“I’d rather eat a dead rat” Shadrik thought to himself, groaning, as he stood in the line for free sandwiches, trudging slowly across floortiles colored in a sickly orange. Even while complaining, his stomach was really not having it. Shadrik could not eat out of a dumpster again for the third day in a row; so here he was, at a university cafeteria going to a free course by a cryptoguru to leech of the free food. It was just… He hadn’t thought they would be eating something worse than shit today. He tried to hold himself from tearing his ruff black hair out from his head as he trudged forward in the line. But even has he complained, he was not one to deny himself leeching of free food. He wanted to sneak away with an extra sandwich, but has he did not have any functioning pockets in his pants or jacket. He would need to hide it in a much more…personal space… That was a death sentence for his remaining pride. He didn’t have a lot left.

Deep in thought, light reflecting off his glasses through the cathedral sized windows, shining light into the vast space of the cafeteria -- filled with cryptobros who also were attending this course --, he did not manage to notice the large burly man behind in the line huffing forward and pushing people in line away as he pleased, making many fall over and smash their dorky meta-glasses on the floor. He personally picked one up off the ground – which hadn’t been broken when the cryptobro fell on the ground – and crushed it in his hand. This big burly man -- named Kepelnoff – did not even spare the dork a glance as he continued towards the front of the line where Shadrik stood.

As Shadrik finally made it to the front where they dealt out sandwiches, a old lunch-lad stood behind the counter (Name for a man in the position of a lunch-lady), with a smile that could barely be seen from under his bushy moustace, the lunch-lad said “Here you go sonny, this done be the last one we have for today, so count your luck with it” Shadrik got a bit mesmerized with the smile, thinking to himself “When was the last time I saw such a smile filled with only kindness?”. In his state of deep thought he did not sense the big burly man which pushed him away from the table with the last sandwich. Shadrik stumbled and began to fall as the force threw him off balance. He was astounded, not only that he was caught off-guard, but also that even with his well defined physique capable of stopping a car (atleast) was brushed away as if it was nothing to this burly man. As he began to fall, it was like the world moved in slow motion. He locked eyes with Kepellnoff and invoked his presence. All the whitebalance of the room became akin alike to titanium, a cold misty blue. It became cold, but then another presence was Invoked.

The visage of the large cafeteria disappeared, the people in line vanished, only Kepelnoff remained as he invoked his presence and opened the gates of his domain; throwing both their souls into a Anima-Duel. Shadrik was shocked? Horrified? Both really. Torches lining a circular wooden hall, shining orange light onto the red brick floor of a circular stone arena. Shadrin – now 20 feet away from the large burly man. Kepelnoff – as he was

called by many -- was wearing no clothes but a circular jungle hat and jeans held up with straps going around his shoulders. Kepellnoff turned his moustache as he laughed, he then spoke in his deep voice towards the small, ragged figure laying before him; that figure being Shadrin.

Do you know, boy? That when an older man wants to in line for free sandwiches before you, then it is your duty as a small snotling to step aside for those like me? » Kepellnoff smiled, but it was not a friendly smile in any way. Shadrin slowly raised himself off the ground, dusting off his black jeans and equally black jean jacket he looked towards the old midlife crisis of a man standing before him. He replied. The sarcasm was oozing off his voice. He tightened his headband so it would not fall off, just in case.

«First of, my name is Shadrin. And secondly; seriously? All this because you want the last free sandwich. Are you stupid or r did the last sandwich you ate change your chemical brain structure to make you this stupid? », but in his head, he was quickly taking in information and planning his next move «Damnation, why did this man need to be an invoker. This is just my luck, but it's the little things in life you need to look at, because this man looks like he lacks the smarts other invokers have. First off, his domain seems to be one of the logos kind, a domain dependent upon a specific rule, but also it seems to lack any form of aptum or kairos, so there are no weird conditions at least. What is weird is I get the feeling of Patos as well. I hope I am wrong, but this domain may be that weird variant where it has two types built into. So, it may very well carry logos with a passive effect instead, troublesome to say the least. I think I should wait to see what he does before doing anything else. »

Either Kepellnoff was really that stupid, or he really didn't care to listen, because he answered only the first part of the sentence like an average reddit commentor «I do not care for your name brat! You will die here for your sin. » The big man then began crying aggressively, tears streaming like rivers and snot bawling out his nose like long ropes «My precious sandwiches! They are so delectable and simple, they are so cheap and wet! There is nothing more heavenly nor better than a free sandwich with cheese, pork and cucumbers! Do you not see truth! Or is your wisdom as thin as your stature! I cannot help but cry for your insolence…» The audience of the arena -- hazy figures of people sitting in the seats above them – wept at keppellnoff's human sorrow for sandwiches.

Repulsed by the sudden outburst, Shadrin took a step back, but kepelnoff moved, «Fast-» Shadrik thought to himself as he was decked square in the face by a large man crying

rivers. Kepellnoff regained himself as he rubbed his fist, now stained with blood. «The rule of this arena is simple; you will come to learn child». The audience cheered with the violence that erupted. Shadrik did not even get to raise himself off the ground before he was lifted into the air and decked in the stomach. Kepellnoff, who had raised him into the air then let go of the arm he had lifted Shadrik by and decked him back into the ground by slamming his head downward into the ground. Shadrik could feel blood pouring out of his nose and mouth. It was a struggle to breathe, like being stabbed in the stomach each time he tried. His white T-shirt was stained red. His arm had been utterly broken by the violence. This was due course between a battle of invokers; he had become used to these kinds of painful things. But it was peculiar. «I know this pain well, but why does it hurt so much more? It must be logos of this arena» He could not raise himself off the ground. It felt impossible to stand up as he had been beat down, like more weight was put on him the more he was losing.

He was repeatedly beat up. Thrown into walls, being beat up and down into the ground, and repeatedly being hit in the face and stomach. He could not feel energy the energy to keep going, and as he was held up from the ground, being chocked in the air by the big musclebound form of Kepelnoff, grasping desperately for air, the big man talked again; Having been silent while beating him up. «Do you understand now child. The consequences of standing in the way of what others want, to be a nuisance that only impedes those with a goal in life. » but the boy was silent. He had been beat up and down, near death's door for the stupid ideology of an enemy invoker's belief. Tired and beat he stopped trying to breathe, but kepelnoff was confused, since Shadrik did not seem sad or broken, no, quite contrary.

Shadrin smiled a wicked grin.

He understood it now, the rule, he had an idea when he felt powerless to raise himself off the ground, but he had gained a greater understanding now. He had gathered the hints. The pain of each blow was more painful than usual, he could not force himself to move or attack against this greater enemy, the arena was a colosseum with an audience that cheered as he was beat down, and kepelnoffs unusual actions before beginning to fight. It all clicked into place. The patos was the audience, the core of this domain. And the logos, the rule that kept this place working was simple. It was all a game, a play where they both had roles. And the master of this domain would know best how to win in a debate where he could force his opponent into a disadvantageous role. Right now, Kepelnoff was playing the tragic hero who needed to defeat an opponent to continue his quest. It was quite a cruel logos, for it forced the opponent to play the role, heightening

pain to simulate reality, forcing him to be unable to resist the opponent, and best of all demoralizing him as the hero was cheered by the audience. Right now, he was seen by them as nothing more than a temporary villain before the boss. He had read enough shonen to see where this was going.

But this situation was in truth an advantage to him. Any invoker who was not cunning enough to turn the table of any situation could go die, and he was not like them, for he had a small magic item which was perfect for this scenario. The headband he had been wearing was a magic item named «Pugilist's headband», and it held a small enchantment which was not extremely powerful, but it followed the setting of this domain, causing it to be strengthened. Now it would give him exactly what he needed, the ability to become an underdog. And as he understood this, he smiled widely. But now he needed just to do something to change the roles and flow of the story he was forced into by the logos of the domain. With the last breath of air, he proclaimed his role to the domain with a raspy breath and a vain laugh.

«That's all you got? » and spit in the face of Kepelnoff. Feeling a surge of power overcoming him and the grip of the chokehold loosening, Shadrik grabbed the forearm of Kepelnoff with both hands swung his foot in the air and slammed it down into Kepelnoff's elbow like an axe, breaking it. As his feat hit the ground and kepelnoff was hunched towards the ground screaming in pain, he moved fast and with precision hit the large man square in the balls. Kepelnoff was pushed far away in the arena, but managed to stab his hand into the ground, arresting his movement and ripping bricks up from the ground, the crimson hue of the rubble making it look like an explosion of blood. The story had now turned away from the favor of Kepelnoff. It was now the underdog against a fearsome opponent. The audience cheered with the escalation of the stakes. Shadrik, fully in character, spit blood out his mouth, a tooth being shot out with it. It was a bit weird as none of his titanium teeth had been broken, but it was the suspension of disbelief that the setting required, so he just stayed in character and smiled towards his opponent. «Common then big guy! Let’s dance! »

A fearsome fight began. Blood spilled on the floor from both sides now. Broken bones and so many gallons of blood that any ordinary man should have already died of blood loss. It was horrific, and even as Shadrik knew that he would not be able to fight forever, he smiled. In the heat of battle and carnage of a real fight, he forgot himself and let loose everything. He transmuted his hands into deadly weapons of many kinds. Swords, hammers, whips of mercury-like metal. He stabbed and slashed, whipped and nae-

naed, but his enemy was just as brutal. Throwing sand in eyes, going for weak points, faking a truce and breaking it. It did not matter how long or how brutal the battle was to Shadrik, because he felt alive. He would never get tired of living this life, and wished that if he died, may he live it all again.

In a decisive moment, Shadrik managed to evade a forward punch from Kepelnoff, ducking under it. He then grabbed the underside of kepelnoff's remaining arm, and with perfect precision turned his leg like battering ram and shot it forward into the abdomen of his foe. His leg -- now a titanium battering ram – made him unstable and exposed to an attack. But it was no matter, as kepelnoff had been hit with the force of a car moving at roughly 50 km/h. Kepelnoff was slammed of his feet and shot into the wall of the opposite side of the arena: laying flat on the ground. Shadrik's leg shimmered and turned back into its usual form. Both opponents were still unharmed after the exchange of brutality, which was another expected quirk of the domain's setting. Shadrik needed to think fast now « I need to follow the flow of the story and stay in character if I want to win. I do not know how this plot may escalate if I do not adhere to my character. » He walked forward towards Kepelnoff, slowly and methodically. His footsteps echoed through the circular chamber. «I cannot think of what will happen if I break character. There is no way to know. What would the next part of the story need, how do I perform the ending act? This is one of the hardest battles I have fought to this date I think. It is truly the worst part of fighting an invoker» He spit blood and teeth out of his mouth as he walked forward for dramatic effect. The audience was silent in suspension. «No matter what I cannot break character, surely it will lead to my downfall» He now stood above Kepelnoff. «But where's the fun in that? » Shadrik smiled.

«Stand up». Kepelnoff could barely stand and in pain his powerful voice resounded as he slowly raised himself off the ground «Insolent child. » he managed to raise himself to one knee «Who do you think you are, talking to your superior li-» a loud crack resounded through the hall as Shadrik slammed a titanium coated foot onto Kepelnoff's head, his steel boot leaving a mark on the head of the old man. «I said…Stand up! » No longer was Shadrik the underdog. On the contrary. Now he was playing the hero who, after tribulations and pain, is performing acts of wrath upon his most hated enemy. The audience was silent as a classroom after someone said an extremely awkward joke. The suspense was killing many of them; not in a metaphorical sense. The domain was crumbling slowly. Shadrik needed to push Kepelnoff farther to the brink. Now he would either kill him, or the domain would collapse, bringing them back to the cafeteria again. Kepelnoff hadn't moved yet, so Shadrik with spit blood on him. His eyes were heavy from the blood that soaked his hair, the headband was oozing with power, and slowly it was transforming under the effects of the story. It was at the final stage of its innate story. As

Shadrik put his boot on the head of the large man, ready to crush it, his headband began to glow and Shadrik experienced a flashback of a live he never lived.

He was a small boy, being beaten to a pulp by a young man. A famous pit fighter named Kepelnoff. The ground of the floor in the changing room was filled with blood. They had been friends once, one could say brothers. Yet something changed in Kepelnoff as he got more famous and powerful. The kind young man helping old ladies began to abuse old ladies. Now instead of helping old ladies cross the road because of reckless drivers. He had become the reckless driver that trapped kind old ladies on the other sides of roads. Instead of buying a kid ice cream which had fallen on the ground, instead it was he who caused it to fall in the first place,; to the dismay of children around the world. It was that day in the locker room after they lost a smalltown tournament of ultimate frisbee, when Kepelnoff had begun to yell and slander him. That it was his fault they lost, that he could have jumped higher, been faster, been less greedy. When he in futility tried to make his friend, his brother, understand that it was his own fault for being greedy on the field, for not looking for his teammates, and throwing horrible shots to them because he wanted to look cool for the girl, he was decked square in the face, much like today. That same powerlessness he felt at the start of the match, just like that day.

He was beat up by his brother, his head slammed into the showers, causing water to shower everywhere, and he bled as his face was horribly disfigured by the frisbee enthusiast which he called his brother. Kepelnoff, with his heavy steel boots, stood above Shadrik in the showers of the changing room, having beat him senseless. He stood above his once best friend and brother in all trials and tribulations, his heavy steel boot resting on the head of Shadrik. The only word among the horrifying silence «Stand up…» the sound of water falling on bloody tiles like rain.

As Shadrik now stood in the same position, the flashback ended. An interesting escalation. He could now fulfill the story in a circle. But he had a better idea, something much more fun. The audience was silent, some hoping for carnage and death, some hoped the pesky underdog would be defeated, and some believed in a happy ending. They were all silent in tension. The domain was on its death throes. Shadrik had made it to the final act, and now he would decide the ending.

The silence became even stronger and more devastating as Shadrik took his boot off of the head of Kepelnoff and then, in what could only be described as the most shocking and magnificent plot twist – which only a hack of an author could come up with – he

knelt down to his brother and reached out his hand to kepelnoff. Even if that flashback was only a fabrication of the domain, kepelnoff would surely have seen it as well. Shadrik then said to Kepelnoff «What you did to me after that frisbee tournament all those years ago. It is not something anyone can forgive. You betrayed me and made me fall into despair as I looked into your eyes, and knew that no longes was my brother alive. I remember everything we have been through. This headband was given to me by you as a good luck charm for my first match as a 5th grader (Lies, it was sewn by his grandmother to him, but in this story, what he said in the moment became true, so really it didn't matter), and it was because of this gift I won said tournament. I- you… brother… I… » Shadrik was in a struggle to come up with anything as he talked, improvising was hard, and it was much easier when he was a GM for a ttrpg than when he was fighting an invoker. Tears began running down the eyes of Shadrik as his hand – still held out to his brother – was trembling. «Brother… even if no other man could forgive you… I-…I do! I forgive you! Even if no-one else in this world could forgive you, I would need to be dead for there to be none that would. So please brother. Let us be friends again, I miss those late nights, talking about random nothings, playing Mario Kart and D&D together for hours with our friends. I miss hanging out with you and playing ultimate frisbee (Shadrik had no idea what ultimate frisbee was). W-…What I'm trying to say… What I want to-…. I-… I forgive you brother, for.. that day, and any-… any other! I forgive you! For everything!…! He went silent for dramatic effect. He had the audience at the edge of their seat as he continued "Can-… Can we be friends again? » Shadrik's hand was trembling. He felt proud inside himself in the moment and astounded that he managed to act out such emotion in this moment, after all, he still felt pained from his wounds. But Shadrik's mind was focused more on what was in front of him than the unnecessary feelings inside him. It was now the antagonist's turn to act.

From the perspective of Kepelnoff. His domain, a fearsome ability ingrained in his presence of logos – aka [The Hand] – had the power of forcing the participants to follow a storyline based on who acted like they were most like the main character. This storyline would cause anyone deemed as the antagonist to tragically lose at the end as the hero would reign supreme. It was the exclamation of Kepelnoff's soul. His will and belief in that anyone who stood in his way was better off dead. The domain had been thwarted. Kepelnoff was not knocked unconscious, but slowly he could feel himself chocking on his own blood…yet…He could not move a single muscle. The presence of his opponent…It was far greater than he had ever imagined. This scrawny young man carried the presence of someone who truly saw himself as above all other people. He was stronger, he was smarter. In every way, Kepelnoff's opponent was better. It was this seed of doubt that crept into his mind as he fought, a seed that bloomed into his tragedy. It was in a decisive moment, when he let his guard down -- or maybe it was when his will faltered before that, or maybe even before that, when he thought to himself as lesser to

this child – he was struck with a leg formed into a battering ram, flying across the arena and crashing into the wall. His will was crumbling slowly, he knew now what it felt like – the thing all invokers talked about – the feeling of fate catching up to your hubris, to see someone with the stronger will, the more honed presence, the better argument for their doxa. His ribs had shattered; it may have become dust even. He would die in his own domain if he did not finish this battle, but he couldn't stand up. When his death approached him slowly, boots of titanium resounding his requiem, he could only think how pathetic this was. Because of those delectable sandwiches he had now fallen to the level of dying in his own domain, drowning in the blood of his argument. It was all crumbling slowly. Horrible pain. “Stand up”. He could hear the voice of the puny boy. For a second, something in his soul regained its flame. «Insolent child. » something in him was slowly restoring itself, was it pride? «Who do you think you are, talking to your superior li-»... It was quenched... Like rain seeing a candle dare to light up the darkness of a storm. The candle dared not be lit up again. He wanted to persist, a desperate longing... Futile efforts were seldom rewarded in this world. As he felt a cold boot of metal plant itself on his head he heard a cold voice resound through the arena. It was like the unfeeling selfishness of steel, cold and sharp. “Stand up...”

He then remembered a life he could not remember. Many years ago, before the domain. He was young. He was impulsive. He was strong. Victory after victory. He proved himself repeatedly on the battlefield of various sports. Arena combat, tactical warfare, and the most important to him personally, ultimate frisbee (He had never heard of such a sport). He loved this game to the death, and as he won repeatedly, he could see himself disappearing beyond the horizon. His old self was slowly vanishing like a boat coasting toward the setting sun. With each victory he grew more fearsome, he dominated this game with an iron fist. It was that fateful day. He had a small break after getting to the qualifiers for the world cup. It was a smalltown tournament. He did not think it would matter here if he won or lost. But that fateful day set the course for the rest of his life. Cold water rushing blood down the drain, a fist coated in crimson, a light dancing in his eyes like pretty little flames. His brother laying before him. In his heart, he could feel something die. The last piece of himself vanished to the voracious gluttony of his pride and ego. Freeing, but some things are better not being free from to stay human. Such wrath for a small game, he did not believe that it was because of the game – even if it may have been the reason – but he wanted to tell himself the days afterwards that it was to keep his brother away from following this cursed path, then as years passed it turned into that it was the best for his brother. As he climbed higher in fame, that caring turned into anger, and the belief that he only did what was right turned into “He deserved it”. It was his voice, he saw through his perspective. He was sitting in a luxurious chair in the darkness of a fine apartment. Two people sitting farther away from him on a nice sofa. He lit a cigarette, it was one of the only lights in the room, illuminating his visage in a

room that smelled of weed and tobacco. Another light quickly turned on and off, a small lighter with stickers of cute characters. A hunched figure was trying to light a bong on fire with it, the bong was made of glass. “It was all his fault you ‘know, he deserved it. The tournament I mean” Kepelnoff continued “He was the reason we lost, so he had to go. Its simple math.” another figure on the sofa, sitting beside the one with the bong. “What? What are you talking about?” the figure replied. Kepelnoff just continued “don't think about it. Now I want to talk about this deal with the arena” The flashback ended. His head was pressed to the floor by a tyrannical boot, much like his own. Ironic… He accepted his fate and closed his eyes, hoping it would not be painful.

But what he heard… it was not the crunch of his skull and splattering of brain matter. It was an apology, or maybe more like a request for peace, for reconciliation… It was weird and wondrous to have a feeling of a fake life. He was fully knowledgeable of his domain and its rules, but he had never lost in it, so this was an entirely new experience. Something extraordinary. There was something in him. It felt like sorrow and happiness in a wondrous and horrifying marriage of existence. It was an emotion that said that he was angry, wrathful that he lost, yet something in him that yearned for this reconciliation, something which longed to be friends again with his brother. The unrelenting wish to be forgiven for his sins against his brother. He had become the antagonist, and he knew that his life would be short if he didn't make the right choice. He wanted to refuse, his entire being and what remained of his will and ego wished nothing more than to win. But a vase that had been broken could never be built into the same thing, it would always become something new. He was now the antagonist, and now the one he considered as an enemy had given him the choice of his own ending. It was unheard of for an invoker to let choice be given, to have their will be impeded by the choice of another, and yet this one did what any other would never even think of. He showed mercy to his enemy. A storm of emotion, the mind of Kepelnoff was much too small to understand this. But in his heart he had always wished for a friend, and outside of the roles his domain had given them, this invoker was giving him not only mercy, but a wish to become allies in some way, not a companion of any kind, but someone he could trust in this world to not kill him if given the chance. And allies were rare to find in this world.

Kepelnoff looked up at the hand trembling before him, he could see the kid hiding his face, but the drops of tears were obvious. Then Kepelnoff, through all the blood in his mouth, began to speak “For years I thought back to that fateful day. I lied to myself. First it was to keep you safe, that it was for the best. I became twisted in self-loathing, one could even say it was self-love twisted in a horrific fashion by greed and power. I believed that what I did was what you needed, turning it into that you deserved it. I lied and lied to

myself every day of my life. But each day I lied to myself, I also wished that I could go back and change what I did. That I could do anything to be forgiven. Deep inside I wished nothing more than to be friends again. I thought it impossible, yet here you stand, reaching out your arm to give me something I have never deserved. Friendship is a powerful thing you know. It is something one needs to understand the value of too deeply appreciate. So, I ask you…Shadrik, do you truly wish to be friends with me, or is it only for yourself?

The invoker Infront of him answered. His tears had subsided, yet his voice carried a peculiar emotion… Was it happiness? Kepelnoff could not tell. “I am not asking you out of pity. You are a pity excuse of a person the way you treated me, yet I know you have learned and can change. Nobody is locked in their ways; there is always a way back to light. There will always exist forgiveness for those that ask. Let us be friends Kepelnoff. And as Shadrik said that Kepelnoff smiled. And as Kepelnoff grasped the hand of Shadrik and was raised up from the ground, his domain collapsed. Their wounds disappeared as if they had never been there. Their souls healed and they were again standing in the large cafeteria looking at the disk with the last remaining free sandwich. Shadrik who had previously been pushed to the ground before the domain opened fell on the ground again, but this time he did not fall on the ground, rather his hand had been grasped by Kepelnoff who stopped him from falling “Sorry for that…Wanna share that sandwich then instead?” Shadrik managed to stabilize himself again on his feet “Yeah” he was visibly happy. Mostly because of the clothes. His bandana was now in his pockets again. “Wanna sit and chat then?” Shadrik continued “Still 30 minutes till the crypto course is continuing” Kepelnoff looked at him with a bit of surprise that mellowed out “Yeah. Sorry bout pushing you” Shadrik smiled “No worries, nobody died so its fine. As they walked towards a table and talked for a bit about crypto and stocks, kepelnoff made a peculiar grimace. «Also. What was this D&D you mentioned earlier? »