

CHAPTER 3

The kingdom of Nogard was bustling with activity. The news of the Princess's kidnapping had been kept as quiet as they could keep it, and so the average resident's daily life went on as usual. People going to work, tending their garden, hanging clothes out to dry, sending their kids off to school. Looking at the kingdom's inhabitants, you'd never realize anything had happened.

Over on a small hill near water street high school, a middle aged man was pushing a wheelbarrow up said hill. The wheelbarrow was filled with hay and bags of grain. He was managing quite well when the left wheel hit a rock and the whole thing started to wobble, it was about to fall over when a young man with dark red hair grabbed the side and steadied it.

"Wh-whoa! Thanks a bundle Sora! Almost lost my stuff."

The young man wiped the sweat off his brow, "Phew, glad I made it in time, you want me to take this the rest of the way Mr. Tiberius?"

"Sure thing! This lets me get started on prepping the barn sooner."

Afterwards, Mr. Tiberius' wife treated Sora to a bowl of Flambe Chowder and sent him home with a big bag of fruit and veggies. Due to condition, they couldn't sell them, but they were perfectly edible.

In another part of town, a construction crew was putting the finishing touches on a new church built in honor of the Princess's 18th birthday. They probably wouldn't be too pleased to know her mind isn't exactly pure.

Around the major shopping district on Air Street, a small fairy was weaving through the tight crowds trying to find someone. It was Ginko. She fluttered around as best she could, but the crowds were almost impossible to traverse at this time of day.

She finally broke free and took a rest on the roof of a fruit stand.

She was terribly out of breath, "Hah, Hah, this is crazy, how am I supposed to find anyone like this? My scanning hasn't brought up anything worthwhile yet anyway, but I doubt I could find whoever if I do get a good reading."

She fell back and gazed at the sky.

"It sure sounded good at the time, but I wonder if anyone like that even exists?"

She sat up with a determined look on her face.

"That's it, I'll take a quick break to refuel and then I'm going super overdrive! Sitting around moping isn't going to get me any closer to finding this person!"

She flew back to a small cafe she noticed earlier that had a discount on strawberry cake. She'd unconsciously made a mental note of where it was as fruit and other sweets are a big weak point of hers.

"Welcome!" The owner said as she entered through the door, barely making the bells on the inside of the door jingle.

"Well, ain't you just the cutest little thing I've seen all day! What can I get you?"

The owner was an older woman, with tied up black hair and a grin that simply made anybody feel welcome.

Ginko blushed at her compliment as she answered, "I'll take 2 slices of the strawberry cake, and a mug of herbal tea please!"

She had a look of anticipation on her face that made her seem just the slightest bit crazy.

"From the looks of you, I'd say you have quite a sweet tooth."

Ginko seemed to wake up from the trance like state she had been in.

"Well then, what size slice would ya like, mini or regular?"

"Regular please."

The owner compared the size of the slices of cake to her little customer.

"Are ya sure?"

"Quite certain!"

She rung up the order and handed her her change while she waited for the kettle to boil.

"Well, here ya go."

She placed the slices of cake next to the small table she was seated at on the counter. She set the much smaller mug of tea on the small table itself.

Ginko gazed at the cake with great excitement.

What happened next would be told for years to come in this particular establishment, the sight of the minuscule fairy chowing down on not one, but two normal sized slices of cake was simply astounding. It was almost creepy, but the look of sheer joy on her face as she ate every last bite was just so cute that the scene just became puzzling.

"Ahhhh, that hit the spot. Thank you very much ma'am!"

"Naw, thank you. Just remember to tell your friends about us, 'kay?"

"I definitely will! That cake was yummy!"

She left the cafe with a full belly and continued her search with renewed passion.

"Alright, now that I've eaten, I'll definitely find someone!"

She continued zipping around town, scanning every nook and cranny as best she could.

Over by the fire street river, she noticed a tough looking guy swinging a sword up and down in a rhythmic motion as if he were training.

"Oh, maybe him."

She flew in a little closer and focused her scan on him.

A look of pity appeared to form on her face, "I feel bad that his training isn't going to amount to too much. Aoko as she is could beat this guy at his strongest without breaking a sweat..."

She flew out of fire street and headed for the adjacent stone street. There, she found a rich family relaxing in the park.

"Maybe them?"

A quick scan dashed her hopes.

"*sigh*" Again, she flew off, keeping her spell active as long as she could.

An hour later, she dropped down on a bench near the wood street tavern.

"Maybe Murasako was right... I've been out here forever and haven't gotten a reading even half as good as the bunch the great scan found. How can there seriously be nobody in all of Nogard who could become strong enough to save her!?"

A flash hit her senses.

"What was that?"

She widened her scan.

"That can't be right. But I need to get closer to find out for certain. Let's see, it seems to be...behind me?"

She flew into the tavern, but her scans showed the person was definitely not inside.

So she headed out and looked for an alley leading behind the place. To her left, there was just such a place.

"I'm so close, I can taste it!"

It was a bit of an odd route, the path was built like a maze. But that was no problem for Ginko, she was great at mazes.

She shot around the twists and turns of the labyrinthine alleyway until she started getting a stronger reading.

She was just reaching an opening in the midst of the maze.

"Yes, this is it! The one we need is right around he-*oomph*!"

She'd flown straight into a large sack of produce sitting in the middle of the opening.

"Oh! I'm sorry, are you okay miss fairy?"

A young man with dark red hair peeked over the bag to check on her.

She was out cold.

"...Ugh, what happened?"

Ginko woke up in a strange place. It was slightly dim, and very cluttered with stuff.

She pulled off the washcloth that had been apparently used as a blanket for her

and stood up.

"Hello? Is anyone there?"

She stood there for a second to recollect her thoughts.

"Hmm, let's see. I was flying around town looking for someone who could eventually save the Princess, and..."

It came back to her.

"That's right, that power I sensed should be around here."

She flew around the room very quietly, searching for the person who brought her there.

"Oh! I'm dumb, just scan around. I never thought to use it like this before."

She scanned her surroundings and located one human located in an adjacent room, though something felt off about the person.

She flew to the doorway and peeked around the corner, she could smell something, but couldn't put her finger on what it was.

She crept a bit closer and the source of the smell came into view.

It was a large pot filled with what appeared to be a vegetable stew. Steam was still rising from the pot, so it must be fresh.

She had just eaten not too long ago, but her stomach growled at the smell nonetheless. She flew over to it to fully take in the savory aroma when she heard a door open beside her.

"Oh! You're awake. Are you feeling okay?"

She was startled by the man's sudden appearance and hid behind a sack of tools in the corner of the room.

"You don't need to be afraid of me miss fairy, I'm harmless. Hey, ya want some stew?"

She peeked around the tools and her mouth started to drool.

"Here," He rinsed out a small measuring cup and filled it with stew. "I don't mind sharing."

He smiled brightly.

Ginko slowly flew over and took the cup.

"I'm Sora. Sora Ganji. What's your name?"

"G-Ginko. Ginko Chiyosei."

He was a very polite man, and made light conversation while they ate.

"So what brings you to this part of town? Nobody usually comes into the catacombs. That's what we call these alleyways, because they wind around and are easy to get lost in."

"W-well, you may have heard about the Princess..."

"Hmm? Did something happen to her?"

"Um, the thing is... She was kinda kidnapped by trolls."

Sora's face grew worried.

"Oh no! What is the King going to do?"

"Well, he had his royal casters gather strong people in town..."

Sora nodded.

"Yeah, I remember seeing them around town recruiting people for something."

"A-and after that, they pooled their magic together to scan the country to find all the remaining powerful people in Nogard."

"Okay, so how did that go?"

"That's the thing..."

"W-what?"

"Their whole force was defeated... They're being treated at the castle as we speak."

A look of terror appeared in Sora's eyes.

"Oh my goodness! Can't the royal knights do anything to help?"

"Well, most of them are training in Sitnalta... B-but I've been sent by the King to find someone with my magic!"

"How does your magic work? Didn't that great scan find everybody already?"

"My magic can find people with great potential."

"Isn't that kinda the same thing?"

"N-no, not at all! I couldn't even participate in the great scan because of my

magic. It searched for people who ARE strong, I can only find people who CAN BECOME strong."

"I see, so you've been flying around looking for people, and then what?"

"I'm going to personally train whoever I find to unlock their own potential!"

"Wow, are you a good trainer?"

Ginko slumped over her food.

"I don't know, I've never trained anybody before..."

"Hmm, come to think of it, why did you come back here anyway? I'm the only one who actually lives in this part of town, kind of its caretaker I guess, and I'm nothing special."

"Let's have me be the judge of that."

She set her stew down and focused her spell directly on Sora.

After about half a minute, she got her answer.

"Wh-wha!? H-h-h-how is this possible?"

"What is it?"

Ginko couldn't believe her eyes as she gazed at the results of her scan.

"According to the results of my scan, your maximum potential rivals the great dragon Nogard of legend!"

"HUH!?"

END OF CHAPTER 3