

Song of Machi
Episode One

"Elite Guard Starla"

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FADE IN:

EXT. HILLTOP - DAY

ANGLE ON A SILVER FIGURE resting back comfortably against a tree near center frame, facing out into the background.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Starla gazed out from a hilltop and took in the sunny day as a breeze danced in the air.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODED RIVER - CONTINUOUS

PAN across following the river downstream.

CROSSFADE:

EXT. VANTAGE POINT - CONTINUOUS

ESTABLISHING SHOT ON the field, HILLTOP, WOODED RIVER, and a CASTLE and TOWN in the background.

A BLACK CLOAKED FIGURE slowly walks toward the HILLTOP from the southeast woods. A BLUE FIGURE, SARINYA, approaches the HILLTOP from the CASTLE, BLACK CLOAKED FIGURE pauses and hides in the trees again.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The scholar in blue approached the hilltop.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HILLTOP - CONTINUOUS

NARRATOR (as SARINYA)

"It's time," she said, "we need to go."

Pause.

NARRATOR (as SARINYA) (CON'T)
"Nervous?"

STARLA
No.

NARRATOR (as SARINYA)
"Scared then? It's just a
ceremony."

CUT TO:

EXT. VANTAGE POINT - CONTINUOUS

PAN LEFT to reveal a RED CLOAKED FIGURE overlooking HILLTOP
and CASTLE.

STARLA
Elite Guard is a huge step up. What
if I'm not strong enough?

CUT TO:

EXT. HILLTOP - CONTINUOUS

STARLA now standing, beside SARINYA.

NARRATOR (as SARINYA)
"You've been honing your skills
since the nursery. You're strong
enough for anything."

STARLA
Maybe. Maybe not.

NARRATOR (as SARINYA)
"Well I believe in you, at least."

Pause. STARLA headpats SARINYA. (UwU)

STARLA
Thanks, little one.

FADE TO:

SONG OF MACHI OPENING ONE AND EPISODE ONE TITLE CARD

FADE TO:

INT. WAR ROOM - DAY

ANGLE ON a table with maps on the table. Elite Guards BRIGESTO, SLISTRELA, and STARLA enter from right.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The celebrations took place without issue. They were a joyous occasion for all, with Starla's promotion being the sole new elite induction. In the castle's war room, Elite Guard Slistrela continued informing Starla of her new role.

NARRATOR (as SLISTRELA)

"This would be our central base of operations and where we'd adjourn for instruction," she said. "Additionally," she continued "a smaller armory with spare equipment is in the back should you require anything."

BRIGESTO

Now listen up, recruit our task is an extremely important one. This is no walk in the orchard where we can afford to prance around and pick some apples and smell the roses.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THRONE ROOM GRAND HALL - DAY - CONTINUOUS

ANGLE ON PRINCESS FALIYAH strolling from right to left toward the throne.

BRIGESTO (O.S.) (CON'T)

Princess Faliya and her advisers are always our top priority, alright?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WAR ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

ANGLE ON Elite Guards BRIGESTO, SLISTRELA continuing to introduce STARLA to her duties. BRIGESTO steps forward as he speaks.

BRIGESTO (CON'T)

Think only of their protection. At all times.

NARRATOR(as SLISTRELA)

"I secure the perimeter and keep a lookout on our surroundings," Slistrela said. "Brigo here tends to remain within arm's reach of the retinue."

BRIGESTO steps back upon hearing himself referred to as "Brigo."

NARRATOR(as SLISTRELA) (CON'T)

"I'm sure you can fulfill your own niche position as you adjust to operating with the team."

BRIGESTO jumps forward and protests against his nickname.

BRIGESTO

(interrupting)

It's Brigesto! Don't give the novice any ideas of insubordination, you miscreant!

NARRATOR(as SLISTRELA)

"Ah! Of course! My sincerest apologies, great and stalwart commander Brigesto!" she said dryly. Slistrela turned back to address Starla "If you need anything clarified or have questions of our objective, Brigo will surely know all, Star. Ask him. The big chief."

STARLA

Any members of Princess Faliya's train who I should know specifically or who require special attention?

NARRATOR(as SLISTRELA)

"Not in particular. They are mostly aristocrats, scholars, and other such nobles. I am not one to care of their details, I am simply here to serve as eyes and ears to the crown."

BRIGESTO rapidly steps closer to Starla, stepping in front of SLISTRELA. She steps back and, unable to find a comfortable spot, stands aside to the left.

BRIGESTO

I know not what kind of training you come from, rook, but here we have no room for error or the slightest lapse in judgment. The strength of a kingdom lies in our hands.

NARRATOR(as SLISTRELA)

"And lest you forget, Star, we cannot afford a single misstep," Slistrela mocked. "The fate of a nation rests upon our diligence."

STARLA

Ah, yes! Thank you for informing me!

PAN left as SARINYA enters.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

A familiar voice called from the hall, "Hey, Star!"

SARINYA bolts in from the left.

NARRATOR (as SARINYA)
"I see you're getting to know Brigo
and Slis!"

BRIGESTO is again taken aback upon hearing SARINYA utter his
nickname.

BRIGESTO
What did you call me, kid?!

NARRATOR(as SLISTRELA)
"Pardon, but I've some matters to
attend to," Slistrela said. "I'll
take my leave."

SLISTRELA exits the War Room to the right.

NARRATOR (as SARINYA)
"See ya later, Slis!"

STARLA
Hello, Sarinya. Do you travel with
the princess' retinue as well?

NARRATOR (as SARINYA)
"Sometimes. The elder sage is
called upon at times and I follow
along. The library here has lots
for us to study."

STARLA
And you know Slistrela and Brigesto
too?

NARRATOR (as SARINYA)
"They're always somewhere around
when the sage advises the royals. I
told Slis lots about you so she
could recommend you for Elite
Guard."

PAN right.

BRIGESTO

So you two know each other?

SARINYA turns to address BRIGESTO.

NARRATOR (as SARINYA)

"Yes. Both raised at the nursery during our youth."

BRIGESTO

I see. Well we haven't the time to dally--

BRIGESTO turns and exits left.

BRIGESTO (CONT'D) (O.S.)

Come Starla, you must prepare for your sentry duty tomorrow morning.

Pause.

STARLA

He seems... fun?

SARINYA turns back around to face STARLA.

NARRATOR (as SARINYA)

"Maybe he's trying to test your mettle. But at least it's not too bad so far, right?"

STARLA

An early morning assignment... sounds grand. We'll just have to take an early night.

STARLA exits left.

Panicked, SARINYA shouts and goes after STARLA.

NARRATOR (as SARINYA)

"Wait! Before I forget!"

PAN left as STARLA returns quickly.

NARRATOR (as SARINYA) (CON'T)

"I made this for you, Star! I've finally been able to craft a unique charm!"

STARLA

Wow, it's pretty! How does it glimmer like that?

NARRATOR (as SARINYA)

"Umm... I can't say. It was not my intention, but I like what I forged with what little skill I have."

STARLA

I think it's amazing. Thank you, love.

NARRATOR (as SARINYA)

"I was able to make two. I suppose we can wear the pair and that way a part of me will always be with you."

STARLA and SARINYA put on their matching necklaces.

STARLA

Thank--

BRIGESTO (O.S.)

(interrupting)

Starla! We haven't got all day!

STARLA turns toward BRIGESTO, then turns back to speak with SARINYA.

STARLA

I foresee it will take all my discipline to keep from ending that guard.

NARRATOR (as SARINYA)

"Shush, you knave, he'll hear you."

Pause.

NARRATOR (as SARINYA) (CONT'D)
 "I'll have our warm meal and bed
 ready for you when you're done
 here. Try not to skewer him, Star."

STARLA
 No promises. I'll see you tonight.

CROSSFADE:

EXT. VANTAGE POINT - DAWN

WIDE ANGLE overlooking the CASTLE and TOWN. The night is quiet and still as the air is filled with the chirping of crickets and distant bird calls.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CASTLE OUTSKIRTS - DAWN - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON the dawn sky. PULL BACK to reveal a lightly wooded area leading toward a FOREST to the right.

STARLA thinks to herself the words of a poem she is writing.

STARLA (O.S.)
 "The warm and sweet tea of the
 town."

Pause.

STARLA (O.S.) (CON'T)
 Why town? That won't even rhyme.

STARLA slowly steps into frame from left and paces back and forth as she thinks.

STARLA (CON'T)
 Stupid.

Pause.

STARLA (CON'T)
 Hmm.

Pause.

STARLA (CON'T)
 "The sweet biscuit that fuels my
 strength."

Pause. A BLACK CLOAKED FIGURE peaks out from the treeline.

STARLA (CON'T)
 Would she like it if I called her
 "biscuit"?

Pause.

STARLA (CON'T)
 Sounds more like the name of a dog.

Pause. The BLACK CLOAKED FIGURE whistles to attract STARLA's attention, but she remains focused in thought and unaware of his presence.

STARLA (CON'T)
 What if I-- "The warm and sweet tea
 that fuels my strength." Hey! I
 like that!

The BLACK CLOAKED FIGURE steps forward and steps on a branch, which echoes along the treeline. STARLA quickly turns round and witnesses the FIGURE turn and flee into the trees. She draws her sword and pursues.

STARLA
 Halt! Elite Guard!

CUT TO:

EXT. PURLIEU - CONTINUOUS

The BLACK CLOAKED FIGURE, a SHAMAN, is at the end of his run as he enters from left and turns to await STARLA.

STARLA dashes in, following the SHAMAN.

SHAMAN

O brave youth...

STARLA

Who are you?

SHAMAN

Lo, my name is of no use. Heed,
young and noble Starla, for I must
divulge to you some vital
knowledge.

STARLA

How can I be certain you are no
danger to me?

SHAMAN

You cannot, my dearest youth.

STARLA

Whatever it is you wish to tell me,
you can say it to a room of nobles.
Come tell your message to our
court.

SHAMAN

Impossible!

STARLA

Then I cannot trust you.

SHAMAN

No one in this earthly place shall
we ever know or trust. This I must
reveal to you, you alone will
understand.

STARLA

I do not believe you can offer me
wisdom, shaman. One who conceals
himself in the darkness of the
forest cannot sway me.

STARLA turns and exits left.

SHAMAN

Hold, rash hero! Take my words,
perchance they would be of great
use to you.

Pause. SHAMAN steps back upon seeing STARLA return. Faint sunlight begins pouring through the canopy and birds begin chirping.

SHAMAN (CONT'D)

It is easy to be brave behind
castle walls, but vicious fiends
yet slither twixt the gaps
neglected. My vision into the
castle has become ever shrouded. I
fear machinations are astir.

Pause. Sunlight shines brighter on STARLA.

SHAMAN (CONT'D)

Be wary. Be wary, young fighter, of
those from this plane and beyond,
for I sense the Gates of Disorder
have burst agape. Hold your ground,
Elite Guard, and let not deception
and temptation rule you. Please be
strong and fulfill that which is in
you.

CROSSFADE:

INT. THRONE ROOM GRAND HALL - DAY

STARLA enters from the right. She surveys the room.

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON BRIGESTO standing at attention. PRINCESS FALIYA enters right and walks across the room, passing BRIGESTO. He turns to keep a watchful eye on her.

The RED CLOAKED FIGURE quickly peers in through the window furthest from BRIGESTO, then hides behind cover once more.

A sudden explosion crashes in from the right and knocks BRIGESTO against the wall.

STARLA
Brigesto!

The RED CLOAKED FIGURE, now in the throne room, enters in the cover of smoke.

DISSOLVE TO:

STARLA
Princess!

STARLA sees a RED CLOAKED FIGURE moving in the smokescreen. She draws her weapon and sallies forth.

DISSOLVE TO:

The RED DRUID spots the PRINCESS and dashes left to apprehend her. The DRUID pulls the unconscious PRINCESS back into the smoke and they teleport away.

END