "Amy Harrison said she was going to make an example out of the 'little overachievers.' Angela Hall just raised her hand at the wrong time."

Dahlia drags Angela the rest of the way down the ramp, shoving her under the bottom rope and into the ring. Angela tries to push up, but Dahlia stomps the leg again, then steps on her wrist and GRINDS her boot down -- smiling while she does it.

Hardcore Sandy and Rosa slide in next, flanking. Selena Vex takes her time, sauntering around the ring, taunting fans at ringside, pointing at Angela and laughing.

Then the music changes.

The UTA Women's Champion makes them wait for it.

Amy Harrison steps through the curtain -- slowly, methodically, title over her shoulder, dressed in expensive ring gear like she owns the place. She doesn't rush to the ring; she strolls. The fans boo loud, but Amy smirks, tilting her head like, "Say it louder."

John Phillips: "And there she is... the empress herself. The UTA Women's Champion, Amy Harrison -- and this is her court."

Mark Bravo: "That's five-on-one. That's power. That's what a real faction looks like."

In the ring, Angela Hall is trying to fight up -- she throws a punch that clips Dahlia -- but Rosa Delgado is right there with a dragon screw to the leg to take her back down. Hardcore Sandy stomps the midsection. Selena Vex slides in behind her and rakes the eyes from the back just because she can.

Amy finally reaches ringside, walks up the steps nice and slow, wipes her boots on the apron like a queen refusing to dirty her gear, and steps through the ropes.

The Empire parts for her.

Angela Hall is on her knees, holding her leg, blinking through the cheap shot -- and now she's surrounded.

John Phillips: "Somebody needs to get out here and stop this -- this isn't a match!"

Mark Bravo: "No, John... this is a message."

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Amy Harrison looks down at Angela Hall... and smiles.

Amy Harrison is smiling down at Angela Hall like a queen about to pass sentence.

Amy Harrison: "This is what happens when you--"

-- and then the crowd in Baltimore suddenly ROARS.

John Phillips: "Wait... wait a second..."

From the crowd, three figures hop the guardrail in one smooth motion -- Marie Van Claudio, Susanita Ybanez, and Valkyrie Knox.

Mark Bravo: "Uh-oh. The cavalry just showed up!"

They don't pose. They don't point. They slide straight into the ring.

Marie Van Claudio goes right for Selena Vex -- forearm, forearm, forearm -- then a sharp slap right across the face that sends Selena stumbling to the corner.

Susanita Ybanez springboards in off the middle rope and wipes out Rosa Delgado with a flying forearm, popping right back up to her feet like she's ready for more.

And Valkyrie Knox? She makes a beeline for Hardcore Sandy and Dahlia Cross -- the muscle versus the monster.

John Phillips: "Marie, Susanita, and Valkyrie -- they were watching. They knew The Empire was gonna pull something like this!"

Mark Bravo: "And Amy Harrison sees it -- look!"

Amy Harrison, the UTA Women's Champion, takes one look at the ring about to break into chaos... and immediately slides right back out under the bottom rope. She wants none of it. She adjusts the title on her shoulder and starts backing up the ramp, hands up, shaking her head like, "No no, that's not for me."

John Phillips: "Of course she's leaving! Of course she is!"

Mark Bravo: "That's a champion protecting her asset, Johnny. You don't brawl with three fresh women when your whole stable just got surprised."

Back in the ring, Valkyrie Knox runs through Hardcore Sandy with a short-arm lariat that nearly flips her. Dahlia Cross tries a palm thrust -- Valkyrie just shoves her to the mat.

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Marie pulls Angela Hall up to her feet.

Marie Van Claudio: "You good?"

Angela nods, still holding her leg, but fire in her eyes now that the numbers are even.

Selena Vex bails to the floor. Rosa rolls under the bottom rope. Dahlia rolls out too, holding her jaw. The Empire is in retreat mode now, gathering at ringside, looking up at the four women in the ring.

Up on the ramp, Amy Harrison is furious -- but also smirking, because she didn't get touched. She points the title down at the ring and yells something we can't hear.

John Phillips: "So much for the Empire's big statement -- they just got ran off!"

Mark Bravo: "They got jumped by the anti-Empire is what happened. And Amy? She stayed untouched. That's on purpose."

In the ring, Angela Hall, Marie Van Claudio, Susanita Ybanez, and Valkyrie Knox stand together -- not an official alliance... but absolutely a message: the Empire doesn't own this division.

Amy Harrison keeps backing up on the stage, yelling down at the ring, clutching the UTA Women's Championship to her chest. The Empire is regrouping at ringside, pissed off and embarrassed. Amy is sneering at them like it's their fault.

John Phillips: "Amy Harrison making the smart escape here--"

Mark Bravo: "Smart? She left her whole team to get jumped."

Amy stops.

Her face changes.

Because she's just backed into someone.

Slowly... she turns around.

Standing there, center stage, blocking the exit... is Emily Hightower.

The UTA Women's United States Champion has her title slung over one shoulder -- and in the other hand? Her daddy's tow truck hook, chain and all, heavy, real, and absolutely not for decoration.

John Phillips: "Ohhhhhh my lord... Emily Hightower!"

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Mark Bravo: "That is NOT who Amy wanted to see right now."

The hardcam catches it perfectly. Emily stares daggers through Amy. Her jaw is clenched. That West Memphis attitude all over her face.

Emily Hightower: "You're not the only one with a chain, bitch!"

The crowd POPS huge.

John Phillips: "Emily heard everything she said earlier! She told Amy she was opening a can she couldn't close -- and now she's here to prove it!"

Amy's eyes go wide. Real wide. She hugs the Women's Championship tighter and, without even thinking about it, she immediately starts backing the other way... back down the ramp... back toward the ring she just bailed on.

Mark Bravo: "Look at this -- the 'empress' running away from the woman with the tow hook!"

Emily doesn't rush. She doesn't swing wild. She starts walking toward Amy slowly. Methodically. Every step is heavy -- junkyard stomp, like she's walking through gravel.

Amy's trying to talk her way out of it, both hands up now, backing down the ramp.

Amy Harrison: "Emily... Emily... hey... let's not--"

Emily just keeps coming.

Emily Hightower: "You shoulda kept your mouth shut."

In the ring, Marie Van Claudio, Angela Hall, Susanita Ybanez, and Valkyrie Knox are watching, ready. At ringside, the Empire is shouting up the ramp for Amy to come back -- but Amy can't go forward, and she can't go back.

John Phillips: "Amy Harrison is trapped between her enemies and the woman she disrespected."

Mark Bravo: "And Emily's got a hook. That's a problem."

Emily reaches the foot of the ramp -- Amy's halfway down now, retreating, shaking her head, yelling for Rosa and Dahlia to get up there.

But everyone can see it now.

The Empire doesn't run this division alone anymore.

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Amy Harrison makes a split-second decision -- instead of letting Emily corner her, she whirls to her right and LEAPS over the barricade into the crowd. Fans scatter as the Women's Champion shoves through, clutching the title, yelling for security to "move these people." She wants no part of a tow hook brawl.

John Phillips: "Amy Harrison bailed! The champion just ran right into the people to get away from Emily Hightower!"

Mark Bravo: "You call it running -- I call it living to fight another day. Nobody wants to get hit with a chain, Johnny."

At ringside, the rest of The Empire panics and spreads out -- Dahlia yanks Selena Vex to the floor, Rosa Delgado pulls Hardcore Sandy to the ramp side, all of them retreating in different directions so they don't get surrounded again.

Up on the ramp, Emily Hightower stops. Chain and tow hook in hand. She just watches them scatter.

In the ring, Marie Van Claudio stands with Susanita Ybanez, Valkyrie Knox, and Angela Hall. Four women. Four very different paths through UTA... but all of them stared down The Empire tonight.

Emily looks from the escaping Amy... to the ring.

She locks eyes with Marie.

John Phillips: "...wait a minute."

There's no microphone. No music. No talking. Just a stare between two women who have both carried this division.

Then Emily Hightower slowly lifts her hand... and spreads all five fingers.

Mark Bravo: "Ohhhhhh... oh that's what that is."

John Phillips: "Emily Hightower just accepted the fifth spot! Marie Van Claudio has her Survivor team!"

In the ring, Marie gives the slightest nod -- that veteran "good" nod -- and Susanita pumps a fist. Valkyrie folds her arms, approving. Angela, bruised but standing, exhales in relief.

Up in the crowd, Amy Harrison sees it... and she is livid.

Culture War

The camera cuts to the backstage hallway. Troy Lindz rounds the corner, radiant and relaxed, sequins

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catching the light, humming a Lady Gaga riff under their breath. They pause to check their reflection in a monitor, adjusting a curl and blowing themselves a kiss.

From the opposite end of the corridor, Avril Selene Kinkade emerges--heels clicking with precision, clipboard in hand, dressed in a tailored navy skirt suit and silk stockings. Her posture is immaculate. She stops. She stares. Her normally cold and uncaring demeanor is broken by a look of complete and utter disgust.

Avril Selene Kinkade: "Heavens above. I'd heard whispers, but I assumed they were exaggerated. And yet here you stand--proof that the decline of Western civilisation is not merely academic."

Troy Lindz: "Rude... Do I know you?"

Avril Selene Kinkade: "No. But I know you. Not by choice, mind you. Unfortunately, my client has no social life to speak of. He devotes himself entirely to studying this roster. Every match. Every movement. Every weakness. Which means I've had the misfortune of enduring far more of your performances than any sane person should. You're not a wrestler. You're a glittering mascot for a generation that confuses indulgence with identity. A culture that rewards noise over nuance. You are the end result of a society that abandoned standards in favour of spectacle."

Troy Lindz: "Okay, wow. That's a lot of syllables for someone I've never met. You always open with a monologue, or am I just special?"

Avril Selene Kinkade: "Special? Don't flatter yourself. You're symptomatic. A walking tantrum in rhinestones. You mistake applause for absolution. You mistake your own reflection for relevance. And you mistake the tolerance of others for respect you've never earned."

Troy Lindz: "And you mistake your bitterness for brilliance. You sound like a villain from a BBC drama. One of the ones who dies in the first act."

Avril tilts her head slightly, unamused.

Avril Selene Kinkade: "You mistake survival for relevance. You're not the lead--you're the cautionary tale they forget to mourn."

Troy steps forward, closing the distance. Their smile fades into something sharper. They lean in, just enough to invade Avril's space.

Avril Selene Kinkade: "Do come closer if it lends you the illusion of control. It won't make you any more formidable. Your sequin-covered bravado doesn't stir a single hair on my neck--though it does offend my sense of decorum."

Troy Lindz: "You sure you want to keep talking like that? Some people might take it personally."

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They smirk, tilting their head with theatrical disdain.

Troy Lindz: "I mean those are brave words for someone whose war dog isn't standing behind her."

Avril's expression doesn't change. Her voice remains composed.

Avril Selene Kinkade: "On the contrary, you should be thankful that he isn't or you would not have gotten this close."

She lets the moment settle, then continues.

Avril Selene Kinkade: "Thankful is surely the correct word. Gunnar Van Patton fought for freedoms you exploit without reverence. He bled for a flag you deface with every breath. You should consider yourself blessed to exist in the same world as a man of his calibre. He is everything you will never be--principled, forged by sacrifice, and the absolute pinnacle of what your homeland has to offer."

Troy Lindz: "You make him sound like a monument. Bronze, blood-soaked, and boring. I don't care how many flags he's folded or how many ghosts he's collected. I care what happens when the lights hit and the crowd roars. So let's find out. Next week at Survivor. One-on-one. Just me, him, and the spotlight that loves me."

Avril's lips curl into the faintest smile--cold, composed, and utterly confident. Just enough to hint at the suggestion of fangs, like something regal that remembers how to bite.

Avril Selene Kinkade: "Then consider it accepted."

Troy Lindz: "Shouldn't you ask him first? Or does he only speak when you pull the string?"

Avril's smile vanishes.

Avril Selene Kinkade: "There is no need. I already know his answer. He doesn't run from filth. He cleanses it. Washes it from the face of the earth like floodwaters sent by God Himself."

Troy Lindz: "Then I'll pack a swimsuit. I look divine in a deluge."

Avril Selene Kinkade turns, heels clicking like a metronome of judgment, and disappears into the shadows. Troy watches her go, the smile fading just slightly.

The tension doesn't break--it lingers. The show moves on, but something has shifted beneath it.

Jarvis Valentine vs. Jack Hunter

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John Phillips: "Main event time in Baltimore. UTA Championship on the line. And remember -- earlier tonight Jarvis Valentine said two things: he's the fifth man for Chris Ross at Survivor, and if he retains here he'll defend against Ross at Season's Beatings on December 28. Big promises... that only matter if he survives Jack Hunter *tonight*."

Mark Bravo: "That's the trap, Johnny. Make too many plans for next month and you forget the guy tripping you in the hallway. Jack Hunter might be a questionable pick, but he's stubborn, he's shameless, and sometimes that's kryptonite to a focused champion."

The house lights dip to a dingy amber and a distorted punk riff rips through the PA -- fast, loud, a little off-time. A spray of cheap strobes pops at the entryway as Jack Hunter strides out like he just headlined the place he barely got booked on. He chews imaginary gum, throws an arms-wide "I'm back!" pose, and cups a hand to his ear for cheers that mostly boomerang into heckles.

John Phillips: "Here comes the challenger, Jack Hunter, returning to the UTA and calling his shot against the champion tonight."

Mark Bravo: "'Calling his shot' is generous, Johnny. He's vibing like a cover band that knows the chorus and hums the verses."

Hunter stalks to the hardcam and mouths along to a line he clearly doesn't know, then taps an imaginary wristwatch with a smirk. He paces the stage, points to a "WELCOME BACK" sign a fan clearly printed in marker ten minutes ago, and bangs his fist to his heart like it's a movie trailer. The crowd answers with a mix of boos and ironic claps.

John Phillips: "Love him or hate him, he's not short on confidence."

Mark Bravo: "Confidence, caffeine, and chaos. Let's see if he packed ring skill in the same bag."

Down the ramp he goes, jawing with the front row. He shadowboxes a kid's foam finger, then leans into a camera and says something about "streetfighting the truth outta champions," lips outpacing his brain. He hops to the apron on a sprint... and his plant foot skitters. A quick windmill-arms save keeps him upright. He grins like it was on purpose and slaps the top rope twice to sell the bit.

John Phillips: "Nearly blew a tire on the entry lane there."

Mark Bravo: "No worries -- he'll tell you gravity slipped, not him."

He wipes his boots (late), slingshots in with a lazy half-twist, lands off-center, and pops to the second rope for a pose. He cups his ear again, tries to start a chant that dies on the third syllable, then points at the hardcam like he's about to drop a famous catchphrase... stalls... smirks... and shrugs it off into a cocky middle-rope hop down.

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John Phillips: "Jack Hunter has promised all week he's going to 'make it ugly' in there."

Mark Bravo: "Good news -- he's already halfway there and the bell hasn't rung."

He peels off his sleeveless tee and flings it toward a section that tosses it back like a hot potato. He paces a crooked figure-eight, testing the ropes, yanking a turnbuckle pad once for show. At ringside he mouths off at a fan in a Chris Ross shirt, then turns and points dead center -- a jab at the champion's nameplate waiting on the timekeeper's table.

John Phillips: "The UTA Championship changes people -- it either sharpens you or exposes you. We're about to find out which way Jack Hunter breaks."

Mark Bravo: "If swagger counted on the scorecards, he's up ten-eight already. Unfortunately for Jack, punches and pins get judged here."

Hunter settles into his corner, rolling his neck, shaking out his hands. He pounds his chest twice, nods like he's manifesting destiny, and points to the stage with a big, theatrical sweep -- the kind you do when you're begging the spotlight to share credit. He's ready. Or at least convinced he is.

The arena drops to blackout. A single white spotlight hits the stage grille. Then the snare cracks and the opening bars of "American Flags" by Tom MacDonald slam the silence. Red beams spear the rafters; blue lancers sweep the lower bowl; white strobes chase the ramp in a tight, marching rhythm.

The tron blooms with a slow ripple of the title plate, and the UTA Champion steps into the cone of light.

Jarvis Valentine wears a tailored, patriotic ring jacket -- clean lines, matte finish, with a subtle chevron trim at the shoulders that suggests a Q, and ghost-stitched 17s you only catch on the close-up. The UTA Championship is clasped at his waist. He doesn't posture; he takes one measured breath, sets his eyes on the ring, and starts the walk.

John Phillips: "The champion, Jarvis Valentine -- and remember the stakes he set earlier: he's riding with Chris Ross at Survivor and he promised Ross a title shot at Season's Beatings... if he handles business right here, right now."

Mark Bravo: "It's a long calendar between promises and payoffs. This is the page he has to turn first."

Each step down the ramp cues a tight pop of prismatic pyro at ankle height -- more celebration than explosion, like handheld July sparks pacing him to ringside. Jarvis doesn't look left or right; he keeps a steady cadence, right hand brushing the belt once, a ritual check.

At the foot of the ramp he pauses, angles to the hardcam, and lifts his off-hand just enough to trace a small, restrained Q. The lower bowl swells. He nods once, then circles to the steps.

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On the apron, Jarvis wipes his boots, rests a palm on the top rope, and scans the hardcam with that even, reporter's stare -- the "ready" look. He ducks in between the ropes and paces a slow line to center.

He unbuckles the title and raises it high. The house lights respond -- red, white, and blue arcs sweep a full 360 as the camera tracks from the main plate to his face. No roar, no shout -- just a calm exhale and a nod as he hands the belt to the referee.

John Phillips: "Businesslike. Jarvis has turned this building into a courtroom -- and he's about to present evidence."

Mark Bravo: "He'd better, because the guy across from him is chaos wrapped in a smirk. Focus beats chaos... if you never look away."

Jarvis backs into his corner, fingers flexing once at his sides, eyes never leaving Jack Hunter. The music fades, the lights settle, and the referee steps in with the belt -- the main event's center of gravity -- held between them.

John Phillips: "Bell's about to ring -- champion looks composed, Hunter looks... enthusiastic."

Mark Bravo: "Enthusiasm's great until it meets gravity."

DING! DING! DING!

Jack Hunter sprints out of his corner throwing wide hands like he's late to a bar fight. Jarvis Valentine takes a half step back, parries one, ducks the second, slides behind with a tight waistlock, and drags Hunter straight down to the canvas. No strike. No gloat. He pops up and gives Hunter room to stand.

John Phillips: "Jarvis starting with fundamentals -- take the air out of the room, then breathe on his terms."

Collar-and-elbow. Hunter bull-rushes Jarvis to the buckles and buries a shoulder, then a second. He peels back to mug for the front row -- too long. Jarvis pivots out along the top rope, catches the far wrist, and turns Hunter down into a grounded hammerlock. Smooth. He floats to a front headlock, posts a knee, and guides Hunter to the mat with pressure instead of force.

Mark Bravo: "Clinic. He's not fighting Hunter's match; he's deleting it and writing his own."

*Hunter worms a knee under, shoves to space, and swings a backfist on instinct. Jarvis slips inside, clamps a body lock, and **German suplexes** him high and tight. Bridge--*

Ref: "One! Two--"

Kickout.

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Hunter bails to the apron, shaking the cobwebs. He slingshots in with a lariat -- not pretty, but it connects enough to stagger Jarvis. The challenger pounces with stomps and a quick cover -- one-count only. He drags Jarvis up by the hair, points to the hardcam, and mouths something about 'streetfighting the champ.' Jarvis answers with a short forearm that stops the monologue cold.

John Phillips: "The champion won't give him free beats -- you want to talk, you do it on your own time."

*Whip to the ropes. Jarvis ducks the return hook and snaps Hunter down with a **DDT**, planting him center ring. He floats immediately into a lateral press, forearm across the face for emphasis -- two-count; Hunter jolts a shoulder up and rolls to his side, blinking at the lights.*

Mark Bravo: "That's Jarvis cashing in a tiny mistake for medium interest."

*Jarvis stays attached -- short-arm pull into a **sidewalk slam**, then he sits Hunter up and rakes a forearm across the back between the shoulders, measured and mean. He hauls Hunter vertical, snaps a back suplex, and holds the body cinched on landing to keep Hunter from bailing.*

John Phillips: "Everything connected and centered. The opposite of Hunter's chaos."

Hunter reaches blindly and grabs the bottom rope to force separation. The referee counts; Jarvis breaks on three and backs clean. Hunter uses the rope to pull up, waves Jarvis in like he wants a fistfight -- then dives low for an ankle. Jarvis hip-sprawls, shoves him face-first to the mat, and rides a half-nelson to stack Hunter on his shoulders for a quick two before letting him slide out to the corner.

Mark Bravo: "That's the worst feeling in the world -- when a guy can pin you by accident because he's so much better on purpose."

*Hunter slaps his own chest to wake up, charges again -- Jarvis sidesteps, guides him chest-first into the buckles, and **German suplexes** him a second time, this one releasing high. Hunter skids to his hip and rolls under the bottom rope to the apron on instinct, eyes wide.*

John Phillips: "Hunter's discovering that there's a massive difference between wanting a fight and being in there with a champion."

Jarvis doesn't chase to the outside. He waits, center ring, breathing even, finger and thumb rubbing together once like he's counting beats. The referee starts the count on Hunter as the challenger clings to the rope and stares back in, reconsidering his plan.

Hunter re-enters on the eight-count, shaking out his arms, jaw set like he's willed himself back into the fight. He feints low, then snaps a quick kick to the thigh and a pair of body shots -- the first honest combo he's landed.

John Phillips: "That's cleaner from Jack -- touch the leg, touch the ribs, make the big man breathe."

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He hits the ropes for momentum -- Jarvis steps in and clamps him mid-stride with a tight body lock, turns the hips, and deposits him with a simple, smothering takedown. No flourish. Jarvis floats to a front headlock and leans his weight through the jaw, making Hunter carry him.

Mark Bravo: "And there goes the oxygen. Jarvis doesn't have to hurt you to beat you -- he starves your plans."

*Hunter posts a knee, tries to build to a base -- Jarvis switches grips, bumps him to his knees, then yanks him up short-arm into a thudding **sidewalk slam**. Cover.*

Ref: "One! Two--"

*Kickout, but Hunter's breath comes rough. He scrambles to the corner; Jarvis gives him three steps, then tracks in and folds him with short body shots -- nothing wild, just professional pressure. He whips him corner-to-corner, follows with a **clothesline from the corner** that buckles Hunter's legs, and keeps the wrist to whirl him into a **neckbreaker slam**.*

John Phillips: "Every time Hunter finds daylight, Jarvis turns off the power."

*Jarvis hooks a half-nelson and rolls Hunter to his belly, rides him for a second, then transitions up and **DDTs** him again -- sharper, spiking the crown. He doesn't even try a pin; he slides to Hunter's back and drags him to center by the wrists to deny the ropes.*

Mark Bravo: "Ring generalship 101 -- make the square feel small for your opponent and huge for you."

Hunter throws a desperation elbow from his hip. Jarvis absorbs it, answers with a grinding forearm across the bridge of the nose and a knee pinned into Hunter's ribs to keep him folded. The crowd alternates between a low buzz of appreciation and a rising chant for the champion.

*Jarvis hauls him up, feeds him to the ropes -- Hunter ducks a line and swings big on the return -- Jarvis beats him to the point with a **back suplex** that leaves Hunter staring at the lights again.*

John Phillips: "Jarvis is wrestling like a man with appointments on the calendar -- handle tonight, live tomorrow."

*Hunter rolls out to the apron on instinct. Jarvis stays patient, forces the count to four, then reaches over the middle rope, hooks the head, and slingshots him back in with a snap. He pops to his feet, takes the angle, and **discus clotheslines** Hunter so flush the challenger's boots leave the canvas. Cover -- deep hook.*

Ref: "One! Two!--"

Hunter drapes a foot on the bottom rope by reflex. The ref sees it. Two-and-nine-tenths.

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Mark Bravo: "Instinct saved him; intention didn't."

*Jarvis doesn't argue. He peels Hunter up, cinches for the **Patriot Plunge** -- the building lifts -- but Hunter rakes the face on the scoop (referee screened on Jarvis's back) and slips free to a schoolboy.*

Ref: "One! Two--"

*Kickout with authority. Jarvis rolls through, beats Hunter up first, and meets him with a forearm shiver that deadens the challenger's legs. A short whip sends Hunter chest-first into buckles; Jarvis follows with a snap **running bulldog** out of the corner, face-planting him center ring.*

John Phillips: "Every shortcut Jack tries gets turned into a straight line back to the canvas."

*Jarvis takes a long breath, resets his stance, and motions Hunter up with a quiet hand. Hunter, glassy-eyed but stubborn, fights vertical. He swings... air. Jarvis ducks under, clamps the waist, and **German suplexes** him a third time -- this one bridging deep.*

Ref: "One! Two!--"

Hunter kicks free by sheer will and tumbles to his side, sucking wind.

Mark Bravo: "Credit where due -- the man won't die easy. But the math isn't changing: control beats chaos, and Jarvis has all the control."

The champion rises without hurry, shadow of a nod to the hardcam -- not a taunt, a tell. He reaches down, grips Hunter by the wrist, and begins to pull him into position again. The crowd knows the rhythm he's setting. Jack Hunter can feel it too -- and that's the problem.

A ripple rolls through the lower bowl -- fans stand, point, phones up. The hard camera wobbles off center as a pocket of commotion swells near the entryway.

John Phillips: "Uh... something's happening in the aisle. We've got movement at the stage--"

Mark Bravo: "That's not 'something,' Johnny. That's trouble with a capital T."

The shot snaps to the ramp. Maxx Mayhem strides out first with a steel chair dangling from his fist, grin wide and feral. Fanning behind him in a loose, predatory line: Kaine, face paint cracked like old bone; Kaida Shizuka, eyes narrowed, hands loose and poised; Silas Grimm, slow and expressionless; and Malachi Cross, looming with that funeral-still posture.

John Phillips: "That's the whole pack -- Maxx Mayhem, Kaine, Kaida Shizuka, Silas Grimm, Malachi Cross -- the team Chris Ross and Jarvis Valentine are slated to face next week at Survivor."

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Mark Bravo: "Birthday party came early, and they brought folding metal as a gift."

In the ring, Jarvis Valentine stops mid-grip, releases Jack Hunter's wrist, and turns square to the ramp. The champion's chin lifts a hair -- not a flinch, a read. He steps in front of Hunter's prone form, center ring, hands low at his sides, stance balanced.

*Mayhem barks a laugh and bounces the chair head off the rail once -- **clang** -- to spike the noise. Kaine throws a wide-armed "DEAD BUT ALIVE!" to the jeering fans. Kaida wipes her boot soles at the threshold out of reflex even as she stalks. Grimm just tilts his head, birdlike. Malachi stops dead-center of the ramp and crosses his arms over his chest, gaze fixed on Jarvis like a benediction before a burial.*

John Phillips: "Security is moving -- we've got stripes spilling from the back. The referee in the ring is waving them off, trying to keep this a championship match and nothing else."

Mark Bravo: "If I'm Jack Hunter, I pretend to be unconscious and hope they don't notice me. If I'm Jarvis Valentine, I do exactly what he's doing -- pick the spot in the middle and make the ring your world."

Jarvis doesn't take a step. He just tracks them with his eyes. The belt isn't here -- it's at the timekeeper -- but the posture says everything: you want it, come through me. Out of frame, Jack Hunter paws at the canvas, trying to rise on elbows, confused at the sudden tide turning away from him.

At the foot of the ramp, the pack fans out. Mayhem points the chair toward the ring like a conductor's baton, mouthing off -- unreadable under the din -- then lifts it to rest across his shoulder. Kaine paces left, Kaida mirrors right, Grimm and Cross stay spine-straight in the middle, unblinking.

John Phillips: "This is psychological warfare on the champion's time. The team of chaos just came to look Jarvis Valentine in the eye before Survivor."

Mark Bravo: "And the champ is giving them nothing to feed on. Stone face. Breath even. The man keeps his promises because he doesn't waste his pulse on panic."

The ref leans through the ropes, shouting down to security; a few officials create a human line at the base of the ramp. The pack stops one step short -- wolves at the treeline. In the ring, Jarvis finally glances over his shoulder just long enough to locate Jack Hunter... then turns back to the aisle, daring the next move.

Security floods the aisle, but Maxx Mayhem and his pack muscle straight through, peeling to all four sides of the ring. Malachi Cross posts at the hardcam side, arms folded like a midnight sermon. Kaida Shizuka claims the ramp side, eyes flat and hands poised. Silas Grimm slides to the timekeeper's edge, head tilted, unreadable. Kaine stalks to the announce side beside Maxx, face paint cracked in the lights.

Jarvis Valentine turns a slow circle in the ring, setting his feet, palms low, ready to break either way. The referee and a half-dozen officials crowd the apron, pleading up at the wolves to back off.

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John Phillips: "This is a championship match, and we've got a siege underway."

Mark Bravo: "And the king hasn't blinked. He just squared his stance and started counting exits."

*Maxx cackles and **CLANG**--smashes the chair against the apron lip. The ring shudders. He does it again. And again. Each shot a heartbeat faster, echoing through the bowl. Kaine leans in over the middle rope beside him and hisses, "DEAD BUT ALIVE!" to the front row. Kaida wipes her soles on the edge out of reflex, never breaking that calm stare. Grimm's fingers tap the apron in a slow, ritual cadence.*

Inside, Jarvis plants himself dead center, body half-turned so he can see Mayhem and Kaine to one side and feel the shadow of Malachi on the other. He flicks a glance to the prone Jack Hunter, then back to the perimeter -- calculation without panic.

John Phillips: "Officials are begging them off -- if this band spills a foot farther, we're headed for a full-on incident."

Mark Bravo: "Maxx isn't here to throw a punch; he's here to steal breath. He's drumming on Jarvis's pulse with that chair."

*Another **CLANG**. The chair-head skips a spark. Maxx throws his free hand wide, laughing, mouth running hot. Malachi lowers his chin and never moves. Kaida's knuckles flex once. Grimm exhales through his nose, a ghost of pleasure at the tension.*

Jarvis raises one hand -- not high, not taunting -- a small, steadying command to the chaos at every edge of the canvas. The building hums on a knife's edge while security tries to push the line back a half-step and fails.

In the split-second Jarvis glances to the apron, Jack Hunter springs alive -- he dives forward, snatches the tights at the hip, and yanks the champion into a tight schoolboy, stacking hips over shoulders.

John Phillips: "Schoolboy! Schoolboy! The challenger's got him stacked--"

The referee hesitates a heartbeat, then drops.

Ref: "One! ... Two! ... Th--"

Jarvis explodes a shoulder at the exact beat the hand slaps for three. The crowd gasps, half rising; the referee waves it off immediately, two fingers up, emphatic.

Mark Bravo: "Oh man, that was a hair and a prayer! The champ kicked at two-point-nine-nine-nine, I swear!"

Outside, Maxx Mayhem doubles over laughing, chair bouncing on the apron with a clatter. Kaine pounds the ring skirt, howling "DEAD BUT ALIVE!" Kaida doesn't move, but her eyes glitter. Malachi's stare never

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changes. Grimm's mouth twitches -- almost a smile.

In the ring, Hunter pops up wild-eyed, both hands flashing three as he chases the referee into the near corner, pleading. Jarvis is already to a knee, jaw set, breathing controlled. He taps his chest once -- calm -- then rises, eyes on Hunter's back.

John Phillips: "Jack nearly stole the UTA Championship in the most chaotic moment of the night!"

Mark Bravo: "And what did it cost him? He turned his back on a champion who doesn't make the same mistake twice."

*Hunter keeps arguing, pointing to the mat; the ref shakes his head, two fingers again. At the apron, Maxx clocks the scene and starts a slow, mocking golf clap with the chair, metal on palm, **ting... ting... ting**, daring Jarvis to break focus.*

Jarvis doesn't bite. He steps in behind Hunter, hooks the waist clean and tight--

--and the building swells, sensing the momentum tilt back to the champion as the wolves circle and the match teeters on a knife's edge.

Jarvis tightens the grip--

--and Jack Hunter stomps straight down on the champion's boot. Jarvis' knee buckles a fraction. Jack peels free, wheels behind, clamps a waistlock of his own and leans back like he's trying to deadlift a house.

John Phillips: "Counter by Hunter-- he's got the waist--"

*With a ragged shout Jack heaves, hips through, and somehow **German suplexes** the champion. Jarvis lands high on the shoulders and rolls through to a hip. The crowd pops in shock; at ringside Maxx Mayhem throws his head back and cackles, chair thumping the apron like a drum.*

Mark Bravo: "Stop the presses! Jack Hunter just hit a clean German on Jarvis Valentine and I think even he's allergic to his own success!"

Jack sits up, eyes wide, hands in his hair like he just pulled a sword from a stone. He scrambles into a cover late--

Ref: "One! Two--"

Jarvis powers a shoulder free and turns to his side, already shrinking the space. Jack blinks at the ref, then at his own hands like he can't believe they worked.

John Phillips: "Best shot of the night for the challenger, but the champion rolled his way to oxygen right on

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impact."

*Hunter drags Jarvis up, swings a wild forearm-- Jarvis ducks beneath, clamps a rear waist, and tries to lift; Jack kicks his legs and drops to a knee to block. He fires a back elbow that grazes, hits the ropes... and runs straight into a **short lariat** from Jarvis that flips him inside out.*

Mark Bravo: "There's the difference: Jack can spike a moment. Jarvis can end one."

Jarvis shakes out the stomped ankle, resets his base, and stalks. Outside, Mayhem is still giggling into the camera, pointing at Jack and pantomiming a "so close" pinch with his fingers. Kaine hammers the skirt, Kaida remains stone, Grimm and Malachi hold their posts like statues at a gate.

*Back inside, Jarvis hauls Jack up by the wrist, whips him-- pull-back **neckbreaker slam** drops the challenger flat. The champion doesn't cover; he floats to side control, presses shoulder-to-jaw, and makes Jack carry weight while Jarvis breathes even and the crowd swells behind him.*

John Phillips: "Jarvis Valentine letting the adrenaline dump on Hunter burn off in the worst way possible -- with two hundred and seventy pounds pinning him to the truth."

Jack squirms to a knee; Jarvis guides him up with the hook still on... and the champion's eyes flick, just once, to the chaos at the apron before squaring right back on the job in front of him.

Jarvis yanks Hunter up and walks him toward the ropes to funnel him into the corner -- textbook champion's geometry. He frames Jack's head, looking to thread him through the middle strand...

...and that puts Jarvis' back within arm's length of the announce-side apron -- right where Maxx Mayhem lurks.

John Phillips: "Careful, champ -- that's dangerous territory with Mayhem patrolling."

Mark Bravo: "Maxx plus metal equals misdemeanors waiting to happen."

*Maxx cocks the chair and **swings** for Jarvis' shoulder blades -- a brutal, flat arc -- and stops a hair shy of contact as the referee whirls, eyes bulging. The steel kisses nothing but air, but the **whoosh** and sudden shadow whip Jarvis' instincts around for a half-beat.*

John Phillips: "He didn't touch him! He *didn't* touch him -- but he sure made him feel it!"

Mark Bravo: "That's Maxx's favorite hold: Attempted Assault, no-contact version."

Officials on the floor swarm Mayhem, shouting him back. Kaine barks "DEAD BUT ALIVE!" in their faces. Kaida doesn't flinch, eyes locked on Jarvis. Malachi never moves. Grimm's fingertips tap the apron twice, delighted at the tension.

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*Inside, Jarvis checks over his shoulder on reflex -- just a flick -- and Jack Hunter **shoves** him chest-first into the top rope, snapping his throat on the cable. Jarvis staggers, hand to neck--*

*--Hunter dives behind and **rolls him up** in a tight backslide!*

Ref: "One! Two!--"

*Jarvis powers through, muscles Hunter over and up, both men spilling to their knees. Hunter scrambles faster than he has all night, hits the ropes, and throws himself into a **running knee** that catches Jarvis on the chest and sends him reeling to a corner.*

John Phillips: "That non-shot with the chair turned the champion's head for a heartbeat -- and Jack Hunter made it count."

Mark Bravo: "Almost only counts in horseshoes and heart attacks. Jarvis didn't get hit, but he *felt* hit -- and that's enough to open a door."

Hunter climbs to the middle rope and rains down clumsy but committed punches -- the crowd counts to five before Jarvis stiff-arms him in the hips and walks out, letting Jack face-bounce to the canvas. The champion coughs once, working air back through his throat, eyes narrowing as he resets his base.

At ringside, Maxx spreads his arms like a proud dad at a science fair, mouthing "So--close," while the ref on the floor jabs a finger at him: "One more and you're gone." Maxx curtsies with the chair, mock-innocent, then sets it gently against the barricade like a museum piece he'd never dream of touching.

Back inside, Jarvis rolls his shoulders, checks the ropes once more -- and then his eyes go flat and focused. The moment passed. The champion is back on task.

The lower bowl detonates into a roar that drowns the commentary headsets. Cameras whip to the stage just as a black-and-scarlet blur barrels through the curtain--

Chris Ross, full sprint, jaw set, storms down the ramp. Behind him in staggered formation: El Fantasma Oscuro I and II in mirrored masks, Madman Szalinski stalking with that wolfish grin, and Jaxson Ryder pounding a taped fist into his palm. Security parts like a rip current as they charge.

John Phillips: "Reinforcements! Chris Ross and company are here-- El Fantasma Oscuro, Madman Szalinski, Jaxson Ryder!"

Mark Bravo: "From hostage situation to standoff in ten seconds flat."

Maxx Mayhem pops up on the apron with the chair raised like a trophy, laughing. Kaine slaps the apron and shouts "DEAD BUT ALIVE!" Kaida Shizuka plants her heels, unmoved. Silas Grimm tilts his head with that dead-eyed calm. Malachi Cross uncrosses his arms, gaze never leaving Jarvis Valentine.

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Ross slides in under the bottom rope; Jarvis squares beside him. El Fantasma I and II slip through on opposite sides, Szalinski steps over the middle rope, and Ryder claims the near corner. The ring fills with purpose.

The referee takes one look at ten fighters coiled to detonate and makes the only call left--he waves his arms in an X, signaling the timekeeper.

DING! DING! DING!

John Phillips: "He's thrown it out! The main event is a no-contest!"

Mark Bravo: "Smart. We were a half-breath from a riot."

Team Ross fans out inside the ropes, forming a tight circle -- Jarvis, Ross, Szalinski, El Fantasma I and II, and Ryder -- each man posted to a side, hands up, daring the pack to try it.

Outside, Team Mayhem mirrors them: Maxx on the announce side with the chair, Kaine pacing at his shoulder; Kaida on the ramp edge, body bladed; Grimm dead-center at the timekeeper's table; Malachi at hardcam side, statuesque. They creep in a slow orbit, testing angles, never breaking the ring of eyes staring back.

Officials, referees, and security pour in to build a shaky human fence between the two lines. Fingers point, chins lift, words are thrown like knives -- but no one blinks first.

John Phillips: "This is the picture of Survivor a week early -- five on five, the temperature at a boil, and nobody giving an inch."

Mark Bravo: "Tonight the fuse burned to the knot. Next week, somebody lights it."

*Maxx taps the chair twice to the apron -- **clang, clang** -- and grins. Inside, Jarvis doesn't flinch. Ross leans forward on the balls of his feet, ready. The camera floats over the tableau: two armies, one line of canvas, and a promise written in the noise.*

Jack Hunter pops up red-faced, jabbing a finger at the referee and shouting that he "had him beat." The official doesn't argue -- he just points to the chaos on every side of the ring: two full teams, security, and a steel chair glinting under the lights.

John Phillips: "The ref made the safe call and he's not walking it back -- look at the perimeter. This was seconds from breaking wide open."

Mark Bravo: "Jack's yelling at a thunderstorm for raining. Pick your battles, kid."

Inside the ropes, Jarvis Valentine, Chris Ross, Madman Szalinski, El Fantasma Oscuro I and II, and Jaxson

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Ryder hold their circle tight, each man leaning over the ropes and waving Mayhem's crew on. "Come on!" "Bring it!" The Baltimore crowd surges with them.

Maxx Mayhem's smile never fades. He raises one finger... then draws a slow circle in the air.

Outside, Kaine peels back from the announce side, still barking "DEAD BUT ALIVE!" Kaida Shizuka steps clean to the center of the ramp, never taking her eyes off the ring. Silas Grimm slides away from the timekeeper's table like a shadow shrinking with the light. Malachi Cross backs in that eerie, patient cadence. The pack reforms on the ramp under Maxx's signal.

John Phillips: "They're not taking the bait. Mayhem's calling the retreat."

Mark Bravo: "Not retreat -- rehearsal. He just made sure everyone here tasted tomorrow before it gets served at Survivor."

The two armies hold their distance -- Team Ross inside the ropes, Team Mayhem halfway up the ramp -- a gulf of officials and security between them. Maxx taps the chair twice to his shoulder, mouths "Next week," and laughs loud enough that the hardcam catches every syllable.

Jarvis stands at the front rope, chin high, unmoving. Ross paces like a caged dog, jaw clenched. Szalinski points to his temple. El Fantasma I and II throw synchronized, taunting beckons. Ryder pounds a fist to his chest and then points dead at Maxx.

John Phillips: "No clash tonight -- just a message. The mind games have already begun."

Mark Bravo: "And next week at Survivor, those minds come with fists."

Team Mayhem disappears through the curtain one by one, Maxx last, walking backward with that same feral grin. Inside, the champions and their allies lower their guard, but not their eyes. The camera lingers on the split-screen of faces -- defiance below, derision above -- before fading to the event graphic for Survivor.

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Show Credits

Segment: "Introduction" - Written by Ben.

Match: "Next Level vs. Velocity Vanguard" - Written by Ben.

Segment: "Reinforcements" - Written by Ben.

Segment: "Cross Examination" - Written by tony.

Segment: "Level One: Cleared" - Written by Ben.

Match: "Tyger II vs. Dante Rivera" - Written by Ben.

Segment: "The Monster's Circle Forms" - Written by Ben.

Segment: "The Champion Arrives" - Written by Ben.

Segment: "Can of Worms" - Written by Ben.

Match: "Gideon Graves vs. Gunnar Van Patton" - Written by Ben, tony.

Segment: "Jack Attack™" - Written by Ben.

Segment: "Team Ross Just Got U.S.A Stronger" - Written by Ben.

Segment: "The Mayhem Express" - Written by Ben.

Segment: "Future Stakes" - Written by Ben.

Segment: "Healing" - Written by Ben.

Match: "Angela Hall vs. Dahlia Cross" - Written by Ben.

Segment: "Culture War" - Written by tony.

Match: "Jarvis Valentine vs. Jack Hunter" - Written by Ben.

Results Compiled by the eFed Management Suite