

Thomas Tarpula, me, the chosen one? I was to play in the world's greatest poker tournament, The Super Card. I had waited patiently for this day, and it's finally here. Every year, the dragons from the planet Dragum pick one representative from each planet to represent the species in the annual game. These nominees gather at the poker table in a city known as Paccimacx. The exact location of the table is only revealed to the players chosen. Here, all new nominees, as well as the previous victors come together to play. The Super Card is the biggest and most sought after competition that exists, and I finally get to experience it.

The dragons had done their bidding and I had been the one to emerge as the lucky nominee from the planet Earth. I had been training for The Super Card since I was a wee boy. My father had been the chosen one the very year I was born. He had lost the game to a Finch who by his description was a "little whiny kid" that year, and he has never let it go. Finches were creatures from the planet Farga. They could almost pass as human, save for their bulgy eyes and antennas and wings. They were one of the nice ones and they often visited earth. Dad's loss to the Finch is something I've never heard the end of. It's almost as if he brought it up every single lesson. He would tell me "You have to focus Thomas, focus! Lest you lose to another one of them Finches". Every lesson, I had to hear those lines. I had poker games scheduled for me every weekend, which I could never miss. "It strengthens your resolve", my father had said to me. "It makes your love for the game grow. Constant practice is key", he would always say. In these games, my father taught me how to deal and play. We played full ring (9 handed) games, and extensively practiced 6 handed poker as well. My father taught me every trick in the book; and there were thousands of books over the years.

The games were changed from the traditional 9 hand, to 6 handed games 5 years after I was born. My father simply focused the subject of his teaching on 6 handed games after that. The traditional positions from which play was the tightest; UTG (Under the Gun), UTG+1 and UTG+2 no longer exist in 6 handed games. Instead, there was Lowjack (LJ), Hijack (HJ), Cut-Off (CO), Button (BTN), Small Blind (SB) and Big Blind (BB). With three fewer players, 6 handed games, or 6-max is looser than full-ring poker, and so there's a larger average pot size, a higher percentage of players seeing flops, and more hands per hour. Players get to spend less time folding and more time playing hands.

The day of my nomination had started out terribly. I had jolted from my sleep, covered in cold sweat from the nightmare I had. I couldn't remember what it was about exactly, but it involved a lot of running. I sighed and got out of bed. I pulled off my grey shirt which had clung to my body for dear life as beads of sweat rolled down my face. The heater in my room was turned on, leaving the room a cozy temperature in contrast to the freezing temperature just outside my window. I remembered I had a presentation due that morning and grabbed my books off my

desk. I put everything I needed in place, and tidied up my room before heading downstairs to have breakfast. Or at least I hoped I would have breakfast. Everything that could go wrong that morning, went terribly wrong! First I woke up from a nightmare, and then I couldn't have breakfast because the food got burnt. While heading to school, I saw the piles of fresh snow in the driveway I cleared the day before and I fell trying to make a path. I also got late to school and got detention. The whole thing was already a huge mess and I couldn't wait for it to end.

The announcement came like it usually did. A loud noise, a beam of light, and the dragons ship appearing and hovering in the air. All technology is momentarily taken over, so everyone, everywhere gets the announcement. I was just about to deliver my presentation when it happened. I stood by the window pane, staring at the ship in awe. It didn't matter how many times I saw it, I still stared every time. The dragons are such beautiful and majestic creatures and the sight of them is something I look forward to each year. Their grandiose appearance, the hypnotizing voice, the fact that they breathe fire, the thickness of their skins, the grace in their movements, all of it. Seeing them come to earth for the announcement each year was the highlight of my year. The announcement started. "Citizens of earth, it's that time of year again. Time to play the famous card game. Time to play to win. The Super Card games will be held at the usual venue in Paccimacx. This year's Earth nominee is Homas Shylin Tarpula. Will you please step into the beam?" I felt myself freeze. Homas Tarpula? Me? The chosen one?? I was finally going to put my years of practice to use? I heard my classmates yell at me to go, and I took off running. I screamed as I ran, mostly out of excitement. I couldn't believe it! I was the Earth's nominee for The Super Card! My entire body hummed with excitement at the thought of finally seeing Paccimacx. I had always wanted to be one of the chosen, and now I am.

I got down to the ground floor and the students cleared a path for me. I could hear whistles, claps, screams and congratulations with every step I took. I nervously approached the beam and I got lifted into the air. It felt like a dream; a fantasy that exists only in my head, except it wasn't. This is real. I entered the ship and a box awaited me. It was handed to me by one of the dragons. It had told me the contents of the box, but I was honestly too busy staring at it in awe for me to fully register anything it said. The short meeting ended with the dragon telling me goodluck, and then I was back on the ground and the ship retreated in the air. I clutched the box to my chest as I sat on the cold floor to process what just happened. This is really happening?