

RACE 02 — PACKARD GHOST Detroit Blacklist Underground | Event #2 of 12 Location: Packard Plant Complex & surrounding grid, East Grand Boulevard Conditions: February, 1:22 AM | Overcast, 4°C, surface moisture from prior rain Winner: Sable — Porsche 911 GT2 RS, stripped, cage-built, white with no markings

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The Packard Plant had been dying since 1958.

It took its time about it. Sixty-plus years of managed collapse — floors giving way in sequence, ceilings opening to weather, walls returning to aggregate and rebar and the long patience of decay. Five storeys of it, entire city blocks of it, a ruin so vast it had graduated from abandoned building to landmark. The city had sold it, lost it, reclaimed it, attempted to demolish it, failed, attempted again, failed again. The structure simply refused. It stood the way things stand when they have no particular reason left to fall.

Tonight, someone had strung work lights along the perimeter route. Low-wattage, battery-powered, zip-tied to rebar and chain-link at intervals, they marked the course in amber dots that stretched out ahead and bent at corners and disappeared into the dark interior sections where the route clipped through the ground floor and came out the other side. It was a circuit race — not a drag. Four laps. Approximately 1.4 kilometres per lap. The interior section ran through two collapsed bays and came back out onto the eastern exterior stretch before doubling back through a narrow alley passage that cut between the plant's outer wall and a long-abandoned loading dock.

The organizer tonight was not Viktor Drach. The organizer tonight was a woman who went by Sable, and she had set the course herself.

That detail was not lost on the other five drivers when they arrived and saw the Porsche already sitting at pole position.

Ace parked the Nismo 270 two spots down and stepped out into the cold. She didn't survey the crowd. She surveyed the entrance to the interior section — the gap in the outer wall where the circuit dipped inside, maybe four metres wide, the threshold illuminated by a work light clamped to a bolt in the masonry above. She stood there for a long moment, reading the geometry of the angle, the surface transition from exterior concrete to interior rubble-slab, the way the darkness pooled just beyond the light's reach and would need to be navigated by feel and memory after the first pass.

Then she got back in the car.

The DB11 arrived to a respectful murmur from the forty-odd people assembled. Respectful because of the car — because even stripped of its grand touring context, even parked on crumbling asphalt in a ruin at one in the morning, an Aston Martin DB11 communicated something about the people inside it before either of them had stepped out. Shammy unfolded from the passenger door and the murmur shifted register. People stepped back without deciding to. She was simply a presence that altered the available space.

She stretched her arms above her head, rolled her shoulders once, and looked up at the Packard Plant with something that might have been appreciation.

“Old,” she said.

“Structural resonance on the interior section could be unpredictable,” Mai said, coming around the hood with a flashlight already out. She put it to the entrance gap and swept it across the interior

ground. "Surface is uneven but consistent. There's a section of dropped ceiling slab at the second bend — enough to navigate around if you know it's there."

"How do you know it's there?"

"I asked someone."

Shammy looked at her with mild amusement. "Who?"

"Someone who owed me a favour," Mai said, and switched the flashlight off.

The six cars lined up. The circuit race format changed the grid — this was not a drag, this was a sustained contest, and the interior section would compress the field in ways that pure speed couldn't resolve alone. Sable's 911 GT2 RS sat at front right, engine ticking in warm-up, stripped of nearly every interior panel, cage glinting under the work lights. The car was white in the way that teeth are white — absolutely, unnervingly so, unmarked by a single sponsor decal or identifying flourish. Just the car, the cage, and Sable behind the wheel.

Whatever information existed about Sable was incomplete by design. She was fast, consistently. She had never lost a circuit race. Whether she had ever entered a drag, no one seemed certain.

The flag dropped — a worker in a high-vis vest with a handheld radio, arms wide, then brought down together.

All six cars moved.

The first exterior stretch was wide enough for three cars side by side, and the field sorted itself fast — Sable pulling a clean lead by the first bend, a modified M4 claiming second, Ace finding third. The DB11 was running fifth, which on the exterior stretch looked like a problem and wasn't. Mai had walked the entrance gap with her flashlight and knew the interior section would compact everything.

First lap. The interior gap swallowed the front three cars in quick succession. Sable went through first without adjusting her line at all — the Porsche took the surface transition and the immediate hard-left bend at speed as though the route were a circuit she'd memorized rather than one she'd set. The M4 went through second, wider, one rear corner glancing off the inner wall and shedding a spark trail that went unnoticed in the dark. Ace came through third and felt the surface change under the Nismo before she saw it — the rubble-slab interior floor was rough in a frequency that came up through the steering column, and she read it the way she read everything, adjusting the line without reducing speed.

The dropped ceiling slab was exactly where Mai had said it would be. Three-quarters of a metre across, lying flat at the apex of the second interior bend. Ace moved two metres left and cleared it cleanly. The M4 didn't know it was there. It hit the edge at partial speed and the impact disrupted the rear end just enough to push the driver into a correction, losing a half-second and dropping further back.

By lap two, the field had ordered itself: Sable, Ace, DB11.

Sable ran the interior like she'd been born in it. There was no hesitation at the gap, no adjustment at the slab, no visible conflict between her chosen line and the available surface. She and the Porsche moved through the Packard Plant as though the ruin had been built for this specific purpose and had simply been waiting for the right driver.

Ace watched her and understood that she was not looking at a driver who had gotten lucky with a home course advantage. She was looking at a driver who was operating at a level that had to be respected on its own terms.

On lap three, she tried to close the gap. The Nismo came through the interior section half a second faster than it had on the previous lap — she'd absorbed the route, the surface, the slab, the precise angle of the hard-left — and came out the back exit less than a car length behind the Porsche. On the exterior stretch she felt the Nismo's power come into range, felt the possibility of the pass open up ahead of her as the long straight gave the engine room to work.

Sable simply extended. No drama. No defensive line. Just more speed, accessed cleanly, as though she'd kept a reserve specifically for this moment. The 911 moved away from the Nismo 270 at a rate that was neither panicked nor aggressive. It was controlled. A statement rather than a reaction.

Ace lifted slightly. Recalculated. Filed it.

Lap four. The crowd could hear the circuit without seeing most of it — engine sounds appearing and disappearing as the cars moved through the interior and back out again. When Sable's Porsche emerged from the final interior pass and took the last bend toward the line, the crowd didn't cheer so much as exhale. She had been so clean for so long that her victory felt almost pre-written. She crossed the line with Ace four lengths back and the DB11 in third, and she brought the Porsche to a stop and got out without visible celebration.

She was already looking at the entrance gap when people came to hand her the cash envelope.

Ace stepped out of the Nismo and stood in the cold for a moment. She had learned two things tonight. The first was the interior section's geometry — already mapped precisely in whatever internal cartography she ran. The second was Sable, who did not race to win but raced to demonstrate something, and who the demonstration was for remained unclear.

The DB11 idled up beside her. Shammy's window came down.

“She knows this place,” Shammy said.

“Yes,” Ace said. The first word she'd spoken all night.

“She chose it,” Mai said from behind the wheel. It wasn't a question.

None of them needed to say the rest. Two races in. Two defeats. The Blacklist was not going to offer easy ground.

They had already stopped expecting it to. —

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Last update: **16/03/2026 17:37**

