Case 1 Jira

I could hear the roar of the crowd as I sat on the sand floor inside the arena.

It sounded like the match was finished, but who had won? Who had gained their glory from victory in single combat, who was bleeding out on the ground?

I didn’t much care for the answers to these questions. Both of the fighters were fools as far as I was concerned. Fools that thought that killing unnecessarily made them strong. That couldn’t have been further from the truth.

So, why was I fighting?

The answer was simple, I didn’t have a choice. As the first Worldstain in history, the only Worldstain, it was my duty to be punished for my crimes against King Kratan by fighting to the death every single day, with barely enough time to eat and sleep in between.

I closed my eyes for the tenth time that morning and slowly drifted off to sleep, but a hard poke in the back with a spear woke me up.

I was so tired, but I couldn’t sleep, I would die if I did and all of my fighting for the past year would have been for nothing.

The Kings’ voice still echoed in my head like a great lion’s roar. “You are a useless soldier, Jira. You were too weak to kill during the Great Kingdom War and for that, you must be punished!”

“I am sorry my king, but I was taught that killing is wrong,” I stuttered, kneeling down in front of him.

“Then your teachers taught you wrong!” He responded sternly.

“As King, I cannot let this go unpunished. As of now, you are a Worldstain.”

“A Worldstain, my lord?” I asked, I had never heard the term uttered before.

“Yes, the first ever, you will do what you and nobody else wants to do for you are useless to me!”

“And what might I do?” I asked, trembling.

“As of now, you are a gladiator in the Elten Arena. Since you don’t like killing when you have a choice, let’s see how you feel about it when you have none.”

I looked up at the King with tears escaping my eyes like a torrent.

“Please King Kratan, don’t do this.”

Kratan shook his head, “I do not have a choice.

“Take her away.”

Two of the royal guard grabbed me by the arms and hoisted me out of the palace and away to my punishment.

I did not struggle, to do so would have meant a swifter end or a life as a fugitive. I was not prepared for either of those outcomes.

“You have to admire the king’s balls,” I smiled, ignoring the crowd’s pleas for another fight.

He hadn’t even been Royalty for a week, and he was already punishing his citizens.

I looked down at my arms, they were covered in scars. *What’s one more?* I thought as I walked towards the arena, inching ever closer towards my demise.

I had killed many in the arena, 499. I had counted. Maybe I’d try to steal more bread tonight as a celebration, a consolation prize for killing so many.

I walked confidently out into the crowd, eager to get this fight over with but when I stepped outside that confidence quickly faded.

I thought this fight was going to be one vs one, but standing before me were nine opponents, all of whom were wielding gold axes.

“Kratan’s Children,” I growled, only royalty were allowed to wield axes made of gold.

“So glad you could join us, Jira.” I heard a courtly voice speak from above.

I looked up and groaned. Sat right above me with the best seat in the house, King Kratan himself was watching me, his golden eyes glinting in anticipation.

“My King, to what do I owe the pleasure,” I scowled.

“No need to be so confrontational, girl. Today is the one-year anniversary of you becoming a Worldstain!”

The crowd cheered in response to this celebration.

“So what?”

“So, I thought I’d make your match today a little more interesting, by making you fight my children.”

All four of the king’s sons and five daughters sneered at me and played around with their axes.

“And what do they get out of this?” I asked.

“Oh, I almost forgot to say.

“My children, whoever kills the Worldstain filth shall be next in line to the throne!”

*Shit, that’s a big incentive, he must really want me dead.*

I took a deep breath to calm myself and looked at my opponents.

Each of them were tall and well built, all except one. The enemy in the centre was short and skinny, clearly the runt of the family.

He would be who I would kill first. Lucky 500.

I clenched my fists and made ready to run at the small prince.

I would need his axe if I was to stand a chance of winning.

“BATTLE BEGIN!”

Without pause, I launched towards the small prince and punched him hard in the face.

“Bumf,” He reeled backwards and that was when I took my chance.

I lunged my arm forward, ripped his axe off him, and swung it clean across his neck.

“500.”

I heard the thud of his head dropping to the ground, but I didn’t have time to look at it, for two princesses were running towards me with their axes raised and teeth bared.

I smiled and waited for them to swing, once they did, I jumped up and pirouetted in the air, slashing both of their throats in the process.

“501, 502.”

Their blood tainted my clothes as I reached down and grabbed another golden axe from the ground with my left hand.

Now I was well armed and near unstoppable.

The remaining six royals stared at me shakily for a few seconds taking in the brutality that the woman they once thought was weak was capable of until finally, one of the tall and muscular princes ran towards me.

He brought his axe down powerfully, powerfully but slowly.

I easily dodged out of the way of his strike and lifted my axe upwards, slashing his arm clean off in the process.

The prince screamed and fell to the ground, trying to stop the bleeding.

I turned back to the remaining five, I would finish him off but not yet, our fight was more personal.

The five remaining royals circled me, boxing me in with nowhere to run.

I smiled, I had them right where I wanted them.

As the royals got ever closer to me, I extended my arms out, holding the axes out as far as I could, then I spun in a wide arc.

The royals caught onto this however and jumped backwards. Unfortunately for them, I didn’t need to stay in one place.

While I was still spinning, I ran towards the nearest three royals taking them completely off guard and I cleaved them into tiny bloody pieces.

“503, 504, 505.”

I saw the other two backing away, they would not escape.

I ceased spinning jumped high in the air and threw my axes aiming for their heads.

The Weapons connected and lodged themselves deep into the Royal’s faces, where they remained, covered in the blood of their siblings.

“506, 507.”

I landed back on the ground and gave myself a minute to catch my breath.

I panted heavily as I looked around the red battlefield.

The crowd had quieted, how long they had been silent I did not know, I was too preoccupied with surviving to notice.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw the prince I had spared was limply trying to lift himself to his feet with his unsevered hand. No doubt trying to get his axe.

I walked over to him and kicked him hard in the gut.

I heard a crunch as he wheezed and fell on his side.

“P-please Jira, I don’t want to die!”

“You should have thought of that before you treated me like a common whore!” I spat, kneeling on his windpipe.

I put my whole body weight on his neck, he grabbed at my leg clawing desperately, but it was no use.

\*Snap\*

“508.”

*Good riddance.*

I looked up and saw that all around me, the crowd was silently staring at me with disdain, I looked over to the King and saw that he too looked at me with the wide eyes and open mouth of a man faced with a demon.

I picked up one of the axes from the battlefield.

“508!!”

The crowd looked around and repeated my number in confused murmurs.

“508!” I repeated to the king. “That is how many lives I have taken since you threw me in here, that is how many lives were lost unnecessarily thanks to this damned arena!

“And that’s just from me. Kratan, what is wrong with you, why did you have your own children do this!? Do you really want me dead that badly?!”

Kratan growled, “I DO!”

“THEN FIGHT ME YOURSELF, YOU COWARD!”

Kratan did not respond to me, he simply stared angrily at my hands.

“You are not worthy of that axe!”

I looked down at my hand and sighed. His children were dead and he was talking about a piece of metal. *What nonsensical priorities this one has.*

“THEN, HOW ABOUT I GIVE IT BACK TO YOU!!”

I twisted my arm and threw the golden weapon into the stand towards the King’s head. I watched gleefully as it hurtled towards him.

It was about to hit him when a bright blue light pierced his stand and melted the weapon into nothingness.

I covered my eyes to avoid the light.

After the flash, I heard a soft voice of authority.

“You will not harm my father, your king.

“Worldstain scum!”

I looked up and saw to my surprise that a woman, adorned in the midnight black of the Royal Family was standing in front of the king protecting him. A golden axe was strewn around her waist. Her white hair shone in the sun.

*Shit, I guess I missed one.*

“Selina, I thought one of you was missing, are you too much of a coward to face me too.”

Selina bore daggers into me with her expression, her emerald eyes stared into my soul like a great green flame.

“More like too smart, Jira.

“I knew that you would win and since I am the oldest anyway, I would have gained nothing from killing you!”

“Sure, whatever helps keeps your pride intact, princess,” I responded dismissively.

I was going to say more but before I could the arena’s guards grabbed me from behind and hit me over the head with a spear, knocking me out.

The next thing I knew, I was back inside the hypogeum anxiously awaiting my next match.

I got to my feet and sighed.

“366 days,” I groaned.

Then I made my way over to the kitchens to steal some food.

I had earned it.