

“Friends! Allies! Ladies and Lords! What this most auspicious night is missing is the very thing which brought us all together to begin with... competition! As such, I am announcing a tournament, one of magical might to test your selves, your training and dedication and to have a chance to dethrone your beloved King!”, you shout, voice magically amplified to the sound of a couple dozen hands clapping or voices cheering. *God, it is good to be the king*, you think to yourself as you lock arms with your Queen to her giggling laughter and conjure up a couple dozen slips of paper to hand out the contestants, nearly every person present in the end, including Helga and Arty.

Raven has drawn up a bracket by the time you and your Lady love have finished, and you are pleasantly surprised you shouldn't be facing the tiny girl next to you anytime soon. On the other hand... it looks like you may in fact have to go through most of your lieutenants. Oh well, might as well remind them why you are the *king*.

In your bracket, you battle through Talon, Amalia, and finally Elend who seems to have maybe held a tiny grudge for the tea incident. Unfortunately, though they fight well, as you expected from the best duelists of the Raiders, your lieutenants simply lacked the training you had gone through. The life or death struggles you had, so one after another you put them down with a combination of skill and sheer bloody determination, though you now lacked Helga's power.

In the other bracket Apollo is, well Apollo. He brought out the “Stupify Laser”, something you hadn't seen since your first battle and just steam rolls people, up until he is matched against his sister. He hesitates and she doesn't so he gets a stunner to the face, though he did have a dumb smile, proud of his twin, as he was *rennervated*.

Arty... It was amazing. You may have made sure to be able to see each of her fights using a bit of kingly privilege with your matches to make sure you could watch her. She could finally fight, cast spells as she was always meant to, and she had trained every bit as hard as you had. Harder, really considering her previous handicap. She most certainly reaffirmed her status as the Hufflepuff Fury as she took out stronger, more experienced witches and wizards one after another.

Speaking of Hufflepuffs... THE Hufflepuff did surprisingly well, clearing her first couple of matches, to hoots of praise, considering she was, as far as most people in the room knew, only introduced to the magical world a few days before and was slinging spells so well. It did take its toll, Arty's old problems cropping up, and by the time she faced her “sister”, Helga just didn't have the strength to continue. She had only been living with Arty's issues for a few days and though she founded the House of the hardworking, Helga simply had not adapted yet. And so after a brief exchange she simply surrendered. None the less, you are positive her performance had won the tiny woman more than a few admirers, given you had to break through a circle of people to pass her a diluted Girding Potion such that she could

continue to enjoy the party with out needing to pass out in a chair for a while. Helga smiled, quaffed it, and directed herself and her new groupies to the nearest tray of snacks, and you couldn't help but grin.

Raven... Raven was a menace. She had been through as much as you had and was far more devious. And more graceful in her dueling than you recall from the many time the pair of you had practiced. She did say she had felt some of Rowena waking... and Godric had been awake enough to take Brighton's voice when he saw the sorting hat. She demolishes her opponents, including Riley which made you very proud of her, until it was only her and Arty left. A final contest to determine who would face the king; your best friend or your Queen. The General of the Raiders vs. the Commander of Sunshine Army.

And it was fabulous, your Kingly privilege granting you a front row seat on your raised dais. Raven was more magically strong, slightly, knew more hexes and curses than any other 6th year you had met, and could be quite mean. Arty had a body she could push to the extreme, training, and pure skill. It was easily the longest match of the night and you watched with baited breath as the two most important women in your life exchanged hexes and stunners, Raven graceful and Arty energetic and pulling off some acrobatics you had never seen using her new body. By the end both were dripping in sweat and at least one person, the mysterious waitress of all people, had caught a stray hex and ended up with a giant pumpkin on her head and needed someone to *finite* the curse.

Ravens supernatural grace had faded and Arty managed to land an *expelliarmus* which didn't stop your best friend who charged in while you small lover was recovering and swatted her wand way after Arty was distracted by a shoe to the face. And that when you knew the match was over. Raven might be taller, larger but Arty... well she was quite familiar with this scene. And so your tiny girlfriend broke the grapple enough to grab Raven at the arm and waist, tossed her over the hip and went in for an arm bar. It only took a couple of seconds for your old friend to tap out then.

You digned to march down, and congratulate both of them, something which got an equal amount of cheers and laughs considering Raven had to search around for where shoe had landed and was blushing terribly. Once she had it back on her foot and was beside you and Arty, you heard her speak.

"Fuck him up, Arty. I don't mind losing if it is to the winner of our "King's" little tournament."

"Of course. Raven... It was fun. No hard feelings?", Arty says softly though there is a megawatt smile plastered across her face.

"No hard feelings. Sorry about the shoe."

“Hahaha! I’ve been through worse.”, Arty says while you hand her a small bottle of undiluted Girding potion as Raven exits into the excited crowd.

“Hey! I don’t need to cheat to kick your butt, mister ‘King!’”

“Wouldn’t dream of something like that. The second half of that bottle is mine. Figured we should give them a good show, my Queen.”

And you are repaid by a soft trilling laugh that reminds you of silver bells and a deep blush as Arty passes the bottle back to you and you feel your tiredness wash away as you gulp down the remainder.

After you had knocked him out in the first round, Talon had taken the roll of announcer with vigor, and now his amplified voice rings out for the final bout of the night.

“Ladies and Lords! The final match, King Hallaster vs. Queen Pertinger! Who could have seen this coming? Not I, Lord Batt! Who will wear the pants in this most auspicious relationship?! Only their wands can tell! Now are you ready, my King, my Queen?”, his voice booms out and even a few of the crowd who were disinterested have gathered around the slightly raised dueling platform and clap.

“Ready.”

“Ready.”

You and your tiny, slightly sweaty queen say in unison, as Talon hops off the platform.

“Begin!”

And Arty proves to be an absolute terror and almost begins to make you regret splitting a Girding Potion with her. *Almost*, except you are having so much fun and seeing her fight like this fills your chest with a distinct, warm feeling. She is tossing out hex after hex, 1-2-3 combos that get more than a few ohhhs and awwws from the crowd. She might be slightly less magically powerful than you, have a couple fewer

spells in her arsenal just by virtue of being younger but it doesn't really matter when she is casting with such speed and ferocity.

Towards the end, both of you adopt a high style, wands above your heads and forgo any chance of defense in favor of speed and precision. Both you and your tiny lover are panting slightly. You know this will be the final exchange; as soon as a glass clinks against another in the mostly silent room, the pair of you begin tossing out spells with a fury. Arty almost gets you with one of your own tricks, a *carpe retractum* to the leg and barely dodges a *langlock* which would have taken her out of the game, until finally...

"Expelliarmus!"

"Expelliarmus!"

And both of your wands go flying and someone cries out about their eye. And in the moment you look over towards the voice, a tiny auburn-haired comet collides with you and takes you to the ground.

However, instead of working to get you in a hold, Arty just laughs and presses her mouth against you own, a move which you return against her. After several seconds of sloppy kissing, you hear Talon step on to the platform, and you and Arty begin to sit up, with her adjusting your crown and you returning the favor.

"Ah... Ladies and Lords! It seems I have no choice- the duel between our King and Queen ends in a draw!", you dark skinned friend calls out to racuose applause, whistles, and shouts, along with a certain waitress collecting quite a few coins from betters. "There you have it! Your King and Queen!", Talon says before exiting the stage as you help your tiny queen up as she does her best impression of a tomato. And everything is right with the world and you and here can just be dumb teens for a bit longer.