

Prologue: Tana

The deafening cheers of the spectators echo through the Arena, chanting in support of their favorite contestant. Up there, the air is clean, and the aroma of food makes my stomach growl. Yet, down here, under the Arena, we are only fed when we win. You'd think our captors would want to keep us all healthy and well-fed. After all, they brought us here as modern-day gladiators. But sadly, that's not how it works.

Here, only the strongest survive, and I am one of the strongest.

My name is Tana, and I am one of the last Elemental Dragons in existence. There are only four of us left. One for air, one for water, one for earth, and me, one for re. My captors are unaware of my true identity, a secret I guard ercely. We're not allowed to shift in the Arena anyway. We must ght in our human form, which inadvertently helps me protect my secret.

The ones who imprison us do not care about our well-being. Supernaturals are easy to nd, if not so easy to capture. Very few survive the rst week in the Arena, but there is a never-ending supply of ghters coming through the doors every week.

I've lost count of my time here; perhaps a year or more has passed. Our jailors deliberately keep us weak so we cannot stage an uprising and get out of here. Yet, few endure long enough to even consider it. Every battle is to the death. If you don't kill your opponent, the Commander of the Arena will kill you himself and claim the other as the victor. I've never seen it, but we can hear everything from under the Arena.

Cedric is ghting now. He's been here nearly as long as I have. It's only through our survival that we've become something like friends. We're the two that have lasted the longest; because of that, we look out for each other.

He is an Alpha werewolf. I know this because I can smell the wolf on him, and his aura is strong. He thinks I am also an Alpha werewolf because I've hidden my scent, and only someone that strong could survive here. The only other survivor of comparable tenure is a tiger shifter, but he's a loner and has no interest in creating connections with us.

I'm standing at the gates when Cedric is brought back, battered and bruised. We always are after a ght. Based on the burns, I'd guess he was ghting against a warlock or a faery. I hope to catch his eye as they drag him past me, but it looks like he's unconscious. If I'm back quickly enough, I can help heal him. I've done it before when he's been injured badly. It's part of how we've bonded. He made sure my food wasn't stolen when I was unconscious, and I helped him heal.

As my match is announced, I stand at the gates, where the crowd begins chanting my name, "Tana! Tana! Tana!"

Both Cedric and I are fan favorites. The sounds of the spectator's feet stomping on the Arena oor cause the ceiling of our prison to vibrate, sending ripples through the scales beneath my skin.

The crowd's excitement increases as my competitor is released into the battleground. I only have to wait another minute, and the gate opens for me.

Slowly, I make my way to the battleground, to kill yet another supernatural.