



Approval is shown towards the leading stallion with the wild cheers and screams of a spectating crowd. A loud voice narrating each and every move these two horses make over an old speaker tied to a support beam. “That concludes the final round.” The announcer's gruff voice echoed, trapped inside the roughly round metal structure.

A light bay stallion stumbled around in a round corral trying to keep his distance from the other who accompanied him. Both boys battered and bleeding, the grey victor stallion came at the light bay for a final blow. Teeth bared, he stretched his long neck out towards the bay. The bay quickly lunged a short kick towards the greys mouth as a warning but the grey ignored this sign. Wrapping his teeth around the cannon bone of the bay, he tore the skin releasing the muscle and tendons that were once inside. The bay fell to the ground exhausted and unable to stand, ready to accept his death as the grey reared up.

The crowd was filled with different reactions. Some cheered as their pick of the stallions was about to win as others moaned for the loss of theirs.

The stallion's nostrils flared as he slammed his massive body on the top of the bays. That was all it took. With his opponent motionless the grey circled around to the center of the corral where a chestnut mare was tied. Ring Men jumped from the railings that lined the top of the cement corral, landing on the bloody battlefield. Each man with a sharp rod or whip in his hand encouraged the stallion to move back through a small fenced alleyway. The horse, knowing his job, bolted right back through the alleyway to a small square set of panels. Breathing heavily with eyes wide and full of adrenaline, a man climbed on the side of a panel and draped a red velvet sheet over the beaten hide of the grey. The stallion was so tired that he didn't move as the silky sheet touched his wounds.

“We congratulate the owner of this fine horse, Theodore Rachesto, on his victory,”

These words pierced through the roaring crowd.

The grey was pushed back through the alleyway and into the cement round pen once again, welcomed by a roar of applause. The body of the bay stallion still sat on the far side of the arena but the mare had been removed from the structure

and taken elsewhere. The grey walked around, tired and hurting but proud as the red sheet shimmered in the arena lights.

“Once again the Champion wears his color.” the announcer shouted but was barely able to break through the whistles and applause of the spectators. “Speaking of champions,” the gruff voice started again. “Next week we will be welcoming a horse type we rarely see on this side of the country. A horseman with a name not too familiar in the battlefield, but known all over the world for the horses they raise. They will enter one of their very own against our own ‘Casino’. Blind bets will be the rules for this next pairing.”

With these words the satisfied crowd tapered off into the early morning darkness. Casino was coaxed back into a small, wet box where he lived until his next opponent was brought in.

While the sun took its time to rise, the air stayed cold and sharp. The wet ground now iced over and solid. Casino was being fed nothing but a handful of dried grass for his first and possibly only meal of the day. With the grey fed, the ring men began setting aside a place for the new arrival. There were hundreds of rows of panels cemented to a concrete slab with dark concrete walls, creating living quarters for the horses. Few were occupied as the season was coming to an end.

“I say we put him next to the mares, get him a little feisty for the next few events.” One short man mentions walking past Casino and disappearing behind a row of enclosures. “That could be a possibility.” another man followed the short man. The footsteps echoed across the hard floors as the men went to another part of the property. Silence filled the stalling area, nothing but the sound of hooves clacking against the cement was heard as horses paced in their stalls.

While the day went on, more and more people were coming out to work around the stalls. They did not perform maintenance tasks, but they hung posters and signs. This was unusual behavior. The sound of drills and hammers, driving nails into wood, and saw blades running bounced through the stalling area making it hard to pinpoint the humans exact location. The advertisement was nothing but a name. “Bexley Rasinoa - Tonight and Tomorrow.”

The construction was faded by the sound of a rumbling diesel coming up one of the property's roads. Following the truck was an army of civilians wanting to get a glance of who and what was inside.

“BACK IT UP OR WE WILL FIRE!” a man screamed over the muttering of spectators, waving a hand gun above his head.. Other men came to the aid of the gunman, pushing people out of the way allowing a path for the diesel to pass. People tried to see who this Bexely character was as the truck rolled down the slick asphalt guided by dim headlights and the flashlights of the other horsemen. Their attempt to peek in the windows were unsuccessful as the rain drops reflected the flashlights glow making it impossible to see the dark interior.

Fright filled whinnies and knickers loudly flew out of the silver horse trailer as the horse inside was slipping around. The truck and trailer bounced around in the darkness for a good half hour traveling from the stallion quarters to where the mares were held.

‘This good enough for the horse Ma’am?’ rain pounding against the metal trailer. With no answer, the short man un-latched the trailer handles and pulled the light steel doors open. Everyone was excited to see what beauty was awaiting.

The horse was led by a dark green lead attached to a black and gold halter that he wore. The horse everyone awaited to meet was here. Crowds of spectators were pushed back to give the groomsmen of the horse some room to unload. Light graceful stepping hooves walked down a damp ramp, legs long and white with heavy black spotting. Blue eyes were light against the horse's pure black body as it shimmered in the moonlight. His mane a beautiful white and cream color, long and slightly waved as if it was previously braided. His tail also as beautiful in color and length. Unusual points of discoloration were interrupting the pureness of white and cream in his hair. His forelock was black and in his tail, a thin stripe flew down the center like a dorsal stripe, fanning out at the bottom making the ends of his tail also black. Strategically placed markings along his neck were white, a brand, a BLM brand.

Screams of aw filled the air, making this young horse skittish. He was built long and thin but with plenty of horsepower in his bones. Bexley jumped out of the rumbling truck and walked over to her Stud. With a hood over her head, she was escorted by the short man to where her horse was to stay for the night. The groomsmen yanked on the halter as to cue the horse to come. The horse tossed his head in confusion and fright as he was not used to all this attention. This

made the groomsman angry as he lashed at the black beauty with a hand whip. The horse jumped forward and gave in to the man's demand.

Pushing through the crowd, people outreached their arms trying to touch this beast. "Do not touch him or you will be banned from the facilities." Was warned out to the public. Once out of the public, the three people and the horse reached the mare quarters. The stallion did not react to the whinnies and greeting of the mares as he was walked past them. Finding a small stall sitting at the end of a row of stalls, the horse was released here for the night.

"He's a cool one." The short man mentioned breaking the awkward silence while the groomsman unlatched the lead and left the halter on the horse. "Yeah he is a hard breed to come by now a days." The groomsman muttered quietly. "Has it got a name?" Again the short man breaking silence. The groom looked at the short man then at Bexley then back at the ground. "Oh I can't tell you that."

"His name is Void." A woman's smile was seen coming from the black hood as she turned around and headed back down to the crowd where her ride awaited.

==Part 2==

With only a simple day of rest for Void, he was expected to fight this season's 'final hour'. The fight that ends it all until next year. People from all over the country have come out to see this pairing.

"Remember as I said two nights ago, Blind bettings are the rules." A younger man standing at the entryway of the semi round metal structure said. As spectators walked by this man they would say the horse they wished to win, handing the man a lump of cash not even knowing what this horse's history was. "All I know is that if this horse is here to fight Casino, he must have some skills." many people would comment handing the young man paper bills.

While people found their seats, loud music began to play and the light went out. A spotlight landed right in the middle of the muddy arena where a man stood. "Welcome to the final hour. Earlier this day you have watched nothing but a few minor shows, possibly winning some money if you chose the better horse. Ultimately it comes down to this." Bexley jumped into the arena and stood next to this man, Theodore right behind her. "The owner of our very own homegrown stallion, Theodore Rachesto fighting against the champion of the south, Bexley Rasinoa. Good luck to the both of you and may the best be able to take home their contestant." Bexley and Theodore shook hands. "You wont need a trailer by

morning.” Theo snarked under his breath as he released Bexleys hand. “You better hope you're right.” she smiled back as her long black hair bounced behind her while she left the arena.

The lights got slightly brighter as the arena was empty. A small milky buckskin colored arabian filly was walked into the arena from a side gate and tied to one of the iron railings. “Our mare Dixi will be awarded to the owner of the victorious stallion,” the announcer said as to clue in the crowd why a mare was let into the arena.

A halter was wrapped tight against Voids face while he held his head high, fighting the lead rope. The crowd grew restless as five rings men had to escort the horse to the arenas alleyway. The stallion knew what was going to happen when he stepped in that alley, dreading it. With the stallion's stubbornness to move, the ringmen gathered ropes and wrapped them around his flank. As they pulled Void gave into the pressure due to the pinching of his flank.

Void turned his ears back as the squeaking of a rusted gate was slammed behind him. Bexley herself came and unlatched the halter while telling the men to un-rope her horse. She whispered in a soft voice to the frisky stallion. “You don't let that grey win.” her cold hands touched his face for a moment, then she was on her way back to the stands. The ringman poked the stallion in the sides with a metal rod to get him to finish down the alleyway into that mucky arena. As he entered the south side of the arena, the crowd roared. The stallion's bright blue eyes darted every which way trying to find an escape but his efforts were for nothing. Only way out is to win. As he looked around, his eyes landed on a small mare, the mare that was in the neighboring stall next to him earlier that day.

After a moment the crowd began to settle and it quickly became silent. Void stood motionless against the gate, glossing over the thick slop that covered the arenas floor. Void noticed the buckskin filly prancing around on her short lead making the mud deeper as she paced the same course repeatedly. Her movements were memorizing for void, helping calm his nerves. Unaware, Hoofbeats thundered behind him. Void turned around to see the big grey beast running at him. He never heard the gate let Casino in but it was too late. The grey lashed his teeth on Void's neck and the fight began.

Void whipped his neck in desperate efforts to get free from Casino. Loosening the greys grip for no more then a second, Void took his chance and broke free. Without a second of rest, the grey had jumped to his hind legs in a rear. Not knowing what the best counter-move was, Void did the same. Void had

the speed advantage and took the first hit in the air, hitting Casino in the jaw with one of his front legs. This didn't slow the grey down and he returned the blow with a hit to Void's upper chest. The black horse grasped the grey by the neck and dragged him back down to all fours. The crowd could not contain their excitement and screams and shouts could be heard from miles away. The grey took another shot at Void, he turned around quickly but his back leg slipped, causing him to kick out to the side in an awkward position. Void was safe only by a few meters. While the grey was unbalanced, Void jumped up onto Casino and pushed him, sending him into the water that puddled in the mud.

The crowd grew silent for a moment. They have never seen Casino go down this early in a match. Theodore looked at Bexley with a slightly panicked face. Bexley did not take her eyes off the horses but she felt Theodore looking at her. All she did was smirk.

Just as quickly as he fell, Casino got up and was ready to end Void. He pushed Void into the little mare that was forgotten about by the crowd in all this conflict. Void, trying to miss the mare, hit the cement wall and metal rails with his head that was behind her. The crowd oohed and gasped as this was a blow that certainly should have killed a horse. Despite the odds, Void stayed conscious. The horse was blinded in one eye as he had scratched it on the railing. Confusion fogged his mind. Casino kicked Void in the stifle sending him falling to the ground. Before Void could get up, the grey got on top of him and started pounding the black horse with heavy blows from his hooves. Slicing Void's shoulder with shoes, he let out whinnies for help and submission to the dominant stallion.

"Hey! That horse has shoes on! That's illegal!" Bexley jumped out of her seat and yelled at the announcer in an attempt to help her horse as his cries of pain echoed in the metal building. "No, we do things different here. The horses are allowed to have shoes." the announcer mentioned calmly to Bexley. "Yeah kid, welcome to the big show." Theodore laughed.

Void struggled to get up with the greys' heavy body weight still on top of him weighing him down. To Casino's surprise, out of nowhere a small striped hoof came flying through the air landing powerfully on the greys ribcage. The grey lost his balance once again in the slippery mud. The crowd burst into laughter as such a small mare had fallen such a big powerful stallion. Lying in the mud, Void slowly gained balance on his shaky legs. He may be standing but he was in terrible shape. His white mane stained red and matted with mud, his white legs cut to shreds, and his black body full of gashes. Void was able to move a

few steps, limping, before the grey got back up. The grey saw his chance. Casino once again went for the throat and succeeded. The crowd booed with anger and sadness as the little black horse gargled a weak cry of submission. The thought of this one of a kind horse to die was too hard for the crowd as they begged the announcer to end it. The announcer, liking the horse too, called the fight.

“That is not fair!” Theodore screamed. Bexley was silent because this intermission meant her beloved horse might live. “You can take the mare if that's what you're after.” Bexley notioned.

“No, I want the winning horse. This is cheating and you all know it. If you didn't want to lose a special horse then you shouldn't have offered him up to be a contestant.”

‘It's getting too early, if that black horse is still alive by this next night, you will have another chance.’ the announcer put an end to their childish conversation.

Ringsmen jumped into the bloody ring with rods and ropes. Gun fire was made to scare the horses away from each other. The grey knowing what that meant immediately backed off and trotted to the opposite end of the arena. The grey easily went through the ally way back to the exit. Three ringmen each threw a rope around Void's neck. His eyes glazed over in exhaustion. The short man returned, untying Dixie and escorting her away. Void didn't move. The ring men whipped him in effort to get him to move but Void just couldn't.

As the dawn's sun broke the sky, spectators were leaving the stands to claim their bets while others waited to see what was going to happen to the black horse.

Men with whips finally got Void moving with much needed “encouragement”. His aching muscles slowly carried him down the alley. A young man put his black halter on, this time loose on his face. Together they walked the distance to his small stall. He opened the gate and let Void walk himself in. From there he took the horse's halter off and laid it by the stalls door. The horse was Bexley's problem now.

Wasting no time, Void slowly lowered his body down into a lying position. His head drooped and laid flat against the cold concrete floor as his eyes slowly closed. The sound of sniffing echoed in his stall. He opened his good eye to see what was going on. Dixie's nose was stretched out to the top of his stall trying to look over. He closed his eyes again. Shivers rippled through his body while the cold was trapped in the stall. He felt weak, terrified of what was to come this next night.

He caught the scent of his human. He knew she was standing by the stall, her wondering why her horse didn't even try.....