

February 13th, 2021
The Brando Residence
Dawson, Yukon, Canada
(Off-Camera)

As much as he had begun to like and enjoy Lyza's presence, Devin enjoyed his time away. A two-show break after a crushing, close loss meant that he could reconfigure. He hadn't been home in some time; it was to the point that seeing the large house brought a smile to his face. He didn't mind trudging up the hill to the house. He always loved the snow crunching beneath his boots. Someone should have taken a picture of his passive joy. It would last longer.

Devin considered himself a simple man with simple pleasures. He enjoyed woodworking, fishing, and reading. Oftentimes, people would call him boring, but he wasn't always that way. The wild life of a globetrotting bachelor had been put to rest. Now, he felt his maturity age faster than his body, and he picked up hobbies that reflected a grizzled old man, rather than what he was. If you asked him, his body felt older when he walked the wrong way.

He had bought the lands years ago when he won his second world championship. Finances began to roll in, and he knew that it was best to cultivate that into something realistic. Living off a teacher's salary taught him better than that. When Rebecca came into his life, he knew he made the right choice. When they had Amy, he wanted to improve what was already good.

In a way, the house was his family too.

Devin dragged some firewood close to the house. He had made it to the front gate. Take some of it and use it for the firepit. There was a simplistic pleasure to use woodfire to grill meat.

Why did he think that peace was ever an option?

The explosion knocked Devin off his feet. He wasn't anywhere close to it, but it was enough to rock his mind against his skull. He crashed into the log, cracking his back, and he laid on the ground. The sounds of debris falling, the remnants of the destruction, was the only thing keeping him company.

One step at a time, Devin brought himself to a standing position. He saw the dancing gradients of all-consuming fire in front of him. This was a message, he knew and spoke the language of deranged criminals. In a flash, Devin saw his home go up in flames, damaged beyond repair. The

sirens in the background hardly reached him, perhaps because of the deafening shock he took just a moment ago.

The only thing Devin could do was watch it burn.

Stolzen was coming for everything--this was the first step.

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Footage from Breakdown, February 4, 2021 replays in Lyza's head repeatedly, capturing her and Lucas Knight flying out of the ring, as their partners continue to duel.

Adam Sharper from the commentary team says, "both up and over. Lyza sacrificing herself to open an opportunity!"

She underestimated the impact of exiting the ring in the way that she did.

There's only so much the human eye can capture and process during a wrestling match. Bodies in different areas, various camera angles and controls from the production crew. The commentary team adds their input to the action in front of them, yet they didn't have a bird's eye view of all the action.

"Ooof!" Lyza hears from the fans seated in the first few rows. Things become hazy for a few seconds until she hears the fans' roars echoing throughout the venue. She opens her eyes, squinting at the bright lights as she attempts to regain composure.

The fans' reaction wasn't in favor of what she did.

Tipper Witherbee's expression said it all.

"I'm sorry," she mouths to Devin, making her way back to the ring after all was said and done.

Fly, hummingbird, fly
Ascend into the night sky
The moon awaits you

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Splash. The warm ocean water gently brushes against Lyza who is seated at the shore. Away from the noise and light pollution that fills New York City, she has a clear view of the night sky filled with stars surrounding the crescent moon. While her closest neighbor back home was a hop and skip away, she was secluded in her private beachfront property in Playa Chiquita, Costa Rica.

The property was a multi-generational gift from her father's side of the family. Despite offers from developers wishing to meet the demands of the booming tourism industry, the Reyes' were adamant about keeping it within the family. They had seen more than just monetary value in the piece of land that anyone would be happy to call it their new home.

Once a thriving community for the Bribri people (before colonialism,) her ancestors held celebrations and gatherings at the beach. The tradition remained for generations, even with the integration of two different cultures. Where the Spanish language and Christianity were the new norm for the natives, some traditions remained. For the millennial mestiza, however, this was her sanctuary.

She slowly rises to her feet, positioning her hands in front of her in a prayer pose. She closes her eyes, bathing in the moonlight before lowering her hands. The nocturnal animals in the jungle make their presence known with the chorus of chirps and clicking sounds becoming louder. She turns around, walking towards her bungalow. As she walks further, a thin neon green light forms around the crown of her head, moving downward to her limbs. She pauses for a few seconds to look at her arms, shaking her head with an amused expression on her face.

"Oh, that? It's just the effects of a rare species of algae," she says, pretending to be surrounded by curious onlookers.

Upon reaching her home, she brushes off the excess sand from her arms and legs before stepping inside.

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February 6, 2021
San Gabriel Hospital
Downtown Playa Chiquita, Costa Rica
(Off-Camera)

For over a week, Lyza was in communication with family friends from Costa Rica. Long-time friend Julio, who took care of Lyza's beachfront property, was taken to the hospital due to heart complications. With a couple weeks off, she didn't think twice about catching a flight to support him and his family in any way.

As soon as visiting hours started, she made her way to the wing he was staying at, arriving before his family members. An orderly had just exited his room with a cart of items to throw out, suggesting he had his breakfast. With the door already open, she gently knocks on it to make her presence known.

"Buen dia," Julio says, greeting Lyza as she enters the room. She takes a seat across from him, adjusting the straps of her facemask.

"Así que a usted también le gusta ver American Ninja Warrior?" Lyza inquires, glancing at the television screen before the show cuts to a commercial break.

"Es mejor que las otras pendejadas que ponen. No me quiero enfermar más, hija," he says, chuckling.

Lyza smiles, understanding where he was coming from. For some people, comedy was comforting, and for others, game shows did the trick. "No te culpo por escogerlo," she says, reassuring he had made an excellent choice.

Despite what he may have been feeling, she was happy to see Julio in good spirits. He was close in age to her parents, seeing him like an uncle.

"Agradezco que llegastes a visitarme. Pasas bien ocupada allá en Gringolandia," he quips.

"Busy" was the best way to put it with respect to how her life was going. She didn't have a retort for him right away. Anticipating his family to walk in any minute, she gets up and walks

over to the side table next to his bed. “El gusto es mío. Sabes que puedes contar conmigo en cualquier cosa. Te voy a dejar para que no haya problema cuando venga su esposa.”

Julio nods and extends his hand to shake Lyza’s hand. She instead balls her right hand into a fist, waiting for him to do the same. They do a fist bump, which causes a shock similar to when someone touches a doorknob after grabbing a fleece sweater. He raises his eyebrows at the slight spark, and leans back in his bed.

“Cuidate, hija. Esos malvados siguen dando vueltas por el pueblo,” Julio warns. She never wanted him to know about anyone that worked for Stolzen. He had been briefed years ago, when she started to travel to Costa Rica on her own. To this day, there was no sign of any direct attacks or inconveniences on him and his family. Lyza wanted to keep it that way.

“Yo se, pero no tengo miedo,” she says, letting him know she was not afraid as she headed for the door. She puts on her brave face to leave on a good note. “Take it easy, tio,” she says, before exiting the room.

While walking down the hall, she looks from all sides, for anything or anyone presenting something that wasn’t part of the everyday operations of the hospital. The visit, as brief as it may have been, was important to Lyza. She reaches in her bag to slip on a pair of aviator shades in hopes of hiding the tears she could feel running down.

She left feeling immense pain by the uncertainty of what the future could hold for Julio, yet it’s not what he would want. His family needs all the love and support, which she was happy to provide.

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February 24, 2021
Minnehaha Regional Park
Minneapolis, Minnesota
(On-Camera)

After a couple of weeks of intense winter weather, it was refreshing to see the snow melting in many places. As the temperatures were rising, many have decided to spend the day outdoors, including the Minnesotans who sought the hiking trails and activities at Minnehaha Park.

Lyza Reyes was one of those enthused individuals, even though she recently spoiled herself earlier in the month and had the tan to prove it. Joining her for the stroll is her tag partner, Devin Brando, who has a neutral disposition on the choice in outing. He knew Lyza could do worse, like say an arcade that was hosting children's parties, therefore he wasn't complaining. They pass a small group of adults doing yoga under a large canopy. As they get closer to the camera, a better view of their ensembles are displayed. Lyza dons pastel tie dye blue and pink joggers, with a white hoodie, while Devin is seen in dark, casual clothing.

The duo make a brief stop, as Lyza is given the greenlight to start the promo for team Doom & ~~Groot~~...Groove.

"Hello again, dearly beloved. I, Lyza Reyes and my comrade Devin Brando are present, rested and ready to get back in on the action. When we found out who our opponents were going to be, I had some...thoughts. I'll get to that in a bit."

She winks playfully before proceeding.

"First, I would like to give props to Suited and Booted. They were the better team on Breakdown a few weeks ago, and to have first-hand experience in competing against one of SCW's best was detrimental for Devin and I. We know what it's going to take to succeed when another opportunity comes our way in the future. I understand that we will need to prove ourselves worthy, and there are other teams looming in the waters just waiting for their moment to strike. While some may find this daunting, I actually like it!"

She steps out of the frame, pacing a bit before re-addressing the viewers.

"At the beginning of a calendar year, many will take it as their opportunity to start things off on a clean slate and put the previous year to rest. The idea of a new beginning is intriguing when you don't think you can do any worse - and then you meet The Golden Boys."

She waves her hands defensively to elaborate.

"No--no. Hear me out. We have heard about Adam Alloco and the sad news regarding his son, Allistaire. I could not imagine the amount of pain a parent goes through when their children are suffering and there's nothing they can do. All the best for the younger Alloco."

There is a brief pause as she collects her thoughts.

“Now this doesn’t excuse Adam for being a slimeball who thinks he can say whatever he wants without consequences; it doesn’t work like that. It’s good to know that SCW is ‘woke,’ and dare I say tolerant with you still being on the roster AND payroll. When you throw the jokes out the window, and take this seriously for just a minute, you’d realize that you’re not the only one that suffers. You have a tag partner to take into consideration. Bison is an individual, and despite his size and strength, he is not to be objectified to nothing but ‘the muscle.’ And as an individual, he has a choice. He can choose to remain complacent and wait for Adam’s command, or he can march to the beat of his own drum. Doesn’t that sound nice?

Adam’s comments to Light in the Darkness were unnecessary and set him back decades. Inadvertently, he did them a solid as the loving duo left Breakdown with a win that night. If only they had returned the gesture, by giving the Golden Boys enlightenment and maybe they’d get a firm grip on things! But no, leave it to my partner in crime and I to finish the job? Alright, I see you, ladies. Really though, who uses their son’s tragedy as an excuse for not making it to the final four of the Tag League? Adam is no better than Ted Cruz blaming his child for going to Cancun at the worst time! Again, think about the consequences. Take my words and the hands you’ll be catching from Devin and I as a personal ‘thank you.’

Thank you for recognizing talent.

Thank you for setting yourself up for another loss because you don’t know when to keep your trap shut.

Thank you kindly.”

She bows gracefully.

“From marketer to marketer, you can count on Doom & Groove to further add to SCW’s value. We’re more than an impulsive decision made by the powers that be. There is a high ROI to be expected when all is said and done, boys.

You’re welcome.”

Devin, ever dour, didn’t seem to enjoy the space they were in. He looked mostly out of place, wearing dark colors that strike against the beautiful green hues. The sun was out and he wore the darkest shades he could. He seems only to humor the local because of his tag team partner. As he watches out to nature, purposely ignoring any people about, he takes in a sharp, annoyed breath.

“I despise losing.”

A curt statement.

“When you’re getting started out in a company, losses are the venom that will derail your entire career. For me, it’s frustrating to watch an opportunity slip through your fingers. Imagine defeating the Tag Team Champions. Imagine having a win of some sort over the World Champion,” Devin raises his hand and clenches it, indicative of seizing the chance. “Alas, we left with a loss, and we only have the respect of our peers. Unfortunately, that doesn’t amount to anything.”

“Now that we’re behind, Lyza and I have to play around with the Golden Boys,” Devin’s mouth twinges with dissatisfaction towards the pompous team. Or rather, a pompous man and his ignorant muscle. I can forgive Bison for wanting to follow a man with charisma. I, too, have done the same in the past. Surround yourself with men who could get the job done, or at the very least be worthy meatshields. It’s a common tactic. I believe that I fit the bill of the muscle in my own team.”

“Normally, I would see this as just another flavor of team to beat, but then Twitter became an issue as it always does. That platform gives people the chance to make checks that their asses can’t cash, and that’s what happened. Lyza may have taken less offense to the comment made towards us. As you may note by how I react to things, I was more severe in my approach. I didn’t have to say anything. No, I decided to wait until this match was laid out before me.”

Devin turns on the bench he was sitting on, deciding to gaze at the camera. A hint of his glare appears over the top of his shades. “The consequences of implying that you were the reason why we’re here is your utter destruction. And I’ll do it in a way that’ll make you quiver.”

“Understandingly, you use Bison as the man to even the odds, but what happens when I take him away? You’re competent, sure, I can’t argue against that, but how strong is your mind? The damage that I’ll do to you starts there. Because I will carve fear into your mind as I dissect your associate. Your hired gun will watch as every ounce of his strength is ripped from him by my hand. It will be methodical, and you will have to understand that it’s all your fault. And even if your ego manages to protect you from the brunt of guilt, it won’t protect you from the fact that you’ll be alone. This match will become a handicap match, and I will take my time educating you to never *think* about speaking to us in the manner that you do everybody else.”

Devin removes his shades, tucking them inside of his shirt collar. “We are not props. We’re not agents either, as Knots would hope us to be. No, we’re a team that’s going to rectify our hardest loss. And to do that, we have to put on a show.”

A smirk sparks on Devin’s features. “Okay. You can say this is our thanks for what you’ve done for us, if we’re playing your game.”

“You brought us here, Adam, and you will learn why you maybe shouldn’t have.”

Lyza takes a few steps forward, whispering “*Ultra*” before the scene fades to black.