

Chapter 15 – “Do You Have What It Takes?”

Walking alongside Kai, Elyn kept shooting him glances, but they exchanged no words. She was pissed at the fact that she had to do this and that she didn't really have a choice in the matter since this was directly from Elder Eri herself.

However, the further they walked, the idea of trying Kai out for a warrior actually started to sound better to Elyn. Realizing that she would be able to *personally* assess if he was capable or not might just make this situation a lot less infuriating. This might even be enjoyable...

Now smiling, she was practically skipping the rest of the way, her sudden change in demeanor being much to the confusion of Kai.

Walking into the studded and worn ground of the training yard, Kai and Elyn drew quite a lot of stares. But it was Kai drawing all the attention specifically as word of his odd situation already had spread far and wide across the settlement.

Suddenly stopping in his tracks, he looked up at the large fellow who had just stepped in his path.

For Kai having to look up, that meant the guy who was blocking his path was quite tall as Kai was only a little under two meters (6'2), this guy almost an entire head taller.

The tall man was quite the brawny type, not the body-builder kind, but the bulky half-fat half-muscle kinda type.

[Aric Kuun - Skin Hardening]

Glaring challengingly down on Kai, the man obviously meant conflict. However, contrary to what the big guy had expected, Kai actually shot a gaze even more intense than his own.

In front of the smaller man, this guy who was confident in his ability to fight anyone below his own size and warrior stage, felt a sudden onset of fear; like his instincts were telling him to step out of the smaller man's path.

And amazingly enough, before the big guy had realized it, he had unconsciously taken a few steps to the side, allowing Kai to pass. Staring incredulously at his back, he tried to piece together what in the seven hells had just happened...

Elyn was equally as stunned, not knowing what Kai had done to make the volatile Aric step aside. That man had always been known to have an abundance of brawn and a lack of brains. So when she saw him step forward, she had already been gearing up to reprimand the brawny man as it was *her* privilege to beat up Kai before anyone got to.

Under the gazes of everyone, Kai moved into the corner of the training yard, beginning to make all kinds of stretches and exercises that wholly confused everybody as it seemed like he was goofing around like some town-idiot, high on Midnight Mushroom or having drunk a bit too much of Garnell's brew.

"By Kiandri's name, what are you doing?" She asked Kai incredulously who were currently doing burpees.

"I'm warming up." He grunted. "So, how are we doing this? We sparing, or just exercising?"

Stumped, Elyn just stood there, Kai simply continuing.

"Did Grandma Eri tell you?" Elyn asked as she hadn't actually said why she brought him here. "That we were going to try you out for a warrior?"

"Nope." He said simply. "But why else would someone like you bring me here?"

Elyn was about to say something about that off-handed remark, however, she didn't get to as a deep voice interrupted her from behind.

"Why have you brought *him* here?" The voice asked.

Turning around, Elyn saw the figure of one of the tribe's three hunting leaders; Alark.

The tribe had three elders, and three hunting leaders, with the chief at the head. The elders were of course those who managed and took care of the essential matters of the tribe, whereas the hunting leaders stood with the responsibility of defending and securing the tribe's survival. That meant that each of the three hunting leaders was the strongest that the tribe had to offer, besides the chief.

Snapping around with her back suddenly straightened stiff, Elyn bowed to the large and rugged man.

"Elder Eri asked me if I could take Kai here and try him out for a warrior." She said respectfully to Alark, this militant behavior clearly having been drilled into her during her time as a warrior.

"Really now?" He said frowning, but the note of curiosity in his voice betrayed his expression. "Kid, do you think you have what it takes to fight?"

Kai stopped his burpees mid-pushup and got to his feet. Looking into Alark's stern eyes, there wasn't an ounce of hesitation in Kai's voice as he answered. "To fight is my nature."

Smirking at Kai's obvious display of confidence, Alark turned to the irritated Elyn who glared daggers at Kai.

"Since Elder Eri requested this, then I'll allow it - even though he isn't of the tribe."

Bowing again, Elyn hid the mask of mixed emotions warring on her face.

"But I expect you to supervise him during his initiation trial."

Grinding her teeth angrily, she gave Alark a strained smile which just caused the rugged man to laugh heartily.

Looking around at all the warriors who have stopped their training to look on at the scene, Alark adopted a pondering expression before breaking into a wide smile.

"Why - how about you start now?" He said, his booming voice carrying out to everybody present. "I think we all want to see how an outsider fights, no?"

Roaring in agreement, Alark was approved of by all the warriors' enthusiasm. It wasn't long before an opening in the training yard had been formed, and surrounded by a multitude of bodies, Kai stood alone.

Kai wasn't sure what all the commotion was about, but it seemed that everybody wanted to see what the 'outsider' was capable of. Kai had initially been expecting this when he was taken to the training yard, however, he hadn't expected that it would've caused such a spectacle.

Looking around expectantly, Kai waited for whoever his opponent was going to be. Seeing that Elyn took one confident step forward from the crowd, he smiled gleefully. However, right before she could move further into the ring of people, somebody rushed forward and took her place.

"It'll be me who's going to put the outsider in his place." That one annoying kid proclaimed

Sighing expansively, Kai looked around to see if somebody had played a prank on the kid and encouraged him to fight. However, as he saw no laughing faces, only neutral and pitiful gazes, Kai gawked at him.

Was he really that stupid? Kai wondered seriously.

Not only was Kai a grown man and his physique was unquestionable, but this kid was also barely more than eighteen. How could he then possibly think this match would ever go his way?

"Fear not, I won't hurt you too much." He said, flexing, causing exasperated groans from many of the spectators. "I've increased my warrior's physique multiple times, and I'm almost a 1st-stage warrior! So don't worry, I'll take it... *easy* on you."

Not sure if there was any merit to his words as Kai didn't feel the same odd and inexplicable sense of danger from him like he got from people like Urok and the warrior leaders, he decided to not take the fight seriously.

It was obvious that Elyn was about to protest the foolish antics of the boy whose name Kai had already forgotten, but she was stopped by a large hand landing on her shoulder.

Alark, just gave her the shake of his head, causing Elyn to step back - very annoyed.

Seeing that both fighters were ready, Alark said out loud. "Begin."

Not wasting a second, the kid bolted towards Kai. Although he was a bit curious to see that the kid moved slightly faster than he would have expected, it barely made a difference.

His poor posture and charge made it abundantly clear that this kid hadn't the faintest of technique or skill.

Easily dodging the awkwardly thrown haymaker, Kai rammed his shoulder and locked legs with him while giving him a rough palm right above his navel, causing all wind to be knocked out of him. Even though Kai barely put any force into it, his firm posture and stance made it more than easy to leverage the kid's momentum against himself.

Falling on his ass, the kid look with clear befuddlement up at Kai. The added strike to his abdomen hadn't been necessary to make the point he wanted across, but Kai felt he should at least give a little back from back when the kid had shoved him in an attempt to make him face plant on the mud all the way back when he was captured by their group.

As Kai believed this was enough, he caught Alark's attention.

"This is rather pointless, do we end here or should I just forfeit?" Kai asked the large man overseeing the fight since it was more than obvious the kid didn't stand a chance.

"I'll show you pointless!" The kid suddenly shouted.

"Ah - wait... that's not how you use that sentence..." Kai muttered awkwardly as he watched the kid scurry back to his feet.

Charging at Kai, the scene from just a few seconds before repeated once again.

"Enough fooling around!" Somebody shouted, storming into the ring.

"B-but Elyn!" The kid protested wheezingly.

"Shut up Arek, get out." She said with clear reprimand in her voice.

It would seem that she had reached the end of her patience, and Alark wasn't holding her back any longer. Scurrying out of the ring like a dog with its tail between its legs, the kid shot scathing glares at Kai all the while.

Now faced with Elyn, Kai's eyes narrowed, and gone was the fake joviality that he usually displayed to everyone. This startling change in demeanor took Elyn off-guard, but she quickly reprimanded herself for the brief instance of fear induced by this mere non-warrior.

"Begin!" Alark announced, breaking the silence that had engulfed the training yard, his tone now clearly much more interested.

With a speed much faster than Kai had expected, Elyn shot forward, intent on getting the upper hand. As Kai's fighting instincts kicked into motion, he moved to parry the strike almost without conscious thought as his body moved on its own.

Fighting had been ingrained into his very bones, and only with the quick upsizing of his opponent with a scanning gaze, his body knew what to do to win.

However, what he hadn't been expecting was the sudden lash of pain streaking down his arm from his failed parry.

Barely managing to avoid the sloppy but overwhelming powerful blow of Elyn, Kai stumbled back, causing all the warriors around to hoot excitedly.

"Fuck me..." Kai muttered silently to himself as Elyn smirked victoriously.

As hand to hand combat was something that Kai was extremely adept in, he needed only size up his opponent and use just the correct amount of force and strength to each action without wasting additional energy.

But as such, Kai had unconsciously treated Elyn as a normal human girl. And that was the problem, as she wasn't just any ordinary girl - she was a cultivator.

That meant that the amount of force she displayed with her inept punch practically matched that of a grown and strong man instead of a spry and young woman, causing Kai's light parry to fail.

Realizing the power of being a cultivator - or 'warrior' as they called it here in the tribe, it became clear how lethal her attacks could potentially be.

If you were to take an example, consider a large and bulky man who was a warrior. That would mean adding strength to weight, resulting in a crushing force whenever they attacked.

However, if you take a lithe and young woman who as a warrior, that would be adding strength to speed, resulting in a penetrating force.

Depending on the multiplying elements of the resulting force, it would completely change the dynamics of fights. Which meant, Kai could not take it easy on Elyn.

With the power of her punch and the size of her small fist, she could literally rupture a spleen or crack a rib of a normal person with just a single punch.

It wasn't as though Kai had taken it easy on her just because she was a woman as he was not one to care for whether or not the person he was fighting was a woman or a man, but rather

because, even though Kai had gotten his ass handed to himself multiple times before by some woman in the past, there was the unquestionable fact that there was a biological difference physically between men and women.

So it hadn't been surprising that Kai unconsciously expected weak and fast attacks from Elyn rather than what he had just gotten handed to him. In a world of cultivators, gender differences didn't create a rift between who could fight or not, which opened for an interesting dynamic that Kai would have to think further on.

Completely changing his stance, Kai's demeanor once again shifted - but it was so slight to practically no one picked up on it. All but one.

Alark who was overseeing the mock duel noticed the slight change in Kai and shuddered upon seeing it. That look was something he had only seen from one other person before; the chief.

"No wonder why Elder Eri had wanted him to be tried out for a warrior." He muttered to himself amusingly, now very interested in seeing what kind of warrior this young man could be shaped into.

Seeing that her attack had been successful and Kai was forced on the backfoot, Elyn chuckled triumphantly. It was about time she showed this punk who his betters were.

Lunging in, she attacked with the same straight punch as before; this time also expecting Kai to try block or parry it.

But just as she thought her punch had hit home as her fist went straight through Kai's defenses, her entire world turned upside down. Literally...

Unable to comprehend what had just happened, Elyn could only stare up from the hard ground of the training yard as Kai loomed over her with a jovial smile.