

*It's been a while...it's definitely been a while.*

The thought latched onto his mind as Ricky exited the locker room with the younger human trailing behind, his own, feline tail swaying behind him. Rioku wasn't too shy of the tiger's height, and despite both having toned, taut muscles overall, Ricky had a slight, natural bulkiness to him.

They made their way towards the practice rings, both wearing their typical ring attire underneath their t-shirts, as well as each carrying a small, drawstring bag for their other gear. It was late in the day, and most of the gym-goers were already gone. Ricky glanced around the empty room and grinned. "Alright; we get the whole place to ourselves." He then looked towards Rioku, noting how he too was both excited and nervous about this. "So, ya ready for this, bud?"

Rioku's feline ears atop his head twitched as he tried to show he was more excited than nervous. He nodded. "Ready when you are."

Ricky walked over to a corner of one of the rings, setting his bag on the ground. He grinned. "Good!" He opened his bag and placed his black and orange elbow and knee pads on the ring edge. He then took off his shirt, revealing a black singlet with an orange chest-sweep stripe that ran from the left shoulder down to his right thigh; a similar pattern was on the reverse, making it appear continuous.

As Rioku got the rest of his gear out, he couldn't help but admire how well the singlet showed off the tiger's muscles and green stripes. He hoped he wasn't blushing so hard that his cheeks matched the color of his red eyes. Shaking his head, he placed his red and light-grey MMA gloves on the ring edge and stripped as well, though he only wore a pair of light-grey spandex trunks with red trimming. It was very clear how much smaller Rioku was compared to Ricky, now that they both had their gear on.

"So, um," the tiger began as he leaned against the turnbuckle after they both entered the ring, "As I mentioned before, I'm more into the pro wrestling stuff and not so much MMA. But, it's not unheard of to use such techniques in that sport. I personally don't consider myself a striker, but I have used such attacks before on occasion."

Rioku placed a hand on his hip as he let out a sigh of relief. "Oh thank god. When you mentioned you were skilled in that and not MMA, I...was having second thoughts on sparring with you." His red eyes shifted to the side, tail thrashing about behind him as his false-confident smile faded.

Ricky pushed off the turnbuckle and placed a paw on the human's shoulder. "Hey, don't worry about it, kiddo."

Rioku looked up and noticed how the tiger's blue eyes were both comforting, yet intimidating. He managed a genuine smile for once when he heard Ricky say that.

He continued. "You can use whatever techniques you know, ok?"

The human nodded.

"Besides, I haven't been into this wrestling thing all that often either. Honest." It was then he realized his paw was still on the kid's shoulder, which he allowed to slide off and drop to his side while giving an apologetic grin.

Rioku cock his head sideways, feline ears twitching as his tail began to curl upwards. "Wait? Really?!"

He nodded, scratching his cheek. "Yep...surprising given my age, I know." He shrugged. "A lot of it's due to missed opportunities or lack thereof when I was younger. But more on that later; we got a match to put on!"

"Of course!" He said as he grinned wide enough to show his teeth, a mix of human and feline.

"That's the spirit!" Ricky ruffled Rioku's light-grey hair, pushing down ever so slightly. The human pushed back up against the paw, still putting on his toothy grin. Ricky eased up on the pressure as he felt the human push against his paw.

Rioku backed up towards the opposite corner of the ring as Ricky did his pre-match stretches. "So," the tiger began, "I'm sure you know winning by pinfall is the default in pro wrestling, but we can do something different if you want."

He crossed his arms, look off in the distance in thought for a moment. "Could do submission or knockout, or all three if that's possible."

"Oooo, I like that idea. Though...you *do* know how to get a pin on your opponent, right?"

Rioku shook his head and shrugged.

"Basically, keep your opponent's shoulders touching the mat for three seconds, though sometimes it would have to be for ten. Just hope you're able to prevent them from kicking out, meaning you *have* to get off them." He paused a moment to allow Rioku to process his instruction. "Makes sense?"

He nodded while loosening up. "Mmhmm."

"Good!" Ricky grinned and got in a loose boxing stance. "Because I'm sure this will go quick."

Rioku gave a deep breath before getting into a loose boxing stance, his ears and tail twitching with anticipation for the fight. "Not if I force you to tap out first, kitty!"

"Hehe; if you say so, kid." Ricky smirked. "Ready when you are."

He started to slowly approach the center of the ring as Rioku did the same. Soon enough they began to circle one another, waiting to see who would make the first move.

Ricky wiggled his fingers, intending on going for a takedown right off the bat, but got an idea. He raised an open paw up and out, nodding towards it. "Com'on kid; let's see how strong you are."

Rioku's ears twitched in confusion, but a smirk soon formed as he interlocked his fingers with the tiger's.

He then raised his other paw in the same manner, to which Rioku complied as such. As soon as that other hand interlocked with his paw, Ricky began to push against the human, gently at first. Rioku had to widen his stance right away once the tiger started to push. He gritted his teeth and tried as best he could to push back; he knew strength wasn't on his side, but he still wanted to show Ricky what he could do.

"Good. Good. Glad to see those muscles of yours aren't for show." Ricky could feel his sparring partner pushing back with all his might, sometimes forcing him to adjust his stance during the lockup. But he knew he had strength on his side and, sure enough, he pushed Rioku ever so closer to the ropes while also getting closer to him as well.

But he wasn't having any of that, and he was thankful he didn't get pushed right up against the ropes. Rioku quickly let go of the tiger's paws and lunged forward towards his legs.

Ricky tried to stop him in his tracks, but the kid was too quick, and he found himself getting tripped up by a double-leg attempt. His back slammed hard on the canvas. "Ooof!" he mewled. It has been a while since he's been in the ring, but he snapped himself out of his daze and got his arms around Rioku's neck to put him in a guillotine.

"Ack!" Panic quickly set in as he felt Ricky's arms tight around his neck with his head right up against the tiger's chest. Soon he felt Ricky's legs close tight around his waist. He felt around to try pushing himself out, but that only made Ricky tighten his grip. As a last resort, he began to pound away at the tiger's side, which forced Ricky to let go.

Once he shoved the human off, Ricky got up and backed away to allow Rioku to do the same. After all, they never set any rules for a TKO, so the tiger was being nice and allowed him to take his time.

Rioku started to get up, slowly at first, rubbing his throat as he did so, but was soon back on his feet in no time and got back in his stance.

Ricky massaged his side before getting back in his stance as well. "Hehe. Got one hell of a swing there," he grinned as they both circled each other, "But let's see if you can handle this!" He charged towards Rioku, sidestepping at the last second to grab at his left wrist.

But Rioku moved out of the way just in time, sending a solid kick to the back of the tiger's calf while he was turned around.

"Gah!" The kick didn't trip him up too bad, but it did force him to lose his momentum. He managed to turn around, only to be smacked in the cheek by another kick, making him stumble sideways. He just missed getting smacked again by a third kick as he went on the defensive, arms up and continuously circling Rioku while avoiding the ropes.

He sent a flurry of punches towards the tiger's face, most of which were dodged or blocked, but he did push Ricky back. It wasn't without getting nicked in the face or the side every so often, and Rioku had enough. The tiger was taller and bigger, sure, but he could use those strong, fuzzy shoulders to give him a boost for a swift knee to gut.

As if by instinct, Ricky grabbed at the human's arms when he felt his hands push on his shoulders. He growled, showing his teeth when--

"Gah!"

He instantly let go once that knee connected to his abs, which he couldn't tighten up in time. Even though he was doubled-over some from the impact, he used this position to his advantage and charged at Rioku for a shoulder tackle.

Rioku's arms were up by the time he felt one of those shoulders smack his abs while Ricky grabbed him around his waist. He yelped as his back slammed against the canvas with his larger opponent's weight crushing his legs. He tried to get at least one leg out from under the tiger, but Ricky spun sideways and slammed down on his chest while raising one of his legs to go for a pin.

"One!" Ricky called, "Let's see if you can kick out of this!"

Rioku tried pushing up against the tiger's weight to get his shoulders off the canvas.

"Two! Com'on kid, I know you can get out of this one!"

He growled and tried to kick out again, but no dice.

"Thr--ACK!" He mewled as a red fist smacked him square on his muzzle, forcing him to get off the human as he held up a paw to his face. He could already smell his own blood coming out of his nostril as he groaned. *Son of a bitch; again!?*

Rioku wasted no time and rolled away from the tiger, sliding behind him. While Ricky was still on both knees, he wrapped his arm around his throat and locked it in with his other arm for a rear-naked choke. He struggled to keep it locked tight as the tiger managed to get on a knee and pushed himself back, his weight crushing down on him. Tightening his arm up again, Rioku also wrapped his legs around Ricky's waist for a triangle hold to keep him grounded. Of course, the

tiger's thrashing about as he pulled on his arms didn't help much, but he could tell Ricky was starting to fade fast in the choke. "You gonna tap, kitty!?"

As Ricky thrashed about and pulled on the human's arm, he could feel himself begin to black out as he gasped for air. He barely let out a growl when he smacked his paw on Rioku's arm. Once he was let go, he instantly rolled onto all fours, wheezing and coughing as soon as his windpipe opened. His head throbbed as the circulation to his brain started up again. A few drops of blood dripped from his nose while he recovered.

Rioku stood there with his hand on his hip, panting a little. "I'm surprised I took you down this easily."

"Yeah, yeah," he said as he stood up fully, panting heavily, "Whaddya say...round two?" he asked as he wiped his nose.

"Oh, want me to beat you again? Alright!" Rioku headed towards a corner and got in his stance.

Ricky did the same in the corner opposite of the human, grinning with a small line of dried blood coming out of his nose. "We'll see kiddo...we'll see."