

SORCERER'S HANDBOOK

Chapter 9: Disturbance

“Ha!”

With a thunderous shout, Engulite raised her wooden sword, stepped forward, and channeled all her strength into the blade, bringing it down with full force toward the armor stand in front of her!

Crack!

As the sound of the armor stand fracturing echoed, the wooden sword came to a halt at the edge of the ninth ring.

Engulite withdrew her wooden sword and resumed a defensive stance, exhaling a yard-long white breath as she followed the breathing technique taught by the school, rapidly regaining her energy.

‘At this rate, I should be able to summon the Slash Sword spirit by the end of the month,’ Engulite thought to herself.

As an institution with hundreds of years of heritage, Swordflower College had developed various techniques to guide Sorcerers. The training armor stands, like the one Engulite was practicing with, were specifically designed to help Swordcerer apprentices get started.

The armor stand looked like a simple wooden post, but at its core were ten rings, made of an incredibly hard material. When an apprentice could strike through to the core’s tenth ring with a single blow, it signified that their Swordsmanship was powerful enough to summon their first Sword Qi spirit.

Typically, there are three types of One Wing spirits a Swordcerer can summon: the 'Slash Sword,' 'Thrust Sword,' and 'Cleave Sword.' Naturally, Engulite, who was practicing slashing techniques, aimed to summon the 'Slash Sword' spirit.

After taking a second or two to regulate her breath, the armor stand in front of Engulite had already returned to its original state, as if she had never broken through it.

This was the strength of Swordflower College's training grounds – no matter how much damage they took, all the armor stands would quickly self-repair. As long as you had the energy to spare, the armor stands were yours to ravage, because in the end, it wasn't the armor stands that ended up staggering out of the training grounds with jelly legs.

Boom!

As Engulite continued her slashing training, she suddenly heard the training ground's door burst open and couldn't help but be momentarily distracted. Although the training ground was filled with apprentices exuding sweat and shouts, it was, in fact, a place of discipline, where few dared to cause trouble.

Anyone who dared to make a scene here would quickly find themselves the subject of a 'close physical conversation' with dozens of Swordcerer apprentices boiling with pent-up Sword Qi.

Engulite had a few persistent suitors last semester, but they never dared to approach her in the training ground. Any act that disturbed training would immediately provoke the nearby hot-blooded apprentices to leap to justice at the slightest frown from Engulite.

Passion, restraint, a fighting spirit, and an atmosphere filled with masculine hormones – these were the hallmarks of the training ground.

There's a famous joke within Swordflower College: "Some guys start out learning Swordsmanship to pursue a girl, but they end up practicing to compete with other guys. Maybe it's not that love loses to strength, but rather, compared to the complexities of love, the pursuit of pure strength seems much simpler, right?"

But that evening, complex love boldly stepped into the domain of strength.

A swathe of ruby-glossy hair appeared at the doorway, skin so pale it dazzled, features so delicate they seemed sculpted by an artist's careful hand, a waist small enough to encircle with one's hands, legs long and straight.

A rose that belonged at an evening soiree had abruptly bloomed in the midst of the forest of swords that was the training ground.

But what caught the attention of the Swordcerer apprentices the most was what she held in her right hand – a training wooden sword.

"Sonia?"

As Engulite watched Sonya cross the Training field to an unused Armor Stand and begin practicing with a Wooden Sword, her mind was filled with questions.

Though she bore no ill will towards Sonya, in her mind, Sonya was the last person she would associate with Swordsmanship.

Unlike the elegant and graceful female Swordcerers in 'Epic Fantasy' and 'Knight Drama' on Holographic Screens, real-life female Swordcerers have to exercise their bodies to a level even superior to men in order to summon Spirits and master Spells.

The callouses on their hands from wielding swords were a given, and the muscles in their arms, legs, and even waists would all be more robust and developed due to training. The actresses in the Holographic Screen, with their

pretty little hands devoid of any muscle, executing lavish Swordsmanship, simply didn't exist in reality.

Even the Swordsmanship Spirits would never acknowledge a physically weak Sorcerer. Engulite had grown tired of hearing news about Spirits fleeing from aging and weakening Swordcerers since she was young.

While some say there is a 'beauty of strength' in female Swordcerers, Engulite's own observations showed that there were far more boys chasing after female Water Art Sorcerers than those pursuing female Swordcerers.

And she admitted to herself that the delicate Water Art Sorcerers like Sonya and Lois were indeed more beautiful and refined-looking than her, a Swordcerer who resembled a rough man.

She had no complaints about this, after all, while she was Training, Sonya and the others were busy with makeup and skincare, everyone was pursuing what they wanted.

That's why Engulite was so surprised; after all, if Sonya was starting Swordsmanship Training now, wouldn't that be a waste of all her previous efforts? It would not only delay her progress in the Water Art Faction but also affect the delicate beauty she had been so carefully maintaining.

However, when Engulite noticed a handsome young man not far from Sonya, wiping sweat despite the heat and still dressed in a full set of Training gear, she suddenly understood.

Felix Vlozrada, a freshman in the same year as them, a genius Apprentice of the Swordsmanship Department.

Although Felix, like Engulite, was still Training hard to summon his first nascent Spirit and was aiming to summon the basic 'Slash Sword' Spirit like Engulite, Felix aspired to summon the 'Vibration Sword,' a Secret Spirit passed down through the Vlozrada Family.

The initial Spirit summoned by each Sorcerer is crucial and can even determine the future direction of the Sorcerer's development, so families with the means will try to find suitable practices to help their talented members summon the strongest and most suitable nascent Spirit.

Even for a small Noble Family like Engulite's from the countryside, there was a cultivation method for a Secret Spirit, it just wasn't suitable for Engulite.

The 'Vibration Sword' was undoubtedly stronger than the 'Slash Sword,' and Felix's Training intensity undoubtedly crushed Engulite's—Felix earned the praise of being a first-year Swordsmanship genius because his Swordsmanship skills and Training intensity were far beyond his peers.

In the end-of-semester Swordsmanship Department sparring session last term, Engulite lost to Felix, but she was convinced by his skills. After all, he not only had more Talent but also worked harder than her; the title of Swordsmanship genius was well-deserved.

But what intrigued the girls even more than Felix's talent in Swordsmanship was his other side.

Even though Engulite came from the countryside, she knew that the Vlozrada Family was one of the top Noble Families in the Stars Kingdom, one of the five pillars of the council.

The Duke of Vlozrada, also known as the Starforging Duke, controlled the most advanced steel factories in the Stars Kingdom. His business spanned civilian and military use, and he held significant influence in the military, political, and business realms, arguably the most powerful man in the kingdom.

As the second son of the Duke, Felix should have attended Truth College, but for some reason, he ended up at Swordflower College. Many speculated whether he was out of favor with the Duke.

But even if Felix was not the favorite, he was still a legitimate member of the Vlozrada line, and no matter how lowly he might be regarded, he was still part of the elite class. Naturally, many sought to use him as a stepping stone to climb the social ladder.

Felix's social skills were as extraordinary as his talent for Swordsmanship. He seemed to have a new female companion almost every week, changing partners faster than some change clothes.

At times, Engulite even noticed that the women coming to the Training field to see Felix were different on five consecutive days. She couldn't help but feel both disdain and admiration—how could he still have the energy for other activities after such intense Training?

After her own Training, she felt like melting into her bed.

With his high skill level, good looks, and numerous scandals, Felix was undoubtedly the center of attention on the Training field. If Sonya had a specific purpose, then Felix was likely her only target.

But back when their dormitory relationship was still good, during a conversation about the boys at school, Lois, Adelle, and Sonya all made it clear that they kept their distance from Felix.

After all, a playboy Noble like Felix would inevitably end up in a political marriage arranged by the Duke of Vlozrada. If they got their hopes up and got close to him, they'd merely end up as insignificant members of the ex-girlfriend group.

While Engulite, who harbored romantic fantasies, did not like their stark pragmatism, she had to admit they were correct in their judgment. Over the year, none of Felix's girlfriends had managed to last more than a week.

Could it be that Sonya wasn't here for Felix? But besides him, there was no one else here who could catch her eye...

While Engulite was pondering this, Sonya had already begun her Training in a methodical manner.

“Ha!” In sync with her breathing technique, Sonya struck towards the armor stand with her sword, but she couldn’t even pierce its surface.

Engulite watched for a while and shook her head repeatedly: Sonya’s grip was unstable, her off-hand was weak, her footing was loose, and her body was sluggish—not a single movement was proper.

She hadn’t even changed into appropriate Training gear, still wearing her flashy regular clothes.

Even her shouting sounded more like coquetry.

To say she came for Training would be generous—it seemed more like she was there to attract attention.

Whatever her purpose, it certainly wasn’t for Training.

Engulite no longer paid attention to her and continued her own Training. The essence of Swordsmanship Training is the integration of mind, body, and technique; focus is paramount. Each strike must be executed with full concentration, with a precise calibration of force, the rotation of the shoulders, the swing of the wrists, and the nimbleness of footwork. Only when all these details are mastered can one execute a proper strike.

Slacking off is pointless; the efforts of a Sorcerer Apprentice are for no one but themselves.

Only when an Apprentice’s talent is sufficient to resonate with the Virtual Realm can they conjure a spirit from thin air, thus crossing into reality and earning the right to step into the Virtual Realm as a true virtual wing Sorcerer.

At Engulite’s current level, she needed a brief Rest after every three strikes and to relax her muscles after every thirty, with a total of nine hundred strikes

within two hours marking the completion of one Training session. The accumulated fatigue was enough for her to fall asleep as soon as her head hit the pillow after a bath.

“Ha!”

“Ha!”

“Ha!”

Minutes later, Engulite couldn't suppress her irritation any longer and looked at Sonya with dissatisfaction. In just these few minutes, Engulite heard Sonya swing her wooden sword dozens of times without any Rest in between, which was sheer nonsense.

Engulite's anger was justified, much like in a highly difficult and serious exam where a careless student starts answering the questions without even looking at the test paper and making comments like “This is so easy,” “Just this,” “Surely no one can't do this,” which would surely disturb the other examinees. Sonya's behavior was tantamount to causing a disturbance.

However, just as Engulite was about to warn Sonya, she realized she might have been mistaken—although Sonya's movements were still rough and novice-like, each one strictly followed the requirements of the Swordsmanship Manual, and she put all her strength into each strike. The sweat on her forehead streaming down her nose was not the result of messing around.

Moreover, Sonya's Swordsmanship had visibly improved compared to a few minutes ago; her wooden sword could even chop into the edge of the armor stands!

While still not up to the level of the Training field, it appeared she had some foundation in Swordsmanship, at least the kind that only comes with several months of practice.

“Has she practiced Swordsmanship before?” Engulite wondered.

Still, she didn’t believe Sonya was there for Training—such a waste of energy, and in a few more minutes, Sonya would surely be too tired to stand, far from achieving any Training effect, but perhaps it might be good for weight loss.

I get it now, she must be here for body sculpting! I’ve heard about that!

Engulite suddenly felt she understood Sonya’s purpose, but she also sensed that Sonya was about to reach her limit.

After all, even as a Swordsmanship Apprentice with years of Training, she could only manage two hundred and fifty-six strikes at a time, taking eleven minutes.

For a Swordsmanship novice like Sonya to keep going for several minutes without stopping was already quite impressive.

Feeling a bit tired herself, Engulite stopped to Rest, counting Sonya’s strikes in her mind, planning to offer some pointers when Sonya’s form began to falter—although she didn’t think Sonya would switch to the Swordsmanship Department, improving Sonya’s interest in Swordsmanship even a little would be good.