Narrator: This scene is from Brandon Sanderson’s fantasy novel *The Rithmatist*. Rithmatists have the power to bring chalk drawings to life. Rithmatic students are disappearing and everyone is needed to help fight whatever is threatening their world. The protagonist, Joel, is not a Rithmatist by birth but due to special circumstances, he’s given the chance to learn and help fight. In this scene, Professor Fitch, one of the Rithmatic teachers, is giving another Rithmatic student, Melody, extra lessons on drawing chalk circle defenses. Joel looks on and eventually joins in. Joel is read by ___________, Melody is read by ________________, Professor Fitch is read by ________________, and I am ________________ your narrator.

Fitch: But, don’t assumed that just because you are aggressive, you will beat a good defense. True, a strong defense is generally more viable against multiple opponents – however, a skilled duelist can build their defense even against a determined offense.

Melody: (confused) So, what you’re saying is it doesn’t matter which defense I use.

Fitch: (defensively) That’s not what I’m saying at all! Or, well, I guess I am. It doesn’t matter which defense you use, for strategy is the most important. You have to understand the defenses to know what advantages you gain by picking a certain one. You have to understand your opponent’s defense so you can know their weaknesses. Here, what about this?

Joel: That’s the Osborn Defense.

Fitch: Very good. Of course, that shouldn’t be too hard to determine, since there’s only one basic defense based on an ellipse. Now, which defense would be strong against the Osborn?

Joel: (after thinking for a minute) I’d use another Osborn. That way, I’d be matched with him in strength, and it would turn into a test of skill.

Fitch: (not quite impressed) Ah. I see. And you, Melody? Would you do the same thing?

Melody: (unsure) Um…the Sumsion Defense?

Fitch: So, if you’re not going to use another Osborn, which would you use instead?

Melody: (unsure) Um…the Sumsion Defense?

Joel: Do another, Professor.
**Fitch:** Hum. Shouldn’t you be working on those ledgers?

**Joel:** (feeling competitive) Just give me one more chance to beat her.

**Fitch:** Very well. Both of you, get out your chalk.

**Joel:** (sheepishly, to Melody) Can I…borrow a piece?

**Fitch:** All right. Let us see here. Hum…. (looks at Melody’s drawings approvingly) Yes indeed. That’s actually quite good, my dear. You may not have an eyes for circles, but you can think like a Rithmatist. And, my! Will you look at that chalkling! Indeed!

**Joel:** (also impressed) Wow.

**Fitch:** Yes indeed. And Ballintain was the correct choice in this instance, I believe – though something with a very strong defense against chalklings would have been very good as well. (looking at Joel’s drawings) Ah, a nine-pointer? Showing off a little, are we? Hum, not bad, Joel, I must say. The third point is a few degrees off, but the others are within reasonable limits. Is that a Hill Defense?

**Joel:** (proudly) A modified one.

**Fitch:** No Lines of Forbiddance?

**Joel:** (still proud) You drew Sumsion. So you probably weren’t going to use many Lines of Vigor – not unless you’re an expert at reflecting them, but you didn’t set yourself up to do that. So you couldn’t have pushed me about. That means I didn’t need the stabilization.

**Fitch:** Excellent point. Unless, of course, I were to notice what you’d done. Remember, I could always dismiss the Lines of Forbiddance and attack you from the front by surprise!

**Joel:** (self-assuredly) That would take a few seconds. I’d notice and stabilize my defense.

**Fitch:** Assuming you were watching carefully.

**Joel:** (even more self-assuredly) I would be. Trust me.

**Fitch:** (impressed) Yes…I believe that you would be. Well, that’s certainly impressive. I think both of you might very well have defeated me!

**Melody:** (excitedly) What’s next?

**Fitch:** Well, I suppose we can do a few more.

**Narrator:** Now that we’ve seen them practicing, you’ll have to read the book to see how they do on the real dueling fields. We have murders to solve and battles to win. Read *The Rithmatist* by Brandon Sanderson and get immersed in the world of Rithmatics.