

Kokoryu: The Training Grounds

By BloodyHell

Submitted: November 11, 2005

Updated: November 11, 2005

A young mage looks for the grounds of Kokoryu. On the way she meets an odd person and they end up traveling to Kokoryu.

Provided by Fanart Central.

<http://www.fanart-central.net/stories/user/BloodyHell/22849/Kokoryu-The-Training-Grounds>

Chapter 1 - The Beginning

2

1 - The Beginning

Entwined Paths

By LeeAnne "Kai" Richards

Akane, a young mage, was trudging through the snow, which reached up to the middle of her thighs, to look for shelter.

I hate the north, she thought, **Does it have to be so cold?!** Her thoughts were interrupted when she tripped over a fallen tree.

"Argh!" she exasperated.

She lay in the snow, face-first, and said dejectedly, "Why must the Sun God test me so?"

Akane got up and shook the snow from her dark purple apprentice's robe.

"As soon as I become an official mage, I'm living in the south!" she muttered bitterly.

Suddenly, she smelled something cooking.

"Great! Now I'm hallucinating!" she said, infuriated.

As Akane followed the smell, it led her to a small, shabby-looking hut.

"It's better than nothing..." she sighed.

She walked in and saw it was actually one big room divided into two by a wall. On the side she walked in, there were two tatami mats.

Why two mats? she wondered.

She shrugged it off and put her pack down next to one of them.

"I guess I was imagining the smell..." she murmured as she laid down on one of the mats.

Little did Akane know, there *was* someone cooking a meal. A boy, about seventeen years old, was cooking some rice.

He heard someone come in and stuck his head out from behind the wall to see a girl asleep on one of

the mats.

She looks kinda cold... Where'd I put that blanket? he thought.

After searching frantically around the hut, he found a blanket and covered the girl with it.

“Hopefully, when my rice is done, she'll wake up.” He muttered to himself.

~Half an hour later~

Akane woke up, but kept her eyes shut. She sighed quietly, **I've never felt this warm in who knows how long!** She tried to move her arms, but could only move them a little bit. She opened her eyes and tried to sit up, but fell back with a thud and a moan escaped her mouth.

She looked to her right and saw a teenager staring at a pot of rice as if willing it to cook faster. When Akane moaned, his head flicked in her direction.

“You're awake!” he said cheerfully.

Akane nodded slowly.

“I was getting kinda worried because you were cold, shivering and blue! Anyway, would a beautiful, young mage like yourself like some rice that I, the great Yamata, cooked?” He had said this quite fast and, not knowing what he said, Akane just nodded.

Once again, she tried to sit up, but failed. She closed her eyes and braced herself for the fall, but it never came. She opened her eyes and saw that Yamata had caught her.

“You should ask for help, especially when you almost froze to death!” he laughed. He put her in the sitting-up position and asked, “By the way, what's your name?”

“Akane. And from your earlier question: yes I would like some rice, but I'm not really a mage yet. Just a traveling apprentice.” She replied while stretching to get the numbness out of her body.

“Ah...” he said, dishing the rice in to two bowls. “How long have you been traveling?” He handed Akane a bowl.

She took the bowl and thought for a moment. “Since I was about eight years old.” She replied.

Yamata's eyes widened in shock. “Really?! I've only been traveling since I was twelve...”

Akane finished her rice quickly and stood up. “Thank you for the rice, Yamata-kun! But I must get going. I have to be in Kokoryu as soon as I can.”

She found her staff and bag and was about to go through the door when Yamata came up behind her

"Do you have to go?" he asked with pleading eyes.

She nodded and replied, "Yes. I have to meet a martial arts teacher."

He looked sad, then his face lit up as he said, "I know! I'll come with you and be your bodyguard!"

"Uh..." she said nervously. **If I take him, would Sensei Jin be mad? Oh well, only one way to find out!**

"Okay, Yamata-kun!" she said.

Yamata jumped in the air. "YES!" he exclaimed.

Akane let out a laugh as he went inside the hut. He grinned as he gathered up his things.

~Later on~

It had snowed as Akane and Yamata were making their way to Kokoryu.

They were both shivering madly as Akane led them to a house.

"Sensei Jin!" she called.

A tall, fit man in his late twenties came out of the hut. He was about five inches taller than Yamata and, since he was a sensei and had a high rank, he wore the customary black uniform.

"Yes?" he asked calmly.

"Um..." Akane began nervously, "My name is Akane. My most recent sensei mage sent you a letter that stated I would be coming to train with you."

He chuckled slightly. "It sounds like you've been rehearsing that!" he remarked.

She blushed and bowed deeply.

"I did get the letter but..." he turned to look at Yamata, "it didn't say anything about a companion."

"He saved me from freezing to death, so I owe him something." She explained.

He nodded towards Yamata and said, "That was very noble of you both."

They bowed and said simultaneously, "Thank you."

"Fortunately, we have two extra rooms. Kari will explain everything because I have to take care of some underclassmen. I will see you both at dawn." He bowed and left.

"You get to train here too!" exclaimed Akane.

Yamata nodded nervously as a girl in a blue kimono came up to them.

"I am Kari, one of the maids here. Master Jin requested that I explain the rules and your training programs. Just follow me."

She pointed out two buildings and said, "The one on the right in the women's quarters and the one on the left is the men's." She led them to a clearing and said, "That's where you'll be training with Master Jin every morning, except for Saturday and Sunday."

She then took them inside a small hut and said, "This is where you get fitted for your uniforms."

Akane went into one door while Yamata went into another. The maids measured her quickly and went into another room. Before Akane could blink, they came back with two sets of uniforms. She thanked them and walked out to wait for Yamata.

He came out almost immediately and Kari led them back to the quarters.

"The rules are: You must be up at dawn to train with Master Jin and if you are late, you will do the drills that Master Jin wants you to. You eat after you train, noon time, and at sunset. You will be eating in there," she pointed to a very large building and then continued, "After you eat lunch, you must meet Master Jin for weapon practice. That is it for now. I will lead you to your rooms, but then I have work to do."

She led them to their rooms and told them to be at the training grounds in ten minutes.

When they got to the grounds, Jin was there with four other teens.

"Ah!" Jin exclaimed as they walked up, "There are my new students! Boys, this is Yamata and Akane."

The four boys bowed and said simultaneously, "Hello!"

"Now line up!" Jin ordered. "Yes Sensei!" they cried.

The first hour of training was put towards practicing different kicks. Yamata kept losing his balance, which kept earning him sharp strikes on the head. Then the second hour was punching. "Imagine an enemy, Akane!" Jin ordered. Akane's punches were a bit slow and clumsy.

Then, after combining the two drills, training was over. Yamata and Akane dragged themselves to their rooms, both in pain. Akane dropped onto her mat. **I really need to get stronger, but training hurts!** she thought tiredly. She changed into her night clothes and as soon as her head touched the mat, she fell asleep.

~In the morning~

She woke up a bit late and, degradingly, Yamata was already at the training grounds. He waved as a

disappointed looking Jin walked her way.

“Only the second day of training, and you're already late. Kari told you that if you're late you do drills of my choosing, right?” She nodded.

He thought for a moment and said, “You will do punches as your drills.” He walked over to one of the teens and whispered something in his ear and the boy walked over to Akane.

“I'm Tahei. Master Jin requested I help you.” He said as he bowed.

She bowed also and replied gratefully, “Thank you! I'm Akane by the way.”

After about an hour of Akane doing drills with Tahei, she returned to the group. They were doing slightly more complicated punches. She watched them for a second then joined in. **I'm so glad I can pick things up quickly!** she thought happily.

“Very good, Yamata!” Jin said.

“Thank you Sensei!” he replied.

A few minutes later, Akane started to lose her balance, but, instead of falling over, she turned so she faced the ground and put her right hand out to catch herself. (Basically a one-handed push-up.) She got up and started to resume her punches, but Jin came over and said, “Those were some quick reflexes, Akane!”

She bowed and replied, “Thank you Sensei! I learned that ability from Mage Sensei Sachi.”

“She is a good teacher. But you should continue practicing.” He said and went to observe the others.

After training, Akane and Yamata were walking to dinner when Tahei came up to them.

“You two did great today!” he said happily.

“Thanks.” They replied wearily.

Tahei laughed and said, “You think you're tired now? Just wait `til the spring season comes. It takes a lot outta you when you get stuck in the mud!”

Yamata sighed, “I wish I had gone with my brothers to the fighting monk's training...”

“C'mon!” Akane said, suddenly full of energy, “It's not *that* bad!”

He stopped and shouted, “YOU'RE NOT THE ONE WITH A BRUISE THE SIZE OF A SHIELD ON YOUR HEAD!”

She looked back him and smirked, “I think that's accurate! Your head's big enough!”

He glared at her.

“Do you two always fight like this?” Tahei asked quietly.

“No!”

“Yes!”

They said that at the same time and glared at each other.

“Let's go to dinner...ok?” Tahei asked nervously.