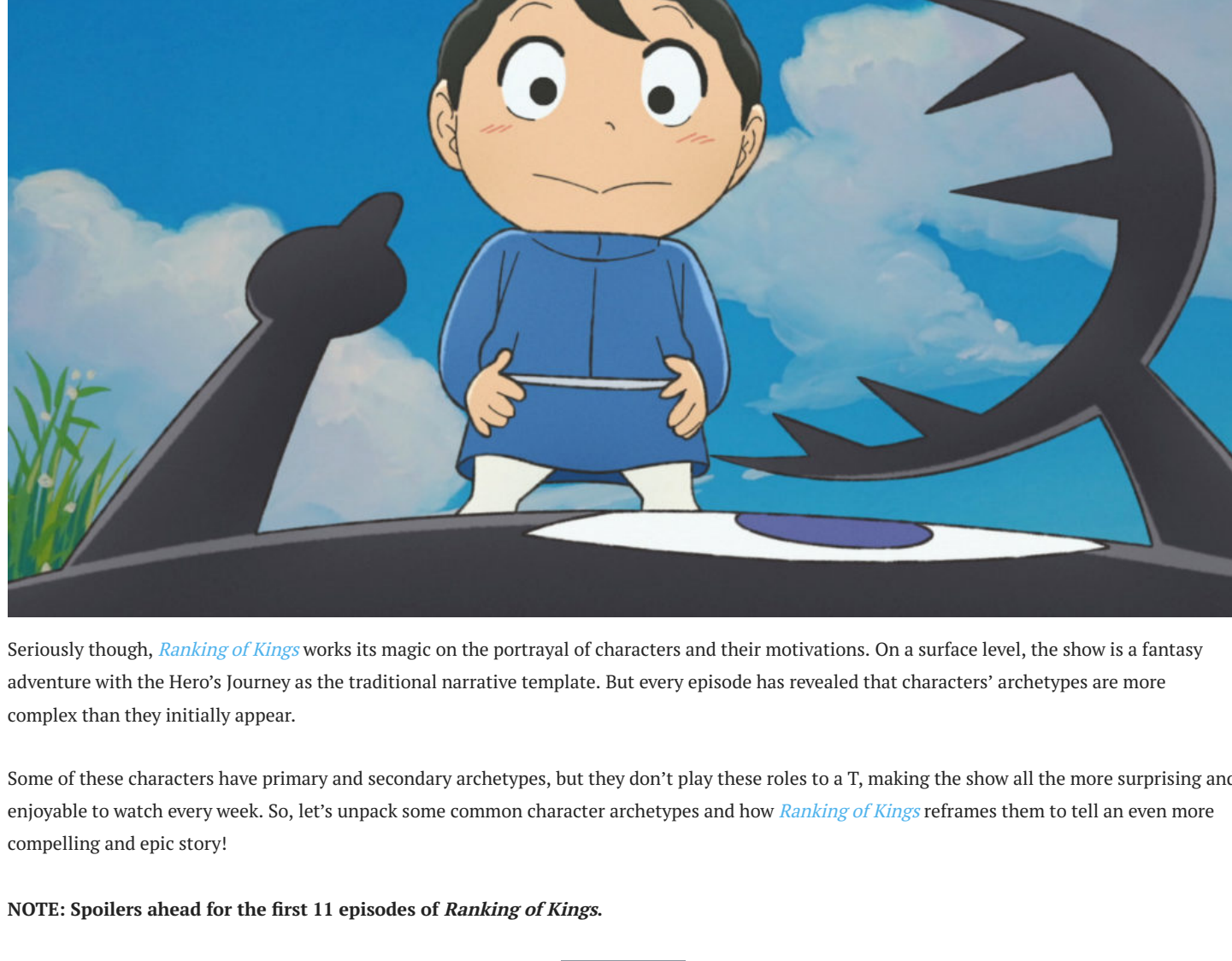


How Ranking of Kings Reframes the Hero's Journey

By Daanna Nguyen January 13, 2022

Who doesn't love an adventure story with fleshed-out characters, an engaging plot, fascinating world-building and underlying themes that tie everything together? So far, *Ranking of Kings* checks all these boxes.

Take a look at Bojji—how can you not love and support a protagonist like him?

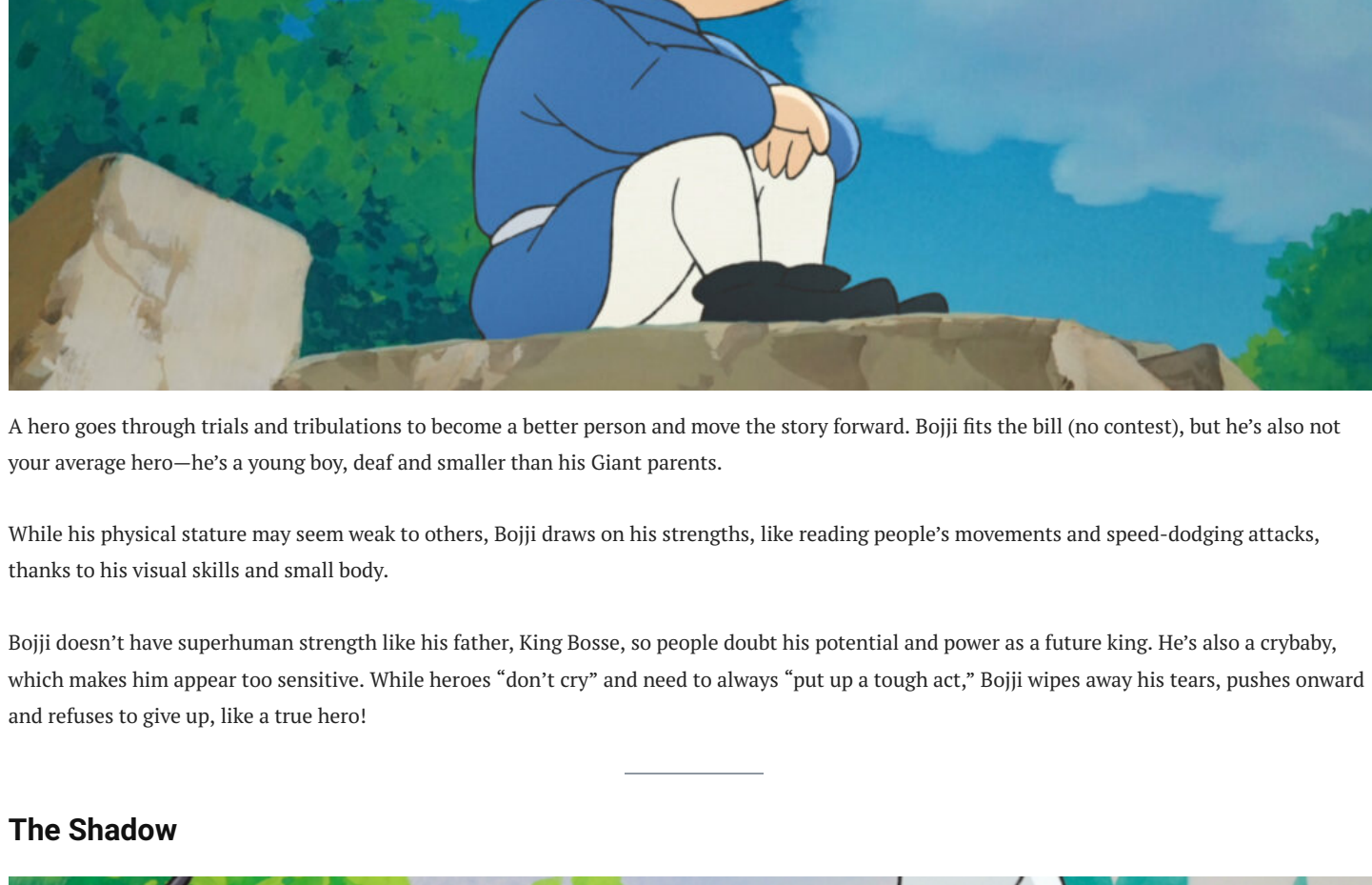


Recently though, *Ranking of Kings* works its magic on the portrayal of characters and their motivations. On a surface level, the show is a fantasy adventure with the Hero's Journey as the traditional narrative template. But every episode has revealed that characters' archetypes are more complex than they initially appear.

Some of these characters have primary and secondary archetypes, but they don't play these roles to a T, making the show all the more surprising and enjoyable to watch every week. So, let's unpack some common character archetypes and how *Ranking of Kings* reframes them to tell an even more compelling and epic story!

NOTE: Spoilers ahead for the first 11 episodes of *Ranking of Kings*.

The Hero

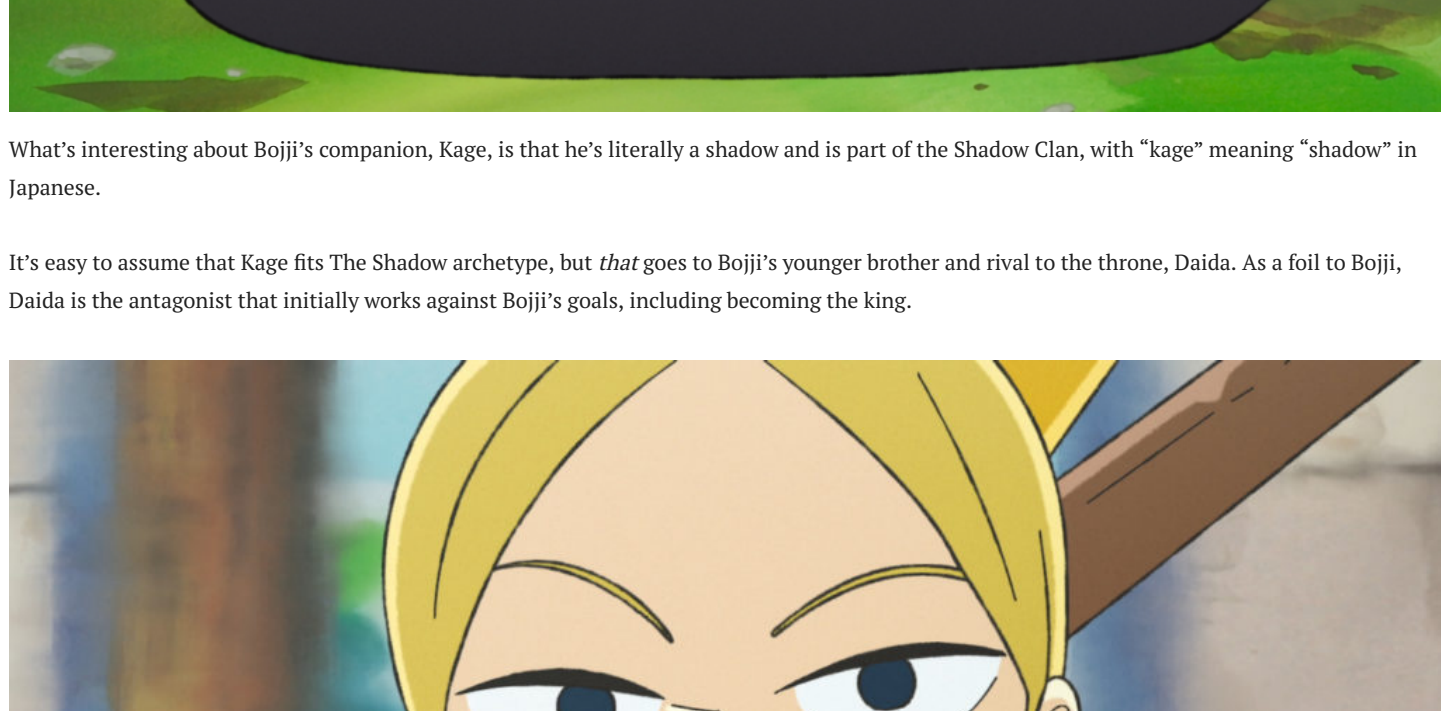


A hero goes through trials and tribulations to become a better person and move the story forward. Bojji fits the bill (no contest), but he's also not your average hero—he's a young boy, deaf and smaller than his Giant parents.

While his physical stature may seem weak to others, Bojji draws on his strengths, like reading people's movements and speed-dodging attacks, thanks to his visual skills and small body.

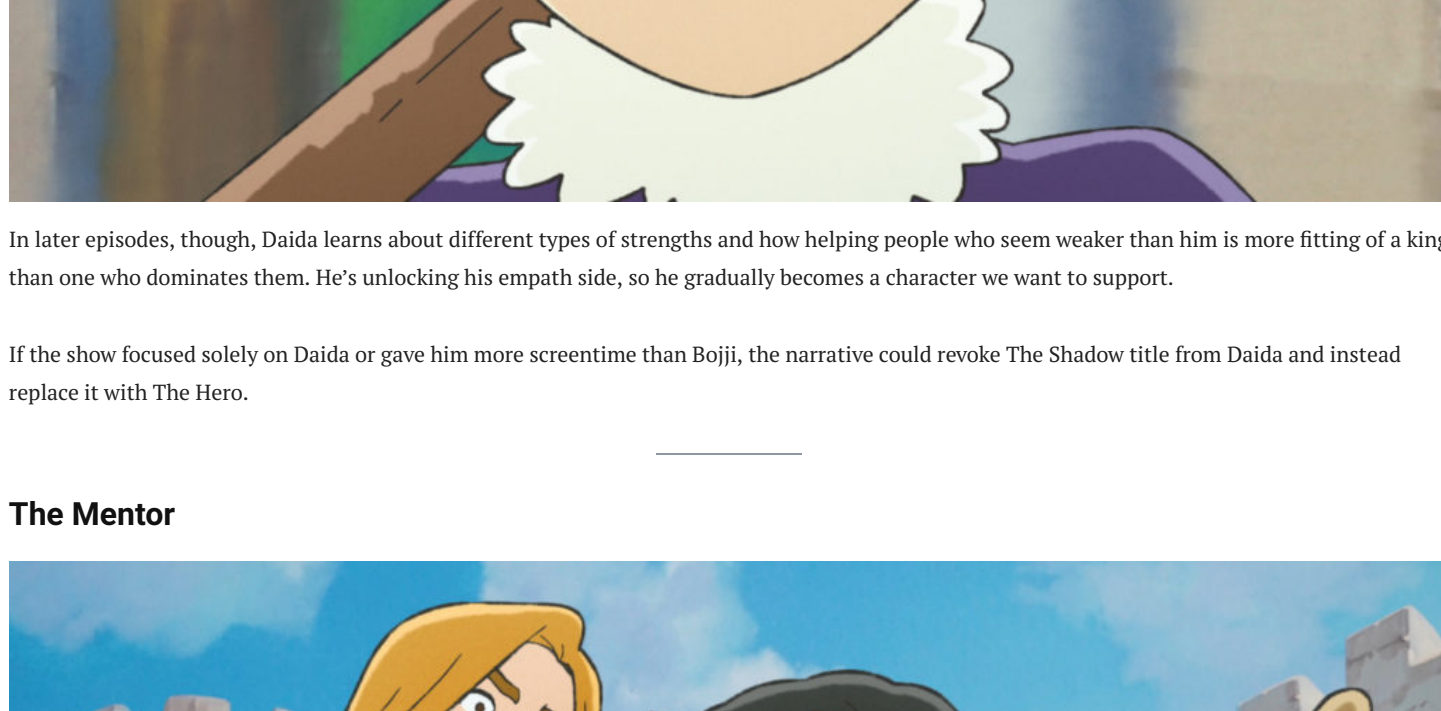
Bojji doesn't have superhuman strength like his father, King Bosse, so people doubt his potential and power as a future king. He's also a crybaby, which makes him appear too sensitive. While heroes "don't cry" and need to always "put up a tough act," Bojji wipes away his tears, pushes onward and refuses to give up, like a true hero!

The Shadow



What's interesting about Bojji's companion, Kage, is that he's literally a shadow and is part of the Shadow Clan, with "kage" meaning "shadow" in Japanese.

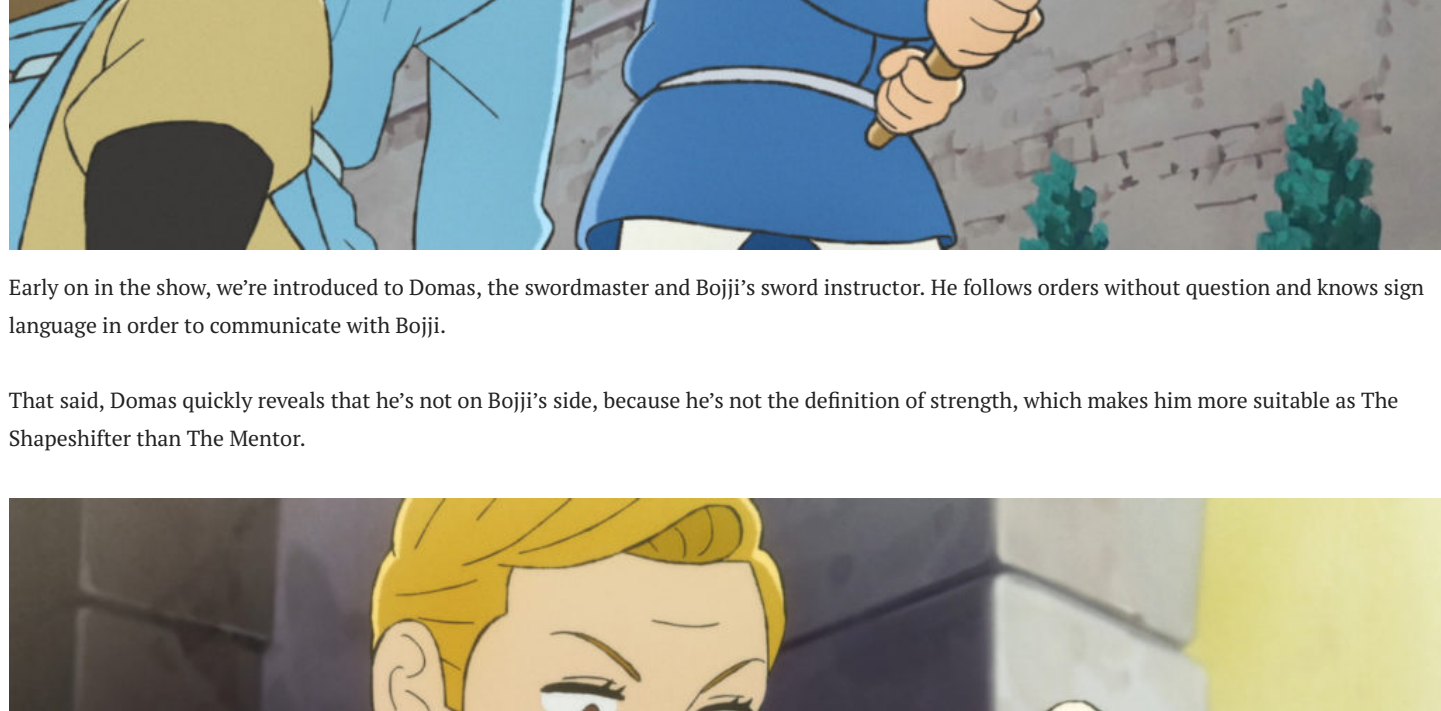
It's easy to assume that Kage fits The Shadow archetype, but *that* goes to Bojji's younger brother and rival to the throne, Daida. As a foil to Bojji, Daida is the antagonist that initially works against Bojji's goals, including becoming the king.



In later episodes, though, Daida learns about different types of strengths and how helping people who seem weaker than him is more fitting of a king than one who dominates them. He's unlocking his empath side, so he gradually becomes a character we want to support.

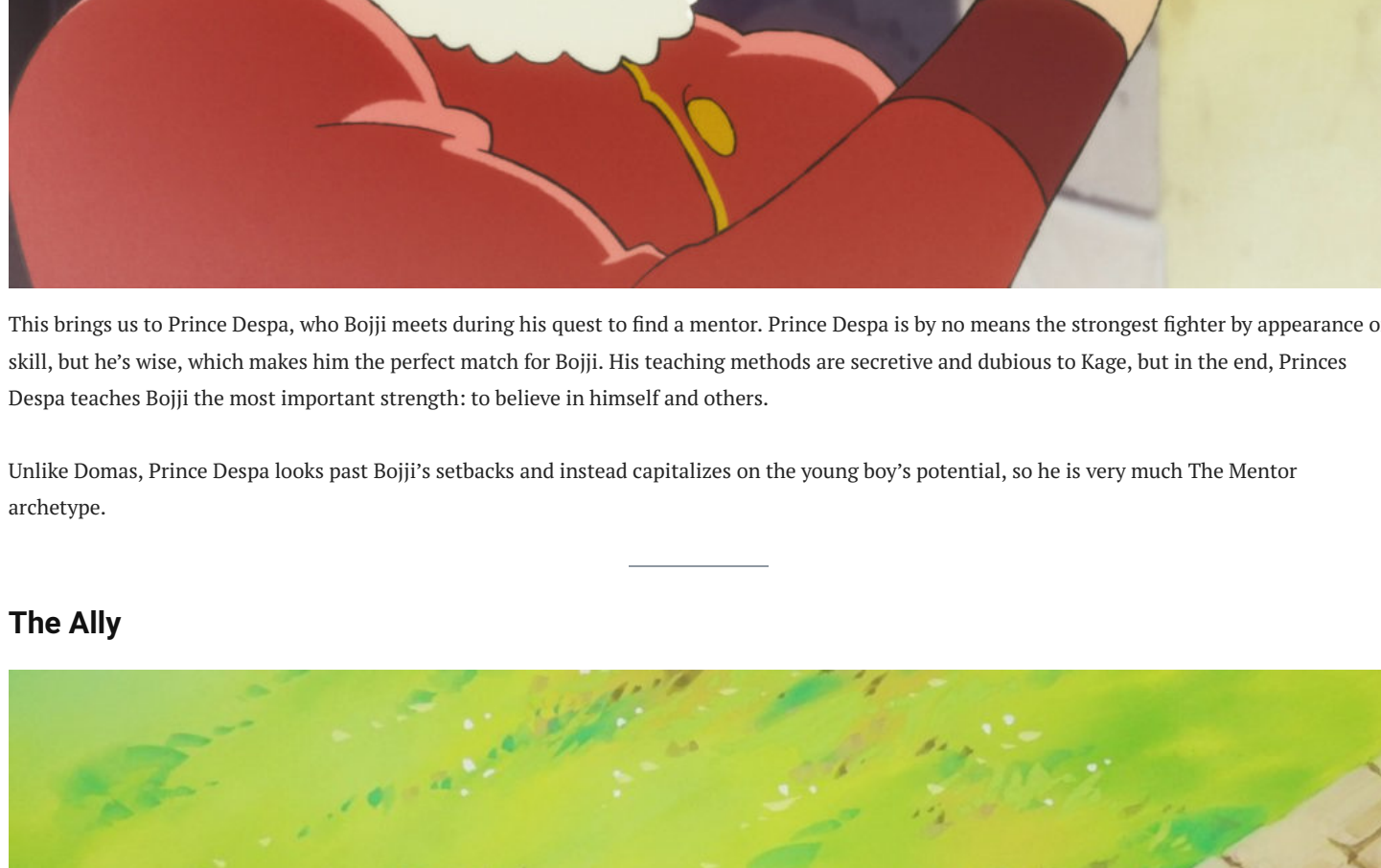
If the show focused solely on Daida or gave him more screentime than Bojji, the narrative could revoke The Shadow title from Daida and instead replace it with The Hero.

The Mentor



Early on in the show, we're introduced to Domas, the swordmaster and Bojji's sword instructor. He follows orders without question and knows sign language in order to communicate with Bojji.

That said, Domas quickly reveals that he's not on Bojji's side, because he's not the definition of strength, which makes him more suitable as The Shapeshifter than The Mentor.



This brings us to Prince Despa, who Bojji meets during his quest to find a mentor. Prince Despa is by no means the strongest fighter by appearance or skill, but he's wise, which makes him the perfect match for Bojji. His teaching methods are secretive and dubious to Kage, but in the end, Prince Despa teaches Bojji the most important strength: to believe in himself and others.

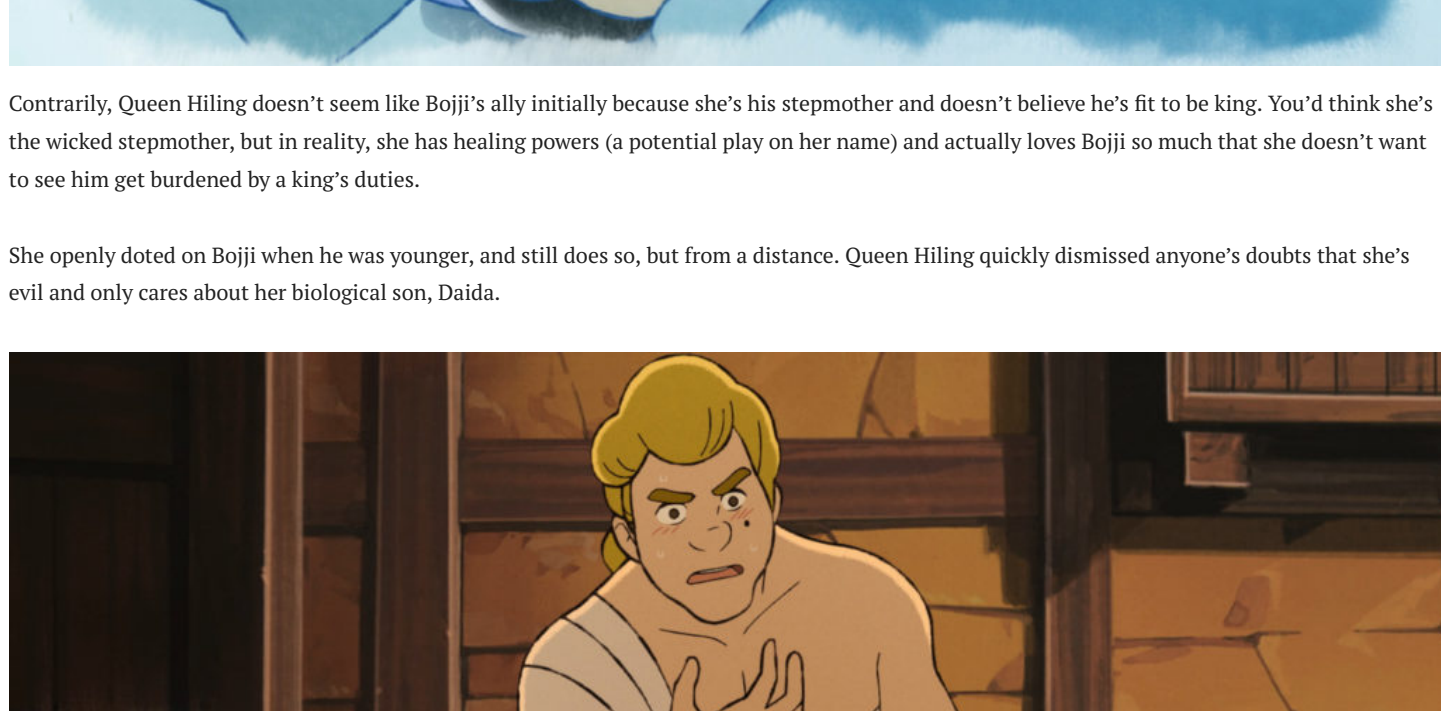
Unlike Domas, Prince Despa looks past Bojji's setbacks and instead capitalizes on the young boy's potential, so he is very much The Mentor archetype.

The Ally



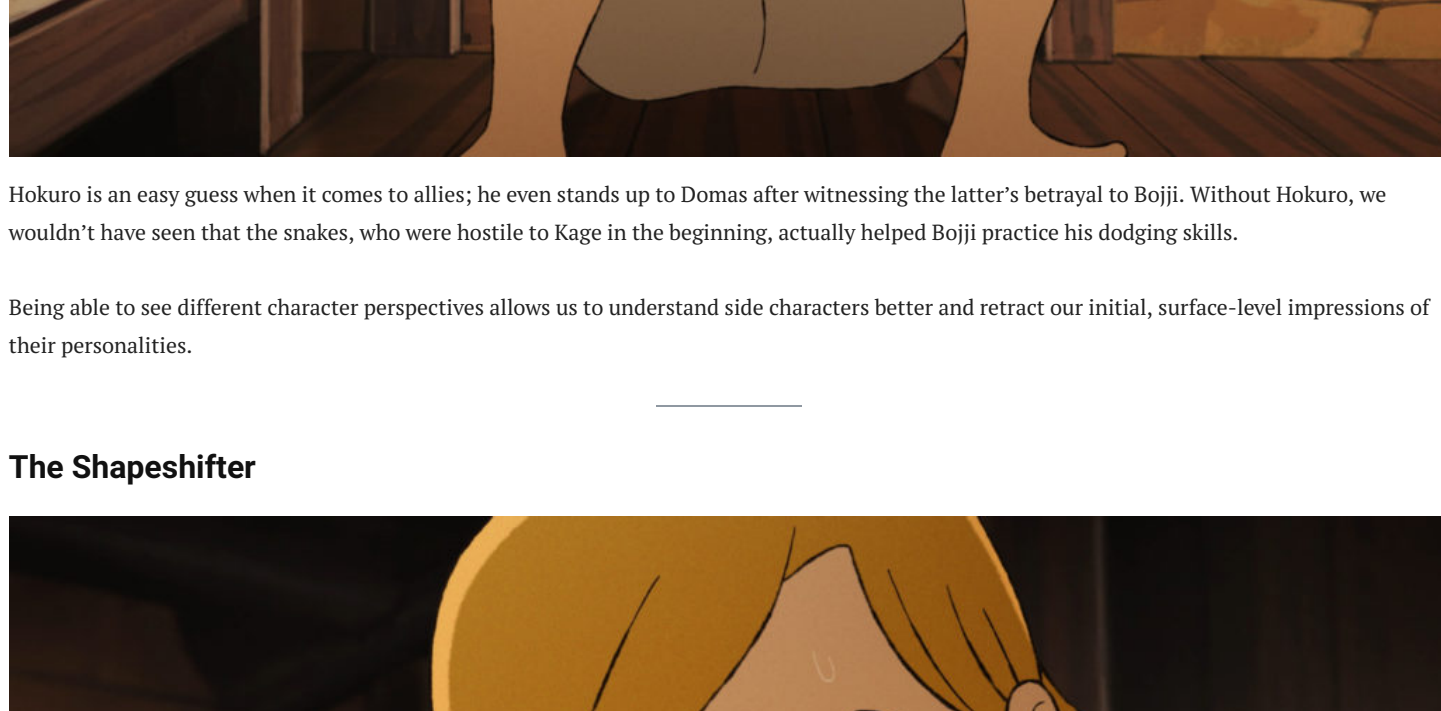
Heroes need a strong support system, which is where The Ally archetype comes in. Bojji has a handful of allies, many of whom don't seem like one at first until the show redirects its focus to the character.

Bojji's biggest supporters are Kage, Queen Hiling, Hokuuro and the snakes. Kage is a given because he's Bojji's companion, singing him praise and being by his side along his journey.



Contrarily, Queen Hiling doesn't seem like Bojji's ally initially because she's his stepmother and doesn't believe he's fit to be king. You'd think she's the wicked stepmother, but in reality, she has healing powers (a potential play on her name) and actually loves Bojji so much that she doesn't want to see him get burdened by a king's duties.

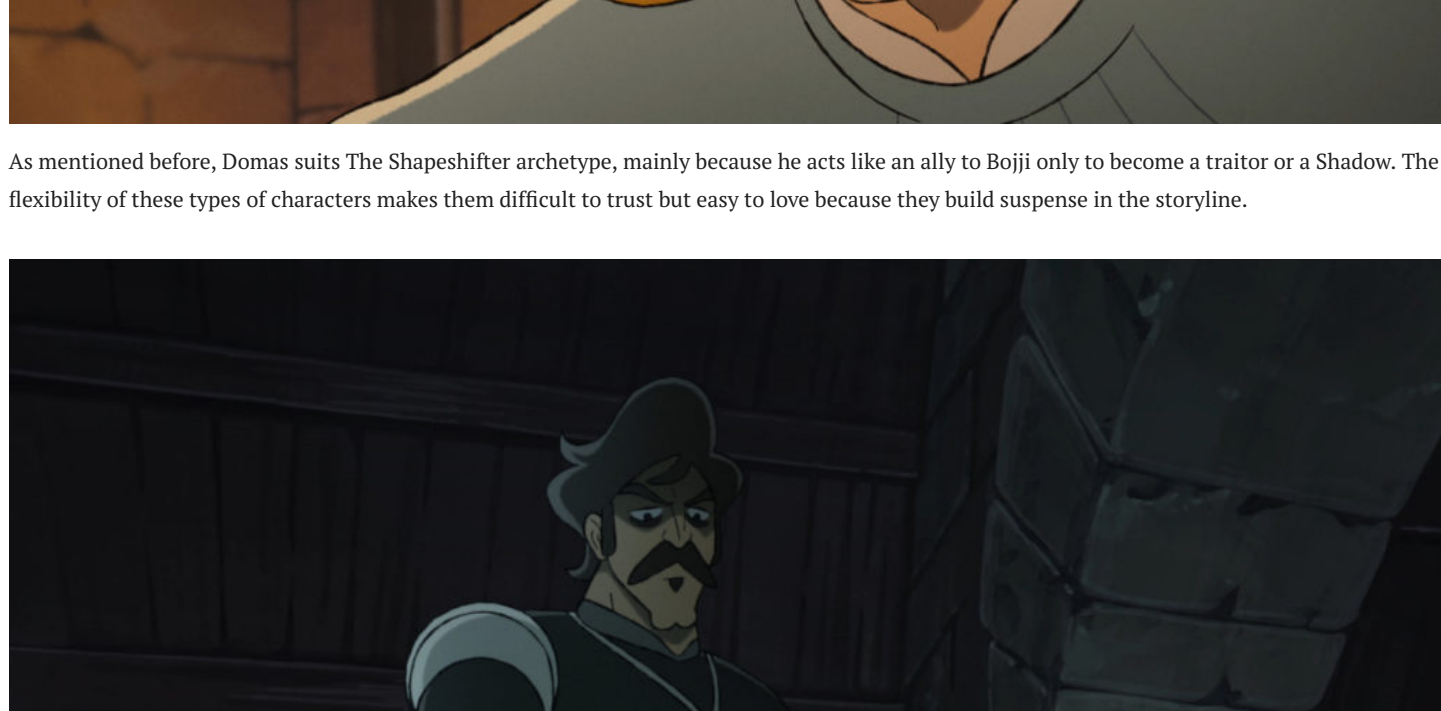
She openly doted on Bojji when he was younger, and still does so, but from a distance. Queen Hiling quickly dismissed anyone's doubts that she's evil and only cares about her biological son, Daida.



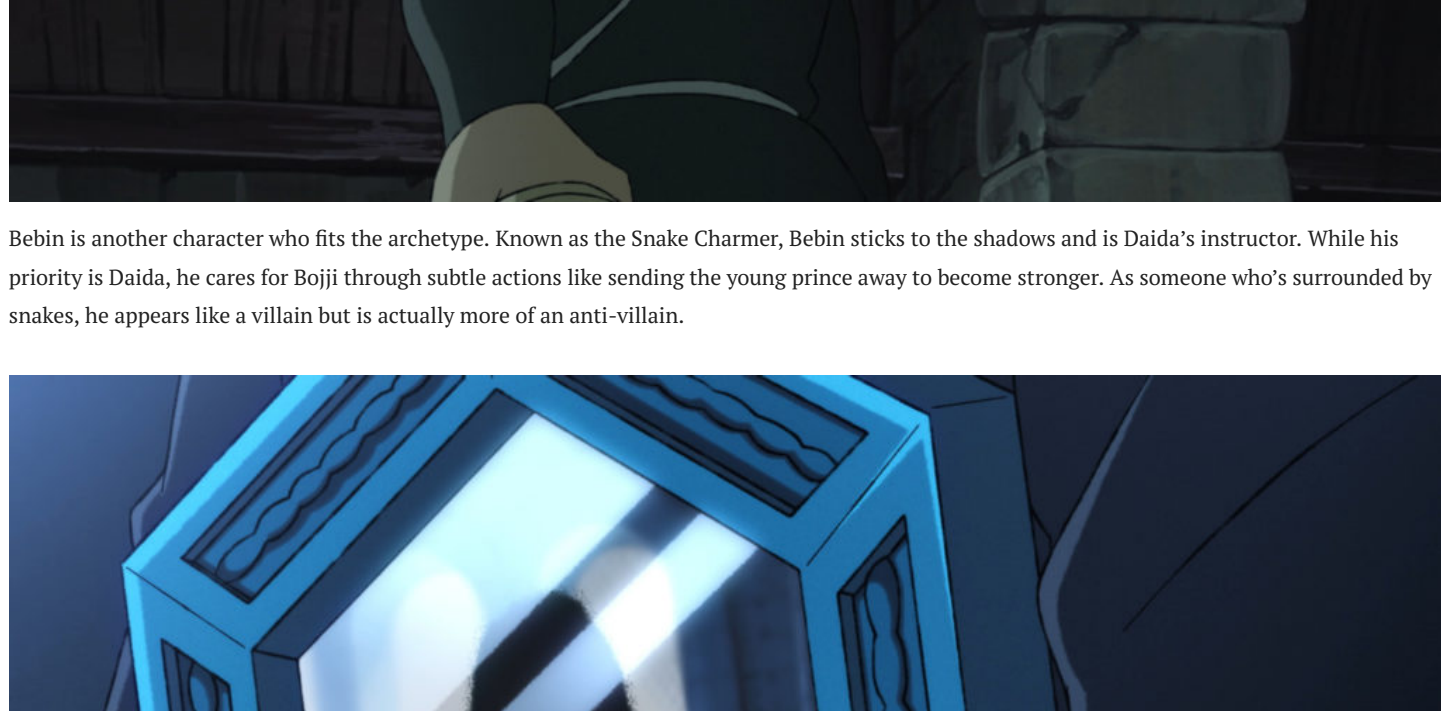
Hokuuro is an easy guess when it comes to allies; he even stands up to Domas after witnessing the latter's betrayal to Bojji. Without Hokuuro, we wouldn't have seen that the snakes, who were hostile to Kage in the beginning, actually helped Bojji practice his dodging skills.

Being able to see different character perspectives allows us to understand side characters better and retract our initial, surface-level impressions of their personalities.

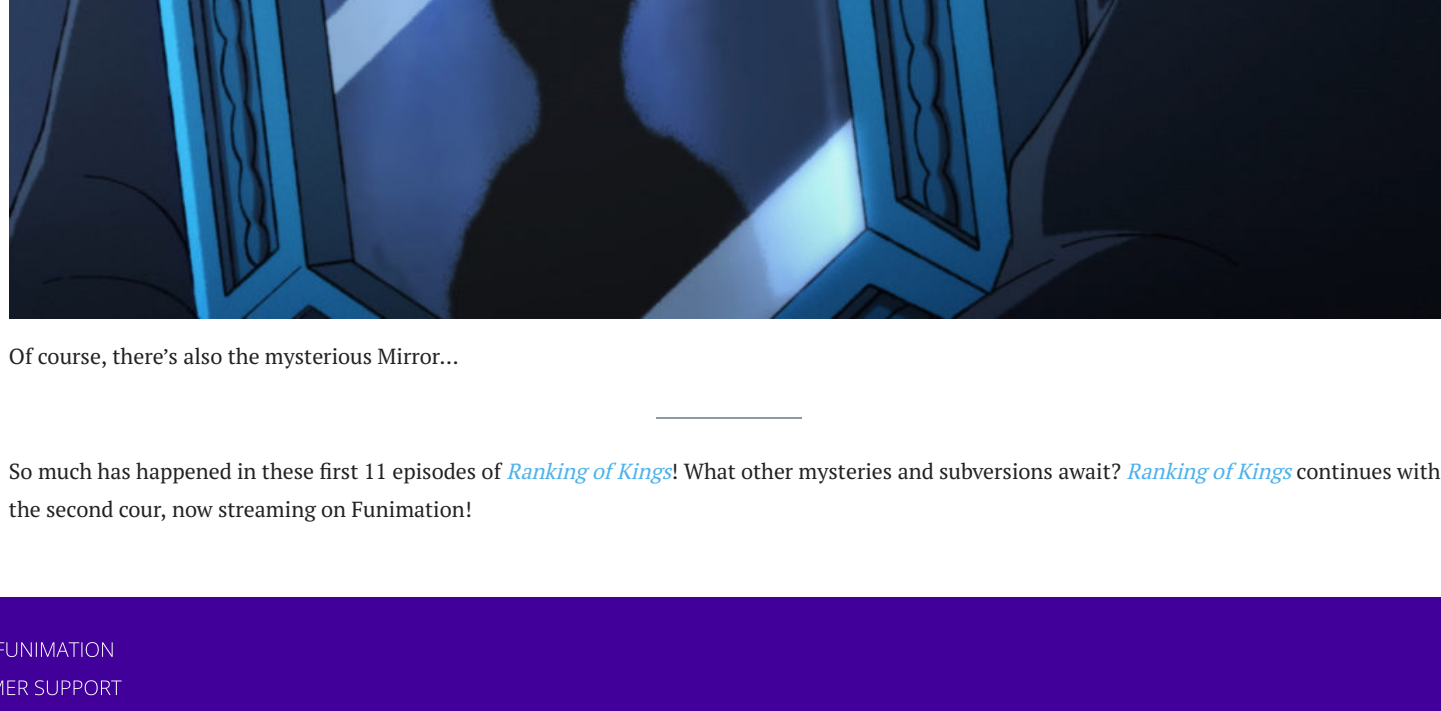
The Shapeshifter



As mentioned before, Domas suits The Shapeshifter archetype, mainly because he acts like an ally to Bojji only to become a traitor or a Shadow. The flexibility of these types of characters makes them difficult to trust but easy to love because they build suspense in the storyline.



Behin is another character who fits the archetype. Known as the Snake Charmer, Behin sticks to the shadows and is Daida's instructor. While his priority is Daida, he cares for Bojji through subtle actions like sending the young prince away to become stronger. As someone who's surrounded by snakes, he appears like a villain but is actually more of an anti-villain.



Of course, there's also the mysterious Mirror...

So much has happened in these first 11 episodes of *Ranking of Kings*! What other mysteries and subversions await? *Ranking of Kings* continues with the second cour, now streaming on Funimation!

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