Just Like Piñatas

Jamison VanLoocke
"...Barbaric?! The Parade? Oh that's just bull!" Mr. MaKenly shouted through a mouthful of half chewed popcorn. "I know, I know." His old friend John Mayzer said. "But it's true, that they say that I mean. Bloody foreigners."

"Well how do they choose their wives then?"
"Apparently they fatten them up with chocolate, and then when the woman believes that the man will keep her fed forever, they get hitched." Mayzer checked his watch, impatiently. Bleachers were always hard to sit on.

"They just freely choose who they want?" The very thought baffled MaKenly.
"I guess so, I'm not sure. I mean, all the good 'uns would be taken pretty fast, I'd think. And wouldn't there be a lot of people who don't get married?"
"Well, they're stupid."

There was a great roar in the crowd as a few women came walking out into the sand-filled stadium, leading a large amount of black blobs with white masks, who each vied to be in the front near the gate.

"My little Reth is in there this year..." MaKenly said with a hint of both pride and sorrow. "Reth?" Mayzer choked on his beer. "No way! She's what, eight, if that?"

"Nope, she's seventeen this year. The numbers finally worked out, she got a spot."

"Seventeen..." There was a long sense of bewilderment and longing. "My, where did nine years go?"

"Out of a bottle and into your gut!" MaKenly laughed loudly. "So which one is she? Can you tell? Parents are supposed to be able to tell."

"Oh that's bollocks and you know it. The only ones you can tell are the fat'uns. They're bigger'n the rest."

"True... true. Oh, remember last year?" Mayzer's stomach grumbled lightly. He raised his hand to a vendor walking by, who handed him another hot dog.

"Last year...? Oh, you mean the Lauden boy?" MaKenly eyed the hotdog greedily, compared it to his popcorn, and got one for himself.

"Ayup, that's the one. Came in last and got stuck with that thunderous monster of a woman. Fell to the sand crying he did."

"I remember." He chuckled. "Whatever happened with them?"
"I hear she ate him."
"... No! You're shitting me!"
"You're much too big for that! And what am I, a public servant? I don't keep tabs on everybody!"

"Still, his own fault for that. He shoulda got here faster! Everyone knows the good'uns are in the front." "Yes, but the mothers of the ugly sons hide in the streets, holding the fast boys back so theirs get a shot."

"Aye, I know. I got hit in the face by Mrs.Benafis when I ran. Hurt like a-"
"Oh? What'd she hit you with?" Mayzer checked his watch again. "I believe it was a large sausage."
"...Sausage?"
"Aye. Not sure where she got it though, least not one that big. I had a nice red bruise on my face during the honeymoon pictures!"

"Your face is always red."

MaKenly started to make a comeback, but there was the sound of a large buzzer and many men screaming in excitement.

"It started!" both cried in unison, turning their attention to the monitors located above them, across the open field.

The gates opened somewhere across town, and young boys, from fifteen to twenty, dressed in naught but white shorts came barreling out at full speed, tripping over each other. Various cameras placed all across the road filmed the action as the boys each pushed, clawed, and screamed their way towards their victory.

"Oh-oh!" Mayzer cried, dropping his half-eaten hot dog. "Look out boy, look out!"

His words obviously didn't reach the ears of the child, who was suddenly caught by a tripwire placed by the mothers of the uglier boys. The rest, those not on the ground, jumped over the wire with a laugh.

MaKenly changed from the monitor to the black sheep-like blobs in the stadium. They were excitedly buzzing, trying one last desperate push to get into the front.

"Still trying to figure out which is Reth?"

"Oh shut it!"

The gate started to open after a few minutes, rising slowly. The black blobs did as they were trained, and remained within the stadium; leaving would result in disqualification.

The fastest, or rather the luckiest, boy came round the corner.

"Why, it's Reth!" Mayzer cried. "Reth was the first pick!"

"My God!" MaKenly jumped up and down. "My God, my God! Her mother's going to be so proud!"

The rest of the boys came spilling in, socking the first girl they approached in the Springtime Wedding Parade. Women fell, hitting the sand with violent thuds, and their betrothed gently brought them back up after their first binding touch.

"Oh!" Mayzer jumped up now alongside MaKenly, who was crying a few tears of joy.

"We got a runner!"

MaKenly followed to where Mayzer was pointing, and by God he was right.

"She won't get far!" MaKenly cried. "Look! She's already got'im on her tail!"

A young boy broke from the pack, running full speed towards her. The sand kicked up from his feet and glittered the air, and the girl's shriek could be barely heard over the cheers and jeers of the men in the crowd.

The boy leapt forward with a reckless blow, knocking the mask clean off the girl.

"Feh." MaKenly laughed. "And they call this barbaric?"