

SHOW OPEN

[*~♪ "DEFY" by Of Mice & Men ~♪*](#)

Houston, Texas welcomes DEFIANCE! The Health & Physical Education Arena in Texas Southern University is HYPED AF for the first DEFIANCE show on the road in YEARS. Pyro explodes from the top of the rampway. The fans are going ballistic. The entrance way is different. Instead of a normal curtain there's the giant FIST logo to walk out from and the DEFlatron above.

Signs and excitement, as always, is everywhere!

TEXAS WELCOMS DEFEANCE!

PCP IS 4 ME

EYEPATCHES ARE FOR PIRATES

VAE VICTIS IS LATIN FOR MURDER FAMILY

I DON'T NEED SAVING, DEACON

**DEFIANCE SHOULD JUST CHANGE THEIR NAME TO DOMINO'S, CUZ EVERYONE HERE DELIVERS
CONOR DIDN'T INHALE**

I THOUGHT HELEN WAS A LIE, I WILL NEVER DOUBT AGAIN

SOMEONE TELL CONOR ABOUT SHROOMS

DAN RYAN IS QUITE LARGE

I KNEW CORVO ALPHA'S SILHOUETTE LOOKED FAMILIAR

ASK DEB ABOUT KEYES'S DIME DADDY ENERGY

CORVO ALPHA IS ALSO KAISER SÖZE

TOO MANY COPS AT THE POST-DEFCON BARS

DEACON DONE THE DEED

I DON'T REMEMBER THE MASKED VIOLATORS AND NEITHER DO YOU

JESSICA FEAR = A CONVOLUTED TRAINWRECK AND I LOVE ME SOME CRAZY

I KNEW YOU WOULD BE BACK, HENRY!

MAKE FUN OF TEXAS, NED, I DARE YOU

WILL MALAK GARLAND MELT IN TEXAS HEAT?

I'M HERE FOR DEXtv!

CORVO ALPHA IS MY FATHER

I SAW THE SIGNS... CONOR FUSE FOR ACE OF DEFIANCE

*I CAME HERE FOR WRESTLING, NOT TEXAS JOKES
I CAME HERE FOR TEXAS JOKES, NOT WRESTLING
DEFIANCE FEARS VAE VICTIS
I FEAR VAE VICTIS TOO
HEY U THER DOCTER REFROM U BETER NOT BADMOUTH TEXAS OR IM GON WHOOP A CAN O ASS CUZ
YOU DON' TESS WIT MEXAS!!!!
TEXAS IS PROBLEMATIC, LET'S TALK ABOUT IT.
IF THE STATE OF TEXAS IS INSIDE DAN RYAN'S HOUSE, THEN ARE WE ALL CURRENTLY
TRESPASSING?
LINDSAY TROY IS FLORIDA WOMAN
ON WEDNESDAYS WE BRING PINK SIGNS
ALL YOU CAN EAT DEX-MEX
GET NED REFORM A MASK SO I CAN STOP LOOKING AT HIS STUPID FACE
DEACON IS BIGGER IN TEXAS
EVEN TEXAS ISN'T BIG ENOUGH FOR MALAK GARLANDS HEART
PLAGUE DOCTORS CREEP ME OUT, NGL
LETS GET DEFIANT
SUCK IT NOLA*

The feed goes to an excited announce team, "Downtown" Darren Keebler and Lance Warner.

DDK:

I don't believe it! DEFIANCE is on the road! And here we our, the first stop... Houston, we have DEFIANCE!

Lance:

We also have snowflakes!

DDK:

This is true.

Lance:

And Plague Doctors!

DDK:

A Plague Doctor.

Lance:

And FAKE Doctors like Ned Reform.

DDK:

He better not have heard you say this.

Lance:

Anyway, we have a huge two nights planned as we kick off the new "season" of DEFIANCE.

DDK:

Yes. Lots of news to come your way. Next week, the ACE of DEFIANCE UNCUT show will air live from Garland, Texas!

Lance:

Garland you say?

DDK:

Yes.

Lance:

Maybe this travel thing isn't such a good idea. Where's Brian?

DDK:

Who?

Lance:

Let's move on with the start of our program. I believe we're going to be welcomed by the NEW FIST of DEFIANCE!

HOLY ROLLER

The lights go out and the Gregorian Chant hits. The crowd does as expected - they stand up and cheer the new FIST of DEFIANCE.

Magdalena steps through the curtain beside 'her man', the Deacon, all robed up and carrying the FIST! Though, Deacon's a good bit shorter than normal. Age does cause people to shrink but nearly a foot shorter and a hundred pounds lighter???

DDK:

Oh come ON! This is just wrong! That's just a replica belt!

Lance:

Only available at defiancewrestling.com

While the announcers talk, the crowd instantly turns from cheers to boos, but the counterfeit couple who's really in love, REALLY in love, pay it no mind - the Hallmark Journey is going to share their love with everyone. They walk down the rampway doing their best impersonations, which is to say, a poor impersonation unless Deacon and Magdalena acted like school kids in love, holding hands and swinging their arms all the way down the ramp.

DDK:

How is this even remotely okay?

Lance:

My sources say that Dr. Ned Reform was incensed that Deacon won the FIST at DEFCON.

DDK:

History proves that this is something Reform would do, but on Uncut, he gets his opportunity, along with 6 other competitors. Whoever climbs the ladder to claim the Ace will get an opportunity at the real FIST.

All is magical for the tag team until they reach the stairs & climb into the ring. It's at that moment the Gregorian chant is overtaken by "Revolution" by Skillet. They turn back toward the entranceway, their eyes bulging and overexaggerated sneering adorning their otherwise perfect version of the Deacon & Magdalena.

Magdalena steps through the curtain. She makes her way to the front of the rampway, microphone in one hand & Chris Shepherd's staff in the other.

Magdalena:

You should know, Mr. & Mrs. Hall, Texas is the state where everything's bigger, and Jonathon, you don't quite cut it as far as the NEW ... FIST... of DEFIANCE.

Magdalena pauses to let the crowd pop, taking the moment to start her own stroll down toward the ring, letting the staff swing freely, almost playfully in her hand, slyly reminiscent of the Halls.

Magdalena:

But don't you worry, we're gonna size things up in just a minute.

The Halls cock their fists, ready to fight at the first sight of the Mute Freak FIST of DEFIANCE. Magdalena, now at the ringside area, turns the staff around in her hand, studying it as if she's trying to find just the right switch, her face contorting and lips pursing. Suddenly, she smiles with an "Aha" expression and gestures with the staff at the Hallmark Journey.

Magdalena:

There it is!

She slides her hand. A short explosion of fireworks exits the end of the staff... if you can count sprinklers as a firework. The Hallmark Journey reacts, or overreacts, to the explosion like they're Eddie Kingston in an exploding ring deathmatch.

Magdalena:

Hmm... that's... not right

Confounded again, Magdalena studies the staff once again. Vickie Hall climbs on the bottom rope, springing on it as she points at Magdalena.

Vickie Hall:

I've waited a long time for this! You're not stealing my m-

Magdalena:

I know what I did.

Violently, Magdalena swings the staff into the ringpost like Biggio going for the fences. The KLANG is accompanied by an explosion of fireworks from each ringpost, sending Vicki Hall springing backwards into her husband, both careening around the ring until they hit the mat with another robed individual splitting the difference. Also with another FIST belt. The real FIST belt. The crowd pops as the Deacon drops the FIST and grabs Jonathon by the head, sticking Hall's stunned head between Deacon's thighs before hitting the "cross position" and snatching Jonathon, hefting him up on his shoulders.

DDK:

ALTAR CALL!

The Deacon holds Jonathon-Christopher Hall on his shoulders, but it's a bit longer than he should've. Vicki Hall leaps on the top rope and then springs off it, landing on her husband, facing him, and clutching to him for dear life. The Deacon takes a step forward to regain his balance, adjusts his grip, and now has both Halls caught. While Vicki screams "NO!" the Deacon takes a step forward and launches both Halls to the mat, each bouncing out of the ring to the crowd's pop. Magdalena climbs up the steps and enters the ring.

Magdalena:

Sorry about that, Big Guy. Told you that we should've asked Chris to leave New Orleans with us *[Magdalena shrugs]*. There's another question I keep getting asked? If Deacon winning the FIST led to us being kicked out of New Orleans? *[Magdalena shakes her head "no"]* It only takes one look at this crowd to know that we have fans outside of the Crescent City, and they've been waiting a LONG time to show just how DEFIANT they can be.

One by one in the arena lights go dark. Section by section of the arena the lights start to fade out. They keep going dark until there is nothing left. The lights start flickering on one more time and beep until a wrecking ball with the Dex Joy logo smashes through a wall!

♪ "Fight Back" by Konata Small ♪

DDK:

WHOA!!! DEACON BARELY HAS TIME TO ADDRESS THE CROWD ... CLEARS THE RING OF THE HALLS... AND NOW- -

He stops in mid-sentence when Deacon and Magdalena both see the tank in the disguise of a man standing at the top of the ramp!

Lance:

DEX JOY IS OUT HERE?!?!

The Biggest Boy appears on the stage in his new black and gold wrestling gear for a match he will have later tonight.

He walks to the ring with a purpose.

DDK:

Listen to the ovation for Dex Joy! He's worked hard to get to where he is now, and he just recently scored the biggest victory of his DEFIANCE Wrestling career by pinning Oscar Burns 1-2-3 at DEFCON!

Lance:

Dex's Wrecking Crew has members all over the country! What does he want with Deacon though?

Dex Joy puts his ear up and collects more cheers from the crowd then smiles back to the crowd. Magdalena and Deacon both watch when The Biggest Boy slips through the ropes. He steps into the squared circle and can't help but milk the reaction of a larger crowd than normal. The Foreman of the Wrecking Crew looks up to Deacon ... and then a look at the FIST of DEFIANCE title belt.

Dex Joy:

Guys, it's been a while since DEFIANCE Wrestling has been able to hit the open road so let me see if I get this right ...

Dex starts to clear his throat and gets ready to put some bass in his voice!

Dex Joy:

HOUSTON, TEXAS!!! WELCOME ... TO DEX TV!!!

The screaming and shouting of a packed house is music to the ears of Dexy Baby.

Dex Joy:

All right we're off to a good start so far! Wrecking Crew, stay with me, all right?

He turns to Deacon.

Dex Joy:

Magdalena, nice to see you again. Big man ... the holy roller, it's a pleasure to share the ring with you again! You went through hell – can I say hell? Am I going to hell? I'm not being funny, these are serious questions.

Magdalena:

That deals more with Jesus, the only thing in my life as big as Texas.

The crowd pops and Dex waves it down.

Dex Joy:

You went through ... H-E-Double-hockey sticks to win the FIST of DEFIANCE in the battle of the Mute Freaks, Deac! You won big at DEFCON so that's why I think before I tell you why I'm out here ... you get to enjoy that. Houston, give this man a round of applause for everything he has been through to win that title. He deserves it.

The Houston DEFIANCE Wrestling Faithful cheer for Deacon as loud as they can. Dex tucks the microphone under one of his arms and claps with the crowd. The Deacon only warily watches Dex Joy.

DDK:

Classy move by Dex Joy!

Lance:

He's right. Deacon ended the reign of terror that Crimson Stalker had with that title. Now it's in the hands of a fighting champion who will represent it to the best of his ability!

Dex Joy stops clapping.

Dex Joy:

Now I won't waste another second of your time, Deacon. You deserve that title. Next week, there's a special UNCUT show dedicated to the ACE of DEFIANCE. DEFIANCE management had approached me with the chance to be in that match too but I told them I had my eye on a different match!

The DEFIANCE Wrestling Faithful's volume increases. They are picking up on what Dex is hinting at.

Dex Joy:

You've done a lot in DEFIANCE Wrestling, Deacon, but I have, too! I've beaten Gage Blackwood! I just beat Oscar Burns and shut his ass up at DEFCON! And when I was the Southern Heritage Champion ... The last time we fought on UNCUT *[pointing to the title]* ... I beat you.

A loud sound of realization erupts from the fans. That gets Deacon and Magdalena's attention.

Dex Joy:

That's three former or *current* FIST champions that Dexy Baby has beaten. I've gotten good at beating champions ... but now, pally of the faith, I want to *be* the champion! That UNCUT show feels like a big deal next week, but I think Big Deac and the Biggest Boy can make it even bigger! You and me for the FIST, pally! UNCUT ACE of DEFIANCE special next week! What do you say?!

Stone-faced, the Deacon stares at Dex for a moment, letting it linger, allowing the crowd's cheers to grow. The Mute Freak's face turns from Dex to the FIST held in his fist, holding it up a bit higher, then back to Dex for another few moments. After a shrug of his shoulders, Deacon curtly juts his chin out toward Magdalena and goes to the ropes, stepping over the top to stop on the apron.

Magdalena:

I think that's a yes.

Massive crowd pop follows.

Magdalena:

He'll see you at our extra special UNCUT!

Even larger crowd pop as Deacon jerks the FIST into the air, letting the belt dangle from his massive hands as a smiling Dex Joy stares at the FIST from the ring.

Lance:

WHAT A MAJOR MATCH WE'RE GOING TO SEE!!! DEACON DEFENDING THE FIST AGAINST DEX JOY!!!

DDK:

I didn't think our ACE of DEFIANCE Special was going to get any bigger considering the star-studded line-up we have for that match, but Deacon versus Dex Joy! And coming up, Dex Joy is going to be in action against the brawler Thomas Slaine!

Deacon and Magdalena take leave while Dex Joy remains in the ring, getting ready for action in mere moments!

DEX JOY vs. THOMAS SLAINE

Dex Joy is front and center in the ring and he is ready for a fight in the ring now after his challenger for the FIST was accepted by Deacon moments ago!

DDK:

Dex Joy is in action momentarily against Thomas Slaine. We're only one week away from the UNCUT Ace of DEFIANCE special and if Dex has his way, we could be looking at a brand new champion.

Lance:

What an amazing match that will be! They mixed it up over the Southern Heritage title and that was one of Dex's defining wins of that title reign but now the stakes are much higher and Deacon is now the champion!

DDK:

Dex is already in the ring and now it's time for our first match of the night!

Dex Joy's theme is playing for the crowd now!

Darren Quimbey:

Introducing, from Los Angeles, California and weighing three-hundred fifty pounds... he is THE LEADER OF DEX'S WRECKING CREW ... DEEEEEEXXXXXX JJJJJJOOOOYYYYYY!!!!!!

Dex calls out to the crowd.

Dex Joy:

WHO WRECKS LIKE DEX?

Crowd:

NO ONE!!!

Satisfied with the answer, the Wrecking Crew Foreman is ready to get to work.

Darren Quimbey:

Introducing his opponent from Nachitoches, Louisiana, weighing in at 221 pounds... THOMAS SLAAAAINNNEEE!!!

♪ "I Feel Love (Every Million Miles)" by The Dead Weather ♪

The music hits and Thomas Slaine steps out from the back, ready to fight. The brawler then starts running to the ring and when he gets there, he points an imaginary gun and then at ringside and grins at Dex. He gets into the ring and he is ready for the fight of his life.

DDK:

Nothing to lose and everything to gain! If Thomas Slaine beats Dex Joy tonight then he could realistically put himself in position to challenge Deacon.

Lance:

I'd call it a big if, but in this sport, all you need is just three seconds to make your dreams a reality.

The referee gets in the middle of both men and then starts the match.

DING DING

Thomas Slaine tries to jump Dex Joy at the bell and throws every right and left that he can in an effort to stutter the big man's efforts to get anything going!

DDK:

Probably the best strategy! Catch Dex off guard!

Lance:

Stranger things have happened in wrestling rings!

He tries sending Dex across the ring and then runs and uses a shot gun drop kick that pushes Dex back into the ropes. Thomas Slaine gets up and then he starts laughing at what he's just done ...

DDK:

Thomas Slaine with a shot gun drop kick ... NO!!! DEX WITH A SHOT GUN DROP KICK OF HIS OWN!

Thomas gets an incredible shock of his own when Dex Joy returns off the ropes using an even *bigger* shot gun drop kick from the Biggest Boy!!!

DDK:

What the hell! Oh my God that was amazing!

Dex gets back up and then he feels the crowd in the palm of his hands as they applaud his moves. He gets up ...

RUNNING SHOOTING STAR PRESS!!!

Lance:

Holy s- ... my God! He debuted that running shooting star press on Oscar Burns back at DEFCON! He crushes Thomas Slaine!

DDK:

We talked about this at DEFCON! Dex has shed some weight in this last year and those amazing aerial moves he could do before? It looks like he can do a whole lot more now!

Dex chooses not to try and pin Thomas Slaine. Slaine might have a broken rib because he has a hard time keeping The Biggest Boy from muscling him up. He gets tossed one way. Dex comes out from the corner and then knocks Thomas Slaine halfway across the ring with powerful Dexy's Midnight Runner!

Lance:

DEXY'S MIDNIGHT RUNNER!!!

DDK:

Some weight lost, but he still has a tremendous amount of power and speed!

The pounce-like tackle puts Slaine in the corner. Dex Joy spins his fingers forward in a circle to let the DEFIANCE Wrestling Faithful know what is coming Slaine's way.

DDK:

And this is going to be it if he hits this move ...

JUMP FOR JOY!!!

The cannonball senton to the cornered Slaine crushes him! Slaine is left gasping for breath when Dex yanks him out of the corner by his leg! The Houstonians count with Dex.

One ...

Two ...

Three!!!

DING DING DING

♪ "Fight Back" by Konata Small ♪

Darren Quimbey:

Your winner ... DEEEEEXXX JOOOOOYYYY!!!

Dex Joy has a nice warmup in him. The referee hoists an arm and then Dex climbs the middle rope to bask in the positive reception!

DDK:

What an amazing victory tonight by Joy! He wasn't working by the hour tonight!

Lance:

You hear about immovable objects and irresistible forces in professional wrestling, but Deacon versus Dex Joy is going to be one level above that!

DDK:

I can't wait for that match!

Dex Joy leaves the squared circle and when he walks up, a new match graphic appears for the ACE of DEFIANCE Uncut Special on the big screen!

FIST OF DEFIANCE

Deacon © vs. Dex Joy

Dex points at the screen.

Dex Joy:

Hey! Hey, pallies, that's me!

DDK:

Tonight Dex Joy buzzsaws through Thomas Slaine! This new determined Dex has taken him higher and his battles with Arthur Pleasant and Oscar Burns have only made him better! Will it be enough to wrestle the FIST away from Deacon next week?

COMMERCIAL: DEFIANCE LIVE

WHERE THE FUCK IS EVERYBODY?

♪ “Stranger Fruit” by Zeal and Ardor ♪

Crashing piano chords, hard drum beats and a haunting voice floats through the Health & Physical Education Arena’s speakers, and all eyes shoot to the entrance ramp.

♪ *Stranger fruit*
How it grows and grows
We all saw the shoot
But we tend to the rose ♪

Lindsay Troy and Dan Ryan saunter out from the back to a massive ovation from the Houston fans. The in-laws are dressed to impress: the Ego Buster in a dark blue suit, jacket over a light blue button down, collar opened and dark sunglasses on his face, and the Queen of the Ring in a navy blue pantsuit and pink blouse.

It’s Wednesday, after all. And on Wednesdays we wear pink.

DDK:

Welcome back to DEFtv folks and I’m told that Vae Victis has asked for some ring time before we get to our next match of the evening.

Lance:

They’re coming off a big win over Gage Blackwood and Teresa Ames at DEFCON a few weeks ago, Darren, and weren’t very responsive to our media crew’s questions at the post-event press conference. Maybe they’ve changed their tune a bit since then.

DDK:

Somehow, I doubt that.

Troy and Ryan make their way down to the ring, looking rather smug as they do. They climb between the ropes, Dan holding the cables open for his sister-in-law, and they are both handed microphones by ring attendants. “Stranger Fruit” fades out and the duo look out to the still-cheering crowd.

Lindsay Troy:

Boy, the DEFplex sure is looking different tonight. New coat of paint, maybe?

She grins, waving off the statement.

Lindsay Troy:

Little travel joke; we were told eleventybillion times when we got here today not to say “DEFplex” and I want to see which one of the producers is gonna yell at me after Dan and I are done with what we came out here to do.

With a flourish, the Queen concedes the floor to her brother-in-law.

Dan Ryan:

Alright, I’ve got some things to say. But before I do, real quick, what’s up, Houston?

The crowd roars in approval for the hometown boy. He leans in the direction of his sister-in-law.

Dan Ryan:

See, much better than Tampa.

Troy rolls her eyes and mouths, “Real cute.”

Dan Ryan:

Now that we've gotten that out of the way, I'm gonna get straight down to the point. I have a question to ask, and it's rhetorical, but I'm asking it nevertheless. And my question is simply this...

He pauses and lets the mic fall to his side for a moment, then presses his tongue against the inside of his cheek before bringing the microphone back up to speak.

Dan Ryan:

Where... the FUCK... is everybody? Huh? Where the fuck is everybody?

Behind him, Lindsay Troy shrugs her shoulders as she looks out to the Faithful.

Dan Ryan:

What in the living hell has happened to the DEFIANCE roster? When I left this place, threw some money down and said, "Here you go guys, run with it," we were a roster of a bad bitches and bad motherfuckers, and now you have to fucking beg to get one of you pussies to get in the goddamn ring. Now I like to talk. We all know that. But I'm gonna be as clear as possible without too much fluff right now. I'm calling that entire fucking locker room out. Every last goddamn one of you. You hear me back there? Put down your fuckin' Evian and listen close. I want some fucking opponents, and if I don't get what I want, don't think for one second that I'm just gonna go away. Nah, I'm doing this old school. Starting next week, if some of you bitches don't step up to the plate, I'm comin' backstage and I'm going one by one, from one dressing room to the next, and I'm beating the ever living shit out of whoever is on the inside of the door. I don't care who you are. FIST of DEFIANCE, number one contender, number two contender... all of you. You feel me? I don't know what you people have gotten used to, but I'm about to shake you the fuck up. I'm not mad, I'm fucking DEFIANT.

The crowd roars in approval again as Dan leans on the ropes and stares out at the mass of humanity. He turns around and Lindsay is standing there, a big smile on her face and nodding.

Lindsay Troy:

No random doors will be safe from the rage of Murder Daddy. Just like the locker room hasn't been safe from my anger and ambition for nearly a year. Let's take a walk down memory lane, shall we?

Troy starts running through names and counting them off as she does.

Lindsay Troy:

Ned Reform. Kerry Kuroyama. Arthur Pleasant. Cyrus Bates. Malak Garland. David Noble. Rick Dickulous. Squidboy. Barely Active Team. Crimson Stalker. Deacon. And now Gage Blackwood and Teresa Ames. All have been brought to heel. Rising stars, technical masters, so-called "plaguebeasts" ... oh, and the new FIST too.

A very unimpressed look crosses Troy's face, and she hits the eyeroll on cue as the fans cheer for Deacon.

Lindsay Troy:

Oh don't worry, I plan on bringing Big Deac to heel again, should he manage to make it past whoever wins that little ladder gimmick. My money's on Henry, obv's. Because my mission hasn't changed. I've wanted to right a whole lotta wrongs and reclaim what I never should have had taken away from me in 2017....the FIST of DEFIANCE. I've done nearly everything I said I was going to do. I retired Cayle Murray. Bronson Box fucked off for the hundreth thousandth time instead of facing me again, so I guess that makes me the new ACE of DEFIANCE by way of forfeit. Gage Blackwood is off bathing his wounds in a loch somewhere. All that's left is to get the big red belt again. And after that?

A pair of malevolent smiles from the in-laws grace the audience.

Lindsay Troy:

Vae Victis is coming for everything else.

The Queen of the Ring lets her mic fall to the mat, the feedback from the drop coming through the speakers in unsettling fashion before "Stranger Fruit" kicks in again and DEFTv cuts backstage.

MASKS MAKE FRIENDS

The words “Earlier Tonight” appear briefly on the lower third of our screen as the private rear parking lot of the Health & Physical Education Arena unfolds before us. Serving also as a private entrance as well, several technicians and other support staff are milling about, hither and thither.

Suddenly within their midst a colorful masked man appears. Tall, athletic, and dressed in a matching red and blue wrestling singlet and boots, Masked Violator #1 has his hands full. Stumbling into several passersby, MV1 awkwardly juggles the bags and packages he carries in his arms.

MV1:

Uh, excuse me. Pardon me. Uh, hello?

A passing audio specialist bumps into MV1, knocking a bag out of the masked wrestler's hands and onto the ground. The tech pays it little mind and continues walking, leaving our hero briefly floundering. Barely able to see over and around the packages he clutches, he sticks his right leg out to search for his lost bag. Another laborer approached–

MV1:

Oh! Hello! Excuse me, could you–

The tech briefly acknowledges MV1 but only moves the bag far out of his way, perhaps thinking MV1 was trying not to trip over it. The worker continues on, leaving MV1 still juggling.

MV1:

Ah, yes. Thank you.

Finally finding the bag with his foot, MV1 kicks it. Gently at first. Then a little harder. Until he stumbles upon (and the bag on the ground SMACKS into) what he feels must be the backstage entrance door. Setting the bags and packages down with something of a crash, 1 takes a deep breath and stretches his red mask with a wide, white-toothed smile.

MV1:

Ahhhh... feels good to be *home*.

As if on cue, a DEFsec team member emerges through the back door, momentarily holding it open for a handful of lighting technicians carting equipment into the building. He eyes MV1 with skepticism.

DEFsec Dude:

Hey. Are you supposed to be here?

MV1:

I'm asked that quite often, yes, Hello! Greetings! No, by your standards it's quite likely that I am, in fact, NOT “supposed” to be here.

After dropping dramatic airquotes around “supposed”, Masked Violator #1 thrusts his right hand out, offering a shake. DEFsec dude doesn't sell it.

DEFsec Dude:

If you are, in fact, not supposed to be here... then you need to leave.

MV1:

I actually **knew** you were going to say–

Voice Off Camera:

Hold on! Wait! He's cool! I know him!

Stepping into frame is Leyenda de Ocho. A bag slung over a shoulder and a hand raised to relax the security guard, LDO. DEFsec Dude shrugs with annoyance and returns inside the arena.

LDO:

Good to see you again! Your name... "Juan", you said, right?

MV1:

It's pronounced "ONE", actually. And I'm quite glad to run into you here as well! I feel I have some explaining to do!

LDO raises a hand again, this time to dissuade MV1.

LDO:

Really, you don't-

MV1:

No. I do. You and your crew took me aboard your airship and into your trust...

LDO:

Listen, little secret for you. MOST of the Plague Doctors are masked wrestlers, just like you and me. I was brought in by Henry a few years ago and he's helped me make ends meet while I've been working through my own stuff, and there are a ton of other stories just like mine on that airship. We're happy to help. That being said...I feel like we could have helped MORE if we knew your whole deal!

MV1:

I should have been honest with you all about my identity... my intentions. But I had my reasons. I-

LDO's hand finds MV1's shoulder.

LDO:

It sounds like you were doing everything you had to do to save your friend. That's something I think I can relate to.

Relieved, MV1's smile widens.

MV1:

I truly appreciate that, I- AH! I have gifts! THANK YOU gifts!

1 dives for his bags and packages and quickly pops up with an oversized gift basket.

MV1:

EMOLLIENTS! A vast variety of emollients, salves, lotions, and topicals! For your Captain, of course! All those months in a cocoon, I can't imagine what that did to his pores. Please do me the honor and pass this along to him and offer my gratitude and best wishes in his new reign as Favored Saints Champion!

LDO awkwardly takes the basket from MV1, the basket being nearly half his size.

LDO:

You really shouldn't have-

MV1 darts back to a bag and pulls out a stretch of undyed woven cloth. Somehow, he still finds a way to present it with excitement! Wrapping it around LDO's head and neck.

MV1:

I crocheted this for our friend, Dr. Plague Doctor. I... never had the chance to tie dye it as I intended, but... felt he should have it just the same. Please give it to him and offer my thanks for his kindness and counsel. Oh!! And for you...

MV1 shuffles through boxes and bags. Taking longer than expected. He slowly rises with the dropped and repeatedly kicked and smashed bag that had fallen on the ground earlier.

MV1:

I, uh... made you a pie! Coconut Cream! As a, uh... token! Of our friendship!

MV1 sticks his hand in the bag and when he pulls it out, cream frosting is caked on his index finger. He seems to offer it to LDO, who politely chuckles.

LDO:

Oh, heh, No thank you. I'm uh...on a strict no-sugar diet for the rest of the month, trying to gain definition.

LDO pats his non-washboard belly. MV1 licks the frosting clean himself and drops the bag back on the ground behind him with a clunk.

MV1:

Of course. My apologies.

LDO:

So like...are you ALLOWED to be here?

MV1:

I am asked this often, actually. No, I came in hopes of seeing you OR Captain Keyes to offer my thanks. And... also in hopes that I might see my friend, MV2-

LDO:

You mean Corvo.

MV1:

...yes. Try to talk some sense into him.

LDO adjusts the basket of lotion in his hands as his tone changes.

LDO:

"Friend", huh. Well. I don't know how much of your "friend" is still there, 1, or how willingly that animal is going to listen to you.

MV1 nods, knowingly.

MV1:

I know. But... I have to try. I owe him that.

LDO nods his head behind a 32oz bottle of relaxing salve, face half buried under a scarf under the late spring Texas sun.

LDO:

I get it. Good luck, 1. And, uh... thanks for all this.

As a sound specialist came out the arena door, LDO took that opportunity to pop in. MV1 turns his attention back to the few remaining bags, muttering to himself.

MV1:

...wait, who did I crochet THIS for? Hmm.

Again, DEFsec dude pokes his head out the door.

DEFsec Dude:

Alright, buddy... unless LDO gave you a ticket, it's time to move along. You can't hang out back here.

With a curt nod, MV1 snatches up his remaining bags and smiles once more to the DEFsec member.

MV1:

I was hoping I might petition DEFIANCE representatives to reinstate my contract from five years ag-

DEFsec Dude:

Time to go.

MV1:

I see. Of course. Very well. Maybe next time. Thank you.

MV1 nods again before shuffling away, past a nearby dumpster. Just as he passes, the dumpster's side door groans open and none other than Rezin spills backwards onto his back out of it.

Rezin:

HHUUAAGGHH!! Man, I gotta look into some cheap motel rooms, cause crashin' in these things is gonna be MURDER on my back!

From his vantage point on the asphalt, he notices MV1 walking by.

Rezin:

Oh heyyyyyy...

THE D vs. TA COLE

Cut to the Commentation Station, where DDK and Lance Warner shuffle a few papers before looking into the camera.

DDK:

That took place earlier today, ladies and gentlemen, but up next live we've got... well, it's time to shift gears a bit.

Lance:

That's right. Up next, The D of the Pop Culture Phenoms is set to square off against TA Cole, whose mentor Ned Reform is fresh off a big DEFCON victory over Jessica Fear.

DDK:

As we've seen, Jessica Fear's strange and tragic tale is far from over... but I can't say I'm looking forward to what Ned has to say about it...

♪ "Fur Elise" by Cole Rolland ♪

The arena lights turn purple as the rock version of the classic Beethoven jam begins. TA Cole, looking intense in a purple and white singlet, walks through the curtain. He pauses, turning his head left to right slowly and taking in the arena of college students - his face betraying no emotion except an intense snarl. Behind him slinks Ned Reform. The Good Doctor is not dressed to compete, but he's practically prancing around in pure giddiness. The boos don't seem to phase him as he moves in front of TA Cole, spreading his arms for all his "adoring" fans.

Darren Quimby:

The following contest is scheduled for one fall with a twenty minute time limit. Introducing first, from...

Ned Reform:

No, no, no, no, no!

Reform, somehow, as a mic. The music cuts out abruptly as he interrupts Quimby's announcement.

Ned Reform:

That's quite enough, Mr. Quimby. I believe I can take it from here.

BOOO!

Reform turns to the hate-filled crowd, still grinning from ear to ear. He shakes his head and smiles, waiting for a break in the jeers before raising his hand in a way that seems to be asking for calm. It has the opposite effect. Reform goes on anyway.

Ned Reform:

Ladies and gentlemen, as you know... I am not a boastful individual.

DDK:

Come on, man.

Ned Reform: *[shrugging]*

Now, granted... were I a smaller and less secure man, I could regale you all with the epic tale of one hero's struggle against an agent of chaos and insanity at DEFCON. I could describe, in poetic detail, the satisfying sound of Jessica Fear's arm cracking under the weight of the truth. I could painstakingly recreate the look of utter despair in her eyes as she realized that she could no longer hide from the truth. And frankly, I wouldn't be in the wrong for reminding you all that in the end, it was Dr. Ned Reform who was right about everything.

BOOO!

Ned Reform:

Yes... were I a petty man, I could point out how I tried to tell you...

Reform points off into the crowd.

Ned Reform:

And you...

He points in a different direction. Finally, he turns and points directly into the camera that is directly in front of him.

Ned Reform:

And YOU... but you refused to listen. Luckily, I am not that man. And so we move on, children. We put DEFCON, Jessica Fear, my righteous victory and complete vindication behind us, as the work is never done. The brass of DEFIANCE have recognized my meteoric rise to prominence and I have been entered into the ACE of DEFIANCE. Which means, of course, that you are looking at your next FIST of DEFIANCE. But, that is the future. As for tonight, you are all in for a treat, as Mr. Cole here has a match in this ring.

Reform puts a proud hand on TA Cole's shoulder. The All-American Athlete doesn't drop his intense facade despite the praise from his mentor, but he does flex to emphasize the description.

Ned Reform:

And what a night it is! Imagine for a moment, children: my initial wave of utter delight at the news that DEFIANCE was moving away from the rotting, disgusting, vile cesspool that is New Orleans. This was a change that truly uplifted my very soul. Charged the FIBER OF MY BEING! To think that I was going to escape the black hole of intellectual stimulation that is the swamp. And then...

Reform's happy face... falls. He looks utterly distressed.

Ned Reform:

... imagine how quickly that joy was dashed when I discovered... that we were coming... to....

Reform pretends to shudder.

Ned Reform:

...Texas.

As the crowd erupts in a fresh round of boos, Reform pretends to be washing something off him. Cole looks at The Good Doctor, shaking his head in extreme sympathy. Reform seems to compose himself before raising the mic back to his mouth.

Ned Reform:

Yes. I, Dr. Ned Reform, a man of culture... a man of intellect... a sage beyond compare... have come HERE... deep in the beating heart of ignorance. If the continent of North America had a rectum, I'd be standing dead center inside it right now.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!

Ned Reform:

Oh, does this displease you? Perhaps you'd like to pick your caveman dragging knuckles off the ground and what? "Whip" my ass? Or... shoot me? I'm guessing the majority of you savages are armed. Wave an American flag at me despite the fact it makes no logical sense? OH! Maybe you'd rather slather me in BBQ sauce and call it "cooking!"

Oh man. Reform has gone for the food, and the crowd is approaching riotous levels. A quick camera cut shows a small child giving Ned the double bird. Back to the ramp.

Ned Reform:

Perhaps something involving a ridiculously sized belt buckle? Honestly, this mic time is really a waste of my valuable moments, as I doubt you people are even capable of learning anything, nevermind a...

Cole leans in. Cups a hand to Reform's ear. Says something the mic doesn't pick up. Reform listens... and then his face shifts. Cole has made him realize something. He nods in appreciation before going back to the mic.

Ned Reform:

...ah! Mr. Cole reminds me that we are, in fact, on a college campus. A place of higher learning! Perhaps all hope is not lost. I suppose I should give you your due! Maybe it actually is a pleasure to be here at...

Ned struggles for a moment. Where exactly are they again? He scans the arena... before locating the name of the school on a banner in the rafters. He makes a "yikes" face before looking into the camera, slightly embarrassed.

Ned Reform:

...oh! Oh dear. Texas... Southern... University. I want to be clear here, children: I cannot, in good conscience, judge you all for choosing a safety school, but I must admit...

BOOO! A beer flies by Reform, just barely missing his head, but he doesn't sell it.

Ned Reform:

I must admit that this establishment is a bit below my pay grade. You understand, I'm sure. I'm accustomed to Yale... I'm not sure I remember how to operate in the minor leagues. Instead of a lecture that will surely soar directly over your Texas-sized heads, I invite you all instead to watch a premier athlete in action. Levi Cole is as American as apple pie... and you people get off on that sort of thing, right? He's a big strapping young man who managed to escape the intellectual wasteland that is the middle of this country and find an outlet to better himself. Perhaps he can serve as an inspiration to you all as he trounces a man who... named himself after gentilella. A level of humor that I'm sure is a hit in Texas.

After shaking his head one more time, Reform again puts a hand on TA Cole's shoulder.

Ned Reform:

Make me proud, Levi. Show these simpletons what we are made of.

♪ "Live for the Night" by Krewella ♪

A spotlight floods the entrance area as the Texas Faithful rise to their feet in cheers. After a few moments, a voice rings out over the pa system.

The D:

Now Ned, I'ma let you finish, but that's not nearly the greatest introduction of all time.

Emerging into the spotlight is the D, dressed in a fine three piece suit. He holds a microphone high upside down and scans the cheering crowd.

The D:

At DEFCon, you saw a family reunited...

At this point, Elise, Flex and Klein all emerge onto the stage. Shadowing them are Miss Y and Sweet Sanders, once again. They're all dressed ready to pose for the trading card picture. Elise is wearing a pink sparkly cowboy hat and waves at the crowd.

The D:

Tonight?! One fourth of the greatest quartet with at least 32 stars from Timmy T-Stars, the D-iest D that ever D'd, accompanied by THE EXCELLENCE OF FLEXICUTION, THE LEADER OF THE KLEINTELLE, and YOUR,

LEADING LADY... He's the silhouette TA's gonna see when he looks up at the lights. One, big ol' D.

The D turns to his PCP brethren.

The D:

Don't worry, I got this.

The D waves the rest of PCP backstage. Elise acts like it's everyone but her and begins towards the ring but is pulled back by Klein and Flex. However, as The D turns to continue his entrance, he shoulder bumps into Ned Reform, who just walks past him and toward the announce booth. The D is taken aback but just makes his way to the ring.

DDK:

We are set for what promises to be a heck of a contest, Lance. Both of these men are superb athletes.

Lance:

TA Cole, the man Reinhardt Hoffman had to vanquish to become the first ever BRAZEN champion. And the D, a man who's had more tag team success than singles, but holds wins over Cayle Murray and Oscar Burns to name a few!

Ned Reform: *[rustling as the head set comes on]*

Yes, but the man is a walking genetilla joke.

Lance:

Hello, Ned.

Ned Reform:

That's Doctor Ned Reform. And we're about to see a good old fashioned slaughter, Generic Announce People.

DDK:

Ah, Noted

Ned Reform:

Not Noted. DOCTOR. NED. REFORM. Imbeciles.

Carla Ferrari signals for the bell.

DING DING

At the sound of the match starting, TA Cole immediately goes into an amateur wrestler stance - hunched forward, arms at the ready. The D, for his part, finds this really amusing and begins to point and chuckle at Cole's scowling face. The D imitates his wrestling stance in an exaggerated fashion, causing the Texas Faithful to let out a ripple of laughter at ol' Cole's expense.

DDK:

Levi Cole does not find The D's antics amusing... he darts in for the lock-up...

...but The D slips out of his way at the very last second, causing him to awkwardly grapple with air before righting himself. Cole, with his face growing redder, turns to face his smaller opponent and again lunges in for the lock-up... but The D again moves out of the way.

Lance:

Oh man... your man in there seems to be losing his cool, Mr. Reform.

Ned Reform:

Doctor.

In the ring, TA Cole is stomping his foot into the mat in frustration as his face has turned cherry red. At the Commentation Station, Ned Reform stands from his chair, places two fingers to his mouth, and lets out a piercing whistle. Cole turns to look up the ramp at his mentor.

Ned Reform:

COLE! Remember what we discussed! The breathing technique!

Reform begins to model what he's talking about, running his hands down his chest and back up again while taking large breaths in and out. In the ring, TA Cole begins to do the same.

DDK:

Reform clearly trying to get TA Cole to calm down and focus on the match... OH WAIT!

Ned Reform:

BEHIND YOU LEVI!

While Cole is working on his breathing and looking toward his mentor... The D from behind with the most dangerous move in wrestling...

Lance:

ROLL UP!

ONE!

TWO!

THREE!!

DING DING DING

DDK:

WOW!! The D puts TA Cole away in seconds!!

Lance:

Cole kept his eyes on Ned Reform for a little too long and paid for it!

Ned Reform is standing at the announce desk, still wearing his headset, with his mouth open and arms spread in disbelief. In the ring, Cole pops up to his feet, eyes bulging out of his head. He looks at Carla, but she reaffirms that it was a three count. Cole puts both arms on the back of his head as he continues to stare. He looks to Reform, and they both do a simultaneous "what the hell" motion.

The D, meanwhile, sees the anger rising in TA Cole and knows he chose to wrestle alone tonight. With the numbers disadvantage, he decides to hop over the guardrail and slip out through the Texas crowd to a roaring wave of cheers.

DDK:

Any parting words for what we've just seen, Ned?

Reform looks to Keebler. Removes his head set. With a snarl, drops it on the table. Turns and walks out of frame.

DDK:

Well... The D with an easy victory here on DEFtv... and we'll be right back!

Lance:

I think he wanted us to call him doctor...

COMMERCIAL: UNCUT'S ACE of DEFIANCE

FIST of DEFIANCE
Deacon © vs. Dex Joy

ACE of DEFIANCE
****winner calls their shot and stipulation for a future FIST of DEFIANCE match!***
HENRY KEYES vs. MALAK GARLAND vs. CONOR FUSE vs. TYLER FUSE vs. REZIN vs. ALVARO de VARGAS vs. DR. NED REFORM

SPEECH TO TEXT

The show returns from commercial as Darren Quimbey stands by.

Darren Quimbey:

Faithful of Texas, it is time I introduce you to, the one and only, the great comments king, the fluttering flake of truth, FROM ANYWHERE BUT DIRT HOLE, TEXAS, HE IS THE COMMENTS SECTION LEADER AND SUPREME OVERLORD, HE IS MALAK GARLAND!

♪ "Tap In" by Saweetie ♪

A damn near riot breaks out at the sight of Malak Garland who is literally carried down to the ring by his cronies. Percy holds a juice box at mouth level for Malak to sip from on demand as he's pretty much in a soft body cast. Thurston runs down to the ring and hands Quims some cash for the customized ring announcement.

DDK:

Lance, I've gotten to the point where I have nothing left to say about this despicable human being.

Warner just stays quiet as they watch The Comments Section assemble in the ring. Conor Fuse is there, too. He appears to be rather indifferent as he certainly isn't carrying Malak or helping in any capacity.

DDK:

I do see Malak's fingers are still heavily bandaged. Looks like his crushed fingers haven't recovered from being stomped on by SNS at the Safe Space Match.

Percy grabs a microphone as does Thurston Hunter. It's Thurston's job to hold the mic in front of Malak's generational mouth.

Malak Garland:

Please calm down, everyone while I conduct a safe space check. Safe space check? Safe space check? SSC. SSC. SSC complete. Thank you.

Malak stares a hole right through Percy who looks like he forgot something. Percy leans over to Malak and they exchange some whispers as The Game Boy cradles the Social Media Savant in his arms.

Malak Garland:

I have to activate it!? For crying out loud. Initiate speech to text mode.

The DEFiatron screen lights up like a typewriter.

Malak Garland:

As you can see, I am a bit indisposed at the moment but it's okay. I can still talk.

Everything he says appears in text on the video board.

Malak Garland:

However, out of both circumstance and necessity, it is my understanding that my segments need to be more accessible. So be it Welcome to the speech to text era!

The fans are not impressed with the accessibility stunt.

Malak Garland:

In fact, not only am I FULLY endorsing speech to text mode but I also have been using TTY and let me tell you, WE NEED MORE ACCESS TO MORE SERVICES AROUND HERE! Imagine being without hands or fingers!? How do they text!? I've had a heck of a time sending copious complaints to HR recently and therefore I'm donating half of the gate proceeds DEFIANCE incurs from tonight's event in this shithole town of Texas to better improve speech to text

technology!

Percy Collins:

YEAH!

Malak Garland:

I know all you buffoons would never willingly donate to my cause so I went ahead and arranged it with the Favored Saints.

The fans vocalize their distaste.

Malak Garland:

Anyways, onto business. DEFCON did not go according to plan.

Garland gazes over at Conor Fuse who just stares forward.

Malak Garland:

Not my fault. Not my narrative. Not the pinfall I ate!

Percy Collins:

YEAH!

Conor Fuse rolls his eyes.

Malak Garland:

I was innocently trying to navigate through the match when those cowards, Brocky and Patty cakes viciously assaulted me. I mean, my fingers are FRACTURED! I've had to go to the best nail specialists all over the world and they said I can't text for a few weeks! Unreal! How am I supposed to doom scroll!? I've had to get Thurston to big spoon me and hold my phone by my pillow until I've fallen asleep.

BIG SPOON!

BIG SPOON!

BIG SPOON!

The fans run with it. Conor smirks? It was way too fast to tell.

Malak Garland:

What the hell was that, cOnOr!? I saw that, you piece of trash! GET ME IN CLOSE, GAME BOY!

Fuse immediately readies himself, thinking he's going to be taken out by Malak or a goon but instead, Game Boy brings the Keyboard King up to Conor where he pats him on the shoulder.

Malak Garland:

Listen up, *Fuse*. Next week you and I have been placed in the ACE of DEFIANCE match for a shot at the big prize, the FIST of DEFIANCE. I no longer care about those handful of belts we just fought for, like I said, my narrative has changed. But this ACE of DEFIANCE match, for as much as I am deserving to win... you see, it gives me severe anxiety.

Garland starts to tremble. Conor looks like he's going to puke.

Malak Garland:

So we are both in this match.

Garland pauses and eyes his nemesis from head to toe before speaking again.

Malak Garland:

We are BOTH in this match.

Another pause.

Malak Garland:

And you are a part of *my* team.

Another pause.

Malak Garland:

Hmmmm?

DDK:

He doesn't expect Conor to help him, does he?

Lance:

That's exactly what he expects.

The Ultimate Gamer takes a moment and meets eyes with each goon in The Comments Section. The youngest Fuse crosses his arms and positions himself directly in front of their leader.

Malak Garland:

You are going to make sure **I** will win the match or **you** are going to suffer. I am not only the leader of this group but I am the leader of this... *[head tilt]* locker room?

The Comments Section cheers on Garland. Everyone else boos.

Malak Garland:

And after next week, I'll be well on my way to this new goal.

Malak gives permission for Percy Collins to lift his arm and pat Conor on the shoulder. The Texas crowd gives a !RANK chant in support of the gamer.

Malak Garland:

Oh yeah... I almost forgot.

Garland grins.

Malak Garland:

You're in the main event tonight, too. cOnOr Fuse is wrestling for the Favored Saints Championship.

MagnumG shakes his head.

Malak Garland:

I don't like it. I will not have anyone overshadow me. You better not win. You better lay down. Or you'll get ADDITIONAL consequences.

Garland nods to his team, as if signifying he's done. Everyone other than Conor helps Malak exit the ring as his theme song plays... leaving the gamer standing in the middle of the ring, shaking his head.

DDK:

How can Malak Garland heal in time for next week?

Lance:

I'll assume he's not really hurt to begin with, or at least not *this* hurt. Either way, apparently he's got the man in the middle of the ring to do his work for him...

The Texas Faithful continue to cheer on Conor and boo Malak as The Superstar Snowflake is carried up the rampway, the entire time staring down his "partner" and telling Fuse he better do what Malak Garland says.

CORVO ALPHA vs. REZIN

♪ "Apocalyptic Havoc" by Goatwhore ♪

The H&PE Arena EXPLODES with a raucous pop, moments before "The Escape Artist" Rezin comes twirling through the smoke-filled entry-way like a PUNK ROCK cyclone and stops in a Christ pose at the head of the ramp!

Darren Quimbey:

Ladies and gentlemen, the following contest is scheduled for one fall! Introducing first, hailing from Indianapolis, Indiana and weighing in at two-hundred and five pounds... he is "THE ESCAPE ARTIST" ...
RRREEZZZIINNNNNN!!!

DDK:

The challenge was set last week at UNCUT, and tonight here in our first stop of the MAXIMUM DEFIANCE Tour, "The Escape Artist" boldly faces the seemingly unstoppable force of nature that is Corvo Alpha!

Lance:

On paper, this match might come off as a complete squash for Corvo, but Rezin might be on to something tonight. At DEFCON, we saw Henry Keyes perform the seemingly impossible when he took the Favoured Saints Championship from Alpha.

DDK:

You may be right, Lance. Since the revelation that Corvo Alpha was formerly Masked Violator #2, who's to say what's going on in the mind of the monster?

Rezin is full of energy and firing on all cylinders as he weaves down the ramp and charges up the cheering fans pressed up against the guardrail. He additionally does a lap around the ring, coming to rest at the top of the steel steps where he further fires up the Houston Faithful...

...and then a dark blur streaks down the barricade.

DDK:

LOOK OUT!

Rezin:

BLEGHK!!

From out of nowhere, CORVO ALPHA completely clears Rezin off the steps with a running SPEAR! The Goat Bastard lands with a SPLAT at ringside with the beast on top of him! Corvo paws further at Rezin's exposed head before wrangling him to his feet.

DDK:

Oh my! Corvo Alpha apparently couldn't be bothered to wait until the bell, going right after the Escape Artist like a hungry lion released from its cage!

Corvo's face and chest are unpainted, the menacing scowl on his face, however, is as present as ever.

Lance:

What was Rezin thinking in making this challenge?

Referee Hector Navarro yells ineffectively to Corvo to take the action into the ring. Corvo does eventually toss the sputtering Rezin under the ropes and follows him in, but not out of any sense of compliance. Hector cues for the bell.

DING DING

Rezin staggers to his feet just in time to nearly get DECAPITATED by a running lariat that sends him flipping wildly

across the canvas! Some of the crowd can't help but pop at Corvo's unintentional Texas tribute. Then Corvo drops across his prey's chest with a Body Press, and hooks the legs!

DDK:

Corvo Alpha going for the pin, trying to finish this before it even began!

One!

Two!

Rezin kicks out!

Lance:

That was one of only a handful of pin attempts we have ever seen out of Corvo Alpha right there!

But Corvo presses his advantage, scooping Rezin off the mat, locking his waist, and sending him flying with an overhead belly-to-belly suplex! Rezin rag-dolls across the ring, and thankfully one of his arms drapes itself across the bottom rope to give him some reprieve.

DDK:

The UNBELIEVABLE POWER of Corvo Alpha is on display, throwing Rezin around that ring with ease!

Lance:

Corvo definitely smells blood in the water.

Corvo keeps coming, even as Rezin fruitlessly tries to crawl out of the ring. Navarro stands in Alpha's way, but is effortlessly brushed aside as the human equivalent to a honey badger snags the Goat Bastard by the cuff of his pants and attempts to pull him back into the ring.

DDK:

Corvo Alpha may smell blood in the water, but the inner survival instincts of the Escape Artist are kicking in as Rezin kicks and thrashes his legs in desperation!

A wild and desperate mule kick from the Escape Artist connects with Corvo's snout, knocking him back a few paces. With his window of opportunity finally visible, Rezin uses the ropes to pull himself to his feet, does some quick parkour off the turnbuckle, and goes AIRBORNE with the moonsault...!

...and hits nothing, when Corvo Alpha simply steps to the side.

Lance:

Swing and a miss...

Rezin lands with a SPLAT face-down on the mat. He raises his head to reveal his stunned expression, until a dark and hairy hand encompasses his face and yanks him back to his feet! With ease, Corvo wraps his arms into a full-nelson and THROWS HIM AGAIN...

DDK:

Corvo Alpha with the released DRAGON SUPLEX--NO!! Rezin lands on his FEET!

Lance:

Although not quite intentionally...

Rezin stumbles aimless back into the ropes and the momentum sends him running back at Alpha. Corvo dips down and sends him HIGH (no pun intended) into the air with a back body drop... only for Rezin to land on his feet again!

Lance:

Are these cat-like reflexes on display, or is this blind luck?

DDK:

Column A and Column B?

The Goat Bastard's momentum keeps him running, his chest bouncing off the other set of ropes and sending him backpedaling out of control back into Corvo. The monster that is Corvo Alpha now snarls, hungry and impatient, as he catches Rezin from behind.

DDK:

Corvo Alpha with the GERMAN SUPLEX--NO!! Rezin ONTO HIS FEET AGAIN... and a standing DROPKICK catches Corvo in the temple on the turnaround!

Lance:

And it only leaves Alpha staggered!

With the crowd cheering on his potential rally, Rezin snaps to it and runs to the corner. After a moment to shake off the effects of the dropkick, he begins chase. But a second is all the Escape Artist needs to leap up and perch himself onto the top rope.

DDK:

REZINRANA TAKES CORVO ALPHA TO THE MAT!! Shoulders DOWN!!

ONE--KICKOUT!! Corvo Alpha JUST SAT RIGHT UP!

Lance:

And keeps ahold!

Corvo keeps Rezin's legs over his shoulders, right where he wants them as he bulls his way back onto his feet while keeping the Goat Bastard off of his own. Rezin shakes his head in surprise at this sudden turning of the tables, but before he can react, he's DEADLIFTED off the mat...

DDK:

GOOD GOD, CORVO ALPHA WITH THE BUCKLE BOMB!! Rezin's head BOUNCED off the middle turnbuckle pad!

The crowd gasps in unison at the impact. Alpha wastes little time, dragging Rezin out of the corner of the ring like a dead goat, Alpha again goes for a cover. Navarro leaps and slides into position.

One!

Two!

KICKOUT!

Rezin thrusts a shoulder off the mat with gusto, eyes dazed and confused in his head. But Alpha stays on him, laying in a big elbow drop to the back of Rezin's head. The crowd, letting Alpha have it, captures Corvo's attention momentarily, his head snapping towards the roiling sea of Faithful. That moment is all the time Rezin needs to crawl out of the ring and spill onto the ringside floor.

DDK:

Rezin is in trouble but he still has the wherewithal to get outta dodge while the gettin' was good!

Lance:

We're in Texas, Keebs. Dodge City is in Kansas.

DDK:

I am so going to suck at this touring thing...

Alpha is quick to slink out of the ring and find the Escape Artist.

Lance:

Referee Hector Navarro is beginning the mandatory 10-count... but it may be short lived!

Corvo goes to snatch Rezin up, but Rezin - still clutching the back of his head - slides back under the bottom rope and into the ring. Corvo is quick to follow and Rezin is just as quick to slide back out of the opposite side of the ring. Frustrated, Alpha follows behind, audibly snorting. Back in Rezin goes, this time tripping over the bottom rope and falling flat on his face in the ring. Crawling up the ropes to his feet, Alpha is on him once more.

DDK:

They're tied up in the ropes... and Hector Navarro is having a HELL of a time getting Alpha off of- OHHH!!

Rezin delivers a back-kick out of Navarro's view that lands squarely in Alpha's junk. The Faithful eat it up as Corvo drops to a knee.

Rezin, still cradling his head, hits a springboard sidekick to the side of Corvo's head and frantically goes for a cover!

DDK:

Big opportunity here!

One!

TWO!

THR- NO! KICKOUT!

Lance:

BIG kickout! Corvo almost pressed Rezin off of him and AGAIN Rezin goes spilling to the ringside floor!

SPLAT!

The leviathan, still "smarting" from the below-the-belt mule kick, is finally slow on the chase giving Rezin an opportunity to find his footing, using the barricade for balance.

Lance:

Rezin using this opportunity to catch his breath as the referee begins his count.

DDK:

Here comes Corvo! Giving chase! He snatches Rezin but Rezin is ready, delivering a series of STIFF elbows to Alpha's midsection! But Alpha is just RELENTLESS! OH MY!!

Alpha, having had enough, grabs Rezin and again tosses him - this time into and over the timekeeper's table, causing the table's contents to spill everywhere. Rezin bounds back to his feet, two-handing the announcer's microphone in front of him like it was a sword. Quickly realizing it isn't, he puts it to his mouth, breathing obnoxiously heavy into it.

Rezin is quick to slide back in the ring, Corvo stalking behind...

Rezin:

Ok! Ok, wait!

Corvo doesn't wait. He corners Rezin and starts raining down fists and kicks on him.

Rezin:

CORVO! WAIT, CORVO! HEY DUDE! HEAR ME OUT here! I think I know what you need...

Corvo backs off for a moment.

DDK:

What is this about?

Rezin:

I think what... what YOU need ... is a friend!

Alpha lays in a stiff punch. Rezin rolls over and ends up his knees, clutching his jaw.

Rezin:

OWWW... okay, hear me out, WE could be friends, dude! I got the best hookups!

Another right hand from Alpha! Rezin tumbles again, but keeps ahold of the mic.

Rezin:

OOF! Ok, cool! You don't wanna be friends with me!

ANOTHER right hand from Corvo!

Rezin:

GAH! Uhhh... how about that *other dude*? The red-mask-wearing dude!!

Alpha goes to punch but stops short when his opponent's words hit home. Rezin realizes the onslaught has stopped after flinching and nothing following it.

Rezin:

Uhhh... yeah, I mean, he was outside the building earlier! He--

Before Rezin can finish his poorly-constructed thought, the wide-eyed Corvo Alpha is sliding out of the ring and over the barricade. Alpha shoves fans out of his way as he disappears among them.

DDK:

Where is Corvo going?

Lance:

Off to find MV1 it seems!

Rezin collapses in the corner, half-confused, half-relieved. He suddenly recognizes that the ref is halfway through a mandatory 10-count and a shit eating grin spreads across his face.

Rezin:

...No shit!

Lance:

It looks like Rezin is about to stumble, ass backwards, into a BIG win here in Houston, Texas!

Navarro reaches 10 and signals for the bell.

DING DING DING

Rezin uses the top rope for support and clumsily pulls himself to his feet to a supportive pop!

Rezin:

HELL YEAH, I FUGGIN' DID IT! I BEAT CORVO ALPHA! Dames and Dopesmokers, the WINNER of the MATCH-

Hector Navarro goes to politely take the microphone from Rezin and a brief struggle ensues, culminating with Hector letting go of the microphone and Rezin accidentally smacking himself in the nose with it.

POP!

DDK:

Oh lord.

Rezin drops the microphone with an echoing *THUD* and it rolls to a corner where Darren Quimbey, waiting outside the ring, eagerly picks it up.

♪ "Apocalyptic Havoc" by Goatwhore ♪

Darren Quimbey:

Ladies and Gentlemen, the winner of this contest as a result of a countout... he is the Escape Artist....

REEEEEEZZZZIIIIIIINNNN!

Sitting center ring, rubbing his nose, an annoyed Hector Navarro raises Rezin's arm to a magical ovation.

DDK:

I'd say the Escape Artist *escaped* that one, Lance!

Lance:

You're worse at puns than you are touring, Keebs!

DDK:

You might be right about that! Join us after the break! Your Main Event for the Favored Saints Championship is coming right up!

COMMERCIAL: BALLYHOO BREW

THE END OF REEVES

Jessica Fear:

Why didn't you tell me about him?!? Why didn't you tell me about my brother?

Outside of the HPE Arena for Texas Southern University, there is an argument brewing between family members, as cameras circle the two individuals in the cold darkness of the road show venue's parking lot. It's clear that tensions are high between Jessica Fear and her father, former FIST of DEFIANCE Jason 'Stalker' Reeves.

Jessica Fear:

Or better yet, WHY?! WHY did you come with me all of the way here? Was it just to gloat that you were right about what Iris and the medical team would say about me? That... beyond me getting healthy that i'll have to pass some sort of mental health check just to return to action?

The former Codename: Everything - Jessica Fear's words echo with built up anger against the black parking lot's gravel. The redhead has her broken arm snug against her torso, the leather jacket she is wearing looks one armed as she points in anger at her father.

Jessica Fear:

Answer me, Dad!

Jason Reeves is doing his best to ignore his daughter. In fact he seems destined to leave the DEFIANCE parking lot for good. Standing over Deacon's DEFCON Chopper, the former FIST Stalker is strapping several duffle bags to the back of it. Completely abstaining from answering his daughter.

Jessica Fear:

Fucking answer me!

Broken arm not holding her back, Jessica moves closer to Jason, using her good arm she reaches for Stalker's shoulder to spin him around and face her but the weak attempt is not sold by Jason. Ignoring her completely, Stalker moves to the front of the bike leaning forward and down to check the tire. Tears flood Jessica's face as she stutters into more argumentative statements.

Jessica Fear:

I... I didn't know they were going to do that to you. They told me they wanted you 'in' - just like me. The Kabal said that once you became dedicated to the cause that they would erase my name from that god forsaken book. I didn't know they were going to use you like an experiment...it... it wasn't planned like that.

WHOOSH!

Stalker spins around charging forward at his own daughter, his fist is clenched and he brings it striking forward at her face but stops it within an inch of hitting her. Jessica flinches in fear, clenching her slinged up arm against her chest. The tears don't stop running down her face.

Jason Reeves:

BULLSHIT! I SAW you - this entire time... acting like a victim, sending me videos of yourself trapped by them. Meanwhile pretending to be the fucking man I hate the most?!

Jason throws his hands up in the air, both palms on either side of Jessica's face. She knows it's true, all of it. Jessica has been playing both the role of Mr. Fear and the victim, just as her father describes. The rage in Jason's eyes tells more than words ever could but his voice has been silenced long enough.

Jason Reeves:

All this time... my OWN fucking daughter... was lying to me. All this time you were playing both god damn sides of it... you were MANIPULATING ME!!!

Stalker's tense approach makes Jessica's lips quiver as she tries to speak. Stuttering through her words as Jason lowers his hands stepping backwards and towards the motorcycle once more.

Jessica Fear:

All the years of secrets.... Everything they told me about my past... Trevor included.

The Hardcore Icon of DEFIANCE stops tinkering with the bike upon hearing the name of Trevor Fear.

Jessica Fear:

You... you don't fucking love me. You only love yourself... I BEGGED you to help me with The Kabal. I wanted OUT! But... it's like none of what I said mattered to you, NONE OF IT. Not until they asked you to hunt again. Not until they asked you to come back. Why... why did you do it at the whims of Mr. Fear but not when I was RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOUR FACE ASKING FOR HELP!!?!?!?

Shaking his head, Stalker does not turn around from the bike, opting to zip tie down the duffle bag in the back, further ensuring his path is to leave this place forever.

Jason Reeves:

You're beyond help Jessica. Then... now... whatever voice you use, distraction you deploy, none of that matters when you get into the ring. The Kabal, serums, their little Proving Grounds?! It's a joke. One big damn joke. Why did you ever sing their song to begin with, huh? I think we all know why but you won't admit it, will you?

Turning away from the bike once more Stalker gets in the face of his daughter but this time Jessica stands firm, face to face with her own father.

Jessica Fear:

Admit what? That I'm a drunk like my Dad? That I took an offer - from a secret cult group of dedicated people to DEFY you? To be ANYBODY BUT YOU!?!? That's what you want me to admit? We are special.... I KNOW THIS. But you... you refuse to see the obvious. The Kabal doesn't just collect anyone.

WHOOOOSH!!

Darkness envelops the group as the lights in the parking lot begin to shut down. The shadows become much denser on the three interwinder family members as a strong breeze suddenly pushes through. Silence drips like a painful scream as Jason simply stares into his daughter's eyes.

Jason Reeves:

I DO NOT CARE about the fantasies they've filled your head with or WHY you feel the need to FIGHT THEM... FIGHT ME... Whatever it is the hell you are doing. I don't care about a book, I never did. I told them NO, you should have as well. As much as I fucking love you.... I can't fight this over and over for you. This is something you'll have to figure out on your own. I'm done.

HEADLIGHTS!!

In the distance a white dodge charger's beaming headlights turn on, shining on the pair and interrupting Jason's departure. Jessica stares at the ground before slowly saying something almost in a whisper.

Jessica Fear:

They have my soul, Dad....

Jason's distracted by the headlights, throwing his arm up in his face to shield himself from the beams.

Jason Reeves:

The fuck you want?!?!?

SSCRREEEECCCCCHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!

The white Dodge Charger suddenly lunges forward, Jason's taunting the speeding vehicle towards him almost like playing chicken, the screeching of the tires get's Jessica's attention as she looks up seeing her father baiting the car in to hit him and her face turns into a sour scream of despair.

Jessica Fear:

NOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Sprinting forward with her good shoulder pointed down Jessica 'Guardian' Fear moves in to protect her father, the anger in Jason's face blinding him from sure disaster, Jessica bullets against him, knocking him to the gravel!

CRASHHHH!!! THUD!!! SHATTTERSS!!!!!!

Tires squeal drastically in the distance as the car speeds out of the Houston arena parking lot, Jason's head is wobbly as he tries to understand what just transpired. Sitting up he looks over, noticing his daughter in an awkward pose on the gravel across from him.

Jason Reeves:

Jessica.. Jessica... get up.

Stalker's mouth falls open, as suddenly reality hits: the car was destined to him and he was moved out of harm's way.

Jason Reeves:

Jessica..... JESSICA, GET UP!!!

Tears flood the former FIST's face, he paws forward into the gravel crawling like a wounded animal towards his only child, a small bit of blood pours away from Jessica's head as she remains completely silent. Jessica's guardian-like effort to protect her father, sacrificed her body in the process, absorbing the hood, windshield and gravel head on. The girl born on DEFIANCE camera's life was now flashing before Jason's eyes as he heaved in anger upon her body.

Jason Reeves:

Jessica... Wake up please... please.... Wake up.... Please! HELP HER!!!!!!

Jason's screams echo like a thunder clap against the shadowy and 'thought' to be deserted parking lot. Jason's eyes like around rabidly as he attempts to see somebody, anybody, but no one shows.

Jason Reeves:

HEELLLLLLLLLLP HERRRRR!!!!

Stalker's lungs take a hit as the grieving father coughs slightly, tears catching his throat as he tries to palm the blood back into his daughter's head.

Jason Reeves: *[whispering]*

I'll help.. You.. I promise... I'll help.. I'm so... I'm... sorry... I'll destroy... I'll kill all of them for this... you.... Are... you will be okay....

The words are false even to Jason's ears and instead of help, something else lurks in the shadows, someone sensing the gravity and grief of this situation.

Jason Reeves: *[choking up]*

Somebody... Help us....

Behind the sobbing, heaving frame of Jason Reeves, there is motion. Subtle at first. Then suddenly far less so. One can't know what caught his attention and brought him here. The screams, maybe? More likely, it was the abject grief.

That yawning pit of despair; that of a father despairing for a child raised as his own.

Corvo Alpha approached with an almost-curiosity. With something perhaps even resembling concern? We won't ever know. Jason Reeves sensed Alpha's black presence and quickly spun on his heels to face him, hands balled and raised into fists.

Jason Reeves:

You?!? What are YOU doing here?!?

Alpha's eyes narrow towards the shattered and bleeding body of Jessica Fear. In a frenzy, Jason shoves an unprepared Alpha backwards and sprawling onto the ground.

Jason Reeves:

Was it YOU!?

That's all it took. In an instant, Alpha is to his feet. With all of his speed, he SPEARS Stalker in half. And suddenly the pair are a flurry of fists. For the briefest and most uncomfortable of moments, the camera lingers on the noticeably unmoving body of DEF's Guardian.

Reeves quickly finds an upper hand, pulling Alpha back to his feet and away from Jessica's mangled body. With one shockingly easy motion, Reeves sends Alpha soaring through the air, tossed over the hood of a parked Nissan. Somehow, Alpha is back to his feet just as easily – he uses the hood of the Nissan as a springboard and blasts Reeves with a flying forearm shot!

This sends Reeves sprawled just feet away from a wide stream of blood. He raises his head from the pavement and his eyes follow the winding trail back to his ruined daughter... and again anguish washes across his face. Suddenly, Alpha is upon him. Pulling Reeves up and clubbing him down at the same time, with opposite arms. Relentless clubbing blows rain down – but Reeves fires up, launching elbows to Alpha's midsection. Out of nowhere, Stalker suplexes Corvo onto the concrete, Alpha's legs clanging against the unrelenting steel of a nearby dumpster.

Jason "Stalker" Reeves reaches deep for air, deep for anything. Pulling himself back to his feet, he wearily searches the scene for his daughter. The moment his eyes find her, Alpha is already somehow back to his feet. It's just another moment before Corvo Alpha locks on the Alpha Clutch - the katehajime lock. Corvo wheels Stalker around, away from the broken girl on the pavement. A voice rings out.

Voice:

NOO!!

Lord Nigel Tricklebush's eyes are wide and horrified. Corvo spins at the voice, slaving and nearly growling at the sight of his master. He tightens his grip on Reeves, who's eyes flutter, blood bubbling at his lips.

Lord Nigel Tricklebush:

What has happened here?!?

Nigel eyes Jessica, still unmoved and unmoving before turning his attention back to a raging Corvo and at-risk Reeves.

Lord Nigel Tricklebush:

Corvo, my boy... Relax–

At the word, Corvo WRENCHES back on Reeves, who sends red spittle flying in the motion.

Lord Nigel Tricklebush:

It's okay... It's me–

Another wrench, this time accompanied by a strange wheeze from Stalkers lungs.

Jason Reeves:

Help... h-her...

A bead of sweat runs down Lord Nigel's temple.

Lord Nigel Trickelbush:

My boy... don't do it. You must let him go.

Alpha's eyes narrow.

Lord Nigel Trickelbush:

Let him go, my boy... you can trust me--

And with that, Alpha tightens his grip and in one motion **THROWS** Reeves over his head in a powerful clutch suplex.

Lord Nigel Trickelbush:

NOOOOOOOO!!!!!!

CRUNCH.

Jason Reeves slumps on impact, body laying bent and awkward. Lord Nigel falls to his knees as Corvo scrambles away from the scene of the crimes, gone in the gathering mist.

The last of the Reeves line, broken and shattered before him, Nigel Trickelbush is beside himself.

Lord Nigel Trickelbush:

...what have you done?!? ...what have I done?!?

Suddenly, it's head of DEF security Wyatt Bronson who rushes onto the scene, he looks at Jessica and Jason before waving over additional DEF personnel. Iris Davine rushes to Jessica's side, already on the phone dialing for help.

In moments that follow, more support from DEFmed and DEFsec arrive, ushering Lord Nigel away and cordoning off the area. As we pan away, the focus is on Jason Reeves, laying beaten to a pulp, staring at his comatose daughter as his hand reaches for her, before succumbing to the pain and passing out. Lights and tension pulse through the air as the scene fades to a very slow and very final, lingering black.

COMMERCIAL: MAXIMUM DEFIANCE 2022

FAVORED SAINTS CHAMPIONSHIP: HENRY KEYES Â© vs. CONOR FUSE*♪ "King DeDeDe Remix Theme" from Kirby's Dream Land ♪***DDK:**

We're wasting no time here, it's the main event!

Lance:

What an interesting matchup here - two friends who know each other well!

*!RANK**!RANK**!RANK*

Conor Fuse steps through the curtain, still missing a certain exuberance since being branded Comments Conor. The fans still love him, though, as he marches to the ring.

Darren Quimbey:

Ladies and gentlemen, the following contest is tonight's MAIN EVENT, and it is forrrrr the FAVORED SAINTS CHAMPIONSHIIIIIP! Introducing first, the challenger! From Toronto, Ontario, weighing in at 200 pounds...The Ultimate Gamer! Conorrrrrr FUUUUUUUUSE!

Lance:

Malak Garland had some rather tense words for Conor earlier tonight, and you have to wonder how heavily they might be weighing on his mind.

DDK:

Malak doesn't want to be overshadowed, and lest we forget, Henry Keyes is an old pal of Conor Fuse. LOTS to unpack there, partner.

Lance:

...was that intentional?

DDK:

...ah hell.

♪ "Stranger Fruit" by Zeal & Ardor ♪

The Vae Victis trio of Lindsay Troy, Dan Ryan, and Henry Keyes come out together. A couple Plague Doctors follow them, lugging a moderately sized treasure chest; Keyes turns, opens it, and withdraws the Favoured Saints championship belt before slinging it over his shoulder. He shares a fist bump with Lindsay Troy and a nod with Dan Ryan before they return to the back as Keyes marches ominously forward. The crowd is WAY into Henry Keyes in the aftermath of his conquering victory over Corvo Alpha, though you wouldn't know it from Keyes's lack of reaction. We notice that his belt - normally all-black and metal studded - is now bright pink.

Lance:

Vae Victis already made some waves earlier tonight, and now their newest member has his first title defense!

DDK:

It was an impressive victory at DEFCON over the menacing Corvo Alpha. Talk about a contrast in styles - I imagine this match will look VERY different for the Airship Pirate.

The crowd hums with electricity at the prospect of these two particular DEFIANTS facing each other with a championship on the line. Darren Quimbey seems to dig into his pocket and double check a note on a small card in his pocket before proceeding.

Darren Quimbey:

And his opponent...from San Francisco, California, weighing in at 249 pounds. He is your CURRENT Favoured Saints Champion...he is THE KRAKEN! Henryyyyyyy KEEEEEEEEEEEEYES!

DDK:

...did he just call Henry Keyes "The Kraken"??

Lance:

He did, partner. He did.

Keyes enters the ring stone-faced. Conor's eyes light up a bit at the sight of a familiar face, and he extends a hand in friendship. The Houston crowd buzzes some more, hoping to see the magic of handshakes past - as it becomes clear that Keyes is not going to oblige, a few disappointed boos emerge. Referee Benny Doyle holds the Favoured Saints title belt aloft before handing it to a ringside official and motioning for the bell.

DING DING

Conor is a little taken aback at Henry's whole presentation right now as he finally soaks it in - the big leather eyepatch, the different hair, the *vibe*. It's the anger in Henry's eyes that confuses him the most.

Conor Fuse:

...what's going on with you?

Without warning Henry SWINGS in with a mighty chop that Conor barely avoids! Message resonating loud and clear, Conor bounces on his toes and begins side stepping in a big circle around the ring, trying to maintain space. Henry controls the middle of the ring, measuring his man.

Lance:

Conor there with a quick little leg kick, and there's another - hard to imagine this is inflicting a lot of damage.

DDK:

Sure, but the idea is sound - Henry's the must bigger man, Conor doesn't want Keyes to get his hands on him!

Conor plays for one more leg kick and Keyes lunges forward to try to grab him - Conor quickly ducks and locks in a rear waistlock! Standing switch, and Keyes PLANTS him with a German Suplex! Keyes immediately scrambles to his feet and charges to the fallen Conor, who sees this rabid animal coming for him and finds a way to get himself in the ropes to force a break!

Conor Fuse:

Take it easy, man!

Benny Doyle makes it to four, when Keyes lays in a STIFF Propellor Edge Chop into Conor's ribcage! The Texas Faithful *oooooh* at the sound as Conor holds a hand to his chest. Keyes swings in for another, but Conor swiftly ducks under and drops Henry to the mat with a Drop Toe Hold, flips Keyes over for a fast cover, only for Keyes to kick out at one. Conor bounds into the ropes and charges back - Keyes lifts him, twists him, but after a moment Conor is able to shift the momentum of both men and plants Keyes with a Crucifix Bomb pinning combo! Keyes kicks out at two.

Lance:

It's almost like Conor is trying to get the win as fast as possible without hurting his old friend.

DDK:

If that's the case, Henry sure isn't looking like he's going to return the favor!

Conor springboards off the ropes and attempts a cross body - Keyes catches him! Henry's expression would not be out of place in a Terminator movie as he swings Conor high in the air before slamming him down DIRECTLY onto

Keyes's extended knee!

DDK:

Tilt-a-whirl backbreaker!

ONE.

TWO!

DDK:

Conor with the kickout.

Lance:

I still can't get over the whole "Kraken" thing. What do you think that's about?

DDK:

Well, the Kraken is a big monster that destroys everything, right? I figure that's the whole thing.

Lance:

Everyone loves the Airship Pirate thing, though! Myself included!

By now, Keyes has forced Conor into a corner and is throwing big European Uppercuts into Conor's mush. Benny Doyle calls for Henry to get him out of the corner and begins a five count - Keyes obliges by sending Conor FLYING across the ring with a huge Biel! After this, we see a light switch flip in Conor's eyes - hurting, but far from beaten, he gets to his feet and charges!

Lance:

BIG flying dropkick by Conor Fuse, followed up by a spinning elbow strike! Signs of life and Keyes is stunned - Conor gives himself some space, building up a head of steam - CANNONBALL SPLASH! Henry Keyes is down! Here's the cover!

ONE.

TWO!

KICKOUT.

DDK:

Conor's figured out that it's go-time, and we all know that when Conor Fuse is on, he can hang with anyone!

Keyes manages to get to a knee, only to get a stiff kick to the chest by Conor! Another kick, and another! Is that a hint of a smile from Keyes? Conor hesitates for a half-moment seeing this, and runs back into the ropes, bounces off, and attempts a Shining Wizard - but Keyes is able to grab Conor's leg, sending Conor's torso crashing into the mat! Henry cranks on the leg before lifting it higher, nearly straddling Conor's captured knee over his shoulder as he stands up!

Lance:

Something akin to a Stretch Muffler from Keyes - I wouldn't call it traditional, but it sure looks painful!

DDK:

Benny Doyle's checking on Fuse, but he's refusing to tap out here!

The Faithful rally in support of Fuse, who finds the wherewithal to use his free leg to start kicking at Keyes's face! After a few kicks, he's freed himself. Without missing a beat, as soon as Conor gets to his feet again-

THWACK~~

Lance:

BIG chop!

THWACK~~

Lance:

Another!

THWACK~~ THWACK~~ THWACK~~ THWACK~~ THWACK~~

DDK:

MACHINE GUN chops from Henry Keyes!

Conor's chest is beet red as he slumps down for a moment, before a fire lights up from inside! He grabs Keyes by the head and tosses HIM into the corner, and throws machine gun chops of his own!

THWACK~~ THWACK~~ THWACK~~ THWACK~~ THWACK~~

Keyes slumps down too low for chops, so Conor starts stomping! The Faithful love every second of this!

STOMP STOMP STOMP STOMP STOMP STOMP STOMP

Benny Doyle practically has to bodily yank Conor out of the corner - failing that, Conor chooses to drag the now-limp Keyes from the corner towards the center of the ring. Conor makes his way to the top rope, a HOUSE-a-fire!

DDK:

He's leveled up, and now he's about to fly!

Lance:

MOONSAULT CONNECTS! Here's the cover!!

One! TWO! THRE-AAAAHHHHH

Keyes JUST gets his shoulder up in time! Conor looks out to the Faithful who are on their feet at this point. He stands above his fallen friend and holds his hand aloft. Even in Texas, the fans know what's coming next and yell along with him-

Conor Fuse:

WEAPON GET!

He places his hand onto Keyes's chest and pulls it away, but he looks confused.

Conor Fuse:

Where's the...Bell...?

Almost as if his body is being driven by someone or something else, Conor grabs Henry's right arm, and then his left, keeping him on the ground but firmly in Conor's control. Suddenly, his knee SWINGS at Henry's head - Henry dips backward and uses Conor's momentum to send him stumbling through the ropes and out of the ring!

DDK:

We saw how that DEFCON match ended between Keyes and Corvo Alpha - the Bell Clap didn't keep Corvo down, and Keyes had to use those devastating knee strikes instead!

Lance:

I've come to learn that he's calling that knee strike "Coin", Keebs.

DDK:

It took two Coins to put down Corvo that night, if I remember correctly.

Henry is using this valuable time to catch his breath in the ring, Benny Doyle makes his way to the ropes and motions for Conor to return, starting a ten count. Conor isn't too worse for wear from his tumble, and after shaking the cobwebs out, he's about to make his way back in the ring when a HUGE chorus of boos diverts his attention to the ramp.

Lance:

Aw, HELL!

The Game Boy is bodily carrying Malak Garland, soft body cast and all, at the top of the ramp. Malak is shouting something at Conor, thereby pouring a bucket of ice water over the last remnants of fire he had just built.

DDK:

Malak Garland made it clear tonight that he does NOT want Conor to overshadow him!

Lance:

Conor has a real shot at this thing if Malak Garland would just stay out of his way!

DDK:

Be real, Lance, was there EVER a chance of that happening?

Benny Doyle is at a count of eight, which snaps Conor back into the moment at hand. He rolls underneath the ropes, when -

Lance:

CRUSHING knee strike by Henry Keyes!

Keyes hadn't even given Conor the opportunity to fully enter before flying into him with a diving knee! Fists and elbows rain down onto Conor in the middle of the ring as he covers up. Benny Doyle forces a break so that Conor can get to his feet - which he does, QUICKLY,ipping up! He throws a SUPERKICK - Henry steps back and dodges! Steps forward-

CRRRRRRACK!!

OHHHHHHHHH

DDK:

BELLLLLLLL CLAP!

Conor crumples in a heap, and without pausing even for a moment, Keyes gains double wrist control, measures his man, and thrusts forward with a mighty knee to the dome...

Lance:

There's the Coin!! Conor Fuse is - oh, geez, he looks like he's out COLD, Keebs!

DDK:

Henry could end this right now, what is he doing??

Keyes doesn't acknowledge the concerned fans, the two assholes on the ramp, even Benny Doyle. He just looks down at this mess he's created, the Video Game Kid's wrists still in his own hands. One might expect, or at least hope for, a poignant word from friend to friend. Some sort of shared understanding from Henry Keyes to Conor Fuse, who has been through so much needling turmoil in recent weeks and months, perhaps an expression of appreciation over a battle well-fought. Instead?

KERKKKKKKKKKKKKKKKK~

A second Coin.

ONE!

TWO!

THREE!

DING DING DING

♪ "Stranger Fruit" by Zeal & Ardor ♪

Darren Quimbey:

Here is your winner, and STILLLLLLLLL Favoured Saints Champion...HENRYYYYYY KEEEEEEEEEEYES!

Lance:

Someone needs to check on Conor, that second Coin was NOT necessary!

DDK:

I can point to two people who are MORE than happy with what just happened.

The camera pans to Malak and The Game Boy, both over the moon that Conor was defeated with such an exclamation point. As the heavy dread of soul metal blasts through the arena, Keyes snatches his championship belt and signals for a microphone.

THE TAKING TREE

Lindsay Troy and Dan Ryan have made their way to the ring from the back and have stepped inside, both fist bumping Keyes after his decisive victory. Sweat dripping, Keyes motions for a microphone from ringside. He gives it a few heavy THUMP THUMP THUMPs before raising the microphone to his face and the Favoured Saints Championship high into the air.

Henry Keyes:

COME AND TAKE IT, DEFIANCE.

MAJOR mixed vibes from the crowd at that line - significant cheers at this new Kraken Keyes having gone through hell to get to this point, significant concern as his old ally Conor Fuse is still being helped out of the ring by officials.

Henry Keyes:

If there's anyone out there that's confused about why THAT just happened to Conor Fuse, why THAT is about to happen to anyone and everyone who crosses paths with Henry Keyes while I'm holding gold, it's reeeeeeeeeeeal simple. See, there's something that's been true about me my entire career, but it's been ESPECIALLY true since Christmas Eve, 2020 - and that truth is, that I've been a giver.

Keyes has the Favoured Saints Championship slung over his shoulder now and is slowly walking back and forth across the ring. One might call it a tiger-like prowling.

Henry Keyes:

I've given and given, and I've given and given. My body, my friendship, my loyalty, my advice and counsel, hell even my damn airship. EVERYTHING I have to offer to professional wrestling, I've laid it all out there for others.

Some cheers and applause in recognition of that fact from the Texas FAITHFUL.

Henry Keyes:

And of course, people took - only natural, right? Conor Fuse and I had a BLAST flying out of that ship on pay-per-view! We really took it to those lads in Better Future Talent Agency that night, didn't we?

Some more cheers from the crowd, but there's some discomfort in the air.

Lance Warner:

Where do you think Henry's going with this?

DDK:

I don't know, but his eyes are HUGE right now.

Henry Keyes:

And who can forget 2021's Segment of the Year? The feud that really put me and my ol' pal Rezin on the map! I proved that I was the most PUNK ROCK wrestler in the world, right? RIGHT?

The air is definitely weird now in Houston, though we hear a smattering of claps.

Henry Keyes:

I gave and I gave, and everyone took and they took. Like Rezin, for one - steal my beloved tiger and sell it to the highest bidder for a laugh, but that's fine! It's Henry, we'll joke about it later! Maybe we'll wear fancy hats and do a dance routine about the whole thing, Segment of the Year 2022! Or, if you're Conor Fuse? Watch as the FIRST MAN TO HAVE YOUR BACK fights for you as a group of snakes tries to whisk you away into their nefarity, and let that boil over into six months of HELL for him until it ends with a giant Cuban sonofabitch throwing a fireball in his face and defeating him, but it's fine! It's *Henry*, he knows how hard things are for me these days! I don't need to have his back in return! And besides, how could I have known that Corvo Alpha was there, looking at Henry Keyes like the stump of

the damn Giving Tree, ready to be RIPPED from the earth and THROWN into the abyss!

Lance Warner:

That's...I didn't realize Henry felt that way, he's usually so gregarious in the locker room.

DDK:

...maybe that's been the problem, Lance.

Henry Keyes:

DEFIANCE took everything they could because I was so very willing to give of myself, until Corvo Alpha made it his mission to destroy me. He nearly fucking DID, by the way. And out of all the friends I thought I had made along the way...after alllllll my efforts to stand for something, to lead from the front, aiming myself at THIS wrong and THAT wrong for the sake of others, ONE PERSON AND ONLY ONE PERSON showed up for me.

He turns and locks eyes with his oldest friend in DEFIANCE.

Henry Keyes:

Lindsay Troy. The only person that could have brought me back to DEFIANCE on that Christmas Eve night, the ONLY one who's been my constant comrade-in-arms for the better part of a decade. She was there for me in my darkest hour time and time again, and without her, I don't think I could have come back from the depths. She's earned the rights to my loyalty forever and all times. It's LINDSAY TROY AND GOLD FROM HERE ON OUT for Henry Keyes.

Henry turns to Dan Ryan, who has his eyebrow slightly raised.

Henry Keyes:

And anyone who's earned Lindsay Troy's loyalty has earned my loyalty, too. Full stop.

Henry and Dan share a powerfully manly handshake. No flash, no twists or frills, nothing like Henry's handshakes with wrestlers past. He turns back to the crowd and lifts the Favoured Saints Championship high to the sky once more. The growling rage in his voice is reaching a peak.

Henry Keyes:

So that being said, listen closely, DEFIANCE. I AM NO LONGER YOUR GIVING TREE. IT'S TIME FOR HENRY KEYES AND VAE VICTIS TO TAKE, AND TAKE, AND TAKE, AND FUCKING TAKE UNTIL WE HAVE IT ALL. You all want to see a real life pirate?? I'M LEANING IN. The Favoured Saints Championship is only the beginning! ACE of DEFIANCE and three more defenses are coming down the pipeline REEEEEEEAL quick. If you're holding championship gold in this company, now is the time to set your affairs in order...it will all be ours soon enough.

The microphone falls with a THUD as Henry reconvenes with his allies, fist bumps abound.

♪ "Stranger Fruit" by Zeal & Ardor ♪

DDK:

...WOW.

Lance Warner:

No other way to say it, Keebs - the KRAKEN of DEFIANCE has been released!

THIS.

IS.

DEFIANCE.