

CHAPTER 13: WAR OF THE GIANTS

Two weeks after Clair comes to the palace to aid the king, the mages at the royal university get a message from the leaders of the giant clans stating that their war is approaching and that the surrounding areas of the traditional combat zone need to be evacuated immediately to avoid any casualties of any that are not of giant blood.

Upon receiving this news the confused Aram approaches the king to ask what the message meant.

“What the giants mean by their ‘*war*’ is that every thousand years the giant clans come together to fight each other in order to choose a new king, and unfortunately almost every battle ends in a death for a great number of the giants and sometimes hundreds of civilians.” The king then unfurls a map and points to an area about three days ride from the palace, “here is the traditional battleground for the giants’ war. As you can see it’s smack dab in the middle of one of our biggest towns which also happens to be the hub of our land based trade.”

“Sire we must do something about this. If the message was right the war is going to happen in six days there is no way we can get there and evacuate everyone in that time.”

“Aram send a message to the generals of the giant armies and to their current king through your speaking spells. Tell them I wish to have an audience, that I may have a suitable compromise to their constant wars to choose a new king.”

Later that day the giant generals and their current king use magical devices to send astral forms of them to meet with King Gorgash.

“Thank you for meeting with me so quickly, for thousands of years your people have warred on the soil of this great Kingdome dating back to the times before the great

earthquakes, thousands of years billions of lives lost. I have a proposition for you to stop the loss of lives that your people suffer during each war.”

“We know of your diplomatic skills King Gorgash but be warned we are not swayed easily though your hint of fewer lives lost is intriguing. You have until sundown tomorrow to convince us of your idea. Should you fail, our war will take place as planned and we will not be responsible of the lives lost for your time wasted when you could have been evacuating the area.”

“The idea I have is simple but has some complexities to it, the overall idea is that each of your generals choose a proxy for themselves to represent them and their clans, and then in a tournament each proxy competes against each other in single elimination combat. The proxy who obtains the final victory wins the crown for the general they represent. To make the choosing process fair we could have a person write down the names of each of your generals and then put them in a bowl, at which point the names will be mixed up and my queen Aquatica shall pull the names out one by one the order in which she pulls the names would be the order of which general gets to choose a proxy.”

“This plan of yours is very interesting, however I do have a few questions about the proxy, when each of my generals are allowed to choose a proxy who or what would they be allowed to choose.”

“As to the question of what can be chosen as a proxy King Stormfist, I believe that any creature of large size or smaller would be fine as it would reduce the damage to the surrounding area to a minimum.”

“My generals and I shall need to discuss this amongst ourselves, for your plan is very intriguing. We shall extend the time to our war by an additional six days so you may

evacuate all of the inhabitants of the town so that if we don't agree to do this your people will not be harmed. In ten days we shall come to the battleground to deliver our decision and to prepare for the war."

Eight days later finds our heroes evacuating the last of the residents of the town. The king has ordered that they stay by the town to see to anyone or anything that may cause damage to the buildings or to possible thieves who might take advantage of a deserted town. On the tenth day at the town they hear a loud crackling noise that seems to come from all around when the noise ends they see twenty giants of varying size and race approaching the town.

"Where is King Gorgash" bellows the one who was wearing a crown. "I am King Stormfist of the giants I wish to speak to King Gorgash immediately."

"King Stormfist I am here, atop the largest building of the town so that we may speak face to face."

"King Gorgash my generals and I have discussed your proposition and have agreed to try things your way."

"Excellent then we shall begin once I reach the ground to my queen and my personal guard."

Upon reaching the ground the king addresses the heroes thusly, "my friends as this is not a true danger to the country since the giants have agreed to this tournament you are not required to participate. There will be special rules made that will make this tournament unlike the ones you may have seen before. The entire list of rules will be read off before the first round of the tournament, and they will be made to push the combatants to a whole new level. So if you wish to stand aside now I will not fault you however if you choose to accept participation you are

honor and duty bound to see this through.” After addressing the heroes and confirming whether or not they will be participating in the tournament, which Jade and Dimetrius actually decided to pass on while Crystal and Tina agreed, the giant generals’ names are placed into a bowl and drawn. Finally after a while there are only four generals left, General Frostbeard, General Darkwind, General Fireheart, and General Stoneeye. General Frostbeard chose to take Crystal as his proxy, General Fireheart chose to take Tina. Darkwind thought for a while and said, “I shall take a construct that has been sitting in my armory for many years. I shall use Marut the inevitable.”

Finally Stoneeye looked down and thought long and hard. “I shall use a creature from my cousins domain, the plane of fire. I am calling forth the power of a Marilith.” He said firmly.

Frostbeard reached down and clenched his fist for a moment before holding it open and saying, “Child of man Crystal I bequeath to you as my champion this Greater Ring of command water. This ring allows you to control anything that is made of water that being ice, steam or water itself, and makes them immune to water element damage. Once per day can use the breath attack of a greatwyrms white dragon which is a powerful cone of cold and will be launched from your very mouth though cause you no harm.

Fireheart reaching down gave Tina the exact same kind of ring and said, “Use it well child for this is a mighty gift to receive.”

“Very well, now that we have the Proxies chosen It will take us three days to construct the arena for the tournament. The quick rundown of how we planned on doing it is a ladder style contest. These will be one on one fights, though not to the death as that is what we are trying to

prevent here, my mages will have challenges imposed randomly on the contestants and provide them with magical shields to prevent the fighters from dying or losing a limb permanently.

“Very well I assume you shall have a way for all twenty of us to watch this while still allowing for the contestants to fight easily?”

“I have set in motion to have a giant flat crystal to project the images of the arena to you so you can view from a safe distance and not terrify my people. If you wish to make bets I will also have a sorcerer on hand nearby for you to take your bets and teleport to the betting bar before each round and come back with winnings. I believe you will not only have fun with this new way of deciding your king but also find it very profitable on each occasion.” The king said smiling.

“Very well we shall return in three days with the champions we have chosen that are not your two friends here.”

Three days later Dimetrius and Jade were walking along with Mikey, Shiera and Diana between them both carrying their bags. “Remember you three we’re here to cheer on Crystal and Tina and have fun. Jade and I might make a few bets but you don’t use your money on anything other than food you get permission to buy.” He said to them.

“Yes papa Dimetrius.” They chorused cutely.

“Good crinkle bums.” Jade said smiling down to them.

As they got close to the entrance for spectators they saw a giant sign on the wall near the gate where they all had to pay to get in and it showed not only the roster of combatants and who

they were set to fight in the first round of the tournament. Their names were also listed below the starting bracket with the name of the Giant they represented.

Seeing this Dimetrius pulled out his money pouch and paid the entrance fee to a guy going down the line with tickets and a money box and paid for the five of them before saying, “Wow those are some interesting special rules.”

The special rules used in the tournament will be chosen at random each round. A round is over when all fights on that level of the bracket are completed and the victors move to the next round.

The special rules are;

1. BASIC COMBAT. No special effect straight up combat
2. FATTY FATTY. Each combatant will feel as if they have doubled in weight.
3. ANYONE FOR BARBEQUE. The ring will be set ablaze causing constant fire damage
4. HOW DARE YOU USE MAGIC! An anti-magic field will be erected around the entire ring negating all spells and spell like abilities, this does not apply to KI based attacks or natural abilities, though it will cancel out magical artifacts and items from being used as well.
5. DEEP FREEZE. The ring will be surrounded by a solid wall of ice decreasing the temperature inside to 0 degrees F. combatants will take constant frost damage, move slower and have to make constant reflex checks for footing on the icy floor.
6. GIVE IN TO THE DARKNESS. The ring will be engulfed in a black void which no light can penetrate causing all inside to be blinded. Spells that generate light will not generate any light whatsoever and detect magic will not allow combatants to see magical auras on each other or their weapons. Blind fight will still work but actual vision is completely disabled.

7. YOU SOUL IS MINE. Leeching spells will be placed on both players causing them to drain health from the other when dealing damage healing their own wounds

8. GIGA POWER. Whenever a combatant scores a critical attack the damage dealt is increased by one skill level. If contestants have a curse on them preventing critical attacks this buff negates it and they do regular critical damage instead.

9. COMBATANTS CHOICE. Each combatant may choose ONE stipulation to have employed in their own match e.g. your soul is mine and how dare you use magic.

10. ULTIMATE CHAOS. Employs all stipulations after number 1 and before number 9.

“Wow...and they think nobody is going to die from this?” Jade said worried.

“Trust me Jade nobody is going to be hurt. I’m going to be brought in to help with the magical stipulations when one of the mages are drained I can assure you that there are safety measures preventing death.” Dimetrius said nodding.

“Alright then I’ll believe you. I still can’t believe you passed on entering the tournament yourself, you would have done well and probably won if you entered.” She said nodding.

“Maybe...but I’m more of the kind of warrior who doesn’t like to flaunt power in situations like this. Now if I had been ordered by the king I would have and given my all but I would have been very irritated if he had.” He said as they started up the steps and moved down to the lowest rows of seats so they had a good view of the battle floor which was a one hundred square foot ring five feet high from the ground.

“Wow thas a big fighting platfowm.” Mikey said in awe.”

“Yeah we will gets to see it really good from here.” Diana said excitedly.

“Exactly you two. Now remember while you may see monsters that people have had to fight in the past and present appear they are NOT going to hurt you. They can’t leave the

platform boundaries or they will be disqualified. They also will not be allowed to summon helpers if they can summon things for the same reason.” Dimetrius said helping them onto their seats which were cushioned just enough to make them comfortable.

Jade putting Shiera into her seat said, “Now do any of you want a snack from the bag while we wait for the tournament to start?”

“Can I has a juice please Ma’am?” Shiera said.

“Crackers and juice please.” Diana and Mikey said together.

Nodding she got out a juice for them and a pack of animal shaped crackers big enough for them to share and opened it putting it in Diana’s lap since she was in the middle.

Once the seats were filled a lone figure was seen walking out to the massive platform that would serve as the battle ground. Once there he raised his hands and massive glass plates appeared in the sky over the arena which showed everyone around a closer look at the ring and him in general.

“Oh look it’s Aram. Guess he is going to give the giants the view they need and be master of ceremonies today.” Dimetrius said smiling.

Tapping his throat Aram spoke in a voice that carried through the arena and the countryside, “Ladies and gentlemen welcome. Welcome to the Inaugural tournament to sanctify this new arena and the first ever “Giants War Tournament.” Today we are attempting a new idea devised by our most royal majesty King Gorgash to not only aid our people in safety but also to help solidify our ties to the giant clans and keep their people from dying as well.”

There was a murmur from the audience as he paused to take a breath so loud that he had to wait for it to die down.

“Twenty-one of the generals of the giant clans have entered this tournament along with their current king. They have chosen from the many planes of existence including ours proxies to stand in their place. As you entered the arena you saw the special rules that would be applied to today’s matches and for that we have the entire graduating class from our University of Magecraft and myself as well and a few powerful mages we have been so lucky as to meet to help us place these effects into action. To choose these stipulations our royal Majesty Queen Aquatica shall spin the “Wheel of Fate” before each set of rounds.” He continued as the queen stood up and waved to the audience with a giant wheel next to her that had a pointer at the top and pegs to help slow and actually spin it.

“As for the basic rules for the matches there are four ways to win in this combat. You beat your opponent to the point they are not able to answer a ten count to get back to their feet, Throw them from the ring and BOTH of their feet, or in the case of them having more than 2 the majority of their feet, touching the ground, OR your opponent declares Jihi or Mercy. The final way is for me to step in and call the match to prevent the death of a combatant when it has been determined they are in no shape to continue and are too stupid or stubborn to admit their defeat.”

“Now for those who don’t know the giant wars take place every millennium to crown a new king of the giants. Today this tournament is going to stand in place of their normal war and the combatant who wins the tournament shall win the crown for their General or re-crown their current king. So without further ado LLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLET’S GET READY TO BAAAAAAAAAAAAATLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLE.” He said with a yell at the end as a giant tournament bracket was launched into the air to stand over the glass panels showing the names of the twenty-two combatants and who they would be fighting in the first round.

Standing up King Gorgash and Queen Aquatica stood ready as the first two combatants took to the ring a large bull headed red Djinn known as an Efreeti and a bugbear who was wielding a massive spiked morning star. “For the first round of matches let us see what the wheel of fate places upon our fighters.” King Gorgash said loudly as the queen spun the wheel.

The magical viewing on the giant crystalline panels over the arena zoomed in onto the wheel and as it started to slow people in the audience started chanting the stipulation they were hoping for most and when it finally came to a stop King Gorgash yelled, “MAGES PREPARE THE GIGA POWER SPELL. This Match will start in three minutes to give our mages time to place the spell upon the arena floor and those who wish to to make their bets.”

“Mama Jade what is that thing.” Mikey asked pointing at the Djinn.

“That sweetie is called an Efreeti. It is a djinn from the elemental plane of fire and are the more mischievous of the Djinn family and more likely to twist your wording on any wish you get from them to be amusing for themselves. They have control over every kind of fire spell and are deadly swordsmen with their scimitars.” Jade replied smiling at him.

“Oooh...I see.” He said sipping his juice cup.

“I’m not bothering with a bet on this one. You going to place one Jade?” Dimetrius asked.

“Nah the odds would be stacked in the favor of the Efreeti and would have little payoff. If I make a bet I want to have it be worth the time and potential for a good payoff for the orphanage.” She replied as there was a rhythmically sounding drumming before a loud clang sounded from the gong signaling the start of the match.

On the viewing panels under a headshot of each combatant a green bar appeared which ran to the middle of the panel with a good space between each bar.

“What’s that on the screen Dimetrius.” Jade asked looking up and seeing it.

“Ah that is how we will be monitoring their vitals. The green stands for the energy and health they have left if it becomes necessary for Aram to step in and stop the match. As the combatants fight the meters will slowly turn red moving towards the middle of the panel.”

Dimetrius replied reaching down and picking an animal cracker out of the bag in Diana’s lap.

“Ingenious, Aram and the mages of the university have got to have been planning this tournament non-stop since the king received word of the war tournament in the first place.” She said.

“Actually...I was going to surprise you but if this tournament hadn’t been made to save the lives of our people it was going to happen anyway but without the proxies for the giant generals. I came up with the idea myself before we went to your cabin for those few days.” He replied laughing.

Suddenly there was a roar and looking back to the floor the two saw the bugbear flying through the air and slam into the wall sliding to ground just below the five of them. “Well that was bowing.” Shiera said crossing her arms. “The djinn thingy only made one move” she added.

“Don’t worry sweetie the first rounds usually are boring. It’s how you weed out the weaker combatants and have a good tournament later on. I guarantee that even though mama Crystal and Miss Tina are against each other their match which is in the second set of rounds will be much more entertaining.” Dimetrius said petting her head.

“Winner Efreeti.” Aram said as the Djinn floated away to the combatants area and the Bugbear vanished back to where it would have been had it not been chosen.

“First round match number two Hound Archon Hero verses a fearsome Hellcat.” Aram said as the two walked out to the arena.

“is the queen gonna spin da wheel for them too?” Mikey asked.

“No sweetie Aram said that the wheel would be spun on each round not each match.”

Jade said.

“Oh right. I gots confused.” He said squirming a little.

Once they were in the ring the people who were gambling on the event went and got their bets in for this match as it promised to be more interesting than the first one as these two combatant’s looked pretty equal in power.

After the gong sounded the Hellcat pounced using nearly blinding speed and slashed with both front claws at the Hound Archon who leapt back and said something in celestial speech which caused a bright ring to form around him ten feet in diameter. “Thou shalt not touch the divine body I have been bestowed with agent of hell.” He said as the Hellcat cringed away from him. “The power of the gods runs deep inside my veins and I am their sword. Their wrath against evil. BEGON.” He said moving forward keeping the ring around him and forcing the hellcat backwards towards the edge of the ring.

Snorting the hellcat turned around and leapt from the ring landing on the ground and slowly disappeared going back to the nine hells from whence it came. “Winner Hound Archon Hero.” Aram said loudly.

The first set of rounds went by pretty fast even if there were six matches each with a 3 minute betting window before each.

The second round of matches came up and standing up the queen smiled and gave the wheel a hard spin and seeing that there was going to be two dragons, a couple of hell creatures a The Efreeti and other creatures known for magical skills the crowd started chanting for the no magic rule.

“COMBATANTS CHOICE.” The queen yelled causing a roar of applause as this would cause the most chaos and most fun for the spectators.

“Since this round’s stipulations are going to be chosen by the combatants of each match we are going to extend the voting window to ten minute times which will give each combatant proper time to make a choice for their individual stipulations.” Aram said loudly as a cheer went up. “Will the combatants of Efreeti and Water Weird please take the arena floor.”

“Papa Dimetrius can I please bet on Mama Crystal and Miss Tina’s match.” all three of the kids asked at once.

“I told you no betting at all you three. You are too young to do something like that and you need to save your allowances for things you want more and your concession stand snacks.” Dimetrius said firmly causing all three of them to look down sadly.

Jade catching his eye signed to him, “if they behave and don’t act up I think they should get to bet on the final match if we set a limit of 5 gold each.”

Pursing his lips he thought about it and finally said to them. “However if you don’t ask again and you behave the rest of the tournament you can bet on the final match if Crystal gets to it and you can only bet five gold each at most.”

“We’ll be good promise.” They all said smiling before Mikey blushed hard.

“Papa I needs a change.” He said.

“Alright. Girls do you need one too?” Dimetrius asked them.

They blushed hard and reached down between their legs to check their own diapers and both of them nodded silently.

“Alright all of us to the potty then.” Jade said seeing Dimetrius’s look to her which clearly told her he needed it as well.

By the time they got back the match had started with the conditions of No magic and the ring being set ablaze which seemed to empower the Efreeti and heal him faster than the weird could do damage. By the time they had sat down the weird collapsed to the arena floor causing the flames to stop and Aram to jump up onto the stage and pick up the weird. “Winner Efreeti.” He yelled as he carried the badly burned weird to a stretcher that was waiting to take her away to get treatment.

“Oooh look the weird is hurt baded.” Diana said concerned.

“She’ll be okay sweetie that’s why we have the rule of Aram being able to jump in to stop the match. The healers will see she is okay soon enough.” Dimetrius said patting her rump as she snuggled up in his arms as he was carrying her and Shiera while Jade carried Mikey.

Once the Efreeti left the ring the mages who had been casting their spells onto the ring collapsed and accepted the droughts that were given to them as two new ones came to take their place.

Coming back to the arena edge Aram said, “Will the Iron Golem of Arator and Siren come forward and take your places.”

Taking their places the golem and siren looked around and thought about their choices.

Once the time limit was nearly up the Golem held up its massive hands and showed 8 fingers giving his choice of “GIGA POWER” while the Siren said seductively. “Your soul is mine.”

“Very well. GIGA POWER AND YOUR SOUL IS MINE HAVE BEEN DECLARED. MAGES SET THE SPELLS.”

Dimetrius reaching into the diaper bag for himself pulled out a container and handed two sets of earplugs to Jade and said, “best use these on us and the kids.” And then he got them set into Shiera and Diana’s ears before doing his own.

Nodding she plugged up Mikey’s ears and then her own and put a finger to Mikey’s lips as he opened his mouth to complain clearly saying, “No complaints” and he didn’t argue.

People near them seeing this spread the word that the head of the orphanage and the half-dragon hero were plugging their ears and right after the gong sounded just about everyone in the arena had their ears plugged either with fingers or with paper, some even used corks from their wine bottles after cutting them down quickly.

As the gong sounded the Siren started singing and while the crowd heard the song their plugged ears were not affected by the magic of it. While the Siren was fast on her feet and nimble the Golem was not affected by her singing as his construct body was just that. A construct, he had no senses in the normal way and thus magical song that wasn’t focused for metal manipulation was ineffective on him and by the time the Siren realized this it had her backed into a corner. Grabbing it in one massive hand the Golem picked her up and instead of just throwing her out of the ring flipped her so her legs were by his head and her head between his then it jumped high over the ring and landed hard on its rear end driving her headfirst into the concrete slab stage causing her to scream in pain before passing out.

Getting up the golem then kicked the unconscious body hard enough to make her fall out of the ring limp as a wet noodle then it left the ring clearly the victor of the fight.

“Winner. Iron Golem of Arator. Medical team to the stage to assist the Siren.” Aram said as Dimetrius and Jade unplugged their ears first and then the kids.

“Why did you plug up our ears papa?” Shiera asked.

“Because, without sound reduction a Siren’s song can cause a person to do very dangers and stupid things. I wasn’t going to let you three get hurt by hearing the full power of the song and even those with draconic blood or divine protection need to protect against the sirens seduction.” He replied kissing her head. “It’s something I learned a long time ago in my studies with my mama.” He said.

“And you learned your lesson well dear.” His mother said from behind him making him jump.

“Momma...pop what are you doing here you said you were going to be staying at the farm and working today?” he said surprised.

“Oh we were but I got this feeling I needed to come here and you know that when I get those sudden feelings I have to enact on it.” She said holding his baby sister to her chest nursing it.

Getting up he picked up Shiera and Diana and moved them to the same seat as Mikey and said, “Shiera, Diana, Mikey, Jade this is my mother Sapphire Wind and my father Drognan Wind. He took mothers name when they married. Momma, Papa this is Jade Moonflower, High priestess of Pelor and the matron of his Orphanage. She’s the healer and meat shield I told you about in my letters describing my adventures with her Crystal and Aimeric who had to go back to his homeland a while ago. And these three are Shiera, Diana and Mikey. I help Jade take care of them when I have free time and Crystal and I promised them that when my tasks from Boccob were over and she had finished her quest. We would adopt these three.” He said before blushing and going “Shitake mushrooms I didn’t mean to say that out loud.”

“YOU’RE ADOPTING US.” The three squealed happily.

“That was going to be a surprise when we were able to do it. Man Crystal is going to kick my butt for spoiling that.” he said blushing.

“Well it’s good you’re taking care of these three now then and giving them hope for their future dear you just be careful so that you and Crystal can keep that promise.” His mother said smiling and taking the seat he left for her while his father sat on the other side.

“Well then I was not expecting this news...I guess I need to put their files in the “pending” cabinet then so they can’t be snatched up from under you don’t I?” Jade said causing Dimetrius to blush more.

“Come the freezing over of the nine hells or the burning of the high heavens I promise I’ll be around for you three and be able to adopt you soon enough. Remember when I passed out yesterday and you four couldn’t wake me?” he said.

“Yeah I was going to ask about that.” Jade said.

“My lord and master is the reason behind it he took me to his home in the high heavens and spoke with me there. He said within the next six months we will find the thing I am to destroy, and the cure for Aimeric as well. He couldn’t tell me more than that but after he said that we had a long talk about how I’m doing and well...He said while I’m still on probation he is giving me the rank of favored soul. But to announce it to one of my party I had to have my mum and dad nearby so they could be happy too.”

“Well isn’t that good news indeed. I’m so proud of you honey you’ve come a long way from getting a daily spanking for being naughty.” Sapphire Wind said kissing his head causing him to whine. “Mooooooooom I wasn’t that bad.”

“Actually you were the first five years. You got one spanking a day minimum but what do you expect from a dragonling who was in human form. You had to just test the boundaries of

everything you came across.” Drognan said smiling. “And after each spanking time out you were the snuggle monster from the blue mountains.” He added.

This made Dimetrius blush more and pout staying quiet as the girls and Mikey giggled at this.

The next five fights came along with a were-rat fighting the hound archon, who was defeated soundly due to the rat’s speed and agility, a were-bear fighting the criosphinx from the first round again losing due to the speed and strength of a lycanthrope, a weretiger fighting and adult white dragon, this time the lycanthrope losing due to being frozen in a block of ice due to the dragons ice cone breath, and the sixed armed serpent Marilith fighting the inevitable Marut king of the storm fists losing by having four of her six arms shattered at the elbow and rendered deaf and blind from the thunder and lightning fists. The fifth fight was the Were-wolf from the first round fighting a young adult silver dragon and the wolf won but not from using it’s claws or teeth but rather by using a sword that glowed green and black with a dragons skull design as the cross guard.

“And now for the final match of the second round Crystal the Shinobi of the night verses Tina the hex mage.” Aram said causing the girls and Mikey to let out whoops of cheer and Dimetrius to yell encouragement to them both.

“I have already chosen my stipulation Aram. I choose the no magic rule.” Crystal said from behind her mask having gone full shinobi on Tina.

“I forfeit.” Tina said instantly causing everyone to go quiet as the grave. “I forfeit because without being able to cast magic I am not going to have a chance against any adversary. I have no fighting skills unless I am able to place my curses and hex’s on my target. I’m sorry

General Fireheart but this stipulation prevents me from serving you.” She said walking out of the arena floor and going back to the changing area.

“Well shit.” Crystal said as she got off the stage not realizing that Tina was that damn weak without her magic. Going back to the changing area with her she spoke kindly to her apologizing for screwing her out of a chance to have a good fight.

“Now that the first two rounds are over we are going to have one hour for a break to give our remaining combatants a chance to recover from their fights and get some food and use the restrooms. Let’s give it up for the honorable defeated and the victorious combatants.” Aram called out to the arena causing a roar of applause to break out.

Once Aram left the floor Mikey looked up at Dimetrius and said, “Papa can we go see Mommy Crystal for a bit?”

“You girls want to come too or do you wanna sit with your future grandmamma and Grandpapa and get to know them?” He asked them.

“Gamma and Gampy.” They said together cutely causing his parents to smile and laugh.

“Don’t worry dear we’ll take care of your girls. Though I want to talk with Jade while you’re gone too so take your time.” Sapphire Wind said to him giving him a swat on his padded rump as he stood up and picked up Mikey.

“Alright. You girls be good or Grandma and Grandpa can give you a spanking. And trust papa you don’t want Grandma to spank you.” he said walking away with Mikey and the boys diaper bag on his hip and arm respectively.

Once they were out of sight and hearing Jade said, “So what do you want to know?”

“Well we would like to know more about how our son is doing as your team mate, how seriously he takes his studies at the castle if you know, pretty much anything and everything you

can tell us?” Drognan said kindly getting up and picking up the girls he sat down in their seat putting them in his lap for a snuggle hug.

“Well I know he is more than a sorcerer now. Crystal is actually training him in the art of the Ninja. He has already mastered the staff fighting of her clan before she even had a chance to teach him anything about it. It’s hard to explain but the easiest way to do so is to tell you about our first mission together. The one Crystal picked up your son on...when we registered for the hunt we were given a choice of weapons all of which were bestowed with a deck of many things properties which would recharge after a time. He practically wet himself in excitement and begged us to let him be the holder of the weapon and use it when necessary.” She said.

“He...did...what...” Sapphire wind said slowly eyes wide.

“Before you freak out he only used it three times, our friend Aimeric made him tell us what he knew of the deck of many things and I told him unless I gave permission he was not allowed to use it or I would take it away. The first effect was seen after the battle as a very tan Djinn appeared and granted him the choice of four wishes for himself, or one for each of us in the group. Your son is very generous and chose the second option it’s how he got the sapphire dragon amulet that lets him use his breath weapon as often as you madam.” Jade said before taking a drink

“The second effect cause a type four bag of holding filled with changing supplies that would last him six months and bottles of juice and a hairbrush to blister his backside with should he misbehave. The final effect, and this is one that still gets me, let him have the muscle memory and skills of one of Crystals Ninja elders without ever having trained as one, at least in the weapons department. The night before we got there he confessed to the whole party about his

backstory, said he was told by Boccob to come clean to us. We weren't all happy about it but we also all agreed that the past is the past." She finished.

"Yes Lord Bahamut told us the truth of our son the night he left with you four. I was less than happy with him for making my son lie to us for so long but, given what his purpose here on this world is, I am also proud he is turning out to be so good. So you know then all about his real reason he needs diapers then. And do you really spank him on your journeys if he misbehaves?" Sapphire Wind said.

"Well he agreed that while we are on the road doing our jobs as heroes or while he is with me at the orphanage or I'm in the castle with him, or his fiancé Crystal is with him, that since his mind regressed to that of a child a lot when he was extra stressed out that he would be treated as if he were a full dragon and not half. Which means by your race my lady, that he is technically still a baby." Jade said.

"Yes by my races standards he is a baby. And while we would have liked to have been asked I know from the little snippets he told us that you never abused the station of "mother figure" while you traveled. So I don't mind in letting you continue doing so. He needs a firm hand to keep him focused and listening sometimes." She said.

"Well....he has been spanked only for doing the most reckless of things and for excessive potty mouth. I have a three strike rule for the latter as these three can tell you. The first time he got his bottom warmed that wasn't swearing was on that first mission when he ran into a room full of goblins and a couple hobgoblins and caused Crystal and Aimeric to be injured by his recklessness. I felt it right that as "mother" I give him the initial spanking but since Crystal got injured the worst she deserved a chance to give him a punishment as well. After that though it's mainly been swearing that's gotten him over my lap." She said.

“Ganma are you really for real a full blood dwagon?” Shiera said eyes wide.

“I am sweetie I am a blue dragon which is why your papa to be is always colored blue. I just choose this form rather than my draconic form because I don’t want to scare people and it makes it easier for Grandpa and me to snuggle.” She said as he pulled the baby off her tit and put it up to her shoulder patting her back to burp her.

“Does that make her our auntie?” Diana said watching her burp the baby. “Her name is Aquia Skywind. She’s only a few months old and already a handful just like your papa was.” She added as he wiped her mouth with the bib.

The five continued to talk and get to know each other better while down below in the contestants resting area Dimetrius got up to Crystal before she saw him and said, “Boo.”

“You’re getting better at your stealth dear I didn’t even hear you crinkle.” She said getting up and hugging him and Mikey. “How’s the stinky butt doing?” she said taking the boy.

“Daddy’s doing good but he got’s embarrassed when ganma and gampa showed up and started talking to Miss Jade.” Mikey said.

“She meant you you little goober. I’m blue butt.” Dimetrius said tickling his sides.

Squealing in laughter he said, “nah...nah a stinky butt.”

“So they showed up afterall. God I hope they didn’t see what happened. I feel bad for Tina I didn’t know she was useless in combat without magic.” She whispered.

Looking over at Tina across the room Dimetrius saw something strange and inhaled deeply through his nose but he couldn’t scent the magic he thought he saw.

“What’s wrong?” Crystal asked.

“For a second there I thought I saw...that person I mentioned the morning after our first night together...but I don’t smell him...” he said.

“Should we tell Jade?” Crystal asked confusing Mikey.

“No...if he *had* been where I thought I saw him I would have smelled brimstone as well as him...all I smell down here is sweat, blood, and fear. Not fear of death but magical fear from that Marilith and the other hell beasts. The kind that radiates from them like the musk off an Ox.” He whispered.

“Alright...but don’t you dare lie to me about this if you smell that person you tell Jade and Aram instantly understand. Then come get me. I don’t want you going after him alone for revenge. You’re not strong enough to fight HIM alone Dimetrius.” She said.

“Trust me love I would rather face a one thousand headed hydra alone than tangle with that ba...person alone...I will need all the help I can get no matter how strong I become as a ninja or sorcerer.” He said.

“What you talking bout papa?” Mikey asked.

“Just something from daddy’s past that doesn’t matter right now son don’t worry. Papa isn’t going anywhere and neither is mama.” Dimetrius said kissing Mikey on the head.

“Dimetrius...what do you know about Lycanthropes?” she asked.

“Well there are two varieties. Cursed and virus...Cursed lycanthropes can be cured with a very powerful spell but cannot transfer the curse. Those that are of the virus type can spread it from a single bite or scratch while in animal or hybrid form so long as the victim is not an undead, or already a lycanthrope or dragon why do you ask?”

“My next fight, is against that Were-wolf...can you smell which kind he is or would you have to have a blood sample?” she whispered.

“Stay here. I’ll be as kind as possible and ask.” He said walking over to the Werewolf who was in hybrid form still.

“Excuse me but. I know this is probably a painful subject and all but can I ask you which kind of Lycanthropy do you have? It’s for the betting pool upstairs and if you answer I’ll make it worth your while.” Dimetrius said.

“How?” he asked.

Pulling out his money purse he said, “Ten platinum crowns worth the info?”

“Let’s see the cash first.” He said.

Nodding Dimetrius pulled out the coins and put them into the man’s hand and the guy said, “I was bitten when I was five by a werewolf on the southern edge of the great forest. That bastard is long since dead but I live with this virus in me full time. He took pleasure in spreading his disease but I don’t. Though if I fight it is always in this form, I fight to kill as an assassin for the king. If I scratch or bite in this form it’s usually because I was disarmed and have to end the person’s life anyway.”

“Thanks I appreciate the info and the added info on top of it.” Dimetrius said going over to Crystal and taking Mikey back.

“Virus but he said he works as an assassin for the king and never bites or scratches unless he is on a kill mission and is disarmed. All the same be very careful I know spells that will make the shapeshifting not so stressful on the body when you do it but...I would rather have you whole and fur free love.” He said kissing her cheek and leaving. “Gotta get back the next round will start soon.”

“Bye dear, bye Mikey you behave for papa.” She said kissing him back and then kissing Mikey.

“Bye mommy do you bestest.” He said causing a few teasing comments from the back of the room.

Getting back to their seats Dimetrius handed Mikey and the diaper bag to his father and said, “You sit with grandpa little guy papa has to go talk to Uncle Aram and see if he is needed to help with the last three rounds.”

“Just a second dear.” Sapphire Wind said holding Aquia Skywind.

“Yes mama?” He said.

“Jade and your father and I were talking and we agreed that if you and Crystal feel like signing the adoption papers when this tournament is over to take your cuties here into our home and care for them while you are working. But you will have to pay for their supplies and stuff they need.”

“I...I appreciate that. They obviously do too because I’m getting the triple threat of pouty kitten faces. I can’t say yes right now because it is half her decision but I’ll talk to her when I can. If she says it’s okay I have plenty saved up from my missions and work at the Castle to pay for all their needed supplies for a year. That being said mom, dad, if the answer is yes, Crystal and I do NOT use the belt or strap. We use bare hand for minor spankings and a hairbrush or paddle for the more severe ones I would appreciate it if you respected our methods.” He said.

“I’m too old to control a strap properly anyway I wouldn’t risk serious damage if they earn a spanking though I’m very sure these three will be on their best behavior won’t you?” Drognan said looking them in the eyes.

“Yes gampa.” They all said together.

“Alright then I’ll be back as soon as I can. Behave and listen to grandma and grandpa and jade or no treats for the week.” He said turning about and making a quick run along the front of the stadium and over to the mages area.

“Dimetrius welcome. Are you checking in to take over for some of these new graduates?”

Aram asked when he got there.

“I was going to ask if you needed me to yes. Also I wanted to ask if you had something that would prevent the spread of disease based lycanthropy. I know for a fact that the werewolf at least is a disease one and he fights my fiancé next.

“No...I’m sorry but we still haven’t found a cure or prevention for the spread of the disease based Lycanthropy yet I’m afraid. We’ve been studying it at the university for nearly a century and still have come no closer than we were then. I hope she remains untainted but if she does get infected we will of course make every effort to...hmmm I wonder...” he said having an idea and calling up a scrying glass he spoke in code to his assistant at the castles mage wing to test his hypothesis and to get back to him quickly.

“You just thought of something what is it?” Dimetrius asked.

“Have you ever known someone to have more than one strain of the disease in them?” he said.

“No...they are supposed to prevent you from getting sick and what not the rest of your life except for magical illnesses...why do you think that matters?”

“I just told my assistant to take a sample of one lycanthropy we have at the lab and to combine that strain with another one of a different species and to monitor the reaction with the microscope. If my guess is right then if we give those bitten by one animal type an injection from another animal they will cancel each other out.” He said.

“That...is genius...I assume you want all the credit for it if you are right.” He said laughing.

“Actually I wouldn’t have been thinking of lycanthropy if you hadn’t asked so I was going to name the cure after you if it works.” He said. “Though I have a feeling that if it DOES work it will only work on the freshly infected who haven’t gotten to their first full moon yet.”

“Well that’s nice. Though it would be weird naming it using my surname Wind.” He said laughing. “Alright we got four rounds left that’s thirteen fights. I have enough power to help with six fights if you need it. Otherwise I can go back to my family.” He added.

“Go on back to them for now If the wheel rolls to ultimate chaos then get your ass over here fast we will need every mage for that one that we can spare. Even King Gorgash is going to help us with that stipulation due to the power needed to keep the fire from the ring melting the ice wall and from casting light in the absolute darkness.” Aram said nodding.

“Alright I’ll see you then. Here’s hoping your hypothesis is correct about the lycanthropy cure.” Dimetrius said before going back to his family and Jade.