

Nightmare – the Slaughter

Travis and I were in the boys locker room at my high school, getting ready for our wave to attack. Being second tier warriors was something of an honor, but it was dangerous. True, the remaining fighters would be tired from the combat, but they would also be proven survivors.

There were teams of 60 young men and battles took place in large high school gymnasiums. It was always to the death, with the last man (or team) standing as the winner. No firearms were allowed, only edged weaponry.

We finished our preparation and jogged down the hall to the gym. I reached in my boot for a wicked knife and Travis did the same with a slightly mad grin on his face. We entered the gym together, but immediately split up and picked our targets.

There was no training for these battles, and no need for it. If we won, we were the best and had natural talent for death. If we lost, well, too bad. Training would only prolong the fight for everyone.

I focused on the combat, on the killing. Except that I was also looking for Travis. I saw him across the gym and realized he was in trouble. I kicked my current opponent in the chest and ran though the combatants to help him out. On the way I spotted a fallen young man from the other side with a sword. It was generally assumed that only fools brought swords to battle, in the crush of people at the start a sword was less effective than a knife. Sword wielders always died.

Since Travis and I had arrived with the second tier, a lot of young men had already died and it wasn't as crowded. I slammed my knife into a nearby opponent, left it there, and picked up the sword. The crowd cheered - no one had thought to use a fallen warrior's sword before.

I finished my run over to Travis and took out his opponent with a swipe of the sword. Travis looked at me, startled. He hadn't realized I was on my way over to help him.

"Pick up his knife!" I shouted at him and he did. The crowd cheered again - it was also assumed that the men in battle would only carry one knife with them since it took extra concentration and coordination to wield two blades. I thought that Travis's natural athleticism would provide him with the talent. And it did.

He looked at me and we nodded together - then we started double-teaming the enemy. This was unexpected, it was assumed to be dishonorable for two men to fight one. In a normal battle, with uneven sides, some men would wait their turn.

This wasn't a normal battle - our side was far outmatched. By the time Travis and I joined up, only a few of our blue-shirted comrades were still standing and they quickly

fell. We were facing a sea of red - the shirts of our enemies and the blood of the fallen on the slick gymnasium floor.

And we were unstoppable. Moving as one slashing and killing machine we attacked our opponents and slaughtered them. When the opposing team finally got their act together and tried to attack in mass, it was too late. They were uncoordinated and their numbers caused them to get in their own way. Each mistake they made cost them a life.

In moments we had reduced them to dead and dying - with only one warrior from the other side left.

Travis went low, stabbing his twin blade into the young man's torso, then pulling them up and out to do the most damage. I went high and sliced at the man's neck. Blood poured over us both and the battle was over with our side victorious.

The crowd for our side cheered - the crowd from the opposing side quietly came down to the floor with us to claim their dead. Travis and I left the gym as we had entered - together - and silently walked down the hall. He didn't thank me - he didn't need to. And I knew that I had changed the face of these battles, they would never be the same after what I had done.