

E 4 S 09 - RUGGED

*Act 1: Connor moves into the house, and the fish are stirred up at the news he brings from the world. His right-of-center views, and Burt's new interest in prison roleplay, cause Alexis and Smack to become defensive of the liberal grip on the house. Jobe's inexplicable arrival is the last straw, and **Payton and Alexis shout Connor down and demand an immediate return to normalcy**, with Smack insisting she will not quit the show despite the mounting evidence she doesn't have what it takes.*

*Act 2: During **All-Out-War**, Binx wins immunity, but betrays Alex once again to get it, causing him to shut her out again. Alexis, Burt, and Smack struggle with Computer, which is becoming increasingly hateful of them. Alex forgives Binx for her earlier play when he learns Binx hid from him that Connor sexually assaulted her, telling her she shouldn't be afraid to come to him when she needs help. Computer warns Burt not to tell the other contestants the extent to which she has been crossing his boundaries when they are alone.*

*Act 3: Unfavored contestants notice they receive less positive fan mail than those who seem likelier to thrive when conditions worsen. Smack is taken aside and "invited" to leave the show early, to avoid the coming rugpull. **Production begins a sequence of reveals leading toward the ultimate truth that this is Fishtank, and not Famous House, causing extremely polar reactions among the fish.***

Act 1

Connor moves into the house late in the night.⁴⁵²⁷ The fish are surprised at their first arrival from the outside, and ask him if Bam is really dead and what the election results were, and he refuses to answer.⁴⁵³² The men are stirred up by his presence, worrying what it means for him to be there, even after the producers assure them he is a freeloader and can't take the grand prize from them.⁴⁴⁴¹

Omitting the reason (Burt and Simbal compete in horseshoes and Burt loses, it's boring) Burt is given an orange jumpsuit and told he must sleep in the locker room.⁴⁴⁹⁸ He gleefully packs some Bud Lights to drink in there while singing show tunes about murder.⁴⁵⁰¹ He goes to sleep⁴⁵⁰⁸ and Jet TTS wakes him and calls him nigga while inciting him into conspiracy theories.⁴⁵⁶² In the morning he noisily eats fruit snacks and continues to recite scenes from movies and sing. When he is freed, he tells Simbal he wishes he had a roommate in the cell so he could do "prison roleplay."⁴⁵⁹¹

Before falling asleep, Smack and Alex continue to discuss the legitimacy of production: who is computer? Who is Ben? What happened to Ted and Ian? What if this is a social experiment?⁴⁵⁶⁹

The fish get to know Connor in the daytime. He lets slip to them that the episodes are not out yet, which contradicts what they were shown during the Hulu reveal.⁴⁶¹⁰ The guys talk about Connor behind his back, and Burt interjects about fucking Connor until La'ron warns him to stop.⁴⁶⁴⁹

The fish do a quick "cobra kai self defense course" led by Alex^{4640, 4642} - this is overshadowed by the conversation while the fish rest in the aftermath, where Alexis makes an offhand comment about how her body cannot go back to how it was before she had her son.⁴⁶⁴³ Connor inserts himself into the conversation saying, "that's not totally true," and the girls shout him down. *Smack says this is out of pocket in confessional*⁴⁶⁴⁵

Binx and Mizzy scoop Connor up out of the bitchfest, asking him to help them to leverage the longhouse out, and Connor reassures them that the alliance they are trying to break will break soon, due to something he knows will happen.⁴⁶⁵¹ Alex and Binx find Smack in B2, where Smack complains about Connor using the phrase "the liberals" and says the show could use "BIPOC woman representation."⁴⁶⁵⁸

TTS interviews Burt about his "Dream role," and he announces to everyone in earshot that he wants to play "a child molestor" who victimizes girls.^{4669 (before)} Alexis and the others scream at him to shut up. He continues to answer Computer's questions on the topic, until Alexis orders him to stop.⁴⁶⁷³

On his own, Simbal discovers that it says "Jacob gay" in the steamy glass of the window in bedroom 3.⁴⁶⁷¹ The fish are challenged to do "wrestling promos."⁴⁶⁷⁸ Connor, despite being a pro wrestler himself, flubs his attempt and receives guidance from G. Burt goes on about his favorite topic (rape) during his promo, and Smack can be seen covering her ears.⁴⁶⁸⁰ Smack takes La'ron to the bar and says Burt is "ruining his life," and that he's "important representation" but is "tarnishing" it and he "isn't the representation that's needed."⁴⁶⁹⁴

Jobe enters unceremoniously, claiming that he arrived for a "male modeling gig" and that he accepted the role on a whim.⁴⁷⁰³ The fish find this disturbing, because he does not look like a male model⁴⁷⁰⁶. He refuses to tell them who the president is, and they condemn him as working with production.⁴⁷¹³

Several of the fish begin a strategic meeting in the locker room to complain about Mizzy.⁴⁷⁰⁹ They also complain that Connor has to leave because he is being politically disagreeable. However, more and more fish invite themselves into the room, until it turns into everyone questioning Jobe because the circumstances of his travel to the show imply a level of trust and familiarity with production he should not have had with supposed strangers.⁴⁷¹⁴ (How do you still have all your organs? You just put yourself into so much potential danger). The conversation spills into the den, where Alexis and Payton begin to scream at Mizzy and Connor for "egging Burt on" today, for Connor's "dick-ass attitude" and eventually just screeching about child molestation.⁴⁷²³ Smack announces that Mizzy hurt her feelings, but the audience's indifference is clear - Computer spends the span of the argument greeting Jobe (hi Jobe!) repeatedly rather than weighing in.

Payton talks to Binx about how molestation is “not a playable subject.”⁴⁷³⁷ They bring Smack into the discussion and unload a mountain of buzzwords and processes that they believe will enable them to manage Burt going forward.⁴⁷⁴² The conclusion of the discussion is that they will give Burt a safe word to help him change topics when necessary - at the island, they tell him that if they say “balloon” he is triggering them and must stop.⁴⁷⁵²

Jet considerably suggests that Smack come up with a new safe word in case the contestants encounter balloons during the show. Smack and Payton workshop a few ideas before settling on “chevron.”⁴⁸³⁴

Mizzy talks to Smack in bedroom 3 and warns her that she might not be cut out for the show. Smacks says she has no intention of quitting.⁴⁷⁵⁶

Act 2

The fish are placed into separate starting positions for a challenge, and Alex, now drunk, climbs onto the partition in the penthouse.⁴⁷⁶³ Burt, in his own room, declares that the show may go on “indefinitely” with contestants being replaced as it progresses.⁴⁷⁶⁹

The challenge rules for All Out War are: the last fish with a flag remaining wins immunity.⁴⁷⁷⁵ “Red light” means that the fish must remain in the room they are in and not take one another’s flags until the light changes. Green light means the fish may move from room-to-room and attack one another. La’ron discovers Alex on the partition and orders that he come down to help find and eliminate Mizzy, but he refuses.⁴⁷⁸⁷ Alexis and La’ron find her anyway, and warn Alex for prioritizing himself.⁴⁷⁹⁵ Once Connor is eliminated, Alexis and Prince forfeit because they are not on the block.⁴⁸⁰⁵ Simbal and Payton eliminate smack.⁴⁸⁰⁸ Simbal eliminates himself by trying to take a flag from Binx during a “red light.”⁴⁸¹¹ Alex flees to the loft after Luca boots him off the partition.⁴⁸¹³ Believing Payton is the last alive besides himself, he defeats her in a final showdown, but is taken out by Binx who is hiding behind the stairs.⁴⁸¹⁶

Alex takes the loss very badly, taking Jobe and Ben into bedroom 2 and calling Binx a bitch.⁴⁸²⁵ Smack tells Alex he is just mad because he lost, and that Binx outplayed him fair-and-square, and that while they are all going mad in the house, Binx is “healing” in the house because she has a lot going on at home.⁴⁸³⁸

*Confessional: “That disgusting bitch shit in my fucking breakfast” “Double down. Fuck her.”*⁴⁸⁵²

Binx shoots a scene with Simbal confronting him for once again seeming to be cooperating with her but attempting to betray her again, with G egging her on to be ruder and ruder with Simbal because he deserves it.⁴⁸²⁷

Alexis has a panic attack because she misses her three-year-old son, and she keeps hearing nursery rhymes and talk of “Crybabies” that reminds her of him.⁴⁸⁷⁰ Simbal is advised to join them and hug everyone and they tell him to fuck off and stop touching them.⁴⁸⁷¹ TTS makes fun of Simbal for “touching women.” Connor touches Binx’s ass while she is talking to Alex and

Simbal in bedroom 2.⁴⁸⁸⁴ Word gets around to Alex, who confronts Connor for his inappropriateness.^{4911, 4912, 4913, 4914} Simbal ironically takes the lead in the conversation about consent, and Alex gradually folds to Binx and corrects his relationship with her once again.⁴⁹¹⁵ *Confessional: "Please tell me next time? You promise? We're good?" "I'll tell you next time." "There won't be a next time because I'll throw him out the goddamn door myself."*

Burt tells La'ron about the computer calling him "nigga."⁴⁹⁰⁰ La'ron tells Smack and she complains the producers are apparently hypocrites for "wanting to make a sensitive show" but "letting their program to racist shit."⁴⁹⁰⁸

Confessional: Smack & Burt: "It called me the n-word." "That's not okay."⁴⁹⁰⁴

TTS warns Burt he should have kept his mouth shut before he goes to bed.⁴⁹²⁶

Reveal

The fish receive letters from the audience in the morning.⁵⁰⁰⁰ Alex's congratulate him for saying the N-word, Simbal's are all backhanded comments about race, Binx realizes her relationship with Alex is a common factor in most of her letters, Smack gets messages about Palestine and bullshit representation, and the others get a small handful of messages. Alexis cries to La'ron that she didn't get as many messages as the others.⁵⁰¹⁶

Mizzy is instructed to build a table⁵⁰¹⁸, while Smack is brought into bedroom 2.⁵⁰³¹ Jet and G warn Smack that her emergency contact has been trying to get in touch with her, and that although they believe it's her sister trying to pull her from the show because the content is objectionable, they want to give her the opportunity to speak to her at the cost of eliminating herself from the show. Smack decides to leave.⁵⁰³⁷

*Confessional: Mizzy shows the camera the red pill she found in bedroom 2 and says it means something is fishy.*⁵⁰⁵⁹

G offers to pay Alex an enormous prize if he can figure out where in the house Smack is hiding, and the option to enlist other fish if he believes it will help him, so long as someone he didn't enlist isn't the one to find her.⁵⁰⁴⁰ Alex tries to keep this a secret from everyone but Binx eavesdrops and invites herself into the quest.⁵⁰⁵⁵ In his attempt to find the "key" to get Smack out of wherever she is hiding, Alex stomps Mizzy's table, just after G congratulates her on actually making something competent.⁵⁰⁵³

With Smack's disappearance, La'ron announces he wants to go home.⁵⁰⁶⁴ Simbal assures him he is not in danger but La'ron says he is depressed and feels he is isolated and not where he is supposed to be. A flatscreen is brought into the den, showing a rotating series of images from prior seasons of other houses.⁵⁰⁷⁰ Disturbed, Payton announces she will pack with La'ron. They piece together based on Alex and Binx knowing "Fishtank" that this must be related to that somehow, but Alex doesn't have any answers, so they shout at him.⁵⁰⁸⁴ Goldstriker enters, and creeps in from staff entrances to spook La'ron and Payton.^{5090, 5091} He

brings rice into the den and declares he is “Jason Goldstriker,” before beginning the rice counting challenge.⁵⁰⁹⁴ He announces they will win “fish bucks,” not famous bucks. As he reintroduces himself, he smashes the TV. Ben enters and is no longer gay.⁵⁰⁹⁶ Maejok removes the “Famous House” sign and replaces it with the Fish,⁵¹⁰⁰ and Alex, Connor, Jobe, and Binx observe and recognize the image from the images on the TV.

Goldstriker tells the fish they are not on Hulu. He tells them is Jason Goldstriker, an actor portraying the host of Famous House. He tells them the real competition is “Famous Neighborhood,” and that whoever wins the whole famous neighborhood wins a million dollars, and that Ted and Smack are now elsewhere in the neighborhood because they found a clue.⁵¹¹⁰ Burt presses Goldstriker on how they found clues he didn’t find. Goldstriker blurts out “magic,” laughs maniacally, and admits there’s no such thing as Famous Neighborhood either.⁵¹¹⁴ He admits the TTS is the live audience. He says “it’s called Fishtank,” and explains why Alex and Binx knew that term from casting.⁵¹¹⁵

Payton and Alexis interpret Alex and Binx’s foreknowledge as betrayal, and they tell La’ron, who tries to quit on the spot again and orders the girls to quit with him.⁵¹¹⁶ Alex tries to apologize and Payton hysterically chases him from the room, saying she is afraid for her life.⁵¹¹⁸

*Confessional: Mizzy asks Jeremy if his name is Sam. Sam says yes but don’t tell them that.*⁵¹⁸⁰

Burt interrogates Goldstriker at the island, who says they hired Luke as a plant and that assaulting Simbal was “pretty funny.”

*BTS of Luke talking to Jet about being a plant and being a former big brother contestant from day one is shown.*²⁶⁰

Goldstriker clarifies the reason that Ted was eliminated - he was a fan of the show. The clip of Ted saying “TTS” is shown, as well as the BTS footage of Ted admitting to it and trying to whine his way back into the house.⁵¹⁷² Burt asks if him going crazy was funny to him and Goldstriker says it was very funny and he was “dying laughing.”

Burt continues to press Goldstriker until *Arthur* suddenly comes in over the PA, and he begins to dance uncontrollably. The fish dance throughout the house, leading into the credits.⁵¹⁷⁷

- Good clips:
 - Day 1 burt prepaying bills on his phone outside the house while Sam talks loudly about the show being a prank because Burt isn’t paying attention⁵⁰
 - Sam crab-walking behind alexis pretending to shoot her in the back of the head while she walks towards the house¹
 - Times during the shooting of Simbal’s I am an Artist scene, or the pumpkin competition scene, where production was just saying bullshit while trying to set up angles
 - Smack reacting to being told the show is live 20241108_C3238.mp4