

"Why did I have to open my mouth?"

The Rathī bull could hardly stand on his hooves, nearly collapsing in his corner as his seventh sparring partner, Rhyno, exited the ring, a dark green gecko with even darker green dreadlocks. He began to sweat and pant constantly after about the third or fourth round, his neck became more and more sore as he took more punches to his head, despite the headgear he wore. As the rounds continued to get more difficult, his arms grew heavier too; he was practically eating everyone's punches by now.

But his abs hurt the most, especially after the fourth or fifth round when everyone watching and waiting to spar figured out his weakness.

Daivat was never the bulkiest or heaviest fighter, which didn't bother him too much. What did bother him, though, was how small he appeared compared to even the lighter-weight boxers. Luna, a white and brown bunny with light blue speckles on her body, was the only sparring partner that *might* have matched his weight class; even then, she was one of his fiercest opponents yet, despite her sweeter personality outside the ring.

And after her and Rhyno exploited that weakness throughout the majority of their rounds, he immediately began to regret his decision taking on this challenge. As he rested against the corner pad, he wasn't sure if the soreness in his gut was from all the punches or it felt twisted and cramped like he was about to puke right onto the canvas.

Right in front of everyone.

Not only were those waiting to spar with him and have already sparred watched this humiliating spectacle, but the small group of regulars at Battle Horns watched as well. They all knew well enough to continue training on their own as the sparring rounds kept on, but he didn't blame them for getting distracted and just observing.

Itami, a light green lizard who took charge of playing ref for this ordeal, checked up on Daivat.

"Think you got a few more rounds left in ya?" Itami asked in an all-too cheery tone.

The bull panted as his head lulled about somewhat, putting all his weight against the corner pad. "...maybe...fuck..."

Meanwhile, a raccoon, who appeared older than the majority of the other patrons of in the gym, began to climb into the ring himself with a med kit at the ready. "You think he'll be okay?" he asked.

"Yeah, he's fine," Itami replied, though noticed Bandit stepping in to help Daivat. "Hey! Outta the ring! Next round's about to start!"

"He's fine when I say he's fine!" Bandit then noticed the lizard approaching him and backed off, hissing at him as he stepped out of the ring and waited ringside. He would be more than happy to step in the ring with the others and go a few rounds, even if he wasn't as spry as the youngsters, but Itami was an exception.

The lizard focused his attention on Daivat again. "Anyway, you're doing great so far! I'm sure this next round will be fun for ya!" He waved for the next person to spar to join them. "Ricky! You're next!"

A light grey tiger with minty-green stripes climbed into the ring, looking a little too excited to spar with the bull. He padded over to the opposite corner from Daivat, smacking his gloves together and bouncing on his toes. He, too, was just as sweaty and winded somewhat, though it was from working the bags and shadowboxing as he waited for his turn to spar.

Itami waved for both to meet up in the center. "Hey, can someone reset the timer, please!" He ordered towards no one in particular.

Ricky immediately got in his stance and locked his eyes on the smaller bull, though he felt bad at how tired and sore he looked. He had to admire Daivat's stamina throughout all this; even he'll admit he wouldn't last this many rounds against such a variety of opponents.

Daivat got in his stance as well, though one could clearly see he struggled to keep his arms up and his gloves near his cheeks. He wasn't sure how much longer his legs could hold him up either, as it felt easier on him to just stand still and not move around much; unfortunately, this was a terrible idea and he knew all too well.

Itami stayed close to the pair until the bell sounded off to start the next round.

Right away, Ricky threw a couple jabs to the bull's head as he moved forward, forcing the bull to raise his arms up and step back.

The adrenaline rush kicked in right away, and Daivat moved sideways to try and throw off the tiger. Yet Ricky could cut off the ring with ease, keeping Daivat near the outside.

As he did this, Ricky threw some more jabs at Daivat, this time managing to smack him in the face and get closer. But Daivat was just able to slip outside a jab and countered with one of his own to the tiger's ribs.

This got him to back off somewhat, but not much.

Daivat tried to confuse the tiger again but became frustrated at how quick Ricky was to cut him off. He made a risky move and popped a couple jabs to Ricky's face, though those were either blocked or missed. Fueling more of his frustration, he came at the tiger with another jab to his body, then went in for an uppercut to his gut.

Ricky felt the impact force some air out of his lungs and forced him to back off again.

But that didn't last long.

He countered with a quick 1-2 to the bull's head, then risked a left hook for the cheek.

Daivat ate those punches and got pushed back again, though managed to counter with a cross to the tiger's cheek, forcing Ricky back yet again.

The bull sure as hell gave him a good workout, if his heavier panting, sweating, and racing heart were any indication. Wanting to keep Daivat on his hoof tips, Ricky popped a couple jabs to gain some ground and managed to back him up closer to the ropes.

Daivat tried to at least block those punches but took them to his face. His frustration grew even more when he felt the tuft on his tail brush against the ropes. Thinking fast, he parried a jab and countered, landing another hit on the tiger.

But Ricky didn't let up and jabbed at him more, throwing a few rights here and there, nearly all of them landing a hit on the bull or getting blocked. He knew Daivat was in trouble and couldn't back up anymore, plus he poorly blocked the punches as he bounced against the ropes with each impact.

His head snapped left, right, and back. He couldn't get his arms to come up, as much as he willed them to do so, and they drooped against the ropes behind him.

Ricky slowed down some, wanting to give Daivat a chance to defend. As soon as he saw those weak arms come up, though, he started his punches again. He, too, began to feel frustrated by now; he felt more like he was just practicing combos on a heavy bag rather than sparring.

"God! Fucking! Dammit! He hits fast!"

Daivat managed to get an arm up in an attempt to block an incoming hook, but the impact made him smack himself in the cheek with his own glove. Not a moment later, Ricky threw another hook and smacked him on the cheek himself, making him sink lower into the ropes.

Ricky knew how close he was by now and, since it began to feel more like normal training than sparring by now, he decided to practice his uppercuts on Daivat's tender abs.

Each punch made the bull sink lower and lower, forcing out loud groans as he felt his gut cave in. Soon enough, he couldn't take it anymore and stumbled towards Ricky, flopping on him in a clinch.

He kept his balance and just got his arms out of the way when he noticed Daivat going for a clinch, and he ended up hugging the smaller bull rather than clinching with him, rubbing his back with a gloved paw as they both panted hard. He could easily tell how worn out Daivat was as he wheezed and got his sweat mixed with his own.

He then allowed the bull to smack him in the side a few times as they clinched, surprised they still had some force behind them after all this time.

Daivat kept pounding away at the tiger's sides, some of his punches giving off soft **thumps** and forcing a groan from the tiger.

"Alright, you two can get cute with each other later," Itami said as he broke them up as soon as Daivat started punching.

He was glad he scored a few free hits on Ricky, though; as tired as he was, that brief moment felt therapeutic.

They both got back in their stances afterwards and, while Daivat began to feel more confident now, he tried to stand his ground as the tiger came at him.

Ricky threw some more jabs, though quickly caught a jab from the bull, but decided to not counter. He kept his gloves up and wanted to see if Daivat would come at him, which he did.

In the last seconds of the round, Daivat threw jab after jab towards the tiger and did the same thing as Ricky did with tossing a few rights here and there. Most of them were

blocked, caught, parried, or missed, though he was glad when they would smack that feline muzzle.

Soon enough the bell rang, ending the round. Itami had to stop Daivat to break his momentum, to which he complied and lowered his arms. As he was about to return to his corner for his next round, Ricky stopped him before he could take a step. He turned back around only to get put into a tight hug by the big, sweaty tiger.

"Keep it up, dude! You're at least staying on your hooves," Ricky said, though his voice was muffled some from the mouth guard, "Vio may be an ass, but Mike shouldn't be too bad for ya." He gave the bull a quick, tight squeeze, forcing out a soft moo from him. "Rodger might give you a hard time, though; I know how he can get."

Daivat hugged back for a brief moment and smiled.

They both pounded their gloves together and Ricky patted him on the shoulder before exiting the ring. Daivat returned to his corner once again, leaning against the corner pad and making every second of the rest period count before his next sparring partner.*

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