

Hello everybody. It is the last Thursday of the month and I hope that RL has treated you better this past week than it has treated me LOL. Still, **FILFy** is done, though I had to cut it off about 10,000 words before I had hoped to. Seriously, RL has been kicking me in the balls with steel-toed boots. Wednesday was the first day I've had since last Thursday to get a full day's work in. That annoys me, but it will hopefully let me get **MW** out to my editor(s) by Sunday late. That means it will not be out this month, alas. I refuse to put out a chapter like this next one without all the bits I have outlined for it, and my editors have seen it, in particular Justlovereadin' considering the massive amount of repercussions the chapter has for the future of the story. As it is, I have all the easier fights done.

Anyway, before I go back to the difficult bits of **MW**, I decided to take half a day to write this up. Yes, it only took me half a day, LOL. Dragon Naturally Speaking for the win baby, and frankly, working off even small bits of the original like this is both fun and easy for me.

Before we get to the poll, though, I want to note that this time, with the choices being more of type, the specific characters to be introduced via Louise's summoning spell, rather than the next episode's direction, I paid particular attention to the comments. Many people just didn't like one or other of the characters but did like the other options. Novus, Steven Qu, and AR said they would like Makoto in the story, for example but not Saito. Ryoga seemed to split people. You either like him or hate him. Vega mentioned Persona positively, Razgriz0x mentioned its lore but that Ranma wouldn't have much chance against the characters within. I'd agree on it in terms of Bleach...right now. But I have no idea about the Persona game, so I think that is wrong going by the animes I've seen it. Kazuma... is a question mark since only Greed on Greed mentioned Kazuma by name.

So I decided pretty quickly that if the choices were close enough, I would mix and match the people coming through. And whatever else, I wanted at least three people to come through the portal.

As an aside, Greed on Greed, formerly Mibad. Many of your questions have to do with the shape of the story going forward rather than this specific choice. I will address them (or have) in a PM to you.

And now on to the actual poll! This one was actually a lot closer than you might think, considering that three of my editors voted for different choices.

Ryoga bounces of the truck, cause a pile-up and fall through the portal! (Yu From Persona, Saito, Makoto, again possible three-way) is in fourth place, with 516. So, no Ryoga and no Persona.

With 560 votes, Another boy knocks Saito away but is dragged in, along with a sickly girl. (Yasutora Chad pre-Rukia rescue, Sailor Saturn) came in third. I think this would be the one I'd go for since it has Chad in it and he's a great male friend character who is BADLY underutilized in the original. I'd love to give him the ability to grow.

Nipping at the eventual winner's heels was Makoto Kino trying to push two boys out of the way of the portal but fails. (Saito, Kazuma Kuwabara, three-way or more comedy) brought in 670. I wanted Makoto, but as I mentioned above, a lot of people didn't want Saito. The question then becomes... does Saito add anything to the story, or does Kazuma? Hmm...

At 680, Ami Mizuno comes out of the store, trying to grab Saito away from the portal (More from the original) and came in first place by the equivalent of a whisker. This is what I would call the boring choice. I would have accepted it if people said they **liked** Ami, but actually, no one said that. They said it was the tamest, the safest. Something to think about.

Anyway, here is the next episode. And while, as stated above, I have not followed any single choice directly, I hope that everyone will be happy with my attempt at doing so.

Episode 10: A Great Muddle

Sado Yasutora, or Chad to his friends, had been having a very odd month. First of all, some trouble had been occurring around his friend Ichigo. This in itself wasn't unusual, but the fact that he couldn't quite remember anything specific about those problems was annoying. He felt it had something to do with the transfer student, who his friend had rather astonishingly befriended himself. And it had only been recently when chatted finally gotten to the bottom of it. The transfer student was some kind of spiritual policewoman who helps to fairly the souls of the dead to their proper resting places. She had been hurt in the line of duty, and his friend had been stepping up in her place to guard the town from monsters.

A recent incident of a lot of those monsters appearing had forced Chad to help him, in the form of protecting Ichigo's little sister. With her ability to see the monsters, and Chad's ability to fight them, they took out several of the beasts before the incident had been somehow solved. After that, Chad had been approached by a man in with clogs, who said that he would answer all of his questions.

Unfortunately, Chad had other responsibilities. One of his best friends outside of school that he regularly jammed with had broken his leg while helping his father, who had previously thrown out his back. Chad had been forced to put off speaking to the man in the hat to care for his friend and his father, who lived in an entirely different town. It was annoying, but Chad would always put his friends first, and since at the moment Ichigo seemed to have things well in hand, that mystery could wait.

He was just coming out of a grocery store, when he saw the truck careening towards him. He didn't have time to set his feet at all and found himself smashed backward into another young man. The shorter boy flailed his arms wildly, losing whatever was in his hands, as he smacked into someone else.

Two 'someones,' in point of fact. Closely followed out the door by another young man, far taller than the first, although Chad was unable to notice this. A young woman who had seen the disaster occurring from nearby was in such a position and had already been moving to help.

Her name was Makoto Kino. She had very recently decided that she attracted too much attention to herself, both good and bad, at the local high school due to her height. The fact she had, in a single day, turned down three boys and trounced a group of bullies when they picked on her and then been told off about it had been the last straw. With school several months in the future, Makoto had decided that it was time to move away. Since her parents had died years ago, Makoto had been looking after herself, thanks to a very generous will both of them left for her, so moving was relatively easy at need. When even the teachers felt she was causing trouble, simply by being bigger than most boys and tougher to boot, it was time to move on.

She had just turned the corner when she saw the truck and then saw something else, something flashing almost, a circular image of another place entirely to one side of the incoming disaster, against the wall of the corner store. She didn't know what the heck that was, but she could see the disaster occurring and raced forward, hoping to knock the boy who had just come out of the computer store.

She reached them just as another boy, far, far taller, indeed, he made her look small, was hit by the truck. He was sent flying into them all. Her flailing hand was able to grab at one of the boys, and with a twist of her body, hurled him into the safety of the street out of the way of the truck.

Simultaneously, the other boy, who also saw the oncoming truck, had a split second to notice there was also a girl coming out of the computer store after him. She was young, blue-haired, with widening eyes, but a quick thrust with one hand caught her in the chest and hurled her back into the store with astonishing force. Her computer came out of her hand and flew forward, just as the giant slammed into him along with something else she had clenched in one hand, smacking into the back of the giant's head.

For a moment, there was utter chaos as all of this went on, with the truck arriving mere seconds after Chad. This covered the fact that all three of them and whatever they were holding, and the computer which had just rebounded off Chad's head into the opening, were pulled into the portal.

The portal closed with a snap a split second before the truck crashed into the side of the building right next to the entrance to the computer store. Inside of which, Ami Mizuno, who

had recently discovered she was also the Sailor Senshi, Sailor Mercury, stared in shock and a flood of adrenaline that nearly made her heart burst out of her chest.

“There was no blood, she suddenly realized, staring out the door to the back of the truck. There should’ve been quite a bit of it, certainly visible from where she was on her rear in the interior of the store. Underneath the truck’s undercarriage, Ami could see a young boy moving on the other side of the accident, desperately looking around him as he stared in shock from the other side. But there was no way that the giant of a man, the tall delinquent looking one and that young girl who she had just gotten a glimpse of could have ever escaped the truck’s forward progress.

Something was seriously strange and she wondered with a gasp if that truck was meant for her. That thought made her spine stiffen as she realized that the three people who had been teleported away might well be innocent, and she scrambled around, hoping to find her Transformation Pen or her Mercury Computer. Neither could be found, and she cursed, “Well, drat.”

Ami moved outside and people from within the computer store, where she had been trying to see if anything modern was compatible with her Mercury Computer - without much success - hurried after her. Moving to one side of the accident, Ami looked around for any clue as to where her items might’ve gone, only to see nothing. “I’ve heard the urban legend ‘Truck-kun,’ but I never thought it actually existed,” Ami murmured, still in some amount of shock.

That shock faded further when she saw someone standing almost hidden in an alleyway down the street. The woman had green hair and a tan but was more importantly dressed like a Sailor Senshi. She was also holding her head in her hands, biting her lip to keep from screaming aloud in what Ami could tell was a rictus of agony even from here, it was so pronounced.

Sailor Pluto had watched from where she had shot the Dead Scream at the truck to send it careening into Sado. He was her original target and Setsuna wanted him gone along with the fishing spell’s original target. Pluto well understood everything going on in Karakura thanks to her access to the Gates of Time, which could pierce pocket dimension bubbles with ease. The Shinigami were an annoyance, but Setsuna couldn’t care less about them. Nothing the Shinigami or anything they had to do with had ever affected the creation of Crystal Tokyo. Up until recently, anyway.

Now, when she had been searching for dangers to Crystal Tokyo she had discovered Sado had apparently been set to interact with Minako, Sailor Venus {**yes I did see this, this is a DNS error I wished to share with you for the LULZ**} thanks to a long sequence of events that, yes, had something to do with her getting rid of that pest, Ranma. That interaction would eventually bring Ichigo in, who would befriend Ami. Together, interacting with the two boys’ interactions with the Sailor Scouts dropped the chance of Crystal Tokyo to an unacceptable 82%.

So when the opportunity presented itself, Sailor Pluto had thought to kill two birds with one stone, a bare hour before Sado's original interaction with Sailor Venus. She had tested this and had spent several moments in front of the Gate of Time, while the fishing spell coalesced, making certain that there would be no error. That taking Sado out of the way wouldn't bring the others from Karakura Town into interacting with the rest of the Sailor Senshis.

It wouldn't, because, at this moment, they were about to be hit by multiple crises, one after another. By the time the dust settled, Sado's disappearance would be easily explained throughout the paperwork and some sleight-of-hand. Simple.

Setsuna hadn't known that Ami had come to this town in search of computer parts. She hadn't known that Makoto had even been living here for a few months or would be in the area of the disaster. Her searches on the Gate of Time had been too specific, trained only on problems her actions would cause with the Shinigami.

And when Makoto disappeared, the euphoria she had been feeling disappeared to be replaced by pain. Because just at that moment, Crystal Tokyo dropped from 82% certainty to below 20%. Instantly the spell on Setsuna's mind flashed in full reverse. Not only was Crystal Tokyo in as much danger as it had ever been, but it had been caused by Sailor Pluto's actions. The spell in her mind did not like that at all.

However, worse than that shift was the simple fact that the human mind, no matter how magically powerful, was not built to go from feeling ecstasy, to feeling soul-rending agony, the high of a near-orgasm, to the low of your brain feeling like it was being flayed alive. It was all Setsuna could do not to scream, biting through her lip to keep it in, as her eyes rolled up in the back of their head, and she collapsed, her brain frying from the sudden reversal.

Ami skidded to a stop in front of the older Sailor Senshi just as she collapsed. Wildly Ami looked around and decided she couldn't leave the unknown woman here, even to investigate the crash. She could return later, but she had to get whoever this was out of here. Perhaps the crash was caused by some kind of backlash of the spell that struck her? Ami thought to herself, checking for a pulse. She found it, but it was weak, and blood dribbled from the woman's bitten-through lip, as well as from under the woman's eyes. Whatever had hit her was nasty, for certain. Far nastier than she had seen yet with Rei or Usagi.

It was almost enough to make her freeze in indecision, but Ami had not been studying since she was twelve years old to become a doctor like her mother for nothing. She quickly began to bandage the woman's mouth, then dabbed at her eyes before hefting the woman to her feet, dragging the taller woman deeper into the alleyway heading towards a little alcove to hide. Once there, Ami reached into her purse, pulling out her communications compact, noting absently she had lost not only the Mercury Computer, but also her transformation pen. "Rei, Usagi, I need your help! Can you home-in on my location by any chance? I need some Sailor-type help."

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In Tristain, Colbert extended his will along the threads of magic in front of him, trying to analyze what was happening as the Familiar Spirit Summoning Doorway that Louise had created expanded. Primarily a Fire Mage, his greatest proficiency was in casting fire magic. However, his greatest expertise overall was in analyzing magic. Chemistry, alchemy, a smattering of metallurgy, and a great deal of reading on magic lore. These were what he felt were his true strengths.

Using his magic, Colbert followed the creation of the summoning doorway and saw the initial interference. Seconds later, he saw Louise's spell overpower whatever ward was supposed to stop the extra-planar magic.

Colbert had hoped that would be all. That whoever was on the other side was only able to impact where the portal opened. Then, somewhere nearby, he felt it. Magic on the other side of the portal. Two, then three magical signatures.

Two seemed quiescent. Dormant spells or nearby magic users not currently using magic. The other signature was a spike of power, a spell launched somewhere nearby. Thanks to his spellwork, this was as clear to Colbert as if he or one of the other teachers had become aware of someone within the school's wards using magic without being added to the ward scheme first.

The individual using the active magic was not close enough for him to isolate him or her. Still, there was active magic there, and he made a note of it even if, from this side of the portal, no one could see into the other dimension physically. Then someone was pulled through the portal and the spell collapsed back along itself.

For her part, Louise felt it this time when something interfered with her magic. The gentle flow of energy out from Louise into the summoning ritual suddenly became rather like the tangle of bedsheets in the morning after she'd borrowed some of Eleanora's literature the night before. The streams of magic bucked and twisted, and at one point, she could swear that her magic screamed back at her, causing her a flash of pain.

At the same time, several people appeared about sixty feet in the air, crashing in a jumble in front of her as several other objects fell all around them.

Those objects ricocheted all around the amphitheater. One of them was a rectangle that looked like it was made out from metal popped open upon landing. Tabitha, who had been watching all this from the audience, saw this. A second later, she saw half of the square thing

light up with some inner magic. Words began to appear there, and Tabitha's eyes behind her wire-rim glasses narrowed, staring at it with an almost frightening level of intensity. Words meant books and books were her passion. If that magical device had books in them, even if they were written in an unknown language, it was a find of epic proportions.

No one else noticed, not even Kirche. Everyone's attention was on the three individuals who had also come out of the summoning circle, including Louise as she stumbled a bit, her breath coming out in heaves as her body reacted to the output of magic.

"waaaaaaaaAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA-" *KA-THUD!* went some peasant boy into the ground. Oddly enough, he was dressed in something like a uniform and had a large, strong body, with orange hair done up in an outrageous spear-like hairstyle.

Next to him, a young girl of maybe Louise's own age, crashed into the ground. Louise had to privately admit this girl somewhat pretty and wore a very nice skirt and blouse, with brown hair, a heart-shaped face and smile lines that reminded Louise of Cattleya-neesama.

Both of them were subsequently crushed under a much, much larger, broader, and somewhat older looking... human? Louise wasn't honestly certain if he was human or not, he was that huge. His skin was as darkly tanned as Von Zerst. He had lanky hair covering half his grim, chiseled face and was, well, he was just too **big!** Way too big. He loomed almost like a troll, even sprawled out on the other two.

A second later, the portal closed and there was dead silence for a moment. Or at least, there was silence from the crowd. The two more normal fellows being crushed under the last one were both already complaining, groaning and looking around in confusion, as he was grunting in pain.

"So... which one is your familiar?" Kirche teased, peeking her head up from behind a hastily constructed shelter. Next to her, Tabitha was still, her eyes still locked like a hunting falcon's on the small rectangle with words.

"My, my, I know who I would choose," Guiche murmured, causing Montmorency to glare at him in fury.

Not hearing this, Louise looked from one to the other. One was most likely the one she'd felt a sort of "rightness" about when she was casting Summon Servant for the second time. Like her first results from casting the spell, the others were most likely individuals mixed into this by interference from another party. But she couldn't tell who she was reacting to know that the summoning ritual was over. "...That is a good question, astonishingly."

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Henrietta had been somewhat bemused to find herself on tenterhooks as friend Ranma had traveled to the Academy, awaiting the moment when her friend would disappear from across from her, torn from her to become Louise's familiar in truth once more. Yet she put that aside, and while Ranma seemed to be aware of her anxiousness, he didn't comment on it. Instead, he drove the conversation for much of the trip by asking Henrietta questions about Halkeginia while, in turn, Ranma described a lot of his travels.

Nor did he, Henrietta was surprised and pleased to note, push for more physical ways to spend their time. He seemed more than willing to take things slow and, just like Henrietta was genuinely interested in him, seemed to be interested in her.

"Are you telling the truth? I normally wouldn't doubt your word, Ranma, but you said that you swam from your own native country to this other country you called South Korea **before** your latest training to which allowed you to get such strength. Swimming for days on end is, well, it's beyond belief." Henrietta chuckled after one story, shaking her head.

"That's what I said, but we still did it. Both me and the Old Man."

"You know, for all that you mentioned him several times, you haven't really, well, how to put this," Henrietta paused thinking for a moment, then said slowly, "You have mentioned your Old Man training, but you've never mentioned anything else you've done with him. Do you not have any other memories? Memories of him teaching you how to read, perhaps reading you a story? I'm trying to build a picture of his personality and you can often do that by examining how a person treats his family."

Henrietta was honestly wondering if this person Ranma called his Old Man really was Ranma's father. It certainly hadn't sounded like it, really.

Ranma laughed harshly. "My memories aren't complete enough to show me everything, but I don't think I have any like that in the first place. My Old Man and I, we didn't do that. With him, it was 'everything is for The Art.' If it wasn't martial arts, he wasn't going to be interested." He smirked suddenly. "Not that I complained all that much. The Art was all I knew too."

"That is... A part of the wants to say that the is rather admirable, dedicating your life to one thing. Yet, you obviously **do** have an education, so you know that there is more to life than the Art."

"Sure, I know that. But the Art was what I dedicated my life to," Ranma hastened to explain, feeling that Henrietta was questioning if it was worth it. And it was important that Henrietta understood that Ranma felt it was. "Willingly. I can enjoy other things. I enjoy cooking, eating, heh very much on that last one, learning about history, tactics and such. And making friends."

He winked at Henrietta, who laughed and he went on, "Maybe reading fantasy books too, I can remember a few of them, or bits anyway. And a few other things I don't think you have any equivalent of. But The Art, that is central to how I define me. I'd sooner die than give it up. Just like you could not walk away from being Princess and all that implies, no matter how big a burden it is."

He looked at her, reaching forward to rest one hand on her knee, which was currently covered by a skirt. And yet suddenly, that didn't really matter, as Henrietta could still feel the warmth from that hand. "There's a moment you know, in a fight, challenge or a spar, where all of your senses come alive. Where you are pushing yourself as hard as you can go and there's no greater feeling for me. You understand? The Art, my pursuit of it and my following its Code is how I define myself. Everything else doesn't matter."

"I suppose I can understand that," Henrietta nodded, understanding his point exactly. There was indeed a sense of challenge, of pushing herself, balancing on a knife's edge, that was quite addicting. That, coupled with the fact that Henrietta knew that no one else could or would do it as well, was what drove her on. "Still, I wasn't questioning your dedication to the Art or why. I'm just wondering... Well, it doesn't matter, I suppose. We will come back to this one more of your memories return. But for now, do you think though that you could teach other people to fight as you do?"

"I don't know. I've never taught anyone. I suppose I'd be willing to give it a shot, maybe. It would depend on the dedication of the people I was teaching and why they wanted to learn in the first place. Why?"

"That is complicated, although you've already seen bits of it. Suffice to say, I would like my musketeers to be stronger to combat noble mages who might fight against me in the future. There are a few forms and laws I wish to put into effect once I become Queen that a large portion of the noble population will not like," she answered circuitously, then changed the subject. "That is another subject we will come back to later. It seems we're nearly there, and..." She smiled suddenly over at Ranma, and it was now his turn to flush a little as she patted his knee, the warmth of that smile reminding him of their kiss the night before. "You didn't disappear on me."

Ranma's eyebrows rose up in surprise. "You thought that was a possibility?"

"If you were destined to truly become Louise's familiar, then the second summoning ritual would've had the same outcome as the first, you appearing before her," Henrietta admitted, her smile widened as her relief flooded through her. "That this didn't happen is a great comfort to me."

"To me too. I wouldn't want to have to deal with Louise twenty-four-seven, no offense. I know she's your friend, and you did kind of convince me that her temper is something that's occurred recently, but that's not exactly the same thing as saying she's got no temper. And I

think our personalities would just keep rubbing one another the wrong way. Still..." Ranma looked away, peering out of the window towards the Academy, which was now visible through the foliage above the path ahead of them, but still several minutes ahead of them. "I have to wonder if Louise will have any better luck this time..."

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"Ahem, well, as unusual as it may appear, your summoning spell did reach out to the same place both times. While there was, once more some interference, I believe that all things considered, the interference is not directed against you," Colbert intoned, thinking about what he had seen. "Unless you felt a connection to a specific individual on the other side, then I believe that anyone of these three strangers will do."

"Why you seem to be bound by Brimir to have a human Familiar is... something we will discuss later. I've read something about that, but..." A cough from nearby drew Colbert back to the present, and he repeated his earlier words, "Unless you felt a connection with someone on the other side, you can choose your familiar from these three."

"Why couldn't I have just summoned a dog or something," grumbled Louise under her breath as she turned her attention to the three summoned humans, who had been talking or rather arguing amongst themselves. The loudest of them was the first one to land, the young man with the ridiculous hairstyle.

"What the fuck!?! Damn it, this is the last time I run errands for my sister!" He then looked around as much as he could from his currently prone position. "Where the hell are we, man, and will you get the fuck off me, you, big bastard!"

"Ugh, what's with the cursing?" Makoto tsked, thumping him lightly on the back of the head with an elbow even as she groaned a bit under the truly massive guy who was currently crushing both herself and the other guy under him. "Still, he's got a point, big guy. Can you move? Seems as if none of the rest of these gawkers are willing to help for some reason, wherever the heck we are."

"Sado. Sado Yasutora. Chad," Chad replied as he climbed to his feet, holding out his hand to pull the girl to her feet. Looking around, he frowned, wondering what was going on. *Magic isn't so unusual to think of considering Ichigo's issues. But were we sent away by Truck-kun or dragged here?*

Makoto took his hand and allowed him to pull her to her feet, amused at the sheer strength of the big guy. He looked somewhat Spanish, maybe? Some gaijin blood there for

certain, not that she cared. "Makoto. And you're not injured? You are the only one that actually got hit by that truck after all."

"I'm fine," Chad answered simply, holding out his other hand to the other young man.

He smacked Chad's hand away, getting to his feet angrily and trying to shove Chad in the chest with both hands. "What the hell, man! What was the big idea for sitting on us for so long! Don't you know who I am!"

Chad turned his attention to the area around them, something that seemed to infuriate the other young man, while Makoto shook her head, realizing suddenly that her fellow squish victim was dressed like a typical school punk. So typical, in fact, that his picture could've been used in the dictionary. She could also tell that while he was a little annoyed, he was also a lot frightened and Makoto got between them instantly. "Don't you think that we have something else we need to concentrate on right now?"

"Right. Sorry," the punk guy said, nodding his head to her, and surprised after a moment when he realized that Makoto was almost as tall as his sister. That allowed him to calm down further as he looked around. "My name is Kazuma Kuwabara, and this isn't the first time I've dealt with magic. I was part of a kind of competition a while ago, and before that, my rival at my school was kind of killed and then brought back to life. So, teleportation like this isn't well that weird. Only, with magic and that kind of stuff, there's almost always more to it, you know? I nearly died in that competition, and whatever they want us here for, it can't be good!"

Makoto's eyes widened at that, and she stared at him, then at the big guy who just nodded his head. "It's not something I'm used to, but I know magic exists."

"Then this has something to do with you, and we were just brought along!?" Kazuma shouted as he jumped to that conclusion, trying to go around Makoto. But she moved in front of him firmly, keeping the two boys apart.

"I didn't say that. I only said I know about mystical stuff," Chad answered, looking around them. In particular, he was looking at portions of the audience and a single pink-haired woman there. Something about her presence was giving him the willies. All of his instincts were screaming at him that she was dangerous. Even as she stood up and made for the door, Chad watched her go, not even noticing the two girls following her where they obscured his view.

"And we're just supposed to believe you! At least I said what kind of mystical stuff I knew about," Kazuma huffed. Then he looked at Makoto, calming down significantly as the gentlemanly side his sister had smacked into his head came to the fore. "What about you?"

Makoto shook her head. "Nothing. I mean, I've heard about stuff with martial arts tournaments and a few martial arts masters who can use ki, but that's a far cry from magic. Still, whatever's happening, we should probably keep calm and not bark at one another, okay?"

Kazuma scowled, staring over at Chad. The guy was so big and so powerful looking, the idea of fighting him was exciting Kazuma bit, just as it always did when he was facing off against Yusuke. *Only this time, I'm the one that's got an ace in his sleeve.* "I don't know."

Seeing this, Louise shook her head. *Nope.* I've already had one problem, male, the shouty your face buffoon with the odd hair was not an option. Nor was the giant. He was just a bit too scary. *And no matter how I grow, he'll still tower over me. Heck no.* with that in mind, Louise moved forward and beckoned for the peasant girl to lower her head. At least if this one was her valet, she should be capable of doing the job.

"Look, let me try talking to someone," Makoto soothed, calming Kazuma down. "See, that young girl's coming over to us now. Okay, we can talk this over."

"I don't know. There's a shit ton of magic in the air around here, and this whole observatory thing is screaming out tournaments to me. I'm betting we were brought here to fight one another or them." But Kazuma still subsided. There was no way the little kid could be a danger, after all. Not unless... but no, that was crazy, right?

"Talk first, try to break out of here later," Makoto intoned firmly.

"You talk as if you're going to be part of that," Kazuma scoffed, while Chad looked at Makoto with one eyebrow raised.

He then paused, seeing someone from the audience also coming forward, but wasn't moving directly to them. Instead, she was moving towards the computer that had somehow been brought along with them to wherever they were now. She paused as she felt Chad's eyes on her, looking over at him through wire-rimmed glasses. Nearby, another girl had stood up, and Chad looked between the two of them, nodded once and then turned his attention back to Makoto.

"Don't look down on me just because I'm a girl," Makoto scowled, almost but not quite to the point of giving both of them the finger. Then she turned away and moved towards the little pink-haired girl. "Excuse me? Miss? Do you know what's happening here?"

"I am Louise Françoise Lu Blanc de La Vallière," said Louise to the girl. Again, just like Ranma, none of these three peasants seemed as if they could understand a proper language. Still, she felt that was something that could be overcome later. Before that, she had to assert her position as this one's master. With that in mind, she beckoned the tall girl to lean down towards her, her eyebrow twitching a little at how much the girl's chest moved when she did.

As she bent closer, Louise finished the familiar binding ritual. "Pentagon that governs the five powers give this person your blessing and make it my familiar spirit." Then she kissed Makoto.

Seeing this, Chad's eyebrows rose in surprise. Next to him, Kazuma gaped wondering now if all of this was a dream leading up to some of his more interesting imaginings.

"Gah, whaa?!" squeaked Makoto as she broke liplock and leaped back and looked completely astonished and off-balance. "I, I'm not that kind of, that is, I, wh, wHAAA!"

Then the familiar binding magic began to worm its way into Makoto, and Kazuma's eyes widened in shock as his high spiritual sense allowed him to see what was going on. It looked like magical chains had suddenly appeared around Makoto. Now they were starting to seep into her body. If that wasn't enough to cause him to lose his temper once more, what happened next would've been more than enough.

Makoto might not have been aware of it, but she too, had magic within her. A planetary seed that could allow her to take power from the planet Jupiter once it was awakened. Jupiter was nowhere near they were right now, but that initial seed still remained and it reacted to this intrusion. Needless to say, this caused Makoto some discomfort, and she began to yell aloud in pain, "OW, ah OWWW! W, what is going on now! It's like my body is getting shocked from the insideEEE!

Louise watched as the binding ritual's runes appeared on the back of the girl's hand. But they did so very slowly, and for some reason, they also seemed to be causing the girl pain. That shouldn't have happened and Louise was about to start panicking. Peasant or no, Louise hadn't meant to hurt her.

But just then, a loud thrum and a cry of warning caused Louise to look up. It was well she did, because the next instant Louise dodged backward, as a glowing one-handed sword cut it where she had been standing.

While Kazuma had mentioned he had been in a tournament recently where many of the people participating had mystical powers, he hadn't mentioned that Kazuma had actually developed some of his own during that tournament. For example, the energy sword currently in his hand, which he had just nearly tried to chop the tiny enslaver in half.

Chad's eyes widened, as did a lot of the audience but Kazuma was past caring. "See what I was saying?! That little girl just tried to enslave Makoto! That little bitch is probably some ancient old lady, who binds people and steals their youth or something!"

Chad thought about it for a moment and wondered why they had an audience for such a thing if that was the case. But at that point, the bald man standing to one side had reacted, sending a blast of flame towards Kazuma.

That was enough for Chad. He instantly stepped forward, thrusting out a hand as fast as possible to intersect the fireball. The blast of fire burst on the air his punch had thrust out, and

while the backblast burnt Chad, he kept going, uncaring as Kazuma lunged forward, his energy sword lashing out towards the bald guy.

The older man blocked it with another spell, and then the audience really got involved, save for the younger of the two girls that Chad had noticed before. She had ducked underneath the stone bench with her prize, while the other one began to create a shield of flame and air in front of them.

Ignoring them, Chad grabbed at a bench, tearing it out of the ground. He used it to block blasts of flame, shards of crystal, and other attacks sent at him by various people who looked like teenagers from all around him.

Meanwhile, Makoto's seed had finished fighting off the binding ritual. It expended almost all of its energy to do it, though, and Makoto felt really tired, but she pushed through it. She was a martial artist. She pushed herself to her feet and then rolled under another explosion of some kind sent her away from another one of the former audience.

This allowed Makoto to take her attacker and two of his fellows by complete surprise, leaping up into their faces and quickly lashing out with punches that laid all three out. A second later, Makoto was forced to dodge away from some kind of magical golem or something some blonde kid had just summoned into being. She then found herself back in the open area her back to her two companions, wondering if she would get out of this alive as the woman that Chad had been worried about thundered back into the room, her wand raised.

Then something new was added to the equation.

OOOOOO

Before Karen of The Heavy Wind could send out the spell she had been about to use to destroy all three of these foreigners, there was a clap of such loud proportions that everyone there, including Karin, covered their ears. Many of them still had ringing in their ears as they looked towards the sound and found Princess Henrietta standing there next to someone else who the students and the professors seemed to recognize.

His hands were still together, and his eyes were glowing fears red light as he glared around the room. Yet at the present moment, it was the Princess who wrapped everyone's attention. "ENOUGH! Stop this immediately."

Hearing that one voice through the silence caused by the thunderous clap caused the three from Earth to look in that direction, then around at everyone else. To their apparent

astonishment, that command seems to be obeyed by everyone, as many of the audience went down to one knee and bowed to the new person.

Yet even in all of that, there was something important that had to be done. Place the blame before royal anger could descend upon them all equally.

"She started it," said roughly half the people there, pointing at Louise.

"It's not my fault!" Louise exclaimed. "It was that psycho with the sword!"

"Placing the blame does not matter. Get medical care for the two who have fallen first," instructed Princess Henrietta, keeping a manic giggle inside with some difficulty. They had arrived at the front of the Academy just in time to hear the first sound of spellfire being exchanged, and at her request, Ranma had grabbed her up in his arms and raced as fast as he could to the summoning auditorium. They had crossed more than half of the Academy in less time than it took Henrietta to say a full sentence, and she had arrived with only her hair being a tiny bit messed up.

Now, she pointed at four students standing by themselves by the doorway she had just stormed through, sending a brief but warm smile to Karin, who remained kneeling on the floor. "You four! To the infirmary. Help the physickers gather supplies and bring them here to help the wounded. Sir Ranma?"

"Yes, your highness?" Ranma asked, impressed at how well Henrietta could take command so quickly and on his best behavior for the moment. Within the space of a few seconds she had things settling down. With his memories slowly coming back, Ranma knew there had been dozens of times in his life where that kind of thing could have been really handy.

He was also eyeing the big guy, who had apparently survived a fireball by the state of his clothing and only looked mildly singed for his efforts. The other guy was still holding an energy sword, the thing appearing after disappearing when Ranma's lap had interrupted enough to let go of the technique.

"See if you can talk to them," Princess Henrietta requested. "If they came from your world, they may speak the same language. If you could help defuse the situation, I would be most grateful."

"Defuse? So that means I can't challenge that big guy to a wrestling match?" Ranma joked, and Henrietta rolled her eyes at him, but she couldn't stop her smile from forming once more and he laughed. "Sure. I'll talk to them."

"Excellent. Once you have those three calmed down and explain what has happened, I believe that it would be beneficial to have everyone sit down to a good meal. Before that, I am

going to remonstrate most sternly with Professor Colbert and the headmaster. The moment sentient people appeared, they should've stopped the ceremony! I do not care how sacred it is to the Founder or that this is the second time Louise has summoned people. Until we know the effects of familiar bond on a fellow human, I will not allow it to be used on someone in my nation."

That caused Ranma to grin still wider, but instead of responding to that, he moved towards the three from Earth, shouting out, "Any of you three understand me?" He was surprised a second later that all three of them did.

"Wow! Am I glad someone here can speak our language," Makoto said brightly, moving over to the hunky young man who had apparently made a massive noise earlier. The fact he was all also very handsome, unlike her two companions, had something to do with the brightness of her smile just as much as watching the girl who just had to be a princess stopped all the fighting so easily begin to harangue the bald man. "Please tell me all of this is just some huge misunderstanding? And can I say that Princess's attitude was pretty darn cool? Where can I get a command voice like that?"

Ranma shook her hand, somewhat impressed by her size and her forthright nature. "My name's Ranma, and would you believe mishap rather than a misunderstanding? And yeah, it is kind of cool."

"So what, we're just supposed to forget that they were trying to kill us or enslave us!" Kazuma growled.

"They're not trying to do either now," Ranma said, scowling at him.

Kazuma didn't like that look and waved his light sword under Ranma's nose. "Now, see here you..."

Disdaining trying to talk to the punklike guy, Ranma grabbed the energy sword out of the air, his hand moving so fast it seemed to teleport to everyone watching. Now he was holding the energy blade in one hand without any apparent effort. Ranma felt the sword was strong but nowhere near the attack Ranma had accidentally created during his fight with Quiche. Without any effort, he clenched his fist, shattering it.

Kazuma stumbled back and Ranma growled at him. "You want to keep fighting, you'll fight me. The Princess will talk to everyone, including you three, to get to the bottom of what happened here. That's the best you're going to get."

"Can you promise that you can send us back?" Kazuma asked, deflating slightly. Ranma's burning eyes and the ease with which he dealt with the sword without even his hand being singed made it clear that Kazuma was out of his depth here. Not even Genkai had been so

cavalier about his spirit sword as that. "I've got a sister, you know. She'll be worried sick if I just up and disappear."

"I don't have anyone who'd miss me, but I would like to know why we were brought here," Makoto said.

Ranma looked over at the big guy, who shrugged, then said, "No family, but friends. Depends on why we were brought here, I suppose."

"That is going to be a question, I think. But I'm not going to be the one to explain it. The Princess and everyone else well, although I'll tell you now, I think only one of you was supposed to be brought through. Still, if you're all stay calm, we can all sit down with the Princess and her advisors and get to the bottom of this."

"Were you brought here the same way?" Makoto asked. Then she gasped. "Oh, but we haven't told you our names yet." With that, she introduced herself, followed by pointing at the two boys.

Ranma nodded at them all again and explained his own circumstances. Makoto and Kazuma were both interested in this strange martial arts technique he claimed to have learned to become so strong, although both were equally dismayed by the memory loss. The fact that Ranma didn't yet have any desire to go home was also surprising, but his forthright manner calmed them further, as Makoto moved over to grab up the things that had come through with them.

Looking around after a moment, she frowned. "I thought a computer a laptop had come through with us. Where did it go? Then did it get destroyed during the fight?"

Chad shook his head and pointed towards the door. "One of the students took it. She seemed very interested in it."

"I'll mention it to the princess but I don't think it'll be important."

Out of the corner of his eye, which had not strayed too far from Henrietta the entire time he talked to his fellow Japanese, Ranma saw the musketeers finally arriving, with Agnes in the lead. As they fanned out around the Princess, who was now speaking quietly to the woman who had to be Louise's mother, Ranma nodded and turned his full attention back to the trio from Japan. "Now, I think all of you should probably maybe get a bath, and you big dude, should get another shirt."

About forty minutes later, Ranma shook his head in surprise as he led the three earthers into the cafeteria. He knew that they had been supposed to put together some kind of celebration feast, but turning that into a formal dinner at the drop of a hat must have been hard.

He'd been a little bemused by Henrietta's idea of using a formal dinner to further cement the idea of peace between the newcomers and her people., saying that he didn't have any good memories of eating with his Old Man. It had just been another method of training. Princess Henrietta had explained that this was not the case for normal people. "And indeed, a good formal meal, with all the bells and whistles will further allow people to move past the experience and interact with one another in a controlled setting."

Weird as it sounded to Ranma and his still fractured memory, it looked like it was working. Instead of holding grudges and such from spells gone awry, the students were laughing about the mistakes they'd made and actually bragging about it. Or rather, most of them were. Chad, the big guy, was simply nodding his head, listening intently, and regularly commenting as Ranma translated for him and the other. Kazuma was doing most of the talking. Bragging really, but he seemed to know how to act in formal settings despite his punk looks.

Makoto seemed to have made fast friends with few of the girls among the Academy, including Louise, astonishing, despite her body apparently rejecting the familiar bond as Ranma had. Those were the most annoying conversations he had to translate, but they got a bit better when Henrietta started to take part. Despite the height difference, she and Makoto seemed to have the same body type and fashion sense. All in all, it seemed to be going well, even as Henrietta gently brought the conversations together and turned it to what had happened during the Summoning Ritual.

Unfortunately for Ranma's piece of mind, someone else had seen this meal as a tailor-made opportunity...

1. Montmorency decides to use a potion on Guiche (More from the original, lemony goodness, RanmaXHenrietta big-time romance moment)
2. Makoto wonders if Ranma is her sempai and starts flirting with him in front of the Princess. (some drama, comedy, much embarrassment, verbal catfight)
3. Sheffield and her master decide that eliminating both Karin and the Princess is too good a target to pass up (combat, fighting, world-building)
4. Another person other than Montmorency tries to mess with the wine with poison rather than a love potion (drama, character deaths, Ranma becoming angry)

End Episode 10