(Nathan POV)

Hell.

Like a literal HELL.

I mean how can a guy be sooo dry yet soo wet at the same time?

I hadn't had anything to drink in like at least an hour or so. Or at least that was what I thought.

And I was sweating soo much that if I stayed at a place for a little bit. It would have made a small pool under me. Well not here though. Because it would have evaporated even before it would have formed. The desert was that hot.

Yeah, I was still there. Stuck, not knowing how the fuck I got there. It was hot. Like really hot and I had been walking for what felt like decades but I was also sure that it had not been even an hour. I mean where the hell was I? I had my theories.

(How did I get here? I was in my room meditating and then I was here. HOW??)

Well, I was an optimistic guy. So I looked for the good in every situation.

Ahem!

Anyway, there was a good thing and that was that the bastard in my head was quiet. Like a lot quiet. He hadn't spoken a single word since I came here. At one point I even tried to reach out to him but there was no response. At first, I was happy that I was alone in my head for a while but now it was getting concerning. I was in an unknown place at an unknown time without any of my belongings. Wait...… did I mention that I was stark naked? Yeah, that was also a problem. I was somehow transported here without anything. My wand was missing, I had no clothes on, not even my watch. So there was no way of contacting anyone. So I could only use my own magic or the wandless magic. But things were getting really out of hand. The biggest mystery was...… how did I even get here? I was not a traveler and I did not know how to apparate yet. That left only a single option. And by the each passing second, I was becoming more and more sure of it.

(I have to try it. Or else I will not reach anywhere.)

So I stopped and sat on the burning sand. I literally thought my skin would melt due to all that heat. But there were more pressing issues at hand. I sat in the lotus position and started to meditate, trying to reach my mindscape. That was when I noticed it. My mind was clear. Clearer than it had ever been. I had complete control over my thoughts. There were no stray thoughts and the focus I had was simply amazing. This made my theory even more probable. I was becoming more and more sure of it.

What I had theorized was that I was not in any physical place. I was in my mindscape and my physical body was still in the physical domain. That was why I was not able to hear him at all. Because I was in my own head. But the problem with this theory was the fact that I had not seen even a single memory. Our mindscape was supposed to be filled with lots of magical imprints scattered across the whole thing, but if this was my mindscape, then where were the memories or the magical imprints? There was just a vast desert and nothing else.

Another problem was that our mindscape depicted the state of our mind. I did not even want to know what this depicted.

I sat there on the sand for God knows how long before I felt a sudden pull. It was as if something was trying to pull my consciousness towards itself. If it was a call from my own mind, it was definitely going to be helpful, but if it was otherwise...… well let's just say it would have been really bad. I decided to trust my theory and let go. It felt as if I was flying through the sky. When I opened my eyes, in front of me was a mountain range. I was standing in front of a huge cave.

(Seems as if I was right. This probably is my mindscape. If it is my mindscape, then I would be able to do this.)

I willed, and imagined myself wearing clothes. Lo and behold I was wearing clothes. That was the last nail in the coffin and now I was sure that this was my mindscape. So if it was my mindscape, that meant I was all-powerful here. So there was no need to be afraid. I simply walked inside the cave without another thought. But it was all my imagination and the bubble popped when out of the darkness something jumped at me. I was taken off guard. It scratched my face. I tried to dodge but it was too fast. So instead I made sure to protect my eye. My face started to bleed badly. Even though the cut itself was not that deep but it still hurt enough to make to scream.

(What the hell was that.)

I jumped back and cleaned the blood off my face with my sleeves. I looked around but there was nothing. Only darkness. Whatever had attacked me, disappeared as quickly as it had appeared. The inside was dark and I could not see a thing inside.

(What to do now.)

I had to go in and I did not know whether that thing was going to attack again or not.

"seems as if I don't have any choice here. I have to go in." I talked to myself.

Saying that I stepped inside the darkness once more, ready this time. As my feet crossed the line separating the desert and the inside of the cave, the attack came again. But this time I was ready. Ducking down I tried to grab whatever it was that had attacked me. It was fast, I was faster. I succeeded in grabbing it. It was strong but...… unfortunately, I was not stronger. With a single jerk, it got free of my grip. I could not see clearly yet as my eyes were still not accustomed to the darkness but I felt it coming. In a fight or flight response, my body moved itself and with a backflip, I was outside the cave. Immediately I crossed my arms against my chest in an attempt to protect myself from the next coming attack. But it never came. I stood still for a minute thinking that whatever it was, it was lurking there, coming to attack. But there was no movement.

With my last attempt, I gained insight. On a few things.

First, the creature would not take a step outside the cave.

Second, the creature would attack if I so much as placed my pinky inside the cave.

Third, it was a four-legged creature.

I had deduced all that but still, I had no idea how I was going to enter the cave. Last time I was lucky that I grabbed its foot. In reality, it was both stronger and faster than me. I needed a way…

(I have to do something or else I would be stuck here for God knows how long.)

But there was no way. No method that came to mind. There was no.......

\*FACEPALM\*

(Am I an idiot.)

Why the hell was I trying to fight that thing In its own domain and physically at that? I was not some wrestler. For God's sake, I was a wizard.

With that thought in mind, I raised my hand and a ball of flames formed right above my head. I gently threw the ball inside the cave. The light from the fire lit the insides of the cave. And then I saw it. A tiger jumped towards the ball of light. For a moment I was dazed by how beautiful that thing was. It was as white as snow and pitch black lines that were so dark, they disappeared in the darkness giving it a serene look. As the tiger came into contact with the ball, its fur immediately caught fire.

\*ROOAAAARRRRRR\*

It screamed in agony. The screams pulled me out of my stupor. Immediately I formed another fireball and threw it toward the tiger.

\*ROOAAAARRRRRR\*

It screamed even more. I sat on the ground and called to the earth by touching all the sand beneath me. A pointed rock rose from the ground. I grabbed it and using the wind to speed myself reached the tiger. It was still on the ground burning but its survival instincts kicked in. Feeling itself in danger the tiger tried to run away. But this time it was slow. With a swift movement, I thrust the rock into its throat.

The tiger jumped with pain and tried to throw me off. It was a good struggle on its part. And it worked as was sent flying. My back hit the wall and for a moment everything went dark around me. As the world came into focus, the first thing I saw was the tiger almost ripping out my throat. I pushed myself aside using the wind in just the nick of time. And with the momentum gained I pulled out the rock stuck in its throat. The blood that was blocked due to the rock gushed out instantly. Not wasting a moment, I plunged another fireball inside its open wound.

\*ROOAAAARRRRRR\*

Once again it screamed and then it fell down. After a minute it all fell quiet.

(Damn, am I weak or what. It took absolutely everything I had just to kill a tiger. I need to release my seal or else it will be really bad in the coming time.)

Leaving the corpse behind I started to walk inside.

(At least I got rid of that thing. What was it even doing he.....)

My thought was interrupted by the scene in front of me. It was easily the most beautiful thing I had ever seen in my life. I was at the edge of a cliff. There was a small forest at the bottom of the cliff and a waterfall was running from the ceiling and disappearing down into the floor somewhere. There were crystals of different colors shimmering around almost everywhere. The scene looked like something straight out of a fairy tale. But that was not what had me stopped in my tracks. The thing stopping me was the dozens of ruby eyes staring down at me from all around the scenery. There were at least seventy tigers staring at me with their jaws open.

(Oh I am so fucked.)