

A Looping Battle

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He blinked. Looking around he saw that he was sitting in a stone box with a metal door on the wall in front of him. He stood up. He was wearing a loose shirt, pants, some heavy leather boots, as well as a copper bracelet with a small blue jewel in it. He couldn't remember anything. He could remember how to speak, walk, and all that, just not any memories. He thought hard and remembered a name. Alexander. "Is that my name?" he wondered. Before he had time to consider, the sound of metal scraping against stone as a door opened and heavy boots against the stone floor reached his ears. A few moments later the door to Alexander's cell opened and a soldier carrying a spear and a lantern walked in. "Come." He said, "And don't try anything funny. I'm the one with the weapon." Alexander was led out of his cell and through a series of cold stone corridors lined with cells. He could feel the air getting warmer and began to hear distant sounds of cheering. After about ten minutes of walking they reached a room full of weapons. "Pick one, but don't touch it." The guard said. Alexander looked around the room before settling on the weapon that seemed most familiar to him. He pointed to a sword and the guard picked it up and led Alexander up further through the seemingly never ending corridors. They reached a room with a small portcullis on the far side. Another guard was there and he began cranking the handle next to him, opening the gate. The guard that had led Alexander out of his cell threw the sword through the gate onto the ground outside. "Go get it." He said with a cruel smile. Alexander walked out and grabbed the sword. The gate closed behind him as he looked around, taking in his surroundings. He stood in a large, circular arena. The sides were lined with seats filled with people who cheered as he walked out. On one end there was a tower that rose above the rest of the people, it looked to be where the nobles would watch from.

He didn't get much time to look around though. The gate on the other side of the arena was lifted up, releasing a lion. The large cat approached him. Standing a little ways off it slowly circled him, waiting, watching for an opening. Alexander saw the lion tense up, getting ready to pounce. His mind raced through options quickly settling on one that seemed familiar. In the same way the sword did. As the cat pounced he quickly threw himself to the ground on his back and thrust his sword up all in one fluid motion, as though he had rehearsed it many times. The lion flew over him, the sword slicing the underbelly of the animal. It hit the ground a couple feet from Alexander, crumpled into a lifeless lump. The crowd cheered, obviously enjoying the show. "Who would want to see such a majestic animal be killed like this, or want to see a person killed by the animal?" Alexander thought.

The gate (which had closed after letting out the lion) opened again, this time letting out a man. He had some light armor covering the chest but not the belly, as well as a helmet. Other than his armor he only wore a leather skirt that came down to his knees and a pair of sandals. He carried a net and a trident in his hands. Alexander and the man cautiously approached one another, both looking for an opening. When they came within about five feet from each other they began slowly circling, before the man threw his net. Alexander saw this coming and jumped off to the side, slicing the net as it flew past. The man lunged toward Alexander who had just barely enough time to parry the blow, catching his sword blade between two of the trident's prongs. Alexander quickly kicked him in the stomach, knocking him

back and giving Alexander time to thrust the sword into him. The man fell over as the crowd cheered again.

Alexander stood there, he was beginning to tire. He was also thinking, he felt something, somewhere in his mind. It was important, but it kept evading him. All he could tell is that it was something he had to remember to get out of this. He didn't get much time though, the gate opened again and this time let out a horrifying creature. It looked like a bear, but with scales instead of fur. It had no ears, no eyes, just one large mouth filled with large teeth, forcing the beast's mouth into a permanent smile. Its paws had long claws, about as long as a short sword. "Well, that escalated quickly," Alexander thought. After being released the creature reared up on its back legs and let out a great bellow. The crowd cheered again, for the beast. This was going to be hard to beat. It rushed him, charging on all fours it quickly covered the length of the arena. Alexander was just barely able to jump out of the way, quickly getting back on his feet he ran towards the monster and slashed at the tendon on its right leg while it was recovering from its charge. The sword merely bounced off the scales harmlessly and the beast turned to face him. It slashed at his face and Alexander barely managed to lift his sword up fast enough to deflect the blow. The beast reared up and roared, preparing to charge again. Alexander turned and ran diagonally to the creature, hoping to put some distance between them and not be directly in the way of the charge. He looked back as he ran and saw something he could use to his advantage, the beast's belly was covered in a layer of fur rather than scales. If he could find a way to get under it safely, he might be able to bring it down. The beast charged again, Alexander being a bit more prepared this time was able to leap away, staying on his feet this time. The beast turned toward Alexander, who was now panting. It could tell its prey was weakening. It slowly approached, rearing up again, preparing for the final blow. Alexander took advantage of this, he ran over and plunged the sword into the beast's chest, where he hoped the heart would be. The beast staggered on its back feet, rearing up to its full height which was about twice as tall as Alexander, before it fell on its side and began thrashing about. The crowd watched in shocked silence as the beast slowly died. They thought it was impossible to kill, for one man at least. After another minute or two it stilled and Alexander approached carefully to retrieve his weapon. It seemed dead enough so he pulled out the sword. The monster didn't stir.

Alexander sat down, resting as he waited for the next challenge to come. The memory he was trying to remember was becoming clearer. It was still blurry, but he could see what looked to be the shape of a man wearing a helmet sitting atop a blurry black blob with legs. Before he could remember more the gate opened again. The first thing he saw was the massive black spider. Atop it rode a muscular man, he wore a helmet that covered his whole face, with holes for his eyes, mouth, and nose. The helmet had two horns, the left one was broken off near the top. In one hand the man held what was essentially a large dagger attached to a chain, in the other he held the reins to his terrifying mount. He lifted his hands up as the crowd cheered. Instead of attacking he waited, looking at Alexander, waiting for something. It was soon apparent what he was waiting for though, as a man stood up in the large tower decorated with banners. He shouted something which Alexander couldn't hear, afterward it was repeated by others stationed in various areas around the arena. From one of these Alexander could hear the message, "Behold the champion, the final challenge. If our contender can defeat him, he will become the new challenger, otherwise he will be killed and only be known as another part of the show." After that a signal was given and the final challenge began.

The Champion urged his mount onward, swinging his blade in a circular pattern off to his side, making sure to avoid the spider's legs as it scuttled along. The spider ran forward as Alexander prepared to

attack it, however the spider swerved once it got within a few feet of him and its rider stopped swinging his weapon at just the right moment for it to go hurtling directly for Alexander. Alexander jumped backwards and the weapon caught on its chain just before reaching him. "That was a stroke of luck," Alexander thought as he turned to face the spider which was now behind him. "That was lucky, wasn't it boy? Not this time," the Champion said as he flung his weapon. Alexander couldn't dodge it this time so he swung the sword and blocked the weapon, it wrapping around the sword instead of embedding into him. The Champion yanked back on the chain, pulling Alexander's weapon from his hands. "A shame," the Champion said, "I was hoping for an actual challenge after how well you handled the others." The Champion hurled his weapon again, Alexander jumped and rolled forward, trying to grab his weapon. He wasn't fast enough though, the continuous fighting had got to him, slowing him down too much. The Champion's weapon embedded itself into Alexander's back. He dropped to the ground, the world beginning to fade. He saw the jewel in his bracelet beginning to glow, and instinctively grabbed it. He remembered everything, his past, how he got here, the hundreds of times he had been through this. And what he had to do to beat the Champion, the body of the monster he killed earlier would work as cover, he had tried it before, and it almost worked. Then it faded away to the sound of cheering in the background.

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