

## The Mines Ashland

Kryos snapped awake. He vaguely remembered the events that changed his life. It had all been such a blur. He remembered telling his little sister that he loved her as he was dragged away. He had fought back so hard that his clothes were torn down the middle of his torso. He remembered the salty tears that rolled down his eyes. They were about to make a return to his eyes then his door opened. "Take him to the deciding area," a deep croaky voice said. Kryos was escorted to the Deciding Area where he would find his fate. He would either be chosen to be "Resurrected" which meant he would be a servant for the Blue Strikers and rise back up to the over world or descend into the deep dark dusty mines.

"Step forward," a strict voice says. Kryos strode forward unlike the others who were cowering down to little shuffle movements. He made a sideways glance and smirked. "Hand," the voice said. Man, these people are either trying to get their job done and go or just had an insignificant ,miniscule vocabulary. He thought of this system as a wheel that you spun where 99% was descend and 1% of that was to be resurrected "You are..." Ugh. Why did the senders have to be so dramatic? "Mines," the sender said.

He went to a line where people were waiting to get sent to the mines. He put his hand on the stone wall. It was cool, had a deep gray shade with some moss in between cracks and a smell that reminded Kryos of walks he had been on with fresh air filled with mist that made him feel rejuvenated. Walks with his sister. The ones where they would both stay outside finding rocks that resembled some creature, and

hearing the crisp crunch with leaves under his feet while he was under a sky that was like a blanket of blueberry. Then when he wanted to feel strong, he remembered his sister saying that she wanted to do this everyday and then she would embrace him and hold on for a long period of time. He clenched his teeth, trying to hold back tears. He just couldn't do it. Kryos had to let it out, like others who were crying, but either for sadness of descending or tears of joy for ascending.

“Come Forth,” a cotton eyed man says. “Here you will go into the mines where you will dig everything,” he says, “If you find any valuable minerals or ores,” he pauses and chuckles making a fist over his mouth, “Well then when that happens, we will get you out of there.”

“If that ever happens,” he murmurs under his breath.

“What did you say?” Kryos asks.

He laughs, “It's just that a weakling like you with no power will never make it up again.” Kryos suddenly realised he was standing with the man who had dragged his mom and sister back threatening to kill them if he didn't back away.

As if the man had read his mind, he said, “Yes, you remember that?” This time his laugh was so loud, it attracted attention from the others.

Kryos suddenly felt a surge of something. Was it sadness? Weakness? Power? He felt angry, seething with energy and dark momentum.

He let out a yell and was surprised how much his scream sounded like a war cry. What he did next, he thought of in his brain as: Man meets fist, fist and man argue, man suddenly has fist close up, not for a shake but something more painful. “JUST GET OUT!” the man yelled.

Then down in the elevator, he descended.

He arrived with everyone already staring at him. Had they heard the commotion from the 1<sup>st</sup> floor? Didn't matter to him. He strolls forward and suddenly everyone starts cheering for him.

"Okay, what did I do to get ALL of you to clap for me?" Kryos asked. He surprisingly felt lighter like a weight had been lifted off of his shoulder.

"M'name is be Jake," a muscular boy with veins showing like tree roots that you can barely see but when you look closer, it is easy to see.

"And that man you runneth your fist with was a man who," the boy suddenly paused and looked like he was choking, "He... took our families and for that, we wanted to do what you did, but there was security around." At this point, if someone wasn't crying, they had tears taking up all the space in their eyes.

"Come," a man of about 50 who also met the same fate as the others.

"We must sleep for tomorrow, the gates open and our mining begins.

Kryos hears a loud buzz. He knows it is time to mine. He checks his name on a clipboard that sits atop a stone pedestal. 141. Something about that number just made him feel weird. It was like.... he had seen that before. He went to his locker and found Jake waiting for him.

"First day is th' one that kills yeh," he says. Kryos didn't understand so he nodded, put on his helmet, took a pickaxe and went to mineshaft 141. He went in and climbed down a ladder made out of some kind of mix between gravel and cobblestone. His hands were trembling as he went down, looking down cautiously as he inched down. He drew his pick behind his head and swung. There was a blast of sparks and stones that ranged from tiny bits to whole chunks flew off and around him. This went on for and long time and what seemed to Kryos as hours and when he was walking away, he noticed something shiny.

It looked like some kind of iron. Maybe if he showed it to someone with authority, he would get a brake because after that time, his back ached and it felt like standing straight up hurt. He went up to it and smashed the rock around it. After the smoke came away, he found himself standing in front of a door. He opened it and there was a locker, a bed in one corner that looked so comfortable and inviting, he felt tired. There was a basket on the table full of food that looked so good, he wanted to eat. Was he supposed to find this room? Was he supposed to eat the food? The name printed inside the locker when he opened it told him it was his. The name spelled KRYOS. There was a small message with 2 words that made him feel almost dizzy in happiness. Those words were "From Dad."

He couldn't do anything else so he sat down and ate the contents of the basket. He was so hungry, he ate everything then he froze mid-chew. Was that basket meant to last for the entire time? He felt sick, despite how good it felt to eat good tasting food. He had eaten a turkey sandwich with some meat that only the leaders of the Blue Diamonds ate called "Bacon." There was soup and even cold, it tasted amazing. He heard a buzzer, similar to the one he heard when he started so that meant it was time to call it a day and get to sleep. He couldn't sleep. The things that happened that day were flying and swarming around him like bees with a meal left out. He couldn't sleep for a while then his eyes grew heavy. He couldn't leave them open so he shut them and fell asleep.

In the morning, he went straight to the room and saw that the basket was refilled except with different food that looked good. He mined even faster and with more energy because he knew that every day that he came back, he would have food. This routine went on for several days coming and going, having conversations and when he didn't want some food, he would divide it into equal portions and leave them in the others' lockers. They would wake to find delicious food ready to eat and after that, everyone felt a bit lighter and happier. They even

started to sing songs while they mined.

One day, Kryos woke up and started to mine. He felt a bit groggy. He went to check the place where his dad was supposed to give him helpful things. So far he had received food, a better pickaxe, even a toy. The mysterious thing was every day that he came back, there would be a new scratch on the table. He went to see it and moved the basket on to the floor, looked at the table and froze. It was the insignia of The Shadow Serpents, the exact opposite of the Blue Diamonds. What made Kryos almost faint was where the crown on the serpent was supposed to say "Viper" because the Viper was the leader, it said something that made him feel dizzy with mixed feelings because on the crown, it said "Dad." He didn't know if this was a joke or if his dad was actually the Viper. The buzzer rang and he had gotten used to it but today it sounded different. It sounded like it was screaming "Dad" with a nasal tone on the "a."

Kryos again couldn't sleep because he felt like that room was haunted. They were like ghosts filling his head, making it impossible to think of anything else. He knew something had to happen. Like everything was connected. But how? He would have to wait until morning to find out.

In the middle of the night, Kryos snapped awake. It felt like something was calling to him. He walked through the jagged rock and crystalline formations and to the room. He just now realised that he had dug so much that it was impossible to see what was at the back. He turned to the door and took a deep breath. He went up and pressed the door with his palms that were almost drenched in sweat. He looked at the ground when he opened the door and moved forward. He looked up and jumped.

"Son!" a tall man in a sleek black long coat said.

"Dad?" Kryos returned.

“Well, some choose to call me the Viper.” he said, “And before you ask more, I owe you an explanation.”

After about an hour, Kryos had learned the story of his dad. So his mom and dad hadn't divorced. He had been abducted by the old king himself. But his dad wanted vengeance and he was so bent on it that he went to the extreme of taking him out while he was being crowned as the king. No one knew that he had done it until he told everyone. And instead of attacking him, they cheered. The man who would have been king was a traitor and was helping citizens opposed to terrorizing them. Kryos had tears welled up in his eyes. “Son.” his father said, “ Come with me.” And Kryos followed. In the back of the closet, there was a door.

He was lead down in an elevator and right when it opened, Kryos's father said, “Welcome to the Shadow Serpents, son.” “You will be here for a while.” Kryos's dad smiled as if he would enjoy the next thing he said. “And have fun terrorizing the Blue Diamonds.” He handed Kryos a pistol and showed him his target. Governor Lux. The Commander and Governor of the Blue Diamonds. Kryos put the blaster up and saw the man pleading with his eyes not to do it but without hesitation, Kryos let it fly.

The End. Or is it?