

February 1st, 2025

Cormac Nelson had to admit, the Las Vegas residence of Josh Kaine was definitely impressive. The building was a former small warehouse comprising two floors, the top level serving as the spacious living quarters with the ground level housing a three car garage and a small home gym with a full wrestling ring setup. He was met at the main garage door by none other than Josh himself.

“Hey man! Glad you could make it!” Kaine grinned, shaking Cormac’s hand before leading him inside. He watched as the younger man took in the space with that grin permanently in place. “Dunno if it’s over or underwhelmin’ for someone like you, but my Ma never did fuck around when it came to workin’ out. She got this place when she started the Killer Queen like a million years ago, but she’s lettin’ me use it since I got signed with SHOOT. You want a water or Gatorade or somethin’? Jesse’s been big on makin’ that fruit infusion water too--Jada took her to that Whole Foods store and she saw it there but ain’t no sense in paying like twenty bucks for a damn bottle of water with a cucumber slice in it--aw hell I’m babblin’....”

Josh laughed to himself, closing the door and led Cormac past his vehicles to the ring setup. He jumped up to sit on the apron and heaved a lung-clearing sigh. “Jane couldn’t make it this go-round, huh?”

“No big deal, I’ll keep her in the loop. Prior engagements and all that. I’ll admit, it’s a much nicer place than my one-bedroom in the middle of nowhere, Paradise.” He sighed, a much more world-weary sigh than his 20 years would make you expect. “Just water would be fine, thanks.”

He pulled himself up on the apron, not quite tall enough to just step up like his dad, but strong enough where it didn’t really matter. He wiped his feet on the fabric before stepping through the ropes.

“We both know how this match is gonna go down at Rev, right? I mean, if your face on Monday is anything to go by.”

“Yeah it wasn’t just him, he just went first and then last. He’s real full of himself.” Josh snorted, staying seated and turning to watch the younger man. “But he’s countin’ on you endin’ up like me and he’s *real* full of himself...I can use that. Used to bang a chick like Breedlove back when I first started wrestlin’, ended up gettin’ my clock cleaned by her too...and she hits harder.”

He did bend over to the steps and the cooler that resided there. Josh pulled out a water bottle and tossed it to Cormac, who snatched it out of the air with a practiced ease. “Well shit dude, I’m gonna sound like a spoiled sumbitch when I say this but you want me to ask Jada if she’s got somethin’ bigger and closer to the city? She can’t wrestle no more so her new hobby is makin’ money—she ain’t never gonna lose them stripper roots.”

“Nah, it's fine. Keeps me humble. And I can always go visit my sister if I wanna be reminded what luxury looks like.” He took a swig from the bottle, letting it swish around his mouth and little before swallowing. “But yeah, I know Breedlove's type. We both know this match isn't a friendly competition. This is 100% an attempt to send a message. All symbolic and shit. He's gonna hit me with everything he's allowed to, and probably a bunch he's not, so everybody knows what happens when you go against him. It's just what tyrants *do*.” He put the bottle down in the corner, just under the turnbuckle, before turning around to lean into it. His head leaned back, looking to the ceiling, his black mohawk falling in a line behind his head. “I ain't gonna pretend like I'm not worried a little about how far he's gonna go, but I also fought my dad in a deathmatch, so how much worse could it be, really?”

“I've seen some of your dad's matches—ain't no doubt you got a steel spine, 'specially after a deathmatch against him.”

Josh grabbed the ropes, pulling himself to standing and wiping his boots on the apron before entering the ring. “You don't mind, I'm gonna stick close by you and Ms. Laura this show. She wouldn't have no issue beatin' Burkhalter on her own but we're all targets now. Ain't givin' Breedlove or his folks a chance to get close to y'all again if I can help it.”

He took a few moments, stretching and rolling his shoulders. He wanted to see how he and Cormac worked in the ring. The younger star was taller and heavier than him, though neither were absolute giant beasts like their fathers. “I don't like bullies, but I ain't got no problem fightin' dirty neither. One thing Jada drilled into our heads durin' trainin' was *never* underestimate the lengths someone'll go to fuck ya over. You been in a deathmatch with your own dad, so you get that better'n most, I'd wager.”

Cormac chuckled, cracking his neck. “Anybody who thinks he'd go easy on me has obviously never met CJ Nelson.” He stretched his arms forward, interlacing his fingers. The crack of his knuckles echoed. “He earned his reputation in this business. I guess it's high time I earn my own.” He rolled his shoulders a little, bouncing back and forth from one foot to the other. “So we doin' this? It's been a minute since I had a good tussle. I could stand to work off some of this anxiety.”

“Hell yeah we're doin' this. Ain't had a chance to tussle with you yet, so lemme see whatcha got and I'll show ya what I can do besides gettin' my ass kicked.”

Josh grinned as they started to circle one another before he held up a hand, inviting the younger man to lock up and begin this dance.

Cormac smiled as they moved into a collar-and-elbow, and it didn't take long for the young wolf to show his strength. Josh knew it was coming and he was still surprised when Cormac pushed him into the corner as easily as moving furniture. Before he knew what hit him, Nelson had thrown him with an overhead belly-to-belly that rocked the ring.

Cormac turned back around with a smirk. "I'm guessing that wasn't the demonstration?"

Josh's initial response was only to laugh from his place on the mat...mostly at himself. He'd been in the business for a while now and despite doing his best not to underestimate people, there was something to be said for how *easily* and *powerfully* Cormac threw him.

"Man, you sure you're not a fuckin' terminator or some shit under your skin?" He smirked right back, rubbing at his back as he stood up. The younger man was a powerhouse and they *needed* that. Josh was not the giant beast his biological father had been in the ring, but he was tenacious and *fast*. He got back to his feet, bouncing back and forth before Cormac nodded to continue.

It wouldn't do to get into a test of strength again with Cormac. Josh took off like a shot, zipping past the taller competitor to rebound off the ropes. He was able to duck under Nelson's short arm clothesline attempt, using the ropes again for momentum to deliver an elbow strike to Cormac's midsection only to follow it up with a standing dropkick. Both men hit the mat hard, but Josh was up first to scale the ropes and jump for a near-devastating elbow drop. He rolled off to the side quickly, pulling himself back to his feet to give Cormac space to get back up.

One perk of being trained almost solely by a woman who made a name for herself taking on giants? Josh was a damn accurate striker and he had the benefit of being agile and fast. He was just going to have to stay that way, because getting caught by someone as strong as Cormac meant a lot of pain. "Only gettin' warmed up, Mac. Let's keep goin'!"

Cormac rubbed a thumb on his sternum with a smirk. "That almost hurt." He stepped forward, and the two circled again. Cormac went for a lock-up, but Josh wisely ducked it, grabbing him in a rear waistlock. The bigger man grabbed Josh's arm, ducking under it, but Josh moved with him, trying to keep Cormac off-balance. Josh went for an Irish whip, but Cormac reversed it, sending him into the corner. Cormac immediately tried to follow up with a spear, but Josh didn't even hit the turnbuckle, slinging himself up. Cormac, already too invested, hit the ring post with a clang, and Josh swung himself around into an O'Connor roll, pulling Cormac down into a pin. But Cormac wasn't about to let that be the end of it, rolling through it and getting back to his feet. He dove at the seated Kaine with a sliding lariat, but Josh ducked it, kipping back up to his feet just in time to see Cormac sliding to the outside.

The son of CJ Nelson looked up at him in the ring, rubbing his right shoulder. "Nice. You're one fast motherfucker, you know that?"

Josh came to rest his weight on the top rope, grinning down at the taller man.

"That's from trainin' with Ma. She was a damn drill sergeant with them speed drills. I ain't got a bunch of extra inches or muscle like you--don't get me wrong, I don't slack none in the gym, but most folks underestimate me. I ain't keen to change that just yet...but man, you hit like a damn freight train and take a hit like a brick wall." He'd put a good amount of power into that dropkick

and Cormac wasn't showing any real damage. That would work to his advantage taking on the Emperor this week. "Who taught you? Your pop?"

He nodded, tilting his head to the side a little. "I got lucky. I got to train under a whole host of folks. Dad, Jolene, Vaughn, Marisol, Ryan... got a little bit of everything." He was trying to hide his surprise at just how fast Josh was. Cormac wasn't slow (especially for a guy his size) but it was like he couldn't touch him. Every time he thought he had moved fast enough, Josh's reaction time was that much quicker. "Even got some pointers from Lou and Jane once or twice."

"Hell yeah, you're a jack of all trades then, man. That'll only work in your favor long term, my craziest trainin' came from workin' with Azzy Goeren back when him and Ma were a thing...then workin' with Ma's wife Lilah. Lilah ain't a wrestler, but she did that fight ring shit in Russia with Ma and a whole bunch of others--skinny little lady, but she's got them sharp edges and goddamn strippers can get fuckin' vicious in the ring."

Josh leaned back, stretching out his arms and shoulders. "Lou and Jane even helped me out some, but don't really think it was how most folks would expect."

Being a legacy star was something Cormac understood, even more so the kind of legacy star whose mentors made him *work* for that skill and success. Jada might have done a bunch of the business side of things for Josh when he first debuted, but he grew up after a while and took those responsibilities back from his birth mother. "You wanna get back up here and go again? Got a bit before food's gonna be ready and you gotta stay for lunch, Jess always makes enough for an army and we can't never finish all of it."

He slid into the ring, slowly getting back to his feet. "Sounds good. Let's see if all that time with Vaughn and Jolene helped me learn how to catch you speedy types."

Josh smirked.

"Sounds good to me," he reached out, smacking at Cormac's shoulder. "Tag, you're it, dude!"

February 9th, 2025

The weekend was here and Josh Kaine, for one, was glad of it. He'd been in the ring the majority of the week, sparring with his new team members and building those relationships...and getting the World Champion to work with them as well. Laura Seton was slowly getting comfortable with the team her best friend's son had helped assemble for her and luckily for her and Nathan Shaw...Josh had asked to take all the kids for the weekend.

Sleepovers with Josh and Jesse were a favorite time for the Seton twins and Charlie Shaw.

Their pizza had been ordered, their Superbowl party was in full swing. Nathan and Laura got to have a kid-free pre-birthday celebration and Josh got to spend more time with his three favorite kids...and as much as he loved the twins, Charlie especially was growing on him with that amusingly obnoxious nature of his. The boy reminded him a lot of his best friend as a child--PJ had been ridiculously smart but his only real friend had been Josh. PJ had been the same brand of obnoxious, until he'd gotten the shit knocked out of him during recess in fourth grade. Josh hadn't been PJ's biggest fan, but he didn't like bullies even and put a stop to it.

They'd been inseparable from that moment until PJ and his family moved away in middle school.

Josh gave the young boy a smile as he approached, "You all good, Charlie? You ain't said much since we picked you up."

"Yeah kinda." Came the kid's murmured response.

"Kinda?" One inquisitive eyebrow went up. "Just kinda?"

"Laura's birthday is soon."

"It is?"

Charlie nodded, "I heard Dad talking about it because he said it was two days before Valentine's Day and he wanted to make it extra special and stuff."

"Makes sense, your dad loves her...that's what a lot of folks do for their partners on Valentine's Day." Josh shrugged, he didn't care much for the holiday either way but learning that Laura's birthday was soon? He'd already made the decision to do something nice for her. She'd been under a lot of pressure and knowing he could hopefully give her a smile? That was motivation enough.

"Can you help me?"

"With what, kiddo?"

"I wanna get her something nice... 'cause she--she's been..."

It didn't take a rocket scientist to figure out what Charlie was going to say. "A good mom? Yeah, Charlie, I can help ya out with that. You and me will head out tomorrow after breakfast, find her something nice to say happy birthday. Sound good?"

The boy smiled and nodded before his attention returned to the game.