

The sound of 200 foot falls thundered across the ground, causing debris to bounce along the ground accompanied by several carriages drawn by war horses.

200 humans returned, with countless more having fallen in their war against the beastmen, wiping out clan after clan, capturing only their most fearsome to pit in battle at their arena games.

In one carriage a lizard laid out on the rough floor, groaning with every bounce and jostle sporting a scar across an eyebrow that had been roughly stitched together, he wore a collar around his neck that pulsed dully, robbing him of his connection to mana.

The roar of voices grew as they neared the arena, making the lizard stir as the carriages, escorted by 20 troops, all decked out in dull orange attire and light iron armour, were taken down the slope to the arena cells.

“Welcome to your new home lizard, for however long you live, which won’t be long without your, tricks, ehehehehe,” a cruel voice sneered, hoisting the lizardman to his feet roughly before shoving him into his cell and slamming the door, and spitting at him for good measure.

With a groan, he managed to heave himself to his feet. Five, wicked long claws clacking against the stone floor as he stumbled like a drunkard and light flashed over his form from the grating above, highlighting the rows of horns that marked him as a powerful shaman. His blue and beige scales shimmering and his sleek tail whipping as he tried to balance.

He was jolted out of his stupor when the sudden peal of metal on metal rang above him, and a chant that sounded like “Kill, Kill, Kill,” from above him. Leaning against the wall, he looked upwards as he saw the fight taking place, hissing as he clutched his aching head.

There was a pair fighting near the centre of the ring, rows upon rows of spectators watched and cheered. On the ground lay the bloody bodies of other beasts; lizards, felines, canines, ursine and bovine alike. It looked like there had been a slew of fights before, the lizardman had the privilege to see the final moments of the battle royale.

“Kill! Kill! Kill!” was called again and again as the pair continued clashing. One was a short vulpine, a dust brown fox by the look of it. The other towered over him; a leopard, built like a tree, was easily deflecting the fox’s rapid attacks. Wielding a short sword in his left hand and an axe in the right. It looked like he was talking to the lad while they fought.

The cheers erupted as he kicked the fox backwards, and swung his axe heavily, slicing the young fennec across the stomach, spilling the vulpine’s guts into the sand. He stood tall once more, blood dripping from the handaxe. His leather armour was nicked and blood stained, as he faced towards the cell window, one could see the almost maw-like look to his breastplate, metal studs made to look like teeth. Matching armour covered his legs and clawed bracers completed the set.

From out of sight, there was another voice booming from directly above. “Our Champion, ladies and gentlemen. How was that for a victory!” Four guards came towards the leopard, who by now dropped his weapons into the sand, and escorted him towards a pair of heavy doors at the far end.

Other beasts, more sickly and aged ones came and began collecting the bodies of fallen kin, clearing the arena for another match; a human collected the weapons and began setting them into brackets on the wall. “Our greatest contender of an age! It will be an unfortunate day when we lose a great fighter

like Shijha!” The announcer cried out through his bullhorn.

From atop the stands, in the grand box was the ruler of these lands. Solom Braxxus, ruler of the city Drax, kept a sharp eye on the games. With each tribe he conquered, a village or town took its place, expanding his influence and reaching his goal of a beastman free nation.

Solom cut quite the intimidating figure at 6’5 ft tall and a build that a mountain man would be proud of, with a broad chest and broad arms that rippled with muscle.

As Shijha was escorted roughly back to his cell, Rakash’s focus quickly went from the grating above to the entrance of the cells, never saying a word.

A few moments had passed when the leopard showed up in front of the lizardman, still guided by the guards, they pushed him roughly into the adjacent cell, it took three of them to even jostle the mountain of a feline. He turned and glowered at them. Now that he was closer, The lizardman could see just how battle worn he was, his half helm had a cut over his left eye, a wound followed the gash on his forehead and cheek. His eye was milky white, showing he was blind in that eye. He snarled as they left, showing his dagger like fangs, almost looking more like he was a sabre cat of ancient lines.

“Hey lizard, you got company. Though I wouldn’t fancy your chances in a fight against him, he’d probably make a nice soup out of you after he is finished chopping you into lizard meat,” one of the guards laughed before backing up at Shijha’s growl and quickly shutting the cell door.

As they left hurriedly, Rakash sized him up, raking his eyes over him. He did have quite the form, a good head taller than he was and stronger too. Yes, the lizard would be lucky to survive long in the arena with such an opponent. Luckily, he wasn’t your typical lizardman.

“So what are you? Their pet I assume by the way they treat you,” Rakash hissed, his voice a smooth yet strong tone, deciding to goad the feline and see if he let anything slip that would give him an advantage.

The leopard let his snarl fade as the humans walked off, if they had tails they would have been tucked firmly between their legs. At least Shijha wished he could see, but the scent of fear was still strong enough for him to feel satisfied.

Stepping to the back corner of his cell, he sat down, facing Rakash. He stared at the newcomer, hearing the comment and felt his fur bristling, but with a huff he turned his head away. “They think I am.” He growled. It was a lot less terrifying than Rakash would have thought, His voice seemed gentle; gruff, but gentle.

His rounded ears fell back, glad only the lizard had a view of him, the cell just across from them had belonged to the fennec. Clearing his throat, he sat straight again, ears rotating and listening all around. “No. Not their pet...their toy. We all are. YOU are now.” He said with his own low growl. “I hope you can fight, Lizard.” He said, his voice trailing off. His hands were busy with a mucky rag, cleaning the blood off of his hands, his bracers left the fur of his paws exposed. “If not, I hope it’s a quick death...” He said, barely above a whisper.

The leopard beastman’s outburst had surprised Rakash momentarily before regaining his composure. “You may be resigned to your fate but not Rakash; the dragon bones tell of a different fate if events line up right,” he said, putting on a confidence that was part bravado. In truth his past telling with his tribe

had gone wide, something seemingly interfering with his tellings but the last he made before his capture gave him hope. But he couldn't let on to that yet.

"So, how did a proud beastman of the leopard clan get collared like a common house cat? Did they swarm you in superior numbers and bombard your village with arbalasts like they did mine?" Rakash said, unable to help a bitter note from creeping into his tone. "They are as insects these humans, a plague of locusts that are rapidly spreading. If I had only poisoned the city's water supply but the elder was soft, said mass genocide wasn't the answer. The fool," he said, seeming to be mostly talking to himself with the last bit before finding himself back in the present.

Outside another fight reached its climax, the sound of a wet crunch followed by blood that slowly oozed its way in through the grating to drip onto the floor.

"Such barbarism," he muttered before glancing the leopard's way. Got up and staggered to the opposing corner of his cell.

Shijha listened for a while, not giving any real response as he finished 'cleaning' his paws before dropping the rag back near the hay where he slept. Hearing the blood, he watched it drip from the grating that divided them from the arena. "You say that." He said with a sly smile creeping on his muzzle. "But you talk about poisoning an entire city not half a breath ago." Shijha's smile faded and returned to the stone faced glower.

"Is it barbarism to wipe out a disease? I look at humans how one would look at an infected limb, something to be cut out. That is what humans are, a plague infesting and killing the world. So yes, my point. Still. Stands!" Rakash hissed, his tail thumping the ground to kick up a cloud of dust. It was clear he had some beef with humans but he wasn't going to give more than he had already given. Sitting down heavily, he laid on his side on the dirty straw, with a last glance at the leopard. "Fate is a fickle thing cat, remember that," he said before curling up, back towards him.

Shijha, too, laid down. "There is no fate here...no change in the winds. The whim of the humans is all that matters in this place." he said, removing his helm and placing a large paw over his injured eye. "Even when you try to take hold of it yourself, it seems." He paused again.

"You learn your place, don't make waves...I'm the lucky one." He closed his eyes. "You have to play their game." It sounded as if he was programmed to say what he was. Despite all of this, his tail was lashing angrily beside his legs, sending hay all about the floor between the two cells.

"I know too well about their pestilence." Shijha continued from Rakash's earlier comment "Years ago...might not have been with the numbers, but their trickery. The Gaiapaw are...were known fighters, but they came in talking peace after we'd been fighting them off. They got in Because my father couldn't see past their facade." His breathing came deep and heavy. "I've fought only to keep myself alive..."

He gently placed a palm over one wound that was still weeping over his right thigh, a dull glow emitted around the area, only for him to hiss in pain. The device around his neck couldn't rob him of all his mana, the dragon horns decorating his skull were more than for show for they all held a small reserve he could tap into, though far from the potency he was capable of unrestrained.

"Quiet down in there." There was a loud rap of a pommel against the bars of Shijha's cell door. "Lizard, it's your turn!" a pair of guards opened his cell, the larger of the two coming to hoist Rakash

onto his feet once again, and not being too gentle with it.

His cell door was suddenly opened and without preamble, was hoisted to his feet and half dragged him, half kicked him before he whipped a tail around and tripped the one kicking him over before elbowing the other guard, forcing him to let go.

Whirling on them with a hiss, he suddenly found a sword to his neck. “Do that again snake, and we will save the arena the effort,” he hissed into his ear before kicking him forward, into the fist of the second guard, winding him before dragging a gasping lizard to the arena and throwing him out of the doors to a jeering crowd.

The jaguar watched silently as they dragged him outside and tossed him to the sand. Standing up again, he watched the lizard trying to catch his breath again. His rounded ears twitched as the announcer spoke through the bullhorn again.

“What is this, it looks like we have ourselves a new gladiator for your entertainment, though it looks like the guards have already taken the fight out of him,” came the announcer on the outer ring of the arena. “Looks like this fight may be over before it even begins,” he laughed as the crowd joined in the jeering, throwing rotten fruit to pelt the lizard before the announcer held a hand up for them to stop, pausing for dramatic effect. “Bring out his opponent!”

At the call of the announcer, the doors on the opposite end of arena and out stepped a bull, horns shaved down completely, only the stumps of horn showed on his head, something the guards must have done to make him less dangerous when they transported him from arena to cell. But that wasn’t to say that he wasn’t a mountain of a beast. He stood taller than Shijha, and was thicker built in the chest and arms.

He had a dulled expression on his face, as though he’d taken a few too many blows to the head. For all Rakash knew, that definitely was the case.

“The rock steady, Gyra!” the announcer called out. “You all know him well, able to take whatever comes at him and give it back ten fold!” The roar of the crowd filled the arena. Suddenly there was a sound of trumpets that called the start of the fight, and without a moment’s pause the bruteish bull charged, his giant hands balled into fists, looking to take the lizard out in one devastating blow from above.

Before Rakash could even properly process what was happening he was having to evade a charging bull, twisting just out of the bull’s reach as his hands came down to crush his skull.

The brute tried to round on him when he whipped his flexible, long tail around to wrap around the bull’s ankles to send him crashing to the ground.

“I will not be dying by your hands today,” Rakash shouted, making to leap onto him with his short but deadly hand claws bared to blind him.

Only he recovered faster than he would have given him credit for, planting both rear hooves into his stomach to send him flying against the wall, knocking the wind out of him.

“YOU WILL BE THE ONE DYING!” The bull beast bellowed, charging headlong into him with the intent on ramming him.

“*Cough,* think again you muscle bound oaf,” Rakash coughed, waiting until he was just about on top

of him.

Opening his muzzle, drawing from his mana reserves, Rakash spat a ball of acid at his eyes and deftly evaded being smashed against the wall.

Bellowing a hideous sound, he collided awkwardly with the wall, scrabbling at the eyes as the acid robbed him of his vision, thrashing in agony on the floor.

“What a stunning turn of events, our new gladiator appears to have proven victorious with a nasty trick or two up his sleeve! I think the people are clear about what you should do, Lizard! The announcer boomed to the crowd as they all chanted for him to kill.

As the chant reverberated around the stadium, Rakash stood over the whimpering form, his hands flexing as he pondered before snarling.

Shijha watched on, his ears flitting back and forth as the bull seemed to have the upperhand. “I figured as much...” he mumbled just seconds before Rakash spat up an acidic blob, making the bull stagger and fall to the sand, trying to clean the acid from his eyes. It was obvious his opponent was ready for the kill. But at the cry from the lizard, his ears perked up.

“No! I will not kill for your entertainment!” Rakash snarled to the crowd at large, earning a pained silence at his outburst.

The leopard suddenly saw himself again where Rakash was standing, remembering all too well how he felt the same when he came in. He'd fought and killed before, but not for the Human's enjoyment, he didn't want to satisfy them.

The silence turned quickly to mumbling from the crowd and they all turned to look at their ruler who quickly gave a thumbs down “Both of them.” He said simply and guards that brought Rakash out had stepped back into the ring, weapons drawn.

But they barely got up to the lizard and bull when the deep voice reverberated through the colosseum. “NO! This is MY kill!” The bull stood up, and though blinded from the acid, blood and gore streamed from his eyes and down his cheeks. “Even with tricks, I'll win,” he said and got to his feet, shakily turning to face Rakash.

“It looks like the fight isn't over yet! Gyra still has fight in him!” The announcer called and instantly the crowd worked itself back into a frenzy.

As the crowd cheered and egged the bull on, Rakash fixed the crowd, the referee and tyrant all with a murderous glare, silently vowing to cast a plague on them should he make it out of the arena and this accursed collar.

The bull came again, slower, but with determination, his ears pivoted, trying to keep a fix on Rakash. He shuffled his feet through the sand, hands balled up into fists, ready to strike. The crowd was cheering on the bull as he soon came within striking distance of the lizard, and without hesitation swung a devastating haymaker that just missed Rakash, sending the bull crashing into the sand, earning disappointed cries, but even more encouragement from the crowd in turn.

As the haymaker was aimed at him, it almost proved to be his undoing. Rakash was still smarting from

prior injuries, the blow from before and casting that simple spell had robbed him of some strength.

He had to end this now whilst he still drew breath; spying a wall lined with weapons he made a charge for it but his laboured breathing caught the bulls attention, his ears swivelling in on the sound and thundered his way towards him.

Rakash didn't have the speed he would usually have as he clutched his side, trying to fight through the lethargy and pain as the weapon rack neared. Just as the bull was upon him, he launched himself at the wall, grabbing a double handed mace and sprung off, twisting around in mid air to slam the weighted end right between the horns, cracking the bulls skull audibly where he at last, laid still and drew breath no more.

Instead of cheering though, there was mass booing and catcalls.

"Amazing, despite the odds against him, our hated lizard has arrived victorious! But what does our beloved ruler think? Should we kill him like the crowd wants?" The announcer bellowed.

Solom put his hands on his balcony, eyening the trembling lizard, fixing him with a cold stare.

"The good people have spoken! The lizard shall die! But not in this fight, there is no sport in killing a wounded beast!" He proclaimed. "Let the Champion be the one to take his life, tomorrow! Shijah, the slayer!" He shouted to a thunderous applause as Rakash was dragged off with a groan, hardly able to keep to his feet before being thrown back into his cell unceremoniously.

Shijah watched in awe at the lizard's turn around, ending the blind bull's life thankfully quickly. He looked up to the stands where Solom stood, calling his decision and making the leopard's heart drop at the moniker. One he was given by the humans, one he hated. As the slaves cleaned up the arena for the last time tonight, the crowds dispersed. And the fighters were let to rest for the night.

Backing away from the window, he sat next to the bars that separated Rakash's cell and his, he watched as the lizard was dumped unceremoniously into his cell, barely making two paces before he fell on his front.

"You..." He paused, he wasn't sure what to say at first, "I don't know whether to call that strategy...or luck at the end..." Shijha's heart was throbbing somewhere below his stomach. "But now you and I—" he cut himself short as a guard escorted a female slave to deliver the slop they called a dinner. The bowls were set just inside the cells before they moved onto the next.

Rakash bristled at Shijha's comment, despite being battered and worn.

"Unlike you brutes, I know how to use brains AND brawn in my fights. Why do you think the humans lost so many of their numbers in their raid of my village?" he said, though his words lacked the bite they would have had due to his exhaustion.

As the female slave came through bearing their food, Rakash saw to his disgust the female fox bore the vacant look of one who had been broken. She had lost her sense of self and looked painfully thin.

The sight angered Rakash as his claws raked the floor in anger. "These humanssss," he hissed, the collar around his neck pulsing as it restrained the huge amount of mana he was trying to build before collapsing in exhaustion.

"Eat up..." He said and ate it slowly, the chunks of old and probably rotten meat and vegetables tasted

terribly salty. “You need your strength for tomorrow.” He said with a rather forced, comforting voice, though it almost sounded like it was for himself as much as it was for Rakash.

“I would never touch...this slop. I can last months on nothing,” he hissed weakly. “As for our forthcoming battle, do not concern yourself with me. I will...survive,” he said, his arms trembling before passing out, his body giving in to the pain and lethargy.

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As the next day dawned, Rakash was awoken rudely by a bucket of stinking water thrown over his face.

Hacking and sputtering and cursing in his own tongue, he looked up to see the human guards leering at him. “Time for your execution lizard,” one sneered at him through the bars. “No one survives against that monster, especially not without your fancy tricks.”

They unlocked the cell door, followed by two guards, the other two treating Shijha with...a little more respect as they unlocked his door.

Shijha might have eaten the previous night, but it looks like he’d hardly slept, his fur more ruffled than yesterday, and his eyes seemed a bit cold and distant. He followed Rakash as the guards led them, two in front, two in back and he snarled. Though it wasn’t at the lizardman.

The pair were sent into the arena, standing side by side as the same caller from yesterday introduced them and explained why the both of them were standing before them. “Yesterday our generous ruler, Solom, sentenced this lizard to death. And with mighty agreement from the crowd, he chose for Rakash to be put down by our currently reigning champion, SHIJHA!” He let the audience cheer with every fibre of their being.

Shijha lowered his ears and turned his head sideways, the cheering seeming almost painful to the leopard.

As they were presented with a rack of weapons, Rakash scanned them for his own personal favourite. Spying the large, weighted mace from before, he nodded and picked it up, swinging it and testing its weight before turning towards Shijha.

Shijha didn’t hesitate, he went for his favoured weapons, the axe and shortsword combo. The audience launched itself into a new uproar as he grabbed his weapons and turned to face Rakash, his tail curling around his waist like a sash.

The crowd grew silent in anticipation of the fight, the sound of metal and wood being abnormally loud as the weapons were taken out of the field once again. And in the silence, Shijha heard Rakash’s voice.

“I’m sorry, it looks like we might have been friends in another life. Only one of us is coming away from this fight unscathed, and I have no intentions of letting my people down, even if I am the last,” Rakash hissed over the roar of the crowd.

“Might have been.” He said simply in return, spinning the axe in hand before the crowd returned to its uproar as the announcer spoke once again.

“Be sure to try your best, we want a good show, Lizard!” the announcer called again to the ring, hyping

the crowd as Solom stood up, his hand raised. As silence fell, he looked down at the pair with a smirk and dropped his hand.

Rakash was no fool, most would have launched straight into his waiting axe and sword. Rakash made as though to attack him head on when he veered suddenly off to the side, wrapping his tail around his feet in an effort to pull him onto his back with a spin and tug.

He made to block the seeming strike, falling for Rakash's ruse. Shijha felt the lizard's tail catch his legs and yank them from under him.

Thankfully his feline reflexes had him stagger for only a bit, but never lost his footing. He growled and gripped his axe and sword tightly as he launched himself forward, weapons coming down and connecting with the two handed mace's handle. "But it's like you say, only one of us can leave." He aimed a knee upward towards Rakash's stomach.

"Hah!" Rakash cried as he parried the attack, only to leave himself open. Sucking in his gut and holding his breath, the knee collided with him but the damage it did was less than if he hadn't readied himself.

Staggering back with a swing of the mace, he recovered what he could of his breath before Shijha was on him again, exhibiting the speed and strength the leopard clans were famed for.

Rakash spun the mace, using it to both repel the incoming attack and build momentum for an overhead strike, looking to try and either shatter the blades or the feline's skull.

The male saw the strike coming after his blades were deflected with the first swing. He quickly spun the weapons around and placed them against his gauntleted forearms, the blow was devastating and shook his whole body. But he stood back up, shoving the heavy mace off and looked at the damage.

The sword had broken, just as Rakash was hoping for, but the axe was still able to fight. His arms stung, and there wasn't any question as to why. The heavy blow, even with the sword taking the brunt, had actually caved in his bracers. He shook his arm, blood trailing down his fingertips. Growling, he clenched his fist around the axe and gave it a hefty throw. The speed was unbelievable. It almost seemed like it appeared next to the lizard, catching his arm that held the top of the mace and continuing to end up buried into the wall behind him.

Rakash had only just avoided the spinning axe from taking his arm off, the force and impact driving the two handed mace from his hand to clatter on the floor and sliding to the opposing side of the arena. He clutched his arm with a pained hiss, a brief pulse emanating around his hand and limbs doing nothing more than taking the edge off the pain, only to suddenly find the large leopard on him.

Again he charged forward and drove his fist at Rakash, hoping the quickly succeeding attacks would throw Rakash off balance and give him the edge again. But for all it was worth, it was quite a stalemate between the two; having taken blow for blow and still continued to fight.

With his good hand he just deflected a punch to the gut, feeling the raw power he had before locking arms with him.

"You...are strong, feline," he grunted, putting his all into just resisting from being thrown back.

Growling as he held claw to claw, his fist balled in Rakash's hand as he fought for the upperhand. "You've got a good bit of strength yourself." He complimented, but narrowed his eyes at the lizard. "It's been a few fights since I've had a decent combatant." Shijha said quietly, not even sure if he was heard at that point.

"I may be in a spot of bother here. Unless...I do THIS!" He hissed venomously, adjusting his grip so all of his claws sunk into the back of the feline's hand.

It seems he wasn't, it must have just been him thinking loudly to himself, because he felt the sharp claws digging into the back of his fist. He grit his fangs, snarling as pain from the claws seeped up his arm, giving it a bit of a tingling sensation. He tried to fight the feeling off, but eventually it became too much, and he had to pull back.

Swinging his elbow sideways to break the clash they had going on, he tried to make contact with the side of Rakash's head, but had just missed his nose and staggered backwards and fell back into the sand as the pain continued to burn his arm, his hand clutching at his pained arm.

"I am sorry, but I will not fall here. I will give you your fitting send off rites when I manage to escape this accursed place!" Rakash hissed, leaping into the pair, a wicked, clawed talon bared to slice his neck open. "Goodbye warrior!" He cried, swinging his leg in an arc...only to find out that Shijha was far from done despite his bleeding, scarred hands.

Shijha glowered at him, the feeling in his arm had started to dissipate, leaving behind a sort of numb feeling. But he could still move it. He pushed himself up off the ground and reached out to grab Rakash's leg before it could shred him. Sinking his own deadly claws into the lizard's calf, he used the momentum to spin them both around, slamming Rakash onto his back, his claws tearing the flesh.

He cried out in pain as claws tore and rendered flesh and scales, tearing out a good chunk with the crowd screaming for more blood.

In a last ditch effort, Rakash used the momentum to collide his elbow with Shijha's knee, breaking the cap before slamming into the ground head first, sending him out cold.

Roaring out in agony as his kneecap broke and forced him to fall face down onto the ground, grunting. Rolling over onto his side, looking up at Rakash as he passed out. "I won't be falling here either..." He panted, his barrel chest heaving, tail having come unwound and lashed about above him in agitation. The male's growls weakened, his panting breathing slowly as his eyes closed, he grumbled something incoherent before he passed out, his tail becoming still.

"Well would you look at that gentlemen, for once we have ourselves a tie! The lizard, once thought to be nothing more than a sideshow, has proven to be Shijha's equal! But what does our illustrious ruler think?"

Solom looked on at the two beastmen, frowning as he seemed to war with something. A cruel sneer then formed as a thought occurred, a toy he had been meaning to test in the arena pits.

"These two beasts have put on a good show for our entertainment, and so I will grant them a chance to live and fight another day! Handlers, take them away!"

Rakash grunted, stubbornly trying to get back up as darkness engulfed his vision, his scaled head bleeding from a grievous wound before collapsing and laying still, the pair dragged back to be thrown

together into another cell.

Shijha was jolted awake as he was dragged by a couple of guards, his knee throbbing in excruciating pain. He roared, showing off his razor sharp teeth as he was unceremoniously thrown in a cell next to the lizard.

Gripping at his thigh, he tried his best to fight off the pain. Clenching his teeth, the feline looked over at Rakash and narrowed his eyes. "I c-could say we're lucky to not have been killed right then, but I'd be lying," he said to Rakash, seeing the blood on his scales from their fight. "Not sure what Solom has planned, but it's never good..." he mumbled, even though he knew it was only to himself at this point. Shifting back, pressing himself against the cold stone walls.

The feline breathed deep in a heavy sigh and closed his eyes. It probably wouldn't hurt for him to get some rest. He did his best, his body hurt, his leg was...as far as he was concerned, ruined. It'd be quite the lethal handicap in his next fight. But there wasn't anything he could do right now, exhaustion slowly over taking him as he slumped against the cell wall.

As Rakash slept the sleep of the dying, a dream began to creep in. A dragon, something he was told he was descended from, all bones and eyeless sockets looking towards him in an accusing manner.

He knew he was somewhere between the land of the dead and living, and without his magic he could not heal himself. By the morning he would either be dead or at death's door; a chew toy for whatever that bastard Solom had in mind.

Suddenly, the dragon's eyeless sockets flashed and a wave of energy surged, surrounding his dream self before abating.

Coming to with a start, Rakash felt a surge of power the accursed collar couldn't contain, wincing with a hiss of pain as his wounds rapidly healed.

Quick as a thought, he whipped his hands towards Shijha, extending the energy towards his leg, healing the worst and mending bone before the sudden surge left him.

"Maybe...one of us...will make it after all," Rakash hissed as he felt the collar sap his sudden surge in strength before collapsing over the feline's lap.

Shijha shifted little in his sleep. He'd been having nightmares about a fight that was yet to come. His ears and whiskers twitched slightly as he struggled to fight off opponents that were far bigger, stronger and faster than him. They were beast men, but their silhouettes were misshapen. Then they joined together, fusing and growing into a monstrous form, something he couldn't make as anything he'd seen before. He felt like a cub under the creature's menacing form. Standing high above the fight was Solom, laughing as he was suffering during the onslaught.

Feeling Rakash slump over into his lap, he jolted, his claws unsheathed, ready to strike before he saw the weakened lizard. He was about to push him off, thinking of his leg when he realised there wasn't any pain from the injured knee. He blinked and spotted the collar, a small hissing sound issuing from it as it burned out the last of the male's magic. Giving a weak smile, he understood.

"Thank you..." He said and thought for a second back to his dream. "We'll have to have each other's back...the future's not looking good if we're both still alive," he mumbled, again it was to himself, but hoped that Rakash would absorb what he said. "It's going to be a lot harder from here on out."

