

Pandor's Ring

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[DAY 0]

The air cracked with the percussion of four rapid drum beats. They were so loud that they cut across the lava flats for kilometers. Four rapid bursts, silence, then four more. For the uninitiated the sounds themselves would have been awe inspiring, but the drums merely drew the eyes to the wonder of this world. With no engine noise, not so much as a hum or a buzz, a massive hollow mountain floated well above the surface of the planet. The exterior looked like natural stone weathered and eroded by time. A faint blue haze leaked out from beneath the structure and four columns of light lanced upward into the steel blue sunset sky.

Violet eyes regarded the floating mountain, though Ketan thought of it as the Ring instead. The structure was hollow in the center, a sort of caldera shape. A colosseum had been built into the primary structure with an amphitheater of seats, locker rooms, training dojos and more. Several smaller floating islands drifted inside of the ring in a constant changing cloud of configurations. On most summer nights the cheers of an audience would echo across the plains, but this was the quiet season. This was the time where champions enjoyed their laurels and the new fighters cut their teeth.

A small smile crossed Ketan's pale lips. A gentle breeze fluttered the tails of the white silk bandanna he wore. A violet circle on the forehead of the bandanna signaled that the young man came from Kessho, a distant and remote world. Similar white silk was wrapped over his shoulders and down his torso, though his firm abdominal muscles and fit, strong shoulders were left out to be kissed by this world's harsher sun. His baggy, airy pants tapered from white at the waist to silver at the hips and purple at his knees. His lower legs were exposed to the elements.

Ketan knew it would have been logical to retire to sleep, to rest for the early start he would have in the morning... but how could he sleep? It had been exhilarating to climb to the top of the plateau, to look over the lava flats and to see the colosseum slowly approaching. His future would be decided up there in that ring. He would make a name for himself. He would win money and he would win his honor. When the next set of drum beats sounded from the floating mountain, Ketan felt them in his chest. It reverberated his diaphragm and his lungs. He embraced it. He welcomed it. The drums were calling to him, to all the new fighters. They were the drums of triumph, of glory, and of destiny. Ketan's grin only grew larger as he imagined what destiny awaited.

[Day 1]

Every world has a different climate. Ketan had been ill prepared for just how arid Zeffir was. During the day the air was almost oppressively warm, although the lack of humidity kept it from being unbearable. At night that same heat from Zeffir's star escaped back out of the atmosphere, allowing the temperature to plummet. It seemed that most of the world's business was conducted in the early morning and at sunset, making use of those two extremes. Ketan knew he should have regretted staying up so late, but even as he filled his lungs with the cool morning air and the faint dew of ambient condensation, he couldn't.

The shuttle up to the coliseum had been unexpectedly rickety. He'd walked through tunnels cut by ancient rivulets and streams until he reached the stands. While the mountain itself was ancient, the seats were far more modern. Each one adjusted to the weight and anatomy of its occupants and offered climate controls, massages and a variety of beverage holders. Their warm yellow color almost distracted Ketan from the main arena - almost.

As his violet eyes turned back to the center of the massive caldera, he saw the constellation of smaller islands shifting places. A half dozen were little more than bare platforms with grass on the edges and stone circles in the center to allow combatants a place to fight... but some of the other islands were far more elaborate. One held a large glacial pond. Another had gnarled cherry trees on four corners, overflowing with blossoms. Another seemed almost entirely unusable due to the dense forest of bamboo stalks rising from it. One was slick lava stone, another riddled with small craters and dunes.

"What is the first dictate of the ring?" A booming voice echoed out across the stands. Ketan's posture immediately straightened, his crisp black hair contrasting with his white silk outfit.

"Through diversity comes triumph." Ketan replied back, his violet eyes trying to find the source of the voice.

"The second dictate!" The deep, resonant voice commanded, seemingly coming from an entirely different part of the arena.

"Through adversity comes strength." Ketan replied, his head turning, his ears perked to try and isolate the voice.

"The third dictate." The voice said from directly to Ketan's left. Ketan turned, coming face to... pectoral... with a very strong, very large man.

"With victory all things become possible." Ketan replied, inclining his head. The man before him was at least six foot six, a short bushy black beard framing his slightly overweight face. His head was shaved bald, something that made his beard stand out all the more. His round ears were pierced with five gold rings down the back of each. His eyes were a honey brown color, though there were darker rings under his eyes. It was clear the man's frame held great muscles, though the muscles were covered by an equally thick protective layer of fat. He would have put any bouncer to shame.

"I am Ketan Yarrow, initiate to the ring." Ketan said, putting one fist into the other open hand. The larger man returned the feature.

"And I am Malik, your coach." The larger man said. The two couldn't have been more different. Ketan was young, lithe, almost wafer thin. He barely came to five foot ten. Malik was easily several hundred pounds of strength, pushing forty. Just one of his feet would have stretched from Ketan's waist to his sternum.

"I am honored to work with you master." Ketan said. A soft grunt came from Malik's throat.

"Master... Been a while since anyone called me that." he murmured, walking around the young man to size him up.

"Do you prefer another title, sir?" Ketan asked. Malik's lips pursed, something that only emphasized how perfectly groomed and even his bushy black hair was.

"Apparently I prefer master to sir." he smirked, "What about you, Ketan Yarrow?" he asked. Ketan's pale cheeks blushed a shade of lavender-pink.

"K... Ketan would be fine, master." he said. Malik chuckled gently.

"And do you have a favorite house, Ketan?" Malik asked.

"No initiate may choose their house... They are elected to the losing houses at random to refill the ranks." Ketan said. Malik's lips curved into a frown.

"I do not recall asking for you to recite the rules of the ring, nor did that answer my question." Malik said. Ketan's violet eyes widened in shock.

"I'm sorry, master, I..." Ketan trailed off. He struggled to consider, "I've watched so many of the battles on replay, I don't know if I could pick a favorite house..." Ketan said. Malik considered for a long moment before he looked out at the floating islands.

"Sometimes it is best not to get too attached to a particular house. If you do, a loss feels all that more painful. Maybe there is wisdom in you yet, Ketan." Malik said before patting the young man on his shoulder, "Get your things. We'll take them down to the locker room. We have to do a weigh in, a couple of initial tests, and then we can start training." Malik said. Ketan's face brightened with excitement.

"Yes si-" Ketan stopped mid word to redirect, "Master." he said before he bowed his head and sprinted off, heading back to the loading area to collect his things. Malik watched him go, one hand lifting to scratch at the under edge of his belly. For some reason it felt like the new recruits got younger every year, but Malik knew that was just a side effect of him getting older.

The hot Zeffiri sun had risen higher in the sky, causing the long dormant lava flats to ripple and waiver with heat. The atmosphere had grown warmer as well, though the direct sunlight was absorbed by the exterior shell of the floating mountain. The interior caught only diffused light through the center and the temperature difference created a natural breeze to blow and swirl. The leaves of the bamboo stalks rustled in the breeze, though the island was ascending higher in the center of the arena.

Ketan's ribbon-like sleeve extensions and the tails of his bandana rippled in the breeze. The white silk had grown a bit moist on his brow as the headband absorbed beads of sweat. His dark purple eyebrows were low with concentration, violet eyes shrewdly studying the bamboo stalks. They were peaceful, tranquil. Each leaf seemed to be telling its own story and yet harmonizing with the whole. It would have been very zen if not for the fact that Ketan knew an attack was imminent.

A sudden shift in air pressure - Ketan slipped to the right, narrowly missing the apex swing of a bamboo staff. A crack sounded as the staff hit the moss covered stone where Ketan had been standing a split second prior. Ketan spiraled, his ribbons curving around him. He avoided another swipe, then another. The blows came rapidly. Ketan's eyes moved to the fiercely determined eyes of his master, though the larger man was grinning from behind his bushy black beard.

"Light on your feet." he said.

"Thank you master, I-" Ketan yelped as the staff swept against his legs, sending him sprawling onto his back. He coughed as he hit the ground, the air knocked from his lungs. He put his hands down onto the ground to push himself up, though a large and broad foot came down onto his chest. For a moment Ketan expected to be pinned, but he felt the pressure

suddenly increase as his master pushed against him. The moss beneath his body sheared free of the smooth stone and Ketan slid a few inches.

A strange effervescent tingling began to ripple across Ketan's scalp. It felt like bubbling mint, cool and somewhere between a message and crawling ants. Malik watched with an intense gaze as the black pigment blanched out of the young man's hair. It started at the roots and worked its way up, eating away all color until each strand was as white as pristine snow. His hair now complemented his bandanna and the gauzier layers of his wrap. When Malik finally removed his foot from Ketan's chest, the initiate sat up.

"What was that, master?" Ketan asked. Malik leaned onto his bamboo staff with one hand and fished into his pocket before tossing a small circular mirror to his apprentice. Ketan looked at it, raised his gaze a few centimeters and then immediately looked back in a double take. He audibly gasped, reaching up to run his fingers through his hair. It still felt like his hair, but it was entirely white. Ketan then drew his purple eyes down to look at where the moss had ripped free of the stone. While most of it was dull gray, there was a distinct set of inlaid stones making a sharp white curved edge - the perimeter barrier of the island.

"Your first lesson." Malik said, reaching up to stroke his thick black beard, caressing its heft and curve as he looked at the young man, "Always be aware of your surroundings. Take nothing for granted." he said. Ketan slowly rose back to his feet, dusting himself off. There were a few smudges on his pants but that was normal.

"That sounds like two lessons, master." Ketan grinned. Malik rolled his eyes.

"If I can only teach you one thing at a time, we will be here for ages." he replied. He tapped the end of his staff against the stone twice before gesturing into the trees. Ketan grinned and broke into a sprint, heading off to find another hiding spot. Malik took a few steps while letting the young man dart off. Malik counted silently in his head until he knew Ketan was far enough away. The master stroked his beard one more time, and then felt the curve of his belly before reaching down to massage his own groin. His training pants were rather baggy, though the fabric shifted as a very fat, very large cock began to wake from its hibernation. A tent formed and his fat fingers curved around the edge, giving himself a few more lewd squeezes.

It wasn't time yet... but Malik longed to welcome his apprentice to his house properly. He imagined how fine a fighter he would be, how much they would reclaim their name and title from the other houses... but he couldn't move too fast. He had to ensure Ketan was ready if they were going to make it anywhere. No one said training was going to be easy, for either him or his apprentice. Malik counted a few more seconds before a malevolent grin crossed his face and he started into the bamboo forest, ready to find his prey and give him something truly powerful to keep up with.

Ketan had never felt so many forms of pain before. His back ached, both his spine and his muscles. His skin stung where he had countless razor thin cuts, throbbled where purple bruises had formed and seared where he'd abraded the skin. His silver and purple capris pants had specks of blood and smears of moss. He'd considered using one of the bamboo staffs to hobble his way down the long ramp into Malik's personal locker room. Instead he'd followed behind his master, slower but with more dignity.

“You did good out there, kid.” Malik said as he entered the locker room ahead of Ketan. He took advantage of his apprentice’s slower gait to move over to a cabinet on the far wall. He opened a fridge and withdrew a large plastic bottle with one hand and grabbed a small device clipped to the wall with the other. Ketan had barely made it into the room before a cool drink was shoved into his hands. He gratefully twisted the top off, tipped it back and filled his mouth with the coolest, mintiest, saltiest drink he’d ever tasted. He coughed and sputtered, the silvery liquid spilling across his cheeks and running down his sweaty chest.

“What is that stuff?!” he asked. There were too many flavors to even begin to calculate. He tasted coconut, eucalyptus, mint, sea prunes, kale, and who knew what else.

“Hey, you gotta recover your electrolytes after a thrashing like that kid.” Malik said, pointing over to a high backed chair. It looked like the sort of chair that champions got photographed on. It had black velvet lining and a silver frame. Ketan was too tired to protest. He moved over and slumped in the chair, exhaling before he tipped the bottle back. Despite his protest at the flavor, his Adam’s apple bobbed as he took gulp after gulp after gulp. The cool temperature helped, and several of his injuries already started hurting less. Part of the reason for that, however, was the gentle hum of the dermal regenerator as Malik passed it back and forth over the abrasions and cuts. The flesh knit itself back together.

“Do you train all your recruits like this?” Ketan asked, taking a few panting breaths between gulps of the sports drink. Malik looked up, a slight grin on his thick lips, his bald head glistening in the lights of the locker room.

“For over ten years.” he said proudly. Ketan considered.

“I haven’t seen any matches that use staffs before.” he admitted. Malik made a bit of a noise as he moved up to start using the medical tool on Ketan’s bruised rib.

“They broadcast the hand-to-hand matches; wrestling, sumo, kickboxing... But there are other types of fights. Those you have to pay to see, to see them in person.” Malik said. “It all comes down to the same thing though. If you lose, you are recruited to the winner’s house. By the end of the tournament, all the fighters serve them. At the end of the season they can challenge to win their identities back, or they can stay of their own volition.” Malik explained. Ketan held the cool drink to his forehead for a moment, feeling the condensation mingling with his sweat.

“And the ones that choose to stay with their new houses, that’s when you have to recruit new initiates from the lowlands.” Ketan said. Malik nodded a bit at that, moving to start using the regenerator on Ketan’s shoulder.

“Sometimes...” The older man said slowly, “Everyone dreams of victory, but not everyone is willing to put their humanity on the line. Even fewer have the skill needed to keep up in the ring. Some years, some of the empty houses don’t get anyone fresh.” he admitted. Ketan looked worried at that.

“How long has it been for you?” Ketan asked. Malik gave a shrug.

“Two seasons... They’ve gone pretty fast though.” he said in deflection. Ketan straightened his posture up taller.

“I promise I won’t let you down, master. I’ll bring triumph to our house.” Ketan said with certainty. A soft belly laugh escaped from Malik’s lips.

“You don’t even know what our house is yet...” Malik said. Ketan grinned brightly, reaching up to run a hand through his crisp, white hair.

“Whatever it is, I know it’s cool.” he said. Malik grinned at that, patting Ketan’s now healed shoulder.

“You finish drinking that, rest for a few minutes, and then grab a shower. You have free time until bed.” Malik said, straightening up and rolling his shoulders. While he was far more used to fighting than Ketan, the day had been an incredible workout for him too. Ketan merely tipped the bottle back with both hands, taking in gulp after gulp of the salty sports drink. Malik watched his apprentice for a moment before he took a breath and headed to gather his own things.

Even when the Zeffiri sun had set, the sky never got completely dark. The stars sparkled on a navy blue backdrop as the rapidly cooling breeze blew across the top of the floating mountain. It was a shame that Ketan’s muscles were so tight because he felt as if he could have wandered for days and still not find all the secrets the coliseum held. He’d spent a half hour leaning on the copper guard rails, looking out across the vast landscape. He’d found a few different shrines dedicated to religions from worlds he’d never heard of. He’d seen the gift shops and memento kiosks that would serve the countless tourists and sports aficionados, but for the last few minutes he’d been walking along a curved wall made of highly polished wood slats.

The wall was made with such precision that each slat fit into the next while still leaving grooves, curving with an organic elegance that belied the rigid nature of the wood. It was peaceful and tranquil and every step that Ketan took made him wonder what was inside more... until, at last, he found the entrance. His bare feet padded across stepping stones set in soft grass, the curved wooden walls weaving back and forth on either side in a serpentine fashion that hid the interior until he reached the far side and his eyes came across a placid, glistening pond - except that it wasn’t a pond. Steam wafted up from the surface and the sparkling crystal kissing the stone edges indicated minerals in the water. It was a hot spring, a hot spring right in the middle of the floating mountain!

The lovingly crafted walls, the stepping stones, the bonsai trees around the edge, the white gravel, even raised bed zen gardens with sand and stones brought a peace and serenity. It looked so peaceful, so amazing, and after the kind of day he’d had, Ketan couldn’t wait to relax his muscles. He nearly ran around the edge of the pool, making it halfway to the thatch covered nook that had to hold the towels and other things when he saw that he wasn’t alone. Ketan inhaled a bit, wondering for the first time if he was supposed to be there when he saw a very familiar shaved head and bushy black beard...

Master Malik sat at the farthest edge of the hot spring, his thick arms spread out at shoulder height to either side of him. The water lapped against his belly, dark black pit hair was visible under his arms... arms that Ketan now realized wore tattoos. There were complex spiraling shapes and oblong outlines creating a pattern on his biceps and triceps. He couldn’t tell what they were, but the dark ink on his cinnamon toned skin was perfectly contrasted. There was also something about seeing him without a shirt that made Ketan feel a stirring... his nipples hardened, his groin stiffened, and most surprisingly of all, his stomach growled?

“I should have made sure you had a bigger dinner...” Malik mused, opening his eyes. He looked up at Ketan with a smile.

"I didn't think I was going to be able to eat again... I've never had a six egg omelet before, let alone with ramen too." Ketan said, his cheeks blushing violet.

"Athletes burn a lot of calories, and we're not just maintaining. We're going to have to get your weight up. I'll redouble my efforts in the morning." Malik smirked, "The hot springs are a good idea though. Rest your bones." he said. Ketan nodded at that and turned to look at the hutch, realizing it held only towels and... his master's clothing, all of it. "It's not customary to wear swim trunks in the hot springs, at least when the tourists are gone." Malik added.

"I... I wouldn't want to make you uncomfortable, maybe I should come back later?" Ketan asked. Malik frowned.

"You and I are going to be spending a lot of time together, if we can't navigate the hot springs, how are we going to function?" Malik asked. Ketan looked back at his master before he nodded. Of course he was right... He just hoped there was enough salt in the hot springs to make the water milky. He unwrapped his shirt and set it down on the bench next to his master's before sliding down his capris pants. His pert, muscled ass was practically a full moon in its own right, both pale and full. A dusting of snow white hair surrounded a rather ample manhood that curved neatly over decent sized balls. Malik did not try to look away or preserve his apprentice's modesty. He merely thought back to what it had been like to be his age, what it had been like before his balls had gotten so full and heavy that they could practically crack walnuts.

Ketan padded over to the edge of the hot spring, dipped one smooth leg in and then slipped over the edge. He lowered himself down, taking up a sitting position within arm's reach of his master. He smiled politely at Malik and Malik grinned back. The bearded man leaned back, reclining his head. Ketan stretched one arm out along the lip of the hot spring, then the other, emulating his master's position... at least until his legs started to float and his hips rose toward the surface. His manhood had nearly breached when he cleared his throat and changed positions, ensuring that his lower half stayed below the water line. Malik opened one eye, looking at his apprentice before he smiled a bit more and closed it again. Ketan slowly sank down lower in the water, letting the minerals of the hot spring soak into his skin and his muscles, relaxing away the ache.

[Day 8]

The men of Keshho were known for being lithe, airy and agile. So too had Ketan been when he had first arrived, but after a week of practice, he had been bulking up nicely. Beads of sweat rolled down full, firm pillow shaped pectoral muscles before collecting in the canals that ran between his perfect abdominal muscles. His white hair was slicked with that same sweat and his eyebrows were knit together in concentration. His biceps bulged and his firm, full ass clenched as he pulled against the exercise machine. There was a veritable splash zone of sweat around him and Ketan had lost count of how many reps he'd done.

"You're almost there, keep it up! You're putting all the other fighters to shame!" Malik said, bringing what appeared to be some sort of bottom loaded water bottle over. Ketan opened his lips to accept the tube, but the contents that squirted into his mouth were a lot thicker than he had expected. Still, the drink was refreshingly cool. He began to drink and then gulp at it, a placid look crossing his face as he swallowed. It had all the salt and electrolytes he was expecting to replace that he had lost, as well as Malik's custom blend of proteins and amino acids. How else could he have grown so big in such a short time?

“Two ninety-eight, two ninety-nine, three hundred!” Malik cheered. Ketan released the flaps of the machine he had been pushing against, letting them rotate back to default position with a clank. He reached up to take the bottle from Malik, still suckling on it as the minty green contents slowly drained down his throat. Malik grabbed a cloth, wiping off Ketan’s brow, each side of his neck, noticing that the fighter was starting to grow a bit of black stubble on his cheeks. Malik felt that familiar stirring in his loins, especially given the fact that Keshhons rarely grew facial hair. The coach turned away and bit his bottom lip, feeling both his belly and his loins rumble a bit. He threw the cloth in the hamper and used his foot to depress a button near the floor on one wall. A slot opened and a hexagonal robot rolled out and began zooming around the room to clean and sanitize it.

“How long do you think it’ll be until I’m ready?” Ketan asked. Malik turned and looked back, though his breath was nearly stolen away from his chest. Ketan was sitting up now on the bench, his muscled body glistening with sweat, wisps of white hair on his chest and thicker black hair growing under his arms - arms that were bulging with so much muscle that they almost couldn’t be brought straight down to his sides anymore. His torso had almost taken on a v-shape.

“T-The season isn’t for several more weeks.” Malik said. Ketan’s face screwed up a little.

“I didn’t mean for the season, I just meant... ready.” Ketan said, trying to think of how to phrase it. He tipped the bottle back, drinking the last of his coach’s protein shake. He licked at the end of the tube and then looked at his coach imploringly. “Do you have any more, master? I’m still hungry...” he said hopefully. Malik blushed beneath his bushy black beard, though he recovered himself. Maybe it had been too long since he’d trained anyone.

“You’ve come a long way in a short while. You’re strong, fast, skilled... You’re going to be facing a variety of different fighting styles in the ring. Most of your opponents, though, are going to be far from human. You’ll be facing dragons and harpies, tigers and leviathans. You’ve got the muscle down, but we’re going to have to get you a bit more... padding.” Malik said with a grin. After a moment, though, his grin faded as he realized that Ketan had not responded. Ketan seemed to be staring into the distance, his brain churning. “What is it?” Malik asked with concern. Ketan blushed faintly, his violet eyes drawing back to his coach.

“Sorry, Master, I just... What you said, that means that I have not joined the house of the dragons or the tigers or the leviathans?” he asked. Malik grimaced a bit.

“I said nothing of the sort.” Malik replied crossly, “Even if our house has no other current members, you will still have to face me before the new season begins.” he said. Ketan’s eyes widened.

“Is that how... an initiate formally joins the house? To be turned by their master?” he asked. Malik shifted a bit, grabbing a towel from a towel rack before tossing it at his apprentice.

“Usually. The ring is designed to convert those that do not attain victory into the house of the victor... There have been a few over the decades that bested their master on their final spar. It is rare, however.” He said with a warning tone. Ketan grinned and ruffled his hair with the towel before patting down his magnificent body. The cleaning robot chirped as the fighter nearly stepped on it with his large feet.

“Sorry, my friend.” Ketan said down to the droid before looking back at Malik, “I promise that I will give you a fair fight, master, but I know that your experience and skill will bring you

victory.” he said with a good natured smile. Malik gave a soft chuckle, swinging a large arm across Ketan’s newly broad shoulders.

“You’ll give me a run for my money, I’m sure.” he smirked.

Paper lanterns gleamed in shades of shades of pearl and gold across the dining room. The wall panels had been left open, giving a view of the stars and two of Zeffir’s moons. Countless plates glistened with the leftover residue of meats and sauces. The stems and cores of fruit were piled up like a supplication to the gods. Several glasses held only the faint froth of the beer that had been consumed. There were bones, skins, and countless other castings.

Malik leaned back, feeling so full that it was difficult to breathe. His belly rose and fell, his dense beard glistening almost as much as the empty plate before him. He adjusted himself, spreading his legs, letting things settle in a way that would make him the most comfortable. Despite the aftermath of the meal leaving him so slothful, he couldn’t help but watch Ketan on the other side of the table. He’d been eating for almost two hours straight and showed no signs of slowing down.

The fighter’s perfect teeth were cutting and gnawing through a piece of thicker meat. The food stretched and snapped and dissolved in his mouth as he went at it. His eyes were nearly feral, the late hour bringing more shadow to the stubble on his face. Malik had done his best to keep up with his apprentice, but after a while he could only watch. The fighter’s firm pectorals had truly become softer, rounding out like marshmallows. His fit and firm abdomen had distended, rounding out and stretching his muscles until a softer layer of flesh covered them. Even his legs had grown less well defined as the thick calves and powerful thighs were protected by more flesh of their own. Malik had been preparing Ketan for this for days. He was almost there, he just needed a little more. It was almost time to reveal the truth to him, and then-

“Master, do you have any more of your shake?” he asked. Malik looked stunned at that.

“My shake?” he repeated, “You have everything the kitchen has to offer; cakes and pies, quiches and chowders, sushi and steaks?” Malik asked. Ketan pursed his lips a little, considering.

“I know, master, but... I like what you make for me the best.” Ketan admitted. Malik was a bit stunned at that. He considered it for a long moment.

“I don’t have all the ingredients here, but if you give me a moment...” Malik said, having to brace both hands on the arms of his chair and push himself up after his feast. He nearly waddled into the kitchen, pushing through the double doors. Unlike the dining room, the kitchen was lit much lighter. white laminated floors made it easy for the droids to clean up if anything spilled while other robots were constantly busy chopping, dicing, stirring and simmering. what wasn’t going directly to feed Malik and Ketan in one dining room was either serving other coaches and trainers in the next room over or being meal prepped for the next day.

The scent of savory and salty foods was heavy in the air, the beautiful tang of seasonings and spices. It made Malik nearly drool despite the fact that he knew he couldn’t handle even one more bite. He moved over to one of the cabinets, opened it up and withdrew a large drinking glass. Setting it on the counter, Malik glanced around before he unbuttoned his pants. The button nearly flew off as the pressure was released and the zipper whirred as it drew

itself down while Malik's girth pried his pants apart. The coach reached in, adjusting his painfully tight underwear before drawing out a cock almost as wide as it was long - a feat considering that he was so well endowed in general. Malik grabbed the cup with his left hand and wrapped his right around his shaft. He began to stroke back and forth, squeezing with more pressure, building up the momentum. There had been a lot of science involved in Ketan's protein drinks. There were catalysts and enzymes to make him receptive to genetic changes, everything he'd need to rebuild cells in addition to keeping him healthy and in tip top shape despite all the training... but the one thing that everything was built off of was Malik's own essence. It had laid a foundation for what Ketan would become, what he would turn into. Malik hated to admit it, but the time spent as a human was exhausting. He yearned for the training season to end so he could live as his true self... But it wouldn't be much longer.

Malik filled his mind with visions of Ketan growing taller, stronger, and fatter. He fantasized about him being large and in charge, proud of his girth. He dreamed of how handsome and manly he would become before becoming a beast, then what a fine beast he would become. It didn't take Malik long before he was grunting and groaning, his fat cock spasming before a gop of pearly precum came out, then another, then a third. Malik was so engrossed in his orgasm, in the searing and amazing pleasure boiling through his brain, that he failed to realize the double doors had opened. Ketan was standing there, looking stunned, though his purple eyes looked from his coach down to the glass, then back at his coach.

"Master, I'm ready! You can feed me directly!" Ketan announced. Malik's almond colored eyes snapped open.

"Shit!" He muttered in shock, nearly stumbling back. His constant spray of cum arced out, splattering across the floor. Ketan swept in, removing the glass from his master's hands before he dropped down to all fours, leaned in and wrapped his lips around his master's cock. Malik grunted in shock at that, then inhaled as Ketan took in more than just the broad, fat head of his manhood. Ketan slurped and sucked with the power of a vacuum, a skill he'd learned on ramen, to go deeper and deeper. Ketan's violet eyes fluttered shut as he began to suckle and drink directly from the source.

The flavor of his master's semen was still faintly minty, or rather, eucalyptus. It was salty and thick like the shakes, but it was so much warmer and creamier from the source. Ketan kept himself upright with one hand on the floor, but the other reached to start massaging his master's leg. He stroked up and down, his head bobbing back and forth as he gulped down the seemingly endless supply of cum. Malik moaned, groaned and then nearly howled. One hand came down, grabbing a hold of his apprentice's head, guiding the young man forward and back.

Wet, sloppy slurping sounds came from Ketan's most eager and willing mouth. His body rocked forward and back as the hot cream flowed down his throat, gathering in his already over-full stomach. Countless calories had been marinated in catalyzed chemicals and the trigger had finally been provided. Every shake of Ketan's body sent his flesh jiggling. Full pectorals began to wobble as fat packed on. His muscle gut got softer as it ballooned outward, stretching around as love handles that latched onto his ribs. Even his perfect bubble butt began to swell into a grabbable, squeezable ass.

Malik looked down, watching Ketan grow and grow. It only made him cum harder. He slammed his other hand down onto a counter to steady himself as he kept going. His eyes watered, drool escaped the corner of his lips, but still he looked down, watching Ketan's youthful

face enshrouded in stubble that grew as soft as fur as it filled out. The black hairs were fine, straight and dense. They were a sharp contrast to his white hair and eyebrows. The stubble complimented his faintly bronze hued skin, especially as it grew in thicker. The facial foliage spread along his jaw and under his throat, creeping up his cheeks, filling out until the skin beneath disappeared.

Ketan's violet eyes slowly looked back up at his master, glittering with a delight and contentment that far surpassed anything he'd ever known before. His tongue slathered the underside of Malik's cock before teasing the tip, slapping against the urethra that fed him his nourishing slop. As he guzzled at it, his new short black beard closed in from both sides of his upper lip, forming a young but respectable mustache. He'd stacked on nearly a hundred pounds in moments, starting by looking like a wrestler and now looking like a sumo wrestler in training. He kept sucking and slurping until Malik let out a wheezing groan, having afforded his apprentice every last drop.

Malik nearly stumbled, his eyes rolling into the back of his head. He stepped back and Ketan reluctantly licked his lips clean. Malik moved over to the wall and hit his hand on a blue button, summoning a bench to extend. Ketan knelt on the floor, looking not at his changed body but at his master. Malik panted hard, sweaty from the sudden exercise after such a full meal. He looked over at Ketan, at his big and shapely body, still wearing his headband and his baggy pants that looked more like shorts now instead of capris... With his short, thick black beard he looked almost like he could be Malik's son.

"Master, are you alright?" Ketan asked Malik looked back up at Ketan.

"You don't mind?" he managed to mutter. Ketan tilted his head.

"Mind what?" he asked. Malik grimaced a bit.

"That I changed you in ways without telling you." Malik said. Ketan shook his head, moving to stand up. He grunted a little, surprised at his new weight. He grabbed onto the counter and hoisted himself up, realizing he'd have to start working his muscles in a lot of new ways to accommodate for his weight.

"All initiates accept that they will become something else. What we train for is to master our destiny over that change, and I know that you are preparing me to be the best I can be. I'm thankful, master, and more than that... you taste really, really good." he said. Malik made a non-committal noise at that before he, too, pushed himself to his feet.

"I'm going to train you on the joys of sleeping deep after something like that. Tomorrow you'll have a day off, and then we'll get back to training. I think it's almost time for you to have your right of passage." Malik said. Ketan nearly beamed with delight, moving close to walk shoulder to shoulder with his coach as they left the kitchen to the flurry of angry androids that had to clean up after them.

[Day 27]

The sweet wind blew through the bamboo leaves, sending them fluttering. The sun above had grown hotter, but the canopy filtered the light. Somewhere in the distance was the echoed sounds of other fighters training and sparring, but Ketan heeded them no mind. He practiced his breathing, he stretched his arms and legs, and he felt the grit of the moss and dirt and stone beneath his bare feet. The tails of his headband draped down his full, broad back and his baggy pants had been remade to fit his now much more ample ass and thighs. Most of all,

though, was that Ketan had been letting his beard grow in for the last several weeks. He was disappointed it hadn't grown as fast as it had during their first feeding frenzy, but he was proud that he sported a beard that nearly rivaled his master.

Training had gone well. Ketan now embraced a style that was equal parts strength and patience. Despite that, his natural airy aloofness allowed him to dodge and evade attacks despite his size. Ketan's heart still raced as he thought about what was about to happen. It was his final spar, his right of passage. It would be today that he officially joined the house and put the life of an initiate behind him. He would fight for honor and glory, he would become the beast he was meant to be. Ketan closed his violet eyes and took long, deep breaths, preparing himself, unaware that he was already being watched.

Almond eyes peered out from within the bamboo, taking in the way the shrouded sunlight dappled across Ketan's man boobs and belly. He'd always been handsome, Malik admitted, but he had risen to become the most handsome any human could be. It was time to help him embrace the next step in his evolution. Malik's muscles tightened and he felt claws dig into the dirt. The breeze blew across soft fur. A full, round ear twitched. Slowly, silently, Malik drew back. He remained hidden amid the trees until, at last, the powerful drums exploded through the arena. Four rapid bursts and then nothing but the vacuous echo in their wake. Then, four four more. Silence. Then two longer blasts. The rumbling echo of the sounds wafting through the arena masked Malik's emergence, but when the sunlight hit the crisp snow white fur and disappeared into the inky black fur, Ketan gasped. His eyebrows arched, his jaw dropped and suddenly it all began to make sense.

"I am Malik Pandor!" Malik boomed. He had grown a little taller, a little wider, his belly and chest fuller. His body was covered from formerly bald head to paw pad in black and white fur. His beard remained, wiry and dense compared to the rest of his fur. His almond eyes remained the same as well, but his hands and feet were enormous. Black claws glistened from the end of each digit. A small nub of a tail wobbled over his full ass. His fur had a sheen to it, no doubt from all the good eating they had been doing.

"Master!" Ketan said. Malik shook his head.

"I am not your master, not now... I am your opponent, your combattant. You have trained for this moment. Come at me." Malik said. Ketan slowly grinned.

"It is a tactical mistake to be the one to move first." he replied. A strange, broad smile crossed Malik's face.

"So be it." he replied. The large panda man's black nostrils flared, his chest inflating with breath before he suddenly jolted forward. His large feet carried him in easy strides, closing the distance in no time. Ketan brought up his arms, deflecting a good four blows before Malik brought his knee up into Ketan's stomach. Ketan wheezed out, coughing. Malik grabbed a hold of the large initiate, all but lifting him up off the ground before slamming him down.

Ketan impacted the ground with such inertia that the wind was knocked out of him. Malik grabbed his right arm and pinned it down. There was a faint sting of the stone hitting his wrist, but a much stranger tingling began to bubble and froth along his hand. Ketan turned his head, watching as his fingernails darkened from ivory to brown to black. The keratin sank down into his fingers, taking far deeper root as the flesh swelled and grew over the top to keep it in place. His fingertips began to swell and puff up as fine dustings of black fur sprouted from his knuckles,

spreading down his fingers as they wrapped around. Ketan inhaled sharply, snatching his hand back.

Despite Malik trying hard to pin him, Ketan sucked in his gut and crab walked out from under the master, slipping between his legs. He nearly was tempted to take a whiff of his coach's groin, but now wasn't the time. He got free before rolling over and springing back to his feet. He looked once more at his hand, excited by the change, but knowing he couldn't just give into it. He charged and kicked. His foot impacted Malik's side, making a loud slapping motion, but the fat absorbed the attack. Instead, Malik grabbed onto Ketan's ankle and suddenly swung him as if he were a bat. Ketan grunted as he hit the ground and rolled, his ear tingling as he grazed the edge of the ring. Black fur sprouted across his ear lobe, white fuzz filling the interior as it swelled and grew, taking on a rounder appearance.

Defeat was often a slippery slope. In the ring, the asymmetrical transformation often left one disoriented and having to adjust to a constant slate of changes. Ketan breathed in a few times, charging for Malik once more. Malik braced himself and held out his hands, but Ketan stopped suddenly just a few feet short. He grabbed a hold of Malik's waiting arms and tugged him, leaning back with his weight. Malik stumbled forward, trying to keep from falling. Ketan suddenly body checked himself into Malik's side, sending him clattering to the ground. The moss tore up, revealing stone, especially as Malik's leg slipped out of the ring. It sizzled as the fur all but dissolved, revealing the well tanned cinnamon toned leg that Ketan had come to love in his master. Even after Malik drew it back inside, it remained changed.

"You may be one of my best students." Malik said, pushing himself up before dusting himself off, "You're combining styles, subverting expectation."

"I learned from one of the best." Ketan replied, running a hand down his beard. Malik licked his lip before he grinned. In the same instant, the two charged forward. They came crashing together. They grappled with one another, intertwining arms and legs, hands and paws. Ketan forced himself not to focus on how good his master's fur felt against his skin. There was a push and pull, a give and take. Ketan had the advantage on muscle but Malik had the advantage on weight. The air rippled and shimmered as elbows and feet brushed against the barrier. It was almost as if they were exchanging a patch work of qualities. Ketan wound up with a furry shoulder, Malik with a bare elbow.

"I can't believe how fortunate I am." Ketan said through gritted teeth.

"What, because you've held up this long?" Malik asked, grunting as he pushed, sliding Ketan back. Ketan gasped as his fat ass pushed through the barrier, the baggy pants bloating outward as waves of soft black fur radiated out across his hind quarters.

"Because I'll be able to help other fighters learn the joy of house Pandor. We will feast together like kings, I will bring you so many warriors to learn under your wisdom!" Ketan declared. Malik moaned at that, but rather than being caught up in the moment, he used it to force his apprentice forward. Ketan tried to squirm and spiral out of this way but Malik had dug in deep. His claws gripped the ground, his hands held the apprentice by his love handles. One step, two, three, then four. The fizzling energy crept up across Ketan's back, covering his shoulders and ribs. Ketan took one calculated step back, a step that brought one entire meaty leg out of the field. A complex pattern of black and white fur ensnared it, bristling out of virgin flesh, spiraling down to puffy toes with plump paw pads as sharp black claw points burst out of the tip, replacing the inferior human nails that had been there moments before.

With his new found anchor, Ketan pushed forward, forcing Malik to try and stop him. Instead, however, Ketan suddenly ducked down, changing his angle of attack. He managed to knock Malik off his feet, the two collapsing in a clumsy tangle of large bodies. They began to roll, picking up a bit speed as they caught the curve of the floating island. A mild bit of panic filled Ketan as he realized he might not be entirely in control. He yelped as Malik suddenly used a leg and the two were swung on a new trajectory. To Ketan's terror, it wasn't back into the field, but towards a sheer edge of the entire island itself.

The world was a flurry of moss and dirt and stone and sky. Their huge bodies were objects in motion. Ketan tried to extend his limbs to slow them, to stop them, but he felt completely out of control like an unstoppable object. His solace was that Malik was with him until, at the last moment, Malik stopped abruptly and tore away from him. Ketan looked at Malik, realizing he had steered them to the edge of the bamboo shoots, using the stalks to stop his momentum. Ketan had kept going. Malik reached out, snatching one of Ketan's meaty ankles as he skidded over the perimeter line and nearly off the edge of the floating island itself.

There was a bit of relief at not having to learn what happened to people that fell off the floating islands, but that relief was superseded by an intense tingling that suffused him. It was all over his skin, in his bones and ligaments, filling his lungs. Waves of white fur sprouted from his chest and stomach, spreading across his underside like ocean foam lapping at a beach. Darker fur bristled from his shoulders, biceps and triceps.

His face throbbed, ached, even came close to burning before it popped and snapped and wrenched. Ketan's skin felt like rubber as it stretched over reshaping cartilage and expanding bone. His lower jaw ached as it grew forward and his teeth grew sharper to fill it. His sinuses stung and burned as his nose broadened out, his nostrils flaring, giving the fighter a muzzle. His other ear rounded and grew furry to match the first, stretching out from the side of his head. His white hair became white fur and rings of black grew in around his eyes, giving him a splotchy, tired expression despite the adrenaline running through his veins.

"F-fuck!" Ketan shuddered, heaving heavy breaths as his chest rose and fell, his belly jiggling as the white fur spread across it thicker and thicker. He slammed a huge paw down, black claws digging into the moss as his paw pads finished swelling and firming. Fur bristled down his long, thick, meaty legs. His toes felt like they were popping as curved, sharp black claws emerged from each digit. The lean, lithe fighter had become a massive heap of panda. Ketan felt his heart rate slowly returning to normal, his shoulder blades relaxing. He thought it might be nice to lay in the dappled light of the bamboo trees, at least until he felt a huge paw wrap firmly around his ankle.

Ketan yelped as he was dragged back into the ring. Malik whipped his arm and managed to flip Ketan over. Ketan was surprised by how little impact there was between the heft of his belly and the thickness of his fur. His newly muzzled face grinned before he gasped, feeling large hands pulling the massive globes of his ass apart from one another. His small nub of a tail flicked upwards in surprise, revealing a rubbery, stretchy asshole. It tightened slightly with uncertainty, the young bear turning his head, looking up at his master.

It took a moment for Ketan's eyes to adjust. At first he saw Malik only in silhouette; a seven and a half foot tall, fat and muscled panda bear. His head fur was short, his beard full and bushy. His ears twitched, the wind rustling through little tufts of fur on his shoulders. As Ketan's eyes adjusted, he saw the barely subdued need in those almond eyes, the panting coming from

his muzzled mouth, the aroused dark nipples sticking out from his white chest fur, and the biggest, fattest, fullest cock he'd ever seen in his life.

"Take me, master!" Ketan begged.

"I am not your-" Malik was interrupted.

"I pledge myself to you as your apprentice, your servant, your love slave, whatever you want! Just fuck me, please, make me yours!" Ketan begged. Malik looked torn, strained, clearly wanting it badly but not wanting to cross a line. Ketan licked his bottom lip, "Look at the handsome bear you made me into... Won't I grow even more under you, master?" he asked softly, smiling sheepishly. The youthful, innocent smile surrounded by a soft, willowy black beard that crept down a little lower, a little longer each day.

Malik's eyes nearly unfocused as he let out a growl, grabbing onto Ketan's ass cheeks. He slipped forward, letting his huge, fat cock ride up and down between those ass cheeks. Malik grunted and growled, feeling Ketan's musk spreading all over his shaft. He got it all up and down that valley, covering every centimeter before he pulled back, letting the thick head rub and tease that ring of muscle. Ketan moaned out deeply, his gaze shifting forward. He kept one paw dug into the moss, but the other slipped under his own belly to find his own cock, squeezing and stroking it off.

A muzzled grin spread across Malik's face before he grit his teeth, set his posture and began pushing in. He spread Ketan wide, spearing into his apprentice with inch after inch. It was tough going at first but once he got in a bit, he was able to start moving easier. He built up his momentum slowly, burying himself in Ketan's most ample ass. He gripped tighter and felt his partner rearing back, bringing those cheeks toward him. Both pandas were grunting and moaning.

Objects in motion tended to stay in motion, and each of Malik's movements had an equal and opposite reaction in Ketan. Two massive bodies rocked forward and back, the wind carrying both the sweet scent of bamboo and the salty, musky aroma of the masculine males. The thrusting became rutting, the grinding became sublime, and Kean's masturbation became fierce as he felt his depths plumbed by his coach. What looked so natural and fluid required countless muscles and sinews working beneath the surface, keeping both of the fighters aloft. Thick drops of drool fell from Ketan's muzzle, his purple eyes rolling into the back of his head.

As sexy as it was to realize that he had reshaped and remolded Ketan into the perfect member of House Pandor, Malik knew that he had created not a subordinate but an equal. Ketan was strong, dedicated and focused. Their lust together was most enjoyable, but he knew even when the blood flow returned to their brains, they would make a powerful and potent team. Malik still had much to teach his apprentice on tactics and strategy. Now that he had been initiated, though, that was going to become a lot easier...

A sudden undulation along Malik's shaft made him groan out with surprise. He hadn't been thinking about how good the sex was, his mind drifting back to work. Ketan, however, began to moan, then scream out in pleasure as a few sticky globs of cum dribbled out of his dick before a much more powerful load erupted in silky streams. The last of his human seed had been ejected before his panda cum had taken over.

The salty, eucalyptus scented air made Malik lose himself. He dug his claws into Ketan's ass, drove his dick as deep as he could get and started to rut with mad intention. The friction radiated out through Ketan even as he kept cumming, making his muscles writhe uncontrollably.

Malik kept at it until he started to lose himself, barely managing to thrust in one last time before his heavy, full sack unleashed its bounty.

Ketan gasped a bit, eyes clenched shut, mouth wide in the closest a muzzled bear face could get to an O-shape. Wave after wave of heat blossomed in Ketan's ass and he welcomed each one, feeling his belly infused by the blessing. Having spent his own load, Ketan couldn't help but slowly drop to one shoulder on the ground, then the other, slowly sliding forward until he collapsed in a clumsy heap. The movements had made Malik wobble, giving him only the option to fall backwards or forwards. He opted to fall forwards, using his apprentice as a bean bag chair.

The coach landed in a heap on top of Ketan, but Ketan didn't care. In fact, he smiled despite feeling such weight spread across his back. His ears twitched, his sleepy eyes fluttering closed. He liked feeling Malik's dick lodged deep in his ass, but he liked the idea of napping even more. Malik barely managed to drape his limbs over his partner, nuzzling his head into Ketan's shoulder before he yawned, stretched a little, and then passed out. The two settled into an indistinguishable heap of white and black fur, smelling of sweat and sex, peacefully dozing beneath the light and shadow cast by the canopy of the floating island.

[Day 268]

A horn blasted through the coliseum and the cheers erupted with renewed vigor. Holographic confetti rained down and the sound of applause thundered from the stands. There was so much noise that the deep bass rumble of the floating island was more felt than heard as it descended down towards the team levels and out of the view of the crowds. There was a fleeting moment for the victor to celebrate his success, but the sting of defeat lasted longer as another ring rose into the center of the caldera to capture the attention of the crowds next.

A broad smile crossed Malik's muzzle as he padded up the long hallway to the docking gantry. The island slowed to a stop and shuddered as it was latched into place and held. Ketan stood there, seven foot six, four hundred pounds of fat and muscle. His long black beard was segmented into pom poms as it draped down his belly. It was yet another win in yet another season and the Panda warrior stood next to the spoils of that victory. The newly minted Panda was six foot five, having added a few pounds to get him to two hundred, but he still looked scrawny and lithe compared to the others. The only reason he had been put up against Ketan was that his former species, a Harpie, had muscle fibers as strong as steel. The young man looked down at his new feet, relieved to still have claws but baffled by the presence of all the fur.

"Not a bad fight at all, you had each other on the ropes a few times." Malik said, handing Ketan a coconut shake before offering a mintier, thicker shake to their new recruit, "Good work out there." he added. Golden eyes looked up, a small grin forming on the muzzle that had once been a beak.

"But I lost..." He said. Malik frowned a little.

"Did ya, lad?" he asked, considering before grinning, "I suppose technically, but at the same time, you joined the up and coming House Pandor! You're going to rise through the ranks, gain prestige, and of course experience." he said.

"It's amazing, you're going to love it." Ketan said, clapping the younger man on his shoulders. The golden eyed panda looked up with consideration. He missed his wings, but it felt kind of big to have such a strong arm on his back. In fact, it felt rather nice to be surrounded by

two men that were so large and in charge... He accepted the shake, bringing the straw to his lips. As he suckled, his eyes went wide in surprise, then fluttered shut in delight. He slurped and gulped, letting the cool creamy concoction soothe his throat and settle in his stomach.

"Oh yeah, kid won big." Ketan said, licking his lips a little. While the junior combattant refueled, Ketan leaned over to tilt his head and give Malik a kiss. The two exchanged intimacy for a moment, their tongues brushing and caressing each other before pulling back.

"Alright!" Malik said, clapping, "Cool down stretches, showers, then dinner. Ketan, you have one cool down day before your next match. Avery, you have one week until your first match as House Pandor. We're going to start your training in the morning." Malik said.

"I look forward to learning from you, sensei - both of you." Avery said, putting his palms together to make a v with his hands that no doubt resembled a set of wings.

"Sensei..." Malik considered.

"Don't you start." Ketan whispered. Malik chuckled, turning to lead the way down the tunnel towards the locker room.

"At least not until dinner." He commented, his voice echoing along the tunnel, disappearing as it leaked out into the roaring cheers of the massive crowds above.