

the weak fellow

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Alden, the eponymous "weak fellow," has always been the target of ridicule. Frail and timid, he navigates life perpetually hunched over, shrinking from every shadow. He endures the sneers of his peers, the dismissive sighs of his family, and the constant looming threat of the town bullies. He dreams of a life where he doesn't flinch at a raised voice, where he can walk with his head held high. One fateful day, after a particularly humiliating encounter, Alden stumbles upon a dilapidated training ground tucked away in the woods. There, amidst the rusting equipment and overgrown weeds, he finds a spark of defiance.

He begins to train, pushing his feeble body to its absolute limit. Every repetition is a victory against his former self, every bead of sweat a testament to his growing resolve. The journey is arduous, filled with setbacks and moments of self-doubt. His initial gains are minuscule, barely perceptible, yet he persists. Slowly, Alden begins to change. His posture straightens, his muscles develop, and a quiet confidence begins to bloom. He learns not just how to lift weights, but how to carry the weight of his past and forge a future where he is no longer defined by weakness. But true strength, he discovers, is about more than just physical prowess. It's about resilience, courage, and the unwavering belief in one's own potential. And that, Alden finds, is a strength he possesses in abundance.

Chapter 1

The First Lift

The Weak Fellow

Chapter 1: The First Lift

Arnold “Arnie” Finch wasn’t born weak. He arrived screaming, a healthy seven pounds, two ounces, a perfectly average specimen. Somewhere along the line, however, life had leached the strength from him, leaving behind a gangly, pale creature more suited to observing dust motes dance in sunbeams than engaging in any activity requiring... well, exertion.

Arnie was twenty-three, employed as a filing clerk in a basement archive, and possessed the physical constitution of a damp tissue. His handshake was a limp apology, his gait a hesitant shuffle, and his voice a reedy whisper perpetually on the verge of being swallowed by the ambient noise. He was, to put it bluntly, pathetic.

This pathetic existence, however, was about to change. Not dramatically, not suddenly, but with the slow, agonizing creak of rusty hinges, a change was coming. It began, as many significant things do, with a humiliation.

It was a Tuesday, a particularly grey and drizzly Tuesday, the kind that seemed to suck the color from the world and replace it with shades of damp cardboard. Arnie was attempting to maneuver a particularly stubborn filing cabinet, one filled to the brim with decades of forgotten paperwork. He strained, his face reddening, his thin arms trembling. The cabinet remained stubbornly immobile.

Suddenly, a booming voice echoed through the basement. “Need a hand there, Finch?”

It was Barry, the mailroom guy. Barry was built like a brick outhouse, with biceps the size of Arnie’s head and a laugh that could shake the foundations. He sauntered over, radiating an aura of effortless strength. Without even seeming to exert himself, Barry grasped the cabinet and slid it across the floor with one hand, leaving Arnie gaping like a landed fish.

“Thanks, Barry,” Arnie wheezed, feeling a familiar flush of shame creep up his neck.

Barry clapped him on the back, a gesture that nearly sent Arnie sprawling. “No problem, Finch. Just say the word.” He winked and strode off, whistling a jaunty tune.

Arnie watched him go, a strange mix of resentment and admiration churning in his gut. He was tired of being the ‘Finch’ everyone helped, the one who couldn’t even move a filing cabinet. He was tired of being weak.

