

## CHAPTER 10

Ginko and Sora trudged up dark street to head back home, the shock and confusion from the fortune telling still mulling around in their heads.

"What do you think this means?" Ginko asked in a daze.

"D-do you think it means I end up failing as a coach?"

She started to sob profusely.

"No! I'm sure that's not what it meant!"

A crowd of people was starting to stare at them.

Not sure what to do, he grabbed Ginko and ducked into a back alley.

He found a stack of crates and set her on it.

"Listen Sensei, I don't know what that fortune meant, but I'm sure it didn't mean that you're going to fail. For all we know, the trolls could give up and return the Princess without any more fighting."

"\*sniff\* Yeah... I guess you're right."

"You gotta stop letting the bad stuff get to you and focus on the good stuff. Like what we learned about your magic!"

Ginko perked up immediately.

"Oh yeah! I forgot about that with the whole fortune thing. Hmm..."

"What is it?"

"I can't really practice reflect magic if I don't have anybody with attack magic I can train against..."

"What about that Murasako? I bet she'd help."

"She just helped out so much yesterday, I don't want to push my luck."

"Do you know anyone else you could call?"

Ginko thought for a minute.

"Well, I could try Aoko..."

"Who's that?"

"Another friend from the castle, she's Murasako's older sister. But she might not be able to help, she's a royal knight captain after all."

"It's worth a try. You go see if she's available to help, and I'll head back and clean the place up a bit."

"Okay, sure!"

The castle had apparently calmed down a bit, as there weren't people rushing around frantically everywhere.

When Ginko got there, she headed straight for the common room. Once there, she made a beeline for Aoko's room, which she shared with her sister.

When she opened the door, she noticed a large amount of open reference books scattered on the floor.

"What happened in here?"

"What are you doing in my room?"

Ginko turned around with a gasp.

"H-hey Aoko..."

"It's not like I mind or anything, it would just be nice to ask first."

"I-I didn't know where you were, so I thought to check your room first."

"I was sitting in the common room the whole time, you didn't see me?"

Ginko realized she must have been so anxious to get back, she had been blinded from her surroundings.

"Anyway, we should probably head back out, sis would have a fit if she knew you saw these."

"W-wait, she was doing more research. For me?"

"As much as she'd deny it, she still wants to be friends with you."

Ginko started to get all mushy.

"So what did you need me for?" Aoko said, sitting down in the chair where she had apparently been before.

"Oh! That's right, me and Sora, that's the guy I've been training, have run into a bit of a stop with our training, and wondered if you'd be able to help out."

Aoko thought for a minute while she drank her coffee.

"What kind of help are we talking?"

Ginko explained about the fortune teller and about her newfound magic property.

"Huh, I never thought you of all people would have a second attribute. Well, I guess I can spare some time. Most of the important stuff is being given to the big 3 squads anyway. Well, those of them that are in town."

Ginko was overjoyed.

"Thanks so much Aoko! I was afraid you'd be busy."

So the two headed off to the catacombs.

On Sora's end, he was just finishing up sweeping the rocks and trash out of the training area, and also creating a more formal border to the space. Which was more cosmetic than anything, but it made him feel better.

He wiped the sweat from his brow and looked into the blue sky.

"Things sure have changed since Sensei arrived."

He then noticed two small objects flying towards him.

"Oh, that must be them."

Ginko descended with Aoko and introduced her to Sora.

"Sora, this is Aoko Koyosei, captain of the royal knights squad 10, and Murasako's sister."

"I-it's nice to meet you." Sora said.

Aoko bowed politely, "I hope I can be of help to the both of you."

Sora couldn't help but feel a bit intimidated from the aura of strength she let off.

"S-so what kind of magic do you use?"

"I am a fire magic user, but I can also use reinforcement magic."

"Hey, I use reinforcement magic too! Maybe I can have a sparring session with you after Ginko's finished?"

"That should be fine."

Sora finished putting the cleaning stuff in his shed while Ginko prepared for her magic lesson.

"Okay, so what should I do first, Aoko?"

"I thought you were going to study up on magic types. Have you learned nothing?"

Ginko turned her head.

"Yeah, well... I've only ever used my latency magic. So I'm not very familiar with channeling my magic for other things..."

Aoko gave her a look of disappointment and crossed her arms.

"It's nothing difficult, just do like you normally do but hold it back before it would trigger the scan."

Ginko did as she said.

"O-okay, n-now what?" Ginko said, barely holding the magic in place.

"Simply feel what the magic wants to do."

"Huh?"

"\*sigh\* When I learned my reinforcement magic, this is what I did. If you let the magic do its thing, you should feel a second outlet besides your normal one. If you channel it through that, you should be able to trigger your second type."

"O-okay, I'll try."

Ginko tried to relax, and the magic flowed through her body, wanting desperately to become her normal spell, but there was a bit of it that seemed different. She immediately honed in on that part and released her power.

"Wha?!"

A disc-like barrier appeared in front of her.

"I-I-I did it?"

"Congratulations. You learned a new trick."

"Lookin' good, Sensei!" Sora yelled from his seat next to the house.

Ginko turned back and shot him a huge smile.

"Alright, now let's test its durability." Aoko said, readying a fireball in her hand.

Ginko frantically tried to stop her.

"W-w-w-w-wait! I'm not ready yet!"

But Aoko had already flung the attack towards her.

To any average royal knight, an attack like this one would be child's play to deflect, even without the use of magic. Buuuuut, Ginko wasn't even that skilled, so its weakness was appropriate.

It shot in a straight line towards Ginko, she was terrified, but instinctively aimed her shield in front of her. As it collided with the reflect spell, it shattered the barrier into a million pieces and dissipated.

Aoko easily dodged the shards of the barrier that flew past her.

She then looked towards her unfortunate opponent, who was currently passed out on the ground.

"Good grief, can't even handle a small attack like that?"

She flew over to help her wake up, and Sora came over, wondering what happened.

"That was actually one of my weakest attacks."

"I guess the intensity of the battle was too much for her."

"Come on, Ginko. Wake up, you can't be hurt too badly."

Ginko came to, and wondered if the spell worked.

"D-did I do it?"

"Not exactly... You successfully activated your reflect magic, but you couldn't maintain it, and so it broke when my fireball hit it."

Ginko hunched over and sulked.

"C-come on, Sensei! It was your first time using it, you can only improve from here!"

Ginko crossed her arms.

"Yeah, I guess so. Can I try again Aoko?"

"Sure, but then your disciple gets a turn so you can rest your magic, it is quite likely that you are expending more magic than necessary due to being new to it. Might even be the reason why it broke so easily."

They reset their positions and Aoko readied a slightly smaller fireball from the one she launched before.

"Alright, ready?"

"You didn't ask that before!" Ginko steamed.

"I did that to force you to instinctively react, which usually works. It should have helped you get a more natural feel for it rather than trying to manually work it out. Anyway, here goes!"

She launched it with a little less force than last time.

Shooting at her in a straight line again, she was ready this time, and aimed the shield steady in front of her.

With a crash, the fireball hit the barrier and bounced back towards Aoko. Of course, Aoko had more than enough skill to break the attack with another before it hit her.

"Nice. You've got some natural talent. Hm?"

Ginko was in tears. Her barrier had deflected the attack, but in doing so, shattered all over the ground.

"It-it broke again? Did I mess up again?"

"Don't worry, Ginko. All it means is that you're not strong enough yet to handle too strong an attack. Keep working at it and it'll be strong in no time."

"\*sniff\* You think so?"

"You can do it, Sensei!" Yelled Sora from the sidelines.

Aoko pointed at Sora.

"Ah, yes. I believe it's your turn now."

"Right!"

Sora stood opposite Aoko in similar positions to how she and Ginko had stood moments ago.

"It's kinda weird to be fighting a fairy."

"No weirder than myself fighting a human, come at me."

"Alright, here I go."

He cast his reinforcement magic, gaining the aura gauntlets and greaves like

before.

"Decent enough already, let's see how tough they are."

Aoko pulled out the sword she had at her hip.

"You have a sword? Cool!"

"What kind of knight wouldn't carry a sword!" She said as she lunged towards Sora with a vertical slash.

He managed to dodge, but she comboed into a spinning horizontal slash which nicked his left arm.

"Ow!"

"First and foremost, as armor, you need more surface area."

Sora gave a confident grin. He was starting to enjoy this.

"I can do just fine like this for now."

He attempted to throw a punch. Which Aoko deftly dodged and struck down on his left gauntlet. It reverberated with a loud clang.

"Hmm, I see. It may not be all covering, but that causes the magic to be more concentrated where it is covering. Allowing for stronger defenses, just in fewer areas. Intriguing."

Aoko sheathed her sword and lit some fireballs in her hands.

"Let's try something different. Break twenty of these and I'll go all out on you."

"Alright, sure."

One by one she tossed the fireballs his way, in various patterns, so he wouldn't get used to it.

He ended up missing the first 3, which fizzled out on the ground, but after that he started to get the hang of it and proceeded to smash 5 in a row before another miss.

"You have good accuracy."

"Thanks, I used to be a champ at darts."

She felt slightly insulted that he would relate a game like darts to combat, but it was a bit applicable, so she ignored it.

He continued to hit them until he had gotten a total of 18 hits with 10 misses.

"Okay, I'll throw five more. Earn your battle."

"Do it."

The next one she threw must have been thrown at full strength, and zipped right past Sora hitting the wall of the catacombs behind him.

Sora thought to himself, "(Oh crud, if one of those hits me, I'm in big trouble.)"

He readied his guard and aimed for the next ball. Flying in an arc above his head, he jumped up and swung. Barely hitting it.

"Alright, just one more to go!"

Aoko saw his enthusiasm and made a much bigger fireball to finish things.

"Uh?" Sora and Ginko both grunted.

Aoko let the attack fly in a straight on assault. Sora had no clue how to deal with a fireball of this size, so he put his arms together and punched with both arms at the same time. Which was enough to punch a hole in the center of the massive fireball, but not enough to destroy it. As the ball was encroaching on Sora, it dissipated.

It had been Aoko's doing.

"Sorry, I guess went a little overboard on that one. You did hit it, so I'll go all out on you now."

Sora wondered how she could go any more 'all out' than she just had.

Aoko took a deep breath and a beautiful aura of armor covered her small body.

"So is this what reinforcement magic looks like when it's complete?"

"No, this is."

Her aural armor was suddenly engulfed in flames. Adding her fire magic to her reinforcement magic resulted in the flaming suit of armor that stood before him.

"Wow, I guess they don't call her 'The Valkyrie of the Sun' for nothing." Ginko commented.

"Here I come." Aoko immediately rushed towards Sora, a flaming punch aimed at his

arms.

He successfully guarded, but could feel his magic weakening.

A few more attacks hit him, and with each blow he felt weaker and weaker.

"(What can I do to break out of this?)" He thought.

He then remembered Ginko's training earlier, and the channeling trick to trigger a second attribute.

He relaxed his magic reserves, and let them seek out another outlet. To his surprise, he managed to find what appeared to be a different kind of magic, so he went for it.

"Come on, try to fight back!" Yelled Aoko, getting slightly bored beating up on a helpless human.

Sora started to glow a deep red color.

"What is this?" Aoko gasped.

"Sora?" Said Ginko from the sidelines.

With a swing of his fist, Sora collided with Aoko, blowing her across the open field.

As she slammed against the wall, the impact from the punch shattered her armor completely. Which was a problem, as it was tightly attached to the clothes she was wearing underneath.

"Aoko!"

Ginko flew straight over to her and covered her with a small towel that had been laying nearby. Aoko was somehow still conscious, but Sora, still in the position from delivering that blow, tipped over and passed out.

"Are you okay, Aoko?"

"Y-yeah, I'm fine. What was that, that overwhelming power?"

For the first time in 2 years, Aoko Koyosei felt fear.

END OF CHAPTER 10