

CHAPTER 14

The following day, Aoko returned to assist with combat training some more. And she had also been training herself, so Sora would be in for it. But Aoko had a different target for today's training.

"M-me?!" Ginko exclaimed.

"You got it. This guy's getting pretty strong as it is, you're the one who's been slacking off."

Ginko pushed her index fingers together.

"I've been training..."

"Have you? Let me just ask Mr. Ganji if this is true."

"Fine, I haven't done much training myself lately! You happy?!"

Aoko sighed and held her forehead.

"Listen, your power is a very useful support magic. If you can master it, you can be an invaluable asset to Sora during the rescue."

Ginko definitely wanted to be helpful. She'd give anything to make Sora's battle easier. She just didn't like the idea of being in battle herself very much.

Though she hadn't practiced very regularly, Ginko had improved a bit, But she was still far from an expert.

Ginko readied herself opposite Aoko. This time though, Ginko had her own battle attire. A green sleeveless shirt, matching shorts, and a headband with the word 'Immovable' in Etirpsian on it.

Aoko looked at her with curiosity.

"Well, you look more serious than before."

Ginko struck a battle pose.

"I'm always serious!"

"Let's see what you've got then."

Aoko braced herself, and in a flash her 'Valkyrie of the Sun' armor appeared all at once.

The sudden improvement startled Ginko.

"Yikes!"

Aoko rushed ahead without warning, giving Ginko little time to cast her spell.

With barely any window left, she got her screen up and blocked Aoko's strike, causing Ginko to bounce backward onto the ground.

Ginko sat up and proceeded to scold Aoko.

"Aoko! Give me a warning at least!"

"Sorry, someone told me you had been training." She shot Ginko a cocky grin.

Ginko got fired up like Aoko had intended and readied her spell immediately as she returned to the air.

"Good, things should go much better now, here I come!"

She once more dashed towards Ginko and struck her barrier. With a dull ringing, she bounced off and flew back a little.

"Not bad, let me try something a little tougher."

She drew her sword.

"D-d-do you think I'm ready for that? What if I can't block it?"

"I think I'm skilled enough to be able to hold back at a moment's notice. Now get ready."

Ginko readied her barrier, making it a bit wider than before. And without further ado, Aoko swung her sword for a deadly slash.

It collided with a crash, and sparks started flying everywhere as the two forces fought with each other. Finally, Aoko's sword flew from her hand and the struggle was over.

"Not bad. I think your defenses are coming along nicely. Now we should test your accuracy."

"Accuracy?"

After resting a minute, they reset their positions. Aoko spawned a fireball in each hand.

"I'm going to fly around, tossing these at you with increasing speed. You just

need to block them."

"A-aren't they going to fly everywhere?"

"Nah, I only put enough magic in 'em to last a few seconds, long enough to hit your barriers, but not to hit anything else."

With Ginko's barriers at the ready, Aoko began lobbing a light rain of fireballs at her. She easily blocked the volley of not-very-fast fireballs...

"Aoko, be serious!"

Aoko smirked.

"Heh, sorry. Just testing you. Here's the real deal."

A rapid-fire volley of fireballs came shooting at her. More challenging than before, but Ginko was getting pretty good at manipulating her shields, so not too much harder.

"Give me something faster!" Ginko yelled over to Aoko.

"You sure? Here you go!"

The rate of fire, which had already more than tripled from the initial volley, doubled in speed to a nearly invisible pace.

Ginko was handling herself quite nicely, starting to wear down, but managing to block all of them. Until one stray shot missed her barrier and grazed her leg.

"Aaaahh!"

Ginko drifted to the ground, followed by Aoko, who stopped firing immediately.

Ginko sat facing the wall of the house, sulking. Her leg having been bandaged up.

"Come on Sensei, you did great! Even I would have trouble blocking all those shots. And your leg wasn't burned that bad."

"Just let her be for now, she'll get over it. If there's anything I know about Ginko Chiyosei, it's that she doesn't stay down for long."

"Alright... Did you want to get to my training now then?"

"Sure, I think I've got enough magic left for a quick spar."

The day's training went on as usual, though Sora was yet again unable to defeat Aoko, which frustrated him.

Around dinner time, Murasako showed up with some leftovers from the castle. So the group, including the cheerful again Ginko, had a wonderful meal together in Sora's kitchen and chatted up a storm.

"So," Murasako asked, passing Ginko a biscuit, "What did you guys do yesterday? I basically just sat in the stupid library researching your mystery magic."

"She still hasn't got anything." Said Aoko with a straight face, taking a drink of tea.

"Oh, shut up! Like you've done anything to help the matter. All you've done is get beaten by it that one time!"

"Still more than you've found out."

"Grr..." Murasako wanted to hit her, but was able to calm herself because she could tell her sister was intentionally provoking her.

"A-anyway, getting off that topic what did you guys do? I know, I bet you two got all lovey-dovey while we were away." Murasako said with a mocking grin.

Sora and Ginko each looked away.

"Hmm?"

With a look of puzzlement on her face, slowly melting into an obnoxious grin.

"Ohohoho! What do we have here? Did a little someone do a little something with a big someone yesterday?"

Ginko's face was becoming red as a tomato. Sora's was steadily growing red as well.

"Come on, spill it, gimme the details."

She pulled out a notepad. What she intended to use the information for was a mystery.

Sora, being the brave one of the two, decided to come clean. But Ginko also did.

"Sensei and I..."

"Sora and I..."

""Went on a date yesterday!""

The two of them noticed that each other had spoken up as well, and respectively went to sulk in opposite corners of the kitchen out of embarrassment.

Murasako's grin was getting more obnoxious by the second.

"Heheheheh, so you finally asked him out. I knew you could do it if you had the guts."

Ginko slowly turned her head.

"A-actually, it was Sora who asked me out."

This seemed to surprise Murasako.

"Really?! He seemed more like the hopeless in love type."

"Aoko! Help us out here!"

Aoko took another sip of tea.

"It's not like it's a secret, is it?"

"Aoko!"

Murasako kept badgering them for details, from the cafe to the aquarium, and dinner with the warriors from the great scan.

"So that's it?"

"Yeah? Why?"

"Well, you know..." Murasako tried to think of a tasteful way to say it.

She leaned over and whispered something into Ginko's ear.

Ginko's face reddened so harshly it hurt to look at.

"W-w-w-w-what are you saying, Murasako?!"

"What's the problem? Ow!"

Aoko had grabbed her sister by the ear.

"I think it's time we leave. My sister needs a lesson in tact."

As they flew back towards Nogard castle, Sora and Ginko could still hear them arguing.

"Hey, come on sis! Let go!"

"not until we get home."

"what?!"

With the two of them gone, Ginko started to calm down a bit.

"*phew*"

Sora stepped over to her.

"So, what was it she said?"

Ginko's face regained the redness from before and she rushed off to her makeshift room.

"I-i-i-it's nothing!!!"

"?"

Ginko's room, built into an opening in the living room ceiling where the attic would be if there was room for it, wasn't very big, but it was comparable to her room back at the castle. She had even gotten Sora to route a pipe through to the bathroom so she could have a shower installed.

She flopped onto her bed and muttered softly as she drifted off to sleep.

"S-stupid Murasako..."

The training continued without further problems. Though by the end of the third week, Sora and Ginko had yet to go on any further dates even though they'd had another day off during the week.

Something Murasako had said to Ginko during lunch on Friday had started to get to her.

Sora had gone to get more ice at the market, and Aoko was training her squad at the castle.

"You know, it's odd."

"Hmm? What's odd?"

"This Sora guy is kinda unusual, you guys are definitely dating now, but he still calls you 'Sensei' instead of by your name. If it were me, I'd be insulted."

"I-I'm sure he's just trying to be polite!"

"I dunno, I would think he'd want to let people know his date's name. It's kind of awkward to say at some fancy restaurant 'Waiter, I'll have the roast duck, and my Sensei'll have the chocolate cake!'. She imitated him with a cockney accent for

some reason.

"B-but he..."

"How did he talk about you to those jerks from the aquarium during dinner?"

Ginko looked down.

"H-he called me S-Sensei..."

"See?! He needs to get his head in the game. If this keeps up, I know I would begin to wonder about his true feelings."

She thought for a moment.

"Hmm, how about this, I'll tag along with you guys on your next date. See how things are going. We'll make it a double date!"

Ginko tilted her head in confusion.

"Huh? I didn't know you were seeing anybody Murasako."

Murasako seemed to flinch ever so slightly at the statement.

"But of course, who do you think I am?"

The next week of training began, with Sora and Ginko both continuing to improve their respective skills. On Tuesday however, Ginko decided to put Murasako's plan into action.

"Sora!"

"Y-yes?"

"L-let's go somewhere today!"

"Y-you mean, a date?"

"Yes! Date!" Her head was spinning at this point from being so forward, but she managed to keep from getting dizzy.

The plan for today, the famous Nogard Amusement Park.

Located around the intersection of Ice street and Lightning street in north Nogard, the Nogard Amusement Park was home to a multitude of popular rides and attractions.

When they arrived, Sora was surprised to see Murasako there.

"Huh, what a coincidence."

"A-actually..." Ginko said timidly, "I talked to Murasako, and she said she wanted to make it a double date. I-is that okay?"

"Sure, I don't mind. But I didn't know she was seeing anybody."

"That's what I said!"

"Um, so where's the lucky guy?"

"He should be here any minute now. Oh, here he comes."

A kind of thin pixie flew towards them.

He was dressed kind of edgy, all dark colors, he had an earring on only his left ear, and his black hair was draped over his left eye.

"Hey."

"You made it! Everyone, this is Keis, my boyfriend."

Ginko looked him over for a minute.

"Wait, isn't this guy a gardener at the castle?"

Murasako seemed kind of antsy.

"O-of course, that's where I met him! I pass by the garden all the time so I just began talking to him a bunch. We shared so many interests that he ended up asking me out. He's a real romantic."

Ginko and Sora both looked at him and wondered.

They wandered around the park, going on all sorts of rides. Though unfortunately, the roller coaster hadn't had any mini-seats next to regular sized seats, so Ginko had to sit next to Murasako and her boyfriend, while Sora sat in the row behind them.

The group had tons of fun going through the haunted house, taking pictures at the wooden cutouts of the King and Queen that you could put your face through, bobbing for apples, though Ginko and Murasako had to bob for cherries instead. Keis wasn't interested, so he just waited at a stand that was selling edgy clothes until they were done bobbing.

The day was going pretty good, but Murasako was sticking to her hunch. After

lunch, she pulled Ginko aside to talk.

"What is it, Murasako?"

"*sigh* What's wrong is this guy seems like he's just having a fun day out, not like he's on a date with his girlfriend."

"Aw, don't worry Murasako! He's sure to notice your charms sooner or later!"

"Not me you dolt! Your guy. Sora seems like he doesn't even see this as a date. Did you see him make a fuss at the roller coaster?"

"Well... No, not really. B-but maybe he was just being considerate! I did really want to go on the roller coaster..."

"Hmm, not out of the question, but we need to test him, something that's sure to make him play his hand if he's serious."

"What do you have in mind?"

"I've got just the thing."

She flew closer to Ginko and whispered her idea to her.

Ginko turned red.

"N-no, we can't go there! That's way too embarrassing!"

"You got a better idea?"

Ginko drooped her head.

"No..."

While they were off talking, Sora got a chance to talk to Keis.

It was a kind of awkward silence for a minute, as Sora had never met a pixie before.

"U-uh, so how long have you and Murasako been dating?"

Keis glanced indifferently at him.

"Dunno."

Well that wasn't helping the mood.

"W-what made you fall for her?"

He looked at Sora like he was annoying the crud out of him.

"U-um?"

Thankfully, the girls returned just then, so the tension was broken.

"Sorry to make you boys wait!" Murasako said with a smile.

"Oh, no, it's fine." Sora replied, scratching his cheek, hiding the fact that he was glad to be free from his predicament.

"Um, so what did you girls want to do now? I think the line at the bumper cars has gone down a bit."

"Well actually..." Murasako said with a scheming grin, "Ginko here had something she wanted to do."

Ginko blushed.

"Murasako!"

"Isn't that right, Ginko???"

Ginko lowered her head and nodded.

"Really? Where'd you want to go, Sensei?"

After telling him, he blushed a bit.

"Th-there? Isn't that a bit...embarrassing?"

Murasako flew behind Sora and pushed him towards Ginko.

"Go on, don't mind us. We'll wait for you by the exit."

"O-okay."

Ginko and Sora awkwardly made their way towards their destination. The Tunnel of Love.

The Tunnel of Love! A classic amusement park ride where a couple rides a boat shaped like a pegasus through a dimly lit waterway whilst romantic music plays. Intended to incite romance among the couple. Normally intended for lovey-dovey type couples, so for Sora and Ginko, it is a very daring decision. Granted, it was Murasako's idea.

As not everyone at the park was a couple, there was no line, and they could just get their ticket and board.

Sora footed the bill and so they boarded the boat, getting a slightly confused

look from the ride manager.

The setting was quite romantic, a light magic user shone heart shaped beams through a pink filter throughout the tunnel. And a classic Nogatdian love song played from the magic speakers above.

Unfortunately, their boat was rather quiet.

Ginko sat, silently awaiting anything from Sora.

While Sora, quite embarrassed, sat silently, not quite sure what to do.

He finally put his arm around her and drew her closer, but that was all he had the guts to do.

After a long awkward silence, the two exited the tunnel and rejoined their friends.

Murasako eagerly awaited the news.

"So? How'd it go?"

The two of them were overcome with embarrassment, and so didn't end up replying.

"Hmm, not sure if that's a good thing or not..."

The four of them moved on to check out the rest of the park before it got dark.

Ginko and Sora were both very quiet, which made it difficult for Murasako, who was desperately trying to make small talk to break the tension.

Her efforts, however, were in vain.

It was getting to be about 4:00 pm by now, and Murasako was at the end of her rope.

She had an idea, but wasn't sure if it was good or not.

"Hey, Keis!" She whispered.

"Yeah?"

"I could really use some help here. This double date is failing big time!"

Keis raised his one visible eyebrow.

"What do you want me to do about it?"

"Talk to Sora, umm... ask him about Ginko or something. Just break this tension!"

"M'kay."

So when they stopped to get snacks at an ice cream stand, Murasako took Ginko with her and Keis stayed back to talk to Sora at a table nearby.

He hovered beside Sora trying to come up with something to say.

"So what's your guys' deal?"

Sora blinked twice in confusion.

"Uh, what?"

"Like, how the heck did you get a fairy chick to fall for you?"

"U-um, I don't think I exactly got her to 'fall for me'..."

"Then what's the deal? Why's a human going out with a fairy? Kinda weird TBH."

Sora was quite confused, as his conversation with Keis earlier ended in failure.

"W-well, Ginko's been training me to save the Princess. We just ran into each other one day. Well, I guess she ran into me..."

"And how's that going for you?"

"We've made a lot of progress. Your girlfriend and her sister have been helping out a bunch as well. We really should be able to head out soon if we keep up at this pace."

"Huh. Not gonna last too long then, is it."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I mean, once you save the Princess, she's gonna have to go back to the castle right? Not really gonna have any time for you after that."

Sora had never thought about that. He'd gotten so used to the setup they had now that he didn't consider what would happen once they achieved their goal.

"Well, we might be able to still go out after that. I mean, surely the King would approve of a couple who saved his daughter's life!"

"But didn't you two get together because she started training you? Wouldn't it be kinda weird to keep hanging out after that's over?"

Sora was getting really worked up and raised his voice.

"I don't need her to be my Sensei to-!"

Splat

Sora heard a noise coming from nearby. When he looked to see what it was, he saw Ginko floating there with tears in her eyes, two ice creams splattered on the ground in front of her.

"I-i-if you don't need me... Then I'll just leave!"

And she flew off bawling her eyes out.

"Wait, Sensei!"

Sora started to chase after her, but fairies can often fly much faster than a human can run, so he lost her pretty quickly.

Back at the table, Murasako had her and Keis' ice creams and was confused at the event that just occurred. Keis relayed the story, and Murasako threw his ice cream at his face.

"What was that for?! I did what you told me to!"

"You ruined everything! Get out of here!"

"What! You at least gonna give me that gardening book you promised to give me if I went out with you?"

"...Yeah, whatever, just leave!"

"Sure thing babe."

And he left as well.

Sora soon returned to where they had been waiting, and broke down in front of Murasako.

"...What do I do Murasako?"

Murasako's guilt was reaching a breaking point.

"I-I'll go talk to her, she's probably heading back to the castle. If we're not back in half an hour, I guess head home and wait for us there..."

"What about Keis?"

"Uhhh... He had to leave too. Work stuff."

"Oh, *sniff* okay."

Murasako rushed off to try to catch up with Ginko.

END OF CHAPTER 14