

## CHAPTER 18

The scene was heavy.

Sora was covered in his mysterious magic as he faced the giant troll known as 'Bart'.

His dear sensei lay on the ground, injured and unconscious.

The two trolls working for the Princess, Sam and Steve, stood near Ginko to protect her from any further harm.

Breathing heavily, Sora pointed menacingly at the giant in front of him.

"This is your fault!" Sora shouted at the top of his lungs.

"You hurt Ginko! You're going to pay!!!"

Tears fell from his eyes as he increased the flow of magic he let out. His armor quickly changed shape, becoming spiky and deep red. It also became a full suit of armor rather than the sparse covering it had been before.

Sora stomped his foot. The whole ground shook wildly, and a small fissure opened where he hit the ground.

Bart was tired of waiting, so he swung his behemoth arm that held the iron post that injured Ginko toward Sora.

Sora did not move.

As the post was about to hit him, he grabbed it, and crushed it with one hand.

Sam, Steve and Marissa, who had clambered over to join them, watched in awe as Sora displayed his unnatural power.

"W-what is that magic he's using!?" She exclaimed.

"I'm not sure, have you ever seen it Steve?"

"No, I haven't, it's scary..."

He slowly stepped forward, swatting away any attack Bart tried to throw at him.

Bart didn't seem capable of fear, must've been one of the effects of the curse.

Once Sora was directly in front of him, he drew back his fist, and with a mighty shout, he thrust his fist into Bart's belly. Normally, this attack would have amounted to nothing, as with the strike on his leg earlier, but Sora's current strength far outweighed his previous abilities.

The blow caught Bart completely off guard, and you could see it in his face as he flew back a few dozen meters, landing face-up on the ground.

Sora wasn't finished yet though, he ran over to Bart and prepared an even stronger attack.

But although Bart had been launched pretty far from Sora's previous attack, he wasn't out of the game quite yet.

Bart got up and grabbed a crate of potatoes that was sitting nearby and slung it at Sora. Needless to say, he swatted it aside like it was nothing.

Sora leapt at Bart and thrust his knee at his face. Bart's reflexes were working better this time, and he grabbed Sora before he landed his attack.

Unfortunately for him, Sora had more than enough power to escape his grip, and hopped out and landed on the ground.

Sora was starting to sweat pretty badly at this point.

"He doesn't look like he'll last much longer." Sam said.

"S-shut up, he'll be fine. I hope..."

The gravity of the situation was finally starting to get to Marissa.

Sora walked away from Bart slightly, and then ran with all his might at him, readying a fist.

Bart swung one of his gargantuan hands down at the ground, but, seemingly able to foresee him doing this, Sora jumped to the side and continued his mad dash.

He gave a deadly blow to Bart's right leg, knocking him to one knee.

Seeing an opening, Sora proceeded to jump into the air and threw one final punch at the weak spot he had been told of earlier, the top of Bart's head.

With a loud clang, the hit landed, a small shockwave emanating from the point of impact. Bart swayed from side to side, and then fell face-first onto the ground.

Sora landed and delivered an additional round of kicks to the giant troll, his rage still unsatiated.

"GRRRRRAAAAAHHHH!!!!!!!"

After his barrage of pure rage, he walked back towards the others.

"I-is he down?" Asked Marissa.

Sora was still breathing very heavily.

Just then, they heard a voice from the direction of the castle.

"Sora! Is everything okay? \*gasp\*"

Aoko had arrived to lend some assistance.

"Princess!? Are you alright? What happened?"

"U-um, well..."

There was a flash.

Their eyes quickly turned to Sora, who had deactivated his magic. He promptly fell over and passed out.

"Sora!"

Aoko checked his pulse.

"Don't worry, he's okay, just exhausted. But what on earth is going on?"

Marissa realized the jig was up.

She told Aoko that she'd explain everything once they got back to the castle.

They rounded up the trolls, letting them know that 'The Mistress' had given them the order to stop, and brought them to the castle. King Radius was about to deliver their sentencing, but Marissa pleaded with him to let them go, as it was all her fault anyway. Marissa told them everything, about how she had acquired her warp magic when she was 10, shortly after meeting her best friend in the whole wide world, a troll her age named Rebecca. They'd been inseparable whenever they could meet, which wasn't often as her mother, Queen Sharona Enclavius, hadn't the kindest opinion on trolls, feeling that her daughter should keep better company. So she forbade her from seeing her anymore. Even going so far as to have Rebecca's family move back to Tenretni. But that never stopped her, as she could warp to her house in Tenretni whenever she wanted. She became very well acquainted with the people of the village, and instead of 'Princess', to keep her visits a secret, she became known as 'The Mistress'. Over time, she became increasingly sympathetic of the poor living conditions most of Tenretni lived in compared to Nogard, and when it was explained to her that she would be betrothed to a high ranking dignitary's son from Susagep soon after she turned 18, she devised a plot. She would conspire with the trolls to stage a kidnapping of herself, demanding a large sum of money for her return. If the plot was successful, she would still have to marry somebody she didn't know, but the village would have the money to build up and expand their education and way of living, and if they sent some dashing warrior to save her instead, the type she'd read about in folk tales, she'd have a good excuse to decline the betrothal in order to marry her savior.

This caused a small problem when the kingdom sent a moderately large army to save her. She'd had the bright idea not to make the transaction place be the village, as the warriors might've destroyed it in an effort to save her, but she couldn't use her savior as leverage as easily if there wasn't ONE savior. So she helped her friends defend the cave, which had originally been a storage facility of sorts. The way she defeated such an imposing force was quite interesting. She'd wait until the warriors were inside the cave, and then teleport the troll fighters outside the cave and attack from behind. It wouldn't seem like such a strategy would work too many times, but it did.

From then on, she just waited until they sent some TRUE hero to save her, or sent the money. She'd been back to the castle occasionally using her magic, but she of course had to be careful not to be seen, which ultimately hadn't gone well as she had been seen by many people, though they mostly thought they had been seeing things. So when she caught wind of a hero that was being trained to save the Princess, she had to see him for herself. There wasn't a lot of info on the guy, but when she was snooping around her brother's office and found the files on him, she was ecstatic, he was just her type. And the rest you pretty much know.

After she confessed everything, at first her family was quite angry with her, but after seeing how far she went to help a struggling nation, they were lenient with her.

The Queen even issued a formal apology to the trolls for the effect her attitude towards them had had on the situation, and she promised to be less critical of them.

The King confessed to the rest of the royal family and other officials that he had had a pact with the previous troll elder a decade ago to help protect Tenretni by spreading a rumor that the trolls were much stronger on average than they actually were. Facts like their magic-resistant skin were still true, just not as strong as they were made to seem. King Radius said he would have told of the pact sooner, but he felt that thinking their opponents were stronger than they were would make his makeshift army more careful during the battle at Vanishing cave, and more likely to win. And their subsequent defeat made him assume the trolls had gotten stronger over the years and so he had decided to shelve the matter.

They then invited Locke, the current troll elder, to the castle for a meeting on how they could help out Tenretni financially a bit, at least until they could get by on their own strength. The troll elder was brought to tears by their hospitality and thanked them endlessly.

But although things were going quite well for the trolls, Marissa was unfortunately stuck betrothed to Zane Stelxis. Which was a very welcomed thing for Apex, as he wasn't too eager to marry Zane's sister.

As far as the other parties in the fight for the capital, Murasako and her team were only a bit bruised, except for a few that had slightly more serious injuries.

Spike was still tied up when soldiers came to gather up the wounded at Sora's house, and after telling them his side of the story, they immediately untied him and brought him to the castle as well. Unfortunately for him however, Aoko spoke against him and his "Program". Disobeying an order outside the castle was one thing, but questioning it in company of the King was another thing altogether, at most, she would be told she was wrong and she could say no more on the matter. But the King realized the mistake that had been made with the cleanup project, and decided that while it was still a great idea, it would need royal supervision to prevent any more of what nearly occurred.

Spike was quite clever with his words though, so he just got a mild lecture and then he was free to go.

But what happened to our heroes?

In the royal infirmary, two people lay in two beds set right next to each other. One containing a red haired young man, the other, a small silver haired fairy. Sora had a few bandages on his arms, and one on his left leg, but his magic had done a good job of protecting him, so he wasn't hurt too badly. Ginko on the other hand, had her whole body wrapped up in bandages.

Sora slowly came to at about 5:00 in the evening. He sat up and grabbed his arm at the twinge of pain he felt when he tried to move it.

"Ah, you're awake."

Aoko flew in, carrying some towels and setting them on a table.

"What happened?" Sora asked, holding his head.

"How much do you remember?"

"I...I remember fighting that humongous troll, and then...Ginko!"

He looked around and spotted her bed next to his.

"Yeah, she took a heavy beating. But she'll be fine, don't worry."

She patted him on the shoulder.

"You really saved the day, the Princess and her two friends told us what went down with the fight. So, you tapped into that weird magic again..."

"I did? I don't remember any of that."

He laid back in bed.

"What happened to the trolls?"

"Oh, that, it's quite a story." She chuckled as she said this.

She relayed what the Princess had confessed.

"So she was just playing the whole country for saps?"

"I don't think it was quite that simple, sure she had some of her own motives in mind, but she was also thinking of the well being of an entire nation. If we had paid the ransom, she would've gotten nothing out of it."

"Yeah... That's true. What did they end up doing with that big troll?"

"That's the thing... We sent some people to capture him, but the oddest thing happened."

"What was it?"

"He had been completely purified of that curse he'd been under. He looked normal, and was back to his normal size."

"D-do you think that was my magic's doing?"

"We can only assume it had something to do with it. We still need to research more heavily just what is lurking within you. Now get some more rest. Tomorrow, if you're feeling well enough, the King has something to tell you."

"Okay."

Aoko left and Sora thought about everything that had happened. And as he did, he dozed off again and dreamt of his first date with Ginko.

The next day, he was cleared to leave the infirmary, and went to see the King.

The entire family was present, most of them looking stern and dignified, but Marissa pouting and seeming annoyed.

"Welcome, Sora Ganji." King Radius began.

Sora knelt before him.

"You may stand"

"Ah, th-thank you, your majesty."

"This country has just gone through a great deal of trouble. And I have heard of the great things you accomplished during the attack. Even though the recent events were the fault of one of our own..." He glared at his daughter.

"You still have done this country a great service. And so I'd like to bestow upon you a few things."

"Y-yes your majesty!"

"First off, if you wish, I shall prepare a room at the castle for you to live. You shall be treated as if you were royalty, though with not quite as much power. Also, I sincerely hope you will accept your new post."

"P-post, sir?"

"As captain of the newest squad of the royal knights, squad 11!"

Sora was getting excited now.

"M-me, a c-captain?"

"Certainly, you definitely proved your worth in the battle yesterday. Your decision making skills will be a great asset to us all! At least, if you're willing to accept..."

Sora immediately bowed.

"Of course I accept, your highness, it would dishonor the crown to decline!"

"Ohoho! Very good! Well then, you may return to your home to gather your things while we set everything up for you."

"Thank you, your highness! Ah, but may I request one thing?"

"Why, certainly! Ask away."

"I would like my home in the catacombs to be left alone. It's... Very dear to me."

King Radius smiled.

"It shall be so. David!"

His secretary came up to his side.

"Yes, your highness."

"Write up some papers for his residence in the catacombs so we can officially acknowledge its existence."

"Right away, my King!"

And he rushed out to prepare the paperwork.

"Anything else you'd like?"

Sora was feeling a bit guilty for requesting even what he had, so anything more was out of the question. He bowed deeply.

"That is more than enough, thank you your majesty!"

"Not at all, the hero that, um, technically saved the capitol deserves as much. I hope you enjoy the captain's life!"

With that, Sora left the throne room. But he still had one stop to make before heading back home. Possibly the most important stop of all.

He stood in front of the infirmary door, worrying that she might still be unconscious.

When he got opened the door, his emotions overflowed with joy.

Ginko had woken up, and was rubbing her eyes.

She groggily looked towards the door.

"S-Sora!"

Tears poured from Sora's eyes.

"Ginko! You're awake!"

He immediately ran to her and gave her a big hug.

"Wha?! S-S-S-Sora?! O-ow!"

"Oh my goodness, I'm sorry!"

He set her down and started to tear up.

"I was \*sniff\* so worried..."

Ginko smiled and laid back.

"So, did you win?"

"\*sniff\* Yeah..."

Sora gave Ginko the short version of what happened, including his new post in the royal knights.

"Heh, I guess this means Aoko's got a rival now."

"Hahaha, yeah, I mean, I've already defeated her at least once!"

They shared the heartiest laugh either of them had had in a while.

Then Ginko remembered last week and looked down.

"W-what's wrong?" Sora asked.

"Well, you remember the amusement park?"

Sora knew what she was getting at immediately.

"Yeah, I remember."

"What was it you were talking about with Keis?"

Sora wiped the tears from his eyes.

"He was going on and on about how we wouldn't be able to see each other after we saved the Princess, and our relationship would fall apart. What I started to say in response was..."

He took a deep breath.

"I don't need her to be my Sensei to feel the way I do about her!"

Ginko's face grew red, and Sora's did as well.

"D-do you think we could still go out now that you're a captain?"

"Of course! I wouldn't have it any other way!"

The mood was quite good right then, and Sora and Ginko leaned closer to each other.

Just then, the door opened and a doctor came in.

"Alrighty, Miss Chiyosei, I'm back for your checkup!"

Sora and Ginko sat facing away from each other, their faces red as tomatoes.

"Aw man, did I interrupt something?"

And so Ginko recovered and returned to her duties, while Sora began his new life as the captain of squad 11 of the royal knights. Murasako's efforts were noticed as well, and she was promised a better chance during the next royal knights exam. Spike lost a little bit of respect with the King, while Aoko gained some in return. All in all, the Princess was safe, and both countries were at peace once more.

This adventure may be over, but our story isn't finished quite yet...

END OF BOOK ONE