

Chapter 3

“Have you heard?” Lit yelled excitedly as Cell entered the room.

“Heard about what?” inquired Cell

“Over the ZNN, the Zishen News Network, the government just announced it.” Lit replied

“What? They invented a drug to block noise from your voice cord. Cus, that’s what I need right now.” quipped Cell.

“No,” Lit dragged out as he rolled his eyes, “I can’t believe it. They are going to have a Blade Championship Series.”

“Sweet,” said Cell, “will it be broadcast for us to watch in hologram?”

“No, only the finals will be in hologram,” replied Lit.

“Well that’s lame.” Cell said disappointedly, “Why are they doing that?”

“Cus they will be held on every planet!” Lit said excitedly. Their mother suddenly appeared in the doorway.

“Wait...what is being held on every planet?” said Gene as she placed the rag she had been cleaning with over her shoulder. The expression on Gene’s face was one every boy knows, even without their mother placing her hands on her hips..

“Mom, we wont be able to get into trouble or nothing,” started Lit “It’s just that they will be holding Galactic Blade Championships. It’ll be great. They are going to hold them on every planet. They are even holding them here on Gulao. Can we go mom? Please.”

“It’s just a big promotion to get kids to become a zig.” said Gene, “We’ll see what we can do. I’m not promising anything. You know how short we are on money.”

The next six weeks went by slowly for Lit. He kept reflecting back on what his mother had said. “We’ll see.” echoed constantly in his head. Thoughts of the Blade Championships had him daydreaming from sunrise to the sunset. Cell had only reflected back on his mother’s words at quiet times. Mostly the competition only crossed his mind while he was out in the barn loft relaxing from his chores.

Cell lay in bed one night trying to go to sleep. His mind started to drift as a leaf down a stream. Like all streams they flow

to a river, then to a sea. Cell soon found himself drowning in thoughts of the Blade Championships.

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Cell could see his father and mother standing at the front door. They were waving at someone.

“We love you Lit.” Gene screamed out. Cell then turned to see his brother turn and walk away angrily. Cell pursued him wondering where he was headed.

“I’m so glad to be out of there and finally on our way.” Lit started as he looked at Cell.

“Oh yeah,” Cell said in confusion unsure of what was going on..

“This trip is going to be so much fun.” Lit said excitedly.

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Cell found himself sitting in an arena. He was lost as to how he had gotten there. Something was happening in the middle. It looked like two men fighting. Cell looked over at his brother. Lit was cheering excitedly. Cell realized where he was. He was at the Local Blade Arena. Him and Lit would often come here on the weekend to watch a fight. Lit loved blading. It was his favorite sport. When Cell had got his head around where he was. He turned to watch the action.

George was in a match against Bill. As Cell turned his head Bill swing hard. George dodged the swing aimed at his abdomen. Bill had just made a huge mistake. George took the opportunity to swing for Bill's neck. As George's blade connected with Bill's neck the crowd stood with a roar. As Cell stood to see what had happened he thought, "Why is the crowd cheering? George had only got a point he couldn't have won the match." As he peered though the crowd he saw a round object rolling on the ground. It was half black half red. George stooped and picked up Bill's head by his hair.

"What happened?" Cell asked Lit. "This is just a sport, no one get's hurt."

Lit turned to Cell and said "It was a sport. Now, it's war."

As Cell looked around him. People where pulling blades out from their robes. "It's the resistance" Cell shouted as he grabbed Lit to run. Cell ran up the stairs as zig ran past them. "What is happening?" Cell kept asking himself.

They ran though a tunnel towards the exit. Cloaked men were in pursuit. "Stop right there." one of the cloaked men shouted. Cell kept running dragging Lit along by the hand. He had to get away. The resistance had taken all he had, Lit was all he had left. The men were closing on them as Cell dodged around a display to

get to the exit. Suddenly the ground shifted. The other end of the tunnel collapsed and fell. The tunnel had become a hill then a cliff face. Cell caught a hold of the display island. He held on with one hand trying to hold Lit with the other. The hall they had run down had now become a bottomless pit. Cell's hands started to sweat. Cell felt Lit's hand slipping from his grip. "No, just hold on Lit." Cell screamed as he turned to see his brother slip from his protection.

"Noooooo." was Lit's last word as he disappeared into the blackness.

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Cell awoke to sudden shouting. It was all just a dream. But something was going on in the kitchen. Cell quickly got dressed and headed for the kitchen.

As Cell walked in the door he was met with shouts from a hysterical Lit. "You won't believe it Cell." Lit started, "We got tickets!" Lit was holding an envelope high in his hand.

"Tickets to what?" said Cell as his brain searched for registration. It came. "To the blading championships?" Cell blurted out. "But those have been sold out for a week now."

"Yes!" Lit replied, "We are gonna get to go."

“Now boy’s calm down,” Endo said, “But, Cell we could only get two tickets so you will have to watch out for your younger brother.”

“Yeah I can do that.” Cell said, “It shouldn’t be a problem.”

“Dad, I’m sixteen.” Lit said, “I can watch out for my self.”

“Yes I know son,” Endo started, “but I would feel much better if I knew that Cell was watching after you.”

“I’ll do it dad.” Cell said.

“Ok, well boy’s you need to get your chores done. Let’s go.” Endo said. “We only have a week to prepare the farm for you to leave for a few days so you can get to the match.”

Then next week seemed to drag on forever. Lit was always lots in thought of seeing the championships. Once he was paying so little attention to what he was doing he almost had a mack fall on him.

Cell was shaken awake by Lit. “Get up Cell. Let’s go.”

“Wha? Why are you shaking me?” Cell said in confusion.

Then it sunk in. Today was the day. Cell didn’t remembering getting out of bed by there he was walking next to Lit out the front door. As they were leaving Cell turned to see his parents in the doorway.

“Have fun boy’s.” Endo shouted.

“Cell, watch out for Lit.” said Gene, “Lit, stay with your brother.” Lit was enraged that his own mother didn’t think he was old enough to look after himself. “Lit, it’s just that we love you.” Lit didn’t even turn and wave, as they walk off toward the nearest Public Access Pod Station.

They walked along the side road in silence for nearly two kilometers. “I can’t believe they still treat me like a child.” Lit said turning to Cell.

“Well, that just means they care for you Lit.” Cell replied, “Mom would be devastated if she lost you.” Lit remained in his tense silence.

They walked up to a small shack on the side of the road. Above the window was a green sign that read Public Access Pods across the top, PAP terms of use were listed below in smaller print. Walking up to the window they saw an old lady sitting behind the counter.

“Two tickets for Erature.” Cell said to the old lady behind the counter.

“Ok,” came the reply, “That will be twenty rutia please.”

As Cell searched through his money pouch he knew he had another ten rutia coin inside.

“What takes you to Erature today, are you two going to the Blading championships?” the old lady asked politely.

“Yeah we are.” Lit said excitedly as Cell handed the lady his change.

“Ok here are your tickets. Thank you for choosing Pap. It will be a little while before the next Pap departs for Erature.” the lady said turning back to work at her screen.

Cell and Lit turned and walked towards a bench and sat down. Before they knew it, they were exiting the Pap at Erature station.

“Wow, we are already at the space port.” Lit began.

“Wow that building is new.” Lit said as he pointed towards a large building.

“Must be that new factory they were building the last time we came here.” Cell said. “The stadium is that way.” Cell said as he pointed up the street.

“Ok, lets go then.” said Lit impatiently as he started heading down the street.

As they walked down the road they past shop after shop. Many of the things being sold were either trinkets that had been hand made or food available for purchase. One shop keeper would jump out selling toy pods, while the next would try to sell his farm

raised nubs. Many of the people among the crowd were dressed in tattered robes. “This must be the slums” thought Cell as he passed a man sitting on the ground underneath a thin rag held up by some old bent rods. The makeshift hut offered little shade looked to be all the man owned and could call a home.

“Hey there is the stadium,” said Lit.

“Yeah there it is,” said Cell as he took in the surrounding space port. There was a GX140 landing on a near by pad. “Look at that ship,” Cell said, pointing it out to Lit, “it’s huge.”

“Yeah it is.” Lit agreed, “look on the side of it, that’s the Blade Championship logo. It must be the officials and support crews.”

“Well it’s doesn’t really matter we will need to find our selves a place to stay during the tournament.” Cell said, “We wont be able to sleep in our seats you know.”

“Oh yeah,” Lit said disappointedly, “but I wanted to go check out the stadium and all the shops set up for the Blading Championships.”

“We can do that after we find a place to sleep.” Cell replied, “We need to get one before they are all gone.”

“Fine.” said Lit in defeat.

Cell started to look around for anything resembling a hostel. He didn't want to pay too much for the night. As they walked along there were a few places that looked like they had already taken in guests. Then Lit saw it, a sign in a window. The sign read, "Bed's Open"

Lit pointed as he said "Hey Cell, look at that sign. Is that what we are looking for?"

"Yes," Cell said quickly as he started towards the building. "That is exactly what I was looking for."

Just as Cell and Lit reached the door, it opened. A little girl was standing there staring at them. Cell and Lit stood there staring back. The girl then reached up for the sign on the window sill. She had to stretch above her head to reach the sign. As she lifted it to take it down Cell asked his question, "Is there any more room?"

"Nope, Sorry" said the little girl. As she turned on her heel she shut the door. Lit stood there shocked for a second.

"What just happened Cell?" he asked.

"I think that means we have to find another place to sleep." Cell replied.

They soon found another house that was happy to give them shelter for the night. As they settled in they realized they would be two among many guests in the house that night. It

wouldn't matter they would be able to sleep. After a quick dinner, Cell and Lit explored the stadium a little and found many people very excited about the next day's events.

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That night it was hard for them to fall asleep among the interesting smell coming from some of their fellow guests. Finally the sun dawned. As the first of the guests arose he tripped over another guests bedding. The resulting scream from the woman he landed on awoke the rest of the house.

After a quick breakfast and deciding the bathing line was to long to wait. Cell and Lit made their way to the stadium.

As Cell and Lit made their way to their seats an announcer came on the loud speaker. "There will four rounds in this local tournament. Today, on the first day, during the morning hours half of the bladers will have a match. In the afternoon the remaining bladers will then have their matches. The matches will be drawn by lot. The judge has a collection of all the names and two will be drawn at random. After that match is over the next two names will be chosen. This will be the format for the entirety of the tournament. Tomorrow morning we will once again eliminate half of our contestants. Then we will hold the finals in the evening.

While we wait please direct your attention to the display screen and enjoy this informative video on the origins of Blading.

The screen flickered to life. A man was standing in a Blading stadium. He started to talk, “Hello I am Reka Epsgnol. Since 2045 G.Y., the art of hand to hand combat has been perfected. The use of a common piece of wood is often used for training while a metal blade is used by military forces.” The man then held up an example of each displaying their features.

“Oh my,” Lit said quietly to call, “this could get boring fast.”

Reka epsgnol rambled on, “The metals used in blades have become gradually stronger and sharper. Though the biggest development came in 5534. This was when Percel Grat invented a blade that had a cooled handle but a heated cutting edge. Grat blades are still among the finest quality blades sold in the galaxy. Heated blades have become the standard for military units. A heated Blade seals any wounds it makes, keeping deaths from losing an arm or leg minimal. Needless to say since then Galactic Rolling Chairs Inc. has become one of the most profitable companies in the galaxy.

“Hand to hand combat has become not only a skill but and art form. Many people young and old enjoy going to see a blade

fight. Blade fighting has become the most popular sport in the galaxy.”

The man suddenly vanished from the screen as he was replaced by the Grat company logo. “This short video has been brought to you by Grat Blades. For more information on Grat Blades you can find us on the Galactic Information System. Grat when only the best will do.” said the company spokesperson.

“Wow; I wonder how long it took to make that,” Lit said sarcastically.

The announcer came back on the loud speaker, “Before we begin I will quickly review the rules for all the contestants and spectators. The first Blader to score Five points will be awarded the match victory. Points are awarded when ever a Blader’s blade strikes his opponent. One point is awarded for every limb, two for the body and three for the neck of head. Bladers may also receive bonus points for executing skillful maneuvers, as seen by the judges. Do not worry, the Bladers will be using nonlethal blades and wearing protective armor. We also have professional healers on hand if anyone is seriously injured.”

Before Cell realized it The action had started. Many of the fighters looked really inexperienced and lost very quickly to their opponents.

“This is almost sad,” Lit said turning to Cell “look at all these fighter that lose so quickly.”

“Yeah it is sad.” Cell replied. “Most of these Bladers wouldn’t stand a chance at regionals.”

The time seemed to pass without letting anyone know it was gone. Before Cell knew it, they announced the final match of the day. Cell and Lit walked slowly back to the house that had provided them with their much needed shelter, all the while they discussed the different Bladers they had seen that day and who they thought would win. It was hard for them to really know who would win. They had only seen each Blader once and some of them where only briefly while they disposed of and unequal opponent.

Sleep came no easier as the final day of the tournament loomed in their minds. The tournament got better during the third round. Half of the bladers had now been eliminated. This cut out most of the inexperienced bladers from the smaller villages.

The fights got more exciting in the afternoon, Now only the skilled fighters were left. The field was soon down to just four bladers left. An announcement came over the loudspeaker. “We would like to announce today’s lucky winner. If everyone will look under their seat for an envelope.” There was a mad dash

as people started extracting envelopes from under their seats. Cell reached down below his seat. He couldn't feel a thing. He looked over at Lit. Lit was staring at an envelope in his hand.

“I got one Cell.” Lit said excitedly.

“If everyone who received an envelope please open it.” the announcer continued, “Inside is the name of one blader. The person holding the winning blader's ticket will receive an all expense paid trip to the regionals with their blader.” Lit tore open his envelope along with the hundreds of others that had also found envelopes hidden beneath their seats.

“Gishi Liken,” Lit read aloud. “Hey he's still in the competition.” he concluded excitedly. “I got a one in four chance.”

“That's a really good shot at winning then.” Cell told him Lit.

The next to bladers were chosen to fight first. Kai won his match and advanced to the finals. Gishi face a formidable opponent, but he easily beat him six to two.

Gishi and Kai would fight for the local championship. Gishi and Kai quickly engaged in an all out fight. Gishi swung high and Kai blocked it easily. Kai then launched his counter attack. He quickly spun his blade around as Gishi's blade glanced off of it. It looked like Kai would score a point for his thrust at Gishi's leg. Kai lunged while driving his blade down towards the left side of Gishi's body. Right before Kai's blade connected Gishi sidestepped around Kai and came back to his defensive position. A few more tense moments occurred. Gishi scored the first points after dodging another lunge and sliding his blade along Kai's side as he passed. Kai soon recovered as Gishi moved onto the offensive. First Gishi came high, Kai blocked him and caught his arm on the way by. Gishi then tried to go for it all making a risky move to hit Kai in the head. He swung low then spun to hit Kai high. Kai took this advantage to hit Gishi in the back of the head. Gishi was losing two to four. One more point and Kai would win. The crowd around Lit cheered for their local ticket holder. The noise became deafening as the crowd cheered louder and louder. Kai kept attacking Gishi head on trying to get the last point he needed. Gishi was a master at defense and was able to perry these attacks out of the way.

Gishi was starting to find himself in a tough spot though all this defense had caused him to continue backpedaling. Before Gishi knew it he was against the wall. Kai was closing in. Kai lifted his blade above his head and started to charge. Gishi braced for the impending blow from above. Kai changed his tactic at the last second, dropping his blade to the left and swinging hard at Gishi's unprotected legs. Gishi instinctively jumped, swinging his legs out to his left. As Kai's Sword passed just under Gishi, grazing the tail of his belt on course to hit Gishi's foot, Kai was so sure of victory he forgot to dodge the swing Gishi had aimed at his left ear.

A loud thump was the last thing Kai could remember of his watch. Gishi's blow knocked Kai out and won Gishi was declared the victor. Lit was now hoarse from screaming. Cell couldn't believe it they could go to regionals.

Chapter 4 - Life

Cell sat huddled in the corner completely in shock, he couldn't bear to look., but nothing could stop him from hearing Lit scream and reel in pain. The past weeks seemed a blur to him. Cell was no longer aware of what day it was or even what meal he would be eating next.

“How to you know him?” a neighbor asked Cell through the bars.

Starting to shake all over again, Cell peered up at the Gradainian squatting next to him. Cell wasn't gonna lose it though. He was gonna stay strong, stay strong for Lit. “He. . . he's . . . my brother.” was all Cell could get out.

“He's taking it very well.” said the Gradainian, “You should be proud of him. I haven't had a chance to introduce myself. I'm Agrod. What's your name?”

“Cell,” Cell said in a faint whisper.

“Yes, you are all in a cell.” Agrod said kindly, “We all are and have been for a while now.” Agrod then repeated his question, “But what’s your name lad?”

“My name is Meracel, but I go by Cell.” Cell said quietly, “Not sure where I got it from though.” he added, “people have been calling me it for years.”