

unyielding hatred for your family. Your father hurt him personally, he will probably kill you the first chance he gets unless you learn to hate him”.

The two of them arrive at an old abandoned shed in the woods. Luke looks at Jonah with confusion who just nods and holds his hand out. Luke steps inside the shed, but before he can fully take a step inside he feels a sharp pain in his stomach. His head already facing down he sees the source, a fist sinking in. A tall boy wearing designer clothes laughs, “everyone else is here, I knew the next one would be the Brackenstein player”. Luke says with pure emptiness, “just kill me then”. Lander is shocked enough by these words to take a step back, “well killing you before Ur means a stronger Brackenstein will show up to take your place. I’ll just kill you in Ur, and then kill your family after I win!”. Luke nods, “...ok”. Lander grits his teeth, “you’re a freak! Open Phantom-” He is cut off by another player grabbing his arm. This player is a full grown man, “save it for Ur young Wodsnell”. Lander pulls his arm off, “are you sure you don’t want to just play now Leonne?! We are all here anyways!”. Jonah bursts into the shed and speaks calmly, “if you continue to act so rambunctious then you will leave me no choice but to start Ur right now before explaining all the rules”. Lander sighs and holds out his hand, “then speak the rules”.

Luke sits down next to the other two players. One is Leonne, an older man in his late 50s, while the other is a woman in her late 30s. They face a velvet red curtain. Leonne and Lander both stand instead of sitting with the rest. Jonah stands in front of the curtain, “the truth of Ur are only told to the elders of each of the 3 families. They decide how much information is needed to share with the kids participating in Ur. So for the sake of the two outsiders brought in, and also I have no idea how much your elder taught you, I will start from the beginning”. The group waits patiently as Jonah continues, “Ur take place every 15 years. 5 of the strongest magicians are picked to enter Ur. Once you enter there is no exit, even in death. The goal of the game is to kill the other 4 players and open the gate leading to the Hanging Garden of Babylon. Inside the garden one wish will be granted. So far, in the thousands of years of this game’s existence, not a single player has ever won”. Everyone begins berating Jonah, except for Luke. Lander calls out, “all except me of course!”. Leonne yells out, “that’s not possible! Someone has to live!”. Jonah holds out his hands, everyone stops yelling and Jonah finishes, “you didn’t listen to earlier. You cannot escape even in death. All the past players will also be at the battle ground. They cannot win Ur or get a wish, and if you die in this round of Ur, then you will return in the next games”. Leonne punches the wall leaving a giant hole to the outside, “so you’re saying our lives are forfeit already?!”. The woman, Zial, speaks confidently, “I died 5 years ago, if I have a second chance to wish for things to be different, then that’s all I can do”. Leonne’s anger boils, “what is wrong with you?! To throw away your life so easily?!” he smacks Luke on the shoulder, “what about you?! Don’t you think that is crazy?!”. Luke looks to the floor with his empty eyes, “I agree with you that this sounds like a fate worse than hell, but I was forced to compete, and I have no chance to win and wish my life any better. I have no choice but to just start coping with it now”. Leonne removes his hand from Luke’s shoulder as if he was a leprosy patient. Lander laughs confidently keeping eye contact with Jonah, “Winners have no reason to fear losing!”. Leonne looks to the last player Mical, hoping for one bit of sanity in this world. Mical ponders for a moment, “that does sound pretty bad, and my odds aren’t too great...but I can’t get what I want without playing, so I guess I’m in”. Leonne’s shoulders drop in disappointment. “I agree to the rules...” he sighs in defeat.

“Excellent. All of you get ready. Ur begins now. Silver Crest!” Jonah calls out. Mana swirls around all 5 of the players and they all shrink down until they become nothing but a tiny needle sized string of mana, that flows behind the curtain. None of them can see, or feel anything, except for a split second, they all see the same exact image. A beating heart.