FESTIVAL OF FRIENDSHIP

It was the middle of a bright summer’s day, or at least the summer time of this digital world anyway. Most of the beast type digimon were enjoying the day’s festivities. What kind of festivities would they be…?

Starlight City was the capital of Baihumon’s territory of the digital world. Named such because of the way the city always seemed to be awake, even in the dark of night as if always on guard. The real truth of the matter was just that it was the digital world’s equivilent of the city that never sleeps.

Today however was a joyous occasion. It was called the celebration of friendship, made in honor to the ancient warrior ZeedGarurumon who served as the ancient general of beast type digimon many many generations ago. Though his was mainly the source of the celebration, those within the city also made to honor the warriors that served under him just as well!

Two digimon enjoying the festivities in particular were a pair of Guilmon walking through the crowds of digimon that crowded the streets. Drimogemon, Garurumon and various other animal type digimon flooded the area in a way that the two reptiles looked out of place.

“Come on…! We’re going to miss our shot…!”

Of the two dinosaur’s, one looked like a fairly normal Guilmon who’s eyes were scanning along the lines of food stalls and souvineer stands. It was clear he was eager to experience all that the festival had to offer. His name was Nova, a digimon with a curious nature of the world around him that was only rivaled by his appetite.

The other Guilmon was somewhat different. His scales were a darker red and his eyes more focused, almost like a wild animal’s than that of the happy go lucky dinosaur that the species were known for. His name was Shade “Oh calm down…You know father would give us an earful if we’re not behaved. Besides…why are you in such a hurry to lose…?”

Hearing the quip about him losing gave Nova enough pause that he stopped amongst the crowd. “Hey…You never know…Today might just be my day! It’s an honorable day after all!”

“You do realize that this is a celebration to honor the beast army that fought in this world…They fought our ancestors…We might just be turned down.”

“Oh come on…Don’t be such a skeptic. Besides…we’re regulars at this point! No sense in blaming us for the past right…?” Nova was always the type to find the bright side in everything. Where his brother was one to always look at the glass as half empty…He preferred to look at it as half full. “Ohhh! They have Ikayaki!!”

His train of thought was completely derailed as he spotted a Gabumon sitting in a stand, using a hand fan or rather…a paw fan to blow on a makeshift grill. The pelt wearing digimon was busy flipping a few squids when Nova made a beeline towards him.

“H-hey! Can we have two Ikayaki?!?” The energetic Guilmon’s eyes were glinting with eager anticipation, a bit of drool hanging on the corner of his muzzle that would leave some digimon somewhat unnerved.

“Two of them…?” The Gabumon looked at the pair of red reptilians, wondering if the darker toned digi was really interested in the treat. “I suppose so. Give me one moment!”

The Garuru pelted digimon picked up two squid’s and set them over a skewer before handing two of them to his energetic patron. “I hope that you two enjoy the festival!”

“We will sir!” Nova cheered, handing the vendor a few digi-bits before turning to his brother in a happy sing song like voice. “Here!”

“You’ve got no shame…” Shade muttered, looking at the squid that had been thrust right on into his paws and stared at his brother with incredulity. “But it does smell good…”

Even if Shade was a more reserved individual it was apparent the scent of good cooked food was enough to bring rise to his species instincts. It was a sight that always left Nova giggling. “Yeah. Let’s enjoy ourselves. Besides, we’re residents of Baihumon’s territory too.”

Nova was already taking a bite out of his Ikayaki, happily munching on it while walking through the streets to get a look at the many different attractions that were set up through the city. Heck, halfway through his grilled Squid, he caught sight of a dunk tank with a Gomamon sitting on the plank while other young digimon started tossing balls at the target in hopes of dunking the little guy.

“Oh! I want to try that!” Nova quickly snapped up the rest of his treat before walking right up to the tank. He set a few bits into the jar that was situated by the tank before grabbing a small ball which his father had called a Baseball, and tossed it at the target! And missing.

Nova whined out his disappointment and tried just a few more times before finally calling it quits. “I don’t get it…I know I’m aiming for that target…”

“Let me try.” Shade insisted, reaching his paw out for a baseball and let his claws get as firm a grip that he could get on them. His eyes closed as he breathed in and out through his nostrils…He could hear his brother’s footsteps, even his breathing, as the energetic guilmon circled around him.

“I can hear you y’know.” The darker toned guilmon muttered, one eye peeking open to see his brother sniffing at the ball in his paw. With a small sigh, Shade craned hisarm back, twisted his body before finally letting the ball fly right in the center of the Dunk tank’s target.

A bell could be heard ringing as the plank gave out under the Gomamon followed by the subtle sound of water splashing as the little guy submerged in it’s depths.

“Awww…! You made that look so easy!” Nova whined, clearly impressed by his brother’s technique but also disappointed that despite the fact they were brothers he just couldn’t seem to do the same things.

A few seconds later, the Gomamon finally emerged from the water, sighing explosively when it took in a lungful of air and clung to the edge of the tank with a laugh. “That was great! You’re the first person to dunk me in there! It was getting boring sitting up on the plank all day.”

“I’m sure there will be others.” Shade assured the aquatic digimon, moving in to even help reset the plank and get the little guy back in place. “Just don’t bake yourself in the sun sitting to long here okay? My brother might mistake you for a carnival snack.”

The Gomamon looked to Nova who was still pouting, but inspecting the tank more closely now and couldn’t surpress a giggle. “A tempting thought. But I’ll do my best! Are you two going to the colosseum?”

That was oddly observant of the Gomamon. Something told Shade that this Gomamon wasn’t your usual digimon that runs a festival attraction. He turned his head to check what Nova was doing but his brother was already busy trying to catch a goldfish, or a digital world equivilant of one.

“I thought you looked familiar.” Shade crossed his arms as he looked over the Gomamon’s form. “So how many of you are helping with the Festival? Are there still going to be enough for the competition?”

“I knew it. You two always did love coming to participate.” The Gomamon lifted up a claw and waved it a few times. “Yeah we’re having the competition still. The boss is letting digimon who aren’t contracted to his colosseum participate in today’s competition so you two are free to join don’t worry.”

Good. While Shade didn’t mind if it was closed to contracted fighters only, his brother Nova was always eager to prove himself in the ring. Even if it never did turn out the way he wanted it to. “Is there a cut off time? Or a limit to entrants?”

“Yes to the first question.” Gomamon glanced over his shoulder to clock that was hanging above a cotton candy stand. Nova was within eyesight happily scarfing one down in his paws. “I think…Yes there’s still half an hour before registration closes. After that though you’ll have to settle for being in the audience. As for the number of entrants…Because it’s the Friendship Festival there’s no limit on entrants. Only a limit on the time for signing up.”

That meant no way of knowing who or how many rounds there’d be. Shade was a critical thinker unlike his brother, and worried how their energy consumption would hold out for a tournament like this. One look towards his brother, who’d gotten cotton candy stuck to his PAWS however, told him they may not have to worry so hard about that. “What am I gonna do with you…”

Before he could continue his thoughts, he heard a bell chime in the distance and took that as their cue to leave. “We’re gonna go sign up now! Thanks for the tip Gomamon!”

“You kids take it easy! And tell Lord Dukemon that we’re looking forward to tasting more of his bread!” The Gomamon called out, paws to either side of his muzzle to help his voice travel only to watch the darker Guilmon grab hold of one of his brother’s paws. “Those boys…”

“Ack! Hey…take it easy what’s the rush?” Due to him licking the cotton candy off his paw, Nova was stumbling to follow Shade’s lead and not trip as he was being taken off through the crowd. “We’re here to have fun.”

“I know we are.” Shade’s reply was a little more terse than he’d intended it to be. Nova always meant well and was always a kind dinosaur and didn’t deserve to be spoken to like that…After a small breath, Shade continued. “That’s why we’re rushing though. We gotta sign up for the main event or we’re going to miss it. You DO want to prove yourself like always…right?”

That got the ligher toned Guilmon’s attention. His ear fins perked up and his slurping picked up in speed as if in a hurry to get all the cotton candy off his claw tips before matching his pace more with Shade’s. “Oh! Yeah I do! Why didn’t ya say so?”

“Because you were stuffing your snout with carnival foods.” Shade teased, glad to see that his brother perked up after realizing where it was they were going.

Starlight city was big, even if there WASN’T a festival and it was easy to get lost. Thankfully, for those that frequently visited the big city, or even lived within it, they knew of a useful landmark that made it easier to get their bearings.

It was the Howling Colosseum. Named such because of the owner, a Dorulumon by the name of Drill, who was known to be quite a formidable beast himself. Someone whom not only Nova and Shade respected, but so did most other digimon within Baihumon’s domain and beyond.

His nickname was the Howling Knight. He’d been given this nickname by his peer’s as he was one of the few digimon in the living era that could topple a Royal Knight and put them to their knees. Even trained most of the current generation of knights in that very Colosseum.

There was always a rising sense of excitement in Nova, despite coming to this place every other week to test himself he never got over the rush of stepping into those halls when understanding the history of this place and it’s importance in their digital world. Taking a deep breath in through his nostrils, the red dinosaur’s body began to bend back a bit, chest and belly puffing out with the air inflating his lungs before finally letting it all out in a dramatic expressive sigh.

“I never get tired of being here.” While his voice was toned down so not to disturb anyone in the halls, the way in which his tail wagged back and forth told of his genuine excitement of the place.

“And we never get tired of having you here.” There was a bit of a growl that went into the voice that approached. One could hardly mistake the appearance of a Dorulumon making way. Those toned muscle in his fore limbs showed many years of intensive training, eyes observant as if always on the lookout where trouble could be brewing.

“I hear from our once Lord Dukemon that you will be leaving on a trip soon. To the human world?” Drill asked Nova with a softer voice as if he were trying to take the growl out of his tone. “I assume you are leaving with a purpose.”

It was impossible for Drill to sneak up on them but every time he approached, Nova would always spring to his feet as if he were itching for a fight. His yellow eyes locked onto Drill’s own, before letting his muscles relax, remembering that this was the wolf’s territory after all.

“You could say that.” Nova put his paws together and smiled. “Our mom is a human after all, and I want to see what it is that drew our father to her. And to that end…I’ve heard all sorts of stories from her that just make me all the more curious.”

‘So he’s looking for a partner.’ As far as intentions go it wasn’t bad. Some digimon desired to enter the human world on less than honorable reasons and have been put in their place by the firewall set to act as a borderline between their worlds. “Lord Dukemon was removed from his service to King Drasil when he chose to save that human. Is it really wise for you to be looking for the same thing in humans as he did?”

“Yeah!” Nova’s eyes brightened with what Drill could only suspect was an overwhelming sense of excitement. He never got to speak this openly to other digimon aside from his family, his mother being one who was mot encouraging of his interest. “He loved humans so much that he gave up his title as a Royal Knight to save them. I want to learn what was so important about them that he gave everything up for mom. To me…That makes him even more amazing than Lord Alphamon.”

“You may…want to keep that kind of thing to yourself for today.” Drill advised, looking kindly to the energetic dino that was standing in front of him. He understood the boy’s idolizing of his father though. Not many could claim to be the son of a knight. “We have some very important guests for the Festival, one of them being our Lord Alphamon.” Leaning further down to be at Nova’s eye level, he added in a whisper “And he’s looking for the two of you…”

That one statement got Nova’s usual peppy disposition to go cold for a moment. What would Lord Alphamon…the leader of the Royal Knights want with him…? Was it because he and Shade were Dukemon’s children? Was it a crime to be the offspring of an exile? He’d never thought about it until now butthen the knights had always allowed their existence up until now.

“Why…Does he want to see us…?” Nova whispered back, his tail which normally would be wagging in anticipation of today’s events was now still.

Drill didn’t respond right away. Or rather he didn’t know HOW to respond. He slowly lifted himself back up to full height and gestured with his tail for them to follow him to registration. “All I know is he’s going to be a guest in this competition, scoping out the digimon that will be competing…and he asked if you specifically were going to be in the tournament.”

Lord Alphamon scoping out the competition? Sure there were talent scouts in some of these events. Heck some of the regulars in the Howling Colosseum were scouted by Drill in other battle facilities and relocated here to make a living from battle. And if it was Alphamon… Many scenarios played out within Shade’s head.

‘Scouting for potential traitors…?’ No that didn’t fit. If there were digimon threatening the peace of the digital world, Alphamon would take measures to eliminate them before they could make any meaningful move. The aloof knight was known for his kindness but when he took action he took it with an iron fist and steadfast resolve.

‘Maybe scouting for replacement knights?’ The order of 11 Royal Knights were powerful…Enough so that they were said to be a force in of themselves that could rival the four harmonious ones. But through many different historical battles in the digital world some would be lost in the combat and give their lives for the world. It wasn’t unheard of for a new member to arise after such a loss.

‘It’s got to be Dukemon…Maybe they’re looking for a digimon that can fill that 12th seat. They never did replace Father after he’d been exiled by King Drasil…Maybe they didn’t want another Dukemon filling that seat in shame…?’

Nothing fit in the darker toned Guilmon’s head. Sure, filling the seat that has been unoccupied in the table of the Knights took precedence. For the safety of the digital world and it’s balance, there must be a new digimon to occupy that seat. But with the many competitions held throughout the various regions why come to this one specifically. Especially given Dukemon was a knight that originated in the East…In the dragon empire.

“There’s more to this…” Shade finally muttered. Drill might know something but the wolf wasn’t letting on. The most he’d done was take them to the registration booth where a Gabumon was sitting taking in applications from digimon hoping to compete.

It only took a handful of minutes once they’d actually made it to the front of the line, but there were so many eager participants that looked ready for battle. Gabumon sitting in his booth looked a bit worn out judging from the sheer volume of paperwork that it had sorted on his desk but the pelted lizard remained professional in his work, even when Nova stepped up to the booth.

“Should I get the first aid kit ready…?” The Gabumon asked in a jovial manner. He’d seen Nova compete a number of times and while the dinosaur had spirit, he’d never once managed to make it past the first rounds of competition. Most fighters worried about his lack of fighting intuition and it’s become a bit of a habit for those around him to keep some form of medical aid on hand.

“Yeah you should.” Nova was already signing his form, having done this enough that it was more muscle memory than a chore, slipping the paper back into the booth to hand over to Gabumon. “Because this time I’m going to win.”

A small blue wrist band was produced by the pelted digimon who didn’t need to explain it’s necessity but did anyway as Drill was currently present and it never hurt to remind even the regular anyway. “That wrist band will be your pass into the ring so make sure you wear it while you’re in the competition.

It was a quick sign up for both dino’s, who wasted no time in getting themselves ready in the locker room. Or rather one of several locker rooms. Drill’s employed warriors had their own dedicated apartments up on the upper floors where they could prepare themselves for the battles to come while walk-in’s shared and occupied the locker rooms below.

It wasn’t so bad though. Plenty of leg room for everyone and the cushioned benches that Drill had placed in each room were comfortable enough to sit in while everyone readied themselves. Nova, in his curiosity could not help but take a look around at their competitors. Each bracket was separated by stage, so the rookie stage could not fight the champions or ultimate’s and vice versa.

In the Rookie division, it seemed like a diverse group of competitors had lined up. From what Nova could sum up, he saw a Bearmon doing a few squads to get itself pumped up for the battle. Renamon, as composed as always could be seen sitting in a meditative stance that told of it’s confidence for this competition. An Elecmon’s fur stood at rigid attention as if it were on edge, but then Nova couldn’t blame him.

From the corner of his eye he thought he saw something floating in the air and turned to face it. There he could see a Terriermon and Lopmon practicing the use of their ears to keep themselves afloat in battle. Not a bad plan, considering their disadvantage in height. But something concerned him. There should be at minimum 8 competitors. It’s always been the case but here he could only count 7 if he included his brother and himself.

His answer did come in just a few seconds later as an odd purple furred digimon with small bat like wings stepped in, white snout sniffing the area. It’s yellow eyes locking onto Nova in a blink and approached him with soft quiet steps. None of his claws clicked on the floor boards which surprised the red dino. If this mysterious digimon had wanted to sneak up on him he certainly never would have heard it’s approach.

When up close, he could make out more defining features of this digimn. There were black markings along it’s ears, giving it a fiercer impression than it’s initial appearance might suggest, and the red gem just above it’s snout shone dimly. Where had he seen such a gemstone before…?

“I’m kinda new here so I have to ask…” The Dorumon’s voice was nasily, cute even as the high pitched voice reminded Nova of his own. “Are you…The Guilmon that has no sense of combat whatsoever?”

“D’oh!” Was all Nova said as he sprawled onto the floor. It was a sentence that always left him feeling demoralized. It was even worse if a complete newcomer knew about his reputation. Risking a glance with one eye, Nova could see that this new digimon hadn’t meant to offend him…He’s just curious. I guess I should answer.

“I…I have combat sense! I’m just waiting for the right time to show it is all.” It was a lie and Nova knew it. For whatever reason even though he was the son of Dukemon, he seemed to be unable to match up to his father’s name. It was something that always hurt and haunted him, as if he were bringing shame to their family for not being good in battle. It was also the reason he was so determined to compete every week to show he wasn’t a weakling.

The purple furred digimon took a moment to soak in the response only to smile kindly. He understood Nova’s frustration, and reached a paw out to help him up. “My name’s Doru.”

“Nova!” The red dino cheerfully replied. With one paw, he let this purple digimon help him back to his feet and did a brief hop. “Nice to meetcha! It’s a good thing we met today too. I’m going to be going on a trip soon. This will be my last competition for the next year or so.”

‘he bounced back quick.’ Doru thought quietly to himself. While Nova didn’t have combat instincts, he certainly had a positive outlook on life. “Well then I guess it’s a good thing indeed! Supposedly we’ll be getting paired up for the first round. Should we go get set in the waiting hall?” The purple digi lifted one of his white tipped paws and gestured for the door.

“We’re first? Alright! I’ll race you there!” Nova was always eager to make a game out of everything, even bounding out of the locker room so that he could make his way towards the ring like a kid high on sugar.

The way this ‘Doru’ quickly zoned in on his brother troubled Shade. Nobody else approached him, and yet this one managed to pick Nova out between the two of them without any questions regarding their natures. “Doru…”

The Dorumon was just about to take his leave and follow Nova out the room when he heard. “So you’re him. What do you want with my brother?”

An accusation straight off the bat, but Doru came to expect this. He turned to the darker Guilmon and smiled in a kind manner, hoping not to alarm the more battle savvy brother. “Nothing that will harm him I assure you.” He put a claw to his muzzle before stepping out of the room.

“This is going to get interesting…” Shade muttered. He quickly strapped his bracelet around his wrist and made his way out to follow them. If this Dorumon was who he thought it was then his brother probably had the most difficult challenger in this whole tournament to attend to. The only question lingering in his head now was WHY.

The seats have been filled. The Colosseum could hold hundreds if not thousands in attendance as many who were enjoying the festivities within the city were now seated in anticipation for this day’s main event.

In the middle of the Colosseum was a large ring like stage, comprised of strong digizoid metals that would withstand the abuse that it would no doubt sustain in the midst of the battles to come. And standing proudly just outside the ring was a 10 foot statue depicting the image of a ZeedGarurumon sitting upright, head up as if it were howling at the moon. A celebratory statue that had been made in honor of the beast general of legend.

Before any fighting could begin, the crowd was effectively silenced in their seats when Omegamon stepped into the ring. He was a digimon of impressive size, given how the ring itself was about 50 feet wide and 50 feet across, this left more than enough room for competitors to have a thrilling bout, Omegamon himself was able to dominate the entirety of the space in his presence simply as he stoodin the middle.

“It’s been well over two thousand years since it ended. The records of the past, of the war between the beast type digimon and the dragons that raged on for decades over the resources of our digital world have for the most part been lost. We can only speculate on much of the events that transpired during that period.”

Omegamon paused only for a moment to glance at every Digimon that had their eyes and ears on him, wishing him to speak more. He would not disappoint them.

“But we do know that the two legendary generals of Light and Friendship strove for peace. Had put the fighting to an end after many years of loss, of struggle. The East will surely be holding their own celebrations to honor their general of light, VictoryGreymon. While we will uphold our traditions of honoring the great general of Friendship!”

Omegamon gestured towards the grand statue of ZeedGarurumon, wanting everyone to get a good image of the wolf while they could. “Known as the wolf of friendship, he and VictoryGreymon managed to achieve peace for all the digimon under their command and put an end to the conflict between the Dragons and Beasts.”

He took in the looks of every spectator in the stands and decided to finish it off. “Today, as every year, we will hold competition in the grand Howling Colosseum in honor of the brave digimon who fought for us, for those who’ve given their lives for us and for the ones that came back home to their friends and families since! A competition to foster friendships through adversity! So let’s not waste any further time. Show each and every competitor in every generational class that we can all obtain Friendship!!”

There was a roar of approval from the crowd, several of the canine type digimon in the stands even howling as if in hopes to have some connection to ZeedGarurumon. “Why don’t we start off our grand competition with our first match.” Omegamon pressed his Garuru Cannon to his chest before taking his leave away from the ring.

“Are you ready?” Doru asked the rambunctious Guilmon who was eagerly stretching his limbs out to get out any excess stress within them. “Don’t worry about winning or losing alright? This is all about extending friendships. So long as you’re giving your all, it doesn’t matter if you win or lose.”

Nova turned around to look at his opponent and giggled. “I’m ready.” He liked the pep talk. Normally just before a fight he would tense up, but for whatever reason something was telling him to keep an eye on this one, yet at the same time…they weren’t a danger.

Both digimon stepped into the ring, gave each other a respectful bow, then one to the statue itself as if they were displaying their power to the ancient general himself. It could feel like a lot of weight on your shoulders. And the tense feeling in Nova’s body came back.

Not only was he thinking of ZeedGarurumon, but the eyes of everyone in the crowd, all cheering for the two of them to get started.

“You can win this time Nova! Show us what you can do!” One overzealous fan shouted. Who it was, Nova couldn’t tell given everyone was shouting.

In the next moment, a gong sounded, indicating the start of their match. No time for hesitation now. One breath in and Nova was already moving in for a strike. “I guess I’ll start off strong…Rock breaker!”

He was already rearing a paw back and moving in to strike at Doru with all the strength in his body but he hadn’t been prepared for the next step. In one graceful step, Doru grabbed hold of his paw and spun gently counter clockwise, driving him into the ground with a gentle push.

The resulting impact of his paw in the ring left a small impact crater in the stone. Something in which Doru was quick to take note of. There was a lot of power in that body. Signs that he was stronger than the crowd seemed to believe this Guilmon was…And he suspected even Nova was unaware of what he could do.

Instead of uttering an attack, Doru, while keeping one paw over Nova’s own, lifted his body upward and kicked the Guilmon in the side of his muzzle, forcing him staggering back a foot or two. “Not a bad strike. If you control the force of your attack you might be able to hit me.”

Nova didn’t know if that was a taunt or genuine advice…But his jaw hurt from that kick just now. It didn’t look powerful but his head was ringing. Rubbing at the side of his snout, Nova let out a small puff of smoke. “Yeah yeah Everyone says that. But I know what I can do.”

He started throwing a handful more punches in Doru’s direction, hoping to get some kind of hit in but the purple beast just avoided each strike like he were moving in slow motion. At one instant, Nova grew frustrated and tried to sweep his foe’s legs out from under them in a sideways kick.

Doru leapt into the air though, a smile never leaving his muzzle when he reached forward to grab at Nova’s head and tossed him towards the other side of the ring. “So you DO have some sense of fighting instinct. Maybe the rumors about you were false.”

After sliding across the ring, Nova couldn’t help but feel a sense of shame as these things always seemed to happen to him. Thoughts of the last couple of competitions flooded into his mind and he started wondering if it was worth it to put himself through this kind of humiliation. To put his family through this.

Disappointed, Doru let out a small sigh, walking to the other end of the ring. “You know…I heard some positive things about you too. How you never give up, no matter how tough the fights are. Or how despite everyone comparing you to your brother or even your father, you still get up, eager to show that you can stand with them. This isn’t all you have is it?”

The Guilmon’s claws dug into the hardened ring. Doru was right about one thing. He may keep losing, but every single time, he feels himself getting stronger. Neither Shade, or his father ever told him to give up. Sure…Shade teased him from time to time, but it wasn’t as if he were openly trying to break the dino.

“I don’t care if I can’t be as strong as dad is.” Nova muttered out, legs propping up from under him as he gripped at a chunk of the ring. “I don’t care if I’m not as smart in the ring as my brother…”

His arms started straining, muscles tensing as he slowly pulled himself together. “What I care about…” He growled out, feeling a portion of the ring starting to give out under his hand claws. “Is being the best me I can be…!”

He roared as he violently turned his body towards Doru, throwing a chunk of the ring that he’d pulled out just moments ago at him. It didn’t hit, of course. The purple digimon evaded his attack just as he thought he might.

“There’s the heart!” Doru grinned, his disappointment suddenly overfilling with pride. Such strength was unprecedented in the rookie stage, to rip a chunk out of the ring…And one made of chrome digizoit no less!

His thoughts were interrupted when Nova made a leap for him. No rest in between blows, the Guilmon opened his jaws wide and fired a Pyro sphere right on into the purple digimon’s belly, sending him rolling to the edge of the ring.

Panting heavily, Nova was about to make a take another leaping strike in the hopes of eliminating Doru from the match only to feel the strike of cold metal in his own belly…He looked forward and saw the Dorumon’s Jaws wide, as a cannon ball fired into his belly yet again, knocking him out of the ring with the Guilmon clutching at his stomach.

There was a whistle from the ref to indicate that the match promptly ended. A result that most people here expected, but they’d definitely seen improvement in the red lizard who managed to land his first hit on an opponent in many competitions. Even amid his loss he could hear the crowd roaring even amidst the ringing that was in his ears.

When Nova came to, he was laying in his own bed. He’d expected an aching feeling in his stomach but he felt nothing…As if it had all been a dream. “Did I just imagine it…?” He pondered that thought as he stared at the fan rotating on his ceiling. And where was Shade…?

His curiosity got the better of him, making the Guilmon stand up to catch up on the day’s events…Wait…day? Checking out the window he could see that the sun was starting to set. “There’s no way I slept all day…”

Stepping his way back downstairs he saw most of the lights off, save for a few candles that burned on the table harmlessly. He did hear voices outside however and decided to investigate them.

What he saw wasn’t at all what he’d expected. Doru…was sitting opposite of his grandfather on their picnic table outside. Shade was there too, sitting beside their father as they spoke in hushed tones. He couldn’t hear them…not from where he was standing.

That would soon change when Doru caught notice of the door swinging open to announce his arrival. “Ah Nova! We were just speaking of you. Please come, sit. I have words with you…”

“Wait…You’re Doru. Did we just-“

“Have a fight? Yes. If it’s any consolation your brother mopped the floor with me.” Doru answered with a sheepish smile. His eyes remained kind. They’d never had a hint of animosity or anger in them even when they’d battled. Who WAS this guy?

“I am sure if you were fighting seriously…and in your true form you could crush me under your boot.” Shade huffed, grabbing a glass of orange juice and handing it over to his brother once he sat down. “I didn’t think YOU of all people would have that kind of power in you.”

“What power?” Nova wasn’t sure what his brother was getting at, but he appreciated the drink offered to him and guzzled it down. A day in battle followed by a whole afternoon of rest left him parched. “I lost remember? Quite horribly too…” His ears drooped when recalling the loss he’d taken. It was his last competition before he’d be going away for awhile. He hoped that he could at least take one win with him on the way.

Doru’s eyes changed to one of sadness when he reached out and set a paw on Nova’s shoulder, shaking his head. “I think you did remarkable. You lost the battle, but you proved to everyone that you DO have the combat sense to protect yourself. And the strength to back it up. I’ve seen Greymon try to pick up a slab of digizoit metal like that before in their bare claws and strain to do so.”

The purple creature traced his claws along Nova’s arm, gesturing at his biceps. “You want to go to the human world, but if your goal is to find your own partner you need to be able to protect them. I had to make sure you could do that before you could be allowed to leave.”

“Before I could be allowed to leave?” Nova didn’t like that phrasing. It sounded like Doru’s verdict was what would decide if he went or not. But then his anger by that wording stopped when he thought about the implication. “Wait a minute…So are you saying you decide who can leave the digital world…?”

“I am saying…My vote has purpose.” Doru slowly stepped out of his seat and away from the house, letting a brilliant glow envelope the area as he started growing rapidly. Every inch of his body was slowly enveloped by a stunning set of jet black and gold armor, the obsidian digizoid of his form glinting somewhat in the fading sunset. His cape, slightly rugged from years of combat flittered about behind him as two large armored pair of wings formed just behind either shoulder.

The gemstone that he’d seen earlier on Doru’s head, was now much more pronounced, glimmering with life as the red stone pulsed ontop of the head of the massive knight standing before him, easily towering over the modest cottage house that they lived in.

“I knew it…” There wasn’t any satisfaction in Shade’s voice in being right. He had his suspicions, and when the knight never revealed itself in the middle of the festival he knew that could only mean one thing. Doru had been sent ahead to scout them. For what purpose. “Lord Alphamon…” He knelt in respect given just how powerful the lord of knights could be. “Why…Did you enter the competition?”

The nasily voice that’d come from Doru earlier had long since faded, replaced with a more booming voice that had the power of authority behind it. “Lord Dukemon requested it. While he isn’t a knight in any capacity any longer, we still have respect for him, which is why we allowed him to live so close to such a large civilization as Starlight city.”

“When he told us of a son that wanted to understand humans more, and to find his partner, we had to find out for ourselves just what you were capable of.” The knight knelt down on one knee so that he could be closer to the three Guilmon in his presence. “King Drasil forbids travel between the worlds as some digimon will merely cause havoc to the humans. So we needed to test you. If you had what it took to protect your partner when the time comes, and if you could overcome your own weaknesses in the face of adversity.”

Hearing Alphamon speaking to them, speaking to HIM, Nova felt a cold shiver in his body. Had he messed up? Did he not show enough resolve to the knight in their battle? Should he have surrendered? Or maybe he just wasn’t strong enough to impress the leader of the knights. All these thoughts ran through his head but were stopped, when a large armored finger gently tapped hi snout.

“Humans and digimon…their connection is priceless. You must devote yourself to your partner should you find them. As they will do the same for you. Today you showed me that you have that drive in you. Never lose that fire in your belly.”

For a moment, bathing in the words of the knight, Nova couldn’t help but have a gleam of hope in his eyes. He had a feeling he knew where this was going. “So then…That means that I can go…right?”

Alphamon’s other hand reached out towards the young Guilmon and uncurled the fingers it had previously been concealing to reveal a colorless digivice in his hand. “Take this. When you find the human that you wish to bond with…give them that digivice and your bond will be made physical. Just be mindful of who you select. The digivice will remain in their possession the moment that you give it to them and cannot be transferred.”

It was a gentle warning, or one that Alphamon intended to be. “Baihumon’s guardian, Smithy developed that digivice specifically for you on request of your father. Treasure it, and your human partner and go forth.”

Nova could hardly believe what he’d been hearing. It was really happening…! He reached out for the digivice, sensing no life in it sort of disappointed him, but he knew that once he found the right human, it would hum with the beat of their bond. “Thank you…! I promise you…I will protect them with all of my power!”

Satisfied, Alphamon slowly rose up to his full height. “Humans have a strange effect on us digimon…You believe yourself weak because you lack the instinct other digimon have. Your partner will reveal to you things you never knew about yourself. Good things…wonderful things. I expect you will find your adventure fulfilling.”

Seeing the sunset fading just behind the hills beyond, Alphamon knew that his time was up. He glanced down to the elder Guilmon, whom he identified by the greying scales on his muzzle and politely bowed his head. “I’ve told you all that I can dear friend. The rest…will be up to them.”

Alphamon looked up to the stars slowly revealing themselves. “Farewell all of you. May one day in the future we all meet again under peace.”

It was an odd way to end such a momentous meeting. There were other things Nova wanted to ask the great knight but he was already flying out into the distance by the time he had the courage to speak up. As night began to overtake their surroundings, he took one last look to the colorless digivice in his paw and smiled in thought. “Alright. I’ll find the best partner a Guilmon could ask for.” He promised himself, clutching the digivice in hand as he resigned himself to sleep. His adventure…his story, was only just starting.

(End)