

I wake in a strange place.

It has pillars made of marble and a floor as black as space.. It has what must be millions of engravings on a wall that appears to be made of crystal. It has an open ceiling, so I can see the millions of shining stars in the night sky. On the far side of the room I see a small pool of water. I don't know where I am or how I got here. I go to inspect the pool of water, because I am thirsty and need something to drink. Though as I get closer and closer to the water, It starts to look a dark red, like blood. I decide it might not be the best idea to drink it. "Where am I?" I think aloud to myself. I look around for an exit, but there doesn't seem to be one. Than I see something bright, a small rectangle that looks like gold appears on one of the walls. I go towards it and I see it's a sign. It says "*Hello, competitor from the nation of Earth, you are probably wondering where you are. It doesn't matter, because you will be dead in a matter of hours.*"

Before I could remark how incredibly strange this was, a loud "BOOM" came from behind me. I turned around, and saw a giant stone thing. It looked like it had some sort of face carved into it. Along with carvings similar to the ones on the walls around me. It was a bright green color, but faded. It was humming. I had a seriously bad feeling about this thing, whatever it was. I backed up from it, trying to get as far away as possible. As soon as I got to the other side of the room. A fist the size of a steamroller punched through the rock, sending debris everywhere. Than the rest of the rock was blasted into rubble by a thing made of the same material as the rock it punched through. It was humanoid, but it's face and features look like they were carved on. It looked at me, and I could tell that it wasn't going to want to be my friend. "Careful..." I whispered to myself. "No sudden moves..." I inched my way around the room, trying not to provoke the giant rock creature. Than "SPLOOSH" I accidentally step into the pool of mysterious liquid, wetting my shoe. The giant makes an outraged face and comes charging towards me. I jump to the side to avoid the giant. It crashes into the wall with a extremely loud "PKOOSH". Bits of debris go flying everywhere. When I see the giant through all the dust, Half of his face is gone and most of his body is chipped or cracked. He comes flying towards me again but slower this time. I decide to play weak, as if I have been hurt somehow. It works. The giant is encouraged and speeds up, thinking he has an easy prey. But at the last moment I dive to the side again and the giant made of stone crashes into the wall once more, wailing in pain. More bits of debris fall off. I figure that one more hit would bring the giant down. But he appears to have learned from his two previous mistakes. Because he comes towards me walking leisurely instead of running full speed. I have absolutely no idea what to do now. Than BAM the pain hits me. A sharp pain in my foot

that seems to be eating away at my flesh. I look down at my shoe and it's smoking. Quickly I try to take it off while running away from the rocky beast. Then I realize, the pool of mysterious liquid, it must be some sort of corrosive material. I could lure the giant into the acidic liquid and disintegrate it. So I decide I'll have to taunt it to make sure it starts running towards me again, instead of ambling slowly around, waiting patiently for me to tire out. "Hey! Rust for brains!" I yell at the giant, "I bet you couldn't catch a sloth!" It wasn't a great insult, but it seemed to do what I hoped. The giant screamed in fury and started racing towards me. I run towards the pool of corrosive liquid and dive to the side. The giant falls straight into the pool. Splashing the stuff everywhere getting quite a bit on my clothes. "ARRRGG!" The giant yells, slowly dissolving in the acid. It gives me a look of pure hatred and I know what he's trying to tell me. "*I'll be back*". I fall to the ground and groan.

A flash of light reveals another sign. I crawl towards it, knowing that I'm probably badly injured from the corrosive material I stepped in. I read it. "*Congratulations competitor, you have defeated the giant of stone. In doing so, you have completed the first out of three tasks in order to keep your race alive. You get a one hour intermission a weapon of your choice and healing before you compete in the second task. Choose wisely.*" The pain in my foot disappears, so that must've been healed. Then a piece of parchment and a quill and ink appear at my side. "I guess I'm supposed to write down my weapon of choice on this." I think aloud, "What should I choose?" I think for a moment about what I should use for a weapon when I finally come to a decision. I write down *sythe*. For a moment nothing happens, then in front of me there's a flash of light and a sabre appears. Its blade is made of some material that looks like a combination of diamonds and iron. The handle is wrapped in soft leather. I pick it up and find that it is perfectly balanced. I twirl it around once or twice and am positive I made the right choice. I hear a "DONG" of a bell and figure it has been an hour. A doorway opens up and I see a long corridor. At the end of it I see a faint light. My curiosity gets the better of me and I walk through the corridor. The hall appears to be modern, with windows and support beams. But there's something ominous about it all. Just being in it sends shivers down your spine. Out the windows there is nothing but blackness. It's dimly lit, and it's trouble just waiting to happen. I lift my sword up a bit higher, ready to slice anything that I come across in half. Then I come across a part with two hallways, There is no path that goes straight, the light must've been an illusion. I choose the hallway to the right. I walk for about five minutes. The hall slowly turning from a modern hallway to a corridor made of cobblestone, with torches illuminating the hall. I see no other passageways, it's a dead end. "BOOM" I turn around and see the hall going back is gone, blocked by a wall that appears to have come out of the ceiling. I'm

trapped. I look around for some sort of escape and see none. I hit my sword against the wall, and then I'm falling.

“AAAAAAAAAAGGGGGGHHHHHH!” I scream while falling. I'm going much too fast to notice any of my surroundings. There is a loud “POOSH” as I drop onto a giant pile of hay. I groan, my back aching when I notice my surroundings. There is sunlight, actual sunlight. I see a bunch of dairy cows and a farmhouse in the distance. I cheer with joy because I think I actually managed to escape the terrible place I was in. I jump off the pile of hay, grab my sword and run towards the farmhouse. But I slam into a wall instead. I fall down, my face aching along with my back. I get up and notice that the color is more faded than I thought, Nothing is moving. *“It's a painting”* I think to myself. I groan, I thought I was so close to escaping this place of horrors. Though I can't help but admire the handiwork of whoever created the painting. *“So realistic.”* I say to myself. *“I'm so tired, it must've been my imagination and the realisticness of the painting that fooled me.”* *“MOO!”* I jump, startled. I turn around and I see a... Cow. But this one isn't necessarily normal, It was grey, with bright yellow eyes. It has horns, like a mooses, but they look like they're made of some sort of metal. Oh, and it was the size of a school classroom. It doesn't seem to notice me. I decide to call it Gus. I walk in a circle around him and find another corridor similar to the one above me along with a dozen more cow like Gus. *“Hey big fella, I'm gonna call you Gus.”* I say to him. It draws his attention. His eyes narrow, and I prepare for a repeat of the stone giant attack, when instead of attacking me, he gently nudges me with his snout affectionately. I look up into his eyes and see that this guy kinda likes me. And then his eyes turn from the bright yellow to a dark red. *“Uh Oh.”* I say to myself. It looked like something out of transformers. Gus was changing and morphing with gears turning and things powering on while there was a deep whirring noise. When he stopped he was a robot minotaur thing with the same moose antlers and grey skin. Giant of course. *“At least he isn't armed”*. I try to think positively to myself. Than he smashed the wall and revealed a hidden compartment holding a double bladed axe with a blade the size of a kitchen table. *“Crap.”* He hefted the axe out of the comptrment and threw it at me with deadly accuracy. I dropped to the ground and the axe came an inch from my head. I hear more whirring and see all the 12 other cows morphing into mechanical minotaurs. Each smash a hand into the wall or the floor and bring out a different weapons, a sledgehammer, a bow and arrows, a mace. Then they all look at me. *“Could my luck be any worse?”* I think. Than they all come running at me. I scream and run down the corridor being chased by robot man-bulls, absolutely terrified, there is no possible way my sword is going to do anything to those monstrosities. I run for what must be a $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile and I know I'm not going to be able to run away from these things much longer. I notice the corridor narrowing starting to become

more like a school hallway, the floor turning to tile and posters with cheesy sayings appearing on the walls. The minotaurs can't get through the narrowing hallway. I keep running through when I hear a loud "MOOOOOOOO!" of pain. I turn around and see the bulls wedged in the wall unable to get through. I can't help but make a couple of taunting faces at them before I continue through the hall.

I continue through the school hallway and see several doors that might lead to classrooms or maybe something more sinister like a dungeon full of lions. I come to what looks like the main entrance to the school. I feel a strong urge to push through the doors, so I go ahead and do that and see that I'm in an arena, like where you would watch somebody be mauled by a lion in ancient Rome. I hear a booming raspy voice, "FINALLY! OUR LAST CONTESTANT IS HERE, THE THIRD TASK MAY NOW BEGIN!!!!" I hear loud cheering and see that the stands are full of... I'm not even sure what they are. Like octupi mixed with a platypus with some sort of legs. Or what looks like the skeleton of a baby with antennae. Tons of creatures of multiple kinds that there is no way I could name. I look around and see 26 other entrances to the arena part of the arena. A confused looking creature standing in each, holding a weapon of their own. "AND NOW I SHALL GO THROUGH THE RITES!" yells the voice. "There used to be 58 planets that could support life in our universe. All had their own species of plants and animals, and of course a dominant species in each. There was much development in all, some became warlike planets, constantly at war. While others remained completely peaceful, never building themselves weapons or causing destruction. One planet, which had astounding scientists and researchers decided that it was not possible for there to be only one planet with life on it. So they developed an airfleet of spacecraft and had astronauts search the universe for life. That planet was called Interitum. The planet eventually stumbled upon another planet that had less superior technology and was still in the stone ages called Lapidem Gentem. The astronauts, unsure what to do mistook them for violent and mauled an entire village of them. Word spread fast and eventually There was war. Whenever Interitum tried to study the planet and it's resources, the people would attack with vicious force. Other planets started to develop, find the war and take sides. The war spread to the other planets and turned into an intergalactic war. After Eons of fighting, there was finally a chance of peace. Two planets on the opposite sides were going to form an alliance that could make both sides see the light. The official alliance ceremony was going to be on the moon of a foreign planet called Earth. But something went terribly wrong. The locals on Earth were launching what they called the Apollo 21 mission to successfully civilize the Moon. The astronauts from Earth panicked when they saw us, and created another situation like on Lapidem Gentem. It destroyed any chance of the 2 planets making peace and brought the war to Earth, though their governments managed to hide the war from the

civilians. After another few years there was finally complete peace. But at a heavy cost. 31 of the planets that could support life had been completely annihilated. The people you see in the crowds contestants, are the survivors of the war from the planets that have been destroyed. And in honor of them, we take one person at the age of 14, from the remaining 27 planets that survived, and see them battle each other, killing each other in this small arena, and after every single one of them but one has been mauled, we crown them victor. And then assassinate them.”

Well that was a really scary story, and after all I've seen today, I have absolutely no doubt that it could be true. Then I realized I was the guy who was going to be fighting for his life, and than killed if he wins anyways! That seriously got on my nerves. “LET THE BATTLES BEGIN!” shouted the man with the booming voice. I look around and see that the other 'contestants' beginning to realize where they are and what is happening. One of the contestants screams “KILL THEM!!” and runs towards the guy next to him. That started the chaos. Everybody starts running towards each other swinging their hammers or maces, or notching arrows on their bows. Instead of running towards my death, I try to escape, pulling at the double doors that I came in through. They don't open, because nothing in my life can never be easy. I turn around, desperate for some means of escape. Instead of finding escape, I get hit in the stomach with a hammer that was thrown at me. I groan in pain and fall to the ground, dropping my sword. I think I cough up blood. I look up and find that it is hard to see, the world looks fuzzy. I try to get up and fall right back to the ground. I struggle to stay concious, knowing that if I slip out of conciousness I will surely be killed. Mustering up all the strength in my body, I reach for my sword and get back up. I see about 10 of the alien creature things still fighting. All the rest lay on the ground either dead or seriously injured. I think through what I could do, I could run into the battle and be killed, or win it and be killed. Neither sounds very appealing. There is however a third option that might just work. I scream “STOP!!!” as loud as my lungs will let me. Everybody and everything stares at me. “Do you really want these people to kill each other? Wouldn't you rather just live in peace and harmony instead of all this violence?” Everybody looks around at each other. Wondering if maybe, just maybe this isn't the right thing to do. Than somebody else yells “KILL THEM!!” again. And springs the whole arena back into chaos. I have no idea what to do now. So I decide to think of another plan, of how to escape the arena and wherever the heck I am. But that's another story.