

CHAPTER 5

Morning of the first day of training.

Ginko slowly opened her tiny eyes and shifted her sleeping position. She proceeded to close her eyes again and started to drift back to sleep.

She did, however, come to her senses and sat up before falling back asleep.

She groggily wiped the sleep from her eyes as she looked about the room and recalled the previous day's events.

She slapped her cheeks to wake herself up fully, "Okay, time to get to work!"

She put on her work clothes(Though they weren't much different from what she normally wears.), and flew around to find Sora.

"Hmm, he's not in the kitchen. Not in the bathroom. Not outside, Where did he go?"

She tried her scan, but got no reading, so she headed out to inspect her surroundings.

Sora's house was in a kind of clearing in the middle of the so-called 'Catacombs'. From the door leading outside from his living room, the area had two entrances, one to her left and one to her right. She had been in such a rush the previous day that she never gotten a good look at the place. She turned around to see what her new abode looked like.

It was of a humble size, neither small nor large, and seemed to be almost round, but the walls of the main part were definitely flat, so it was likely an optical illusion caused by the roof.

She landed on the conical roof of the house while she pondered.

"I might think he ditched me, but this is HIS house. So that's out. Maybe he got kidnapped by bandits wanting his treasures? Or maybe the trolls caught on to our little scheme and took him out before he could get tough enough to stop them."

She was thinking so hard, smoke began to emit from her head.

Just as she started to feel dizzy from thinking so hard, she saw a man approaching the house carrying a paper bag. It was Sora.

"Sora!!!" Ginko shouted as she flew down to him.

"I thought you'd abandoned me!" (She hadn't.)

"Whoa, I just went to shop for some supplies before training started, I'm not gonna leave someone working so hard to save somebody just like that."

"When did you get up?"

"I always get up just before the crack of dawn. Have ever since I moved here. It helps me get stuff done quicker. Plus, I get the first pick of fish over on air street."

He grinned as he held up 2 large Lunafish.

"Breakfast is on me!"

"Ugh, I think I ate too much..." Ginko said, the results of her meal being quite apparent from looking at her stomach.

"Well, five bowls of Lunafish over rice will do that to you."

Ginko laid back and patted her stomach.

"So, what kind of training are we going to do first?"

"Ugh..."

"..."

Sora stood with an awkward grin on his face which was starting to warp.

"*sigh* I guess we're getting a late start on the first day..."

Half an hour later, Ginko finally felt well enough to start training him.

"Sorry about that, I tend to lose my restraint when it comes to tasty food."

"Well, I can at least feel confident in my cooking skills. Now, about the training..."

"Ah! We're off schedule!"

She bowed deeply.

"I'm so sorry for screwing up like this!"

"Hey, don't worry about it, I doubt 30 minutes or so of missed time will hurt too much."

Ginko started sobbing.

"Come on, it's not that big a deal."

"I, *sniff*, I'm always messing up like this. I'm asked to help out at the castle, and the moment I see something tasty, I lose track of my job and wake up with a full belly. I can't mess up here, there's too much at stake!"

"Well then," He stood up, "Let's get started so we can break your streak of bad luck!"

"Bad... Luck?"

"Think about it, all those times, food has been in the wrong place at the wrong time, right? So if we can succeed here, maybe the people at the castle will start to see a new side of you, and won't leave food out everywhere!"

Ginko couldn't help chuckling.

"You're one crazy optimist."

Sora stood in front of a variety of things, stuff like planks of wood and dumbbells.

Ginko was hovering to the right of the stuff holding a clipboard.

"Okay, now before we begin training your muscles, we first need to decide on a fighting style for you. Any preference?"

Sora thought it over for a few seconds.

"I guess I would have to say I'm more of a hand-to-hand fighter. I've never been comfortable using weapons. But why would I need to train my muscles as much if I'm just going to learn how to use my reinforcement magic better?"

Ginko crossed her arms, "If you don't have a good base, your magic won't have much to support. Think about it this way..."

She wheeled a large blackboard over and started to draw diagrams.

"Think of reinforcement magic like a multiplier, if you start out with 50 Muscle points and use your current ability with reinforcement magic to gain a boost, it'll go up by, say, 50%. Which gives you 75 Muscle points. By training your magic, you could be able to increase your boost to a X2 boost or higher, but that will still only be increasing your 50 Muscle points. If you train both at the same time, both your Muscle points AND multiplier go up resulting in a much higher level of strength by the end. I mean, arguably you could just train your muscles and the multiplier would still be going up faster than if you just trained your magic but training both seems the most efficient, a bit of training on both ends rather than intense training at either end."

Sora applauded.

"Very nicely presented, I understood everything. So where should I start?"

"How about some simple weightlifting so you can show me what you can do?"

"Alright."

He was glad he'd helped the Silverman family repair their carriage last month, since he'd gotten a used set of dumbbells and barbells as a reward.

He sorted through the weights and decided on a 50 pound barbell to start.

Ginko watched in amazement as he continued lifting for 10 minutes straight.

After the 10 minutes had passed, he dropped the weight and sat down on the ground.

"Haaaaah, how, *hah*, was that, *hah*?"

"You did much better than I expected."

"Oh, come on, I should be able to do at least this much if I've got all that power sleeping inside me."

"Are you sure you don't train like this regularly?"

"Do you think I'd be this wiped out if I did this much on a regular basis?"

Ginko scratched her chin.

"Well, true. But then your true potential must really be itching to come out and play!"

"Yeah, let me rest for a few minutes and I'll get back to it!"

They proceeded to do all kinds of training, he broke boards, flipped drums full of water, pushed AND pulled a cart filled with random junk from his house, and stood still holding a stack of bricks on each arm.

About 2 hours later, Ginko and Sora were both lying on the ground out of breath, Ginko was tired because she had attempted in the heat of the moment to lift a 10 pound barbell weight, and obviously it was too much for her tiny body to hold.

"So, 2 hours of muscle training is done, what do you want to do until lunch?"

Sora sat up and remembered something.

"Oh, that's right! I promised Mr. Saunders I would weed his garden today."

"Who?"

"Oh, Mr. Saunders is the old man who owns the stonemasonry down on stone street. I weed his garden every so often, and he said yesterday he was starting to get worried about his peonies."

"Well, let's go help him then, think of it as extra training!"

"But, I always do this, so it's nothing extra really..."

The kingdom was bustling with activity as usual, and as Sora and Ginko passed through town, Ginko was starting to realize just how many people Sora knew. Every few minutes a shopkeeper or passerby would stop and greet Sora, and he would smile and wave back.

They passed a bagel shop and Ginko's stomach growled seemingly on instinct.

"Would you like to stop for a snack?"

"N-no! We should get to the stonemason's as quickly as we can!"

"Eh, a little treat for the road can't hurt."

He stepped inside and ordered 2 bagels, a normal sized blueberry for himself and a mini everything for Ginko.

He put out his hand to give it to her.

"I hope I picked a good flavor for you."

Ginko instead stared intently at the blueberry bagel Sora had in his other hand.

"U-um, would you like this one instead?"

Ginko timidly nodded her head.

They ate as they walked. And though Sora's bagel was now a fairy-sized one, he still enjoyed it, but he did wonder where she had room for the large bagel she was now enjoying. Ginko, on the other hand, looked a bit guilty for taking his bagel.

"You didn't have to do that for me..."

"What are you talking about? This is more than enough for me."

He shot her a grin.

Ginko ended up feeling extra guilty.

As they entered stone street, Sora spotted the stonemason's.

"There it is, up ahead. His garden is in the back so-ugh!"

He bumped into someone and fell to the ground.

As Sora looked up, he saw a face that was all too familiar to him. Long black hair, piercing yellow eyes, tusks that looked like they'd been to the beauty parlor a few hundred times, it was none other than the one minotaur in all of nogard that enjoyed picking on Sora the most.

"Oh, I'm sorry, did I bump into you? How clumsy of me."

Sora got up and brushed the dirt off his clothes.

"It's fine, Spike. Now if you'll excuse us, we have an appointment with Mr. Saunders."

He started to step past him with Ginko right behind when Spike stuck his cane out to block his path.

"Now, now! What have we here? Got yourself a servant have you? Veeeery nice I must say. Heh."

He grinned creepily.

Ginko hid her face, embarrassed.

"Hey, don't pick on my Sensei like that!"

Spike's eyes widened.

"Sensei? Mighty big title for such a pipsqueak. Oh, I get it, the mighty Sora can't get any girls his size, so he's settling for a fairy! How amusing!"

"That's it!" Sora began to throw a punch, but Ginko grabbed his arm.

"Don't, it's fine..."

"But he..."

"Save your strength for the trolls."

Sora mulled it over and understood that hitting Spike wouldn't help things.

However, Ginko flew beside his head and whispered in his ear, "Words can be stronger than punches, especially against the weak minded."

Ginko smiled, and Sora knew just what she meant.

Spike was getting bored and was preparing to leave.

"Well, I would love to stay and chat, but I am quite late for my brunch, and these little legs of mine can only go so fast. Arrivederci!"

"Yeah, with legs like those, I bet you wish you'd been born a centaur instead, huh?"

Spike stopped and turned around.

"How silly of you, centaurs don't exist, my friend. I would have thought you'd know that."

"Of course I know that, I just meant, you look like you came out of a folktale book anyways, so I just figured..."

"Why you!"

Spike's attendant Claudius, another minotaur, who had just exited a nearby business, tapped Spike on the shoulder.

"You are late for your appointment with master Bruce. Must I remind you again?"

Spike reluctantly turned away from the two of them and headed off, leaving them with the win for now.

"Who was that?" Ginko asked.

"*sigh* That was Spike Tenma. The son of a big businessman in the area, he's looking to take over his father's business someday and he just LOVES poking at me for the dumbest reasons."

"Seems like a real jerk."

"You got it, hard to believe he's just a few years older than me. With how he presents himself."

Ginko looked puzzled.

"He seemed like he was on the older side, I guess minotaurs look older than most races or something."

The two picked up where they left off and headed to weed the stonemason's garden.

END OF CHAPTER 5