

2.13.18 A New Commissioner is Named and Lines are Drawn on a Must-See SmackDown LIVE

February 13, 2018 | Rabobank Arena – Bakersfield, CA

The show kicked off with a chilling video package recapping last week's violent attack on Commissioner Shane McMahon. Set to slow, haunting piano music and punctuated with echoing thuds from last week's footage, the package served as a grim reminder of the ambush by Kevin Owens and Sami Zayn in the Kansas City parking garage. Grainy security footage and somber commentary underscored the brutality. It faded to black with one ominous phrase: *"Justice must be served."*

Exclusive Medical Update on Shane McMahon: Dr. Amann Issues Harrowing Statement from Trauma Center

KANSAS CITY – The screen fades in from black. Gone are the sounds of the arena. Gone is the roar of the crowd. In its place: silence. Cold, fluorescent lighting casts an unrelenting glow across the entrance of the Kansas City Trauma Center. The stillness of the exterior is interrupted only by the subtle hum of hospital equipment behind glass doors, sliding open and closed with mechanical indifference.

Standing before the facility is WWE's Medical Director, Dr. Chris Amann.

His white lab coat catches the glare from the lights above, but the brightness does little to hide the deep fatigue etched into his face. His expression is grave. Somber. Haunted. The WWE microphone he holds is still, heavy in his grasp.

Dr. Amann:

"Following last week's reprehensible attack... Shane McMahon was admitted in critical condition."

The words land like stone. Behind him, paramedics pace with quiet urgency, their presence a chilling reminder of the facility's purpose.

"I can now provide a more comprehensive overview of his injuries."

There's a beat of silence before he continues — as if gathering the resolve to say aloud what no one should have to. His voice remains calm, professional... but there's a fracture in the veneer.

"The initial assessment of three fractured ribs was, unfortunately, an underestimate. We've now confirmed **five fractured ribs on the left side**. Two are **significantly displaced**, and one caused a **partial lung collapse — a pneumothorax**."

He pauses again. The reality of the words lingers. Somewhere behind the glass, a gurney is pushed swiftly past, shadowed in silhouette.

"A chest tube had to be inserted immediately to re-inflate the lung. That tube stayed in for **72 hours**. Three full days under round-the-clock monitoring."

The camera slowly tightens on Amann. There is no music. No dramatic cutaway. Just a man forced to recount the price of brutality.

"The damage to his left knee is catastrophic."

"We're talking **complete tears** of the **ACL, MCL, significant damage to the PCL and meniscus**, and a **comminuted fracture of the patella**. In layman's terms... **his kneecap was shattered into multiple fragments**."

His hands momentarily tighten around the microphone.

"A **seven-hour reconstructive surgery** was performed two days ago to stabilize and repair the damage. Ligaments were reattached. The patella wired back together."

Another pause.

"The prognosis? Guarded."

The word feels like a sentence in itself.

"Extensive, aggressive rehabilitation will be required. And a **full return to prior physical performance... is highly uncertain**."

The air feels heavier now. Dr. Amann shifts — not uncomfortably, but with the weight of a man who has said too much, yet not nearly enough.

"The concussion sustained from the repeated head trauma — including the powerbomb onto the car hood and the chain-wrapped fists — is **severe**."

He lowers his voice.

"Shane lost consciousness at the scene. Since then, he's experienced **significant post-concussion syndrome** — headaches, dizziness, sensitivity to light, and **short-term memory loss**."

A graphic briefly fades in showing a list of sustained injuries as Amann continues:

- **5 fractured ribs (2 displaced)**
- **Partial lung collapse**
- **Full ligament tears: ACL, MCL, damage to PCL**
- **Shattered patella**
- **Severe concussion**
- **Post-concussion syndrome symptoms**
- **17 stitches above the eye**
- **Extensive soft tissue trauma**
- **Internal bruising to torso**

"The laceration above his eye required **seventeen stitches**," he says flatly, before adding,

"and there's **considerable soft tissue damage** and facial bruising. His torso shows extensive contusions consistent with repeated blunt force trauma."

The list is almost unthinkable. Still, Amann isn't finished.

"Psychologically... as you can imagine, this has been incredibly traumatic."

The screen lingers. His eyes, once steel, now soften.

"There is no timeline for recovery. Only hope."

The camera fades to black.

Video goes live inside the Rabobank Arena as the air inside the arena thickened with anticipation as the lights dimmed subtly, casting a bluish hue over the sea of WWE fans. Suddenly, the unmistakable opening chords of **"No Chance in Hell"** blasted through the PA system like a bolt of defiance. The reaction was instant and seismic — a thunderous blend of jeers, cheers, and gasps greeted the arrival of the most powerful figure in WWE history. The curtain at the top of the ramp parted, and out stepped Mr. McMahon.

There was no pyro, no grand fanfare — only the sheer presence of the Chairman himself was enough to command the moment. Clad in an immaculate, sharply tailored navy blue suit and a crisp white shirt that shimmered beneath the arena lights, Vince McMahon looked every bit the

empire-building icon that he is. But there was a noticeable heaviness in his gait. Gone was the exaggerated strut that once defined his entrances. Instead, he moved with solemn purpose, his hands clenched slightly at his sides, his jaw tight, his steel-blue eyes scanning the horizon of the audience without expression. Each step he took down the long aisle was deliberate, weighted by the gravity of what he was about to address.

The crowd's energy shifted from mockery to reverence as he neared the ring, a complex mix of nostalgia and respect overtaking their usual disdain. As he reached the ring steps, Vince paused for a brief moment, laying one hand on the turnbuckle post as if gathering himself. There was a slight quiver in his fingers, the only outward sign of emotion betraying his stoic exterior. He ascended the steps slowly and stepped through the ropes with a practiced ease, taking center stage beneath the spotlight that now bathed the ring in stark white.

Vince McMahon stood in the center of the ring, the microphone already in his hand as if it had been waiting for him since the moment Shane McMahon was attacked one week ago. The crowd remained restless, a low rumble of speculation coursing through the arena. But Vince didn't speak right away. He let the silence breathe, let the weight of his presence settle over the WWE Universe like a slow-moving storm. His eyes roamed the crowd — not with his usual smug authority, but with a piercing, contemplative glare that seemed to search for understanding, for answers.

Finally, he raised the microphone.

“You know...” he began, his voice lower and more gravelly than usual — a far cry from the bombastic bark fans had grown used to. “In this business, in *my* business... There are lines. Invisible lines. Lines that you do *not* cross.”

The audience responded with a mixture of curiosity and quiet agreement, leaning in.

Vince paced slightly now, his voice rising with each word, his fury tightening just beneath the surface. “What Kevin Owens and Sami Zayn did to Shane McMahon last week... was not just an attack. It was not just some desperate cry for attention. It was a cowardly, sadistic, and *disgusting* assault on a member of *my* family.”

The crowd erupted, some chanting “Shane-O-Mac!” in support, others jeering Owens and Zayn's names as if cursing them.

Vince's lip curled as he turned toward the hard camera. “I've tolerated a lot in this ring. I've seen men betray each other. I've seen careers ended, friendships destroyed, and families torn apart. Hell, I've even been the one doing it more often than not. But what you two did...” he jabbed a finger at the camera, his voice trembling with controlled rage — “...was unforgivable.”

A long pause. Then his tone shifted — darker, colder.

“You want to make this personal? You want to go to war with the McMahon family?” Vince growled. “Then you've *got* it.”

The crowd exploded again as Vince's face twisted into something primal — not the smug corporate mogul, but the battle-hardened general who built an empire brick by brick through blood and control.

“But know this: You don't just get to lay your hands on my son and walk away like nothing happened. There will be consequences. *Severe* consequences.”

Vince McMahon's gaze hardened, his jaw set like granite as he paused to let the gravity of his words settle into every corner of the arena. The crowd, still rumbling with anticipation, quieted just enough to hear the tension in his breathing — like a powder keg moments from detonation.

“You see, I've been in this business a long time,” Vince continued, stepping toward the ropes and gripping the top strand as he looked out into the sea of humanity before him. “I've dealt with backstabbers. I've dealt with lawsuits, media attacks, government investigations — hell, I've even been blown up in a limousine.”

A flicker of bitter amusement rippled through the crowd.

“But what I will *not* tolerate — not today, not ever — is an attack on my *family*.” His voice cracked the air like a thunderclap. “What you two did to Shane wasn't a storyline. It wasn't a scripted segment. That was real. You put your hands on my son. You crushed his windpipe. You left him in a hospital bed!”

Vince's face turned red with fury, veins bulging along his neck and temple as he shouted toward the rafters.

“And you think you're still going to *have jobs* after that?!”

The crowd roared again — this time a unified wave of support, urging Vince to take action.

“I was ready to fire you both myself,” he growled. “Right there. No questions asked. No severance. No goodbyes. Just... *gone*.” He drew a long breath, trying to restrain the volcanic rage just under the surface. “But then, something happened. Someone reminded me... that this isn't just about punishment.”

Vince turned slowly toward the stage now, his posture shifting from pure wrath to something more calculated, more theatrical.

“This is about *justice*. This is about giving you two exactly what you deserve — in the most painful, humiliating, and final way possible.”

The arena stirred with anticipation. Vince's eyes narrowed as a smirk crept onto his lips, but there was no humor behind it — only retribution.

“And so... I made a call. I didn't fire you. Not yet. Because someone else wanted a shot at you first. Someone who's earned the right to make *your* lives a living hell.”

He stepped back to the center ring.

“Ladies and gentlemen, as of tonight, I am appointing a new Commissioner of SmackDown Live. Someone with the authority to make matches. Someone with the vision to lead. And someone... who has a *very* personal reason to want Kevin Owens and Sami Zayn in his crosshairs.”

The arena buzzed louder.

Vince raised the mic again, thunder in his eyes.

“Please welcome... *Daniel Bryan!*”

The crowd erupted into a white-hot frenzy as the familiar opening beat of Bryan’s entrance theme hit the speakers. A tidal wave of “YES!” chants surged through the crowd before Bryan even stepped through the curtain. And when he did — clad in a charcoal blazer over a white T-shirt, his eyes sharp with purpose — the WWE Universe came unglued.

He stood on the stage for a long moment, soaking in the welcome like oxygen, before heading down the ramp with determination in every step. This wasn’t the humble underdog of old. This was Daniel Bryan, the man reborn.

Bryan entered the ring and stood across from Vince, the atmosphere now crackling with unspoken history and mutual respect. Vince offered a short nod and handed Bryan the microphone.

The crowd fell into an expectant hush.

“Vince,” Bryan begins, his voice steady but filled with emotion, “I appreciate the offer. I’m honored by the trust you’re placing in me. But I need to be honest with you, and with everyone here tonight. I didn’t come back to wear a suit. I didn’t endure three years of pain, of struggle, of hearing ‘no’ from every doctor I saw... just to sit at a desk and watch from the sidelines.”

The crowd begins to buzz with anticipation. Bryan’s voice strengthens as he continues.

“I’ve spent the last three years fighting for one thing — the chance to do what I love. To *compete*. To stand in this ring and wrestle. And as of today... that fight is over.”

He pauses, and then the words explode out of him.

“Because earlier today, I was officially **CLEARED** to return to in-ring competition!”

The crowd erupts into absolute chaos. The thunderous roar of “YES!” chants shakes the very foundation of the arena. Bryan nods, overwhelmed but resolute. His voice cracks with fire now.

“I didn’t come back for a title. I didn’t come back for power. I came back for purpose. I came back because this — this ring, this life, this dream — it’s in my blood. It’s who I am.”

Vince raises his brow, impressed but also aware of the elephant in the room. He lifts the mic again, his voice low and direct.

“Daniel, I admire your passion. I do. But this company still has a decision to make. Kevin Owens and Sami Zayn assaulted a McMahon. That’s not just a disciplinary issue — that’s grounds for termination. Those two don’t deserve another minute under contract.”

A large portion of the crowd actually cheers at that, but Bryan quickly steps forward, raising his voice with urgency.

“Vince — wait. Please. Don’t fire them.”

McMahon looks at Bryan, clearly surprised. “Excuse me?” he growls.

Bryan’s expression is dead serious now. His tone drops lower, intense and personal.

“I know what they did. I know they deserve it. I know they went too far. But if you fire them, you’re letting them off the hook. You’re giving them the easy way out. And after everything they’ve done — to Shane, to this show, and to me — I don’t want them gone. I want them right where I can see them. I want them right here. In this ring. With no place to run.”

The fans roar in approval, catching on to where Bryan is headed.

“I want Kevin Owens and Sami Zayn in a tag team match... at *WrestleMania*. Against me — and a partner of my choosing.”

The arena explodes once again. The “YES!” chants come back full force, nearly drowning out the reaction of Vince McMahon, who stares at Bryan with a slow, calculating smirk forming on his face.

“You’re sure about this?” Vince asks, almost impressed.

Bryan doesn’t blink. “You wanted to fire them? Fine. But after *WrestleMania*, you won’t need to. Because I’m going to do what they’ve done to others for years. I’m going to *break* them.”

The match is made official: Kevin Owens and Sami Zayn vs. Daniel Bryan and a partner of his choosing at *WrestleMania 34*.

But Bryan isn’t done.

He turns and stares directly into the hard camera, his expression darkening.

“Kevin. Sami. I looked at you two like brothers. I believed in you when no one else did. I fought for you. And how did you repay me? You lied to my face. You tried to manipulate me. You used me. You assaulted my friend, you crippled my colleague — and then you *turned* on me. You tried to make me your puppet. But I see you clearly now. You’re not victims. You’re not revolutionaries. You’re not the heart and soul of anything.”

He steps closer to the ropes, his glare unshakable.

“You are parasites. And at WrestleMania, I will make damn sure you’re cut out.”

He pauses for one last beat, eyes burning with fury.

“The miracle is real. The YES Movement is back. And at WrestleMania... you’re dead men walking.”

Bryan throws down the mic as the crowd absolutely erupts into one of the loudest “YES!” chants in years. Vince McMahon looks on, satisfied that the match is now official — and that Daniel Bryan is very much still the fighter the WWE Universe loves.

Backstage in the SmackDown General Manager’s office, WWE Chairman Mr. McMahon was seen speaking directly to the camera. With a somber yet resolute tone, he addressed the chaos that has gripped SmackDown over the past several weeks.

“Daniel Bryan made his decision,” Vince said, referring to Bryan’s refusal to become Commissioner. “And I respect it. But that leaves SmackDown Live without a guiding hand. My son Shane was brutally assaulted by Kevin Owens and Sami Zayn — and while he recovers, someone needs to step in. Someone with vision. Someone with class. Someone with *authority*.”

Then, with the weight of his words hanging heavy, Vince turned toward the door.

“And I know *just* the man.”

The door opened... and in walked **William Regal**.

The WWE Universe watching at home erupted on social media as the esteemed veteran and NXT General Manager stepped into the frame, impeccably dressed, with that signature calm intensity in his eyes.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” Vince continued, “as of this moment, *William Regal* is the new Commissioner of SmackDown Live. And he will carry out this responsibility in honor of my son Shane McMahon — to restore order, dignity, and competition to this brand.”

Regal spoke for the first time with trademark authority and elegance.

“This opportunity,” Regal began, his voice calm and deliberate, “is not one I take lightly. I accept this position not just as a responsibility, but as a personal commitment — one I make in honor of your son, Shane McMahon.”

He continued, “Shane was a leader who gave his all, sometimes to a fault. He believed in action, and he believed in fighting for what was right. And now, I intend to carry that same torch forward on this brand — starting tonight.”

With purpose, Commissioner Regal immediately reshaped the WWE Championship picture heading into WWE Fastlane.

“At Fastlane, the WWE Championship will be defended in a Triple Threat Match,” he declared. “AJ Styles will put his title on the line, but as for who his challengers will be, that will be decided right here, tonight.”

Regal then announced two massive main events for SmackDown LIVE:

- **Randy Orton vs. Jinder Mahal**
- **Baron Corbin vs. Chad Gable**

The winners of these two colossal encounters will advance to WWE Fastlane to challenge AJ Styles for the WWE Championship in a Triple Threat Match.

The new Commissioner concluded with a final, earth-shattering proclamation that directly impacts The Grandest Stage of Them All.

“And remember this,” Regal stated, his eyes fixed on the camera. “The winner of the Triple Threat Match at Fastlane... will go on to defend the WWE Championship against the Royal Rumble Winner.....Shinsuke Nakamura at WrestleMania 34.”

As SmackDown Live returns live, the arena darkens slightly, bathed in shifting neon lights. A smooth bass line pulses through the speakers—and **Naomi's music hits**. The WWE Universe erupts as the former SmackDown Women's Champion emerges under a black light glow, dancing her way down the ramp. She slaps hands with fans at ringside, her LED gear lighting the path forward like a glowing beacon of resilience.

Following closely behind, **Becky Lynch's theme explodes through the arena**. "The Irish Lass Kicker" walks out with trademark swagger but a serious expression. After last week's misfire with Charlotte, there's determination in her eyes as she joins Naomi on the ramp.

A wave of "WOOOs" breaks out as the entrance for **Charlotte Flair** kicks in. Dressed in a regal blue robe, the SmackDown Women's Champion stands tall and confident—despite the looming challenge ahead. She joins Becky and Naomi at the bottom of the ramp. Together, the trio stares into the ring with a unified front.

The camera cuts to commentary where Tom Phillips exclaims:

"And don't forget, folks! Just moments ago, WWE officials confirmed the rumors—**Ruby Riott will challenge Charlotte Flair for the SmackDown Women's Championship at WWE Fastlane!** The stakes just got raised, and you have to imagine Ruby would love to get into Charlotte's head with a win tonight."

The lights cut once more—

The Riott Squad's music crashes in. The trio of Ruby Riott, Liv Morgan, and Sarah Logan

walk out in unison, grim-faced and methodical. Ruby leads the charge, confidently eyeing the champion. Liv and Sarah flanking her like wolves on the hunt. They slide into the ring like predators preparing for their next feeding.

The referee separates the teams as the camera zooms in on the steely-eyed face of Ruby Riott. She motions a title belt around her waist while glaring across the ring at Charlotte.

Six-Woman Tag Team Match: The Riott Squad vs. Naomi, Charlotte Flair, and Becky Lynch

Tag Team Grudge Match – Immediately Following the Chaos

With order barely restored and the ring cleared of debris, WWE officials made the call: turn this chaos into sanctioned warfare. The crowd surged in approval as the six competitors squared off again, this time with rules—but no less rage.

The Riott Squad stood united, feeding off Ruby Riott’s looming championship opportunity at Fastlane. Ruby carried herself like a woman already wearing gold—her smirk icy, her tone mocking, pointing at Charlotte from across the ring as if to say, *“I already pinned you once. I’ll do it again.”*

Naomi and Ruby started us off, and the pace was feral. Naomi struck first, chaining her strikes with the precision of a prizefighter and the grace of a gymnast. She lit Ruby up with a rapid-fire kick combo followed by a flying headscissors. Becky Lynch tagged in and exploded out of the corner with uppercuts and a running leg lariat. Ruby retreated—but Sarah Logan made the blind tag and dropped Becky with a crushing spinebuster.

The Squad took over, isolating Becky in their corner with quick tags and underhanded tactics. Liv Morgan choked Becky in the ropes while Ruby whispered venom in her ear. The tension spilled over when Becky mounted a comeback—hitting a back suplex and crawling toward her corner—only for Charlotte to hesitate.

There was visible frost in the air. Charlotte didn’t extend her hand right away. She looked down at Becky, a flicker of hesitation in her eyes, still fuming over last week’s pinfall—and perhaps still feeling the weight of the Fastlane challenge looming over her title.

Finally, Charlotte made the tag.

She roared in with vengeance, slamming Logan with a belly-to-back suplex, then hitting Ruby off the apron with a thunderous big boot. Liv attempted a crossbody but Charlotte snatched her midair and dumped her with a fallaway slam. Naomi tagged in and landed a picture-perfect springboard body press for a near fall on Logan.

As Naomi tagged Becky back in, the match raced toward a flashpoint.

Becky ducked a clothesline and hit a flying forearm... but Logan ducked—and Becky **BLASTED Charlotte off the apron!** The crowd gasped. Charlotte crashed to the floor, holding her jaw, glaring back up at Becky with nuclear heat in her eyes.

Becky's face twisted with realization—but Logan rolled her up from behind. **1...2... kickout!** The miscue nearly cost the match.

Naomi tagged back in and broke the rhythm with a diving blockbuster. She motioned to Charlotte, pleading with her to get back up—but The Queen stood motionless outside the ring, arms crossed, lips tight.

Charlotte eventually tagged herself in. Becky looked bewildered. Charlotte shoved her out of the way, scooped Logan up—and with a defiant cry—**NAILED Natural Selection. 1...2...3.**

The match was over.

But the aftermath was far from it.

Charlotte stood in the ring alone, victorious yet fuming, her eyes never leaving Becky's. Becky stepped forward, trying to speak—Charlotte turned her back and exited without a word. Naomi stood between them, unsure which direction to look.

And behind it all, Ruby Riott stood on the ramp, smiling wide, clapping slowly. She pointed at the WrestleMania sign above the ring, then tapped her palm to mimic a title belt.

The camera cuts backstage moments after the intense six-woman tag team match, where **Chad Gable** is seen lacing up his boots inside a quiet locker room, the echo of crowd noise still faintly audible from the arena. His brow is furrowed with focus, hands tightening the final strap on his ring gear. A neatly folded towel and bottle of water sit beside him. He's locked in, ready for another big night following his gutsy performance in last week's grueling Gauntlet Match — a performance that left the WWE Universe on their feet and his stock soaring.

Suddenly, the air shifts. Off-screen footsteps grow louder and more deliberate — until **Shelton Benjamin** steps into frame, arms crossed, jaw clenched, his eyes burning a hole through his former tag team partner.

Shelton Benjamin:

"So this is what it takes now? One good night and suddenly you're the golden boy around here?"

Gable looks up, not surprised, and slowly stands to his feet, their eyes now level.

Shelton Benjamin:

"That should be me in the main event. That should be me getting title opportunities. I'm *The Gold Standard*, remember? Not some scrappy underdog who got lucky."

Gable scoffs, shaking his head.

Chad Gable:

"Lucky? Shelton, I eliminated three guys in that Gauntlet Match. You? You were the **first** one I put down."

A beat of silence. Benjamin's expression stiffens, his eyes narrowing. Gable leans in slightly.

Chad Gable:

"Maybe instead of worrying about my opportunities, you should focus on your own in-ring work. The Standard's lookin' a little tarnished lately."

Benjamin grits his teeth, clearly biting back his instinct to explode. His fists clench at his sides as Gable grabs his wrist tape and slings his towel over his shoulder. He steps past Benjamin without flinching, heading for the exit.

As Gable stops at the doorway, he glances at the **production run-down sheet** taped to the wall.

He smirks.

Chad Gable (over his shoulder):

"Looks like you're up against Nakamura tonight."

He pauses just long enough for the final jab to land.

Chad Gable:

"Maybe the extra practice will pay off, *Gold Standard*."

Benjamin stares after him, jaw locked, seething in silence as the crowd's ambient reaction from the arena filters through again. The segment fades out on Benjamin's furious expression — a storm quietly building behind his steely gaze.

A softly lit backstage hallway comes into view.

As SmackDown Live returns from commercial, the scene is quiet... but the tension is anything but.

Charlotte Flair, still in her ring gear, strides down the corridor, championship slung confidently over her shoulder. Her pace slows as she turns the corner — and comes face to face with **Becky Lynch**, who's standing alone by a monitor, arms crossed, expression unreadable.

The crowd audibly reacts from the arena as the two women stare at one another, the echoes of the earlier match — and the accidental collision — still hanging between them.

Charlotte tilts her head slightly, cool but assertive.

Charlotte Flair:

"You got something you want to say?"

Becky lets out a dry chuckle, more bitter than amused.

Becky Lynch:

"Funny... that's the same thing I was gonna ask you last week."

The silence between them sharpens.

Becky Lynch:

"I said I was sorry when *you* knocked me off the apron. Mistakes happen, right? But tonight? You didn't even look back."

Charlotte's eyes narrow, her tone low but edged.

Charlotte Flair:

"I was in the middle of a match. I was focused on winning — on not letting the Riott Squad humiliate us again. I didn't have time to play the blame game."

Becky steps in, her voice firmer.

Becky Lynch:

"You always have time to point fingers when it suits you. Just remember — Fastlane's coming. And you're not the only one with something to prove."

Charlotte scoffs, adjusting her title belt.

Charlotte Flair:

"Fastlane is Ruby Riott's problem. Not yours."

She walks off slowly, heels clicking down the corridor, leaving Becky alone — her face tight, jaw clenched, eyes following Charlotte until she's out of frame.

The camera cuts back to the arena, where the crowd buzzes with anticipation. The lights pulse to the opening riff of Chad Gable's entrance theme, and the Olympic athlete emerges onto the stage with purpose in every step. He bounces in place at the top of the ramp, the residual respect from last week's marathon Gauntlet Match performance still fueling chants of "GABLE! GABLE!" throughout the Rabobank Arena.

Tom Phillips:

"Ladies and gentlemen, we are moments away from a critical match in the landscape of the WWE Championship picture. Chad Gable — the man who stunned the world last week with his heart and tenacity — has a golden opportunity tonight. If he can defeat Baron Corbin, he'll punch his ticket to Fastlane and earn a spot in the WWE Championship Triple Threat Match!"

Corey Graves:

"This is a career-making moment, Tom. Gable's performance last week was one for the ages, but let's be honest — Baron Corbin is a different beast. He's stronger, he's colder, and he hasn't forgotten that Gable eliminated him from that same Gauntlet."

Byron Saxton:

"And with that bad blood still simmering — and a WWE Title opportunity hanging in the balance — this match could get ugly in a hurry."

Gable hits the ring, pacing like a caged animal. The stakes couldn't be higher.

[Graphic appears on screen:]

→ *Fastlane: WWE Championship Triple Threat Match*

AJ Styles (c) vs. Winner of Gable vs. Corbin vs. Winner of Randy Orton vs. Jinder Mahal (main event later tonight!)

[Cut to backstage feed of WWE Champion AJ Styles watching on a monitor in his locker room. He adjusts his title slightly on his shoulder, his eyes sharp and focused.]

Tom Phillips (voice-over):

"AJ Styles knows what's at stake tonight. And whoever walks out of that triple threat at Fastlane will be heading into WrestleMania as WWE Champion. For Gable or Corbin — the road to immortality starts right now."

Suddenly, the lights dim, and a harsh guitar sting hits the speakers. The crowd's reaction turns venomous.

Baron Corbin steps through the curtain, stoic and cold, his eyes locked on the ring as if Gable is already prey.

Corey Graves:

"You can feel it — that's not just a walk to the ring, that's a slow, methodical hunt. And if Baron Corbin smells weakness, he won't hesitate to exploit it."

Corbin slowly climbs the steps and enters the ring, brushing past Gable without even looking at him. He walks to the corner and leans back against the turnbuckle, smirking.

Chad Gable vs. Baron Corbin

Winner Advances to WWE Championship Triple Threat Match at Fastlane

Final 5 Minutes

The final stretch of the match unfolded with the energy of a powder keg ready to blow. Chad Gable had just narrowly escaped the Deep Six, his body twisting just enough to avoid the crushing spin that had put so many men away. Corbin, enraged, stormed forward with a vicious lariat, looking to take Gable's head off and finally shut the door on the underdog's dreams. But Gable, digging into reserves few men ever tap into, ducked beneath the blow and instantly slid behind Corbin, locking his arms around the Lone Wolf's waist. The crowd came unglued as they sensed it—Gable's specialty. With pure grit, he deadlifted the 285-pound Corbin into a breathtaking rolling German suplex, bridging with every muscle in his neck and core screaming

from exertion. The referee's hand came down—once, twice—but Corbin just managed to kick out, leaving the crowd gasping in disbelief.

Gable sat up, pain etched across every inch of his face. His ribs ached with every breath, but he didn't hesitate. He dragged himself to the ropes and climbed the turnbuckle, each step a war against gravity and pain. As he stood tall atop the corner, the crowd rose with him. Corbin stirred below. Gable steadied himself—then soared through the air with a picture-perfect moonsault. Time froze. Corbin rolled out of the way. Gable's body met the canvas with a brutal, gut-wrenching thud, all the air in his lungs blasted out in one awful burst. He writhed in agony, clutching his ribs, while Corbin smirked through a busted lip.

Seizing the moment, Corbin backed into the ropes and exploded forward, catching Gable in the side of the skull with a massive big boot. The sound echoed like a gunshot in the Bakersfield arena, and Gable's body snapped sideways across the mat. Corbin dropped for the cover, barking at the ref to count. One. Two. But Gable still found life—barely kicking out as the crowd erupted once again. Corbin's eyes bulged with disbelief. He wasn't just wrestling a man—he was wrestling a force of will.

Corbin yanked Gable up by the wrist like a rag doll and threw him over his shoulders, setting up End of Days. The crowd braced for the inevitable. But Gable, in mid-air, twisted like a man possessed, kicking free and slipping behind Corbin at the last possible second. He hit the ropes, looking to capitalize, launching himself with a spinning DDT. Corbin caught him mid-flight, but Gable twisted again, wrenching down with all his weight and finally planting Corbin head-first into the mat. Both men collapsed, sprawled out like wreckage from a car crash. The referee hovered above, eyes darting, ready to call the count.

The fans were on their feet, clapping rhythmically, pouring their spirit into Gable's body like fuel. He was the first to stir, crawling to the ropes and pulling himself up one limb at a time. Corbin pushed off the mat, dazed, and tried to follow. Gable, sweat pouring down his face, glanced once to the crowd, then to the heavens. He climbed the turnbuckle again. This time slower. This time, it meant everything. Perched at the top, he launched once more—**another moonsault**—and this time it connected with a thunderous impact across Corbin's torso. Gable screamed through the pain and hooked the leg.

One. Two. No. Corbin kicked out again.

Gable sat back, stunned, his hands in his hair. He looked up to the ceiling, whispering something only he could hear. He dragged himself up again. Corbin followed. They exchanged sluggish, heavy strikes. Corbin went for a wild haymaker—but Gable ducked and wrapped his arms around the waist.

The crowd knew.

He rolled. He lifted. Corbin tried to plant his feet, tried to elbow free—but Gable adjusted, absorbed it, and wrenched with Olympic precision.

Chaos Theory.

Gable hit it. Perfect rotation. Perfect bridge.

The referee slid into place.

One. Two. Three.

The bell rang, and the building exploded.

Chad Gable didn't move for a moment. He just lay there, staring up at the lights, tears mixing with sweat, his chest heaving. The referee raised his arm, but it took Gable several seconds to even register what had happened. He had done it. He had beaten Baron Corbin. He had defied the odds again. And now... now he was going to Fastlane.

As the ring announcer confirmed his victory, a new graphic filled the TitanTron:

WWE Championship Triple Threat Match at Fastlane AJ Styles (c) vs. Randy Orton OR Jinder Mahal vs. Chad Gable

In the crowd, grown men were cheering like kids. Gable staggered to his feet, chest still heaving, and climbed the ropes one final time—not to fly, but to stand tall. A bruised underdog now on the doorstep of greatness.

The scene transitions from the roar of the Rabobank Arena to a bustling backstage hallway, where WWE Champion **AJ Styles** stands in front of a SmackDown Live backdrop, title slung over his shoulder. He's glistening with sweat from an earlier warm-up, but his expression is all business. Renee Young stands beside him, microphone in hand.

Renee Young:

"AJ, we just witnessed an incredible match between Chad Gable and Baron Corbin. Gable has now officially joined the WWE Championship match at Fastlane. If Randy Orton or Jinder Mahal wins tonight's main event, you'll be defending your title in a Triple Threat. How are you feeling about that?"

AJ adjusts the WWE Title on his shoulder and gives a small, knowing nod.

AJ Styles:

"First off—props to Chad Gable. That kid's got heart, no doubt. I know what it's like to scratch and claw to prove you belong, and tonight, he earned it. But let's get one thing straight—Fastlane's my lane. And no matter who wins between Orton and Mahal... no matter how many challengers they throw at me... I'm walking out still the WWE Champion."

The crowd cheers from the arena, reacting to Styles' words. But before Renee can ask her next question, a quiet hush falls over the hallway. The camera slowly pans left as **Shinsuke Nakamura** steps into frame.

The Royal Rumble winner stands silently at first, his eyes fixed on AJ's. He walks forward with a deliberate calm until they're standing **nose to nose**, both men unblinking.

Shinsuke Nakamura:

"I hope... you win at Fastlane."

AJ doesn't flinch. He raises his eyebrows, curious.

Nakamura (with a small smirk):

"Because I would hate... to have our dream match ruined."

The crowd inside the arena erupts at the mere mention of the word "dream match."

AJ leans in just a bit closer, fire in his voice.

AJ Styles:

"So would I."

A tense silence hangs between them for a beat. Styles finally speaks again, voice low and serious.

AJ Styles:

"Just make sure you're ready, Nakamura. Because if you're stepping into the ring with *The Phenomenal One*... it's not just a dream match. It's a fight."

Nakamura smirks again, giving the faintest nod.

Nakamura:

"Good. I like to fight."

They stare each other down for a few more seconds, the electricity between them so thick you could slice it with a katana. No further words are needed. The match is coming. The dream is waiting. The champion just has to survive Fastlane.

[Fade to commercial as the two men remain locked in an intense stare, nose to nose.]

The crowd noise swells as the lights shift to gold and a deep bass-heavy beat kicks in.

"Ain't No Stoppin' Me Noooow!"

Shelton Benjamin makes his entrance, storming out onto the stage with a determined glare etched across his face. No posing. No pandering. Just business. Still simmering from his earlier confrontation with Chad Gable, Benjamin marches toward the ring, the expression of a man with something to prove and someone to hurt.

Tom Phillips:

“Shelton Benjamin’s had a chip on his shoulder all night long. Earlier, we saw tensions explode between him and his former partner Chad Gable—and now, Benjamin’s taking all that frustration into the ring against one of WWE’s absolute best: Shinsuke Nakamura.”

Corey Graves:

“Let’s not forget—Shelton Benjamin is a world-class athlete. NCAA champion, tag team champion, veteran of the game. Don’t let the swagger of Nakamura fool you—if Benjamin catches him slipping tonight, we could see a major upset.”

Benjamin stretches in the corner, eyes locked on the stage, waiting.

The lights cut. The haunting strings of “**The Rising Sun**” echo through the arena. A strobe of red and white lights pulses to the beat as **Shinsuke Nakamura** slowly steps out onto the stage, silhouetted in shadow before emerging in full view—arms waving, eyes closed, moving to the rhythm only he can hear.

The WWE Universe erupts in sync with his charisma.

Byron Saxton:

“Nakamura may have already punched his ticket to WrestleMania, but every match between now and then is a statement—and Shelton Benjamin is no easy task.”

Nakamura glides to the ring with his signature swagger, then slides under the ropes and pops to his feet with a sudden burst of energy, throwing his head back in a dramatic pose as the lights snap back on.

He turns slowly to face Benjamin... and **smiles**.

Tom Phillips:

“Dream match or not, Nakamura isn’t taking his eyes off the prize. He’ll need to stay sharp here against a hungry Shelton Benjamin, because this match starts... right now.”

The referee signals for the bell as both men circle each other, the crowd buzzing in anticipation.

Shelton Benjamin vs. Shinsuke Nakamura... is underway.

Shelton Benjamin vs. Shinsuke Nakamura

***Final 5 Minutes*

The match had already been a stiff, physical contest, a true showcase of strength versus style. In the final five minutes, the momentum teetered precariously between two veterans who knew exactly how to dissect an opponent. Shelton Benjamin, fueled by bitterness and a chip on his shoulder the size of WrestleMania itself, had slowed the pace, grounding Nakamura with ruthless precision. He had targeted the left leg of “The King of Strong Style” for the last several

minutes, wrapping it around the post, stomping the knee joint, and slapping on a punishing single-leg crab. Every time Nakamura tried to shift gears, Benjamin yanked him back to reality—and to the canvas.

But now Nakamura was starting to stir.

The crowd clapped rhythmically as Nakamura used the ropes to pull himself up, limping but defiantly waving Benjamin in. Shelton snarled and lunged with a clothesline—but Nakamura ducked and came back with a stiff spinning back elbow that caught Benjamin flush on the jaw. The impact echoed. Nakamura followed up with a high roundhouse kick that staggered Shelton back into the corner. Nakamura limped in, then launched himself with a brutal running knee to the midsection, nearly folding Benjamin in half. The audience roared as Nakamura dropped him with an enzuigiri, his body twisting in mid-air despite the pain in his leg.

The former Intercontinental Champion rolled across the ring, trying to regain his bearings, but Nakamura crawled after him and attempted a suplex. Benjamin countered—dropping down behind—then *shoved* Nakamura into the ropes. On the rebound, he caught Nakamura and delivered a stunning **snap overhead belly-to-belly suplex**, bridging for the cover.

One! Two! Kickout.

Frustrated, Shelton slammed the mat. He stood up and measured Nakamura, yelling, “I’m the Gold Standard! Not you!” before hoisting him up and setting him on the top turnbuckle. Shelton climbed to the second rope, hooking Nakamura’s arm for a top-rope superplex. But Nakamura fought back with elbow after elbow, slipping underneath Benjamin mid-attempt. In one fluid motion, he grabbed Shelton’s wrist and yanked him down hard, Benjamin landing chest-first across the top turnbuckle with a thud.

With Benjamin stunned and draped over the corner, Nakamura slithered back, favoring the bad leg, then surged forward with a running **inverted exploder suplex**, launching Benjamin halfway across the ring. Nakamura pounded the mat with his fists, teeth clenched through the pain, and the crowd rose as they knew what was coming.

He backed into the corner, arms raised, eyes wild.

Tom Phillips:

“Nakamura’s calling for it! Here it comes!”

Shelton slowly staggered to his knees.

Kinshasa.

Nakamura *exploded* forward—only for Shelton to duck it and roll him up in a tight schoolboy pin!

One! Two! Nakamura kicked out!

Both men scrambled to their feet—Benjamin with a wild swing—Nakamura ducked, sprang behind him, and drove a **rapid-fire knee strike to the back of Shelton’s neck**, dropping him like a sack of bricks. With no hesitation, Nakamura leapt up and **drove a final Kinshasa**, this time connecting clean and violent across Shelton’s jaw.

Benjamin collapsed flat, unconscious.

Nakamura hooked the leg, body shaking from exhaustion.

One. Two. Three.

Winner: Shinsuke Nakamura

The bell rang, and Nakamura rolled off, wincing as he clutched his knee. The referee raised his arm, but Nakamura didn’t rise immediately. He stared at the lights, chest heaving, soaking in the sound of the crowd chanting his name.

As he finally stood, he glanced down at the motionless Benjamin, and for a moment, there was no cocky grin—only quiet respect. The King of Strong Style had survived the Gold Standard’s best, and as he limped toward WrestleMania.

Suddenly, the arena lights flicker and cut to black.

A **deep, grinding metallic sound** rips through the speakers, followed by a flicker of static. The screen turns to grayscale. Then darkness. Then — flashes of twisted, distorted imagery:

Cracked church windows... a flock of crows taking flight... heavy iron gates slamming shut...

Then the words in jagged font:

“THEY HAVE BEEN WARNED...”

The camera cuts to a **cold, desolate field**. Gray skies churn overhead. Fog slithers across the earth like a living thing. In the center stand **Harper and Rowan**, cloaked in tattered leather, sledgehammers slung over their shoulders, breathing heavily like monsters summoned from a forgotten world. Their eyes glow with fury. Their faces are stone.

Harper’s voice cuts through, raspy and cold.

“We’ve watched long enough.”

Quick, jarring cuts follow:

— The Bludgeon Brothers decimating Breezango.

- Powerbombing Aiden English into the mat.
- Wrecking The Ascension without blinking.

Rowan speaks, slow and guttural.

**“They dance. They laugh. They *boast*.”
“But they are... not safe.”
“*Not anymore.*”

Cut to black. Then static again. The images return, now blood-tinted.

- A sledgehammer cracking through concrete.
- Tag ropes being torn in half.
- The Usos raising their titles from last week, overlaid with glitchy red Xs.

Harper leans in close to the camera, his face filling the screen. His voice drops to a terrifying whisper.

“Usos... you call yourselves the best?”
“At Fastlane, we bring you TRUTH.”
“Your reign ends.”

Rowan steps beside him, breathing heavily through his mask.

“Your penitentiary...”
“Becomes your tomb.”

The screen glitches violently. Their silhouettes fade into shadow.

Then, with a thunderclap—

**"BLUDGEON BROTHERS VS THE USOS – FASTLANE – SMACKDOWN
TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP"**

The words slam onto the screen in blood-red letters, cracked and glitching.

Fade to black. Silence.

Then a final sound:

The sledgehammer hits. Once. Loud. Final.

[Return to the live arena, where the crowd sits in stunned silence, murmuring.]

The crowd buzzes in anticipation as the lights dim slightly and the opening chords of “**GLORIOUS**” ring out over the arena. The WWE Universe erupts in song as the United States Champion **Bobby Roode** steps through the curtain, dressed in a sharp navy blue suit and his

golden title draped proudly over his shoulder. He pauses at the top of the ramp, soaking in the ovation, before slowly raising both arms into his signature pose.

Tom Phillips:

“There is no doubt about it — Bobby Roode has brought class and prestige to the United States Championship. But tonight, he faces perhaps his most personal and frustrating challenge to date: Dolph Ziggler.”

Roode walks confidently to the ring, steps through the ropes, and takes a microphone from ringside. The crowd chants “GLORIOUS!” one more time before quieting as Roode begins to speak.

Bobby Roode:

“Last week on SmackDown LIVE, we all saw it. Chad Gable... went to war. For 35 minutes, he gave everything he had. He pushed himself beyond limits most people don’t even realize exist. And in doing so, he earned something that can’t be handed to you — *respect*.”

“But then...”

Roode’s tone shifts slightly. He looks out at the crowd, jaw tightening.

Roode:

“Out came Dolph Ziggler.”

The crowd boos at the mention of the name. Roode doesn’t hide his disdain.

Roode:

“You didn’t come out to challenge a man. You came out to pick the bones of a broken one. Gable had been through hell — and you pounced like a vulture. And now, somehow, that win makes you the No. 1 Contender for this United States Championship?”

Roode lifts the title on his shoulder for all to see.

Roode:

“Dolph, you didn’t *earn* that. Just like you didn’t *earn* the right to walk around with the U.S. Title you abandoned. You left it in the middle of this ring. You left this company. You left *these people!*”

“You say you never lost this title? No, you just walked away from it. And I promise you this—”

“—I won’t let you do that again.”

RECORD SCRATCH.

♪ “THEY CAN’T LOOK AWAY...” ♪

A wave of jeers rains down as **Dolph Ziggler** struts out onto the ramp in a leather jacket, dark jeans, and — slung over his shoulder — *the very same U.S. Title belt he vacated* weeks prior. The real one remains around Roode's waist. But Dolph wears his with arrogant pride.

Ring Announcer (officially):

“And it is now official... at WWE Fastlane, it will be *Bobby Roode vs. Dolph Ziggler for the United States Championship!*”

Ziggler smirks as he raises his mic, pacing the top of the ramp.

Dolph Ziggler:

“Oh, Bobby... are we really still whining about the past? Are you and all these people still patting little Chad Gable on the back for his big, heroic *loss*?”

“See, you can pretend this title means everything to you. You can polish it, pose with it, soak in your little cheers. But this right here?”

Ziggler pats the title over his shoulder.

“This isn't about respect. This isn't about honor. This is about reality. And reality is, I never lost this championship. I just got tired of wasting my greatness on people who didn't deserve it.”

The boos intensify. Ziggler smirks and begins his walk toward the ring.

Ziggler:

“You act like I stole something. Like I cheated the system. No, Roode... what I did was *survive* it. You needed a tournament just to get a taste of this spotlight. I walked back in, beat your boy Gable, and proved what I've known all along — I'm still the best damn thing going in WWE.”

Ziggler climbs into the ring, slowly circling Roode like a shark. His tone shifts — darker, more bitter.

Ziggler:

“You don't know what it's like to scratch and claw for *years*, to carry this company and be forgotten *overnight*. I've been stealing shows, breaking backs, and getting disrespected for over a decade. You've been here... what, a year?”

“You walk around in your fancy robes, singing your little song, pretending you're a savior for this title.”

“I made this title mean something when nobody else cared.”

Roode steps forward, nose to nose with Ziggler now.

Roode (quietly):

“You walked out, Dolph.”

Ziggler (snapping):

“And I walked back in *better than ever!*”

Roode:

“You abandoned the title. I *earned* it. I *fought* for it. You don’t get to skip the line, carry around your old belt like it means something, and pretend this is still your show.”

Roode raises *his* championship, directly between their faces.

Roode:

“At Fastlane, we settle it. You want this so badly? Come take it. But just remember — when I beat you... you won’t have a title, you won’t have a spotlight, and you won’t have an excuse.”

Ziggler smirks, his voice now a whisper.

Ziggler:

“Bobby... you don’t beat someone like me. You survive me.”

The crowd roars as the tension reaches a fever pitch. Roode begins to remove his jacket, ready for a fight, holding his title up again. The fans chant:

“LET THEM FIGHT! LET THEM FIGHT!”

Ziggler teases a response — he shrugs off his own jacket...
...then smirks.

Without a word, Ziggler slides under the bottom rope and backs up the ramp, his own U.S. title held arrogantly overhead. Roode leans over the ropes, staring him down.

Ziggler (backing away):

“Fastlane, Roode. Not tonight. That moment — when I take everything you built? That moment’s going to be... picture-perfect.”

♪ **“THEY CAN’T LOOK AWAY...”** ♪

Ziggler’s music hits as he stands tall on the ramp, holding the "title he never lost" in the air.

In the ring, Bobby Roode hoists *the real* United States Championship above his head, his glare never leaving Ziggler. As **Dolph Ziggler** disappears behind the curtain, the camera lingers one last time on **Bobby Roode**, who remains in the center of the ring holding the United States Championship high above his head. The tension still hangs thick in the air, with the Fastlane title clash now firmly set.

The Confession in Room 237

Midway through smackdown, an image flickers to life on the massive Titantron, its crystal-clear resolution deliberately degraded to something resembling a decades-old surveillance tape. The picture quality wavers and distorts, pixelated and grainy, as if filtered through layers of static and desperation. The setting is unmistakably seedy—a forgotten motel room that reeks of cigarette smoke and broken dreams even through the digital transmission.

The wallpaper, once perhaps a cheerful floral pattern, now hangs in tattered strips like dead skin peeling from infected wounds. Water stains bloom across the ceiling in abstract patterns of neglect, while a single naked bulb dangles from a frayed cord, swaying gently and casting shadows that dance across the scene like specters of violence past. The harsh fluorescent light creates deep valleys of darkness under the eyes of the two men seated before the camera, transforming their familiar faces into something almost unrecognizable—something predatory.

Kevin Owens sits slouched in a rickety wooden chair that creaks with every subtle movement, his broad frame somehow made even more imposing by the cramped confines of the room. His usually pristine appearance has been abandoned; his beard is unkempt and wild, peppered with what might be crumbs or debris, while his black t-shirt bears the wrinkles and stains of someone who has been living rough. But it's his eyes that command attention—those dark orbs that normally sparkle with calculated cunning now burn with something far more dangerous. They reflect the harsh light like polished obsidian, containing depths of malice that seem to pull viewers into their darkness.

Beside him, **Sami Zayn** perches on the edge of a sagging bed, the mattress compressed and stained with years of transient misery. His signature toque is absent, revealing hair that stands at odd angles, greasy and unwashed. His face, usually animated with passionate conviction, now cycles through expressions like a broken kaleidoscope—righteous fury melting into smug satisfaction, then hardening into cold calculation before the cycle begins anew. His hands shake almost imperceptibly, whether from adrenaline, caffeine, or something deeper and more disturbing.

Kevin leans forward into the camera's unforgiving lens, his face filling the frame until individual pores become visible, until the viewers can almost smell the stale air on his breath. When he speaks, his voice carries the weight of absolute certainty, each word carefully chosen and delivered with surgical precision:

"Surprised?" The question hangs in the air like smoke from a fired gun. *"You shouldn't be."* His lips curl into something that might have once been a smile but has been twisted into something altogether more sinister. *"Did you really think we'd just... disappear? Vanish into the night like cowards? Did you think we'd run and hide after finally—FINALLY—doing what needed to be done?"*

The camera's cheap microphone picks up every subtle inflection, every breath, every wet click of his tongue against his teeth. There's a musicality to his madness, a rhythm that makes his words hypnotic despite their horrifying content.

Sami nods with the fervor of a true believer, his entire body rocking with the motion. When he speaks, his voice cracks slightly, raw with emotion that seems to pour from somewhere deep in his chest:

"What Shane McMahon MADE us do!" The emphasis explodes from him like a gunshot, causing the cheap camera to distort momentarily. *"Let's be very, VERY clear about that. This wasn't some random act of violence. This wasn't some moment of temporary insanity. This was a consequence. This was a reckoning. This was the culmination of months—no, YEARS—of disrespect, of being overlooked, of being systematically crushed under the boot heel of a corrupt, power-mad system embodied by that silver-spoon-fed sociopath Shane McMahon."*

His hands gesture wildly as he speaks, fingers splayed and trembling, painting invisible pictures of injustice in the stale motel air. Spittle flies from his lips, catching the harsh light like tiny meteors of rage.

Kevin's demeanor shifts subtly, his voice dropping to a conversational tone that somehow makes every word exponentially more terrifying. It's the voice of a man discussing the weather while planning murder, casual and friendly and absolutely chilling:

"He pushed us. He prodded us. He poked the bears one too many times." Kevin's smile widens, revealing teeth that seem too sharp in the dim light. *"And what happens when you poke a bear, Shane? What happens when you keep pushing and pushing until something breaks?"*

The laugh that follows is perhaps the most disturbing sound ever broadcast on WWE programming—a harsh, mirthless bark that seems to scrape against the microphone like fingernails on a chalkboard. It's the sound of sanity snapping, of restraint finally giving way to pure, unbridled violence.

"You get mauled. You get dismembered. You get left broken and bleeding in a parking lot, clinging to life by your manicured fingernails." Kevin's eyes seem to glow in the harsh light as he relives the memory. *"We gave him a preview of what happens when you cross Kevin Owens and Sami Zayn. A little taste of the medicine he'd been so eager to prescribe."*

Sami suddenly lurches forward, his movements becoming increasingly manic as the words tumble from his mouth in a torrent of justified fury:

"And to all you keyboard warriors out there! All you so-called 'WWE Universe' members crying your crocodile tears for poor Shane-O-Mac—SAVE IT!" His voice rises to a shriek that causes the audio to distort. *"Where was your outrage when WE were being screwed? When OUR careers were being jeopardized? When OUR families' futures were being toyed with by that egomaniac trust-fund baby? You were SILENT! Or worse—you CHEERED him on! You applauded every humiliation, every betrayal, every knife in our backs!"*

Kevin leans even closer to the camera, his face now filling the entire frame, features distorted by the wide-angle lens until he looks like something from a funhouse mirror—grotesque and

inhuman. His voice drops to barely above a whisper, but somehow carries more menace than any scream:

"We heard the whispers. 'They went too far.' 'They should be locked up.' 'They're animals.' Let me tell you something—let me make this crystal clear for all of you..." He pauses, savoring the moment. *"We ARE animals. We're the apex predators in this concrete jungle, and Shane McMahon learned that lesson the hard way. That Pop-Up Powerbomb onto his precious SUV? That wasn't just violence. That was ART. That was a masterpiece of destruction, a symphony of consequence."*

His eyes become distant, lost in the memory, and when he continues, his voice carries the reverence of a man describing a religious experience:

"I could hear the metal groan under his weight. I could hear the glass shatter like a thousand tiny screams. The way his body bounced... the way he crumpled... it was almost as satisfying as the sounds HE was making. The whimpering. The begging. The realization that all his daddy's money couldn't save him from what was coming."

Sami's pupils dilate to pinpricks of ecstasy as he picks up the narrative, his voice becoming sing-song and dreamy:

"And the sound of that car door... oh, that beautiful, beautiful sound... slamming on his leg... again... and again... CRUNCH!" He throws his head back in apparent bliss. *"Music to my ears! Each impact was a note in our symphony of justice. That was for every opportunity he stole from us. Every promise he broke. Every dream he crushed under his designer boots."*

Kevin's face fills the frame once more, but now his whisper carries a promise of violence that seems to reach through the screen and wrap around the viewers' throats:

"So, to the McMahons... to WWE management... to anyone who thinks they can control us, manipulate us, use us... you can't. Not anymore." Each word is enunciated with deadly precision. *"You want to fire us? Go ahead and try. You want to suspend us? We'll be waiting in the shadows. You want to press charges? We'll turn that courtroom into our personal stage."*

His smile returns, but it's the smile of a shark that has tasted blood:

"Because we're not done. What happened to Shane McMahon? That wasn't an ending. That was a statement. That was the opening note of our new song. And we've got a lot more statements to make. A lot more music to compose."

Sami leans into frame beside Kevin, their faces now side by side, unified in their madness:

"SmackDown Live, Raw, NXT... No corner of this company is safe from our influence. We are a disease, and we're going to infect every locker room, every executive office, every corporate boardroom until the whole rotten structure comes crashing down. Just like Shane McMahon's career. Just like his bones."

With deliberate, almost ceremonial slowness, Kevin reaches forward with one thick finger and presses the camera's stop button. The image doesn't cut away cleanly, instead, it flickers and distorts, the last frame burning into the Titantron like an afterimage of violence. The arena is plunged into oppressive darkness that seems to press against the crowd like a physical weight, silence broken only by the collective intake of breath from twenty thousand horrified spectators.

When the lights finally return, they do so reluctantly, as if even the illumination itself is afraid of what it might reveal.

As the camera returns to the arena following the heated backstage segment with Kevin Owens and Sami Zayn, the lights suddenly dim and a single spotlight shines on the entrance stage. The crowd erupts with anticipation, already chanting in unison before the first note hits.

“RUSEV DAY!”

A spotlight bursts to life as **Aiden English** strides confidently onto the stage, microphone in hand, arms extended wide like a Broadway star ready to own the spotlight. Draped in his signature long coat, English dramatically clears his throat and launches into song, his voice echoing through the arena like the opening notes of a grand opera.

Aiden English (singing):

“Laaadies and gentlemeen... brace yourselves... for celebration... for domination... and for the most GLORIOUS DAY of the WEEEEK...”

He points to the curtain with a theatrical flourish.

English:

“IT’S... RUUUUUUSEV DAAAAAY!”

The ovation is deafening as **Rusev** bursts through the curtain, chest out, head high, stomping toward the ring with pride. Wearing his Bulgarian flag colors and a stern expression of focused intensity, Rusev plays to the fans without saying a word — his presence alone enough to ignite them. He joins English mid-ramp, nodding in approval as Aiden continues to sing his praises all the way down the aisle.

As Rusev and English enter the ring, English ascends the turnbuckle and delivers one final vocal flourish, while Rusev stands center-ring, fists clenched and eyes locked on the stage.

Suddenly, the tone shifts.

The lights flicker to a bleak, almost apocalyptic glow as the heavy industrial beat of **The Ascension’s** music blasts through the speakers. The crowd’s energy turns from celebratory to wary as **Konnor and Viktor** emerge from the back, clad in black leather and spiked armor, their faces painted with harsh, war-like designs.

There is no showmanship — only cold, determined aggression.

The Ascension march with methodical steps toward the ring, their expressions unreadable, like two hunters on the trail of blood. They pause at the base of the ramp, looking into the ring at Rusev Day like they're surveying prey, then slide in with sudden bursts of movement, pacing around their corner like caged beasts ready to be unleashed. With both teams now in their respective corners, the referee steps in to keep order. The crowd continues chanting, the tension rising.

The bell is moments from ringing.

Rusev tightens the tape around his wrists. Viktor glares across the ring with animalistic focus.

Match: Rusev Day vs. The Ascension

The match had been more physical than anyone expected, and now, in its final five minutes, all four competitors had been tested. What was meant to be a showcase for Rusev Day had instead become a war of attrition. The Ascension, long dismissed, long forgotten, had come tonight with something to prove. And for the last ten minutes, they'd done exactly that.

Inside the ring, **Rusev** lies prone in the corner, gasping for air, having just eaten a flying knee to the chest from **Viktor**. Across the mat, **Konnor** roars, pacing like a man possessed, shouting to the crowd who rain down boos. Viktor crawls, slapping Konnor's open hand, making the tag.

Konnor enters the ring like a sledgehammer. He yanks Rusev up by the hair and hoists him into the air for a thunderous **fallaway slam**, launching the Bulgarian Brute halfway across the ring. Rusev lands hard, clutching his lower back. The crowd chants desperately:

"RU-SEV DAY! RU-SEV DAY!"

Aiden English is stomping on the apron, hand extended, shouting encouragement.

Konnor stalks over to Rusev again and scoops him up for a **short-arm clothesline**, nearly decapitating him. He goes for the cover, barking at the referee to count.

ONE!

TWO!

NO!

Rusev powers out just before the three. The crowd bursts in relief.

Konnor slaps the mat in frustration and drags Rusev back to his feet, yelling, "You're nothing, Rusev Day's a joke!" He whips Rusev into the corner and charges in—**but Rusev gets a boot up!** Konnor stumbles back, dazed, and Rusev, from instinct, explodes out of the corner with a **spinning wheel kick!** The big man drops!

Both men are down.

Rusev crawls, arm over arm, the fans rising to their feet in anticipation. Aiden is begging for the tag. Konnor starts to stir. Rusev stretches... leaps...

TAG TO AIDEN ENGLISH!

The crowd erupts as English vaults over the top rope and immediately takes down Viktor, who had just entered, with a running forearm. He spins, ducks Konnor's wild punch, and nails a **step-up enzuigiri** that knocks the big man off his feet! Aiden feeds off the energy, leaping onto the middle rope and crashing into Viktor with a **springboard tornado DDT!**

He covers:

ONE!

TWO!

BROKEN UP BY KONNOR!

Konnor stomps on Aiden's back and pulls him up for a **chokebomb**, but Rusev charges back in — **Machka Kick to Konnor's jaw!** The crowd explodes as Konnor crumples and rolls to the outside.

Viktor tries to take advantage, sneaking behind Rusev with a chop block to the knee. Rusev falls to one knee. Viktor hits the ropes and charges — **but Aiden intercepts with a clothesline that flips Viktor inside out!**

Aiden and Rusev look at each other. They know it's time.

Rusev picks Viktor up and **launches him into the air — pop-up style — right into Aiden's waiting arms!** English rotates midair and **spikes Viktor with a sit-out facebuster!** The impact rattles the ring.

Aiden hooks the leg.

ONE!

TWO!

THREE!!!

WINNERS: Rusev Day

The bell rings, and the crowd erupts in a joyful frenzy. Aiden English collapses backward, exhausted but triumphant, while Rusev, still holding his ribs, lets out a primal roar from his knees.

Tom Phillips:

“What a win for Rusev Day! After a tough loss last week at the hands of the Bludgeon Brothers, this was a much-needed bounce back tonight!”

Byron Saxton:

“Absolutely. The Ascension pushed them to their limit, but Rusev Day weathered the storm and picked up momentum when they needed it most.”

Rusev and Aiden regroup in the center of the ring, arms raised high, sweat pouring, pride unmistakable. Aiden picks up the microphone, struggling to catch his breath — but grinning ear to ear as he raises it to his lips.

Aiden English (singing):

“AND TONIGHT... WAS ANOTHER BEAUTIFUL CHAPTER... IN THE
SAAAAAAGA OF... RUUUUUUSEV DAAAAAAAAAAAY!”

The WWE Universe sings along, a massive wave of cheers rolling through the arena. Rusev beats his chest and nods to the crowd, then glances up, his eyes catching the **WrestleMania sign** looming above.

There’s no gold yet around their waists — but Rusev Day is climbing again. One match at a time. One chant at a time.

“RU-SEV DAY! RU-SEV DAY! RU-SEV DAY!”

The chants continue as SmackDown fades to the next segment.

The scene shifts backstage to the locker room area, where **Chad Gable** is seen toweling off sweat, still visibly sore but smiling from ear to ear. His gear is half-unzipped, his ribs taped from earlier in the night, but the pride on his face is unmistakable. He sets down a water bottle on the bench beside him and lets out a long, satisfied breath.

There’s a knock on the door — just a single rap — and in walks the WWE Champion **AJ Styles**, dressed in his leather jacket and black gloves, the title draped over his shoulder. The crowd in the arena reacts instantly to the sight of both men in the same frame.

Gable stands up, a bit surprised, and wipes his hands.

Chad Gable:

“AJ.”

AJ Styles:

“Chad.”

Styles extends his hand. Gable takes it, and they shake firmly.

AJ Styles:

“Just wanted to say... congrats. That win over Corbin? That wasn’t a fluke. You earned your spot at Fastlane.”

Gable smirks modestly, still catching his breath even now.

Chad Gable:

“Thanks. Coming from you? That means a lot.”

Styles steps forward slightly, adjusting the title on his shoulder.

AJ Styles:

“I watched that match. You fought like a champion. The thing is... now you’re in the ring *with* the champion. Big difference.”

Gable lets out a half-laugh, nodding.

Chad Gable:

“Trust me, I know exactly who I’m stepping into the ring with. I’ve looked up to you, AJ. Hell, half the locker room has. But come Fastlane...”

Gable’s expression shifts — respectful, but focused.

Gable:

“...I’m not stepping in there to be inspired. I’m stepping in there to beat you.”

Styles raises his eyebrows slightly, then smiles.

AJ Styles:

“Good. Because I wouldn’t want it any other way.”

The tension hangs briefly between them — not hostile, but competitive. The kind of fire born from mutual respect and looming opportunity.

AJ Styles:

“Just don’t forget... you earned your way into the match. But I’ve *earned* this.”

Styles pats the WWE Championship on his shoulder.

AJ Styles:

“And at Fastlane, I don’t plan on giving it up.”

He offers a final nod before turning toward the door. Gable doesn’t move, watching as the Phenomenal One walks off.

As Styles exits, Gable glances down for a moment... then looks straight ahead, eyes burning with resolve.

Chad Gable (to himself):

“Neither do I.”

The crowd is buzzing with anticipation. The lights begin to shift, taking on a golden hue as an ominous, slow-building instrumental theme fills the arena. A deep voice announces over the system:

“Ladies and gentlemen... please welcome... the Modern Day Maharaja.”

♪ "Shaaanti..." ♪

Jinder Mahal emerges through the curtain with deliberate grace, his hands pressed together in a symbolic gesture of power and discipline. Behind him, **Sunil Singh** trails, clapping and gesturing to the audience, hyping his leader with near-religious fervor. The camera zooms in tight on Jinder’s face — stoic, cold, calculated — the look of a man on a mission.

Tom Phillips:

“Jinder Mahal knows exactly what’s at stake. He’s already held the WWE Championship once before, and tonight, if he can beat Randy Orton, he’ll get one more shot at reclaiming it at Fastlane.”

Corey Graves:

“Say what you want about Jinder’s methods — he knows how to win. And with that Fastlane opportunity dangling in front of him, expect the Modern Day Maharaja to pull out every trick in the book.”

Mahal steps into the ring with royal arrogance, raising his arms while Sunil Singh drops to his knees, clapping and praising him as if he’s a deity. The crowd boos, but Mahal remains unbothered, pacing slowly, eyes already turning toward the entrance ramp.

Then—everything stops.

♪ "VOICES" blasts through the speakers. ♪

A huge roar from the crowd as **Randy Orton** steps onto the stage, arms extended wide in his iconic pose. His face is locked in the same expressionless, coiled-serpent calm that has preceded some of WWE’s most vicious moments. The Apex Predator stands alone — no theatrics, no entourage. Just the cold, lethal confidence of a man who’s done this dance before... and usually wins.

Byron Saxton:

“Randy Orton has nothing left to prove — but everything to gain. One RKO tonight, and he punches his ticket to Fastlane... and into the WWE Championship picture once again.”

Corey Graves:

“And if you're AJ Styles? You do *not* want to see Randy Orton added to that match. When The Viper strikes, he strikes quick... and he finishes.”

Orton slithers down the ramp, slow and measured, never taking his eyes off Jinder Mahal. He circles the ring like a lion stalking prey before sliding in and heading straight to the corner. He climbs the ropes, throws his arms wide again in that signature crucifix pose as the crowd sings along with the beat of his entrance.

The lights settle. The music fades.

Both men are in the ring. The tension is immediate.

The referee stands between them, holding them back as the official ring introductions begin. Sunil Singh retreats to ringside, hands nervously clasped.

Tom Phillips:

“The final spot in the WWE Championship Triple Threat Match at Fastlane... is on the line. Orton. Mahal. One winner.”

The bell is moments from ringing.

Jinder Mahal vs. Randy Orton

***Winner Advances to WWE Championship Triple Threat at Fastlane*

The match had already been a brutal back-and-forth affair — a collision of grit, strength, and championship hunger. With the clock winding down and both men weathered from war, the intensity in the Rabobank Arena had reached a fever pitch. Sweat soaked through both competitors' ring gear, and each breath looked heavier than the last.

At the five-minute mark, **Jinder Mahal** had Orton grounded with a deep chinlock, driving his forearm into the side of The Viper's neck, forcing his weight down. Mahal growled through clenched teeth, wrenching the hold tighter, shouting to the crowd, “This is MY time!” Boos poured down as Sunil Singh cheered from ringside, pounding the mat in rhythm with Jinder's confidence.

But Orton, methodical as ever, refused to stay down. He planted a boot and began to rise, slowly powering his way up to one knee, then both feet. With a sudden surge of strength, he **drove an elbow** into Mahal's gut — once, twice, a third time. Mahal stumbled back—Orton hit the ropes and came charging in—

But Mahal answered with a big boot!

The crowd gasped as Orton crumpled to the mat. Mahal covered:

ONE!

TWO!

NO! Orton kicked out with authority.

Frustrated, Mahal slammed the mat and pounded his chest, signaling for the **Khallas**. He stalked Orton, waiting as The Viper began to stir on all fours. Jinder hooked the arms — ready to finish it — but Orton **exploded to life**, twisting out of the grip and shoving Mahal chest-first into the turnbuckle.

Jinder bounced back and walked right into a **snap powerslam** from Orton!

Both men were down, gasping. The crowd rumbled, torn between two fierce competitors. Orton crawled toward the ropes, eyes blazing now, and began pounding the mat with his fists — one... two... three times.

Mahal staggered to his feet, dazed. Orton lunged for the **RKO** — but Mahal shoved him away and ducked out of the ring! The crowd booed mercilessly as Jinder clutched the ropes, trying to gather himself.

But The Viper wouldn't be denied.

Orton followed, grabbing Mahal by the hair and **slamming him face-first into the announce desk!** The crowd popped. Orton peeled back the top of the desk and threw Mahal onto the surface. The referee warned him, but Orton didn't care. He climbed up onto the table with that cold, merciless glare in his eye.

He grabbed Jinder by the neck... and the crowd rose as they sensed what was coming.

DDT OFF THE ANNOUNCE TABLE — NO!

Mahal shoved Orton off the table at the last second, sending him crashing to the floor. Jinder slid back into the ring as the ref continued the count. Orton followed just before ten, favoring his shoulder.

Mahal pounced — **running knee to the jaw!**

COVER!

ONE!

TWO!

THR—KICKOUT!! Orton survives!

Byron Saxton:

“What a war this has become! Neither man is willing to let this opportunity slip away!”

Roaring in frustration, Mahal dragged Orton up and screamed, “THIS IS OVER!” He hooked the arms again — lifting for the **Khallas** — but Orton shifted mid-air, landing on his feet and **snapping into a backbreaker!**

Both men crashed again, groaning on the mat. The crowd clapped in rhythm, urging both gladiators to finish what they started.

Orton was first to his feet. He looked to the crowd... then grabbed Mahal and draped him over the middle rope.

Hangman DDT! Vintage Orton! Mahal's body hung lifeless for a second before crashing to the mat.

Orton dropped to the ground, slamming his fists once again.

He backed into the corner, rising slowly, eyes locked on Mahal. The fans rose with him.

Jinder pulled himself upright, barely conscious.

RKO OUT OF NOWHERE!

COVER!

ONE!

TWO!

THREE!!!

WINNER: Randy Orton

(Advances to WWE Championship Match at Fastlane)

The bell rang and the building **exploded**. Orton didn't immediately move — he just lay there, exhausted, breathing heavy, eyes closed, absorbing the moment.

Tom Phillips:

“He's done it! Randy Orton is going to Fastlane! The WWE Championship match is now a Triple Threat!”

Corey Graves:

“That's AJ Styles. Chad Gable. And now... The Apex Predator. What a match it's going to be!”

Orton slowly sat up, sweat dripping from his face, and the referee raised his arm. In the background, Mahal rolled to the floor, dazed, clutching his jaw, the opportunity having slipped through his fingers again.

The camera cut to a graphic on the screen:

WWE Championship – Triple Threat Match at Fastlane
AJ Styles (c) vs. Chad Gable vs. Randy Orton

Back in the ring, Orton stood tall on the turnbuckle, posing with ice in his veins, eyes flickering toward the WrestleMania sign above.

Randy Orton stands tall on the second turnbuckle, stoic and cold as ever, the image of a viper who just took what he came for. He gazes toward the **WrestleMania sign**, then turns back to the ring, stepping down...

Suddenly, “ELITE” blares through the speakers.

The crowd comes alive again as **Chad Gable** emerges from the curtain, still taped up from his earlier victory over Baron Corbin. He's changed out of his ring gear into a sleeveless zip-up, towel around his neck, and the fire in his eyes burns as hot as ever.

Gable walks with purpose, no fanfare, no smiles. He steps into the ring, climbs the second rope, and nods slowly, absorbing the crowd's energy. Then he hops down and comes face-to-face with Orton.

For a moment, neither man speaks.

Orton, drenched in sweat, eyes Gable up and down like a hunter sizing up an opponent. Gable doesn't back down — he meets The Viper's glare with steel in his own.

The tension in the ring is palpable.

Then — “PHENOMENAL!”

♪ "They don't want none!" ♪

The crowd *erupts* as the WWE Champion **AJ Styles** bursts through the curtain, title over his shoulder, walking with unshakable swagger. There's no hesitation, no theatrics. He heads straight for the ring.

Byron Saxton:

“And there he is. The Phenomenal One. The man they'll both be trying to take that title from in just a few weeks.”

Styles enters the ring slowly, locking eyes first with Gable... then with Orton. He lifts the **WWE Championship** high above his head as he moves to the center.

Now all three men stand in a triangle: **AJ Styles. Randy Orton. Chad Gable.**

No one blinks. No one speaks. The final moments of *SmackDown Live* are drenched in tension. Inside the Rabobank Arena, every eye is glued to the ring. AJ Styles, WWE Championship clutched in his hand, stands face to face with Randy Orton and Chad Gable. The air is thick with anticipation, unspoken threats swirl as the three stare each other down, their fates seemingly tied to the Fastlane pay-per-view just weeks away.

Camera operators circle the trio like vultures around prey. The broadcast lingers just a little too long on their faces: Styles—tense, weary but defiant; Orton—cold, coiled like a viper; Gable—eyes burning with untapped ambition.

The screen begins to fade to black. It *feels* like the end of the broadcast. But it's not.

Suddenly, a sharp **glitch**. No signature outro. No credits. The pristine WWE production feed is torn away, replaced by **shaky handheld footage**. The sound is jarring—wind gusts, distant shouting, tires screeching.

The view cuts to the **SmackDown Live parking lot**, dimly lit and tense. Security is scrambling. A group of superstars can be seen in the background dispersing as someone yells, **“He’s down! Someone call medical!”**

Then the camera catches it:

Vince McMahon is on the ground.

He’s slumped against the side of a black SUV, one hand gripping the vehicle's rearview mirror as he tries to pull himself up. His suit jacket is ripped at the shoulder, his shirt collar askew. His face is flushed, twisted in pain and disbelief.

Suddenly—

Kevin Owens and Sami Zayn explode into frame, brutal and unrelenting.

Owens grabs Vince by the lapels and **throws him back-first into the side of the car**, the steel paneling denting under the impact. Vince lets out a hoarse, guttural groan, collapsing again to the pavement.

Zayn paces nearby like a mad dog off its leash.

“This is what you brought us back for, huh?!”

“This is what you think we’re *worth*, Vince?!”

BANG! A wild kick from Zayn catches Vince in the ribs, and the Chairman curls into himself, gasping for air. Owens leans in close, shouting down into his face:

“We’re done being pawns in your game. It’s *our* show now!”

A car alarm blares as Owens hurls a trash can into the side of a nearby sedan in a blind rage. Chaos is erupting.

Suddenly, the TitanTron audience watching inside the arena **EXPLODES** with a wave of sound—

DANIEL BRYAN comes tearing into the shot.

Wearing jeans and a SmackDown Live hoodie, he doesn't hesitate. He launches himself at Sami Zayn, tackling him to the pavement so hard that both men skid across the lot. Bryan mounts Zayn and starts unloading a barrage of furious fists, years of betrayal fueling every blow.

Owens grabs Bryan by the hoodie and yanks him back, throwing a punch—but Bryan blocks and counters with a hard forearm. He hits the **YES Kicks**: one, two, three, four—each echoing in the night air. Owens stumbles back into a car trunk.

The crowd in the arena is **electric**.

But Zayn returns, diving low—

CHOP BLOCK to Bryan's knee.

The cheers die instantly.

Bryan crumbles to the pavement, howling in pain. His hands clutch his leg—*his surgically repaired knee*—panic and anguish written all over his face. Owens immediately pounces. He grabs Bryan and drags him across the blacktop, **slamming his knee into a parking bumper**. Bryan screams.

Zayn grabs a nearby **road sign post**, discarded during setup earlier, and **DRIVES IT** across Bryan's leg. Not once—**twice**. The metallic clang is sickening.

Referees and producers begin to rush in—but Owens intercepts one, **throwing him face-first into a rental truck**. Another staffer is shoved so hard he stumbles and crashes into a luggage cart.

Vince tries to get up again, barely on one knee.

Zayn charges.

HELLUVA KICK.

Vince is leveled against the fender of a limo, slumping in a heap. He doesn't move.

The camera zooms in tight as Owens kneels beside Bryan, who is barely conscious, writhing in pain. Owens leans in, sinister and low:

“This is the hero you wanted, Vince?”

Zayn grabs Bryan under the arms, dragging his limp frame next to the fallen Chairman.

Owens looks at the pavement, calculating... and then:

POP-UP POWERBOMB — ONTO THE ASPHALT.

The *thud* is horrific. Bryan's body jerks once, then goes still.

For a moment, there's **no sound**.

Just the wind. Just the camera's grainy audio feed struggling to process the aftermath.

Zayn kneels beside the carnage and picks up the dropped camera. He lifts it inches from his own face, breathing heavy, eyes wild.

A whisper:

“We told you this was coming...”

He glances down at Vince and Bryan—two broken bodies in the parking lot, under the dark Missouri sky.

“...No one is safe.”

SMASH CUT TO BLACK.

No outro. No replays. Just silence.