

CHAPTER 8

Castle Nogard was running as smoothly as it could, with everything that had happened over the last few days. As much as the Princess' well being worried most of the staff, most of them stayed professional and didn't let their worries affect their work.

Apex Enclavius, the crown Prince, had just finished a meeting with a royal messenger that had been able to contact Tenretni, in order to settle on an extension on their deadline, and finally had time to relax and sort out his thoughts.

Though he had tried to use her to gain popularity with the people during her birthday celebration, he cared deeply for his younger sister and felt no end of shame that he was not strong enough to save her himself.

"*sigh* Perhaps it's my turn to invest in some training..."

Apex Enclavius was a Light magic user, one of the more uncommon magic types. He could emit light or concentrate it into a beam attack. He almost never needed to fight, so he never usually considered training his skills to get stronger. He could hold his own against a member of the royal knights, but trolls? He wouldn't stand a chance.

He walked down the long hallway which led to his sister's room when he felt something hit his stomach.

As he looked down, he saw it was Aoko Koyosei of the royal knights.

"O-oh! I'm so sorry, your highness!"

As he was still mentally exhausted, he was in no mood to snap at someone just for bumping into him.

"It's fine, as long as you're alright."

He then continued down the hallway.

"...?"

Aoko was quite confused, as Prince Apex's short temper was well known throughout the castle.

Apex arrived at his sister's room, memories of his life with his sibling flooding back to him. It felt like only yesterday he had been berating her for reading his "Books" without his permission for the hundredth time. (It pretty much was, she had just been kidnapped a few days ago after all.) And he felt deep guilt for trying to use his sister's birthday speech to score points with the kingdom for himself mere moments before "It" had happened.

He opened her door and looked at the empty room. As proud a man as he was, it saddened him to see his sister taken from him in such a cruel way. He could still see her rolling around on her bed without a care in the world, she then stopped to look at him.

"*sigh* I must get my act together so I don't lose face."

He slowly closed the door.

He froze for a second, and then opened the door again.

It was empty of course.

"I must be going out of my mind, I was certain I saw her just now."

A hand was placed on his shoulder.

"We all miss her, Apex." Queen Sharona Enclavius said, "We'll get those horrible trolls, don't you worry a bit!" She motioned to him, "Come now, you're needed in the throne room."

He wiped the tears from his eyes.

"Yes, mother."

He arrived at the throne room with the Queen and was greeted by Susagepian dignitary Syrus Stelxis, who had arrived on schedule to discuss the Princess' betrothal to his son Zane.

He was of average height, with receding black hair and a great big mustache.

"I am terribly sorry to hear about the Princess, I was on my way here when it happened."

"You didn't come by carriage?"

"Oh, no. I don't trust those things, I prefer walking, it's good for the heart, and I can stay in touch with the people as well."

"Well, whatever suits your fancy. So how can I help you?"

"Well as you have heard, I was on my way here to confirm the announcement date for my son's betrothal to Princess Marissa. However, due to circumstances beyond our control, this date must be pushed back, which causes many problems."

"What kind of problems?"

"Well, you see, there are many important social and official gatherings and announcements associated with the betrothal. One vitally important matter is that of the Dwarven King Trapezius, who has been formally invited to the betrothal ceremony, and our two nations may very well have a rare opportunity to open up trading with the dwarves."

"That is a rare chance, but what can I do to fix this?"

"As it so happens, I also have a daughter who is getting of age, though she won't turn 18 until the first of June. My point is, if you'll agree to marry my daughter, at least if we cannot rescue the Princess by June 1st, then we can resume preparations uninterrupted."

"...I see."

Apex turned to face away from Stelxis.

"I can't say I like the idea of marrying some woman I've never met, so if you can set up a meeting between us, I'll agree to your terms."

"Of course, your highness."

"Oh, and take a carriage back, time is of the essence after all."

And with that, he took his leave.

Back in the catacombs, Sora and Ginko had just returned with the groceries Murasako had requested.

"Ngh... here... you go!"

Ginko dropped a rather large bag of fish onto the ground in front of Murasako, who had just finished writing up a new schedule for them to follow.

"Great, now take a look at this."

She passed the paper to Ginko.

After scanning the paper for a minute, Ginko's face grew a look of wonder and excitement.

"This is great! I can tell this is going to speed things up a ton!"

"I tried to write it so even a simpleton like you could understand it, and it looks like I succeeded."

"Thank you so much Murasako, but why are you going so far just to help me?"

"First, a correction, I'm doing this to help the Princess, not you. And second...I know what it's like to seriously work toward a goal only to have everything crash down on you."

Ginko smiled at her with a question mark above her head.

"...Forget it, just be glad I helped you this once. See ya."

She zipped off towards the castle with just a bit of awkwardness about her.

The two waved her off. Sora then turned to Ginko.

"Uhhh...So that was...Murako?"

"*sigh* Murasako Koyosei, I guess you'd call her a friend of mine from the castle. We used to be best friends, but she's been going out of her way to pick on me for the last 5 years. I really don't know what's going on in her head..."

Sora could see Ginko was dealing with some rough feelings, so he stepped over to her and patted her on the shoulder.

"Wha?"

"It looks like she's realizing you aren't as useless as she thought, right?"

Sora gave Ginko a big grin.

"W-well, I still need to get my act together and put your new training regimen to use."

"Come to think of it, how did she change it?"

"Well..."

She explained the drastic changes Murasako had made.

"Ouch, that's a pretty strict schedule."

"You're telling me...It even has stuff for me to do! I thought the teacher was supposed to sit back and tell the trainee what to do..."

"I think you just insulted all the other the teachers of the world. So what's next?"

"Since you drained your magic for the day, you're to get some more muscle training in and then rest up for tomorrow."

"What'll you be doing?"

"Murasako says here that I have to study the whole magic book..."

"Doesn't sound too bad."

"But...! But what if I start training you some more and tell you how to improve fire magic or something and we waste precious time for nothing!"

"Calm down, I'm sure that won't happen. And wouldn't it be cool if I learned some fire magic along the way?"

"I'm afraid it doesn't quite work that way. Most people can only manage 1 type of magic. If a normal person tried hard enough to use a type they weren't compatible with, it would drain most of their magic reserves from the body not recognizing the magic attribute."

"But I almost used that reincarnation magic earlier, right?"

"True, but dark magic is like that. Part of why it is forbidden is because it's dangerous magic that anybody can use."

Sora scratched his head for a few moments.

"So, it might be possible for me to have a second attribute?"

"Only possibly, to be safe, we'd need to find someone with normal scanning magic, and the ones at the castle should still be resting from the great scan."

"I guess we'll just have to make do for now then..."

"That's right! So get to work!"

"Yikes, right away, Sensei!"

And so they split up to complete their individual tasks.

"*SIGH*"

Ginko flopped down onto the couch in the living room, which was mostly piled with junk, but she found a place to lie down.

It was already 9:00 in the evening, but she had finished the book. She would have to reread it and make notes, but the hard part was done.

As she lay there, she remembered Sora.

"Ah, that's right! I wonder how he's doing?"

Just then he stumbled into the room and fell on his face.

"Sora!?"

She rushed over to him.

"Ugh... Don't worry about me. I'm fine!"

And with that, he passed out.

"U-uh... What do I do?"

Ginko looked frantically around the room for an answer. She thought splashing him with cold water might wake him up, so she grabbed him by the arm and dragged him into the kitchen, which was a good idea in her head, but he was rather heavy for a foot tall fairy to drag by herself.

She filled a small cup with water and threw it on him.

...

Nothing.

"Not enough water!"

She couldn't think of anything bigger she had the ability to lift full of water.

"Ah, there!"

She dragged him into the bathroom, which would have been a good idea to do first, as the bathroom is through the opposite exit out of the living room from the kitchen.

She lifted his head over the side of the bathtub and turned the water on.

Cold water began pouring onto Sora's head, waking him instantly.

"Bwuh, what happened?!"

"You're okay!"

She hugged him around his neck.

"Hey, I'm okay. I just overdid it a bit with the weightlifting."

Ginko, with a teary-eyed face, looked sternly at him.

"KNOW YOUR LIMITS!"

She looked away.

"I don't want you to get hurt just because of one of my stupid ideas..."

Sora wiped the tears from her eyes.

"I'm sorry."

He sat up.

"From here on out, I'll stop if I feel tired. I admit I have had a bad habit of pushing myself a bit too hard sometimes."

"Good."

Both of their stomachs decided now would be a wonderful time to make the loudest possible noise so as to be heard in neighboring kingdoms.

In unison, they blushed, and said together, "Hahaha, I guess we should get something to eat."

Ginko finished eating first, and promptly fell asleep.

Sora smiled.

"It has been a long day."

He covered her with a washcloth.

"Goodnight, Sensei."

END OF CHAPTER 8