

Chapter 21: Learning Water Magic

After a little while later at the carnival, more people and dragons arrived at the sides of the street, filling in the empty spaces with their crowding numbers. Minerva saw the announcer guy walking to the middle of the street and speaking through the microphone to the audience, "Ladies and Gentleman, thank you for coming to this festival's grand parade. We will now start the show immediately. Bring out the marching band!" Immediately, trumpets, drums, and tubas started filling the air with loud music. Minerva looked both ways to see where the marching band was coming from and there they were coming from the left side. Men and women in red uniforms and white pants marched down the street as they played their instruments.

Within moments, Ronan and Drake came by to stand in the spots that Minerva had kept guarded for when they returned. "Made it just in time," the assassin said, handing her some cotton candy he got for the parade as he sat down to watch with her. Drake sat behind the pair as the other humans close to him moved away in contempt.

"Thanks!" said Minerva, happy he got one of her favorite snacks. She took a piece off the soft pink treat and put it into her mouth to melt and taste its sweetness. Following the marching band came three couples with men wearing white tuxedos & gray pants and women in greenish-yellow dresses with fluffy white trims. They waltzed along the street as the crowd shouted cheers at them. "Don't they look so wonderful?" Minerva asked as she admired their outfits.

The parade went on with more floats, dancers, dragon performance, and another marching band. Then the crowd heard a call from a booming draconic voice and turned their attention to see an Aquarian spitfire dragon propped himself on the large dragon fountain at the center. "Citizens of Windfall, we will be making an announcement shortly. This concerns humans and dragons alike," he said as his whitish-blue metal armor acting as a great sound conductor.

As the crowd turned their attention back to the parade, Minerva took an interest to the mysterious news and thought, *'Sounds like the Aquarians want to tell us something. I wonder what they're going to talk about.'*

After the parade ended, a big gold dragon in Aquarian armor flew into the town square, landing next to the fountain. He was too bulky to perch on it like the spitfire. The dragon smiled at the crowd and spoke to them, "Good day, Citizens. I hope you've had fun at this ongoing festival. Many of you might know me from a few days ago. If not, I am Woltar, head of the Aquarians. Now that humans and dragons have settled in for a few days, I wanted to bring up a more pressing matter. It is our belief stray dragons and human groups will unfortunately strike against Windfall to prevent such a united city. In good faith that we promote the ability to live here in a peaceful life, we believe we need to teach you how to defend yourselves. Aquarian ambassadors have gathered masters of different dragon types to teach humans and dragons alike the art of magic since technology is not at your disposal. There are many elements of

magic and you are free to try whichever you like, but we do have counselors to help make a decision if you need help. Magic relies on your own mind, and thus, different personalities mold better with different elements."

As Woltar continued talking towards the end, the crowd, most commonly the humans, started discussing among themselves and voices their opinions varying from excitement to refusal to learn from dragons. Minerva was one of the ones to find this news very exciting and was enthusiastic to get to try her skills at magic. She could use it for convenient uses as well as to help people. Of course, she'll need to know some information first, since in the midst of her excitement, she had let the last words of Woltar's speech fly out the other ear. The woman turned to Ronan and said, "I'll be right back." The man nodded to her and she went over to Woltar to ask, "Excuse me, I hope I'm not disturbing you. But can I ask you where I need to go learn some magic?"

The Aquarian leader looked down at her and chuckled softly. "Not a problem. We are teaching in the city hall since it is the roomiest place for our kind. We may take groups out into the field if need be. But for now, I suspect beginner level magic will do for the indoor," he said as he raised a claw in the direction of the giant castle-like building in the far distance. Minerva looked at the architecture in bewilderment as she never imagined a government building would be the one place to learn magic. They looked back to each other and the dragon informed some more, "We ourselves can only teach about fire, but there are many masters in there for different elements. You don't seem like the fire type to me. Something soft I'd guess. But that's just the ramblings of an old man. Go try it out if you like, it's still midday."

Smiling at Woltar, Minerva said, "Okay sure, I'll be on my way then. Thanks for your help!" Then she walked back to Ronan and Drake and said to them, "Well I'm going off to go learn some magic. You don't mind if Drake gives me a ride over to the city hall, do you?"

"Sure, Drake can handle that," Ronan said, smiling as he patted his friend's scaly skin.

Drake walked over and said, "It would be my pleasure, lady Minerva." Then he crouched down for her to climb on.

After Minerva mounted the dragon, Ronan said, "I'll be on the rooftops when you're done, Drake." Then he headed on out as Drake took Minerva to city hall. She got the feel of flying out into the open air and being able to see buildings below clearly and closely than she did in an airplane. She had never ridden on a dragon before and the experience felt amazing. She let out a cry of excitement.

A few minutes later, they arrived at the large doors of the city hall and Minerva hopped off. She looked up at the dragon and said with a grin, "Thanks for the ride, Drake! It was so exciting riding in the air like that. I've never rode on a dragon before."

Drake nodded to her and said with a smirk, "Anytime Miss Minerva. If I may say... if you wanted to ride

again, I'm sure Ronan would be willing to accompany."

"I'll keep that in mind," the woman said. A ride with company sounded fun and she hoped to do that sometime. Minerva went inside the city hall and saw the magic masters, who all seemed to be dragons of different elements. A water dragon for water magic, a gray dragoness for wind, a gold-feather white dragon for light, an ice dragon for ice, an Aquarian ember dragon for fire, a thunder dragon for lightning, a black dragon for darkness, and a green dragon for earth. She looked at each and every one of them as she wondered which element she should go with first. She guessed an element in water would be a good start as she had seen buildings go up in flames yesterday and want to be prepared in case something like that happened next time. She went to stand with the group of people for water magic training.

After a few minutes gone by, more dragons and humans showed up to join the group. It was now time for class to start; the water master teacher looked at how big the group was and said to everyone, "Ah, it looks like I have quite the handful of people around here to learn. But alas, having a class this large would be difficult for me to teach. So instead, I'm going to split everyone into small groups and take a few at a time. I'll pick the first six to go with me to the moonlight dragon fountain." He pointed at each individual with his finned tail as he said, "I'll pick you, and you, and you, you, you, and you." The last person he pointed to was Minerva.

Unsure if her guess about being picked was right, she pointed to herself and asked, "Me?"

"Yes you, who else am I talking to?" the water master said. "Now before we go, I should introduce myself to all of you. I am Gynast, master of the water element. Since we don't have a large bowl of water inside this city hall, all of our magic lessons will take place outside. So come along everyone that was chosen. The rest of you will stay here until I get back with training the students outdoors." Gynast slithered like a snake across the floor while the others followed him out the door. The group walked through the busy streets, mindful of the passing individuals, until they reached the town fountain in the largest square of the city. The fountain had a circular shape and it was decorated with lights that were currently dim. A large statue of a moonlight dragon sat in the middle of the fountain with vine dragons surrounding the eastern beast. Smaller dragons were carved into the actual stone face of the fountain. The water master stood next to it while the students stayed before him. He explained to the humans, "Now in order to use to be able to use magic, you'll need to unlock your inner gate which prevents you from using the powers of magic. Dragons from birth are able to use magic, but humans however need to unseal their powers." After he explained to everyone how to unlock the inner gates, he said, "Humans, unlock your powers now."

"Unluk magisto," Minerva and the others said as they started unlocking their inner gates. They felt a weird tingling sensation within their bodies. The woman widened her eyes a bit in bewilderment and wondered, *'Huh? Is this the magic I feel? Did I unlock my inner gates?'*

Gynast went on to say, "If you're feeling something in your bodies, then good! You have successfully

unlocked your inner gates. Now we move on to the basics of water magic." He explained, "In order to use water magic, you'll need to picture the essence of water in your minds and then channel that magic energy into the form of water spell you want. But for this exercise, we're going to focus on the fountain's water itself." The water master held his tail over the fountain's water and explained the steps, "Our first spell of practice and the most basic of water magic is the Water Control spell. The first thing you'll want to do is look at any body of water and bring the magic energy to your eyes. The energy will automatically transfer into the water in less than a second. Then that will be when you will the water into going which way you want it to or you can take some of it out and shape it into any form you like." He demonstrated this by using his water control spell to bring up a ball of water out of the fountain. He warped its shape into various forms like a pyramid, a cylinder, and a coil. The students were bewitched as they watched the spell in action. Immediately, the coil lost form and returned back to normal as it fell back into the fountain. "What you just saw is what happens when you lose focus on the water you control. You must always keep your concentration on the water, so that it doesn't fall and splash on the ground. You understand that?" he asked. Everybody said 'yes' and Gynast said, "Good now, begin trying out that spell I just explained to you."

Everyone looked at the water and focused their magic energies onto it. Minerva brought up a small watery sphere that was two inches in diameter. She looked at her successful attempt in amazement and said, "Wow." Everybody else got their water spheres, too. A young boy was making his sphere fly up and down and he laughed as he had fun with it.

After letting the students play around with their water balls for a little while, Gynast said to them, "Okay everyone, that's enough. Please drop your waters back into the fountain, so that we can get to the next part of the lesson." The students let their shaped waters hover over the fountain before releasing their magic energy from them. The water lost form and splashed back into the fountain. The master began to lecture, "Now we're going to try to move the fountain's water around. You do this by concentrating on the water and willing it to go which way you want. Now watch how it goes." Everyone watched as he demonstrated the Water Control's other ability by making the fountain water course around the moonlight dragon statue like a river. He soon stopped the flow and told the students, "Now each one of you at a time is going to take a try at the spell, since too many doing it at the same time would prevent the water from moving too much due to a tug-o-war over control on the water." He looked at Minerva and said, "Well start with you. Focus on the water and move any way you want it."

"Okay, I got it," the woman said. She stared at the water and willed it to run over to the left until the head was barely hiding behind the statue. Then she made it run in the opposite direction and went full circle this time. After Minerva finished controlling the water, everybody else had their turn performing the second part of the lesson. The woman watched how they went about moving the water around.

The last person to try out the spell was the boy who made the water run around the statue, before he decided to play a prank and made the water throw itself at Minerva, a dragon, and a man next to her. They were all splashed wet as the blonde screamed in reaction to the surprise attack, while the dragon

flinched back and the man went, "Whoa!" The two humans felt cold and uncomfortable with their clothes soaking wet. The boy pointed and laughed at them.

The boy may have found his prank amusing, but his victims certainly didn't and neither did Gynast. The water master scolded the boy, "Young man, we're having a magic training in session. You can play your little games later." The boy stopped laughing and stood quietly in shame. The water dragon turned to the wet students and informed them, "You know, there's water inside your clothes and on your scales. You can use the water control spell to get it out."

Minerva and the others thought that was a very convenient way of using the spell. She and the man used their magic to remove the water from their clothes, until they became dry again. The water formed into spheres and they let them sink back into the fountain. The dragon didn't return his water sphere, but rather flung it at the boy's face to splash him with in payback for having been wet. "Ugh!" the boy cried in annoyance as he squeezed his eyes shut to keep the cold liquid from getting into them. The students laughed at how funny and cute that was.

The boy wiped the water from his face before he used his magic to splash some water back at the dragon in retaliation. He also ended up wetting a girl a few years older than his age. She, too, got irked and splashed the water back at the boy. A blonde guy saw how fun this was and called to everyone for a game, "Let's have a splash, everyone!" So everybody used their water control spell to throw the fountain's water at each other. At first, some were mad at having to feel the cold and dampness on their clothes and scales, but then they quickly knew that they could use their magic to get dry again. The students laughed as they all had fun in the little game of their's. Minerva observed all the smiles on the faces of both humans and dragons and thought how this may bring the two races closer to one another.

The game went on for a short while until the humans started to feel tired from expending nearly all of their magic energy. Gynast noticed that they have stopped splashing water and decided to end the game. "Alright everyone, that's enough for today. I see that some of you are exhausted from using the water control too much," he said.

One guy out of the group asked, "So how come the dragons are still able to go on, but we humans can only that stuff for a short time?" He had seen how energetic the dragons still were after the humans became tired and he was envious because of that.

Gynast explained, "Well that's because first-time magic users such as yourselves will have a small capacity of magic energy at the start. But it'll grow eventually the more you practice and use magic." Then he warned them in a serious tone, "Since you humans are exhausted, I would recommend you all rest first before trying to use magic again. If you ever were to spend too much of it, you would fall unconscious if death doesn't take you first." Minerva got scared at the fact that magic had a risk of death to it. It sounded like she needed to be responsible with this power or else she would face the consequence. The water master said to them, "Now I would have taught you humans the final part of the water control spell, but since some of you are drained, you'll just have to watch how we dragons do

it so that you can get the idea." After using his magic to transfer the water from the students and ground back into the fountain, he looked at the dragons and explained the next lesson, "Now for the final part of the water control spell, you're going to create a wall of magic energy and sink it into the water. Think of it like putting a glass in a filled-up sink to split one water body into two. With that wall in the water, you can now push much of the water back and leave an empty space where it used to be. Here, I'll show you what I mean." He separated the water and pushed both ends away from each other to create a spot void of the liquid. After everybody got the idea on what the spell should be like, Gynast reunited the water and told the dragon students, "Now we'll start practicing this one at a time again." He looked to the waterhorse dragon and told him to go first. After the waterhorse succeeded at the spell, the other dragon went next. One dragon after another took their turns at the spell until everybody was done.

After all the dragons practiced their next spell, Gynast said to them, "Well done students, you all did a good job with the spell. Keep practicing everything I have taught you and you will have them memorized in your head." Then he spoke to the humans as well, "And that goes for the rest of you as well. Try this spell at home for yourself after you've regained your energy. We will try this spell again next week, so that we can see what you humans have learned from observation. Anyway, class is hereby dismissed. I will see you all again next time. Right now, I have other people back at the City Hall to go and teach. So you all take care and have a blessed day." The students went their separate ways, while Minerva headed back to the entrance of the City Hall to wait for Drake. The woman stood in front of the door for only less than a minute as Drake had immediately flew into sight with Ronan riding on his back.

The dragon landed gracefully as Ronan asked with a smirk, "Class over?"

Minerva nodded and said, "Yep!"

"Where do you want to go now?" the assassin asked.

The woman thought about where to go next. She could go back to the festival to see what else was there, but she would have to buy another ticket first to enter again. Since she had already spent money, she would have to put that decision off. She thought about showing Ronan around her house, so that she can tell him where the rooms are and which one he will be sleeping in. "How about home?" she said.

Ronan held a hand out to her and she took it as he helped her onto Drake's back behind him. "Just say where to go, Drake can handle the rest," the assassin told her.

Minerva started picturing in her head how they would get from the city hall to her home. "Let's see... Just give me a minute here," she said. She thought about the direction she went from her house to the carnival and then to the city hall. It took about two minutes until she finally got it mapped out. Then she gave them what she thought were the right directions to her home, "Alright, I need you to fly back towards the carnival and then you head west until you get to a small intersection and then you turn

north until you see a modern-looking house." The woman's home was among the few that hadn't been damaged during the spell and it was most likely because she never shown any sort of mistreatment towards the dragons. Because the house made it out okay, it never needed to be redesigned in Aquarian fashion. Drake was getting a running start for lift-off before he jumped into the air to fly. He showed off some flying tricks and made the ride more fun. "Whoo!" Minerva screamed out of excitement.

Soon, they saw the house in sight and the dragon swooped down and landed lightly. Ronan hopped off first before he turned to help Minerva down off Drake's back. "Watch your step," he said with a smile.

The humans walked to the door as Minerva said to Ronan, "Since we're here, I guess I should show you around my house, so that you'll know where everything is at." She unlocked the door and they went inside where the assassin started looking at the place. The living room was at the entrance with a flat-screen TV sitting on the entertainment center, a beige leather couch, a bookshelf, and a coffee table. Minerva pointed to the next room that was in combination of a dining room and kitchen. "Over there is the kitchen and right past the glass door is the exercise room," she explained as she led him to the kitchen. The exercise room had a treadmill, a 5 lb dumbbell, and an exercise bike. Minerva had these equipment for fitness whenever she wanted to exercise.

Ronan smirked seeing the gym equipment. "Not much but it'll do for endurance," he said with a smirk at her.

The woman nodded and replied, "Well as long these things have some use, then I'm happy for you."

Then Ronan looked outside the window as he asked, "So where is this garage that Drake is sleeping at?"

"Oh, it's at the backyard," Minerva answered. "Want to see it?" she offered.

The assassin shook his head and declined, "Nah, I'm good." Then he went back to the living room area and sat down on the couch. "It's a nice home. How long have you had it?" he asked curiously.

Minerva answered, "For 19 years; that's my whole life. My father died years ago in a car accident and my mother passed away last year. So now I've been trying to make a living to take care of myself and make money to pay up my bills and save money for college classes. It's really hard work when you're young and alone without a degree."

The man sighed before looking to her with a frown. "I'm sorry to hear that. I know what it's like to lose family," he said. He got up and moved to the window looking outside.

It was apparent that Minerva's past had stirred up a sad memory from his past; something the girl hadn't meant to do. She had to get back to showing him around the house in order to take his mind off it. "Me too, Ronan," she said, feeling a bit sad. Then she dropped the sad mood and said, "But anyway, let me show you the other rooms." She opened the door to the laundry room and said, "This is the

laundry room. If you ever need to have your clothes washed, feel free to use the washing machine and the dryer." She pointed to the cabinets above the two sleek white appliances and said, "The bleach, detergents, and fabric softener are in these cabinets."

Ronan smirked and said, "Well, I can certainly take some time to clean my clothes." He chuckled at his own comment as Minerva giggled along with him.

Then she led him up the stairs, where she would show him the guest room. "This is the guest room. Whenever I have visitors who would like to stay, I always let them use that room," the woman said. The assassin went inside and unbuckled all of his weapon belts and pouches, laying them out on a table, leaving his robes hanging freely off of him. He started to remove them, but only as far as keeping his pants on. His entire back covered in scars and old wound marks. Minerva stared at them in admiration as she thought, *'He really is a fighter.'* Her finger touched one of the scars and traced it over like a kid coloring over the lines. "Ooh," she moaned. Her finger went over to the next scar and the next one after that. For some reason they looked quite fascinating to her.

The assassin looked over his shoulder before he turned to face her and said, "Old wounds. Each one a different version of the same story." His muscular body wasn't just covered in scars on the back but even his front had an equal number of long cuts across and diagonal. His right eye had a small scar running down through it but the eye itself was undamaged. "When you live a life of always fighting.... You earn your marks quite easily and you learn from each new one," he said looking at her eyes. His eyes were blue like the color of the sea touching the sand, light blue. His skin was also well tanned, and his hair was as black as night. His whole appearance was rather fascinating in Minerva's opinion.

"So what do you fight, Ronan?" she asked, wondering who did this to him and how he managed to get the scars.

As the woman traced the front's scars, the assassin answered regretfully, "Anything and anyone that tried to harm or kill me. I've fought too many people and killed more than half of them. For every life I took, I gained a scar. It stays as a reminder of what I did and why I did it."

Minerva felt sympathy for Ronan. "That kind of sounds like a brutal life," she said softly. "I'd feel the same way too, if I was forced to kill someone."

The man looked at her eyes and met her gaze as if he was captured by them. "It's been years since anyone has shown me the kindness you have."

"What about your friend, Drake?" asked the woman. Surely his friend would be kind to him as well, right?

Ronan smiled and said, "I meant someone human. Drake is always kind. He's over three hundred years old and very protective of me. Ever since I met him, he's been keeping me alive."

"Oh! Okay," Minerva said, giving a brief nod.

The assassin resumed, "The only other human that showed me any kindness was my teacher. The man who taught me all of my skills. He pushed me till my muscles neared their breaking point. Trained me till my bones cracked. He made me who I am. Now Drake is all I have left." He paused to breathe before continuing, "As a child and as a pre-teen I feared death. Now I fear nothing on this world."

The woman said, "You sound pretty confident, Ronan. I suppose I could suggest another career for you to try out in town." She raised a pointing finger upward as if she discovered a bright idea and suggested, "I know, why not be a city guard or a policeman? Surely, these jobs could use a fighter such as yourself."

The man smiled, grabbing a fresh shirt and sliding it on. "No," he responded. "Guard and police follow the laws of the town. I follow my own, it's how I do my work best. It's how I saved you and killed that murderer." Recalling when he had to save her life on those three occasions.

"So you're a vigilante then," said Minerva. She knew vigilantism was just as heroic, but she also knew that it was frowned upon by the law as well as some members of society. Which made her wonder... "Tell me; have you gotten chased or arrested by law enforcers?" she asked. She imagined that kind of scenario happened at least once or more times. It may also explain why people didn't trust him. A good man getting shunned by society for doing a good deed sounded kind of sad.

"More than once," Ronan chuckled. He stepped around past her and went over to the window. "I've done many things that would look bad to the eyes of some people. But the eyes of the majority is what matters."

"And what do they think? I mean of your actions," asked Minerva, referring to the majority. She guessed that maybe many people thought of him as a hero.

Ronan looked to her with a smirk. "Some people have wanted me gone or killed for things I have done. They either gave up, were killed themselves, or... who knows," he said, shrugging. "Minerva, I appreciate your kindness. You have more respect and honor than most... but I don't think I should stay long. I'm not exactly the safest person to be around. I'm.... not capable of having someone special.... not with the life I live....the risk... it's too great of one."

"Not safe?" asked Minerva confused. "Sure, you kill dangerous people and get the law upset with you, but why would you consider yourself too dangerous for me to be around with?"

The assassin sighed and answered, "Because you could end up in the crossfire by accident. I've met many people and some of them have died because they were involved in what I did, and I lived with that guilt on my conscious. If you were ever killed..... I couldn't handle it." He spoke truthfully with her, "I can't handle the guilt of another person dying because of my inability to stop it."

The woman felt sadness and sympathy for him. His backstory was beginning to sound more tragic. All this fighting and death; was it really fair to have Ronan's life be like that for a long time? "Ronan, do ever hope for the day where you won't have to kill anymore? I mean you already got revenge on the men who killed your family. Wouldn't it be alright to settle down and find a peaceful career change?" she asked.

The man sighed again and told her, "Minerva I just..... I just can't.... I would feel out of place in a 'career change' as you say. I can't change who I am; what I've become. A man who lives by the sword, dies by the sword. I've lived my life that way since I was a child; it's who I am. I am born of the desert heat, forged in the cold mountains. I don't carry weapons; I am one. A weapon can't change." He sounded broken and unsure what to do with his life.

Being the optimistic person she is, Minerva refused to think that he'll always be this way his whole life. "Don't say that!" she blurted. Then she continued in a softer tone, "Don't say that you can't ever change. It doesn't have to be that way, Ronan. You turn from being a weapon to something new, but only if you make the effort. It may seem hard for you to get out of your lifestyle, but it's definitely not impossible. If you were to take things slowly at a time to adjust to something new, then a career change will be possible." She smiled a little and said in an encouraging tone, "I'll be there to help you. We'll find a way to make it all possible, what do you say, Ronan?"

The assassin looked at her in confusion and asked, "Why? Why are you looking for a hope of change in someone like me? I don't understand."

The woman answered, "Because everybody changes, even to a small degree. No one can remain the same forever." She was quite cheerful in believing that Ronan can learn how to compensate for all the lives lost in his involvement. "And besides, you were moping about being a living weapon and thinking that's all you'll ever will be. I couldn't let you be sad like this all your life. So I'm going to help you break out of that boundary and learn some new skills, so that you can be more than just a killer." She listed the possibilities as she suggested, "Maybe you learn to be a doctor, an engineer, a teacher, or maybe an activist for a really good cause."

Ronan smirked with renewed hope in his eyes and said, "Thank you. No one's tried to have such faith in me before. I'll.... think it over. If I may, I'd like to get some naptime." He sat down on the bed, rubbing his face. He was clearly exhausted.

Minerva smiled at him, feeling happy and glad that she was helpful to him. "Okay, I'll see you later," she said. She left the guest room and went downstairs to the backdoor, where she went outside to check on Drake. She found him, laying inside the garage. The woman walked over to him and asked, "So Drake, how's your new home?"

The copper dragon replied in joy, "Wonderful! It's quite spacious in here."

The woman felt glad for him and said, "I'm glad you like it. Anyway, if you need anything just give me a roar, okay?" Taking consideration of Ronan, she added, "But not too loud, okay? Your friend is sleeping."

Drake nodded and replied, "Okay, I understand." Then Minerva turned and went back inside the house. She went over to the cupboard, took out a pink cereal, and filled it with water from the sink. With it, she began to practice the water spells she learned today.