NXT SEASON 2: EPISODE 2

"AFTERSHOCK"

WWE Performance Center, Miami, Florida

OPENING SEGMENT

The camera sweeps across a packed WWE Performance Center crowd in Miami, Florida. The new neon graphics package for Season Two flashes across the titantron, accompanied by a deep brass hit. The signage in the front rows is overwhelmingly green and white. Multiple fans hold homemade banners reading THE MAD MAN REIGNS, THIS IS DECLAN'S SHOW, and CHAMP O'MALLEY.

The opening pyro detonates across the entrance stage. Sparks rain down from the rafters in heavy white columns. The crowd noise builds into a steady roar that fills the entire arena.

"The State of Massachusetts" by Dropkick Murphys hits the speakers. The crowd EXPLODES.

Declan O'Malley walks through the curtain with the NXT Championship belt fastened tightly around his waist. He has fresh white tape across his left brow where a butterfly suture is keeping a deep cut closed. He wears a sleeveless leather vest over his ring gear. His Irish family contingent is already in the front row, banging the steel barricade with their open palms.

Declan does not run. He walks slowly down the ramp, pumping his right fist in the air with every step, soaking in the deafening ovation. He stops at ringside and high fives a child wearing an O'Malley shirt. He climbs the steel steps, steps through the second rope, and grabs a microphone from a technician at ringside.

The fans break into a deafening chant of "DE-CLAN! DE-CLAN! DE-CLAN!" Declan paces a slow circle in the center of the ring with the title gleaming under the spotlights. He holds the microphone at his side and lets the chant roll over him. He doesn't speak for nearly thirty seconds.

DECLAN: MIAMI! YEZ ARE LOOKIN' AT THE NEW WORLD CHAMPION OF NXT!

The crowd erupts again. Declan unstraps the title from his waist and raises it high above his head with both hands.

DECLAN: AAAAHHH! I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M STANDIN' HERE WITH THIS THING!

He paces a wide circle, the title swinging from his right fist, his eyes wild.

DECLAN: A week ago I told ya I was takin' this off Carmelo Hayes! Half of yez bet against me! And I don't blame yez, lads! I wouldn't have bet on me either, lookin' at the feckin' SIZE of the man! But here I am! Cut over me eye! Bruise on me ribs! GOLD ON ME SHOULDER!

He pumps the title above his head. The Irish contingent in the front row is on its feet, banging the barricade with both fists.

DECLAN: Now I know I'm not the prettiest fella in this locker room. Me ma still threatens to wash me mouth out when I come home for Christmas. But I'll tell ya what I am, ye beautiful, beautiful Miami crowd! I'M A FECKIN' FIGHTIN' CHAMPION!

The fans stomp the bleachers. The hard camera shakes from the percussion.

DECLAN: So here's the deal! Anyone in the back wants a crack at this gold? COME AND TAKE IT! I don't care if yer name's PAC, Bron, Kasen, or feckin' Santa Claus himself! I'll be in this ring every Tuesday with me boots laced and me fists up! THAT IS A PROMISE FROM THE MAD MAN!

He holds the championship up high. The fans match the gesture, hundreds of arms thrust into the air.

DECLAN: TO CARMELO HAYES! Ye were a hell of a champion, mate, and ye gave me holy bloody hell out there last week! TO MVP AND HIS LITTLE HURT SYNDICATE! YE SAW WHAT I DID TO YA IN DUBLIN! YE SAW WHAT I DID TO YA AT DEADLINE! YE COME FOR THIS GOLD, YE GET ALL OF THE FECKIN' MAD MAN!

The crowd erupts. The Irish contingent in the front row begin banging their fists against the barricade in a steady drumbeat.

A familiar high fashion beat replaces Declan's theme. The crowd reaction is mixed and uncertain. Some cheer. Some boo lightly. Most are quiet, processing what they're seeing.

Carmelo Hayes walks through the curtain. He is not wearing his entrance robe. He is in a black hoodie pulled up over his head and standard ring gear. His ribs are heavily taped. He moves slower than usual, no bounce in his stride. There is no NXT Championship on his shoulder for the first time in months.

Hayes stops at the top of the ramp. He looks down at Declan in the ring. He stares at the title slung over Declan's shoulder. The crowd has fallen almost completely silent.

Hayes walks down the ramp. He climbs the steel steps. He steps through the ropes and into the ring. He grabs a microphone from the same technician.

Declan watches him carefully. He does not move from the center of the ring. The two men stand four feet apart.

Hayes pulls his hood down.

MELO: You beat me clean last week. Hit the Celtic Crash. Hit the Irish Kiss. Three count. There's no asterisk on it.

The crowd reacts with a respectful murmur. A few "MELO" chants begin building in the upper deck.

MELO: I'm not standin' here to make excuses. I'm not gonna talk about my ribs. I'm not gonna talk about what the Hurt Syndicate did to me three weeks before that match. None of that's why I lost. I lost because you were better that night.

Hayes paces a tight half circle.

MELO: But here's the thing, Mad Man. I held that championship for the longest reign on this brand. I held it through everythin' Miz threw at me. And every contract that gold's tied to has a clause in it. Section four B. Former champion gets a one shot rematch.

The crowd erupts. The Miami fans begin a heavy chant of "REMATCH! REMATCH! REMATCH!"

MELO: I'm callin' it in. Tonight. You and me. Right here.

Declan smiles. It is a slow, knowing, bloody smile. He shakes his head once.

DECLAN: I'm not havin' it tonight, Melo.

The crowd boos lightly, surprised. Hayes' jaw tightens. He nods, working to control his reaction.

DECLAN: Don't take it the wrong way. Yer ribs are still taped. Yer movin' like me grandda when he forgets where he put his glasses. I can see it from here. And I'm not gonna defend this gold against half a man and call meself a champion at the end of the night.

The crowd's reaction is mixed. Some appreciate the respect. Some want to see the rematch.

DECLAN: When ye're right. When ye can give me what ye gave me last week, when ye can come at me with both lungs full and a clear head, then we run it back. Ye have me word.

Hayes lowers his microphone. He looks at the canvas. The Miami crowd watches in silence. Hayes raises the microphone again.

MELO: That's fair. I don't like it. But it's fair.

The Miz's theme music interrupts the moment. The crowd showers the entrance ramp with a wave of boos. The Miz strides through the curtain in a tailored navy suit, microphone already in his hand, a frustrated expression cracking through his usual smarmy smile.

Six feet behind The Miz and slightly to his left, Artemis Frost steps through the curtain. She wears a charcoal pantsuit. She holds her black leather portfolio against her ribs. She has a silver pen tucked behind her right ear. She does not look at the crowd. Her eyes are locked on Miz's back.

THE MIZ: Stop. Stop the lifetime movie reunion right there. This isn't Hallmark, gentlemen, this is wrestling, AND I'M THE COMMISSIONER!

The crowd boos louder. Miz walks down the ramp at a measured pace. Artemis follows three steps behind, her notebook open now, her pen scratching steadily.

THE MIZ: Carmelo, you don't invoke things on my show. You request things. I approve them or I deny them. And there's no automatic rematch in your contract because I personally amended your contract last summer.

Artemis Frost stops at the bottom of the ramp. She raises her pen.

ARTEMIS: That amendment is currently under legal review, Mr. Mizanin. The standard NXT championship rematch clause is a Board of Directors mandate. Your unilateral modification was filed without approval from the executive committee.

The Miz freezes mid step on the ramp. He slowly turns around to face Artemis. His mouth opens and closes once. The crowd's boos shift into a low laugh.

THE MIZ: That's between me and legal, Frost. You don't bring it up in front of the talent.

ARTEMIS: I'm documenting your refusal to honor an active contractual obligation in front of a licensed witness. That's me.

Miz spins back toward the ring. He clenches his jaw. He forces a smile back onto his face. He climbs onto the apron.

THE MIZ: Forget the legal department. The point is, on MYYYYY show, the Commissioner makes the matches. You want a rematch, Carmelo? You earn it. And tonight, I'm gonna give you the chance.

He climbs through the ropes and stands between Hayes and Declan. He smooths his suit jacket.

THE MIZ: Tonight! In the main event! Carmelo Hayes goes one on one with… BRON BREAKKER!

The crowd reacts with a loud pop. Hayes blinks. He looks at Miz. Declan looks at Miz. Miz is grinning.

THE MIZ: Two former hot prospects, both coming off losses, both looking for a way back up. That's a main event, ladies and gentlemen.

He turns to Hayes.

THE MIZ: Win, we have a conversation. Lose, you go to the back of the line. Simple.

Hayes nods once. He raises his microphone.

MELO: Send him out.

THE MIZ: Patience, Carmelo. I'm building the show. Now, Declan! As for you!

Declan grins. He gestures with his free hand for Miz to continue.

THE MIZ: There's a long list of guys in the back who'd love to take that title off your shoulder. Some of 'em are hungrier than Hayes ever was. So at the next Premium Live Event, you're gonna be defending against an opponent of my choosing.

Declan laughs. The crowd boos.

DECLAN: Pick anyone ye want, Mike. I don't care if it's PAC, Bron, Kasen, or yer cousin Marty from accountin'. They're all gettin' the same fight from me.

The crowd erupts. Artemis Frost glances up briefly, then returns to her notes.

THE MIZ: I will pick the opponent, the stipulation, and the venue. By the time we get there, you'll wish you never accepted this title.

DECLAN: I'll see ye when I see ye.

Hayes steps over to Declan. He extends his right hand. Declan looks at it for a moment. He shifts the title to his left hand. He grips Hayes' hand firmly. The two men shake. The crowd cheers warmly.

The Miz watches the handshake with a sour expression. He throws his microphone to the canvas and storms out of the ring. Artemis Frost watches him climb the ramp, then writes something else in her notebook.

Declan and Hayes hold the handshake for an extra beat. Declan releases first. He raises Hayes' arm to the crowd. Hayes nods his thanks.

Declan's theme music plays again as both men exit the ring.

CUT.

NXT BREAKOUT CHAMPIONSHIP TOURNAMENT BRACKET REVEAL

The titantron flashes a graphic announcing the inaugural NXT BREAKOUT CHAMPIONSHIP TOURNAMENT. A polished voiceover from the broadcast booth narrates as the bracket appears on screen.

Two parallel sixteen person brackets fill the titantron. Names slot into place one at a time.

MEN'S BRACKET ROUND ONE MATCHUPS:

Patrick Mahomes vs Cameron Grimes

Joe Gacy vs Andre Chase

Kai Rodriguez vs Trick Williams

Riley Osborne vs Lennox Ryder

Duke Hudson vs David Finlay

Noam Dar vs JTG

Bandido vs Frankie Kazarian

Rey Horus vs TJ Perkins

WOMEN'S BRACKET ROUND ONE MATCHUPS:

Anya Dalal vs Erica Yan

Sherilyn Guerrero vs Ophelia Payne

Skyre vs Daisy Winchester

Olivia Ryder vs Blair Davenport

Nadia Hamidi vs Mandy Leon

Cláudia Pereirá vs Salina de la Renta

Valentina Feroz vs Autumn Storms

Kiana James vs Aalyah Mysterio

The crowd reacts strongly to the final women's bracket entry. The announce team emphasizes that Aalyah Mysterio drew Kiana James in the first round, a brutal opening match for the Mysterio family member. The announce team also notes that Sherilyn Guerrero versus Ophelia Payne represents the first direct response to Ophelia's brutal post-match attack last week.

The graphic fades. The arena lights brighten.

CUT.

ANYA DALAL vs ERICA YAN

(NXT Breakout Championship Tournament, Women's Bracket Round One)

Hundreds of golden sparks shower down from the entrance trusses. Anya Dalal bursts through the curtain in vibrant magenta and gold ring gear adorned with intricate paisley patterns. She has a thick gold cuff on each wrist.

The Miami crowd absolutely loves her. Pockets of fans throughout the arena raise their phones with the flashlight on, creating a sea of bright dots. Anya raises both arms over her head in a graceful arc and spins twice. She slides into the ring chest first, kips up to her feet, and climbs to the second rope to wave at the crowd.

The referee signals for the bell.

Anya and Erica circle each other in the center of the ring. Erica feints a kick to draw a reaction. Anya does not flinch. Erica steps into a collar and elbow tie up. The two women jockey for position. Erica drives Anya backward into the ropes. The referee initiates the mandatory five count for a clean break. Erica releases at four. She steps back and brushes her hair behind her ear with mock politeness.

Anya answers with a quick reverse arm wringer. She wrenches Erica's left arm behind her back and applies torque. Erica grimaces and rolls forward, taking Anya off her feet. Erica scrambles to her knees. Anya kips up immediately. The two women circle again.

Erica drops down for a single leg takedown. Anya leapfrogs her completely. Erica turns around. Anya is already on the move. She runs the ropes and connects with a crisp running shotgun dropkick that sends Erica skidding backward into the corner.

The fans in the front row pound their open palms against the steel barricades.

Anya charges into the corner. Erica throws up both boots at the last moment. The double boot catches Anya squarely in the sternum. Anya stumbles backward, gasping. Erica

leaps forward and grabs Anya in a waistlock from behind. NORTHERN LIGHTS SUPLEX! ERICA BRIDGES BEAUTIFULLY!

ONE!

TWO!

Anya kicks out and rolls Erica backward with the momentum. Erica releases the hold and pops back up to her feet. She immediately drops a knee directly across Anya's spine.

Erica rolls Anya onto her stomach. She steps over her opponent, locks her knees together, and pulls back into a tight Surfboard. Anya cries out as her shoulders are wrenched at unnatural angles. Erica leans further back, flattening Anya's body across her own knees.

ANYA: I'm NOT giving up!

Anya grits her teeth. She walks her hands forward across the canvas. Her own raw flexibility allows her to absorb the punishment. She bridges her hips up violently. The sudden force destabilizes Erica's base. Anya rolls forward and through, escaping the hold cleanly. Erica is left flat on her back. Anya pops up, hits the ropes, and connects with a beautiful corner standing moonsault directly onto Erica's chest.

ONE!

TWO!

Erica throws her shoulder up forcefully. Anya does not give her time to breathe. She grabs Erica by the wrist and snaps her up to her feet. She delivers a gorgeous handspring back elbow that crashes into Erica's jaw.

Erica stumbles into the ropes. Anya hits the opposite ropes. SPRINGBOARD CROSSBODY! ERICA CATCHES HER IN MIDAIR!

Erica spins Anya around in her arms and dumps her with a fallaway slam. Anya crashes hard on her upper back.

The fans groan in appreciation of the counter. Erica rises slowly. She drags Anya to the center of the ring by the ankles. She climbs the corner ropes with confident speed. She perches on the top turnbuckle. Anya is still flat on her back.

DIVING ELBOW DROP! ERICA SAILS ACROSS THE RING!

ANYA ROLLS! ERICA CRASHES INTO THE CANVAS! HER ELBOW BOUNCES OFF THE MAT WITH A HOLLOW THUD!

Anya is the first to her feet. She measures Erica's slow recovery. She hits the ropes. RUNNING DOUBLE STOMP TO THE BACK! ANYA DRIVES BOTH BOOTS INTO ERICA'S SPINE!

Erica arches in pain. Anya does not relent. She grabs Erica by the head and pulls her up to a kneeling position. She runs to the corner and scales the turnbuckles in three fluid strides. She balances on the top rope.

DIVING METEORA! ANYA DRIVES BOTH KNEES STRAIGHT INTO ERICA'S CHEST!

Erica crumples to the canvas. The fans in the front row stomp their feet on the metal floorboards in a rapid, drum like rhythm. Anya rolls Erica onto her back and hooks the leg.

ONE!

TWO!

Erica kicks out at the last possible microsecond. Anya immediately transitions into a cross armbreaker, isolating Erica's right arm and flattening it across her own thigh. She arches her hips upward to apply maximum pressure.

Erica howls in pain. She rolls her body weight forward to stack Anya's shoulders for a quick pin attempt. The referee drops into position.

ONE!

TWO!

Anya releases the hold and rolls clear. Both women scramble to their feet. They meet in the center of the ring and trade lightning fast strikes. Anya delivers a chop. Erica answers with a forearm. Anya hits a step up enzuigiri. Erica counters with a snap suplex. The crowd is stomping the steel bleachers hard enough to make the camera feed visibly shake.

Erica grabs Anya by the wrist and Irish whips her across the ring. Anya rebounds. SPEAR! ERICA CONNECTS WITH A MASSIVE SPEAR! ANYA FOLDS LIKE PAPER!

Erica covers, hooking the leg.

ONE!

TWO!

ANYA KICKS OUT! THE FORCE OF THE KICKOUT THROWS ERICA OFF HER!

Erica grabs her own hair in frustration. She stalks Anya as the Bollywood star drags herself toward the ropes. Erica pulls Anya to her feet and locks in a front facelock. She lifts. She wants a vertical suplex.

Anya blocks the lift. She delivers three sharp knees to Erica's ribs. The grip loosens. Anya floats over behind Erica and locks in her own waistlock. She drives Erica backward into the turnbuckle. Erica's spine crashes against the corner.

Anya stumbles backward into the center of the ring and shakes the cobwebs from her head. Erica slumps forward out of the corner. Anya seizes the moment. She grabs Erica's right arm. CRUCIFIX DRIVER!

THE MUMBAI MASSACRE! ANYA SPIKES ERICA STRAIGHT INTO THE MAT!

The Miami crowd erupts. Anya does not cover. She points to the top turnbuckle. The fans roar in anticipation. Anya climbs to the top rope with practiced ease. She balances perfectly. She measures the distance.

THE BOLLYWOOD FINALE! ANYA SOARS THROUGH THE AIR WITH A FLAWLESS CORKSCREW SHOOTING STAR PRESS! SHE COMPRESSES ERICA INTO THE CANVAS WITH BREATHTAKING IMPACT!

Anya hooks the inside leg.

ONE!

TWO!

THREE!

The bell rings. The Bollywood orchestra hits the speakers again. The referee raises Anya's hand high in the air. The graphic on the titantron updates to advance Anya Dalal in the women's bracket.

Anya celebrates by pulling herself up onto the second rope and waving at the Miami crowd. She blows a kiss in the direction of the front row. She steps down and helps a dazed Erica Yan up to her feet. The two women embrace briefly, an acknowledgment of a hard fought match. Erica nods and rolls out of the ring to recover.

Anya raises both arms over her head. She points to the camera and mouths the words "I'm coming for the gold."

The titantron suddenly cuts to a private luxury suite high above the entrance ramp. Kiana James sits in a leather chair sipping a glass of champagne. Awesome Kong stands silently behind her. Kiana raises the glass in a mock toast toward Anya.

KIANA: Beautiful match, Anya. Very pretty. Very telegenic. Very… Bollywood.

The crowd boos. Anya rolls her eyes and grabs a microphone from a ringside technician.

ANYA: Kiana, you're a luxury suite away from the action. Some of us actually wrestle.

The crowd pops loudly.

KIANA: I drew Aalyah Mysterio in the first round. Poor little thing is still crying over her best friend, isn't she? Honestly, it feels less like a match and more like a mercy killing.

The crowd boos heavily. Aalyah's name receives a sympathetic cheer.

KIANA: But you and me, Anya. That's the finals. And when we get there, I'm going to teach you what happens when a fashion model tries to box with a businesswoman.

ANYA: You've been hiding behind Awesome Kong since the day I debuted, Kiana. I've been waiting to share a ring with you for a long time. So make it through your bracket. I'll handle mine. And when we meet at the end of it, that suite isn't going to save you.

The crowd erupts. Kiana's smug expression hardens. She stands up from her chair.

KIANA: We'll see, Bollywood. We'll see.

The titantron cuts back to ringside. Anya hands the microphone to the technician. She climbs the corner ropes one more time and points to the championship graphic still hovering in the upper corner of the titantron.

CUT.

AALYAH'S CROSSROADS

The camera fades into a quiet hallway behind the production area. Aalyah Mysterio sits on a folded equipment case with her gear bag at her feet. Her hair is pulled back in a low ponytail. Her face is unreadable.

She is rotating a small purple lucha mask in her hands, examining it absently.

A measured set of footsteps approaches from off camera. Christian Cage walks into frame. He is wearing a tailored black blazer over a white dress shirt with no tie. His hands are clasped in front of him in a posture of deliberate calm. Two figures stop a respectful distance behind him.

Jade Dubois stands to Christian's left, her arms crossed, her cold blue eyes never leaving Aalyah. David Benoit stands to Christian's right, his expression flat, his hands stuffed in the pockets of a grey hoodie.

Aalyah's eyes flick up. She tucks the mask into her bag.

AALYAH: Christian.

CHRISTIAN: Aalyah. Mind if I sit?

AALYAH: It's a hallway. It belongs to the building.

Christian smiles slightly. He pulls a metal folding chair from beside the equipment case and sits down across from her. He leaves enough space that the conversation feels respectful.

CHRISTIAN: How is the ankle?

AALYAH: Healing.

CHRISTIAN: The Mysterio family is one of the great families in this business. Your dad was, and still is, one of the finest performers I ever shared a locker room with.

AALYAH: I don't need a compliment from The Patriarch, Christian.

CHRISTIAN: Fair enough. Then how about the truth? I watched what Izzy did to you in Dublin. I saw your father reach his hand out to her, and I saw her slap it away.

Aalyah stiffens. She does not respond.

CHRISTIAN: That's not a bad night. That's somebody you trusted ripping you open on live television.

AALYAH: I'm aware, Christian. I was there.

CHRISTIAN: I know. Which is exactly why I'm sitting here. I've been on this side of the curtain a long time. I've seen a lot of kids go through what you're going through. Most of 'em never come back from it. They start hesitating at the wrong moment, and they get hurt.

He leans forward slightly. His voice softens.

CHRISTIAN: I don't want that for you.

Aalyah looks up sharply. Her jaw tightens.

AALYAH: What do you want, Christian?

CHRISTIAN: I want to offer you a place in my family. The Patriarchy isn't what they say it is in the back. We're not a cult. We're a unit. Three of us. We train together, we look out for each other, and when somebody comes for one of us, the other three answer.

AALYAH: I have a brother who answers, Christian.

CHRISTIAN: Dominik's a good kid. He's also got his own career to manage and a schedule that takes him out of town more than it keeps him here. He can't be what we can be.

Christian gestures behind him toward Jade and David.

CHRISTIAN: Look at the results. Jade hasn't lost since she walked through that curtain. David's the most technically gifted young grappler in this company. Together, we're unbeatable. With you, we become something else. Something nobody on this roster touches.

AALYAH: Why me?

CHRISTIAN: Because you've got something Jade and David don't. You've got your father's instincts and a real connection with that audience out there. And right now, you've got a very specific kind of pain that you can either swallow or sharpen.

Aalyah looks at the floor.

CHRISTIAN: You face Kiana James in the first round next week. You walk in alone, you walk into a woman with Awesome Kong in her corner, and win or lose, Kiana's gonna put your face on a t-shirt afterward.

He pauses.

CHRISTIAN: Or I sit at ringside in a folding chair, Jade keeps Kong honest, David keeps Kiana on her best behavior, and you walk out of there the way a professional walks out of a war.

Aalyah does not speak for a long moment. She rotates the mask in her hands again. She finally looks up at Christian. Her eyes are clearer now, less raw, more calculating.

Christian's expression shifts. The smile that crosses his face is small. Patient. Pleased.

CHRISTIAN: Take your time. We'll be here. Watch what we do. Make the call when it feels right. The door's open.

He stands up. He pats the back of the folding chair once. He walks past Aalyah without crowding her. Jade Dubois holds the eye contact a beat longer than Aalyah is comfortable with, then turns and follows. David Benoit gives a single curt nod and walks behind Jade.

The camera lingers on Aalyah. She looks down at the mask. She slowly puts it into her gear bag and zips it closed. Her hand stays on the zipper for a long moment.

CUT.

JOE GACY vs ANDRE CHASE

(NXT Breakout Championship Tournament, Men's Bracket Round One)

Heavy classroom bells ring through the arena. Andre Chase's energetic anthem hits. Chase walks through the curtain wearing a bright yellow Chase U sweatband and a CHASE U tank top. He pumps both fists in the air and leads the Miami crowd in a quick localized chant of "C-H-A-S-E! U!" The Chase U section of the audience, twenty rows in the upper deck, returns the chant with practiced enthusiasm.

Chase jogs down the ramp, slapping hands with fans in the front row. He slides under the bottom rope, pops to his feet, and climbs the corner. He pulls his sweatband off his head and tosses it into the crowd.

The lights drop completely. A dissonant, low frequency drone fills the arena. Pale violet spotlights begin sweeping the entrance.

Joe Gacy walks through the curtain at a slow, deliberate pace. He is wearing his white robe with the hood pulled up. Six hooded followers walk behind him in two rigid columns. They stop at the bottom of the ramp and form a half circle around the steel steps. Gacy continues alone to the ring. He walks up the steps, steps over the top rope, and spreads his arms wide in the center of the canvas as the violet lights wash over him. His unsettling smile never leaves his face.

Chase points directly at Gacy and shouts something the audio cannot pick up. The referee signals for the bell.

Gacy does not engage. He stands perfectly still in the center of the ring and simply opens his arms wider, inviting Chase to charge. Chase takes the bait. He sprints across the ring and tackles Gacy to the canvas. Chase begins raining down right hands onto Gacy's face. Gacy does not block the strikes. He just looks up and smiles.

The referee shouts for Chase to stop the closed fist strikes. Chase ignores him. The referee starts the five count. Chase finally stops at four and rolls off Gacy, breathing heavily, frustrated that the punches did not seem to register.

Gacy stands up casually. He brushes invisible dust off his robe. He pulls his hood down. He steps forward into a collar and elbow tie up. Chase muscles him backward into the

corner. The referee initiates the five count for a rope break. Gacy releases at four. He pats Chase on the cheek with mock affection.

GACY: Easy now, Andre. Education is supposed to be patient.

Chase shoves him in the chest. Gacy stumbles backward two steps and laughs softly. Chase charges. Gacy sidesteps and uses Chase's momentum to drive him face first into the corner pad. Gacy follows up with three running back elbows directly into the back of Chase's neck. Chase slumps to a seated position in the corner.

Gacy walks across the ring. He turns around and runs at Chase. RUNNING HIP ATTACK! GACY CRUSHES CHASE IN THE CORNER WITH HIS ENTIRE BODY WEIGHT!

Chase rolls out of the corner, gasping. Gacy stalks him with a slow, measured walk. He grabs Chase by the back of the head and pulls him up to his knees.

GACY: You can still join us, Andre. The community is open to anyone who is willing to set aside their pride.

Chase responds by spitting in Gacy's face. The crowd erupts.

Gacy wipes the spit off his cheek with the back of his hand. His smile finally vanishes. He grabs Chase by the head and PLANTS HIM WITH A SNAP DDT IN THE CENTER OF THE RING!

Chase bounces off the mat. Gacy hooks the leg.

ONE!

TWO!

Chase kicks out. Gacy nods once. He gets to his feet and pulls Chase up with him. He whips Chase across the ring. Chase rebounds off the ropes. Gacy catches him with a spinning sidewalk slam that drives Chase's lower back into the mat.

Gacy rolls off and immediately transitions into a chin lock, dropping his body weight onto Chase's chest while pulling backward on the jaw. Chase is trapped. His face turns red as he struggles for air.

The Miami crowd begins a slow, building chant of "CHASE U! CHASE U! CHASE U!" The Chase U section in the upper deck pounds their open palms against the metal rails.

Chase fights to his feet using pure leg strength. Gacy maintains the chin lock. Chase delivers three sharp elbows to Gacy's ribs. The grip loosens. Chase backs Gacy into the ropes and shoves him off. Gacy rebounds. Chase catches him with a textbook back body drop that sends Gacy crashing to the canvas.

Chase hits the ropes. He drops a beautiful leg across Gacy's throat. Cover.

ONE!

TWO!

Gacy throws his shoulder up and rolls toward the corner. Chase stays on him. He hits a snap suplex. He rolls through into a second snap suplex. He rolls through into a third snap suplex. The fans clap in unison with each impact. CHASE U! CHASE U! CHASE U!

Chase floats over into the cover.

ONE!

TWO!

Gacy kicks out. Chase shakes the cobwebs and pulls himself to his feet. He gestures to the corner. He climbs the turnbuckles with focused intent. He balances on the top rope. He measures the distance. He leaps high into the air.

CHASE U FLYING ELBOW DROP!

GACY ROLLS OUT OF THE WAY AT THE LAST POSSIBLE MOMENT!

Chase crashes elbow first into the canvas. He clutches his arm and rolls toward the ropes. Gacy is already pushing himself up. The hooded followers at ringside step closer to the apron, their eyes locked on Chase.

The referee shouts at the followers to back away. They obey, but slowly, and not before one of them makes deliberate eye contact with Chase. Chase glances at the follower. The distraction lasts a half second too long.

Gacy is on his feet. He charges. HANDSPRING BACK ELBOW! GACY DRIVES THE CROWN OF HIS HEAD INTO CHASE'S JAW!

Chase staggers backward into the corner. Gacy grabs him by the head, steps up onto the second rope, and DRIVES CHASE FACE FIRST INTO THE TOP TURNBUCKLE WITH A REVERSE STO OFF THE ROPES!

The fans groan. Chase's body goes limp. Gacy rolls Chase onto his back and hooks both legs.

ONE!

TWO!

CHASE KICKS OUT! THE CROWD ERUPTS!

Gacy rises to his feet. His smile returns. He paces the ring. He looks down at Chase with something close to pity.

GACY: I gave you so many chances, Andre. The path is still open. Just close your eyes. Just stop fighting me.

Chase shakes his head. He uses the ropes to pull himself up. He turns to face Gacy. He raises his fists.

Gacy steps in. Chase explodes forward with a flurry of strikes. Right hand. Left hand. Right hand. Knee to the midsection. Spinning back elbow to the jaw. Gacy stumbles backward toward the ropes. Chase hits the opposite ropes. He builds maximum velocity.

CHASE U SPINNING SLAM ATTEMPT!

Gacy slips out of the lift mid rotation. He lands behind Chase. He hooks Chase in a full nelson grip. Chase pumps his arms upward to break the hold.

The referee turns to deal with two of the followers who have climbed onto the ring apron. The distraction is brief but total.

A third follower at ringside slides a small object across the canvas to Gacy. Gacy releases the full nelson and catches the object in his right hand. It is a roll of athletic tape with a foreign object inside. Chase turns around.

GACY CRACKS CHASE OVER THE HEAD WITH THE LOADED FIST! THE STRIKE LANDS WITH A SICKENING CRACK! CHASE COLLAPSES INSTANTLY!

Gacy slides the loaded tape under the bottom rope to a follower. The referee turns back around. Gacy is already covering Chase, hooking the leg with both hands.

ONE!

TWO!

THREE!

The bell rings. Gacy's unsettling theme music returns. The referee raises Gacy's hand. The bracket on the titantron updates to advance Joe Gacy in the men's tournament.

Gacy stands over Chase's unconscious body. His followers slide into the ring and form a half circle around their leader. Gacy grabs a microphone from one of them.

GACY: Andre, you had so many chances. The Community was patient. The Community offered understanding. You chose the suffocatin' walls of Chase U over the freedom we offered, and look where it got you.

He looks down at Chase.

GACY: Sleep well, Andre. When you wake up, the door will still be open. We will be waiting.

Gacy hands the microphone back. He raises both arms over his head. The followers slowly file out of the ring and trail behind him up the entrance ramp. The Chase U section in the upper deck rains down boos. Officials and trainers rush down to attend to Chase.

CUT.

THE COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

The camera fades into The Miz's office. The room is large, sleek, and aggressively decorated. There are framed photos of The Miz with various celebrities. A glass desk with three monitors. A pair of black leather couches against the far wall.

The Miz sits behind the desk with a stack of paperwork in front of him and his phone pressed to his ear. He is talking in a low, agitated voice.

Six feet across the room, Artemis Frost is seated on one of the leather couches. She has her portfolio open across her lap. Her silver pen is moving across the page in steady, even strokes. She has not looked up since the camera started rolling.

The Miz hangs up the phone. He tosses it onto the desk with more force than necessary. He glares at Artemis.

THE MIZ: Are you going to do this all night?

ARTEMIS: Do what, Mr. Mizanin?

THE MIZ: That. The notebook. The pen. The hovering. The sitting in my office while I am working.

ARTEMIS: I am observing your operational practices. That is the assignment given to me by the Board of Directors and by Mr. Johnson personally. I am required to be in the same physical environment as you for a minimum of four uninterrupted hours per broadcast. We have completed two hours and seventeen minutes.

THE MIZ: Take a break. Have a coffee. Walk around. Stretch your legs.

ARTEMIS: I do not require a break.

The Miz throws his hands up in exasperation. He stands up from the desk and paces the office. He stops in front of a framed photo of himself and stares at his own reflection in the glass. He smooths his hair.

THE MIZ: Frost, can I ask you something?

ARTEMIS: Of course.

THE MIZ: How'd you end up in this job?

ARTEMIS: I was promoted from the legal compliance division of Paramount Global. Mr. Johnson personally recruited me from my role as a contract auditor for the network's documentary unit. I have an MBA from Wharton and a juris doctorate from Stanford Law.

The Miz blinks.

THE MIZ: Wharton. And Stanford.

ARTEMIS: Correct.

THE MIZ: You have two graduate degrees.

ARTEMIS: Three. I also hold a Master's in organizational psychology from Northwestern.

The Miz stares at her. He sits back down at his desk slowly. He clears his throat.

THE MIZ: Why are you wasting your time on a wrestling show?

ARTEMIS: It isn't a waste. The brand under your management generates substantial revenue. The Board has documented inefficiencies in your operational model, patterns of personal favoritism in your booking decisions, and potential litigation exposure

stemming from your unilateral amendments to talent agreements. My role is to assess these concerns objectively and report.

THE MIZ: I have been in this business for twenty years. I've main evented WrestleMania. I've hosted MTV. I'm a transcendent A-lister.

ARTEMIS: Your performance history is a separate matter from your management capability.

The Miz's jaw tightens. He picks up a paperweight from his desk and squeezes it in his fist. He sets it down carefully.

THE MIZ: You know what your problem is, Artemis?

ARTEMIS: Please share.

THE MIZ: You've never been in front of a camera. Never had ten thousand people scream your name. You read spreadsheets. You don't understand the magic of this business.

ARTEMIS: I understand the financial implications of poor decision making. The Hurt Syndicate currently consumes thirty four percent of your weekly creative budget. They've failed to capture either of the two championships they've publicly targeted. Their faction has produced negative returns over the previous quarter.

THE MIZ: They're stars. They move merchandise.

ARTEMIS: Their merchandise revenue ranks fourteenth among active rosters. Their average viewer retention drops eight percent during their featured segments. Their social media engagement is approximately sixty percent below comparable factions on competing brands.

The Miz stands up so quickly his chair rolls backward and slams against the wall.

THE MIZ: GET OUT!

ARTEMIS: I'm not authorized to leave until we've completed the four hour observation period.

THE MIZ: GET OUT OF MY OFFICE!

Artemis closes her portfolio with a slow, deliberate click. She stands up. She straightens her blazer. She walks to the door at a measured pace. She stops at the threshold and turns back.

ARTEMIS: Noted. I'll record that you ordered me out in violation of section three, subsection seven of my observation protocol. I'd also recommend speaking with the medical staff before the main event. Your blood pressure looks elevated.

She walks out and closes the door behind her with a soft click.

The Miz stands behind his desk, breathing heavily. He picks up his phone. He scrolls through his contacts. He stops on a name. He hits the call button.

THE MIZ: It's me. I need a favor. I need somebody from the old contact list down here. Someone who's not gonna fit on a corporate spreadsheet. You know what I'm askin' for. Make the call. Tonight.

He hangs up. He sits down. He smiles a thin, dangerous smile.

CUT.

NADIA HAMIDI vs MANDY LEON

(NXT Breakout Championship Tournament, Women's Bracket Round One)

The arena lights cut to a soft pink. A glamorous pop entrance theme plays through the speakers. Mandy Leon steps through the curtain in pristine white and rose gold ring gear. She walks down the ramp with the deliberate, runway pace of a woman who knows she is being watched. She stops twice on the ramp to flip her hair and pose for the hard camera. The Miami crowd boos her steadily. She blows a kiss in the direction of the announce table.

She climbs the steel steps. She pauses on the apron to wipe the bottoms of her boots with a velvet cloth handed to her by a ringside attendant. She tosses the cloth back without looking. She steps through the ropes and walks to the center of the ring. She raises both hands to her own face in a posed gesture of self-admiration.

The arena floods with bright gold light. Hieroglyphic projections move across the entrance ramp.

Nadia Hamidi steps through the curtain in regal black and gold ring gear with intricate scarab patterns running down both legs. Her hair is braided tightly down her back. She brings her right palm to her chest, bows her head once toward the crowd in respect, and begins her walk to the ring.

The Miami crowd cheers warmly. Several fans in the front row raise small Egyptian flags they brought from home. Nadia acknowledges them with a small nod as she passes.

She climbs the steel steps. She steps through the ropes. She walks directly to the center of the ring and stops face to face with Mandy Leon. Mandy is shorter. Mandy looks up at Nadia with an exaggerated, condescending smile.

The referee signals for the bell.

Mandy raises her right hand and motions for a test of strength. She wiggles her fingers in mock invitation. Nadia stares at her without expression. Mandy tilts her head and pouts.

MANDY: Come on, sweetheart, give me your hand. Don't be rude.

Nadia raises her right hand calmly. Mandy lifts her arm to meet it. The instant the fingers touch, Mandy slaps Nadia across the face with her free left hand.

The crowd gasps. Mandy laughs and dances backward, blowing kisses to the front row.

Nadia does not react for a full two seconds. Her head is still turned to the side from the slap. She slowly turns back and locks eyes with Mandy. The expression on her face has changed. It is no longer calm.

Mandy stops laughing.

Nadia charges across the ring. Mandy ducks the initial running clothesline and rolls under the bottom rope to the floor. She holds up both hands in a frantic timeout gesture. The crowd boos heavily.

Nadia stalks her around the outside of the ring. Mandy slides back into the ring on the opposite side. Nadia rolls in after her. Mandy charges with a forearm. Nadia catches the arm in midair, twists into a wrist lock, and yanks Mandy off her feet with a violent arm drag. Mandy crashes hard on her shoulder.

Mandy scrambles up. Nadia hits her with a stiff European uppercut. Mandy stumbles backward into the ropes. Nadia lifts her off the canvas and SLAMS her with a body slam. The ring shakes from the impact.

Mandy clutches her lower back, gasping. Nadia drops a heavy elbow across her sternum. Cover.

ONE!

TWO!

Mandy rolls her shoulder up. Nadia immediately drags her up by the hair. Mandy rakes her fingernails across Nadia's eyes. Nadia releases the grip, blinking hard. Mandy uses the opening to drive her shoulder into Nadia's midsection and shove her into the corner.

Mandy delivers four sharp slaps to Nadia's face in rapid succession. The crowd boos louder. The referee shouts at her to back off. Mandy ignores him. She grips Nadia by the hair and slams her face first into the top turnbuckle three times.

She drags Nadia out of the corner. She hooks her in a front facelock. SNAP DDT! NADIA HITS THE CANVAS HARD!

Mandy rises and runs both hands through her hair, smoothing it back into place before going for the cover.

ONE!

TWO!

Nadia kicks out forcefully. Mandy slaps the canvas in frustration. She climbs to her feet and argues with the referee about the count. The referee insists the count was clean. Mandy waves him off and grabs Nadia by the wrist.

Mandy pulls Nadia up to a seated position and locks in a tight rear chinlock, grinding her forearm across Nadia's jaw. The crowd begins a slow chant of "NA-DI-A! NA-DI-A! NA-DI-A!"

Nadia uses the chant to fight to her feet. She drives three sharp elbows backward into Mandy's ribs. The hold loosens. Nadia steps forward and whips Mandy off the ropes. On

the rebound, Nadia LEVELS her with a thunderous running clothesline that flips Mandy completely upside down before crashing onto her back.

The Miami crowd roars. Nadia pulls Mandy up by the hair. She lifts her cleanly off the canvas and drives her into the canvas with a fallaway slam. Mandy bounces and rolls toward the ropes.

Nadia stalks her. She waits as Mandy uses the ropes to pull herself up. Nadia hits the opposite ropes. CAIRO LARIAT! NADIA NEARLY DECAPITATES MANDY WITH A RUNNING CLOTHESLINE!

Mandy folds inside out and crashes flat on her back.

Cover.

ONE!

TWO!

MANDY GETS HER FOOT ON THE BOTTOM ROPE!

The referee waves off the count. The crowd groans. Nadia sits up and stares at the rope for a moment. She rises slowly to her feet. She drags Mandy back to the center of the ring by the ankles.

Mandy is dead weight. Her eyes are barely open. Nadia hooks her by the waist from behind and lifts. SHE HOISTS MANDY UP INTO A SCOOP POSITION, ROTATES HER VERTICALLY, AND DRIVES HER STRAIGHT DOWN INTO THE CANVAS WITH A POWERSLAM!

The ring shakes. Nadia does not cover. She pulls Mandy up to her knees by the hair. She steps to the ropes. She hits them. THE NADIA KNEE! NADIA DRIVES HER KNEE STRAIGHT INTO MANDY'S TEMPLE!

Mandy collapses sideways onto the canvas. Nadia rolls her flat onto her back. She hooks the leg deep.

ONE!

TWO!

THREE!

The bell rings. Nadia's theme music returns. The referee raises Nadia's hand high above her head.

Nadia walks to the corner. She climbs the second rope. She raises her right palm to the crowd in acknowledgment. The Miami fans cheer loudly. The Egyptian flags in the front row wave in support.

She steps down. She points at the bracket graphic on the titantron. The graphic updates to advance Nadia Hamidi into the second round.

Nadia exits the ring. Mandy is still flat on her back, holding her jaw.

CUT.

THE GUERRERO RESPONSE

The camera fades into a backstage corridor near the medical wing. Sherilyn Guerrero is seated on a folding chair. A team trainer is finishing up taping her left shoulder, the same shoulder Ophelia Payne drove into the canvas with the spinebuster the previous week. Sherilyn rolls the joint slowly to test the range of motion. She winces, then nods at the trainer.

SHERILYN: Good. Thanks.

The trainer nods and leaves. Sherilyn stands up and pulls her training jacket over the taped shoulder. She is in mid stretch when she sees something off camera. Her expression hardens. She drops her arms.

The camera widens to show Ophelia Payne standing at the far end of the corridor, leaning against a metal supply cart. Ophelia is in her wrestling gear. A pair of Hurt Syndicate towels are folded on her shoulder. She is sipping from a water bottle. She lowers it slowly when she sees Sherilyn watching her.

The two women stare at each other across the corridor for several seconds. Neither of them moves.

Sherilyn breaks the silence first. She walks toward Ophelia with a steady, measured pace. She stops three feet away.

SHERILYN: You got somethin' to say to me?

Ophelia takes another slow sip of her water. She caps the bottle. She sets it down on the cart.

OPHELIA: Nope.

SHERILYN: That's funny. Last week you had a whole lot to say to me with your boot. Where's that mouth tonight?

Ophelia looks her up and down once. She glances at the taped shoulder. Her expression is utterly flat.

OPHELIA: I said what I needed to say last week. The shoulder's still wrapped. The neck's still stiff. You're still walkin' around askin' me questions instead of trainin'. That tells me everything.

Sherilyn's jaw tightens. She steps forward another half foot.

SHERILYN: I'm training just fine. I'm gonna train all the way through your face next Tuesday.

OPHELIA: That's cute.

SHERILYN: That's a promise.

Ophelia tilts her head. The corner of her mouth lifts slightly. It is not a smile. It is closer to a smirk.

OPHELIA: My grandfather used to slaughter steers on the farm in Green Bay. Big animals. Strong. They'd kick. They'd buck. Took a lot of work to bring 'em down. But every single one of 'em, when the time came, ended up on the same hook. You know what I learned watchin' that as a kid?

SHERILYN: That you grew up weird?

The crowd in the arena, who can hear the segment over the broadcast feed, laughs loudly. Ophelia does not flinch.

OPHELIA: I learned that size and fight don't matter when somebody bigger has decided you're done. Your father was a great wrestler, Sherilyn. Hell of a performer. Smaller than the men he was beatin', and he made it work. But the women's division ain't the men's division. There's no Rey to hide behind. There's no Latino Heat. There's just you and me in a ring next week, and I'm twice your size.

Sherilyn does not back down. She steps in until her face is six inches from Ophelia's chin. She has to look up to make eye contact. She does.

SHERILYN: My father wrestled men twice his size every weekend of his life. He beat them. He pinned them. He made them tap. And I'm his daughter. So you can talk about steers and farms and whatever the hell you wanna talk about. But when that bell rings next Tuesday, you better remember whose blood is in this body. Because if you forget for one second, I will put you on the same canvas you put me on.

Ophelia stares down at her. The flat smirk is gone. Her expression is now something colder.

OPHELIA: We'll see.

SHERILYN: We will.

Sherilyn does not break eye contact. She steps backward one full pace, still facing Ophelia. She turns and walks away down the corridor. Ophelia watches her go. She picks up her water bottle. She uncaps it. She takes a slow drink. She does not move from her spot.

CUT.

IZZY RODRIGUEZ vs SKYRE

Izzy Rodriguez walks through the curtain in matte black ring gear. She has a black tracksuit jacket zipped up over her gear. Her hair is pulled into a tight braid. She has no entrance gimmick, no fanfare, no acknowledgment of the audience. She walks down the ramp with a focused, mechanical stride. The Miami crowd showers her with boos. Izzy ignores them completely.

She climbs the steel steps. She steps through the ropes. She unzips her tracksuit jacket and tosses it to a ringside attendant. She moves to the corner and stretches her shoulders against the top rope.

Skyre walks through the curtain in flowing white and jade green ring gear adorned with embroidered cranes. Her hair is pulled into a low knot at the base of her neck. She moves with deliberate, ceremonial calm. She does not slap hands. She does not pose. She walks down the ramp with the steady focus of someone who has already finished the match in her mind.

Skyre reaches the ring. She climbs the steel steps. She steps through the ropes and stops in the center of the canvas. She closes her eyes for two seconds. She opens them and looks at Izzy across the ring. Izzy stares back.

The referee signals for the bell.

Izzy charges across the ring with no hesitation. She launches herself at Skyre with a flying clothesline. Skyre drops flat to her back at the last possible microsecond. Izzy sails over her head and crashes against the top rope. Skyre kips up to her feet in one fluid motion.

Izzy turns around. Skyre delivers a precise palm strike to Izzy's sternum. Izzy stumbles backward two steps. Skyre pivots on her left heel and connects with a roundhouse kick to the ribs.

Izzy doubles over. Skyre snaps a side kick into Izzy's shoulder. Izzy spins from the impact. Skyre wraps her arm around Izzy's neck and drops with a snapmare.

Izzy hits the canvas in a seated position. Skyre runs the ropes. RUNNING DROPKICK BETWEEN THE SHOULDER BLADES! IZZY CRASHES FACE FIRST INTO THE MAT!

The Miami crowd erupts. Skyre stands tall and crosses her arms over her chest in a brief warrior stance. The fans in the front row pound their open palms against the steel barricades.

Izzy pushes herself up to her hands and knees. Her face is twisted with rage. She lunges at Skyre's legs for a single leg takedown. Skyre sprawls backward, planting her hips heavy and shifting her weight forward. She breaks the takedown attempt and locks her right arm tightly under Izzy's chin in a front facelock.

Skyre yanks Izzy upward and snaps her over with a tight northern lights suplex. She bridges high.

ONE!

TWO!

Izzy kicks out forcefully. Both women scramble to their feet. Izzy throws a wild right hook. Skyre slips her head off the center line. She catches Izzy's extended arm and wrenches it into a top wrist lock. Izzy drops to one knee from the pressure. Skyre steps around the trapped limb and delivers a sharp elbow strike to the joint. Izzy howls in pain.

Izzy lifts her free arm and rakes her fingers across Skyre's eyes. The referee shouts a warning. Skyre releases the wrist lock and stumbles backward, blinking hard. Izzy uses the moment to scramble to her feet. She charges forward and CRACKS Skyre across the jaw with a forearm smash.

Skyre's head snaps to the side. Izzy follows with a stiff knee to the midsection. She hooks Skyre in a front facelock and lifts. SUPLEX! IZZY DROPS SKYRE STRAIGHT BACK ONTO HER NECK!

Skyre rolls onto her side, gasping. Izzy stays on the offensive. She drags Skyre to the center of the ring by the hair. She drops a heavy knee directly across Skyre's throat. The referee shouts another warning.

IZZY: Try your little kung fu now! GO ON! TRY IT!

Izzy locks Skyre in a tight cobra clutch, pulling Skyre's left arm across her own throat while applying pressure with her right hand. Skyre's eyes widen as her air supply is cut off.

The Miami crowd starts a slow chant of "SKY-RE! SKY-RE! SKY-RE!" The volume builds steadily.

Skyre uses the chant to fuel her escape. She drives her elbow backward into Izzy's ribs three times in rapid succession. Izzy releases the hold, gasping. Skyre spins behind her. She wraps her right arm around Izzy's waist. RELEASE GERMAN SUPLEX! IZZY FLIES ACROSS THE RING AND LANDS ON THE BACK OF HER NECK!

Skyre rises to her feet. She breathes deeply through her nose. She walks toward Izzy with calm, measured steps. Izzy crawls to the corner and uses the ropes to pull herself up to a vertical base.

Skyre charges across the ring at full speed. She leaps high into the air. CORNER SHINING WIZARD! SHE DRIVES HER KNEE STRAIGHT INTO IZZY'S TEMPLE!

Izzy slumps to a seated position in the corner. Skyre takes three steps backward. She charges again. RUNNING DROPKICK TO THE FACE! IZZY'S HEAD BOUNCES OFF THE MIDDLE TURNBUCKLE!

Skyre drags Izzy out of the corner by the ankles. She positions Izzy in the center of the ring. She climbs the corner ropes with smooth, unhurried movement. She balances on the top rope. She raises both arms over her head in a graceful arc. She leaps.

DIVING SPLIT LEG MOONSAULT! SKYRE LANDS PERFECTLY ACROSS IZZY'S CHEST!

Cover.

ONE!

TWO!

Izzy throws her shoulder up. The Miami crowd groans. Skyre nods once. She does not show frustration. She rolls Izzy onto her stomach. She steps over Izzy's lower body. She reaches forward and locks her arms tightly under Izzy's chin in a Camel Clutch.

Izzy's spine arches violently. She refuses to tap. She thrashes her body weight from side to side. Skyre maintains the hold with absolute precision, her own knees driving into the small of Izzy's back.

SKYRE: Submit. The ankle is already broken. Submit.

Izzy's response is a guttural scream of refusal. She uses the last of her strength to slowly walk her hands forward across the canvas. Inch by inch. Skyre torques the hold harder. Izzy reaches the bottom rope. She wraps her fingers around the bottom strand.

The referee initiates the rope break count. Skyre releases at three. She stands up calmly. She steps backward, allowing Izzy to recover.

Izzy uses the ropes to drag herself up. She turns around. Her face is twisted. Her eyes are wild. She charges forward in pure rage. She throws a heavy clothesline. Skyre ducks underneath. She catches Izzy's arm on the rebound and snaps her down to the canvas with a dragon screw whip. Izzy clutches her knee.

Skyre rises. She runs to the ropes. SPRINGBOARD ENZUIGIRI! SKYRE'S HEEL CONNECTS FLUSH WITH THE BACK OF IZZY'S HEAD!

Izzy collapses face first onto the canvas. Skyre flips her over onto her back. She hooks both legs deep.

ONE!

TWO!

IZZY KICKS OUT! HER LEFT FOOT JUST BARELY HOOKS THE BOTTOM ROPE!

The referee waves off the count. The crowd groans again. Skyre stares at the rope for a moment. She nods. She accepts the result. She drags Izzy back to the center of the ring by the wrist.

Izzy suddenly snaps her free elbow upward. She catches Skyre directly in the throat. Skyre stumbles backward, gasping for air. Izzy scrambles to her feet. She kicks Skyre hard in the gut. She hooks Skyre in a front facelock. She lifts.

MACHINA DRIVER ATTEMPT! IZZY GOES FOR HER PACKAGE PILEDRIVER FINISHER!

Skyre fights the lift. She delivers four sharp knees to the side of Izzy's head. The grip loosens. Skyre slides down Izzy's back, landing on her feet. She wraps her arms around Izzy's waist. SHE DRIVES IZZY HEAD FIRST INTO THE TURNBUCKLE WITH A RUNNING TIGER SUPLEX!

Izzy bounces off the turnbuckle and crashes face first into the center of the ring. Skyre breathes heavily. She walks slowly to the corner. She climbs the turnbuckles. She balances on the top rope. She raises her right hand to the ceiling. The Miami crowd rises to its feet.

CRANE STRIKE!

IZZY ROLLS!

SKYRE CRASHES CHEST FIRST INTO THE CANVAS! HER PHOENIX SPLASH FINDS NOTHING BUT MAT!

The Miami crowd gasps. Skyre clutches her ribs and rolls onto her back, gasping. Izzy is already scrambling. She drags herself to her knees. The cut on her lip is bleeding freely. Her eyes are wild.

She stalks Skyre on her hands and knees. She grabs Skyre by the hair and hauls her up to a vertical base. Skyre is barely conscious. Izzy pivots her into a front facelock. She stares at the hard camera as she sets the grip.

MACHINA DRIVER! IZZY DRIVES SKYRE STRAIGHT DOWN ON THE TOP OF HER HEAD WITH THE PACKAGE PILEDRIVER!

The impact shakes the ring. Skyre's legs go limp. Izzy stays on top, hooks the far leg deep, and folds Skyre nearly in half.

ONE!

TWO!

THREE!

The bell rings. Izzy's entrance theme blasts through the speakers. The referee tries to raise Izzy's hand. Izzy yanks it free and refuses the gesture. She stands over Skyre's motionless body and stares down at her without expression.

The Miami crowd boos heavily. Izzy does not acknowledge them.

She drops to one knee beside Skyre. She grabs the back of Skyre's head and lifts it slightly off the canvas. She speaks something quiet into Skyre's ear that the cameras cannot pick up. She lets the head drop.

Izzy stands. She wipes the blood from her lip with the back of her wrist. She steps over Skyre and walks to the ropes.

A trainer climbs onto the apron with an ice pack and a towel. Izzy snatches both items out of his hands and throws them into the front row.

She forces herself onto the ring apron. She climbs over the top rope and drops to the floor. The crowd boos her steadily. Cathy Kelley is at ringside with a microphone. She steps forward cautiously.

CATHY: Izzy, can we get a word?

Izzy snatches the microphone out of Cathy's hand without breaking stride.

IZZY: I told you all I was sharpening. I told the entire locker room. None of you listened. Skyre didn't listen. Look at her.

She points back into the ring. Skyre is still flat on her back, motionless, with officials slowly making their way down the ramp.

IZZY: That's the new standard. That's what happens when you step in a ring with me now. Sherilyn. Anya. Aalyah. Turaya. Take a real long look at what's left of Skyre and ask yourselves if you want any part of this. Because I'm not stoppin'. No partners. No corner. Just me. And by the time I'm done with this division, every one of you is gonna look exactly like that.

She tosses the microphone back to Cathy and limps toward the ramp. The cameras hold on Skyre being attended to in the ring as Izzy disappears through the curtain.

CUT.

OLIVIA RYDER vs BLAIR DAVENPORT

(NXT Breakout Championship Tournament, Women's Bracket Round One)

Davenport storms through the curtain in matte black ring gear with crimson trim. Her hair is pulled into a tight, severe bun. She walks down the ramp with a hard, disciplined stride. She does not acknowledge the crowd. She slides under the bottom rope, pops to her feet, and immediately begins shadow-striking the air in the corner with sharp, clean elbows and forearms.

The lights shift to soft blue and pale gold. A bright, cinematic orchestral theme rises through the speakers. The opening notes are layered with a soaring violin line. The crowd chants "BAM-BI" in sync with her theme.

Olivia Ryder bursts through the curtain in cream and powder blue ring gear with a small embroidered fawn on the right hip. Her hair is in a loose ponytail. She skips down the ramp with a bright, easy energy that draws an immediate warm reaction from the Miami crowd. She stops at ringside and slaps three open palms in the front row. She slides under the bottom rope and kips up to her feet in a single fluid motion. She climbs the corner ropes and waves at the upper deck.

Blair watches her from the opposite corner with a stone-cold expression.

The referee signals for the bell.

Olivia drops down from the corner. The two women approach the center of the ring. Blair extends her hand for a handshake. Olivia looks at it, hesitates, and then reaches out.

Blair yanks Olivia forward by the offered hand and CRACKS her across the face with a brutal European uppercut.

Olivia stumbles backward into the ropes. The crowd boos heavily. Blair charges. Olivia drops down. Blair leaps over her, hits the opposite ropes, and on the rebound goes for a running boot. Olivia ducks under the boot and uses her momentum to slingshot Blair into the corner.

Blair crashes chest first into the turnbuckle. Olivia pops up to her feet and runs to the opposite corner. She vaults to the top rope in two fluid steps. She stands on the top turnbuckle. She looks across the ring. Blair turns around.

DIVING CROSSBODY! OLIVIA SOARS HALFWAY ACROSS THE RING!

BLAIR CATCHES HER IN MIDAIR!

Blair holds Olivia in a vertical fireman's carry for a full three seconds, showcasing her strength to the audience. The Miami crowd gasps. Blair pivots on her heel. SHE DUMPS OLIVIA WITH A FALLAWAY SAMOAN DROP! OLIVIA CRASHES HARD ON THE BACK OF HER NECK!

Blair rolls into a quick cover.

ONE!

TWO!

Olivia kicks out forcefully. Blair does not show frustration. She simply rises to her feet and begins methodically working over Olivia's lower back. She drives her right boot down across the spine. She drops a knee across the same spot. She pulls Olivia up by the hair and locks in a tight bear hug, lifting her off the canvas and squeezing.

Olivia cries out as her ribs are compressed. The trainer Eve Torres mentioned earlier is visible at the timekeeper's table, watching closely. Olivia's brother Lennox Ryder is in the front row, on his feet, screaming encouragement at his sister.

Olivia thrashes her legs and rakes at Blair's face. Blair shakes off the rake and squeezes harder. Olivia slams her open palms down against Blair's ears in a double slap. Blair's grip releases. Olivia drops to her feet, stumbles backward, and gasps for air.

Blair shakes her head clear. She charges. Olivia ducks. SPRINGBOARD ARM DRAG! OLIVIA LAUNCHES BLAIR HALFWAY ACROSS THE RING!

Blair lands awkwardly on her shoulder. She rolls up to her feet. Olivia hits her with a leaping forearm. Blair stumbles. Olivia hits the ropes. RUNNING HURRICANRANA! BLAIR IS TANGLED IN THE CORNER!

The Miami crowd erupts. Olivia plants her hands on her hips and lets the cheers wash over her for a half second before charging into the corner. RUNNING HIP ATTACK!

BLAIR CATCHES THE HIP IN MIDAIR AND HURLS OLIVIA OVER THE TOP ROPE!

Olivia crashes onto the apron. She lands on her ribs. The wind is knocked out of her completely. The fans groan in unison.

Blair stalks out of the corner. She grabs Olivia by the hair through the second rope and pulls her up to her feet on the apron. Olivia's legs are unsteady. Blair climbs to the second rope opposite her. She hooks Olivia in a front facelock for a draping suplex.

Olivia blocks the lift with a knee under Blair's chin. Blair stumbles backward into the ring. Olivia pulls herself onto the top rope from the apron. The Miami crowd rises to its feet.

DIVING METEORA TO THE OUTSIDE WAS NOT THE PLAN!

Olivia leaps off the top rope and connects with a beautiful springboard double knee drive directly to Blair's chest. Blair crashes back first onto the canvas. Olivia rolls into a cover.

ONE!

TWO!

Blair kicks out at the very last microsecond. Olivia rolls to her feet, breathing heavily. She climbs the corner ropes again, faster this time. She balances on the top turnbuckle. She raises her right hand to the crowd.

PERFECT TEN ATTEMPT! OLIVIA LEAPS FOR HER 450 SPLASH FINISHER!

BLAIR ROLLS! OLIVIA EATS NOTHING BUT CANVAS!

Olivia slams down hard. She clutches her midsection in pain. Blair is the first one up. She drags Olivia to the center of the ring. She lifts her into a vertical brainbuster position, holding her upside down for a full four seconds while the blood rushes to Olivia's head.

Blair drops Olivia onto her shoulder. She pivots into a fisherman's grip. KILL SHOT! BLAIR DROPS OLIVIA WITH HER BRAINBUSTER VARIATION!

Cover. Hook of the leg.

ONE!

TWO!

OLIVIA KICKS OUT! THE CROWD ERUPTS!

Blair's eyes go wide for the first time in the match. She slaps the canvas. She drags Olivia up to her feet. She whips her into the corner. Blair charges in for a running knee. Olivia ducks under at the last instant. Blair's knee crashes into the top turnbuckle.

Olivia spins her around. She lifts Blair onto the top rope in a seated position. She climbs up after her. The Miami crowd is on its feet, screaming. Olivia hooks her arm around Blair's neck.

SUPER FRANKENSTEINER! OLIVIA WHIPS BLAIR ALL THE WAY ACROSS THE RING!

Blair lands flat on her back and bounces. Olivia pulls herself up using the corner ropes. She does not waste time. She climbs to the top rope. She raises her right hand to the ceiling.

PERFECT TEN! OLIVIA LANDS A FLAWLESS 450 SPLASH ACROSS BLAIR'S CHEST!

The impact rocks the ring. Olivia hooks both legs deep.

ONE!

TWO!

THREE!

The bell rings. Olivia's bright orchestral theme returns to the speakers. The referee raises Olivia's hand. Lennox Ryder is already over the barricade. He climbs the steel steps and steps through the ropes. He picks Olivia up off the canvas and spins her in a circle in his arms. The Miami crowd cheers loudly.

Olivia laughs and wipes her eyes. Lennox sets her down. He steps back and lets her have the moment alone. Olivia points at the bracket graphic on the titantron. The graphic updates to advance Olivia Ryder into the second round.

CUT.

THE PREDATOR'S SCRIPT

The camera fades into a private locker room with sleek black walls and gold trim. The Hurt Syndicate occupies the room. MVP sits in a leather chair with a tablet in his lap. Nigel Bryant leans against the far wall, sipping from a crystal tumbler. Keith Lee stands in the corner with his massive arms crossed. Kasen Aiken is wrapping athletic tape around his wrists. PAC paces the length of the room with restless, predatory steps. Ophelia Payne sits on a bench, lacing her boots.

In the center of the room, on a wooden chair turned to face the wall, sits Yvonne Jonas. She is in her wrestling gear. Her hair is pulled back into a tight low knot. Her hands rest flat on her thighs. She has not blinked since the segment opened.

On the wall in front of Yvonne is a large corkboard. The corkboard is covered with photographs of women on the NXT roster. Each photograph is annotated with red marker. Notes about height, finishing moves, weak points, recent match results.

In the center of the corkboard is a photograph of Turaya Rosas holding the NXT Women's Championship. The photograph has been outlined in heavy red marker. Three small red Xs are drawn at the wrist, the ankle, and the knee.

MVP looks up from his tablet.

MVP: Yvonne, look at me.

Yvonne turns her head. Her movement is unhurried. She makes eye contact with MVP.

MVP: We're running the same footage we ran in the lobby. The heel hook from Dublin. Watch how Turaya rotates her hips into the hold. She doesn't hook the ankle from the front. She rolls under and traps the joint laterally. She picked that up in Mexico. Look at it a few more times before bed.

Yvonne nods once. Her eyes return to the corkboard.

Ophelia Payne finishes lacing her boots. She stands up and walks across the room. She stops next to Yvonne's chair. She looks at the corkboard.

OPHELIA: I caught Sherilyn Guerrero last week with the Big Boot and the Spinebuster. Nothing personal. Target of opportunity.

MVP: It was good work. The visual carried the broadcast. Eddie's daughter folded like cardboard.

OPHELIA: I drew her in the bracket. Miz approved it.

MVP: That's even better. We get to break her in front of an audience.

PAC stops pacing. He looks at the corkboard. He points at a smaller photograph in the corner. It is a candid shot of Sherilyn Guerrero, her face mid celebration after defeating Daisy Winchester.

PAC: She moves like her father. Quick feet, high risk, no respect for the canvas. Thinks she can fly all night without consequences.

MVP: Which is exactly why Ophelia's the right answer. Big strikes, heavy hands. The flying stops when somebody catches her in midair.

Keith Lee uncrosses his arms. His low rumble fills the room.

KEITH LEE: Eddie was a phenomenal performer. He also wrestled on emotion. The daughter inherited that. We exploit it methodically.

The door opens. Nigel Bryant straightens. Kasen Aiken sets down his tape. The Miz walks into the room. He is alone. He looks slightly disheveled.

THE MIZ: MVP. We have a problem.

MVP: We have several, Mike. Pick one.

THE MIZ: Frost. The auditor. She's in my office every minute of the broadcast. She's talking to the Board. She's asking questions about the budget allocation for your faction.

MVP: I'm aware of Ms. Frost. We spoke in the parking lot the night she arrived.

THE MIZ: You spoke to her? About what?

MVP: I welcomed her to NXT. Offered her a beverage. Assured her the Hurt Syndicate operates within the bounds of its contractual obligations. She wrote down everything I said and walked away without answering me.

THE MIZ: She's diggin' into things she shouldn't be diggin' into. I made a call. Got somebody comin' down here to shake her loose.

MVP raises an eyebrow.

MVP: A new hire?

THE MIZ: An old friend. From my Hollywood days. He'll be here soon enough. You'll like him.

MVP: I'll reserve judgment until I meet the gentleman. In the meantime, Mike, don't let Ms. Frost slow us down. We have business on this brand. Yvonne's takin' the women's title. Kasen's takin' the world title. Ophelia's sending Eddie Guerrero's daughter to a hospital. Stay out of the way and you'll have your results.

THE MIZ: Stay out of your way? I'm the Commissioner.

MVP: You're the Commissioner because we tolerate you holdin' the office. We can revisit that anytime.

The Miz blinks. He laughs nervously. He recovers his composure quickly.

THE MIZ: Right. Of course. Carry on. I'll handle Frost.

He turns and walks out of the room. The door clicks shut.

PAC looks at MVP.

PAC: He's becoming a liability.

MVP: He's still useful. The day he stops bein' useful, we'll have another conversation.

Yvonne Jonas slowly stands up from her chair. She turns and faces the rest of the room. She walks to the corkboard. She takes a fresh red marker from a small dish on a side table. She reaches up and draws a fourth small red X on the photograph of Turaya Rosas. The fourth X is over the throat.

She caps the marker. She returns it to the dish. She walks back to her chair and sits down. She resumes staring at the corkboard.

MVP smiles slowly.

MVP: That's what I'm talking about.

CUT.

THE FORMER CHAMPION

The camera fades into Carmelo Hayes' private locker room. The walls are painted a deep navy blue. A long wooden bench sits in front of his locker. Hayes is seated on the bench. His ribs are taped. A roll of black athletic tape is on the bench beside him.

He has the NXT Championship belt sitting on the bench beside him. He is staring at it. He runs his right hand across the front plate slowly, as if memorizing the surface.

A knock on the door. Hayes does not look up.

MELO: It's open.

Eve Torres steps into the room. She is wearing a simple grey blouse and slacks. She has her producer headset pushed up over her hair. She closes the door behind her.

EVE: I figured you'd want some space. I'll be quick.

MELO: Sit down, Eve.

Eve walks across the room and sits on the bench. She glances at the title belt between them. She does not touch it.

MELO: He left it for me. Declan. Had one of the production guys bring it down this morning. Said I should get to spend one more day with it before he takes it on the road.

EVE: That's kind of him.

MELO: It's kind. Also feels like a knife in the gut. I held this thing through everything Miz threw at me. I held it through MVP. Held it through Pete Dunne. Then I walked into the premiere and I got beat clean by a man I respect.

EVE: He didn't beat a soft version of you.

Hayes looks up at her.

MELO: Excuse me?

EVE: That's what I came down here to tell you. Listen. Declan O'Malley didn't beat a tired Carmelo Hayes. He didn't beat a half-hearted one. He beat the best version. I watched

that match three times in my office. You were on. Reflexes were sharp, strikes were sharp, high flying was crisp. You hit Nothing But Net and the man caught you in midair and powerbombed you through the canvas. That's not a loss because you were tired. That's a loss because Declan elevated to a place almost nobody in this business ever reaches.

Hayes is quiet for a long moment.

MELO: Doesn't make it hurt less.

EVE: It's not supposed to. It's supposed to hurt accurately. The pain's information, Carmelo. It's telling you exactly how much you cared about that title. Don't cheapen it by writing yourself a story about being tired or under attack from the Hurt Syndicate. Tell yourself the truth. Declan was better than you that night. Now what are you gonna do about it?

Hayes nods slowly. He looks back at the title belt.

MELO: What I always do. Win.

EVE: That's a slogan, not a plan.

MELO: Then here's the plan. Tonight, I go through Bron. Then I climb until Miz can't keep that rematch off the table any longer.

EVE: That's closer. Let me give you one more thing before I go.

MELO: Go ahead.

EVE: Miz is panicking. Frost is taking him apart in real time. He made a call from the parking lot during the bracket reveal. I was close enough to hear. He used the phrase "old contacts" twice.

Hayes looks up sharply.

MELO: Hollywood?

EVE: Sounded like it.

MELO: That's a bad list. Miz has been around long enough to know people who know people.

EVE: I don't know who he called. I don't know when they show up. I'm telling you so you keep your eyes open. He can't replace you cleanly through booking, so he's gonna try to do it by force.

MELO: I appreciate the warning.

Eve stands up from the bench. She straightens her blouse.

EVE: One more. Bron's been working with a rougher gym. Running drills with PAC twice a week. Watch the elbows. He's got new combinations.

MELO: Got it.

EVE: Good luck out there.

She turns to leave. Hayes calls out.

MELO: Eve.

She stops at the door.

MELO: Thanks. I owe you one.

EVE: You don't owe me anything. I'm rooting for you because I want to. That's all the reason I need.

She leaves. Hayes stares at the closed door for a moment. He picks up the title belt slowly. He runs his hand across the front plate one more time. He stands up. He carries it to a small table by the wall. He places it carefully on the table. He pats the front plate twice.

MELO: I'll see you again.

He turns and walks toward the door. The camera holds on the championship belt sitting alone on the table.

CUT.

A QUIET INTERVIEW

The camera fades into a small interview area near the production wing. Cathy Kelley stands in front of a freestanding NXT branded backdrop with a microphone in her hand.

CATHY: Thank you for joining us. With me at this time, please welcome the new NXT World Champion, Declan O'Malley.

Declan steps into frame. He has changed out of his ring gear into a simple black t shirt and jeans. The cut over his left eye is closed up under a thin strip of butterfly bandage. He has a small smile on his face but his eyes are alert and focused.

CATHY: Declan, last week you did what nobody believed could be done. You defeated Carmelo Hayes for the NXT World Championship. Tonight, you opened the show as champion for the very first time. How are you processing it?

DECLAN: Slow, Cathy. To be honest, I haven't really sat down with it yet. After the match I was in the gym for three hours. Drove home with the title in the passenger seat. Put it on the kitchen table that night and I just had a beer and looked at it. Been doin' that every day since.

CATHY: What does it mean to you to be champion?

DECLAN: It means I've got a job to do. That's the long and the short of it. Every man who walks through that curtain on Tuesday is comin' for me, and it's me responsibility to give them a fight. No off nights. That's the deal.

CATHY: You committed tonight to giving Carmelo Hayes a rematch when he's fully healthy. That's a generous offer to a man you just dethroned. Why?

DECLAN: Because he earned it, Cathy. Melo's the best champion this brand's seen. He held that title through everythin' Mizanin and the Hurt Syndicate threw at him. A man like that deserves a fair shake. I wouldn't be able to look at meself in the mirror if I denied him that.

CATHY: There's a lot of speculation about who The Miz might select as your first challenger. Some have said it could be a member of the Hurt Syndicate. Others suggest he could bring in someone from outside. Are you concerned?

DECLAN: Cathy, I'm concerned about one thing. Whoever it is, they better be ready to fight. Could be Kasen, could be PAC, could be a fella Mike picked up off the side of the road. Doesn't matter to me. They're all gettin' the same Mad Man.

CATHY: One last question. Your family is in attendance tonight. Your brother Liam was on the broadcast camera earlier waving an Irish flag. What does it mean to share this moment with them?

Declan's expression softens. He looks down at the championship on his shoulder.

DECLAN: It means everything, Cathy. They flew across the ocean for Cyber Sunday. They flew across again for Deadline. And they're sittin' in the front row tonight. Me ma is at home watchin' on the telly. Me da is no longer with us, may he rest. But I felt him standin' beside me when the referee counted three. This title belongs to them as much as it belongs to me. I'm just the fella holdin' it for now.

CATHY: Thank you, champ.

DECLAN: Thank you, Cathy.

Declan steps out of frame. The camera holds on Cathy for a moment.

CATHY: Declan O'Malley, the NXT World Champion. Up next, we go to ringside for our main event of the evening. Carmelo Hayes versus Bron Breakker. Stay with us.

CUT.

TOURNAMENT UPDATE

The titantron flashes a polished graphic announcing AT THE SOUND OF THE BELL: NXT BREAKOUT TOURNAMENT, ROUND ONE STANDINGS. A polished broadcast voiceover narrates as the brackets reappear on screen, this time with the completed matches highlighted in green and the remaining matches highlighted in red.

WOMEN'S BRACKET ROUND ONE:

Anya Dalal def. Erica Yan

Sherilyn Guerrero vs Ophelia Payne (Next Week)

Skyre vs Daisy Winchester (Next Week)

Olivia Ryder def. Blair Davenport

Nadia Hamidi def. Mandy Leon

Cláudia Pereirá vs Salina de la Renta (Next Week)

Valentina Feroz vs Autumn Storms (Next Week)

Kiana James vs Aalyah Mysterio (Next Week)

MEN'S BRACKET ROUND ONE:

Patrick Mahomes vs Cameron Grimes

Joe Gacy def. Andre Chase

Kai Rodriguez vs Trick Williams

Riley Osborne vs Lennox Ryder

Duke Hudson vs David Finlay

Noam Dar vs JTG

Bandido vs Frankie Kazarian

Rey Horus vs TJ Perkins

The graphic holds for a beat on the four advanced names. Anya Dalal. Olivia Ryder. Nadia Hamidi. Joe Gacy. The graphic fades out.

CUT.

CARMELO HAYES vs BRON BREAKKER

(Main Event, Singles Match)

The referee raises his arm to call for the bell.

Breakker does not wait. HE CHARGES ACROSS THE RING AND TACKLES HAYES INTO THE FAR CORNER!

The bell rings as the contact is made. Breakker buries his shoulder repeatedly into Hayes' midsection. ONE! TWO! THREE! FOUR! FIVE! The referee initiates the count. Breakker pulls back at five with a wild grin on his face.

Breakker grabs Hayes by the wrist and Irish whips him across the ring. Hayes hits the opposite turnbuckle hard. He stumbles forward. Breakker is right behind him. RUNNING SHOULDER TACKLE! BREAKKER FLATTENS HAYES IN THE CENTER OF THE RING!

Hayes rolls toward the ropes, gasping. Breakker stalks him. He grabs Hayes by the back of the neck and drags him to a vertical base. He locks Hayes in a front facelock. He lifts. SUPLEX! HAYES IS DROPPED HEAVILY ONTO HIS UPPER BACK!

Breakker keeps the lock. He floats over and lifts again. SECOND SUPLEX! HAYES BOUNCES OFF THE CANVAS!

The crowd boos heavily. Breakker holds the lock. He lifts a third time. THIRD SUPLEX! HAYES IS PUNISHED FOR A THIRD CONSECUTIVE TIME!

Breakker rolls over into the cover. The referee drops into position.

ONE!

TWO!

Hayes throws his shoulder up just before the three count. The Miami crowd erupts in support. Breakker shakes his head. He gets to his feet and pulls Hayes up with him. He hooks Hayes in a vertical suplex position again. Hayes blocks the lift. He drives three sharp knees to Breakker's ribs.

Breakker absorbs the strikes. He hoists Hayes anyway. GORILLA PRESS! BREAKKER RAISES HAYES OVER HIS HEAD WITH ONE FLUID PRESS!

Breakker walks across the ring with Hayes pressed overhead. He pauses near the ropes. He turns to face the announce table. He walks to the opposite side. The Miami crowd is screaming.

Hayes shifts his weight. He drives his elbow downward. The strike catches Breakker behind the right ear. Breakker stumbles. The press collapses. Hayes lands on his feet behind Breakker. He grabs Breakker by the back of the head. JAWBREAKER! HAYES SNAPS BREAKKER'S CHIN ACROSS HIS OWN SHOULDER!

Breakker stumbles backward. Hayes hits the ropes. SPRINGBOARD CALF KICK! HAYES CATCHES BREAKKER FLUSH ACROSS THE TEMPLE!

Breakker drops to one knee. Hayes runs to the opposite ropes. He builds maximum velocity. He leaps. SLINGSHOT FOREARM SMASH! HAYES CATCHES BREAKKER ACROSS THE FACE!

Breakker collapses onto his back. Hayes hooks the leg.

ONE!

TWO!

Breakker kicks out forcefully and sends Hayes skidding across the canvas. Hayes pops up to his feet. He measures Breakker. He charges across the ring and connects with a baseball slide directly to Breakker's jaw as he tries to stand.

Breakker rolls under the bottom rope to the exterior floor. He clutches his face. Hayes does not give him time to recover. Hayes runs to the ropes. He hits the opposite side.

TOPE CON HILO! HAYES SOMERSAULTS OVER THE TOP ROPE AND CRUSHES BREAKKER ON THE RINGSIDE FLOOR!

The Miami fans leap to their feet. They pound the steel barricades in a deafening percussion.

Hayes pushes himself up first. He grabs Breakker by the singlet straps and rolls him under the bottom rope. He climbs to the apron. He pulls himself up to the top rope in one smooth motion. He balances on the top.

Breakker explodes off the canvas. HE CHARGES ACROSS THE RING! HE LEAPS!

SPEAR! BREAKKER CATCHES HAYES IN MIDAIR FROM THE TOP TURNBUCKLE! BOTH MEN CRASH TO THE CANVAS!

The arena erupts. Half cheers, half horror. Breakker rolls off Hayes immediately. He pushes himself up to his hands and knees. He shakes the cobwebs from his head. He drags Hayes to the center of the ring by the ankles. He stands tall over the former champion.

Breakker raises his right arm. He flexes. He yells at the Miami crowd.

BREAKKER: I AM THE FUTURE!

He drops to a kneeling position next to Hayes. He hooks the leg.

ONE!

TWO!

HAYES KICKS OUT AT TWO POINT NINE!

The crowd's roar is absolutely deafening. Breakker's eyes widen. He stares at the referee. He gestures angrily, but the referee holds up two fingers firmly.

Breakker grabs Hayes by the back of the neck. He drags him to a vertical base. He hooks Hayes around the waist. SECOND SPEAR ATTEMPT!

Hayes sees it coming. He plants his feet and drops his hips low. As Breakker leaves his feet, Hayes drives a knee straight into the top of Breakker's head. The strike stops Breakker's momentum cold. Breakker collapses on his face.

Hayes stumbles backward against the ropes. He uses them to pull himself upright. His ribs are visibly throbbing. He grabs his side and grits his teeth. He looks at Breakker, who is rising slowly.

Hayes hits the ropes. SPRINGBOARD CUTTER ATTEMPT!

BREAKKER CATCHES HIM IN MIDAIR! HE TRANSITIONS INTO A POWERSLAM POSITION! RUNNING POWERSLAM ACROSS THE RING! HAYES IS CRUSHED INTO THE CANVAS!

Breakker hooks the leg.

ONE!

TWO!

HAYES KICKS OUT AGAIN!

Breakker grabs his own hair with both hands. He looks toward the crowd in disbelief. He stalks Hayes around the ring. He waits for the former champion to find his feet.

Hayes pulls himself up using the ropes. His back is to Breakker. Breakker hits the opposite ropes to build velocity. He charges. HE LEAPS FOR A THIRD SPEAR!

Hayes spins out of the corner at the last microsecond. Breakker's spear connects with the corner turnbuckle pads. Breakker's right shoulder absorbs the full impact. He stumbles backward, clutching the joint.

Hayes pounces. He grabs Breakker around the waist from behind. RELEASE GERMAN SUPLEX! BREAKKER FLIES ACROSS THE RING AND LANDS ON HIS NECK!

The Miami crowd is on its feet. The entire front row is pounding the steel barricades. The hard camera is shaking from the percussion.

Hayes drags himself to his feet. He measures Breakker. He runs to the corner. He climbs the turnbuckles. He balances on the top rope. He raises his right hand.

Breakker pushes himself up to a vertical base. He sees Hayes on the top rope. He charges across the ring. He hits the corner. HE CLIMBS UP TO THE SECOND ROPE!

Both men are now on the top turnbuckle. Breakker hooks Hayes for a superplex. Hayes blocks the lift. He delivers four sharp elbows to Breakker's temple. Breakker's grip loosens. Hayes shoves Breakker off the top rope.

Breakker crashes flat on his back in the ring.

Hayes balances on the top. The crowd is screaming.

NOTHING BUT NET! HAYES LEAPS FROM THE TOP ROPE WITH HIS SIGNATURE LEG DROP! HE HITS BREAKKER FLUSH ACROSS THE THROAT!

Hayes hooks the leg.

ONE!

TWO!

BREAKKER KICKS OUT! THE FORCE OF THE KICKOUT THROWS HAYES OFF HIM!

Hayes cannot believe it. He sits up and stares at the referee. The referee firmly holds up two fingers. Hayes looks at his own hands. He looks at the title belt graphic on the titantron. He looks back at Breakker.

Breakker is pushing himself up. He is bleeding from a small cut above his right eye. He is not done.

Hayes rises. He measures Breakker. He hits the ropes for momentum. SPRINGBOARD MOONSAULT ATTEMPT! BREAKKER MOVES! HAYES CRASHES BACK FIRST INTO THE CANVAS!

Breakker explodes off the mat. He grabs Hayes from behind. He hooks both arms. SECOND ROPE LIFT! HE CLIMBS WITH HAYES ON HIS SHOULDERS!

THE STEINER SCREWDRIVER ATTEMPT! BREAKKER GOES FOR HIS NUCLEAR FINISHER OFF THE SECOND ROPE!

Hayes fights the lift. He drives an elbow backward into Breakker's temple. Breakker's grip slips. Hayes lands on his feet on the apron. He grabs Breakker by the head. SPRINGBOARD STUNNER OFF THE TOP ROPE! BREAKKER'S JAW IS DRIVEN INTO HAYES' SHOULDER!

Breakker collapses to the canvas. Hayes lands on his feet. He sees his opening. He hits the ropes one more time.

SPRINGBOARD CUTTER! HAYES SPIKES BREAKKER WITH HIS PATENTED FINISHER!

The impact is total. Hayes hooks the leg deep. He shouts at the referee.

MELO: COUNT IT!

ONE!

TWO!

THREE!

The bell rings. Carmelo Hayes' theme music returns to the speakers. The Miami crowd erupts. The referee raises Hayes' hand high.

Hayes rolls off Breakker. He drops to a kneeling position in the center of the ring. He puts both hands on the canvas and lets his head hang for a moment, breathing heavily. His ribs are heaving. His face is twisted with the effort.

He slowly raises his head. He looks at the entrance ramp.

Declan O'Malley is standing at the top of the ramp. He has the NXT Championship slung over his right shoulder. He is leaning casually against a ring crew equipment case. He has been watching the entire match.

Hayes and Declan lock eyes from across the arena. The crowd holds its breath.

Declan unstraps the title from his shoulder. He raises it high above his head with both hands. The title catches the bright spotlights of the entrance stage.

Hayes nods slowly. He understands the gesture. He pushes himself up to his feet. He pats his own chest twice. He points at Declan. The two men hold the moment for a long beat.

Declan lowers the title. He fastens it back over his shoulder. He gives Hayes a single salute with two fingers off the brim of an imaginary cap. He turns. He disappears through the curtain.

The crowd cheers loudly. Hayes raises his right arm. He limps to the corner. He pulls himself up onto the second rope and acknowledges the Miami fans.

The arena lights suddenly cut to total black.

The crowd noise drops into a confused murmur.

A heavy, distorted bass note echoes through the speakers. A single red spotlight illuminates the entrance ramp. Six figures stand at the top of the ramp in a rigid line.

The Hurt Syndicate.

MVP at the center, in his black suit. Keith Lee on the far left. Kasen Aiken to MVP's right. Nigel Bryant beside Aiken. PAC on the far right, eyes wild. And in the dead center of the formation, between MVP and Keith Lee, stands Yvonne Jonas.

She is in her wrestling gear. Her arms are crossed. Her face is utterly expressionless.

The crowd boos heavily.

The Hurt Syndicate begin walking down the ramp in a slow, coordinated march. Hayes drops down from the corner ropes. He turns to face them. He raises his fists. He is exhausted from the Breakker match. He is breathing in jagged gasps. His ribs are visibly inflamed.

The Syndicate stops at ringside. They surround the ring. MVP stands at the apron on the entrance side. Keith Lee positions himself at the announce table. Kasen Aiken takes the corner where Breakker is still recovering. Nigel Bryant takes the opposite corner. PAC is at the apron facing the announce table. Yvonne Jonas walks all the way around to the far side and stops at the apron directly behind Hayes.

Hayes spins in a slow circle, watching all six of them.

MVP: Carmelo, congratulations on the victory. Inspirational performance. The kinda grit and determination that wins championships. Oh, wait. You don't have the championship anymore. My mistake.

The crowd boos. MVP smiles. He gestures toward Yvonne.

MVP: Yvonne and I were havin' a conversation backstage. Watching footage of your match with Bron. She wanted to come down here. Test something.

Hayes stares at MVP.

MELO: Send her.

MVP: That's not the offer, Carmelo. The offer is more elegant than that. You see, Yvonne's preparing for Turaya Rosas. Studying her. Collectin' data. She wants to send a message to the women's champion, and what better way to do that than handing the recently dethroned men's champion to the back of an ambulance?

Hayes does not lower his hands. He continues turning slowly to keep all six members in his sight.

MELO: I said send her.

The crowd is in a confused frenzy. They want to see what Yvonne does. They are also terrified of the numbers game.

The arena lights flicker once. Twice. Three times.

The lights cut to total black again.

When the lights return to normal levels, the ring is empty.

The Hurt Syndicate is gone. Yvonne Jonas is gone. Hayes is alone in the center of the ring, fists still raised, turning in a slow circle in confusion.

The titantron flashes a single image. A photograph of Carmelo Hayes from earlier tonight, his hood pulled up, his ribs taped. The photograph is torn cleanly down the middle. A red X is drawn across his face in heavy marker.

The image stays on the titantron for five seconds. It cuts to black.

Hayes stares at the titantron. He slowly lowers his fists. His expression hardens into something cold and focused.

He grabs a microphone from the corner of the ring.

MELO: A torn photograph. A red X. Cute. Real cute, MVP. You want to play games with smoke and lights, that's fine. But that tells me everything I need to know.

He paces the ring once.

MELO: You think losing the title broke me. You think I'm the soft underbelly of this brand now. The wounded one. The easy target.

He stops and stares directly into the hard camera.

MELO: You didn't break me when you jumped me four-on-one at Cyber Sunday. You didn't break me when you stacked the deck for Kasen at Deadline. A torn photograph isn't gonna do it either. I'm not the wounded animal. I'm the one that's gonna hunt you back.

The Miami crowd erupts. Hayes drops the microphone.

The titantron flickers back on. The image of his torn photograph reappears. The red X across his face is now joined by a second red X across his throat. The image holds for three seconds. It cuts to black.

Hayes stares at the titantron. The defiant expression on his face does not waver.

The arena lights begin to fade. Carmelo Hayes' theme music plays softly over the arena speakers. The fans in the front row pound the steel barricades in support of the former champion as he stands alone in the center of the ring.

The NXT logo flashes across the titantron.

CUT TO BLACK.