

Proving Grounds: Season 1 - Episode 6: "Take a Hit, Tell a Story."

April 28, 2026 | Proving Grounds House - Las Vegas, NV

Episode 6: "Take a Hit, Tell a Story."

PROVING GROUNDS: EPISODE SIX

Episode Title: "Take a Hit, Tell a Story"

OPENING MONTAGE

Black screen.

We hear the ring before we see it.

Boots on canvas. A body hitting the mat. Ropes shaking. A sharp inhale after a strike. A woman's voice cutting through the noise.

ATHENA STORM (V.O.): "Anybody can do moves. That's not the job."

SCOTT STEVENS (V.O.): "The job is making somebody care what those moves mean."

Then the images hit hard and fast.

Jace Van Ardent launching into a beautiful burst -- and Athena Storm throwing up a hand to stop him cold.

ATHENA STORM: "Too much. None of that mattered."

Darren Valiant sitting on the apron, frustrated, being told to slow down.

Boone Mercer throwing a strike and then being ordered to pull it back and sell the beat after.

Roxie Raze down on one knee, clutching her jaw, eyes up, fury and pain mixing together.

Lena Lux taking a comeback drill, voice cracking as she fights through it.

Tatum Quinn being told, "Let them see the hurt before they see the answer."

Malik Steele standing over an opponent in silence while Scott Stevens shakes his head.

SCOTT STEVENS (V.O.): "This week, if all you have is athletic, tough, polished, or intense, you're dead."

Quick shot of Athena Storm stepping through the ropes and staring the entire cast down.

Proving Grounds: Season 1 - Episode 6: "Take a Hit, Tell a Story."

ATHENA STORM (V.O.): "Tell me something. Or get out of the ring."

Hard cut to black.

ON SCREEN: PROVING GROUNDS

SCENE ONE - MORNING IN THE HOUSE

The morning after camera week feels different from the morning after partner week. Less tense. More inward. The house is not loud, but it is active. Everyone is thinking about something they got told. Everyone is trying not to admit which note got under their skin the most.

In the kitchen, Darren Valiant stands at the stove flipping egg whites with more control than strictly necessary. Boone Mercer is at the island with black coffee, looking like he still doesn't trust the fact that he did well on camera week. Jace Van Ardent leans against the counter eating fruit out of a container. Malik Steele sits at the far end, silent, staring at nothing.

JACE VAN ARDENT: "So who do we think they bring in for story week?"

BOONE MERCER: "Somebody mean."

DARREN VALIANT: "That narrows it down to all of wrestling."

Jace chuckles. Boone drinks coffee.

JACE VAN ARDENT: "I'm serious. There's a type for this week. Somebody who hates wasted motion."

BOONE MERCER: "Good."

DARREN VALIANT: "You say 'good' like this week is yours."

BOONE MERCER: "This week ain't about pretty pictures or media training. This week's about whether what you do looks like it hurts and means something."

DARREN VALIANT: "That doesn't automatically make it your week."

BOONE MERCER: "Didn't say automatic."

Malik finally speaks, quiet but clear.

MALIK STEELE: "This week feels like my last warning."

The room stills for just a beat.

Proving Grounds: Season 1 - Episode 6: "Take a Hit, Tell a Story."

JACE VAN ARDENT: "Then make it your loudest answer."

Malik nods once, not convinced, but listening.

Confessional.

MALIK STEELE: "I know where I am. I know what people think. Strong base. Good presence. Potential. All that stuff sounds nice until you realize it's just another way of saying you haven't arrived yet. If I don't arrive soon, I'm gone."

Upstairs in the Roxie and Lena room, Lena is seated cross-legged on her bed rewatching something in her head, not on a device, just visibly replaying fan week. Roxie stands in front of the closet selecting gear with total certainty.

LENA LUX: "Do you think story week is easier or harder?"

ROXIE RAZE: "Harder."

LENA LUX: "You didn't even think."

ROXIE RAZE: "Because it's obvious. Anybody can hit a move. Anybody can stand under a light. Telling a story means exposing what you think matters. That's harder."

LENA LUX: "You sound weirdly serious about it."

ROXIE RAZE: "I am serious about it."

Lena studies her.

LENA LUX: "You really love this."

Roxie pauses with a top in her hand.

ROXIE RAZE: "Of course I do."

LENA LUX: "You say it like I should've known that already."

ROXIE RAZE: "You should have."

It's not defensive. It's sincere. That makes it land.

In Darren and Tatum's room, Tatum is taping two fingers on her left hand while Darren rolls his shoulder.

Proving Grounds: Season 1 - Episode 6: "Take a Hit, Tell a Story."

DARREN VALIANT: "You'll be good at this week."

TATUM QUINN: "That depends."

DARREN VALIANT: "On what?"

TATUM QUINN: "Whether they want structure or feeling."

DARREN VALIANT: "I imagine both."

TATUM QUINN: "That's what makes it annoying."

Darren smiles.

DARREN VALIANT: "There she is."

SCENE TWO - TRAINING FACILITY / STORY WEEK REVEAL

The recruits enter the training facility. The setup feels stripped down again. Less production gloss than camera week. Less hardware than physical week. Just the ring, lower lighting, a few mats, a stool ringside, a monitor cart, and the feeling that today is about what happens inside the ropes and nowhere else.

Scott Stevens stands in the ring.

Then Athena Storm walks out.

The room straightens immediately. Even Boone. Even Roxie. Athena carries that particular kind of respect that does not need to ask for anything.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Last week, I asked whether the camera could care about you. This week, I'm asking whether a match can."

SCOTT STEVENS: "Not moves. Not action. Not cardio. Story."

He gestures toward Athena.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Athena Storm knows what it means to make a moment hurt, breathe, and matter. She knows pacing. She knows emotion. She knows what a comeback feels like when it's earned, and what a strike feels like when it means more than contact."

ATHENA STORM: "Everybody loves to say they tell stories in the ring. Most of them are lying."

No smile. No softening.

Proving Grounds: Season 1 - Episode 6: "Take a Hit, Tell a Story."

ATHENA STORM: "Story isn't your move list. Story isn't how many things you can fit into ninety seconds. Story is why the first thing matters, what the second thing costs, and whether I believe the last thing changed anything."

ATHENA STORM: "If I can mute the sound and still understand what I'm watching, that's a story. If I can't, then you're just exercising in front of me."

The recruits take that in.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Three parts today. Reaction drills. Story match construction. Performance. At the end of the day, somebody leaves."

The room tightens hard at that.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Get in the ring."

SCENE THREE - TEST ONE: REACTION DRILLS

The first drill looks simple. It is not.

One recruit stands in the ring. Athena feeds them a scenario. They must react physically and emotionally with no promo, no explanation, no move. Just body, face, timing, and truth.

Scenario one: You've just taken a cheap shot from someone you trusted.

Scenario two: Your knee just gave out in the biggest moment of your life.

Scenario three: You finally hit the comeback and the crowd turns with you.

Darren goes first. Athena tells him he's been cut off by someone he trusted. Darren reacts quickly -- maybe too quickly. Shock, anger, step forward, jaw set.

ATHENA STORM: "Too clean. Too camera-ready. Again."

Darren tries again, slower. This time there's a beat where the betrayal actually lands before the ego reforms around it. Better.

ATHENA STORM: "That's closer. Hurt first. Then image."

Jace gets the knee-gives-out scenario. He sells it honestly at first, but then starts trying to add too much physicality.

ATHENA STORM: "Stop performing pain and feel the interruption."

Jace resets, plants, starts the burst, then lets the leg betray him with one ugly, human beat. Much better.

Proving Grounds: Season 1 - Episode 6: "Take a Hit, Tell a Story."

ATHENA STORM: "There. You don't need choreography for disappointment."

Boone gets the comeback scenario. At first he underplays it too much, like he's embarrassed by the drama of it.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Commit to the momentum!"

Boone tries again. This time he feels the surge, the crowd-turn moment, the decision to fight through it. It's not elegant. It's real.

ATHENA STORM: "That works because you believed it."

Roxie gets betrayal. The first take is sharp, furious, controlled -- but too controlled.

ATHENA STORM: "That's anger with makeup on. Where's the crack?"

Roxie stares at her, offended by how accurate that is.

Second try, Roxie lets the shock happen first. Small. Quick. Then the fury swallows it. Now it works.

ATHENA STORM: "Good. The audience only needs a flash. But they need it."

Lena gets the comeback scenario and unexpectedly nails the emotional beat faster than anyone so far. It is messy, raw, slightly too earnest, but it feels alive.

ATHENA STORM: "You know what your strength is?"

LENA LUX: "No?"

ATHENA STORM: "You don't hide fast enough to lie."

Lena blinks at that. Unsure if it's a compliment. It is.

Tatum gets the knee-gives-out scenario. Predictably, she executes the physical logic perfectly. Unpredictably, Athena still stops her.

ATHENA STORM: "You're correct. That's not the same as moving me."

Tatum stiffens.

ATHENA STORM: "The body is right. The emotion is late. Stop trying to protect your face from the feeling."

Tatum takes that personally. Useful.

Proving Grounds: Season 1 - Episode 6: "Take a Hit, Tell a Story."

Malik gets betrayed. He looks imposing, but the reaction is too internal, too sealed off.

ATHENA STORM: "I know you're processing something. Why should I care about the process if you never let me in?"

Malik tries again. Better. Still guarded.

SCENE FOUR - ATHENA'S FIRST CUTTING NOTES

The recruits line the ropes while Athena and Scott stand in the middle of the ring.

ATHENA STORM: "Darren, you're polished enough to skip right over the wound. Don't."

ATHENA STORM: "Jace, you trust movement too much."

ATHENA STORM: "Boone, don't undercut the emotion just because you're afraid it looks soft."

ATHENA STORM: "Roxie, the audience is allowed to see the bruise before the blade."

ATHENA STORM: "Lena, raw is useful. Control it just enough to aim it."

ATHENA STORM: "Tatum, stop being correct at me."

ATHENA STORM: "Malik, mystery and absence are not the same thing."

That one hits like a hammer.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Second drill. Pairs."

SCENE FIVE - TEST TWO: BUILD A STORY MATCH

Scott announces temporary pairings for match construction. Not teams. Opponents.

SCOTT STEVENS: "You're not wrestling full matches. You're building four-minute story segments. Beginning, middle, finish. Whoever you're paired with is your opponent, not your enemy. Act like professionals."

Pairings:

- Darren Valiant vs Boone Mercer
- Jace Van Ardent vs Malik Steele
- Roxie Raze vs Lena Lux
- Tatum Quinn works directly with Athena Storm in a singles storytelling drill due to the odd number after Silas's elimination

Proving Grounds: Season 1 - Episode 6: "Take a Hit, Tell a Story."

The room reacts. Some pairings make immediate sense. Some feel cruelly smart.

Darren and Boone circle each other even before they speak. This pairing practically writes itself, which is exactly the danger.

ATHENA STORM: "You two -- if you give me four minutes of 'we already don't like each other,' I will stop you at thirty seconds. Dig deeper."

DARREN VALIANT: "Noted."

BOONE MERCER: "He needed that more than me."

Jace and Malik feel more uncertain. Jace is all flow and audience instinct. Malik is control and impact. The trick is finding where those things meet.

JACE VAN ARDENT: "Okay. Big man, little movement guy. That's too obvious."

MALIK STEELE: "Then don't make it obvious."

JACE VAN ARDENT: "Cool. Helpful."

Roxie and Lena are the most emotionally loaded pairing. The built-in history is there. So is the risk of leaning on it too much.

ROXIE RAZE: "If we just do 'you underestimated me' all over again, it dies."

LENA LUX: "Then what is it?"

ROXIE RAZE: "You're tired of being tested by me."

LENA LUX: "And you're tired of me surviving it."

Roxie points at her.

ROXIE RAZE: "That. Keep that."

Tatum and Athena step into a quieter corner of the ring. This is not an equal pairing. It's a lesson.

ATHENA STORM: "You're not here to impress me."

TATUM QUINN: "Then what am I here to do?"

ATHENA STORM: "Fail honestly enough that I can fix something real."

Proving Grounds: Season 1 - Episode 6: "Take a Hit, Tell a Story."

Tatum almost smiles. Almost.

SCENE SIX - MATCH BUILD: DARREN VS BOONE

Darren and Boone walk through the segment slowly.

BOONE MERCER: "You start too slick. I cut you off ugly. Crowd sees the contrast right away."

DARREN VALIANT: "Fine. But if the whole thing is just you dragging me into mud, it's one note."

BOONE MERCER: "Then give me something to respond to."

DARREN VALIANT: "What if the story is I keep trying to outwrestle you clean, and every time I do, you make me pay heavier?"

BOONE MERCER: "Until?"

DARREN VALIANT: "Until I stop trying to be pretty about it."

Boone nods. There it is.

BOONE MERCER: "That'll preach."

Athena watches a run-through and stops them halfway.

ATHENA STORM: "Darren, your frustration's still too elegant. Boone, your cut-off is good, but where do I see that he made you mad enough to do it?"

BOONE MERCER: "He's Darren."

ATHENA STORM: "Cute. Not storytelling."

Darren bites back a smile. Boone does not.

SCENE SEVEN - MATCH BUILD: JACE VS MALIK

Jace and Malik struggle more at first. Jace wants rhythm. Malik wants consequence.

JACE VAN ARDENT: "If I'm the smaller, faster guy, you don't need to kill me in ten seconds. The point is I keep creating angles."

MALIK STEELE: "And the point for me is when I finally catch you, it changes the whole pace."

Proving Grounds: Season 1 - Episode 6: "Take a Hit, Tell a Story."

JACE VAN ARDENT: "Yes. Good. That's actually it."

They walk it through again. This time better.

Jace darts, slips, builds frustration. Malik stays patient until the catch. Then the segment shifts. That's the story.

ATHENA STORM: "There. Jace, stop making every escape spectacular. Malik, your hands say more than your face right now. Fix that."

Malik nods, serious. This week matters too much not to.

SCENE EIGHT - MATCH BUILD: ROXIE VS LENA

Roxie and Lena work with immediate intensity. There is less explaining, more understanding. They've been building to this without realizing it.

ROXIE RAZE: "You get one fire-up. One. Don't waste it early."

LENA LUX: "What if the whole point is I'm tired of waiting?"

ROXIE RAZE: "Then make me feel that before you move, not just when you move."

Lena processes that.

LENA LUX: "Okay. Then you smile at me after the cut-off."

ROXIE RAZE: "Why?"

LENA LUX: "Because that's what makes me stop trying to survive and start trying to hurt you."

Roxie points at her again. That's it.

They run it. It's sharp. Personal. Maybe the best built story of the day.

ATHENA STORM: "Roxie, don't overplay the cruelty. One smile is enough. Lena, when you turn, turn all the way."

SCENE NINE - TATUM WITH ATHENA

This is less a match build and more a confrontation between two people who understand structure very well and have no patience for pretense.

Proving Grounds: Season 1 - Episode 6: "Take a Hit, Tell a Story."

ATHENA STORM: "Hit me with your lock-up. Then lose your leg."

Tatum does. Technically perfect.

ATHENA STORM: "Again. Less perfect."

TATUM QUINN: "That is not a real note."

ATHENA STORM: "It is when you're hiding in the perfection."

They do it again. This time Athena cuts her off mid-beat.

ATHENA STORM: "You know what your problem is? You think showing pain makes the whole structure weaker. It doesn't. It makes the structure worth watching."

Tatum says nothing.

ATHENA STORM: "Again."

Third try. Tatum locks up, leg gives, and for one brief moment she actually lets the frustration flash across her face before correcting it.

ATHENA STORM: "There. That. Stop killing that part."

SCENE TEN - LUNCH / THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY

The recruits break for lunch in the back area. Nobody is fully relaxed. Story week is making them expose how they think, not just what they can do.

Boone and Darren sit at one table, clipboards between them.

BOONE MERCER: "You know what I hate?"

DARREN VALIANT: "The suspense is unbearable."

BOONE MERCER: "She's right."

DARREN VALIANT: "Athena?"

BOONE MERCER: "About you. You skip the hurt part too fast."

Darren looks at him. Really looks at him.

Proving Grounds: Season 1 - Episode 6: "Take a Hit, Tell a Story."

DARREN VALIANT: "And she's right about you too."

BOONE MERCER: "Yeah?"

DARREN VALIANT: "You hide from emotional stuff by pretending realism and emotion are opposites. They're not."

Boone sits with that. Doesn't reject it.

At another table, Jace and Malik run the structure again with their hands and words.

JACE VAN ARDENT: "When you catch me, don't stare at me like a statue. Look like you finally got the thing that's been annoying you."

MALIK STEELE: "That's a very specific sentence."

JACE VAN ARDENT: "That's literally storytelling."

Malik shakes his head, but he gets it.

Nearby, Lena is eating half a sandwich while Roxie watches her like a coach who refuses the title.

ROXIE RAZE: "Stop smiling when you're nervous."

LENA LUX: "I'm not smiling."

ROXIE RAZE: "With your mouth, no. With the rest of your face, yes."

LENA LUX: "That's insane."

ROXIE RAZE: "It's observant."

Lena shakes her head and laughs.

LENA LUX: "You really want me to be good, don't you?"

Roxie takes just a beat too long to answer.

ROXIE RAZE: "I want the story to work."

Lena gives her a look that says she does not entirely buy that answer anymore.

SCENE ELEVEN - TEST THREE: PERFORMANCE

Proving Grounds: Season 1 - Episode 6: "Take a Hit, Tell a Story."

Scott gathers everyone around the ring. A small internal audience of trainees and staff has been seated again. Enough bodies to create reaction. Enough silence to make mistakes loud.

SCOTT STEVENS: "You get one performance. Four minutes. No resets. No excuses. We're looking for emotion, pacing, logic, recovery, and whether the story lives without commentary holding its hand."

SCOTT STEVENS: "Roxie. Lena. First."

Interesting choice. Throw the emotionally loaded story out first. Make everyone else live under it.

The segment begins with tension before contact. Roxie gives Lena that one smile after the first cut-off, just like they planned, and the entire thing shifts. Lena's fire-up feels earned because the humiliation lands first. Roxie's cruelty is sharp but measured. Lena's comeback is emotional without becoming chaotic. The whole story turns on a look, a smile, and a decision.

The finish hits and the small audience reacts.

ATHENA STORM: "Very good."

Lena hears that and looks like she's trying not to overreact to it. Roxie hears it and pretends she expected nothing less.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Jace. Malik."

Their story starts well. Jace is movement and irritation. Malik is patient pressure. When Malik finally catches him, the story shifts exactly as intended. But midway through, Malik falls back into being imposing instead of expressive. The logic is sound, but the emotion flattens for a stretch.

ATHENA STORM: "Don't just have him -- feel that you caught him!"

Malik hears it late, but hears it. The segment finishes stronger than its middle. Still, the gap is there.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Darren. Boone."

This one has expectation all over it. Rivalry, chemistry, tension, pace.

And for the first minute, it almost outruns itself. Darren starts slick. Boone starts heavy. The contrast is good, but Darren still wants to get to the escalation too fast. Boone is a touch too eager to punish. Athena barks from ringside.

ATHENA STORM: "Breathe!"

They do. And once they do, the story wakes up. Boone's cut-off starts meaning something. Darren's

Proving Grounds: Season 1 - Episode 6: "Take a Hit, Tell a Story."

frustration actually lands. When Darren finally fires back rougher than usual, the turn means something because he did not start there. The finish comes hard and clean.

Not perfect. But powerful.

ATHENA STORM: "That's the version."

SCOTT STEVENS: "Tatum. In."

No paired performance for Tatum. Instead, Athena feeds her one last extended storytelling drill live. Tatum must wrestle a mini-sequence around a damaged hand and fading control, reacting in real time to Athena's pressure.

It begins precise, almost too precise. Then Athena traps the hand, twists, forces Tatum to fight from frustration instead of structure, and for the first time all day Tatum really lets the disruption show. It's not huge. It's not melodrama. It's irritation, pain, and pride leaking through. Because it's so restrained, it works.

ATHENA STORM: "There. Now that looks like a person."

Tatum hears it, and though her face stays composed, the comment means more to her than most praise ever would.

SCENE TWELVE - DELIBERATION

All seven recruits stand in the ring, sweat cooling, shoulders tight, hearts loud.

SCOTT STEVENS: "This week is where some wrestlers get exposed. Because once moves stop saving you, you're left with taste, timing, and truth."

MELISSA CARTWRIGHT: "And truth is a lot harder to fake when there's a body attached to it."

ATHENA STORM: "Some of you finally stopped demonstrating and started saying something."

SCOTT STEVENS: "Top three."

The room tightens.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Roxie Raze."

Roxie nods once, trying not to show how much she wanted this week.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Lena Lux."

Proving Grounds: Season 1 - Episode 6: "Take a Hit, Tell a Story."

Lena's whole face changes. Shock, pride, relief. All at once.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Boone Mercer."

Boone exhales hard. Not surprise. Validation.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Roxie, best emotional control of the day. You let me see the bruise before the blade."

SCOTT STEVENS: "Lena, best instinctive emotional turn of the day. You felt the story, and this time you didn't lose structure when you did."

SCOTT STEVENS: "Boone, most believable violence with actual thought behind it."

Darren hears that note. Actual thought behind it. He knows what it means.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Bottom three."

SCOTT STEVENS: "Malik Steele."

Of course.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Tatum Quinn."

Tatum accepts it, but less stoically than before.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Darren Valiant."

That stings. Harder than the physical week did, somehow.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Darren, when you let go and trust the story, you're excellent. But you still keep trying to outrun the ugly parts."

SCOTT STEVENS: "Tatum, best growth today. Still not fast enough."

SCOTT STEVENS: "Malik, your body can tell a story. Your face still keeps trying to protect you from it."

Malik takes that like a verdict already in motion.

SCOTT STEVENS: "One of you is leaving."

SCENE THIRTEEN - LAST CHANCE

SCOTT STEVENS: "No speeches. No grandstanding. One sentence each. Tell me what you fix if you stay."

Proving Grounds: Season 1 - Episode 6: "Take a Hit, Tell a Story."

DARREN VALIANT: "I stop protecting the part of me that thinks being seen hurt is the same as being diminished."

That lands. Honest. Uncomfortably honest.

TATUM QUINN: "I stop waiting until the perfect moment to be understood and start risking being understood sooner."

Also honest. Also late, maybe, but real.

MALIK STEELE: "I stop hiding behind presence and finally tell people what all that presence is for."

The room goes still after that one. Because for the first time, Malik sounds like he knows exactly what he's been doing wrong.

SCENE FOURTEEN - ELIMINATION

Scott paces once. Stops.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Darren Valiant..."

Darren stands tall, but there is no performance on his face right now.

SCOTT STEVENS: "You're safe."

Darren nods once, exhales through his nose, and steps back.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Tatum Quinn..."

Tatum looks straight ahead.

SCOTT STEVENS: "You're safe."

Tatum's shoulders drop half an inch. That is the biggest reaction anybody gets from her.

That leaves Malik Steele alone in front of Scott, Athena, and the room.

SCOTT STEVENS: "Malik..."

Long pause.

SCOTT STEVENS: "You have presence. You have tools. You have credibility. You also spent too many weeks asking us to believe in what you might become instead of forcing us to deal with what you already

Proving Grounds: Season 1 - Episode 6: "Take a Hit, Tell a Story."

are."

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

The room absorbs it. Quietly. He was the looming danger, but that never makes it feel good.

Malik closes his eyes once, then nods.

MALIK STEELE: "Understood."

ATHENA STORM: "You're not empty. That was never the issue."

Malik looks up at her.

ATHENA STORM: "The issue is you never stopped treating yourself like a concept."

That line lands hard and stays there.

SCOTT STEVENS: "When you figure out what all that strength is actually protecting, you'll be dangerous in a way that matters. But you're not there yet."

Malik nods again, jaw tight.

MALIK STEELE: "Fair."

He turns, steps through the ropes, and walks up the aisle. No drama. No collapse. Just a man leaving later than he wanted and earlier than he believed he should.

SCENE FIFTEEN - EXIT CONFESSIONAL

Malik sits alone, bag packed, room behind him now empty in a different way than before.

MALIK STEELE: "They were right. That's the hard part."

He leans back and exhales.

MALIK STEELE: "I kept thinking if I stayed steady enough, strong enough, composed enough, eventually everybody would just get it. But that's not how it works. You have to give people a reason to care. I kept giving them proof I belonged in the room. I never gave them enough of the man standing in it."

He looks down, then back up.

MALIK STEELE: "That doesn't mean they were wrong to bring me here. It means I wasn't done when I got

Proving Grounds: Season 1 - Episode 6: "Take a Hit, Tell a Story."

here."

SCENE SIXTEEN - HOUSE FALLOUT

Back at the house, six feels different again. Lighter in one way. Heavier in another. Every cut sharpens the shape of the ending.

In the kitchen, Lena is halfway through a celebratory smile before catching herself and softening because of the elimination. Boone leans against the counter drinking water. Roxie walks in behind Lena.

LENA LUX: "Top three."

ROXIE RAZE: "For both of us."

LENA LUX: "You sounded proud of me in there."

ROXIE RAZE: "That was your imagination."

BOONE MERCER: "She was."

Roxie turns slowly.

ROXIE RAZE: "Careful, Boone."

BOONE MERCER: "What? We all saw it."

Lena laughs and tries not to. Roxie glares at both of them, which only makes it worse.

In the living room, Darren sits on the couch with his elbows on his knees, more thoughtful than upset. Tatum comes in with a bottle of water and stands nearby.

TATUM QUINN: "That one bothered you."

DARREN VALIANT: "Story week?"

TATUM QUINN: "Bottom three."

DARREN VALIANT: "Yes."

TATUM QUINN: "Good."

Darren looks up at her.

Proving Grounds: Season 1 - Episode 6: "Take a Hit, Tell a Story."

DARREN VALIANT: "You have a beautiful way of making concern sound hostile."

TATUM QUINN: "It's a gift."

DARREN VALIANT: "It bothered me because they're right."

Tatum takes that in.

TATUM QUINN: "They were right about me too."

That sits between them like unexpected honesty.

Outside by the patio, Jace stands alone until Boone comes out with two bottled waters and hands him one.

BOONE MERCER: "You all right?"

JACE VAN ARDENT: "Yeah."

BOONE MERCER: "That sounded fake."

Jace smiles at hearing his own line reflected back weeks later.

JACE VAN ARDENT: "Just thinking."

BOONE MERCER: "About Malik?"

JACE VAN ARDENT: "About the fact that every week the margin gets smaller."

BOONE MERCER: "That ain't a bad thing."

JACE VAN ARDENT: "Depends on which side of it you're on."

Boone nods. Fair enough.

FINAL CONFESSIONALS

DARREN VALIANT: "I needed the bottom-three scare more than I enjoyed it. Maybe that's healthy. I don't know. I hate saying things like that."

JACE VAN ARDENT: "Story week was the kind of week that makes you realize being exciting and being meaningful are not the same thing. That's useful. Also rude."

ROXIE RAZE: "That was my favorite week so far. Which probably tells you more about me than I intended."

Proving Grounds: Season 1 - Episode 6: "Take a Hit, Tell a Story."

BOONE MERCER: "I'm in the right part of this now. The part where the room's smaller, the work's heavier, and you can't hide behind anything."

LENA LUX: "Top three on story week means more to me than top three on anything else so far. Because it felt like me. Not a version I was trying on. Me."

TATUM QUINN: "I'm still here. That matters. But surviving isn't the same as arriving. I know that."

FINAL TAG

Black screen.

Then flashes from next week.

A house argument in the kitchen. A slammed bedroom door. Scott Stevens standing in the living room addressing the recruits in the house instead of the facility. Boone yelling. Roxie getting in someone's face. Jace trying to diffuse something and failing. Tatum sitting alone in a confessional chair. Darren staring at himself in the bathroom mirror. Lena crying, angry this time, not scared. Scott's voice over all of it.

SCOTT STEVENS (V.O.): "By now, fatigue's real. Ego's bruised. The house is smaller. Next week, we stop pretending that doesn't affect the work."

ON SCREEN: NEXT WEEK -- "HOUSE PRESSURE"

Proving Grounds: Season 1 - Episode 6: "Take a Hit, Tell a Story."

Show Credits

Match: "Episode 6: "Take a Hit, Tell a Story."" - Written by Ben.

Results Compiled by the eFed Management Suite