

Episode 4: Arriving With Style

Perhaps the children at Tristain's Academy of Magic could be excused for not realizing that the explosion that had just occurred was more of a byproduct of the summoning than the actual summoning itself. After all, few of them even knew that if something fell from an appropriate height it could create something that resembled an explosion to the uninitiated much like the ones Louise The Zero had become famous for since arriving at the academy. Despite coming from a very famous family, with an even more famous mother, Louise was an underachiever in everything but making things go boom. Indeed, most of the surrounding students hadn't even bothered watching, instead hiding behind the stone seats in the amphitheater that served as the summoning place for the sacred right.

"Hah!" shouted one of the students as she stared over her protective barrier into the roiling smoke at the front of the amphitheater. She had tanned skin, bright red hair, and a bustline that had frequently caused adult women to weep and men to drool. Her school uniform put this on display quite a bit, along with her long shapely legs, the skirt under the cape coming only halfway down her thigh. "It looks as if you've done it again, Louise the Ze..."

She fell silent as did the rest of the class for a moment as the smoke and debris started to settle down, staring as a figure emerged from within.

Ranma grumbled in annoyance as he smacked himself down, coughing slightly at the dust got into his nose. *Well, say what you will about the crap that's been happening since I mastered this training technique but at least it worked. Falling from that height should have killed me. But where did that middle-aged cosplaying pervert send me?*

He blinked as he found himself staring around him at a bald middle-aged guy with large glasses, and what looked like a classroom. Thankfully for Ranma's temper, the students here were not wearing anything he recognized, let alone the same Sailor Fuku that the bitch with green hair had worn. Instead, they wore pants or skirts with white shirts and long capes. Looking at them, Ranma only had two things to say. "Damn, but that outfit looks stupid as shit on you guys. Someone was obviously playing favorites for the girls here. Whatever. Any of you speak Japanese?"

At which point Ranma noticed something that distracted him. There were monsters among the people - wingless dragon-things, a weird mole-like creature, and an honest to goodness European-style dragon. "Woow.... Um, wait, how do I know what a European style dragon is but not my own freaking last name!?! Fucking amnesia!"

At that point the shouting began and Ranma tried to make out some words he could recognize in the tumult for a moment before sighing. The language sounded vaguely like English in cadence, but Ranma was pretty sure it wasn't English, even if he couldn't remember what

that was, really. The memory of it was linked to sparring with some big, musclebound types on some kind of military base. Regardless, it sure as heck wasn't Japanese, which was the only language Ranma know how to speak. He could remember that much at least.

"Damn, I should have known. Can't understand a word of it. And..." Ranma paused, staring up at the ceiling, his mind turning on to other things. "Um, am I gonna have to repair that?" he mumbled, staring at the hole his descent had caused.

Of course, since he didn't understand what the students and the balding man were saying, Ranma did miss the fact that what they were discussing was him.

"It's a human, oh my god, Louise the Zero summoned a commoner for her familiar!" laughed one student.

"It figures, why would she get something NORMAL after all the screwups she's caused," said one of the mages.

Louise snarled and turned towards the man overseeing the ceremony, Professor Colbert. "This shouldn't count! I need a second chance!"

Colbert sighed pushing his glasses up his face as he looked back at his most annoyingly unpredictable student. He didn't call her his worst though. Say what you would about Louise's ability with actual magic, her attitude towards education and skill with research and writing was among the best in the school. "While it was improper in the results and casting the summoning of a familiar is a sacred rite. To allow a 'second chance' would cheapen the entire rite."

"But a PEASANT?!" Louise asked, her expression shifting one from anger and chagrin to disgust and horror. Of course, this didn't mean the anger abated, far from it in point of fact. She was honestly contemplating murder. If she killed the peasant, then she would be able to try again, right?

"Regardless of what was summoned, the Holy Founder has decided that he is your familiar. Now complete the bond," Colbert replied firmly, while inside he was wondering why the idea of summoning a human was niggling at the back of his mind.

At that point, Ranma shook his head and tried to concentrate on what everyone was saying, noticing the shorty was moving towards him. *Huh, is it bring your sister to school day or something... nah I don't see any other pink-haired girls here, and how did she even get pink-hair anyway? I might not remember much about my own life, but I have to think that I'd remember meeting someone with that hair color before.... Right?*

Regardless of that, Ranma was certain the little girl was a lot younger than the rest of the teens around him. Most of them looked his own age, but she was at best Middle School age from her height and lack of development. And, Ranma slowly noticed, she looked really ticked

off as she stomped up to him. Now the girl was saying something directly to him, sounding upset.

“Erm, yo. I don't know who you are or what you're saying, but, um, is there an adult I can talk to that, I don't know might be able to at least understand me?”

The girl said something, moving closer, managing to look cute instead of haughty for a moment as she gestured him to lean down, helped by a faint blush on her cheeks. Shrugging Ranma did so, noticing the fact she had a wand in her hand and the fact that there was some kind of glowing energy about her too. *Huh, some kind of ki then? Can you use ki to transfer knowledge? Hmm...*

Then the pink-haired girl leaned up and kissed him.

Now, Ranma's mind was not in a good place at the moment and he knew it. His long-term memory resembled a jigsaw puzzle made of swiss cheese. Hell, he couldn't even swear by his age, let alone his last name or anything of his past beyond the fact he had travelled with his pops who was a freaking psycho when it came to crazy training techniques and that Ranma himself was a martial artist.

Still, deep down, Ranma knew that being kissed by a middle-schooler, someone who had to be at least six years his junior, was a bad thing. Even if she initiated it.

Panicking somewhat Ranma leaned away rapidly pushing the girl away with one hand as he stumbled back. “Wha, wha'd ya do that foRERR” Ranma's querulous shout was interrupted by a burning sensation that spread from his lips into and over his entire body, causing the most serious pain he'd had since clawing his way out of the ground and he collapsed to one knee. “Guuhhh...”

The girl grabbed his hand and began to pull Ranma out of the room and out into a stone-walled corridor then up a flight of stairs into a smaller room. But in his present state, Ranma was in no shape to argue or notice anything around him and Ranma was soon pushed down into a corner in what was very obviously, or would have been to most people, a girl's dorm room.

As he slowly recovered, Ranma became aware of a burning sensation on his hand and looked down at it where some weird marks were fighting to emerge. “What the heck, some kind of brand? Fuck that!” Reaching inward, Ranma connected to his ki. This was something he had been meditating to do for a while, using his ki to enhance the speed of his healing. It was one of the best things his old man had taught him and also one of the most useful since the old man had not believed in holding back even when Ranma was younger.

Normally Ranma would have difficulty in connecting to his ki reserves, it was so small. But Ranma could tell his ki reserves had also risen during the odd training he'd gone through,

and the connection came easily. Redirecting it to his hand was harder, and Ranma once more started to lose focus of what was going on around him. "Come on, come on, no way I am going to be freaking branded, no way!"

He barely noticed when the little girl pointed her wand-thing at him and started chanting something. But as the mark on his hand was fading, Ranma tuned in more to what the little girl was doing. *Some kind of chant?* Ranma frowned but just watched. If she were attacking, he was reasonably sure he could take the attack anyway, so long as she didn't go to kiss him again. That had been damn painful, and Ranma didn't think kisses were supposed to be painful or else people wouldn't do it so often.

There was a brief explosion as some kind of energy hit him, causing Ranma to grunt like one of Herb's bouncy-ball ki attacks had hit him. The pain disappeared quickly though and he waved his hand to clear the smoke the attack had caused.

"Damnit, why didn't that work?!" the pink-haired girl shrieked stomping her foot.

"What the heck, you speak Japanese now?" asked Ranma, surprised and happy at this revelation, setting aside the recent attack.

"Huh? Hey, I understood you? Why did the Silence spell do that?" asked the pink haired girl.

"Silence spell? Spell? Magic? Ugh," Ranma grumbled. For some reason the mere mention of that word made him annoyed. Some memory floated just below the surface of understanding, something about fighting a panda on bamboo poles? *What the heck is up with that?* Shaking his head, Ranma looked back at the little girl. "Well, at least now I can ask where I am, who the hell are you and what the heck is going on? Although honestly, I doubt you'd know enough to answer that last one.

"Wh, how dare you! I am a noblewoman, don't speak down to me like that you peasant! I certainly know what is going on much more than you, you useless familiar!" shouted the girl, practically quivering in rage. And where the heck had she gotten a riding crop from? She turned, pointing behind Ranma to a basket in the corner of the room. "Here! Do this laundry or you won't get fed!"

"Laundry? Why in the heck would I do your laundry, little girl?" asked Ranma, glancing at the basket before turning back to the girl with a snort of derision.

"L, little girl?!" screamed the girl, getting even MORE upset. "I am a noblewoman and you will address me as such! As for why you should obey me, you're a peasant! Your purpose in life is to serve the nobility!"

"Huh. And that tells me enough about your country to make me want to look for a quick exit, girl, who ain't even told this lowly peasant her name," Ranma snarked, shaking his head as he turned to the door. "But if you ain't able to help, being too high up your horse, heh, probably the only height you'll ever get, maybe I can get answers elsewhere."

"You can't leave me," huffed the pink-haired girl. "You're just a familiar and you are a peasant. Therefore, you are mine to do with however I choose twice over!"

Ranma stopped and went back over the conversation, then what he'd seen going on so far. "So... peasants are like slaves then?" *Would explain the attempt at branding me anyway.*

"Of course they are!" said the pink-haired girl.

"Uh huh. That's enough for me then. Buh-bye." With that, Ranma marched out the door, ducking as the girl launched another attack his way, letting it hit the war wall and explode.

Now, had things gone normally – without Setsuna getting involved with Ranma and thus Ranma not being here - Louise Françoise le Blanc de la Valliere would have summoned Saito Hiraga. She would also have at least told him her name, unlike with Ranma.

Saito Hiraga was a computer geek with the combat skills of a NEET, seventeen-year-old with zero ambition or talent with anything but computers. Had he been summoned he would have been given a set of runes which allowed him to expertly wield anything that was constructed to be a weapon. Saito Hiraga's current big ambition had been to use his just-repaired notebook computer to get online, register on a dating site, and perhaps find a girlfriend. So thrown would he have been, he would have submitted easily.

Ranma was **not** Saito Hiraga. He was not submissive in any way, shape or form. He was a martial artist who knew his memory was gone and had put up with everyone attacking him for several hours. So he made a decision that Saito would not have. He left, and then, instead of going down the stairs, interrupting Guiche as the earth mage put the moves on a young noble girl before getting embroiled in the man's issues thanks to his inability to keep his opinions to himself, Ranma turned right.

The fact there was a wall with only a small window there was not a hinderance at all, rather it was a positive. Chuckling, Ranma leaped out, landing easily on his toes, only to turn at a squeak from behind him. Ranma had surprised a maid going about her business, startling her so much she had fallen on her rear.

The girl was kind of pretty, Ranma reflected, in a soft sort of way. She had black hair done in a long pageboy cut, a face that currently was looking astonished at him, and was wearing a maid outfit, one that wouldn't have been so out of place in a mansion somewhere, although again, Ranma wasn't certain why he knew that. Whatever the case, the girl was looking at him

in confusion and not hostility, which was a major plus in his book and defused some of Ranma's simmering anger. "Geeze, I am so sorry I didn't mean ta startle you miss?"

"Oh um, th, that's alright. Um, but where did you come from?" the girl asked, slowly getting to her feet and moving around to pick up the bed linens she had been carrying.

"From up there," Ranma answered, pointing upwards towards where smoke was coming out of the window. Then he knelt down next to her, helping her pick up the linens. "Here, let me help you."

"Oh, Miss Valliere's explosion hurled you out of the window!?" The girl gasped, then smiled at Ranma politely, even as a bit of wariness entered her expression. "You must be a strong wind mage to be able to save yourself from that fall."

Ranma shrugged incomprehension. "I don't even know what that is. I'm just happy her spell, she said it was supposed to be a Silence spell, let's me talk to all of you now."

The woman blinked, then her eyes widened, and her wariness disappeared. "Oh, are you the, the commoner that the lady summoned?"

"Yeah, maybe. I don't know just yet," Ranma was deliberately vague. He didn't think that was what happened, but maybe? And he didn't want to be proven wrong later. "She didn't seem to know much about how I ended up here, anyway."

Just then his stomach started to grumble and the girl giggled.

"Are you hungry? Oh, I'm sorry, I haven't introduced myself, I am Siesta, a maid here in the Academy."

"Ranma. And um, yeah, I could go for some food," Ranma admitted, realizing he hadn't eaten or even felt hungry after digging himself out of the ground. *Kind of weird, but meh.* He took the basket from her, then twitched his head to one side. "After you."

Siesta smiled and led the way back inside the large tower Ranma had just jumped out of.

OOOOOO

While Ranma was lucky enough to find a person who was willing to help him out of the goodness of her heart, Louise was not having nearly as much luck finding anyone who could help her with her current problem: that is, finding her runaway familiar. She had been forced to

stay behind to help fix the wall and door her magic had destroyed and write up a report on it. By the time she had done that, Ranma was nowhere to be seen. "And you are certain you haven't seen him?"

"For the third time, Louise, **no!** I have no idea where your familiar went but he hasn't passed through the dining room. Guiche Gramont, fourth son of the Tristainian general of the same name, nearly growled as Louise asked him the same question she had been asking everyone in the hall. "Now could you please leave us alone? Can't you see I'm busy?" he asked, trying to indicate the younger girl sitting with him without being too obvious about it.

Coming up behind the two of them, Kirche had been intending to tease Louise about her latest explosion. However, she decided to leave off that for a moment as she asked something that had been bothering her since the summoning ritual. "Say, that peasant familiar of yours, did you see his eyes seemed to glow for a few seconds?"

"You saw that too?" asked Guiche turning away from performing his most useful magic trick, that of talking his latest conquest out of her panties, at this observation. The mood had been ruined anyway. "Maybe he just looks, acts, and talks like a peasant, but is actually a noble of some kind, with eye-based magic?" Guiche frowned, then wrinkled his face into a sneer. "No, that can't be. A peasant is a peasant. Look at the way he was dressed and couldn't even speak a proper language."

In response, Louise looked away, not wanting to admit she had given the familiar the means of talking to them when she had been trying to Silence him. If that came out, she would never live it down. "I don't know, but when I find him, I fully intend to skin him alive, so we should be able to determine if he has any magic at that point."

"And he ran away from you as well. I must say you've really outdone yourself, Louise the Zero," Kirche giggled, shaking her head. "Not only did you manage to get a peasant, but you summoned a particularly willful beast of one."

With his latest prey leaving him behind, Guiche turned to Kirche, letting his normal suave, kindly act fade a bit to tease the busty redhead, whose conquests of boys and men well exceeded his own luck with the fairer sex. "Was that jealousy I heard in your tone?"

Kirche looked at him blankly, then raised one elegant eyebrow. "What **are** you talking about?"

"Well, having a boy servant at your beck and call for those nights when your schedule opens up, seems like something you would be interested in..." said Guiche, letting the statement trail off suggestively, before adding. "The way you said willful beast, are you looking to see if you could tame him?"

"Hmfm. While the man looked to have nice muscle tone, something you cannot say about most boys here including you Guiche, he is still a peasant." Kirche, waved the idea off. "Nobles have to have some standards after all, both in who they sleep with and how. After all, a peasant couldn't refuse and that would make it far too much like rapine in my mind."

"True," agreed Guiche, for once agreeing with his fellow seducer. There was no pleasure to be had when the other person was of lesser station than your own. It seemed to take much of the sporty nature of the seduction out of things.

Louise merely frowned and looked quite vexed and Guiche sighed. "The boy is a peasant, Louise. Think of where such a one would go instead of just wondering around willy-nilly."

That caused the pink-haired girl to blink, nodding her head in sudden understanding as she turned and walked briskly off, heading towards the servant's entrance to the cafeteria. Curious, Kirche followed, as did Guiche and Montmorency.

OOOOOO

"-and so I ended up here," said Ranma. "I thought I might be in the past or something but then that little girl started talking about magic and now I'm thinking I'm on another world entirely."

"Amazing! My grandfather came from another world, or so it is said," Siesta replied, while around them the kitchen staff all stared at Ranma, having listened to Ranma describe how he had come to the academy so abruptly. "Although I don't think he ever mentioned meeting someone like this green-haired woman you described."

"Oh," said the chief chef, "I never knew that about you, Siesta."

"Well, I don't talk about it that much. After all, it isn't something that comes up in normal conversation, or even something that would normally be believed at all." Siesta, eyed the empty plates and dishes piled up in front of Ranma before looking up into his face, a face that would have been extremely handsome, in a rugged sort of way, bar one thing, which made it somewhat hard to look Ranma in the face. And made it utterly impossible to look him in the eyes. "Why do your eyes keep glowing though?"

"Huh, oh that," Ranma chuckled, getting up and heading to the sink with a double armful of the dishes. He made the mess, might as well help clean up. "It's the sign of some sort of martial arts training I did. I still can't remember the details. The glow thing has been constant

since I woke up after completing it though. I do know it's a sign of my inner ki though, that's um, inner energy, like what you use to move around with, only more so."

"But you're certain it's not magic?" Ranma nodded firmly at that, and the chef, an older man with bulky shoulders and the hands of a man who could fight as well as he could cook to Ranma's eyes, shook his head. "A world without nobility, without magic at all. How does anything get done? I mean, how do they make lights or defend themselves? And without the nobility, who decides who does what? I might not like them much but at least they keep things running most of the time."

"Hmmm," hummed Ranma. "THAT is gonna be a long story. Erm, let's see... wait." Ranma paused, turning from where he had begun to clean the plates he'd used. "Why the heck do I remember history and stuff by not my own freaking last name!? Gah, amnesia is so freaking weird!"

At that the chef could only chuckle in commiseration, patting the other man on the shoulder while the other servants laughed or giggled at his pout and the look of confusion on Ranma's face.

"There you are!" shouted an annoyingly familiar voice to Ranma. He glanced towards the door into the kitchen and rolled his eyes – not that anyone could tell - as the short pink-haired girl with the attitude stalked in. "Oh. You. What do you want short stack?"

"GRAAAH!!! If you were not at least making yourself useful right now I would tan your hide you, you disobedient oaf!" growled Louise, fingering her wand and glaring at him. "You should be cleaning up my laundry though instead of everyone else's plates and things."

"You were looking for him?" asked the head chef, going to his knees, his whole attitude having changed the moment the noblewoman had entered. He was always careful to be courteous to the nobles around him, which had nothing to do with the fact the young girl could make him explode if she so wished. After all, dead by fireball or cutting wind attack or explosion, dead was dead. "Forgive us, Lady Valliere. We didn't know."

"I don't doubt for a minute that my servant here forgot to tell you," grouched Louise. "Now move, you!"

"Yeah no. I told you Chibi..."

"My name is Louise not Chibi, whatever that is! Louise Francoise de la Valliere!" Louise interrupted, her voice rising as she stamped her foot and raised her wand.

"Ah, let me Louise. The last thing we want to deal with is the kitchen being destroyed." Behind Louise three other nobles had entered the kitchen. One was a woman who wore the same outfit as Louise, but one made for someone her frame if not her curves. Ranma tried not

to look at her, wondering absentmindedly if the sense of decency was different here than in his own world, since the girl made it look almost as sexual as the green-haired woman had made her Sailor Fuku.

Next to her, standing next to the one guy in the group, was a shorter girl, with her hair done up in a kind of cool looking drill look. Her face was less sultry looking than the others, more of a pout than a smirk as it were and at least her uniform actually looked like a school uniform rather than a marital aid. Beyond that, and the fact she kept one eye on the boy even as she sized Ranma up, there was little Ranma could tell about her.

The guy also had blonde hair done up in some kind of coif that made him look like an ass to go with his thin, pencil-like arms, twirling a rose in his fingers. Beyond that, he had pretty-boy features and a face that made Ranma want to punch him for some reason and was showing off a chest that looked just as thin as the rest of him. While the redhead was looking around in interest, not having been in the kitchen before, the man one of the other nobles who'd entered in Louise's wake. He pointed a rose and made a circular gesture.

Ranma abruptly found himself floating up into the air. "Huh? What the heck?" Ranma murmured, scowling as his feet left the ground. *Huh, so this is magic?*

"Honestly, a true magician should easily be able to deal with a wretch like this," said pencil-necked pretty boy with the rose, using the rose, Ranma saw, to direct the energy surrounding Ranma. "Really, Louise, you need to keep peasants in their place, and a flick of the wrist is all one needs for such a thing."

"Heh, flick of the wrist huh?" Ranma smirked, and then with a flick of his own wrist launched the plate he'd been cleaning like a disk. Not at full strength though, he didn't want to crack the guy's skull, and Ranma knew he could have done that even before this latest training that had made him so much stronger.

The plate, a thick disc of porcelain, impacted the pretty boy's face with enough force he was smashed off his feet, flipping entirely in the air before smashing into the opposite wall outside the kitchen doorway.

"Ooohh, now that was interesting," Kirche murmured, biting her full lips as she looked at Ranma with a little more interest than before. After all, if he could fight nobles, then he wasn't a familiar, but some kind of knight perhaps.

"He just threw a plate, Kirche, don't get ahead of yourself," pointed out Montmorency, having been a late arrival to the search for the runaway peasant familiar. "It's impressive, but not all that much."

With the magic gone, Ranma planted his feet on the ground and for once glared at Louise, giving her the full effect of his glowing eyes, which caused her to shrink back for a

moment. "As for you, Louise de whatever, gimme one good reason I need to stick around instead of looking for a way to get home."

"I just gave you several!" growled Louise, anger overcoming caution as was always the way with her, as she raised her riding crop.

"I said good reasons. Are you deaf as well as short?" growled back Ranma, matching antagonism with antagonism. After the day he'd had he was in no mood to take shit from anyone.

Louise growled something inarticulate, put the riding crop away that she'd used after her wand had proven ineffective, and began checking frypans and other tools for swing-ability.

"Okay, how about one of you two girls answer me instead of Louise then," Ranma opined, turning to look at the other two girls, "Can any of you explain why I, someone who isn't even from your world, would have to be the slave of some little kid?!" He pointed at Louise in annoyance, smacking aside a frying pan before she could try to hit him with it. "Shouldn't she be in Grade School anyway?"

At that, Kirche snorted. Montmorency stared. Various kitchen help (those still present) stared. Guiche continued in blessed unconsciousness but if he'd been conscious, he might have stared too. Then Kirche's self-control shattered, and she collapsed to her knees, howling in laughter, so much so her shirt looked as if it was about to burst from the movement of her bust. "BWAHAHAHAHAHAHA!"

Louise ground her teeth together, her anger actually increasing beyond previous levels, which Louise would have thought impossible just a minute ago, kicking Kirche in the side before turning an even more powerful glare on Ranma. "Damn it Zerbst stop laughing at me! As for you, fine! You want to be free? You're free! I hope to never see you again!"

"Woot," Ranma drawled. "Ya can't give me something I already have girl."

"That isn't how it works," said a quiet voice as some gal wearing glasses entered the kitchen. That she apparently didn't even look up from the book she was reading was merely accepted by those who knew her, while Ranma looked at her in confusion.

He could tell the blue-haired girl, who was taller than Louise but not as adult-looking even as the blonde let alone the redhead. She was honestly reading the book, but he could also tell that she was different from the others. She moved lightly on her feet, making no noise. Her movements were quick, certain. And she was completely aware of everything around her regardless of the book. *Huh... she's an interesting one.*

"Tabitha? What are you doing here?" asked Kirche.

"Your method of addressing him is false. He isn't human or a peasant," Tabitha informed Louise.

Ranma blinked at that. "Wait, what do you mean, I ain't human?"

At that Tabitha looked up from her book to regard Ranma over it. "Humans of this world can't leave impressions of their fingers in stone."

"Huh, oh those. Meh, I didn't mean to do that, just had a sneeze all of a sudden when I was walking down here with Siesta. But you're saying you people can't do that? Don't you guys have martial artists here?" asked Ranma. *Then again, the chef looked really impressed too, huh... no martial artists. No wonder this place's nobility are such asses.*

"Not as you understand the term, I think," Tabitha answered after a moment's contemplation. "Further, familiar contracts are for life, or until the death of the familiar," said Tabitha as she quietly continued her lecture now directing it at Louise. "The marks on his hand are part of the contract process."

"I don't want him!" said Louise, punctuating her statement by completing the earlier swing at his head Ranma had interrupted with an iron frying pan, the pan slamming into Ranma's head. Damage to head: zero. Damage to the frying pan, possibly terminal given the indent in it.

"Meanwhile, Louise actually likes you," Tabitha continued, turning to Ranma, "because she's always had sado-masochistic tendencies."

The silence this caused among everyone who actually understood the term was profound. This included Ranma to his surprise and horror. He'd never heard the term before, but somehow, now that Tabitha had said it, knew what it meant. "GAHHH!!! Hell no! That's just, that's just wrong!"

While hoping that if she went to bed tonight and prayed really hard the Founder Brimir would grant her wish and make today a horrible dream, Louise glared at Tabitha in growing fury. "You think he's so interesting Tabitha you can have him!"

"AGH, wh, what happened!" groaned Guiche as he slowly lifted himself up, fingering his head. Then the reality of what had occurred came back to him, and he snarled, pointing his finger at Ranma. "You, a mere peasant, struck me. I shall have satisfaction!"

With the recent experience with a term he had no idea of the meaning of before, it was no wonder that Ranma thought the boy might mean something similar. "Hey don't look at me when you say that. I don't swing that way, man."

"WAAAAAAAAAAAA! Guiche is GAY?!" Kirche taunted, piling on with all the speed of a tiger at the opportunity to tease someone. "I never knew."

"WA, I, I didn't mean it like that!" Guiche nearly yelled. The last thing he needed was a rumor like that to make the rounds. *Although, I suppose I could use it, perhaps I could convince girls they could rescue me from a womanless life? Hmm, no, too risky.* "What I mean is that I challenge you to a duel."

"Oh, is that all?" asked a visibly relieved Ranma. "In that case I accept."

"You can't fight a duel with a mage!" yelled Louise. "That's suicide!"

"Ain't it bedtime for you, little girl?" Ranma taunted, shaking her head. "I'm a martial artist, we have to take any challenge put to us. End of discussion."

"Kill him, kill him now!" said Louise to Guiche.

"Very well then," Guiche replied, making calming motions with his hands to his volatile classmate. "We will settle this in Vestri court. Show the peasant there and I will meet you anon. Before that however, I seem to have developed a headache, and must stop at the nurse's office for some healing."

Unfortunately, he staggered a little due to having just had a head injury and put out a hand to steady himself.

"Ah," Kirche made a little noise in her throat as someone threw his weight briefly onto one of her breasts, her eyes narrowing. "Naughty Guiche."

Montmorency smoothly took the frypan away from Louise and seemed to be considering using it on Guiche but the fact he stumbled away from Kirche like someone had scalded his hand made her reconsider. "Come on you, let's get you healed up so you can meet your fate like a man." Montmorency was no fully aboard her boyfriend getting the snot kicked out of him, even if it wasn't likely to happen. The rumors floating about him today were definitely not painting an image of loyal boyfriend to her.

The walk to Vestri Court, a dueling area set along the outer wall of the pentagram-shaped magic school, had served to cool Louise off a bit. As had the fact that the news had spread and a crowd had gathered to witness the duel between her familiar and Guiche. That all served to make Louise realize she didn't want to see a murder occur, and so there was only one way out of this, in her mind. "Apologize," she ordered Ranma. "Now!"

"Ain't happening," responded Ranma, stretching out as the guy named Guiche raised a wand at his end of the court. "Hey, Quiche?"

"That's Guiche!" shouted Guiche, angry as childhood memories came back to him.

Ranma waved that off. He would remember the guy's name if he proved worth the time to do so. "Fine, whatever. But what is this until? First blood, unconsciousness or surrender? I ain't from around here, remember?"

In response, Guiche smirked. "Until you surrender or are unable to continue peasant. I don't want your corpse on my conscience, after all."

"Heh, okay, fine. Now, are we gonna do this, or what?" Ranma bounced on his feet, eager to hit something again. Being attacked by Louise and not wanting to hurt her had annoyed Ranma, especially on top of the day he'd had prior to that. *And this guy is still making my fists itch for some reason.*

"Now," Guiche intoned instantly, sending his wand through a couple of passes in front of him and to the side. "Valkyrie!"

An armored suit, vaguely feminine-shaped and carrying a spear, appeared, rising out of the ground. But before the process could finish, Ranma's foot went through the thing's head, sending it flying. Nearby a tinkle of shattered grass was heard as the head of the Valkyrie went through a window.

Staring, Guiche blinked in shock, then shook himself firmly, his face becoming more focused now. "Well, then, let's see you handle a full squad!"

Staring down at where the corpse of the thing he'd struck was already melting into the ground, Ranma grinned and started ducking and weaving as spears were thrust at him. "So, these are some kinda robots huh? Well, how about..."

Racing forward, Ranma was soon in the midst of the squad of robot-things. One was sent crunching into a wall as Ranma kicked out followed by another being plowed into the ground as Ranma jumped atop it. As it fell, Ranma wrested the spear away from it, and turned, his arms a blur as he used the spear on the other Valkyrie, shredding the living armor around him until the spear broke.

Guiche was wide-eyed in shock as little bits of his summoned warriors flew off in every direction. It wasn't a fight he was watching and the youngest son of one of Tristain's best generals knew it. None of his Valkyrie could even land an attack on the peasant even when he was surrounded, while every punch or kick from the pigtailed 'peasant' felled another of his minions.

Ranma finished wadding one of the animated armors up into a little ball, then hefted it and hurled it at Guiche, just like he had the plate earlier,

Desperately Guiche dismissed the spell before the hunk of armor could hit him. "How did you.. you can't..."

"Tsk, that's it?" I was hoping for a bit more workout," admitted Ranma then smirked. "Hey, Quiche, I have this attack I've been wanted to try since it was used on me. Now, I wonder if I can..." In front of the wide-eyed audience of arrogant noble brats Ranma clenched his hands in front of him as if holding an invisible ball. And as he did, a reddish energy of some kind began to form there.

The blood-red spark glimmered brightly for a few moments, then began to enlarge, causing Ranma's eyes to widen. "Uh-oh."

"What?" asked Louise, startled that her familiar was doing something like that and now very worried by that brief announcement. "What 'uh oh'?"

"I can't seem to stop it," admitted Ranma.

"WHAT?!" Louise and more than half the audience yelled as one, while as a wave of near-blistering heat began radiating from the spark out from Ranma.

"I, I ah, um, I surrender?" Guiche practically begged, having no desire to know what this strange spell, which looked all too like a fire spell, would do if it hit him.

"Yeah, uhm, ya might want to get away now," admitted Ranma as the sphere began to buzz and shriek as it pushed his hands apart. "Erm, all of you."

At that point Tabitha surprised everyone by reacting quickly with the only plan that could perhaps have save much of the school from destruction. She raced forward and smashed her staff upwards into Ranma's arms from to direct Ranma's hands so they were pointing skyward.

They didn't move and for a moment Tabitha's eyes widened, but then Ranma nodded and raised his hands on his own, pointing them upwards as he began to mentally forcing the spark away from him in. "Good thinking Blue!"

Soon after the blast left his hands with a 'fizzle crack!' of expressed energy.

"That, that looked like some sort of fire spell," said Kirche as the spark shot off into the sky at an extremely high rate of speed.

"Look at the clouds," said Tabitha, frowning as she looked from the direction of the spark to Ranma and then back again.

"Um, are you talking about the ones that just boiled away when that spell passed near them?" Guiche muttered, now sitting on the ground and staring at where the spark had vanished into the distance.

"Yes, well, that wasn't so -" began Louise with false aplomb only to be interrupted as the spell exploded high, high above them, creating a second sun for a moment. Then the sound hit them, flattening many of the physically weaker students. "**CRAKOOOOOOM!!**"

Ranma looked away from shining in the sky with a thoughtful expression. "Yeaaa, I think I need to control the power output of that a bit."

"What a blast!" Kirche gasped, pushing herself to her feet as she looked around pulling Tabitha to her feet. "He didn't even use a wand! What was that? Was it Void magic?"

"No," said the teacher Colbert, having appeared behind them from somewhere, accompanied by several of the staff, including the headmaster. "Void magic still requires a wand or staff and has long evocation times. That was not Void."

"True," agreed Osmond, the headmaster as he pulled at his beard thoughtfully. "Indeed, with the way he collected it and then seemed to have trouble controlling the, what did he call it, the output, it was almost as if it were not magical in nature at all."

"Impossible, it looked like magic, it acted like magic, therefore it was magic," Guiche stated, rising to his own feet on unsteady legs.

The muttering from the students seemed to agree with Guiche's statement.

"The Fifth Element is Void, so what would be the sixth?" mused Louise, also implicitly agreeing with the thoroughly beaten earth mage.

In front of this disbelief Colbert could only shrug. "There is no lore regarding this."

"Is there a way to determine my second familiar's elemental properties then?" asked Tabitha quietly.

"**WHAT?!** Your familiar?!" Louise gasped, having completely forgotten she had attempted to give her familiar away to Tabitha in the kitchen earlier.

"You **did** give your familiar to Tabitha," Kirche pointed out 'helpfully,' her lips twisting into a lopsided smile as she teased her short target. "Or does your anger do away with your short-term memory?"

"I don't think that quite counts," Colbert interrupted, saving a gaping Louise from replying. "It's an unusual situation."

"Unusual situation, unusual familiar, unusual caster," pointed out Guiche as he looked around, frowning. "Um, where did he go?"

As one everyone there looked around, only now realizing Ranma was no longer standing there.

"What, none of you noticed him walking away?" asked Longueville, the headmaster's secretary, a smirk on her face as she looked at the stunned nobles.

OOOOOOO

Several miles down the road from Ranma looked up, curious, as a stagecoach pulled up alongside him.

"You there!" the driver, a woman shouted down at him, her face stern to match her short-cropped hair. "Did you come from the college?"

Wincing, Ranma nodded. "Yeah.

"Do you know what caused that explosion?" the woman pressed quickly, while around the carriage a host of mounted riders, all women, halted as well.

"Yeah," Ranma repeated, shaking his head. "Sorry about that." With his reply given, and in no mood to fight more women, Ranma started to walk off.

"Wait, what?" the woman gaped as the boy started walking off with that mysterious comment. "Hey, you, I said, you, stop there! Do you know who we are? How dare you just walk off?!"

Ranma looked at her, then around at the horsewomen, before shaking his head in ignorance even as his feet continued to move him forward forcing one of the horses to whicker and stumble out of his way lest Ranma run right into it. "Nope, don't know. Don't care. Leaving. Bye bye."

"Stop right there I said!" the woman shouted, now, leaping down and drawing a gun, pointing it at the back of Ranma's head. "Stop or I'll shoot."

Ranma stopped, looking back over his shoulder at the girl with the old-style pistol, smirking. Now, while Ranma somehow knew that before his recent training, modern guns could have been a danger to him, an antique like that wouldn't have done more than bruise and

possibly break a bone if Ranma was unlucky. Now? Ranma doubted it would even dent his skin. And after the day he'd had, his patience was wearing very thin, even with the somewhat therapeutic beatdown he'd laid on Quiche. "Put that away, or I'm gonna make you eat it."

The other guards instantly drew pistols and leapt down to take stances all around Ranma. "Oh, yeah?" the first girl scoffed. "I'd like to see you try!"

Inside the cabin of the coach, Princess Henrietta de Tristain waited, somewhat bemused by what little of the conversation she had been able to make out. She had been on her way to the academy, using the excuse of the Familiar summoning being held as a reason to speak to her old childhood friend. But the sight of that massive explosion had caused an argument between Henrietta and her chief musketeer, Agnes. And not more than a few minutes after Henrietta had convinced Agnes to continue, the coach had stopped and Agnes had shouted some questions at a passerby for some reason.

When she heard shots fired, she naturally drew her scepter and left her carriage, only to pause, taking in the sight of her musketeers currently draped around the road, one of them even dangling from a tree limb above. And apparently the boy, who somehow did it, stood in the center of the robe, fingering a hole in his shirt. If Henrietta had to make a guess, he seemed more annoyed by the

"You gonna attack me too?" asked the boy, otherwise apparently not paying any attention to her.

"Ah, no," Henritta murmured, somewhat in shock at seeing her vaunted guards all dealt with in as little time as it took her to exit the carriage. "Um, are they...?"

"Just unconscious. I don't kill unless I have to save a life," the boy answered as he stooped and picked something up off the ground. "They just decided to try and scare the wrong guy, that's all."

It wasn't until he started wadding it up that she realized it was Agnes' gun. That sight caused her eyes to widen, and she reiterated her earlier thoughts about not wanting to fight this fellow. "I see. In that case, I must apologize on my guardswomen's behalf. They can be somewhat too zealous in their duties at times."

Turning, Ranma looked at the girl who had been speaking, taking in her appearance with just a slight widening of the eyes. *Damn, every girl I've seen, save Pinky, has been pretty here. What the heck.*

The girl who had come out of the carriage was dressed like a noblewoman, way more so than the girls back at the academy, complete with a tiara perched on her light purple hair, which was cut somewhat short, falling only to the top of her shoulders, looking shorter in the back. She wore a dressing gown of white covered by a cloak of purple that seemed to merge

with the gown at the top of her chest, where a large blue gem of some kind rested at the bottom of her throat. Her eyes were a soft, blue, and her face seemed kindly, but stern at the same time.

"Eh, um, it's okay I guess," Ranma said, scratching at his pigtail. He wasn't used to people apologizing like that to him, and suddenly he somehow knew that would have been true even if he could remember more of his own life than he was able to now. It made him feel very awkward and off balance, almost as much as the whole sado-maso thing had. "Erm, I, I suppose it's also my fault. I could have just answered their questions, I just, well, I've had one heck of a bad day, and then they went and threatened me. Erm, but I'm willing to call it even, I guess. Uh, what's your name anyway?"

"That is most gracious of you," Henrietta replied with a smile, only the third such Ranma had seen directed towards him today. She then went on smiling cheerfully. It was always fun to meet someone who didn't know her by sight, it happened so rarely. That and she knew felt the boy in front of her meant her no harm. He was just a young man, a boy her own age really, who had been put through quite a lot recently. With that in mind, she attempted a gentle tease. "And is it not polite to introduce yourself first sir?"

"Heh, I suppose it is. Sorry, politeness has been in short supply lately." Shaking his head with a smile, Ranma bowed from his waist, letting one hand gently brush across the dirt of the road. "My name's Ranma, Ranma of nowhere I can remember at the moment, which is part of the problem," he added with a wry twist of his face as he stood up straight again.

"Oh dear. Well, I am Princess Henrietta de Tristain," Henrietta replied, curtsying in turn to him, her eyes alight with delight at the sudden bit of formality. "And if you know what is going on, can you tell me what caused that explosion. We can ride in the carriage. It's much faster than walking. And it will let us carry my musketeers with us."

Ranma looked at the carriage and nodded, figuring he could stuff the six guards in there. Since they were unconscious it wasn't like they could object to the treatment after all. But he was more interested in the fact he was talking to a princess right now than anything else. "In that case, how about a trade? I'm looking for information myself, and I figure if anyone knows what I want to know, it's a princess, right?"

Once more Henrietta smiled at Ranma. "It sounds as if we have a deal, Sir Ranma. Now, may I ask you to load them in the wagon? I really would prefer they not be left behind. We can ride up front."

"Sure," said Ranma agreeably, putting the wadded gun remnant into Agnes' mouth. With that done, Ranma began to pile the musketeer's bodies into the coach, then moved to help the princess up onto the coach rider's box before hopping up next to her, looking down at the reins. "So, you know how to work these things?"

Henrietta's lips formed a moue as she too looked at the horses and the reins, which rather looked too flimsy to command such large animals. "I, I think so? How hard could it be after all?"

"...why do a feel a sudden premonition of doom?" Ranma muttered, before Henrietta flicked the reins, causing the horses to start moving.

As the coach started on its way...

1. Back on Earth, Setsuna was feeling happy, so veeery happy (Wonder about Zero portions from Earth)
2. Henrietta, who believes she is still in love with Wales, admits to herself that she finds Ranma quite intriguing and, with the power he represents, is someone she could be with since the relationship with Wales is culturally and legally impossible.
3. Louise and Tabitha were arguing about who owns Ranma, only for Colbert to interrupt and Kirche to point out an inconvenient truth.
4. A group of assassins, not believing their luck, were moving into position to attack the carriage. Oops?

End Episode 4

As always, hope you all enjoyed this somewhat more filling episode LOL. Remember to vote! The next Episode will be out on the first of October. And be aware I will possibly be posting new polls for October as well tomorrow.