

Epics of Isavoire

Chapter 6: The Master and the Mimic

Hamal Village was a town that many people visited on their travels from one major city to the next. Being there made the swordswoman named Amber feel alive. It was always great to see new people, experience a new location's charm, travel to her heart's content, but most of all, find people to test her skill against.

The rumors were that recently a talented swords user had taken up residence in the area, although he was also known for performances he put on. Since she had heard, Amber was eager to see what this strange sword user was like.

As she walked through the main street, past other travellers and citizens of Hamal, she found that there was a group gathered around the town's square.

"Say, what's going on?"

"Someone's putting on a performance," a young, Hefonite man said, his tawny wings moving slightly as he watched. "He's rather talented, too."

Looking, Amber saw that a young, blonde Ellon with feline features was balancing himself upon a large, round ball. It was perfectly spherical and even bigger than him. As he managed to perform a single hand stand, maintaining balance, he grinned.

"No need to applaud, folks! Still, if you want to pay me, I'll accept that!" he said jovially.

Many in the crowd laughed, some even offering payment for the show he had put on. Still, Amber wondered if this was the man that she had heard so much about.

Watching and waiting, she saw he continued his act, until he casually rolled the large ball aside and out of the square. “Now, if there are any other acts anyone would like to see? Dancing? Juggling? Acrobatic feats?”

“Perhaps you have other talents?” Amber asked.

The blonde Ellon nodded, his green eyes locked on Amber. “Well, miss, I am a one man talent show.”

“Well, maybe you heard of someone who uses swords?”

“Oh? I used to do sword performances, but I kinda beat the trousers off most challengers, so I decided to do something different.”

Many in the crowd began to talk among themselves, intrigued by the words the man had said. They wondered if it was true. Could a mere street performer be so talented?

“Care if I test that theory?” Amber asked, stepping through the crowd, who watched with interest.

“Not at all! I’m always happy to have a partner in my acts. Just a sec.” Looking around, the blonde performer began to search, until he noticed a stand where a man was selling wooden practice swords. “Excuse me, sir! Three wooden blades, please!”

The vendor nodded and gave them three, while the performer promptly paid him. With a smile, the performer handed Amber one sword and kept two for himself.

“So, ready to go?”

“Sure, whenever you are!” Readying her sword and standing firmly, Amber watched him carefully.

Daringly, the opponent began by stabbing with both blades, but Amber flicked his attacks aside and pressed him back. The performer didn't seem disappointed, though, as he just grinned and attacked again with a single blade. He continued, even after Amber parried, this time his attacks were more rapid, but Amber was too composed. Upon his next strike, she made an upward swipe, knocking one of his weapons from his hands.

"Please, take this seriously." Amber stared at him, somewhat disappointed. It felt like he was trying to be flashy more than effective, but then again, she realized that it was a show.

"Alright, if you insist." Dropping the second practice sword, the young performer held on to the one he had, his stance now more balanced, his weight evenly distributed, and his eyes firmly set upon Amber. Before long, he made a quick, focused swipe.

Amber managed to deflect it, but was surprised by how fast he recovered. He continued, though he wasn't attacking as wildly

Amber decided to go on the offensive, but was pleased to see that he blocked with similar skill, and actually managed to even push her back. She could tell he had some skill, but something was off. What he did seemed reflexive rather than instinctive. When Amber went on the offensive, he'd occasionally flinch or second guess himself, but only very briefly.

Still, she had to secure her win, and soon. With a confident stab, she expected to land a blow on her opponent, but found her blade deflected and he was counter attacking instead. Quickly and on instinct, Amber grabbed the wooden blade in one

hand, wrestling with her opponent, before she stabbed with her own sword. The attack came, tapping the opponent in his chest, but he seemed dumbfounded.

“Um...I think that’s my win.

“What’re you talking about?” Amber asked, a bit confused. “I landed a clear blow to your body.

“Yes, but I technically made a hit when you grabbed my sword. At best, you’d be missing a few fingers.”

Amber sighed. “Good point. The win is yours, then.”

The performer bowed and winked, while the audience cheered for him. He then directed their attention to Amber. “Don’t forget to congratulate the talented swordswoman. She’s a true devotee of the art, and pretty good natured!”

The crowd clapped and Amber bowed, trying to hide a smile before it died down, with the group dispersing. Turning to her former opponent, Amber spoke.

“So, what is your name?”

“Call me Matthew, or Matt.”

“Well, either way, you’ve got talent. Mind if I ask you who taught you how to use a sword?”

Matt shrugged. “I picked it up on my travels. Under the right conditions, I’m kinda a quick learner.”

“Ah, a shame. With a bit of polish you could really take your skills to the next level. I noticed you hesitate at moments, as well as get flustered. How much practical sword practice have you had?”

“Next to none. I guess you could say I’m more of a copycat than an actual practitioner. I just use sword fighting more for performance factor, like everything else.”

“Oh, I see...” Amber folded her arms and looked down, disappointed. “I can respect your decision, still.”

“Wow. You really are a better sport than I expected. Last guy I told that to said I brought dishonor to his chosen path or something like that.

“Life’s about more than that. My daughter taught that to me the hard way.”

“You’re a mother?” Matt stared at Amber. She looked to be in her mid twenties, so it wasn’t entirely out of the question. “But how old is your daughter if you tried to teach her sword skills?”

“If we’re being honest, I would rather not discuss my family life. I just let the topic slip my mind by mistake.”

“Oops. Sorry to hear. How about I buy you lunch as a make up for it?”

“I’d appreciate it. Thanks, Matthew.”

“Good. I know this great place on the other side of town. The beef stew there is to die for.”

“I hope it’s really good if it’s worth dying for.” Amber grinned. Picking up the practice swords, she and Matt departed, a new friendship forged.