

SHOW OPEN

THE CERBERUS vs. BARELY ACTIVE TEAM

DDK:

Looks like we're coming to your favourite part of the night, Lance. I mean, besides it being the opening match of the night of course.

Lance: *[shuffling papers]*

Far from it Keebs, I'm actually not at all looking forward to this first matchup. When's the last time Iris Devine needed to be on standby for the opener? In fact...

Lance sets the papers down and picks up a phone from the commentation station furiously punching in numbers.

DDK:

Let's send it down to Darren in the ring.

The shot shifts to the betuxed ring announcer, a team warming up in the background already in the ring with him.

Darren Quimbey:

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to your opening match of the night! It will be a tag team matchup scheduled for one fall. Introducing first and currently in the ring; No Fun Dean, Barely Active Jen, they are....BARELY ACTIVE TEAM!!

Dean and Jen play to a mixed crowd reception before retreating to their corner to plan strategy.

♪ "Dogs of War" by Savage Souls ♪

The house lights come down as flames RISE UP on the stage. Through a mist, three hound heads appear, and moments later, the trio of terror consisting of RICK DICKULOUS, VICTOR VACIO, and GREEN REAPER emerge, wearing wolfskins. In formation, the Kabal's CERBERUS march to the ring.

Darren Quimbey:

And the opponents, representing the Kabal... the CEEEERRRBEEEEERRRUUUUUUSSSS!!!

The crowd boos as the three men reach the end of the rampway and quickly Green Reaper and Victo Vacio run to opposite sides of the ring and hop onto the apron deftly as Rick Dickulous moves forward and mounts the apron with a large step, pulling himself up by the top rope. The three enter the ring in unison and meet in the middle with their fists raised as their music fades out.

Lance:

Not sure why Barely Active Team even bothered to talk strategy...I mean, did they develop three separate strategies in a minute?

DDK:

They'd better hope so, Lance.

The Cerberus turn to face Barely Active Team with a shared intimidating stare; more looking through Dean and Jen which seems to unnerve the duo. Silently, Green Reaper steps back from the line, Barely Active Jen and No Fun Dean exchange a semi-panicked glance as Rick Dickulous and Victor Vacio remove their entrance gear and hand it through the ropes to their waiting compatriot.

DDK:

D'ya think Dean and Jen planned for this one?

Lance:

Judging by their reaction, I'd say no, and I guess it's a good thing my gut was right in getting Iris prepared.

Rick Dickulous steps through the ropes for The Cerberus, Victor Vacio limbers up in the corner; on the other side of

the ring No Fun Dean steps through the ropes, giving Jen a thumbs up of approval despite her clear lack of enthusiasm to start things off. The official signals the timekeeper...

DING DING

Vacio approaches the centre of the ring and calls Jen on: she reluctantly moves forward as Vacio pulls her into a quick lockup. As they wrestle for position it becomes quite clear that The Lost Cause is simply toying with Jen.

DDK:

Jen isn't getting anywhere, Lance. Seems No Fun Dean didn't want to start things off, and I wonder why.

Lance:

My guess is he wanted to save himself for a rematch with DEFIANCE's Strongest Man, even if it comes in the form of a tag match.

DDK:

I guess we'll have to wait and see.

Vacio pushes Jen back into a neutral corner and unleashes a chop across her chest, followed by a second, and a third, each one knocking her back into the turnbuckles. Controlling her left arm, Vacio irish whips Barely Active Jen across the ring, following with a double handspring flippy-do into a second turnbuckle mount followed by a hurricanrana that sends Barely Active Jen hard to the mat on her back and Vacio rolling quickly back to his feet. As Jen pushes herself back up, Vacio meets her with a quick double legged dropkick to the side of the head that sends her tumbling out of the ring and to the outside.

DDK:

Victor Vacio solidly in control as he sends Barely Active Jen to the outside.

Lance:

I hope she can recover quickly, we know The Cerberus' third head is stalking the outside.

No Fun Dean steps through the ropes and throws himself towards Vacio, connecting with a falling haymaker as the two begin to fight on the mat while the referee attempts to restore order...which gives Green Reaper license to "sneak" around the ring; he makes no real attempt to be stealthy at all. As Jen manages to pull herself up by the apron, Green Reaper rounds the corner and begins heading straight for her!

Lance:

Oh! Watch out, Jen!

The referee begins separating Vacio and No Fun Dean, still not aware of what's happening on the outside as Green Reaper drives a forearm into the side of Barely Active Jen's head then takes control, shoving her into the ring unceremoniously. Vic Vacio lifts Jen up to her feet and runs her forehead along the ropes before depositing her in a neutral corner while the official manages to get No Fun Dean back into position. As soon as the official turns around, Vacio makes a clean tag to The Lumbergiant before running towards No Fun Dean, connecting with a haymaker of his own that leaves him reeling before quickly retreating to Cerberus' corner.

DDK:

Cerberus working well here, Lance. It seems they've become a well oiled machine of late.

Lance:

But it's only a matter of time before we see the chinks in their armor, Keebs.

Rick Dickulous drives his shoulder into Barely Active Jen's stomach a few times before grabbing her by the head with both hands and tossing her in a heap towards No Fun Dean with a sick grin. Rick leans in Cerberus' corner against the ropes as he gestures impatiently for Barely Active Jen to make the tag. No Fun Dean reaches over the ropes as

far as he can as Jen's near lifeless hand touches his and he vaults the ropes and into a run towards his opponent. Dickulous takes a large closing step before driving the sole of his boot into No Fun Dean's face which knocks him to the mat in the corner. Wasting no time, Rick delivers DEFIANCE's Strongest Knee into Dean's solar plexus.

OOOOOHHHHH!!

DDK:

Rick Dickulous is having his way with No Fun Dean, I'm wondering when the momentum is gonna shift.

Lance:

Or *IF* it will shift.

The Lumbergiant lets out a roar as he flexes in the middle of the ring, Green Reaper clapping and cheering on The Cerberus like a professional hype-man. Clutching his chest, Dean gets back to his feet with a steeled glare at his massive opponent, pushing the official away before he can be checked over despite the official's insistence. Dean walks towards The Lumbergiant with a puffed out chest, a finger pointed in his direction.

No Fun Dean:

I've had enough! It's time someone finally stood up to you guys!

Dickulous half turns towards Victor Vacio with a bellowing, tear dripping laugh, his massive hands on his hips. Vacio slaps the turnbuckle as he points at No Fun Dean and laughs. Green Reaper fakes a heart attack. As Rick turns back around, No Fun Dean's hand draws back and JUST as it begins to rocket forward it suddenly stops as DEFIANCE's Strongest Finger is held against the least fun set of lips in a shushing motion. As No Fun Dean remains still, Rick's hand returns to his hip and this time he laughs so hard he doubles over; just as Dickulous wipes his eyes and regains his breath, Dean follows through with a closed hand punch to the side of the head...The Lumbergiant is unphased and simply taps his other cheek. No Fun Dean swings a hard backfist that lands squarely, again the big man is unaffected. Dean cocks his fist back a third time only to be quickly spun around by Rick, who locks his arms around No Fun Dean's gut and lifts him skyward, releasing him at his highest point and catching him again in a vertical position Dickulous delivers a crushing shoulder breaker.

Lance:

Amazing display of strength from Rick Dickulous after shrugging off two essentially free shots from No Fun Dean.

DDK:

From the looks of things, they may be the only punches Dean lands against The Lumbergiant, partner.

Dean writhes around on the mat clutching his shoulder, Rick grabs the injured arm and lifts No Fun Dean to his feet, then deftly twists his arm and applies pressure as he drags Dean back to The Cerberus' corner and tags in The Lost Cause. Vacio quickly mounts the top turnbuckle and crashes a double axe handle into No Fun Dean's shoulder finishing the move off with a somersault and a quick return to his feet, Rick releases Dean's arm and exits the ring.

Lance:

Victor Vacio keeping control for The Cerberus, but what's this?!

DDK:

The Lost Cause is...untying the top turnbuckle pad? In plain view of the official?

Lance:

And it looks like No Fun Dean's regained a little composure...he should make the tag to Barely Active Jen! Get a fresh body in there!

In a flurry of action, No Fun Dean launches himself towards Victor Vacio at the same time as the official steps in to chide The Lost Cause. Rick Dickulous, realizing what's about to transpire, simply raises his hands with a "Nope" look across his face as No Fun Dean crashes into the official, who bounces off of Victor Vacio and takes a hard bump to the

mat after being squashed. Suddenly a massive arm pulls Dean into the corner as Green Reaper slides under the bottom ropes, making a beeline towards Barely Active Jen and connecting with a stiff forearm that sends her careening off the apron and into the barricade before hitting the floor.

DDK:

Now that the official is out, all three heads of Cerberus go on the attack. This is despicable, but at the same time...smart.

Lance:

Someone needs to get the official up and get this match under control!

Victor Vacio unleashes a flurry of punches and kicks to No Fun Dean's midsection as Green Reaper joins in. Rick Dickulous lets go of Dean and steps through the ropes, motioning to his compatriots as they pull a staggered Dean out of the corner and shove him towards The Lumberjiant. Dickulous spins No Fun Dean and hooks his arms underneath Dean's; Vacio and Green Reaper each grab a leg, and in unison the three hoist No Fun Dean over their heads and slam him back down to the mat on his back.

DDK:

That *HAS* to be it, No Fun Dean can't take much more punishment.

Lance:

I don't even think he can take what's already been dished out, Keebs!

Rick steps back to the apron as Green Reaper slides back under the bottom ropes and revives the official as Victor Vacio climbs to the top turnbuckle.

DDK:

Oh, look out, No Fun Dean!

Vacio dives from the top turnbuckle landing a spectacular Shooting Star Press directly across Dean's exposed ribs and instinctively hooks a leg for the pin, the official weakly able to count.

ONE..

TWO...

THREE!!

DING DING DING

Darren Quimbey:

Your winners, The CEEEEERRRBERRUUUUUSSSS!!!

Lance:

What did we just watch? This wasn't necessarily even a match!

DDK:

Love 'em or hate 'em, partner, The Cerberus are working well together, and they're posing an interesting challenge to any team they come up against.

Lance:

I hate them, Keebs. They're dirty, they don't follow the rules, and they're aligned with The Kabal...what makes you like them?

DDK:

Whoa there...I didn't SAY I liked them, just that they're clearly a force to be reckoned with in the tag team division.

Lance:

We'll have to wait and see about that. I just got word that The Cerberus will be taking part in the Tag Team Battle Royale at DEFCON 2022.

DDK:

I wonder who will represent them? Or will all three be in action? I'm so confused, and that's ok! DEFCON is just *WEEKS* away!

Lance:

Indeed, and as for DEFCON, let's head to another one of our DEFIANCE Superstars who will be in action just a few short weeks from now!

DAILY WORDS

BACKSTAGE, before the events of DEFtv last week.

The circle of trust.

Malak Garland sits on a chair looking like the birthday boy of his own party as his fellow Comments Section members surround him, save for Conor Fuse.

Malak Garland:

How important am I to have all of you surrounding me today?

Percy is quick to wag a finger.

Percy Collins:

Now, now, Malak! Not another word from you for the rest of this segment. Today is about you. Today is Malak day in America. This is a day of celebration. May we conduct the sacred act of daily words! Affirmations and confirmations that you, Malak Jones Garland, is the be-all-end-all of professional wrestling and our lives entirely! LET THE EGO STROKING COMMENCE!

Thurston Hunter:

Stupendous! This is such a stupendous occasion!

The word stupendous immediately triggers Malak.

Malak Garland:

What kind of bullshit babble is the word stupendous? That has to be the lamest buzz word ever. Anyone who leans on using one word over and over again is flame shitting jagaloon. Never use that term again, Thurston. Never.

Not wanting to insult his liege further, Thurston obliges and nods humbly.

Thurston Hunter:

Of course, sire. Oh great Malak, you are like the all-seeing owl! You know it all! How great of a leader you are! Especially because you let me street fighted people and cover them in little scars which makes me a badass!

Malak smiles.

Malak Garland:

Delectable. Next.

The focus shifts to Game Boy who sits slumped over in his chair, holding onto some very sad looking flowers. The big man takes a big sigh before offering Malak the near-dead dandelions.

Malak Garland:

FLOWERS!? FOR ME!? JOY.

Garland takes them and rubs them against his cheeks. He is enamored with love. Next up is ALEX who busts out his clipboard.

ALEX:

Uhhh yes, hi everyone. I took it upon myself to do the calculations and it would appear that you and Conor have about a nineteen point three percent chance of defeating SNS and capturing the tag titles at DEFCON.

Everyone stares at ALEX. Percy leans in.

Percy Collins:

This is supposed to be daily words recognizing Malak's greatness in perpetuity, not breaking the man down. How dare you, ALEX!

Thurston points a finger at ALEX.

Thurston Hunter:

FOR SHAME! SHAMMMMMMMMMEEEEEE!

ALEX hangs his head in shame as next up is none other than Martin.

MEE6:

I rank Malak number one out of everyone in the world!

A light golf clap comes over the group as Martin hits it out of the park. Lastly, Percy speaks up.

Percy Collins:

Eerrrrrm. Excuse me. Malak, I adore you. I liberate you. I confirm not only your voice but your vitality and spirit as whole. Dream without boundaries as you are affirmed. I cannot imagine another person feeling and thinking about the rest of us the way you do. I mean, when I legit screw up making your peanut butter and jelly sandwich by not cutting the crusts off the bread or by using the wrong type of margarine, I am glad you're there to correct me by screaming full throttle into my face. It will make me do better next time.

The Game Boy nods in agreement.

Percy Collins:

We need you. I need you. Sleep tonight without inhibitions. Tackle tomorrow with strength and without hesitancy. We will all be by your side until the very end but we all know that is a long time from now. You are the crusader, bringing us to salvation. I have no doubts all my time, money and energy I invest into you will be handsomely paid off one day. You make me better, therefore, I praise you.

Percy daringly walks up to Malak and places a hand gently on his shoulder.

Percy Collins:

I love you. You are loved. Thank you.

Like an actor finishing off the performance of a lifetime, Percy bows as Malak's grin breaks from ear to ear. He just can't help himself. He feels so much love that it makes him rise from his chair.

Malak Garland:

Those fuckers. Those absolute dogshit fuckers in Pat Cassidy and Brock Newbludd have no idea what is about to hit them! Conor too. That assbat is still being cheered by the crowd! Haha. I got news for him, I got news for SNS, I got news for everyone.

Malak takes a moment to gather himself. He chuckles before looking around the room with intensity shooting out of his eyes.

Malak Garland:

DEFIANCE is officially being put on notice. I AM BULLETPROOF!

The group of trolls howl at their leader's declaration!

Malak Garland:

DO YOU KNOW WHY!?

Comments Section:

WHY!?

Malak Garland:

I SAID, DO YOU KNOW WHY!?

Comments Section:

WHY!!!??

Malak folds his arms.

Malak Garland:

Because I'm not afraid to go to HR with any complaint!

His underlings 'OOOOHHHHHHHHHH' as if Malak just hit a mic drop moment. Malak high fives Thurston on his way out the door and the entire Comments Section rowdily follow right behind him.

SOUTHERN HERETIC

Previously Recorded at DEFtv 168...

Backstage in the go-rilla position, REZIN steps through the curtain and begins the walk back to the locker room. Then a familiar face enters the frame.

Chris Trutt:

Rezin! Got a minute?

Rezin throws a sweaty arm over the junior reporter's shoulders and lazily leans against him.

Rezin:

Trutt, my man... for you, I can give four and a third!

Trutt internally does the math and rolls his eyes once he gets the joke.

Chris Trutt:

Anyway Rezin, can we get a reaction to that match against Tyler?

Rezin groans. He sounds disappointed but accepting.

Rezin:

It's tough luck, my dude... but I gotta hand it to Tyler. That dude don't fuck around. I always knew him to be the one legit guy in the Kabal, and he showed it out there.

Chris Trutt:

Still, after spending weeks out of the ring on the mend, I can't imagine it feels great to return to action and suffer a loss.

Rezin:

Ehhhhh, what is a 'loss', really? A number? A tally? A distraction, for people that feel the need to keep count? Bahhh... the way I see it, Trutt, so long as the ESCAPE ARTIST is blazin' it up in that ring, given the Faithful a chance to see their Breakout DEFIANT of 2021, for those people out there--for all of DEFIANCE--it's ALWAYS a WIN!!

He finds the camera, and there's wily glint in his eye.

Rezin:

But you know ain't feeling great? You know what's really a "LOSS", Trutt!? DEFCON--the MEGA-EVENT of the YEAR--is knocking on our door... and this ol' Goat Bastard STILL doesn't have himself a dance partner!

He shakes his head and tsk-tsks.

Rezin:

I think it should go without saying, Trutt... but THAT AIN'T PUNK ROCK!!

Rezin grabs the mic into his hand as he gets on a roll, and Trutt lets him have it.

Rezin:

I LIVE for the fight on the big stage, and I've been LOOKING! LOOKING! LOOKING FOR WEEKS for TWO in particular to answer the call! But WHERE was the Southern Heritage Champion tonight?! WHERE was the fuckin' PLAGUE we were promised by Arthur Pleasant!? I have no idea, but I know they weren't OUT THERE!

He steps closer to the camera, eyes going into full Nic Cage mode.

Rezin:

Well, I'm TIRED OF WAITIN' on these shit-stirrin' BITCHES that ain't got the sack to come face the music! So here's what EYE got planned for DEFCON!

He casually chucks the mic over his shoulder. Trutt reflexively catches it in his hands as Rezin briefly wanders out of the frame. Astonishment spreads over the junior reporter's face as he sees what we can't yet see.

Rezin: *[off-camera]*

Let me show the world MY CHOSEN OPPONENT for DEFCON!

Rezin reappears and returns to his spot next to Trutt, with his "opponent", who we'll just refer to as "Werner T6208".

Rezin:

THIS LADDER!!

Rezin beams a grin, but when he looks to Chris, the face full of skepticism he sees suggests that the junior reporter believes he's finally lost it.

Rezin:

I could wrestle a FIVE STAR CLASSIC that gets everyone in the house ON THEIR FEET with JUST THIS LADDER ALONE, because THAT'S the kinda WRESTLER I AM!

Chris Trutt:

Rezin... are you serious right now?

Rezin:

I'M SERIOUS LIKE A FOX!! You gimme ten minutes with this ladder, I will make those people GASP! I will make them CRY with EMOTION! I will touch their very SOULS when they witness the eternal struggle of FLESH against STEEL!

The Goat Bastard's crazed face finds the camera again.

Rezin:

DEFCON 2022... REZIN VERSUS... a LADDER!! SIGN IT, FAVOURED SAINTS!!

Chris Trutt:

But Rezin, what about Southern Heritage Champion, Scrow? What about Arthur Pleasant?

Rezin cackles as he picks up the ladder and lifts it onto his shoulder.

Rezin:

Heh... FUCK 'EM! They can SIT AT HOME, for all I care! BUT maybe, if they ASK NICELY, pretty please with SUGAR ON TOP... I MIGHT consider being generous enough to let them come play in *MY* match at DEFCON!

He plucks a joint into his mouth and lights it up as he turns to leave. As he does, Trutt has to DUCK to narrowly avoid being taken out by the bottom end of the ladder.

Pre Recorded just days after DEFTV 168

Jamie Sawyers:

Hello, DEFIANCE Faithful. I have been allowed to get some first-hand words from our current Southern Heritage Champion Scrow at The Haven in his luxurious penthouse here in New Orleans.

The SoHer sits in a chair while Hive stands next to him displaying the SoHer. He is in a gray business suit with black shades, Hive has on a pair of jeans and a Kabal T-Shirt with a NEW Kabal skull cap.

Jamie Sawyers:

Thank you for allowing me to get this interview with you here today Scrow.

Scrow:

You have ten minutes, Scrow has business to take care of. So ask your stupid questions and then get out.

Jamie Sawyers:

First off, you have been rather quiet on television as of late. Ever since your grueling match with Kerry Kuroyama you hav..

Scrow stops him right there.

Scrow:

Grueling? Kerry Kuroyama was grueling? Stop just stop. Thirty seconds into this one-on-one and you already have bored Scrow. Kerry Kuroyama was by far the easiest opponent Scrow ever had to face. That is not to take anything from Kerry, oh no every wrestling company needs to have its enhancement talent.

Jamie Sawyers:

Enhancement talent? You can't be serious?

Scrow just stares at Jamie with a stoic expression after removing his glasses for a moment. Before returning them to his face.

Scrow:

So that is thirty seconds of Scrow's life he will not get back, let's get to the reason you're here already. Scrow's good old buddy Rezin.

Jamie just follows the train of thought in the interview.

Jamie Sawyers:

Ok, right into it. So what is your answer after seeing Rezin's proposed match at DEFCON?

Scrow:

Scrow will be cheering for the ladder.

Jamie Sawyers:

I do not think that is exactly what he was getting at.

Scrow:

So tell him oh wise one. What exactly was the pothead getting at? Are you going to say he wants Scrow in that ring at DEFCON in a ladder match? Shit, let's just throw Pleasant into the mix as well. Scrow wouldn't mind, would he?

Jamie Sawyers:

Pretty much.

Scrow:

Well, Rezin can go play helicopter with his little ladder. Frankly, he has not EARNED a shot, back of the line whether these neanderthals out there in tv land like it or not.

Jamie Sawyers:

Well, that was not all. Apparently, Arthur had some choice words shortly after Rezin's ambiguous challenge.

The camera crew push in a television and press play.

Arthur Pleasant:

I see Rezin wants to challenge a ladder. A... fucking ladder. Yeah, yeah. We get it. You're a fucking psycho or something, right? Sure. It has nothing to do with the fact that I stole the show at last year's DEFCON when I took that ladder and beat Matt LaCroix's fucking brains in with it, does it? *Nooooooooo*. No, sir.

Pleasant chuckles.

Arthur Pleasant:

If you wanted to be me so bad, you could've just fucking asked me you goddamn doppelganger-lite. Fact is, that match nearly won MATCH OF THE YEAR. And now, here we are, at DEFCON '22 and there you are, trying to leech onto the thing that propelled me to the forefront of DEFIANCE. Well, guess what, sweetie? I can see straight through your bullshit, and so can Chuck here...

Pleasant brandishes the billhook machete he's been carrying around for several weeks now. Licking the tip of it so that he slices his tongue ever-so-slightly, he pulls in some of the inherent blood that seeps out, closes his eyes, and swallows with content.

Arthur Pleasant:

But go ahead and tell me I'm the try-hard, here. Go ahead and try to tell everyone that I'M the one who's trying to rip YOU off, Rezin. At DEFCON? Chuck and myself will peel back that thin layer of skin of yours and unveil the falsehoods and fabrications you profess so ignorantly. And then? When you're under my boot, bleeding so profusely that people can't tell if I'm standing on your face or your asshole, everyone will know that the Plaguebeast has spread its sickness to the next deserving victim.

Pleasant takes the machete and scrapes it down on the concrete floor with one quick motion, creating some sparks.

Arthur Pleasant:

By the end of this, Rezin. You're going to wish you were never discovered in that garbage can you lived under all your life. By the end of this, Rezin, you're going to rue the day you ever thought it was 'okay' to fuck with the PURE wrestler, the MOST VIOLENT wrestler, and the BEST FUCKING wrestler DEFIANCE has ever seen.

He stops. His eyes narrow and his nostrils flare.

Arthur Pleasant:

But if you want me to beg you to face me? If you want me to say please in order to get it? Then, sorry not sorry, that isn't going to happen. If anyone should be begging ANYONE to have a match with them at DEFCON... it should be you. To everybody else. Now... if you'll excuse me, I have a match to prepare for. Because let's be honest here... you're going to accept having me in this little ladder match either way. Because how else are you going to top last year's match without one of the two people involved in it? Mm? Yeah, that's what I thought.

Pulling the camera in towards him a bit closer, Pleasant's cold stare grows even colder. We're talking sub-zero temperatures here.

Arthur Pleasant:

So, I'll see you at DEFCON, Rezin. And once Scrow realizes the opportunity that "hangs in the balance"...

Pleasant laughs at his own pun.

Arthur Pleasant:

Then I'm sure I'll see him there, too. People are simple, folks. Regardless of what they say, they're keen to oblige those who speak the truth and are better than them in EVERY... conceivable... way.
The video turns to static, and Jamie looks over to Scrow for a reply.

Scrow:

The plot thickens. So everyone seems to be on board with this idea that Scrow should just hang his championship high above the ring. To defend it against a man that would rather be in a horror movie than a wrestling ring, and a man that

says Scrow is not Punk Rock if he does not show up at DEFCON. Tell him here Jamie what would you do?

Jamie Sawyers:

Well...

Scrow:

Shut up that was a rhetorical question, I reject this obvious attempt from DEFIANCE to try and take this championship from The Kabal. Not going to happen!

Jamie Sawyers:

Unfortunately, this interview was not the only reason I am here.

Jamie pulls out an envelope.

Scrow:

That better be a letter containing money.

Jamie Sawyers:

Actually, it's a signed contract for a match at DEFCON, Arthur and Rezin have already signed it. All it requires is your signature.

Scrow snickers.

Scrow:

Well, Scrow appears to be fresh out of ink. Why oh why would he sign something like that?

Jamie braces himself for the obvious blowup he is gonna get from Scrow when he mentions the fine print.

Jamie Sawyers:

The Favored Saints have made sure that in this contract if Scrow does not sign it then, the championship will be stripped from Scrow... *[Scrow's eyes widen, and Hive stoically stares down at Jamie]* That is not all it will be Arthur Pleasant Vs Rezin in a Ladder Match.....*[Jamie takes a deep breath]* for the Southern Heritage Championship...

Scrow leaps from his chair, tossing his glasses off and knocking over furniture. Jamie looks up at Hive who has not stopped her glare at the reporter. Off-camera Scrow is shouting obscenities, through all the banging and breaking of glass and whatnot. Hive takes the envelope from Jamie, then proceeds to grab him by the tie, lifting him off the chair and calmly pointing to the door. Sawyers quickly gets the message as the crew quickly exits the penthouse. Hive walks face to face with an infuriated Scrow and presses the envelope into his chest.

Minerva Hive:

Sign it, you still have us. We will do our job.

Scrow grits his teeth, grunting as he unfolds the contract and signs it, before throwing the pen out the window and falling down the many stories of Haven.

JACK MACE vs. THOMAS SLAINE

DDK:

We've got Jack Mace in action. And he is ANGRY.

Lance:

Jack Mace was victorious over Better Future's Max Luck, but after the match when he tried to get his hands on Morrow for running him down on commentary, Luck came to the aid of his manager and laid out Mace on the very stage... and against doctor's orders, he is here tonight to take out those aggressions.

DDK:

However... we have just found out days ago that Jack Mace's chosen stipulation against Tom Morrow is none other than... a STEEL CAGE!

Lance:

Tonight, though, he takes on Thomas Slaine against doctor's orders. Will that Winning Hand Slam on the stage from Max Luck do anything to slow down Mace before DEFCON in two weeks? We'll go to Darren Quimbey for intros now!

Darren Quimbey:

The following singles match is set for one fall! Introducing first, from Nachitoches, Louisiana, weighing in at 221 pounds... **THOMAS SLAINE!**

♪ "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, waiting for a chance to fight. He waits for his opponent to come out as his music fades and gives way to...

Darren Quimbey:

And his opponent... from Grewelthorpe, North Yorkshire, England, weighing in at 268 pounds... **"THE KILLER BEAR" JACK MACE!**

♪ "Seal The Deal" by Volbeat ♪

The Wrestleplex goes dark for several quick moments... then the entrance wall starts to light up in red before a bear's roar leads to the intro of the Volbeat track. Walking out from the stage in a brown flat cap and tattered brown overalls, Jack Mace does not smile, does not pose, and does not waste time.

He heads on down to the ring getting mostly cheers, though still trying to impress some members of the DEFIANCE fanbase not so easy to forget his history with Better Future. When he gets to the ring, he first tosses the flat cap off. He sheds the overalls and reveals black thigh-length trunks with white trim, black knee pads and white wrestling shoes, but also has athletic tape on a shoulder!

DDK:

Yikes! I guess those reports were not exaggerated!

Mace angrily gets into the ring and has the left shoulder taped up with kinetic tape, presumably from damage done by Max Luck last week... But when he doesn't look...

SHOTGUN DROPKICK BY THOMAS SLAINE!

The crowd jeers as Mace gets knocked into the corner while Thomas gets back up and grits his teeth, ready to try and turn his recent luck around!

DDK:

Whoa! Thomas Slaine going right on the attack! The match has not officially started yet, but Thomas Slaine is looking

for a big win! Imagine if he defeats Mace this close to DEFCON!

Thomas yells at Jonny Fastcountini to start the match while Jack Mace is getting up in the corner, angrily starting to stand, but still favoring his ribs from a big man kicking him.

Lance:

Thomas demanding that Jonny start the match, but he's wanting to check on Mace first!

When he goes over to check on Jack Mace, Jack grabs the young referee by his shirt and pulls him up close.

Jack Mace:

...Mate, ring that damn bell. NOW.

Jonny rips himself away from Mace's grip and then with both Thomas and Mace separated, he calls for the bell.

DING DING

And right away, Thomas runs at Mace with another big elbow to the face and then starts to punch away at The Killer Bear!

Lance:

Anyone in DEFIANCE literally has a puncher's chance of making a name for themselves! Imagine if this is Thomas Slaine tonight!

He continues to punch away at Jack until Jonny Fastcountini starts a five count. When he gets to the count of four, Thomas Slaine breaks off the attack... then starts throwing shots at the shoulder!

DDK:

Thomas isn't a fool! If the opponent has an injury, some may find it questionable but it's a target for anyone to exploit!

Jack is nursing a sore jaw and cradles it close while Slaine backs out of the corner after another five-count is attempted by Fastcountinin. Slaine continues to gloat for the moment and talks trash to the Faithful.

DDK:

Don't taunt the man! Stay on him!

When he's had his fill of teasing Mace, he goes back to dish out some more punishment... but instead, gets POWERED off the mat by a PISSED-OFF Mace and then drilled right into the canvas with a big running tackle transitioned right into a massive side slam!

DDK:

No way! Mauling! Mauling right out of the corner! That lifting spear into a spinebuster just put Thomas Slaine into the ground!

Lance:

And he is not done! I think Thomas Slaine's pre-match attack only served to make Mace angry.

The Killer Bear is practically frothing at the mouth as he gets up, standing over the fallen body of Thomas Slaine who doesn't know where he is. Mace palms him by the back of the head and sits up, patting his foot. He starts stomping on the ground, then runs off the ropes...

DDK:

ROY KENT!

Lance:

I love Ted Lasso! But that's also the name of that Soccer Kick to the chest that Mace has been using!

Mace isn't done. He grabs the back of Thomas Slaine's head one more time and sets him up slowly. He holds up a finger for the Faithful, who cheer cause another Soccer Kick is being loaded up...

ROY KENT II: ELECTRIC BOOGALOO!

Slaine gets booted in the chest and gets the wind booted out of him again!

DDK:

Mace is not in a good mood! And I think Thomas Slaine set something off in a man nicknamed The Killer Bear!

Lance:

Is he... is he going for another one?

The Faithful cheer again as he sits Thomas up a third time, who can barely sit straight up without Mace's help, but he props him up.

ONE MORE TIME! ONE MORE TIME!

Mace obliges their request with the holding up of another finger and then runs and KICKS him again with a third Soccer Kick! Thomas is flat on his back while Mace rotates his arm, making sure the shoulder is still in working order.

DDK:

Mace has been using suplexes, but he's not taking too many chances with that shoulder! But he takes him up...

He grabs him by the neck with his good arm and then hoists him up... he starts a countdown and the crowd counts along with it!

FIVE... FOUR... THREE... TWO... ONE...

The Mace DRILLS Thomas Slaine into the canvas with a high angle delayed German suplex into a bridge!

DDK:

He got it! He named this move especially for Morrow and it calls it... Your Number's Up!

Lance:

And it is for Thomas Slaine! Mace remains in the bridge!

ONE... TWO... THREE!

DING DING DING

Darren Quimbey:

Here is your winner... **"THE KILLER BEAR" JACK MACE!**

Right after the three-count, Mace throws the limp body of Slaine away and then climbs up. He raises his good arm and checks to make sure the shoulder is all good before he puts his flat cap back on, takes his overalls and heads to the back.

DDK:

Jack Mace not working by the hour tonight! That shoulder may be a bullseye, but Mace does not care. He's wanted payback for months and at DEFCON, he'll get it!

The camera catches Mace as he heads up the ramp. The Killer Bear looks right into it and screams at his target.

Jack Mace:

Oi! Tommy! Fifteen days! The countdown is on... and your number is up!

PIECES

EXCLUSIVE FOOTAGE FROM DEFtv 168 Night One

The camera catches hooting and hollering of a particular group of folks who were victorious. Backstage, the unmistakable booming voice of a jubilant Uriel Cortez is heard in the halls with Minute laughing while Titaness trails not far behind, just finishing a shower and a fresh change of clothes after their win over Mason Luck and Ophelia Sykes. The camera is watching from afar with the members of Los Tres Titanes having their conversation, not knowing the camera's on them.

Minute:

We did it, amigos! Los tenemos!

Uriel Cortez:

Dude, the shit you do in that ring. That tornado DDT and spiking Alvaro's head on the concrete?

Chef's kiss acted out by the Titan of Industry.

Uriel Cortez:

I'm telling you guys, at DEFCON, we're putting those BFTA sons of bitches down. I'm not making this some DEFCON tradition where Morrow keeps messing with us. They're gonna learn the hard way... they're fucking DONE.

Uriel looks steadfast, but Titaness still trails behind him a little bit.

Uriel Cortez:

T, you all right? I thought you'd be happy we stuck it to those assholes tonight. Jack Mace nearly hung Morrow out a window to get those contracts for these matches, and...

Titaness:

I know what he did. You don't need to remind me.

He pauses when he sees Titaness looking a little upset.

Minute:

Está todo bien, princesa?

Titaness turns to Minute.

Titaness:

Look... I've tried not to say anything. I hate Morrow. I hate Alvaro's stupid grin and I hate The Lucky Sevens thinking they can just bully whoever they want to... but... does that mean we have to stoop to THEIR level?

Uriel looks over.

Uriel Cortez:

I... I know. I'm not happy calling Thomas to get Jack Mace's work visa situation and bringing him back... especially after the three months and change of shit he did to you...

Titaness did come out triumphant in that issue, but she still looks put off.

Uriel Cortez:

...And I'm sorry that I didn't tell you about it sooner, okay? I thought the whole "enemy of my enemy" thing here and we have a truce. I don't give a shit about Jack Mace, but he wants Morrow worse than we do. We're not his enemy. Morrow fed him some bullshit, same as he did to other people... like me.

Titaness:

Doesn't change the fact he attacked me every chance he got. If he comes this way, I'm kicking his ass.

He puts a hand up.

Uriel Cortez:

Look... I got it. I'm sorry, I should have told you. But I knew you were going to say no and...

Titanness:

Of course I was gonna say no! Bringing that asshole back here and...

The three stop when they see one of the cameras filming them.

Uriel Cortez:

Hey! Look, it's a wrestling show and you guys are all over the place! But this is private time! Get out!

The man behind the camera starts to move.. and the camera goes black.

A SAFE SPACE?

The scene opens to Malak Garland and the rest of his Comments Section (including Conor Fuse) backstage for an exclusive DEF Twitch interview, directly off the events of DEFtv where Malak Garland and company laid out Pat Cassidy, Brock Newbludd and Davey LaRue. Jamie Sawyers walks up to Garland with mic in hand.

Jamie Sawyers:

Malak, yes, hi. Quite the statement you made on DEFtv, taking down-

Garland is HIGH as a motherfucking KITE. He **rips** the mic from Sawyers and hands it to Percy Collins. Collins quivers with glee as he gets to interview The Superstar Snowflake.

Percy Collins:

Would you like more DAILY WORDS, Malak?

Garland thinks about it but ends up shaking his head no.

Malak Garland:

I can't wait to take down those pig fuckers at DEFCON once and for all! The shiny shinies will be mine again!

Garland gives himself a hug.

Malak Garland:

I am feeling fucking warm and fuzzy all over! My FOMO is so strong right now! Pat and Brock are...

Suddenly, Conor Fuse snatches a sheet of paper out of Malak's hand. It's the same sheet of paper Garland read to the UNIFIED Tag Team Champions, Brock Newbludd and Pat Cassidy, a letter from the Favored Saints regarding the main event at DEFCON.

Malak looks at Conor with disgust.

Then delight... when he thinks about the stipulation.

Malak Garland:

Yes, that's right cOnOr. Read it and weep. You and I are going to be wrestling in **A Safe Space Match!**

The rest of The Comments Section cheers! Fuse, however, does not. He merely looks down at the sheet of paper and then up at his nemesis.

Conor Fuse:

What does that even mean, dumbass?

Garland shrugs.

Malak Garland:

I don't know, it's a safe space. Warm and fuzzy and safe for me but not for you. And Pat. And Brock.

The Ultimate Gamer looks like he's going to smash his own head through a brick wall but then finds something particularly of interest. He flips the Favored Saints contract around and sees printing on the back. Meanwhile, Malak looks at Percy.

Malak Garland:

You may proceed with the interview...

Collins trembles with delight once more. He's trying to find the most delectable words.

Percy Collins:

My wonderful spirit, your aura is so strong Malak. I cannot get enough of you.

Collins is so thrilled to be doing this. Garland tilts his head back and closes his eyes to breathe in the words of affirmation.

Percy Collins:

We are a family. We are an obnoxious family. But this is who we are.

Malak tilts his head. He's not so sure about that one.

Malak Garland:

We are not obnoxious. Just connected.

Collins nods profusely as if he was sorely mistaken!

Malak Garland:

And we-

Fuse interrupts.

Conor Fuse:

Wait a second... have you seen all of this, Malak?

Garland rolls his eyes.

Malak Garland:

Yes. DUH, dipshit.

But Conor isn't rattled. It's like he knows something Malak doesn't.

Conor Fuse:

Because I don't think you have...

No concern swoops over The Comments Section because no concern swoops over Malak. And yet Conor Fuse has a wicked grin on his face as his eyes scan the back side of the letter one more time.

Conor Fuse:

Sure, yeah, no worries. It's no big deal. You got this.

Garland turns to face Collins again.

Conor Fuse:

It's only the actual stipulation of the match...

Now Conor has everyone's interest. Fuse clears his throat and finds the front of the letter, picking off a select few sentences.

Conor Fuse: *[skimming the letter]*

Yadda, yadda. The Favored Saints agree with your assessment on a title stipulation for DEFCON. Etcetera, etcetera. We agree it should be A SAFE SPACE match, at Malak Garland's request.

Fuse pauses to clear his throat.

Conor Fuse: *[reading the bottom of letter]*

However, we regret to inform you Malak Garland, while your request for A Safe Space Match has been granted, the Favored Saints don't know what you mean by this. Therefore, please see the backside of the document for the stipulation.

Fuse flips the letter over.

Conor Fuse: *[continuing reading the letter]*

A SAFE SPACE MATCH will be the following: a enclosed steel cage structure, with raised metal platforms on par with the canvas to allow for additional wrestling space. The match will be tornado style in structure, anything goes, one fall to a finish. The cage, complete with a reinforced steel roof on top, is meant to keep the participants in and no one else from interfering. Hence, *A Safe Space*.

Nobody says a word. Percy Collins looks like he's gonna fucking walk into oncoming traffic. Malak Garland is frozen.

The thought of A SAFE SPACE match has completely changed (think of it like Hell in a Cell with a raised Elimination Chamber floor on the outside).

Conor chuckles.

Conor Fuse:

We're all gonna die. Thank god.

Finally, Garland snatches the note from his hands, rips it in two and runs away crying.

Percy Collins: *[still with mic in hand]*

MALAK! WAIT! I can provide more daily words!

The rest of The Comments Section scurries off... all except Conor Fuse. He winks and smiles into the camera.

ALVARO DE VARGAS AND THE LUCKY SEVENS vs. ONLYFLIPS AND DOUG "MOONSHINE" MATTON

DDK:

DEF TV 168 was not a good night leading up for The Lucky Sevens and Alvaro de Vargas. Mason Luck and Ophelia Sykes lost to Uriel Cortez and Titaness in a mixed tag match while Max Luck lost to Jack Mace. They are not in a good mood.

Lance:

Not at all! We are told that for safety concerns ... I think that's because Jack Mace competed earlier tonight ... Morrow is not here but Alvaro de Vargas and the Lucky Sevens are. Better Future take on OnlyFlips and Doug Matton from BRAZEN and that's up next!

♪ "Rocket Fuel" by DJ Shadow and De La Soul ♪

The music plays and the members of the crowd familiar with BRAZEN cheer on the trio. One Asian-American in a blue hoodie, a Caucasian man wearing the same and a young blonde girl pointing at the crowd. And the man coming out behind them is Doug Matton, drinking from a flask he pulls from his wrestling trunks before he grossly takes a sip.

Darren Quimbey:

Accompanied by Liz Icarus, at a combined weight of 402 lbs... the team of Kenny Yi and Lee Laz... They want you to like and subscribe... ONLY FLIIIIIPPPSSSSS!!!

Kenny and Lee both run to the ring and head inside. The crowd watch the young team hit the ring and clearly have their game faces on... except Matton, who offers a hit. The Only Flips members don't partake. When the music cuts out Ophelia Sykes appears on the stage.

Ophelia Sykes:

Ladies that can't be me! Horny men that can't be *with me*! We're not messing around! A few weeks ago, these Only Flips jerkoffs got a disqualification win. We're gonna fix that right now. They weigh in at a combined six-hundred and fifteen pounds! They are seven-foot twins that stand at a combined height of *FOURTEEN FEET!!!* Big Money Max! Big Money Mason! The Lucky Sevens!!!!!!

She points to the stage and the house lights turn black.

The lights go and three numbers appear on the screen in the form of a slot machine!

7 7 7

♪ "Money" by Of Mice and Men ♪

The lights come back on and the twins put up "The Winning Hand" while wearing gold-colored capes that have a message on the back in red: MAIN! EVENT! MONSTERS! ***** The giants take the stage and fire goes off behind them!

♪ "Only One King" by Tommee Proffit ♪

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

Fire erupts from either side of the stage and coming out from the back - a pair of black in his gear - dark purple tights with orange and yellow flame designs, and a sleeveless hoodie is the man called Alvaro de Vargas. He throws the hoodie back and...

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

Another blast of fire from either side of the stage, eyes hidden behind red-tinted sunglasses and a scowl to match. He takes them off and throws them up in the air for Ophelia to catch!

DDK:

Ooooooooo no I don't like the chances of Only Flips and Doug Matton!

Alvaro leads the Lucky Sevens to the ring and the giant threesome surround the ring. Only Flips get ready and Doug Matton takes another sip of his flask as the giants arrive to the ring. The official of the match tries to keep the three to their corners. Mason Luck wants in first. Kenny Yi for his team. Sykes is on the outside talking trash to Liz Icarus.

DING DING

Kenny Yi looks up at a very ticked off Mason Luck. Mason swings from the left and Kenny ducks. Mason swings from the right and then he ducks that as well. Kenny hits a chop on Mason and he does not budge. The DEFIANCE Wrestling Faithful look at him but when he chops him again, it pisses Mason off now. He runs with a clothesline next but Kenny hits the ropes. An elbow misses going the other way when Kenny hits a drop kick and stuns Mason by knocking him back to the ropes. Kenny hurries over and then tags Lee Laz!

DDK:

The team of Only Flips trying to get one over on Mason!

They both run at Mason and then use a double running drop kick that is enough to knock him over the ropes ... but Mason flips and then lands on his feet on the outside and that stuns the crowd.

Lance:

Oh, my god! Mason just got knocked out of the ring but he's not even off his feet.

Mason starts to get up, but Kenny Yi uses a sliding drop kick now to knock him back and that gives Lee Laz the chance to run at Mason and then do a running plancha over the ropes ...

Mason catches him then drops him over his knee with a rib breaker!

DDK:

That didn't work for Only Flips! Mason caught Lee Laz and slammed him back first across his knee!

Max Luck climbs into the ring and then strikes the rising Kenny Yi with a gnarly big boot right to the face!

Lance:

The Lucky Sevens got embarrassed by Los Tres Titanes costing them a disqualification win against Only Flips to main event UNCUT 112. Now they are ready to remedy that loss before they get to DEFCON!

Alvaro watches the fun when Mason throws Lee Laz back into the ring. He picks him up and then tags Max legally. He throws Laz into a harsh knee lift from Max, then the other giant turns him around and then hits a big clothesline!

Max and Mason Luck:

KA-CHING!!!

Jeering fills out the DEF Plex. Doug "Moonshine" Matton is nervously sipping from his flask now and hoping for more liquid courage as the twins tear apart Lee Laz.

DDK:

The two brothers hit the Ka-ching combo! The Main Event Monsters showing great tandem offense like they always do!

Max doesn't go for any sort of cover on Lee Laz and tags Alvaro de Vargas. He picks him up and puts him in a neutral

corner. ADV runs at him with one running corner clothesline ... and then another ... and then one more for good measure! Alvaro casually lets Lee Laz fall out of the corner while he talks trash to the rest of the Only Flips team. Kenny Yi is still seeing stars from Max Luck's boot. Alvaro whips Laz back to the corner and a tag from Mason leads to the Winning Hand in the corner! He holds the claw for the count of four from the official then tags Max. Max comes in and does the same thing to Laz!

Lance:

That Winning Hand claw was passed down from Max Luck and I can't believe how both twins use it so effectively!

The tag goes to Mason. He drops Lee over his knee and then applies the Winning Hand claw while applying a backbreaker stretch!

DDK:

And what is *this*?!

Lance:

I call it trouble!

Mason Luck has the hold in but Kenny Yi saves his partner with a spring board drop kick this time to Mason's back to break up the hold!

DDK:

Kenny Yi doing what he can to save his partner!

Kenny pushes Lee Laz towards the corner while Mason is reeling!

DDK:

Not one member of Better Future has been taken off their feet yet, but Mason is angry now! Kenny tries to get his partner over to Doug Matton!

Doug gets a tag and the crowd cheers while on the other side, Alvaro gets a tag as well! Alvaro charges at Alvaro but he gets a battering ram headbutt to his gut instead and it doubles him over in pain! Doug hurts his own head but he gets up and then stands around Alvaro with some jabs and then snaps his arm across his shoulder with a painful arm wringer.

Lance:

Doug Matton uses a painful fujiwara arm bar called the Whole Lotta buzz and he's trying to lock it in!

He tries to get Alvaro down, but the big man doesn't breathe. He grabs Doug and then headbutts him right in the face! Doug gets doubled over and then gets smacked right down with a spinning back fist!

DDK:

Garra del Tigre! He lays out Matton with that back fist! And now Alvaro tags Max Luck!

Max Luck runs over while Alvaro runs over and kicks Lee Laz off the ring apron! Max Luck grabs the laid out Doug Matton and then grabs Mason. Mason grabs him by the arm and then they double team him with a back suplex and Winning Hand Slam combo!

DDK:

NO LUCK AT ALL FOR DOUG MATTON!!!

Mason doesn't need to hook the leg. He presses down with one hand on Matton's chest.

One ...

Two ...

Three!!!

The match concludes in abrupt fashion!

Darren Quimbey:

Your winners ... BETTER FUUUUUUUUTTTTTUUUURRREEE!!!!

The Lucky Sevens and Alvaro de Vargas are victorious! But they aren't done with their victims at ringside! Lee Laz tries to come into help and starts going at Mason Luck, but he blocks a punch and then gets a Winning Hand locked on! The deadly claw hold gets locked in tightly until Mason stands up ...

DDK:

WINNING HAND SLAM BY MASON LUCK!!!

Liz Icarus is on the outside watching what's happening and before she can step in to help, she also gets laid out ... by a super kick from Ophelia Sykes!

Lance:

And there's a cheap shot by Ophelia Sykes! She takes out the valet of Only Flips!

Kenny Yi gets thrown into the ring by Max Luck right into the arms of Alvaro de Vargas who lifts him up and puts him down with his finishing move ... Ardiendo!

DDK:

BETTER FUTURE SENDING A MESSAGE TONIGHT TO LOS TRES TITANES!!! THEY'RE OUT TO HURT SOMEONE!!!

Alvaro asks for a microphone and then gets one. He starts to talk.

Alvaro de Vargas:

Que bola, pendejos!

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!

He gestures to the strewn bodies around around.

Alvaro de Vargas:

Los Tres Titanes... you pendejos like telling people Titans always stand tall, huh? Digo mierda! We say we can cut titans down!

He gives the microphone to Mason Luck.

Mason Luck:

You people want a FIVE-STAR BEAT DOWN tonight!

He gives it to Max.

Max Luck:

... Nah. You're gonna have to pay for DEFCON to see it!

The three giants stand arms raised in the ring as their music kicks in! Ophelia Sykes claps along outside.

DDK:

Better Future Talent Agency against Los Tres Titanes at DEFCON! That one should be violent.

Lance:

Indeed! A night of losses at DEF TV 168 only seemed to make them angrier and they're going to be more driven to win!

BULLET WITH BUTTERFLY WINGS

After DEFtv 168 night 2. Once more, we're back inside the belly of the Airship, its familiar warm wooden planks lining the floors, walls, and ceiling. The lights are a little less bright than in the past, though we do see Leyenda de Ocho laying in a copper bathtub that's been filled with ice water. On a stool next to the tub, we see orange pill bottles that one would assume were prescribed for the pain. His face is stuck in a series of painful wincing as he tries to get comfortable in any way he can, before finally settling in and closing his eyes. A rare moment of peace since he started this grueling series of Physically Destructive Losses - Alvaro de Vargas, Corvo Alpha, and now Oscar Burns all laying waste to the plucky BRAZEN Star Cup holder.

Another Plague Doctor pokes his head around the corner, tucking what looks like a yellow handkerchief into a pocket. He's pretty tall, significantly taller than the diminutive Ocho, and though he's robed, it can't completely hide the fit frame underneath.

Plague Doctor:

Everything good, boss?

LDO:

This ice is doing some WORK, thank you, new guy...sorry, remind me your name?

Plague Doctor:

Don't worry about it - "new guy" is fine. Or Juan, my friends call me Juan. Well, a friend calls me Juan, but that's a long story.

Ocho smiles, as it appears the combination of the ice bath and pain medication is fully kicking in.

LDO:

One, I like that...heh, we could form a tag team. Ocho One, THE OL' EIGHT ONE comin' atcha! Yeah...

The new guy gives a polite chuckle before double checking that his yellow cloth is properly stashed in his pocket and bowing out of the room. A few moments pass as LDO falls asleep, just in time for another visitor to poke his head in...

...one Conor Fuse.

Conor Fuse:

Hey Ocho, one of the other Plague Docs told me you were back here, what's up buddy? You doing okay?

No response from the happily unconscious luchador.

Conor Fuse:

Hmmm. Yeah, trust me man. This is the same response I had when I found out I lost to Malak Garland and had to join The Comments Section LOL. Boy, is my life messed.

Fuse pauses to contemplate what he just said. Ultimately, the gamer is dismissive.

Conor Fuse:

Annnnyway, I'd love to stay and chat but I don't want Malak to know I'm here so I'm gonna jet past ya here and check in on Henry. I've been meaning to check on him for a while, I've just been preoccupied, you know? Busy. With things, you know. Stresses. Like I haven't been, like, avoiding my advice uncle pirate friend who's been there for me and whose Han Solo carbonite form or whatever it is that he's in might be the emotional straw that breaks my Comments-burdened-back, not to mention we reformed the Friendship Members League all those months ago and all I want to do today is sing about ships eating bags of dicks but I can't because my life has been OVERWHELMING...or whatever...

Conor looks warily over at the tub after word vomiting. LDO's still out like a light, so Conor gives a deep sigh before heading down the hallway.

Conor approaches Henry's quarters and pauses outside the door, steeling himself. He's been meaning to check on his old friend for some time now, but he's never been great at knowing the right thing to say in these heavy moments. Especially moments like these where the conversation is going to be one-sided. He lowers his head and cracks the door open.

Conor Fuse:

Hey, Henry, it's me, the video game guy. I just, I guess I wanted to say thank you for those times you had my back. I know I haven't had a chance yet to return the fav-

Conor takes a couple steps into the room and finally looks up, and he's caught completely off-guard by the sight before him. No mummy, no steampunk hospital bed with pipes and gears, no hazy smoke. Just a pile of shredded, discarded bandages piled loosely on the floor.

Conor Fuse:

...Henry?

THIS.

IS.

DEFIANCE.