

The Best Defence

Posted originally on the [Ad Astra :: Star Trek Fanfiction Archive](http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/1093) at <http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/1093>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	Gen
Fandom:	Star Trek: Strange New Worlds
Relationship:	La'an Noonien-Singh & Una Chin-Riley Number One
Character:	La'an Noonien-Singh , Una Chin-Riley Number One
Additional Tags:	Character Backstory , Childhood , Sparring , Friendship
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2023-10-15 Words: 562 Chapters: 1/1

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Summary

Una teaches La'an how to fight.

Notes

Written for legendofthefireemblem in the [Fandom Gift Basket](#) fest.

La'an wraps her arms more tightly around her knees, fingernails digging into her elbows. It hurts, but that's okay. Pain keeps you alert. Keeps you alive.

She watches feet moving to and fro from her hiding place under the sickbay bed. She likes it down here; it's dark and quiet, with multiple exits in case she has to run.

It's hard to remember she doesn't have to run anymore.

She tenses as a pair of boots stop next to the bed, pressing herself back against the wall. "La'an?"

La'an uncurls a little, recognising the voice as Una's. She's come by several times since La'an's been here, asking how she is, bringing her clothes and toys and games, sitting with her and talking. She doesn't seem to mind that La'an rarely talks back.

Una kneels down, smiling when she catches sight of her. "There you are." She doesn't ask why La'an is under the bed, instead saying, "I was on my way to the gym, and I thought you might want to come with me."

There was a gym on the *Puget Sound*, she remembers. She and Manu used to compete over who could go fastest on the treadmills without falling off.

"I've booked a private room," Una continues. "It'll be quiet, and safe. Just you and me. But only if you want to."

La'an chews on her bottom lip, considering. Manu would want her to go, she thinks. He'd want her to be brave.

"Okay," she decides, and climbs out from under the bed.

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She sticks close to Una on the way to the gym, trying to ignore the other crewmembers around them. There are so many people on this ship that it feels like she'll get lost in the crowd, and she's relieved when they arrive at the gym and it can be just the two of them again.

"Anything you want to try?" Una asks. "There's some skipping ropes and balls in a box over there, or I can show you how to work the treadmill. Or there's a practice dummy over there, I could teach you how to fight."

"You can't fight Gorn," La'an says, because she's seen people try. Even running and hiding doesn't work, not really. Not unless you're very lucky.

"No," Una agrees. "But there are other things out there you might want to defend yourself against."

Defend yourself. The words echo in La'an's head, stirring something deep inside. "I could try it," she says, almost a question.

Una smiles. "Hold out your arm like this." She demonstrates, and La'an does her best to copy.

Una teaches her how to make a fist, how to throw a punch, how to kick, and all the weak points on a human body. (She promises they'll move on to other species next time.) La'an listens and learns and files it all away, and then Una gets her to try out what she's learned on the practice dummy.

"You're a natural," Una tells her as she lands her first punch to the dummy's stomach. La'an makes a fist the way Una taught her and tries again, harder this time. It feels good, like she can do anything.

Like she isn't powerless.

"Same time tomorrow?" Una asks as they're making their way back to sickbay afterwards. La'an nods and slips her hand into Una's briefly, Una's fingers warm against her own.

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