

“That was a rather pathetic display If I do say so.”

“Shut up,” ***** tapped their foot against the floor, hands holding their head.

“How did you even win that?”

“Shut up.”

“You can’t even defend your own name. Kai’emo,” the thing said, stretching every sound and syllable out with a smirk.

“Shut up.”

“Or what, are you gonna punch me?”

***** glared at the purple parasite.

“Are you going to defeat the Black Spear Sion with that glare, hm?”

***** stayed silent.

“You know I could give you power-”

“No!” ***** cut off the words before they could bloom into something bigger. He would not sully his pure blood.

“Rude.”

A knock at the door.

“Come in,” The Purple Piper said in ***** voice.

A middle-aged balding man opened the door, “Three minutes till the match starts Lord,” He bowed.

“Uh.... Thanks,” ***** actually said.

He bowed again, and gently shut the door.

***** put his hands on the bench beneath them, preparing to stand up to drink the healing Elixir. But halfway through It was handed to them by the Piper.

“Oh, thank you.”

***** Popped the cork and drank it. Then they realized something. It picked something up. It touched something that was.... physical. They looked up at the thing that was more him than he. ***** stopped cycling the Elixir

It smiled, “What? Aren’t you going to thank me?”

***** stumbled to the door. Heat pounding. Feeling their stomach drop. pushing at the handle on the door.

Just trying to get away. If it could do that.

“Oh, um. Hello Lord.” The same man who gave him the time warning said. About to open the door again, “I was about to escort you, how convenient.”

***** nodded, “Oh, uh. Mm. Y-yeah.” walking towards the gate.

What was he trying to do again?

In the side of his vision, he saw a tall pale golden-haired man. Holding a staff with an opal adorning it, glowing with cold silver light. The same color as his eye. Only the eye, his left half gone, just a black and white static fuzzy outline. Then nothing. The Purple Piper must’ve been messing with him again.

“We’re here,” the man said

“Ah,” that’s what he was doing, right?

Stopping at the wooden gate, illuminated by silver pearl light. A person at a pulley system cranked a wheel. Raising the gate. Revealing the glare of the setting suns against the horizon, burning his eyes with blue and purple light. Karu on the other side of the stadium

OOO

Karu dragged himself to his room inside the Holy Lake stadium. Not 20 feet away from the gate to it. Using his spear as a crutch to hide the limp he got when he bent his leg weirdly when he was pinned on the ground by the Pearl Titan practitioner. For some reason, he didn't feel any pain in his chest, only a numb tingling around the area.

His head felt faint like he'd been holding his breath underwater for too long. Sweat drenched the ripped black fabric of his clothes under the enchanted leather armor. The rips were probably why it was so damn cold. He knew he was inside a giant ice structure, but it was nearly warm at all times of the year. Even when winter was approaching, well is.

But then why was he sweating? Why wasn't there any light? Where was his room!? Why couldn't he breathe!? No, he could feel his chest moving, there just wasn't air. He needed air. He needed to get to his room. And is there something behind him? he couldn't look back. Why couldn't he look back?
He just couldn't.

Karu's steps quickened. Clicking against the floor in beat with another behind him. All he could do was look forward into the mouth of the hall. Hoping, it wouldn't do something.
It touched his shoulder.

He spun around, readying his spear. Then.... stopped, seeing a petite brunette woman, well he guessed everybody was petite to him now.
"Um, you overshoot your room.... Sion," She said the last word in a hurry, giving a little bow.
"Oh, uh. I uh. I-I-I must've missed it."
"Ah...."
"Hm."
He brushed past her, quickly opening and closing the door with a rush of air. Hiding his flushed face.

He sat on the scrappy wooden bench inside, nailed into the ice. The numbness in his chest started to fade into pain. Then he realized something.

"I.... won,"

Yes, he'd seen, uh.... Whatever his name was teleported away. But now. Now. He didn't know. The spear he propped up against the wall fell over, hitting the floor with a thwack. Making him jump, he readied his hands to wield his spear.

But he realized what happened. And looked at his hands in a form he'd done thousands of times before. And they were shaking. And his sweat was drenching everything. And he was

cold, so, so, so cold. And his chest felt like it was on fire. And every scrape and bruise was battering against him like nails on a chalkboard. And he was going to have to fight again. And win again. And. And. And.

He must've just been more injured than he realized. Yeah, yeah, that's it. He stumbled over to the little first aid cabinet at chest level. Opening it and taking the little yellow-green Elixir out. It was for the finals, so competitors could fight each other at peak conditions, only directly before the battle. But that was never really enforced.

It fell into his empty stomach, stinging as it went down. Wait, now that he thought of it, when was the last time he ate? He skipped lunch and breakfast and before that.... Two days now. Well, there hadn't been any time. So.... yeah.

He half vomited the elixir up but kept it down. Making sure to cycle the energy before he threw it up. Only after he finished did he let it out. Now a watery black sludge in the hole acting as a toilet. Falling to the water below.

As he was washing his face and mouth with water from a bucket there was a knock at the door, "Come in," he called out

Then walked in, was his father. Xangru Fei

"Oh, uh. Hey Dad."

"I am here as your Patriarch," He said coldly, looking down his nose at his son. His Sion.

Karu stiffened, and gave a straight-laced bow, "Apologies Patriarch Xangru Fei."

"Sit."

So Karu did.

There was silence. Karu looked around, eyes and body shifting under the glare of the Patriarch.

"What was that Sion."

"Hm?"

"That performance. It was miserable, pathetic. I don't know how you won."

"A-a-apologies Patriarch," Karu put his head a little lower.

"I don't expect you to match me as I am now. But as I was. Skys, how hard can that be?"

"Yes, Patriarch."

"Don't even think of losing to that squid from the Leviathan Kin Sect."

"Yes Patriarch," Karu's words kept on getting fainter and fainter.

"Bah, and they put their Sect on the same level as ours just because they patrol the Leviathans Womb. They're not even a century old!"

Karu nodded his head

Another knock on the door, "Sigh, come in," the Patriarch snapped.

The brunette woman opened the door, "Um, uh. I-I-it's," she kept on stuttering as she saw the Patriarch.

"Get it out," Fei said.

"I-it's the three-minute warning till the match starts."

"Tsk," He turned to Karu, putting a hand on his shoulder. Leaning in and whispering, "Don't disappoint," and left.

The door shut behind him with a whisper of air.

The room dimmed as the outside light was blocked, all noise gone. Karu gripped the place his dad had touched on his shoulder. He felt like something was wrapping around his chest.

He looked down at his sapphire reflection in the ice, "You are not a coward. You are not a coward. You will not sully your blood."

He forced his trembling to stop. Making a small diamond of ice, spinning it in the air. Sharpening his mind, grinding away the waste. A blade in fire, its impurities pounded out.

A third knock on the door.

"Come in."

"It's time for your match, Sion."

He took a breath, "OK."

He brushed past the woman, walking towards the gate. Grabbing the bottom of it, slamming it open to the light of the setting suns and blazing fireworks ready to fly.

The other side, his opponent.