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Vertical wooden planks latched together with the dead vines and branches of a dozen or so rose bushes. The dried vines and branches, cracked and splintered in their interwoven paths through the loose and shanty wooden planks, still garnish their razor tipped thorns. Beams of dim light peer through the fissures between the planks of wood. Behind the wooden planks, the rolling thunder sound of a crowd grows in intensity with each passing moment. In front of the wooden planks, a man stands, half-naked except for a loincloth made of dirty and blood stained leather.

The man has broad shoulders, a strong, chiseled out of stone face and is that of a slightly better than average build. His hair, cut short, almost to the scalp. The left side of his face, under the flesh of his cheek and eyebrow, is the fading proof of not too long ago blunt force trauma. Dried blood still encases his left nostril, giving further evidence of unforgotten physical violence. As the roar of the crowd behind the wooden planks grows, the man's breathing picks up in pace, inflating and deflating his chest at an increasing rate. Suddenly, the wooden planks slide to one side, causing a dim, soft orange light to blanket the man as he takes a couple of steps forward.

The man steps into a pit, maybe thirty feet in diameter. The six foot high walls of the pit are made of off white, cracked plaster, chipped away in some areas, exposing the walls wooden skeleton. The floor of the pit, a loose sand and gravel mixture. Along the walls, every several feet or so, torches burn bright, illuminating the interior of the pit as well as the hundreds that make up the enthusiastic crowd the surrounds the entire perimeter of the pit.

From behind the man, the wooden planks slide back to their original position, cutting the man off from the tunnel in which he just walked out from. The man peers over his left shoulder and looks at the now closed exit. Inhaling deeply, the man turns his attention from the wooden planks to the crowd and looks it over in an analytical fashion. From in front of the man, across the length of the pit, another set of wooden planks slide open. The man refocuses his attention, taking it away from the crowd, putting it to the new entrance into the pit, tilting his head slightly forward as he waits to see what comes out.

“This is not who I am...”

From a raspy and crackling speaker somewhere in the crowd, a voice can be heard. “It is our great honor to bring you, from the depths of the unknown, from the place where fears are born... Temerarious!” The crowd erupts into a deafening roar as Temerarious steps out into the pit from the tunnel that just opened. Temerarious is a monster of a man. Standing well over six feet, every square inch of Temerarious seems to be cast of iron, for every square inch is bristling with defined muscle. He, too, is half naked except for a loincloth and metallic glove covering his right hand. As the crowd roars, Temerarious grins across the pit and raises his right hand chin-level, gripping it with his left hand at the wrist, making it a point to show the metallic glove.

From the same raspy speaker, the voice continues, “... And his challenger, a newcomer among our ranks... And one who has yet earned a name in our beloved bouts.” The crowd explodes with boo's and name calling. The voice continues, “... Without further ado, we all know the only rule that matters... All bouts are to the death!...” The crowd ruptures into a frenzy of excitement and anticipation. “Let the bout... BEGIN!” Temerarious flails his arms to his sides as he looks up and lets out a terrifying scream, boosting is adrenaline. Temerarious lowers his head and looks at his opponent with a deathly glare to his stare. With a sadistic smirk, Temerarious begins to charge the man in a fast sprint. The man swallows hard as he braces himself for battle.

“This is not who I am...”

Temerarious, still in full sprint, throws a wild right hand, causing the man to duck. In one quick motion, Temerarious plows his right knee into his opponent, causing the man to stumble backwards from the blow.

Without hesitation, Temerarious plants his right foot into the man's chest, causing the man to fly backwards and to land on the flat of his back in the soft sand. The crowd erupts into another explosion of cheering as Temerarious raises his arms, playing to the crowd. Coughing, trying to catch his breath, the man clinches his chest and rolls to his left side before struggling to get on his hands and knees. Temerarious, seizing the moment, lets out a roar as he, with exceptional force, kicks his kneeling opposition in the face, causing the man's eyes to roll with disorientation as he, again, lands on the flat of his back with a harder thud than the first time.

Temerarious releases the same sadistic grin as when he first entered the pit as he grabs his challenger by the ankles and with little effort, spins in a 180 degree spin, hurling the man through the air, causing the man to hit the sand floor hard with a couple of bounces and few uncontrollable rotations. Again, Temerarious plays to the crowd by raising he arms. His opponent shakes his head, trying to clear it from the incoherent fuzz the consumes it. Blinking rapidly, trying to get his bearings, the man rolls over and staggers to his feet. Temerarious, like a tiger attacking his pray, once again is upon his opponent, grabbing his opposition by the throat and with several running steps, slams him into the plaster covered walls, causing another large crack to appear in the horribly constructed walls.

Grasping at Temerarious' hands, the man's feet flail about as he struggles to catch his breath. Temerarious, leaning in, screams into the man's face, displaying the cracked and jagged, yellow teeth of his mouth before, repeatedly slamming his left fist into his opponent's face. After several hard lefts land, Temerarious releases his hold on the man's throat and with the help of the wall behind him, the man lands on his feet. Temerarious, again, plays to the crowd, turning his back to his opponent. After a few seconds of placating the crowd, Temerarious spins around, landing his right, metallic covered fist into the left side of his opponent's face, causing the man to stand erect as a wave of blood sprays the wall behind him before he falls to both knees and finally, landing face first into the soft sand of the pit's floor.

The man, with a trail of blood clumping in the sand around his head, begins to lose consciousness as the sounds of the crowd begin to fade and as his vision is overtaken by a bright white flash.

To Be Continued.

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