

# *SUPER GALAXY KNIGHTS* **STARSTUFF STORIES**



**Stolen Heart**

Fuice Pewo stood nervously, approached by a masked figure. The ten-year-old girl backed away as her opponent rushed in with a fleche. Fuice advanced on her assailant with her own weapon - yet he was able to jump backwards and avoid a hit. Fuice's opponent lunged at her, but stumbled. Fuice took the opportunity to dodge out of the way and strike her enemy on the chest. A buzzer sounded, and a light turned on. Both combatants took off their masks, and set down their swords. A broad-shouldered man with spiky hair walked away from the group of sitting children.

“Excellent job, Fuice!” said Cahe Wuwa, which was the man's name. “You're starting to show some real improvement! Vaseca, keep working on your balance, and you'll be fine.”

The twelve-year-old boy nodded as he took a drink from his water bottle. Cahe looked at the clock on the wall.

“Ok, your parents are all probably waiting outside by now. You're all dismissed. Fuice, try not to take the suit with you this time. Also, everyone! Remember that the Junior Championships in Olimipo City are in six weeks, and I can't take you without your parents' permission. So make sure to get those forms signed, and bring the money for the tickets if your parents aren't coming with us!”

The children filed out of the building, laughing and chatting with each other. Cahe smiled, sighed, and began cleaning up the studio. A woman walked through the door as Cahe was packing up the suits.

“Your kid should be waiting for you outside, ma'am,” said Cahe.

“Oh, uh, I'm not one of the parents,” replied the woman.

Cahe turned to look at the woman. She was roughly Cahe's age, with short, silver hair. Her pants had a camouflage pattern, and her t-shirt was made of a shimmering green material. She wore gold bands around both of her wrists.

“Oh, I see. Apologies for the confusion. The adult class is on Tuesday evenings, so if you come back tomorrow...”

“I realize that, yes, but... I'm just not sure if I want to join the adult class? If it's all right with you, Mr. Wuwa, I'd like to see some of your skills first.”

Cahe's eyebrow raised. "Very well then," said Cahe. "There's some equipment in the back that should fit you. Have you ever done any fencing before?"

"No, but I know the basic rules," said the woman.

"Good, so I won't have to explain them," said Cahe, pulling a suit out of the closet. "We'll be using the Epee sword. With these rules, the entire body is a valid target, and simultaneous touches are allowed."

"Ok, got it," said the woman as she took her equipment.

Cahe took his own equipment out of a trunk and began putting it on over his normal clothes. "What should I call you, ma'am?"

"My name's Kaliho," said the woman, putting on her mask. "Kaliho Solas."

"Well, Kaliho," said Cahe, putting on his mask, "Let's begin."

The two stepped into the strip and took their en garde stances.

*"It's her first time fencing, and she already has a perfect stance!"* thought Cahe. *"She definitely has some potential as a student..."*

Cahe slowly advanced on Kaliho. Suddenly, Kaliho lunged at Cahe, instantly landing a touch.

"That... that was incredible for your first ever round of Epee!" shouted Cahe excitedly. "Your speed and accuracy are unreal! I'll make sure to not go as easy on you for the remaining rounds."

Kaliho nodded, and the two returned to their positions. The two had barely taken their stances when Kaliho won another round. Cahe stared in shock.

This process repeated for the rest of the rounds. No matter what Cahe did, the round was over in under a second. Soon enough, Kaliho had fifteen points, and Cahe had zero.

"Well, that's the match," said Cahe. He removed his mask, and his hair sprung back into place. "How did you manage to get so skilled at fencing without any training?"

“Magic,” said Kaliho. “Kidding!” she shouted, in response to Cahe's look of confusion. “I developed a special martial arts technique a few years back. When I'm using it, I'm able to wield any weapon with perfect ability.”

Cahe was awestruck. “Well, that's certainly... something. Unfortunately, I don't think there's anything I can teach you if you already have a technique that powerful.”

“Yes, I suppose so. Sorry for wasting your time, sir. Oh, one last question...”

“What is it?”

“You said you're teaching a class tomorrow evening, but are you teaching anything later today?”

“No, I'm free the rest of the day,” said Cahe. “Why do you ask?”

“I saw a nice restaurant across the street,” said Kaliho. “Would you... I mean, if you'd like...”

Cahe grabbed Kaliho's hands. “I'll be there at seven P.M., sharp,” he said.

Kaliho smiled warmly. She got out of her suit and walked out of the studio, Cahe smiling warmly at her as she went. The door closed behind her.

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The sun was low in the sky. Cahe sat at an outdoor table at the restaurant his date had pointed out. He waved cheerfully at Kaliho as she walked up to the entrance. Kaliho waved back, then talked to the host. The host brought Kaliho over to Cahe's table, and she took her seat across from him. A waiter walked up to the table.

“Howdy!” said the waiter. “Welcome to Mr. Meetz Steakhouse. I'm Kule Beefman, and I'll be your server on this fine evening. What sort of meat will y'all be having for dinner today?”

“Can I have the Steak Salad, medium rare?” said Cahe. “I had kind of a big lunch today.”

“Sure as I'm a char-grilled t-bone you can! And for the lady friend?”

“Hmm... I would like the thickest, juiciest cut of meat you have,” said Kaliho, while maintaining

eye contact with Cahe. “Rare.”

The waiter was shocked. “A... are you sure about that, miss? You... y'all don't know what you're getting' y'allself into!”

“Trust me, I can handle my meat just fine,” said Kaliho with a smirk.

“Very well. One Steak Salad for the gentleman, and one Godzilla's Older Brother for the lady. And may the good lord have mercy on your soul.”

The waiter walked away. Cahe looked at Kaliho with admiration.

“So, uh, what are you doing around these parts?” asked Cahe. “I'm assuming you didn't travel all the way out here just to meet me!”

“Well, see... I kind of did?” said Kaliho. “I'm kind of a wandering knight. I travel around the country and provide help to those in need. I was just passing through, and I heard about you from some traders who took self-defense lessons from you once, so I decided to pay you a visit.”

“Oh, you met Quge and Taduyi? Great guys. Anyway, I suppose I was probably a disappointment to you, then.”

“In combat, sure,” said Kaliho. “But I haven't met anyone who could best me in combat in a long, long time. In terms of other areas, however... consider my expectations exceeded.”

Cahe chuckled as the waiter walked out of the restaurant. In one hand he carried a small bowl, and in the other he wheeled a cart, knocking over tables and customers in his way. Flopping slightly over the sides of the cart was a steak roughly the size of a small cruise ship.

“Here is your Steak Salad,” said the waiter, placing the bowl in front of Cahe. “And here is your Godzilla's Older Brother. There's a steak knife in your napkin, but if that's not enough for y'all, I can get a chainsaw...”

“Oh, there's no need for that,” said Kaliho, removing the knife from her napkin. She took a stance, then struck with speed and efficiency, cutting up the steak into a mountain of small cubes. The other patrons of the restaurant applauded from their place on the ground.

“Well grind me up and call me a vampire's well done! Maybe y'all are getting' out of here alive after all!” said the waiter. The host walked out of the restaurant, dragging a fire hose behind him. “Here's your steak sauce. Enjoy y'all's meals!”

The waiter and host walked back into the restaurant. Kaliho served herself a pile of steak, and sprayed some steak sauce on it from the fire hose. Cahe began to cut up his own steaks.

“I figured you were just doing a bit, given the way you ordered that,” chuckled Cahe. “But apparently, you're serious about this.”

“Of course it was a joke,” said Kaliho with her mouth full of meat. “But I wasn't about to go back on it, now was I?”

The two laughed as they continued to eat their meals. Cahe ate some of his lettuce, and took a sip of water.

“In a way, I'm jealous of your life,” said Cahe. “It was always my dream as a kid – becoming a 'hero for justice', going on quests and saving people with nothing in return. If I didn't have all these bills to pay, I'd consider joining you.”

“No bills to pay if you don't have a home,” said Kaliho. “I make some decent cash from putting on stunt shows, some light bounty hunting, and the occasional treasure find, but you're right. It is a difficult lifestyle to maintain. Still, you're selling yourself a bit short. I'm sure that you'd be a great knight.”

The dinner continued on. Cahe's salad bowl was emptied, and Kaliho's steak pile dwindled.

“So then I said, 'Be careful, you'll poke your eye out!’”

Kaliho gasped. “It just slipped out? Right in front of his mom? She must have been pissed!”

“Nah, we had a laugh over it. She knew that was just me trying to keep her son safe. Anyway, what's your most embarrassing story?”

“Ok, so I was visiting Hulder Village last year, and there was this bandit who was at large, right?”

“With you so far.”

“I was planning on saving the town from him after I had a nap at the inn. So I went to sleep, and I wake up to find the bandit stealing my bag of knives! Of course, I gave chase... buuut I didn't have anything to catch him with! I managed to hog-tie him to the ground with my belt, can you imagine?”

“Getting your knives stolen? That doesn't sound THAT embarrassing...”

“Well no, it wasn't. The embarrassing part was at the stunt show later that day...”

The waiter walked over to the table, and placed the check on the one dry spot of Kaliho's side of the table.

“Oh, I'll pay!” shouted Cahe.

“No, you won't,” said the waiter.

Kaliho carefully peered at the check to avoid dripping on it. “Yeah, you're not paying. Just trust me on this one.” She reached for a sauce-stained napkin, then turned to the waiter. “Can we have some moist towelettes? I kind of have steak sauce on my... everywhere.”

“There ain't enough moist towelettes in the world to fix you up, ma'am,” replied the waiter. “Also, if y'all planned on going to the bathroom to wash up, just know that the janitorial staff formed a barricade in front of the door as soon as they saw that steak gettin' rolled out, and they're not lettin' anyone in until y'all are gone.”

The waiter walked back into the restaurant. Kaliho grumpily picked up the pen and began to sign the check.

“So I have to go all the way back to my hotel to wash this steak sauce off? The only way to get clean is to walk clear across town like this?!”

“Well, my house is just across the street, next door to my studio,” said Cahe. “You can take a shower at my place. It's the least I can do to thank you for picking up the check!”

“Really?” said Kaliho, as the waiter carefully took the bill from her. “Thank you, Cahe. You're

saving me a lot of trouble. One quick question though. Which one of us is going to take a shower first? Or are we going at the same time?"

Cahe looked around his body. "I wasn't... planning on taking a shower just yet. Why, is there some sauce on my face?"

"Yes," said Kaliho, as she leaned across the table and kissed Cahe.

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Cahe sat at a desk in his living room, typing on a laptop, shirtless. Kaliho walked out of the bedroom. Cahe's tunic was a bit big on her, and her hair was unkempt. She leaned over Cahe and put her arm around his shoulder.

"Good morning, sweetie," yawned Kaliho. "What are you doing up this early?"

"It's noon, bed-head," said Cahe, kissing Kaliho on the cheek. "And I'm ordering flights to Olimipo for the championship. Higyb hasn't paid yet, which is worrying, but their dad usually comes with us so they should be fine."

"Did you order a ticket for me?" teased Kaliho.

"Do you really want to come with us?" asked Cahe. "You know I'm not competing, right?"

"I'm just worried!" pouted Kaliho. "What if you meet some foreign girl and get swept away!"

"Then I'd be a pretty poor chaperone."

Kaliho kissed Cahe, then skipped away. "I'm going to go make breakfast!"

"Don't use up the good milk!" shouted Cahe back at her. He continued typing, then paused. "Hey, Kaliho," said Cahe.

Kaliho ducked her head out of the kitchen. "What is it?"

"I just realized something," said Cahe. "Yesterday evening was our one-week anniversary."

Kaliho gasped. “You're right! Gee, it feels like it's only been a few days...”

“Time flies, I suppose.”

“True. So, what should we do to celebrate?”

Cahe paused for a moment. “Celebrate... well, 'Supreme' is in town this week, if you're in the mood for a musical.”

“The Galaxy Knights rap thing?”

Cahe nodded. “Though, good luck getting tickets. Everyone in town is already going there every night this week. I had to cancel all my classes because of it!”

“Hmm... well, I suppose we'll have to think of something else!”

Kaliho continued to slowly pour herself and Cahe some cereal. She looked through the door, and stared at the two items that were hanging over the couch.

“Hey, Cahe,” said Kaliho. “What's up with that arming sword and chest armor you have? Are they decorative?”

“No, they're real,” said Cahe, as he finished his online order. “My mom's a blacksmith. She gave that sword and armor to me for my birthday a couple years back, but I've never actually used them.”

Kaliho rushed back into the living room. “Wait, you don't mean... I can't believe I didn't recognize your name before!”

“Pardon?”

“Your mother is Hefaitu Wuwa! The most talented blacksmith in history! They say she made a sword that could cut through anything, and would never be tarnished or broken!”

“Yup, the Steel Heart,” said Cahe. “It's real, and it's just as big as you're imagining. My mom's the one who inspired me to take up fencing, actually. She retired a few years back – she and my dad moved up to a beach house in Zoramo City.”

“Huh,” said Kaliho, a look of surprise on her face. “I didn't even realize Hefaitu was old enough to retire. I guess I always thought of her as some ageless goddess of sorts.” Kaliho's expression bloomed back into excitement. “So, can you spar with me while using that equipment? Pretty please?!”

“Well, if it will make you happy, then of course I will,” said Cahe. “But what are you going to fight me with? I wouldn't want to damage any of the fencing equipment...”

Kaliho ran over to the large bag she left near Cahe's front door. She took out a scimitar and some mail armor, and grinned at Cahe.

“Very well,” said Cahe, as he took the equipment off of the shelves. “Let's do this.”

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Cahe and Kaliho walked into the studio, fully clothed and equipped. They stood at opposite ends of the room, faced each other, and readied their weapons.

“Ready...” said Cahe.

“Go!” shouted Kaliho.

Kaliho and Cahe ran towards each other. Kaliho made the first swing. Cahe moved to block, but he was too slow, and Kaliho's sword scraped against his armor. Cahe leapt back, then rushed down Kaliho. He slashed at her in rapid succession, but Kaliho parried each hit. Kaliho ducked to the side and slammed her blade against Cahe's, knocking it out of his hand. Cahe stumbled backwards and landed on the ground. Kaliho pointed her sword at Cahe's throat, but quickly pulled it away.

“Best two out of three?” said Kaliho with a grin.

“Nah, I don't think so,” said Cahe. “This 'martial arts technique' you developed is just too powerful. We could spar a hundred times and I wouldn't even beat you once. I don't suppose you could teach me the technique?”

“Unfortunately, it's not the sort of thing that can be taught...” said Kaliho, as Cahe took off his armor. “If you did try to use it, you'd pass out immediately, and probably end up hospitalized.”

“Hm. That's a shame,” said Cahe. He looked down at his armor and sighed. “Aw, man. Now my armor has a huge scratch on it.”

Kaliho fell to her knees in shock. “You mean... I ruined armor... that was created by Hefaitu Wuwa?”

“No, no, it's fine! I like it this way. It makes it look more... battle-worn!”

Kaliho began to cry. “No, it's ruined! Your mother gave you a homemade gift from the heart and I ruined it! I'm an awful girlfriend.”

Cahe ran over and hugged Kaliho. “You're an incredible girlfriend, Kaliho! Don't ever let yourself think otherwise! And hey, you know who can fix this armor?”

Kaliho wiped away her tears. “Who?”

“How would you like to meet the greatest blacksmith in the world?”

Kaliho squeezed Cahe tightly. “Really?! You mean it?”

“Sure!” said Cahe. “I have the week free, after all, so let's just head there tomorrow. How does that sound?”

“It sounds like you're the best boyfriend ever!” shouted Kaliho. She jumped out of Cahe's arms, then skipped out of the door.

“Where are you going?” asked Cahe.

“To go get packed!”

Cahe beamed, then picked up his armor and followed her out.

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A bus arrived at the road running alongside Mantor Beach in Zoramo City. Cahe and Kaliho stepped out of the vehicle, suitcases in tow. They walked up the beach as the bus drove away.

“Are you sure you want to go to your parents' house right away?” asked Kaliho. “I mean, we just finished riding on a bus, after riding on a ferry, after riding on a cart. Let's relax! There's a ton of restaurants in the area. And the historic mystic forest outside of town is a treat! And... and...”

“Kaliho.”

“No, you're right, I-let's go.”

The two walked along a row of beach houses until they arrived at one with a worn-down exterior. They walked up to the door. Cahe made sure to place all his bags down carefully before ringing the doorbell. A moderately beefy woman with spiky, grey-brown hair answered the door.

“Cahe! It's so good to see you!” said Hefaitu.

“It's good to see you too, mom,” said Cahe, who quickly caught the fainting Kaliho. “This is my girlfriend, Kaliho. I mentioned her on the phone?”

“Yes, I do recall. Bring her to the couch, and I'll get her some water. JAYLEN! HELP CAHE WITH HIS BAGS!”

Cahe carried Kaliho over to the couch in the living room, walking past his father on the way in. Jaylen Wuwa was a tall man with reddish-brown hair, a pronounced chin, and a mustache. He was wheeling the luggage down the hall as Kaliho came to.

“Kaliho, are you ok?” said Cahe.

“Yeah, I... I'm fine,” replied Kaliho.

“Here you go, sweetie,” said Hefaitu, handing Kaliho a glass of water.

“Thank you, Mrs. Wuwa,” said Kaliho as she took a sip. Suddenly, she burst into tears.

“What's wrong?” asked Cahe.

“I blew it!” sobbed Kaliho. “I ruined my first impression with the great Hefaitu Wuwa!”

“Ruined?” said Hefaitu. “I've never been so honored in my life! I've had people ask for my

autograph before, and I've had plenty beg to be my apprentice, but I've never had anyone faint on me!”

“Thank you, Mrs. Wuwa. I... I feel a lot better now,” said Kaliho.

“I suppose it's just my luck,” said Jaylen as he walked into the kitchen area. “Another person who messes around with swords, and I'm stuck as the only car-lover in the bunch. When are we going to get a family member who shares MY interests, huh?”

“Oh, honey, I'll help with dinner!” said Hefaitu, following her husband into the kitchen.

“I'll clear off the table!” said Cahe.

Cahe walked away from the couch and began to clear off some newspapers off the table. Kaliho sat up and looked towards the kitchen. Jaylen clasped his hands to his nose, made a goofy cross-eyed face, and quickly pulled out a carrot. Hefaitu giggled as Jaylen began to chop the carrot up for the soup. Cahe picked up some blueprints from the table.

“Are you doing some renovations?” asked Cahe.

Jaylen stopped pretending he had celery stuck in his ear and turned to Cahe. “Yeah, we're redoing the attic floor. You can probably see it from where you are.”

Cahe looked up through the tall dining area, past the lights and ceiling fan, and did indeed notice the missing ceiling above him which had formerly made up the attic's floor.

“Some things were falling apart, so we decided to just completely redo the floor,” said Hefaitu. “Plus, when we die, you'll want somewhere nice to visit for the summers, right?”

Cahe nodded and continued to clear off the table. Soon enough, the four of them were sitting around the table and enjoying their chicken soup.

“So, Kaliho,” said Hefaitu. “I heard you scratched up my son's armor pretty badly.”

“Ugh, you must hate me for ruining one of your creations!”

“Hate you? No, I'm impressed! The armor I gave my son was meant to be protection against all sorts of blades. Outside of, like, bullets, the armor should be pretty much impenetrable. And you

weren't even using one of my swords! You must be an incredibly talented fighter to put a scratch like that on it!”

“She really is,” said Cahe as Kaliho blushed. “I’ve sparred with dozens of people, but no one nearly as skilled as Kaliho.”

The four continued to eat their soup. Kaliho looked at the blueprints that Cahe had draped over the couch.

“Hey, uh, this is kind of a weird question,” said Kaliho, “But what happens when you die? Like, does Cahe get all your possessions? Sorry, I’m just... I’ve never really had a family, so I’m genuinely curious...”

“Don't be sorry!” said Hefaitu. “These are normal things to be curious about. Yes, Cahe will inherit most things, though Jaylen and I are planning on getting buried with some of our more... sentimental belongings.”

“I see...”

“Hey, Kaliho,” said Jaylen. “Can you pass the salt?”

Kaliho looked around the table. “Uh, I don't... see the salt?”

“Well of course you can't see it, silly!” said Jaylen, reaching a seemingly empty hand behind her head. He pulled away from her, now holding the salt shaker. “It's behind your ear!”

Kaliho burst into laughter, and the rest of the family followed suit, as they continued their dinner into the night.

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Night at the Wuwa residence. Kaliho, wearing her pajamas, walked across the living room from the bathroom to the guest bedroom.

“Are you sure you can't stay up any later?” asked Jaylen. “There's a marathon of The Agile and the Angry on TV!”

“Nah, I'm good,” yawned Kaliho. “Thanks for the offer though!”

Kaliho shambled into the guest bedroom, and took her spot next to Cahe under the covers. Cahe rolled over and reached for Kaliho's hips, but she blocked him before he could put his arms around her.

“Sorry, Cahe, I... I have kind of a stomachache, and...”

“Don't worry about it,” said Cahe. “My mom's soup tends to do that.” He kissed Kaliho on the cheek, then rolled over and went to sleep.

The sounds of car chases played muted from the other room as the young couple laid in bed. After lying awake for over an hour, Kaliho slowly got out from under the covers and tiptoed into the living room. She looked over at Jaylen, snoring on the couch, and snuck into the kitchen towards the house's only telephone. Kaliho took a knife out of her sock, cut the phone line, and quickly re-stashed her blade. She then walked up the stairs, and into the master bedroom. Hefaitu was sleeping across the bed, cocooned in blankets. Kaliho turned to the dresser, and opened the drawers as quietly as she could. She was in the middle of searching through some shirts when Hefaitu began to stir.

“Whass goin' on?” said Hefaitu sleepily, turning on a lamp. She stared at Kaliho. “What are you doing in my dresser?”

Kaliho quickly stood up and put her hands on her back. “Oh, I got a cut! Uh... on my back. So I was... looking for a bandage?”

Hefaitu smiled. “Oh, there's no need to sneak around, Kaliho! Armor isn't the only thing I know how to fix, after all.” She got out of bed, throwing off her blankets. “I know I have a first aid kit around here somewhere,” said Hefaitu, walking over to the closet. “You just wait right there!”

“No, I can help look!”

Kaliho ran over to the closet to join Hefaitu. Both of them looked intently around the various piles of boxes.

“Ah, there you are!” exclaimed Hefaitu, picking up a first aid kit. She hopped onto the bed, and Kaliho stood up in front of her. “Now, just lift your shirt up and I can put some disinfectant on.”

Kaliho paused. “Hey, I have an idea. Why don't you just give me the disinfectant and bandages and I'll just do it myself in the bathroom?”

“Nonsense!” said Hefaitu. “I've been a mother for over two decades, and I've been helping people all my life, so I'd *hope* I know how to make a boo boo feel better! Trust me, you don't have anything I haven't seen before.”

Hefaitu grabbed Kaliho's pajama shirt and began to lift it up. She froze halfway through, and stared at the handgun that was tucked into Kaliho's waistband.

“Well,” said Hefaitu. “That's something I haven't seen before.”

Kaliho pulled away from Hefaitu, then retrieved the gun from her pajama pants. She turned around and pointed the gun at Hefaitu.

“Ok, granny, I'll make this quick,” said Kaliho. “Where's the Steel Heart?”

Hefaitu stared at Kaliho unwaveringly. “I'll never tell you.”

Kaliho sighed. “I wanted to do this subtly,” she said, “but you and your family just HAVE to make a mess of my plans.”

Kaliho pointed her gun to the ceiling and fired. As the dust settled, she grabbed Hefaitu by the shirt collar and pulled her out of the room.

Cahe sat up sharply in bed at the sound of the gunshot. He threw on his clothes and armor, grabbed his sword, and ran out into the living room. Jaylen slowly sat up as 3 Agile 5 Angry played quietly in the background.

“Dad!” shouted Cahe. “Are you alright? Who shot that gun?”

“Yeah, I'm fine,” said Jaylen. “I didn't hear a burglar breaking in, but maybe they came in through the back. Go call the police, I'll go find your mother.”

“Don't bother with the police,” shouted a voice from above, “the phone is out of service at the moment.”

Cahe and Jaylen looked around, searching for the voice.

“Oh boyfriend~!” taunted Kaliho. Cahe and Jaylen looked up, towards the unfinished attic. “If you want to ever see your precious mother alive again, you and your father will come join me for a little chat.”

Cahe and Jaylen ran up the stairs, past the master bedroom, and into the attic. The four were standing on small pieces of completed floor, with a single wooden plank bridging the gap between the women and the men.

“Now, Mrs. Wuwa here says she isn't telling me where she hid the Steel Heart,” said Kaliho, with the barrel of her gun against Hefaitu's head. “So maybe one of you will have looser lips?”

“Jaylen, don't tell her!” shouted Hefaitu. “I'll be fine! Just don't tell her where the Steel Heart is!”

Kaliho smirked. “Jaylen, don't tell her', eh? No 'Cahe, don't tell her'? The implication here being that your son has no idea where the sword is. Which means... he's expendable.”

Kaliho pointed the gun at Cahe, whose eyes were gushing.

“W-why are you doing this, Kaliho?” sobbed Cahe. “I thought you loved me!”

Kaliho lowered her gun. “Oh, Cahe...” she said, “I knew you would. I'm a world-class thief – and I always research my marks. I knew your mother was Hefaitu Wuwa. I knew you were single. I knew you were a fencing instructor. Picking a meal with messy sauces in a restaurant much closer to your house than to my hotel room? That was on purpose. The 'knight for justice' persona and everything surrounding it was created specifically to ensnare you! I mean, did you really think I could have scratched that armor by accident?!”

“Why?!” shouted Cahe. “Why would you go through all this trouble just to threaten us?!”

“I went through 'all this trouble' so that I could marry you and get the Steel Heart through inheritance, you idiot!”

“But... you can use any weapon! What do you need the Steel Heart for?”

“That's exactly the point. The Steel Heart is the most powerful sword in existence. With my ability, I would become unstoppable!”

Cahe continued to cry. “You're a monster,” he said. “All I wanted was to give you my heart!”

“Yes, it is unfortunate,” pouted Kaliho. “You were a great man, and an incredible lover. I'm sure you could have been an amazing husband someday. But now... I'm afraid it's time to steal that heart away for good!”

Cahe smiled through his tears as Kaliho raised her gun.

“You know, if you're the sort of person who never misses,” said Cahe, as Kaliho pulled the trigger, “you probably shouldn't telegraph exactly what you're aiming for.”

Cahe pulled his sword in front of the left side of his chest. The bullet ricocheted off, and struck Kaliho in the shoulder. Kaliho gasped in pain and let go of Hefaitu, before falling out of the attic and into the living room.

“Go get an ambulance!” shouted Cahe. “I'll help mom!”

Jaylen ran back downstairs as Cahe and Hefaitu crawled across the plank towards each other.

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An ambulance and a police car drove away from the front of the Wuwa residence. Cahe and his parents sat on the couch.

“You know, I really hoped Kaliho was the kind of woman I could spend the rest of my life with,” sighed Cahe. “But it turned out she just wanted me for my massive hereditary sword. Maybe I'll never find someone that's right for me...”

“Don't say that!” said Hefaitu. “I'm sure you'll find someone who loves you for who you are on the inside! And sure, maybe you'll meet a few more people who just want to grab hold of that sword along the way – because as I think we've established over the course of this story, it's a really, REALLY nice and powerful sword – but someone somewhere will be able to look past it and love the real you!”

“Thanks, mom,” said Cahe. “I hope you're right. By the way, where were you hiding the Steel Heart all this time? How wasn't Kaliho able to find it when she searched the house?”

Jaylen laughed. “Well, let's just say that Kaliho isn't the only person with a 'special martial arts technique'.”

Jaylen pushed his hands into his chest, until they sunk inside. He pulled, and extracted the Steel Heart from his body. The sword was jewel encrusted and massive – larger than Jaylen himself. Cahe stared at the sword with shock.

“That's a bit more impressive than most of your slight-of-hand tricks,” said Cahe. “But I suppose anything's possible.”

Cahe got up and wheeled his luggage to the door.

“Well, I'd better head back before Monday's classes,” said Cahe. “Let me know when you get around to fixing the armor, and I'll come back to pick it up.”

“Cahe, wait,” said Hefaitu.

Cahe turned around, halfway out of the door.

“You made a great knight in shining armor tonight. Maybe it's time to reconsider that dream.”

Cahe smiled at his parents, then left to return to his village life.

THE END