

Diary of a Mountie - Part the Eighteenth Second Lesson

by
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(based on COTY)

Day Fifteen - Saturday, August 22
League Headquarters

Mr. Otani seemed surprised to see me last night. "I did not think you would come back, Sergeant," he said when I came in. "Many of my prospective students do not."

"I've had worse."

He was too polite to laugh. I'd knocked myself half senseless the night before, and he knew it. "So you are still interested? You still wish to study jiu-jutsu?"

"Yes, sir; I'm afraid you're stuck with me." I didn't mention I'd spent two hours beforehand in the company of the hottest water bottle I could manage. My right shoulder felt like it'd be sore for a week.

"Then we shall begin," he said softly, and the lesson got under way.

I won't deny that I almost didn't come back. That first demonstration of his was pretty brutal. Masaturo listened to my explanation, that I was a policeman who'd come to rely on my partner to get me out of close quarters, without saying anything. When he asked why I'd come to him in particular, I told him about the Bartitsu school. His expression didn't change much, but his lips got very thin. "So, they sent you to me."

"Yes."

"The Nip." There was a definite edge to his voice as he said it.

I winced a little. "Afraid so."

"What do you expect from me that you could not get from them?" he asked. His tone of voice didn't change much, but there was a certain interest behind the words. I knew that speaking carefully wouldn't help me any. He wanted to hear the unvarnished truth.

So I gave it to him. "I expect you to know what you're doing."

"That's all?" he asked. One of his eyebrows went up.

"Well- yes... should there be something else?"

"Mr. Eggleston knows what he is doing..."

"With all due respect, sir, I don't believe he does. If he did, he wouldn't have to talk about it so much."

There was an odd smile on his face as he stood up. "Sergeant," he said as he made his way to the center of the wooden practice floor, "please, come at me. As fast or as hard as you like."

"Excuse me?"

He shrugged. "Hit me," he said simply.

Back in Forty Mile, there was a Russian whose luck in the gold fields had gone sour. He made a nice amount of gold anyway- by betting that he could knock the feet out from under any man in town in the space of a minute. He would have lost every penny of it if he'd ever met Masaturo Otani. I was in that school less than half an hour, and I got all the demonstration I could've asked for- and then some. Wasn't really thinking of it that way at the time, though. Mostly I was getting pretty tired of having my best punches end up with me on the floor and an elbow in my back. The harder I tried, the easier he had it throwing me into the wall, and that didn't sit well at all with me. I think he must've seen it in my face when I left, because all he said was, "Come back if you are still interested."

Like I said, I almost didn't. That kind of treatment stings, on a much deeper level than wrenched joints. I've always been pretty good in fights before, and frankly, it felt like being shown up as a fraud. It wasn't until I went to fill the hot water bottle that I realized it wasn't anything of the kind. There hadn't been anyone else there to see it- and even if there had, it wasn't as if I'd been doing anything wrong. My fighting form just wasn't enough, compared to a fighter like him. Just like an ordinary gun wasn't enough to take down a Siren. It wasn't a comforting thought, but it was a true one, and since we might wind up facing anything- well.

That was when I made up my mind to go back. I've got my hands full just trying to keep up with the rest of the League and I need whatever honorable advantage I can get. I expect the jiu-jitsu will turn out to be useful eventually.