

Something.

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no, I really can't think of a better title. just give me time. anywho, I don't really know enough to describe the plot, as I'm not sure where I want it to go. I count on the characteres to make the story happen. read it if you're curious.

phantom

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0 - prologue

Something.

~Prologue~

Three children stood on a beach at sunset. The sun shone over the waves, like a pathway leading to the distant west. It nearing the end of summer. None of them ever could have guessed what would happen. They were only aware of the first day of school that was fast approaching, not of the pieces that were moving in the world around them.

'Ah, no, I forgot to write that report for the summer reading!' the girl exclaimed.

'What on earth were you doing that day we were working our asses off?' the boy next to her said with a grin. 'And don't say you forgot. No one could be that spacy.'

She laughed and punched him on the arm. 'What are you-'

'I have a strange feeling about this.' The other boy was staring out at the sea, his eyes wide. He spoke softly, but they didn't miss a word.

'Aw, c'mon,' his friend said. 'you just had one too many ice creams.'

'I'm serious. Something isn't right about this. I feel-'

'What? A stomachache?'

'You two eat more ice cream than the rest of the town put together! Why would I have a stomachache?'

The girl smiled, watching the two boys argue. 'You're hallucinating. That's all.' He grinned, shrugging. 'I thought it must be the ice-'

'Shut your mouth! I am not making this up!'

'How do I know that? Sounds like a joke to me. It was funny at first, but you're dragging it out much too- whoa! Easy!' The boy had drawn a wooden sword, deadly serious. He tossed a second to the first boy, who nearly dropped it.

'Go on,' he said in a soft, dangerous voice. 'We can decide this through combat. If I was really high on ice cream, you'd be able to beat me, right?'

'Give me your worst.'

The boys were about to attack one another when the girl pushed between them. 'What is with you two? We're going home tomorrow, so you guys should get some sleep. And I will not have you ruining the end of our vacation! We came here to have fun, remember?'

'Right.' the brown-haired boy threw the wooden sword to the ground and stuck his hands in the pockets of his baggy shorts. 'It was a dumb idea anyway. Sheesh, you're so weird.' He turned and made his way back to his cabin. The girl looked back and forth between them, not sure what to do for a moment, before running after the boy.

'Don't stay out here too much longer!' she called hastily over her shoulder. Then she was gone.

He sat down in the sand, letting his breath out through his teeth as the sun sank out of sight. Maybe his friends were right. Maybe he was weird. His hair was straight and silver-blond, where everyone else on the island had brown or red hair that was almost always curly, and he couldn't seem to be able to get a tan: even after a summer on the beach he was pasty. Everyone else at least had a few freckles.

The waves licked his bare toes. He felt a shiver run up his spine that had nothing to do with being cold. He knew for sure now. Something was happening. He stood as wave after wave of the icy water washed over his feet. The indigo sky was perfectly clear, but he could sense the storm in the air.

'The door is opening.'

'What?' He looked around. There was nothing. Nothing but a twilight beach...

'What a wonderful feeling...' There was the voice again. There was a brilliant flash of violet lightning across the sky, and he saw a cloaked figure. 'Who are you?' he heard himself ask warily.

'But you want it too, boy. I can feel it. Your heart calls out to the other side. Open your heart.'
'What are you talking about? What...?'

He could feel the earth vibrating beneath his feet. The sky was striped black and violet, the stars that had been twinkling into existence a moment before were smothered. The white lightning struck the beach all around them, melting the sand into pillars of dirty glass that stood taller than any of the buildings on the island, like arcane trees.

'You know it's true... This is not your world. You were not meant to exist. You see what they can't. Your heart will open the door...' The stripes of light and darkness were spiralling down, a freakish imitation of a hurricane, and he and the cloaked person were trapped at its eye.

'Who... who are you? Tell me, dammit! What are you doing?'

'You do not remember me? I suppose you wouldn't, after what They did...'

'What-Are-You-Doing-To-Me?!?' he shouted. The wind blended his words together, made them

sound odd even to his own ears.

'Nothing. You are doing this.'

He was doing this? How was that possible? He might be different, but surely not that much... and why would he want to do this...? But he didn't have any time to wonder, because the cloaked person was blurring. **'The world has been connected...!'**

Then everything was gone.

1 - Chapitre I

~Chapitre I~

'Hey! Get up, *daikon!*

'Mmmfff.'

'Hurry up, or Beatrice'll go mad! You know how she gets!'

He sat up. 'You're her big brother, how can you possibly be afraid?'

Alphonse shrugged, that good-natured smile of his in place. He had shortish, golden-blond hair and eyes that were such a light brown you'd swear they were golden. 'Who knows? She's scary when she gets pissed.'

'What does Tris want?'

'Aaah, no! Not "Tris"! She hates being called that! I'd better not catch any flack if she hears...' He smiled again. 'She says you promised to check out the Haunted Mansion with her. What possessed you?'

'You're such a sissy, you *daikon*. I'm not scared.' He was on his knees, fishing for a sock under his bed.

'No. Tell me why. You wouldn't go there with Bea, or any one else, without a reason.'

He straightened, looking rather annoyed with Alphonse. Alphonse looked back with that innocent smile. 'Oh all right. It was a bet. I bet Crimson two hundred thousand I could beat him at kingba.'

'What? He's stupid! You were the champion two years running! ...And everyone knows you haven't got two hundred thousand!'

'Yeah...' August pulled on his sock and set about finding a matching one. 'But I was sure I'd win.'

'No way! Crimson beat *you*?'

'Yeah. He must've owed her something, 'cuz I expected him to make me do his laundry and cooking for a week. Guess I actually got off easy.'

'I bet he was bored. No wonder! I went in yesterday and he nearly bit my head off. I accidentally put cream in his coffee, you know how he hates that. I bet he missed another deadline... I swear,

Crimson's the worst procrastinator I know. But that doesn't make sense... Why'd he waste all night playing kingba?'

August came back up holding a handful of socks, none of which matched. 'Who knows? Alphonse, do you have any matching socks? You know how Tris is picky about these things...'

'Sorry, little brother. Last time I let you borrow socks I only got one back, and it smelled like old fish.'

August made a face and pulled on a random sock. 'I'd better go.'

'Good luck! Don't let her kill you!'

'Thanks a lot.' August swung his bookbag over his shoulder and followed Alphonse to the kitchen, where he began to make sandwiches.

'Where have you been? I thought you'd never come!' August let out a little moan. Beatrice was nice, but only if you were on her good side. Her blond hair was straight with a slight wave towards the ends, cut to a little past shoulder length, and her eyes were pale blue. Today her hair was tied back, and she wore a knee-length light green skirt with dark green designs and a charcoal grey t-shirt with black flowers printed on it. She was wearing charcoal and black striped stockings and was holding a pair of faded black and white chucks with dirty white laces. Someone had doodled on the toe of one.

He glanced at the shoes. 'Since when do you wear chucks?'

'I've always wanted some, and I can't explore a Haunted Mansion in heels, so I swiped 'em from Alphonse. And since when is it any of your buisness?'

'Er...' August stuck the sandwiches and some crackers into the bag. **'We're all out of pocky again!'**

Beatrice frowned. 'Well, blame Crimson. In the meantime, let's go!' She grabbed August's hand and dragged him to the door. August shot a pleading look to Alphonse, but he only smiled and shrugged, watching his friend being dragged off by his younger sister.

It was a couple of minutes later when he heard a call from upstairs. 'Al~~~phonse!' Alphonse climbed the stairs and opened the door at the end of the hall, sighing.

The circular room was messier then anywhere else in the house, and that was saying something. The bed was piled so high in books it was barely visible. The floor was strewn with crumpled sheets of paper, empty pocky boxes, more books, and dirty clothes. There were sheets piled the in the cleanest patch of floor, probably for sleeping, since the bed was covered. Pushed against the opposite side of the room from the bed was a desk with several more stacks of books, on top of which were precariously balanced various things, such as a dim oil lamp, a half-empty coffeepot, several dirty mugs, an ink-smudged glass paperweight, and several inkwells, that were probably all dried out. Pushed to the sides were more piles of paper, pens, inkbottles, and a

typewriter with a jammed ribbon. The whole room smelled of coffee, stale ink, and paper.

Sitting at the desk was a man who looked about the same age as Alphonse with long messy hair that was a queer shade of red/dark pink/purple. It was the worst case of bed-head Alphonse had ever seen and was probably in bad need of a cut. He was wearing a white button-down shirt with all of the buttons undone and the sleeves rolled up to the elbows, and green plaid boxers.

'Yo,' Alphonse said. 'Whaddya need, Crimson?'

Crimson turned around. His eyes were mis-matched: the left was the same colour as his hair, but the right was smoky purple, concealed by a curtain of hair, and both had slight shadows under them, like he hadn't had a good night's sleep in a week. He had a piece of pocky sticking out of his mouth, all of the chocolate sucked off that end. 'I need more pocky, Al.' Only Crimson called him Al. Everyone else knew he didn't like the nickname.

'We haven't got any more.' Crimson threw the empty pocky box he was holding, hitting Alphonse square in the forehead.

There was a slight snap as he bit the end off the pocky. 'Well, what am I paying you for?' Alphonse blinked, and Crimson let his breath out through his teeth. 'If there's no more, then get some, *daikon*. Is the shower free?'

'Err, yeah... I'll be going. To the store. And nobody's in the shower. Aiza's at a friend's, and the Master's out, or locked in the Tower. So you're good.' Alphonse turned to go.

'Wait, Al...' Alphonse turned back with a sound similar to 'nyuuu?' 'What about those kids?'

'Oh, Bea and August? They went to that Haunted Mansion. Is it true you won August at kingba?'

He stood and crossed the room, stretching as he did so. 'Thanks, Al.' He ruffled Alphonse's hair as though he were a little kid instead of a twenty one-year-old as he passed. Alphonse watched him walk down the hall, a cute Alphonse-ish frown on his face as he flattened the hair that Crimson had messed up. Then Crimson turned into the bathroom, and Alphonse started back towards the stairs.

As Alphonse made his way to the store, August and Beatrice were skateboarding to the Haunted Mansion. Or, rather, August was skateboarding and Beatrice was attempting to do so and failing spectacularly. Which made it take a lot longer than it needed to. After falling for the umpteenth time Beatrice demanded that they stop and buy ice cream, which they did. After that, they had to walk, or at least Beatrice walked while August slowly skateboarded beside her.

Finally they reached the hole in the wall that surrounded the town. They ducked through it, stopping to deposit their skateboards on the other side behind a pile of rubble. There was a short walk through the wood on the other side before they reached the mansion.

'Look, August! It's just ahead!' Beatrice ran ahead to the wrought-iron gates that were the only

break in the high wall surrounding it and peered through, bouncing on the balls of her feet. But August had stopped.

The reason for this was the man leaning against the tree. He wore a black bowler hat with a scarlet ribbon around it, a long black tailcoat that was red on the underside over a clean white button-down shirt that needed ironing and wasn't tucked in, a black tie with a red cross at the centre, black pants that were too loose to match though they looked like they were the same material as the tailcoat, and black boots that had pointed toes that turned up at the ends. His longish hair was braided and tied with a silky black string, and he wore wire-rimmed sunglasses with red lenses, despite the shade the trees provided. Maybe it was the light, but he seemed inhumanly pale. It made him look like a vampire.

'Heeeeyyyy,' he said. August glanced at him warily. Was he a gay vampire or something...? 'What brings you to this mansion?'

'You tell me why you're here first,' said August, sounding a lot braver than he felt. Though if he was a shady character, he would surely lie... right?

'I'm just visiting a friend,' said the Gay Vampire. He jerked his head towards the mansion.

'What?! Someone lives there? Who?'

'Sorry, your turn. Why are you here?'

August thought about retorting, but as he didn't know what this guy was capable of, he thought better of it. 'Eh... we're just taking a look around...'

'Hey, August! What're you doing over there?'

'E~~~eh... just talking to...' He turned around, but the Gay Vampire had vanished. 'Nevermind, I'm coming.' He ran over, joining Beatrice at the gate.

'Wow,' she breathed. 'I've never seen it so close before... But the gate is locked. How are we going to get in there?'

'Dunno.' August bent to examine the lock. When he put his hand on it, however, there was a click and the heavy iron lock fell to the ground. 'Umm...'

Beatrice hauled him up by the elbow. 'Well? What are you waiting for?' she pushed the gate open. 'Come *on!*'

'I'm not sure this is a good idea. The way it opened like that...'

'Oh, *please*. You really think it's haunted? The lock was probably broken, or maybe it wasn't shut all the way.' August still looked skeptical, and Beatrice made a sound similar to *phhhh!* and exhaled, which made her bangs flip up. 'Don't tell be you *believe* those ghost stories! Don't be stupid! ghosts aren't real!'

'If you were a ghost you wouldn't like hearing that,' August said softly. That shut Beatrice up. 'Anyway, it's not necessarily the ghosts I'm worried about.'

Beatrice paused, looking at him oddly. 'Well... we'll just have to be extra quiet, then. Right?' Without any further procrastination, she strode through the gates, and August had little choice but to run after her.

Aiza was sitting on the steps of the house. She had left her key somewhere as she had been late for her flute lesson and now it seemed there was no one home. She had even risked knocking... but didn't dare ring the doorbell if the Master might be there. He found the doorbell annoying. And no one quite dared disturb the Master.

She stood. Crimson was coming up the street. With a briefcase, and he was wearing a tie. Unusually nice dress for Crimson... she allowed herself a smile. Maybe he had finally gotten himself a girlfriend. The pale golden leaves of the oak trees that lined the drive were falling around him. She couldn't say she didn't find him attractive, but she was probably a mere child to him.

Then he suddenly turned, leaving the road. That woke her from her daydream. 'Crimson!'

He turned back, scowling at her, the end of the pocky in his mouth flicking up. 'Whad'ya want? I've finally got an idea and you interrupt me.'

Aiza felt herself go red. 'I... I left my keys inside...'

'Oh.' he rummaged in his pocket and drew out a key ring. 'Catch.' Then he turned. She was too stunned to catch them. 'Alphonse is still at the store? Then leave 'em on the table in the kitchen. Stay outta my room.' He stuck another piece of pocky in his mouth and walked in the direction of the rose garden. She was too busy watching him go to notice the cloaked figure that came up behind her.

'You know Caranath?'

Aiza didn't scream. And she never had the chance to pick up Crimson's keys.

Author's note: (character guide for chapitre one)

Aiza: Fifteen years old, soft dark-chocolate-coloured hair and eyes, on the short side. She lives at the house because she is the Master's niece. In her spare time she likes to play the flute and read romance novels. Her name is pronounced eye-zuh

Alphonse: Twenty-one years old. Shortish, golden-blond hair and eyes that are such a light brown you'd swear they were golden. He is more or less Crimson's assistant, which is why he and Beatrice live at the Master's house, and also explains why Crimson tends to boss him

around. He is a kind, and gentle-if-somewhat-clumsy, and has good intentions despite this. Though he is six years older than Beatrice, she often acts more mature. His main hobby is cooking. (so he cooks for everyone. XD)

August: Age: sixteen. Hair: straight and black, like raven feathers, eyes are golden-orange (Alphonse's are golden-*brown*; so there is a difference). Reason for living there is unclear, though he's been there for a long time. Best friend is Alphonse, despite their age difference. He is rather obsessed with 'kingba' (more or less one-on-one swordfighting battles, though with foam-coated wooden bat things in place of real swords. tournaments are held once a year at the end of summer.) I guess that's his hobby...

Beatrice: Age: fifteen. Blonde hair a little past shoulder-length, pale blue eyes. She lives at the house because her older brother works there... August is her friend from school, I guess... (do they go to school?!? gah, plothole... though it isn't really important... XD;;;;) Anyhoo, she tends to act like Alphonse's mother when he's being stupid. (she's kind of like Gwen that way) She likes reading Crimson's novels.

Crimson: Age unknown, though he appears to be about the same age as Alphonse. Hair and eyes: ...see these quotes: 'long messy hair that was a queer shade of red/dark pink/purple. It was the worst case of bed-head Alphonse had ever seen and was probably in bad need of a cut.' though he puts his hair in a ponytail when he wants to be neat... and the other: 'His eyes were mis-matched: the left was the same colour as his hair, but the right was smoky purple, concealed by a curtain of hair...' Other than that: he is a novelist. He is really good at swordfighting, though he has never been in a kingba tournament...

'the Master': Age: unknown. Appearance: unknown. Gender: unknown, though the general assumption is male. 'He' is the owner of the house that they all live in, and 'he' hates loud noises.

2 - Chapitre II

Alphonse arrived at the doorstep of the house with his arms full of groceries. He put one of the bags down to get his keys out. In doing so he spotted something lying half-concealed under a fallen leaf. He picked it up. Crimson's key ring. *Oh no ... Where did Crimson run off to? He'd kill me if he thought I'd lost his keys ...*

Alphonse unlocked the front door, and after depositing his ingredients in the kitchen he climbed the stairs. *I'll just leave them on his desk. That way he's sure to find them ...*

'Come on!' Beatrice hissed back at August. 'Quit lagging behind!' She ran up the front steps, August sprinting up behind her as she ran her fingers over the wood. She reached for the doorknob.

'Come on. You had your look. Let's go back now.'

'No, not after coming all the way here! We haven't even been inside yet!'

'Isn't it enough to be able to say you've touched-'

'Of course not! I want to explore! We've gotta see if the rumours are true! See, look, it's not locked!' She swung the door open. August showed every intention of staying outside, so she grabbed him by the elbow and pulled him in.

They found themselves in a large hall, faced by a sweeping staircase. Beatrice dragged him forward, making a beeline for the stairs. They reached the steps, and a shiver ran up August's spine.

Beatrice turned back. '*August!* Get up-'

'Beatrice. I ... I've *been here before.*' Beatrice's eyes went wide. 'I don't know when - or how - but I *know* it's true.'

Looking into August's eyes, she knew he was telling the truth, or at least he thought he was. She was about to say something when August looked up suddenly, staring at a spot somewhere over her left shoulder, at the top of the staircase.

'It's the ghost girl, Beatrice,' he whispered, so softly she could barely hear him. 'The ghost girl is standing right behind you ...!'

'All! *Where is that girl?*'

'Crimson?' Alphonse looked up from the pot of curry that was simmering on the stove. 'I thought I told you ... Bea went with August to the Haunted Mansion.'

'Not your sister, *daikon!* The Master's neice, the one who's been snooping in my room!'

'Oh, you mean Aiza? She hasn't come back yet.'

'I think she has! I gave her my keys because she lost hers and told her to leave them on the table in here but *they were on my desk*, Alphonse!'

'Oh! Sorry, Crimson, I put them on your desk. I found them on the doorstep. I thought you'd dropped them by accident when you went out. You must've scared her off, 'cuz she isn't here, unless she learned how to turn invisible. Odd, though, it's not like her to -' He realised that Crimson had left, and he was talking to thin air.

No, vanishing is much more something Crimson would do ...

'Hey, Al!' Crimson stuck his head back in. 'Is this today's paper?'

'Yeah ...' Alphonse was chopping vegetables into the curry. 'Since when do you read the paper?'

'Why can't I read the paper?' Crimson scowled.

'I'm just saying it's unusual for you to read the paper, not that you can't.'

Crimson sat down at the table, idly turning the pages. 'This is a load of bullshoot. The papers weren't this full of crap before I started writing. Look! This is written at the level of a student in the third year of primary school. An eight-year-old could write this.'

'Hmmm.' Alphonse stirred the curry. 'You used to read the paper?'

'Every day. But after I became a novelist I got too busy. Or maybe I became a novelist because the paper started printing rubbish like this.' He whacked the paper with the back of his hand. 'But I dunno ... I can't really remember.'

Alphonse opened his mouth to say something, but he never had the chance to, because Crimson interrupted. 'Hey! it says here that some kid living on those islands down south vanished!'

At that Alphonse forgot about his curry entirely. 'What? *Vanished?*'

'Yeah ... This says that there was this freak lightning storm, or something like that. His friends last saw him there - on the beach - then there was the storm not long after they left ... and he hasn't been seen since.'

Alphonse said nothing.

Crimson folded the paper. 'Things are moving. Big things ...' Both gazed off into the distance for a while ... 'You know ... I think I might take a vacation, Alphonse.'

'What? But ... your deadlines ...'

'I said *maybe*, Al. And they can't really control when I get my writing in. Deadlines were only invented so the editors and publishers could feel in charge.' Crimson stood up, tossing the paper down on the kitchen table. 'I'm going to talk to the Master,' he announced. Only Crimson ever came in contact with the Master. No one else even knew what the Master looked like, though August might have seen him when he first arrived.

Alphonse nodded. 'Just don't forget to come down for dinner. I left the mushrooms out specially for you.' Crimson waved casually, and left the room.

Beatrice turned slowly around. A girl was standing there, a youngish girl with long, wavy hair that was pale dusty blonde and large eyes of the palest silvery blue. She wore a simple white dress with wide strips for sleeves and lace along the hem, and light blue sandals with little gold stars on them.

'August!' she said. 'You have to leave! You shouldn't be here.'

'August? How does she know-' Beatrice began, but August finished the question.

'My name! How do you know my name?'

'Please, that doesn't matter! Just go!'

August could tell that Beatrice was thoroughly spooked. He would have been, but he was beyond the freaked out stage. He was simply ... curious? No, that wasn't the right word. But he couldn't think of anything better.

She walked down the steps, but before she reached the bottom they heard a noise from upstairs. A scream. That woke Beatrice up, and she bolted. But August couldn't move.

'Hurry,' the girl moaned, grabbing his elbow. The large double doors whispered shut behind Beatrice. The girl dragged him around the bottom of the stairs, shoved him into a broom cupboard. There was the sound of hurried footsteps, then a voice called out from somewhere above him.

'Aaahhh ... Celia? What are you doing down there? Come give me a hand!' The voice was cute, the kind of voice that put in mind an uke-ish, rather feminine teenage boy.

'I'm coming!' the girl responded. Then August heard her whisper through the wood: 'Wait a minute, then go quickly!' He listened to the receding patter of her sandaled footsteps as she ran up the stairs and out of hearing.

August looked down, hugging his knees, thinking about what had happened. Only he was distracted by something sticking half under the door. He pulled it into the closet, but it was too dark to see it clearly, so he stuck it in his pocket.

After a minute August cautiously pushed the door open a fraction of a centimetre. He saw nothing in the crack of light that became visible. He slipped out of the closet, looked around. Still nothing. Deeming it as safe as it would get, he darted as quietly as he could across the hall, and pulled one of the heavy double doors open. It was a relief to find the bright sunlight burning his eyes. He had almost expected the sky to be dark. Almost.

He didn't really rest until he was outside the surrounding wall, back in the forest. He found Beatrice waiting for him by the skateboards and his bag.

'August! You're okay! I thought the ghost girl had gotten you.'

'She's not a ghost, Beatrice. She grabbed my arm.'

'Wait'll we tell everyone you've actually *touched* -'

'Beatrice. There's someone else living there. And I wasn't lying when I said I knew I'd been there before. I think it's best we don't tell anyone about this. Say we chickened out, or something. It's s'posed to be locked up, remember?' Beatrice pouted. 'Or how 'bout we say that we got to the gate and just couldn't get in? I'll buy you another ice cream.'

She stuck out her lower lip. 'Oh, all right. But can I at least tell Alphonse?'

August thought about it, knowing how happy that would make her. It would also be payback to Alphonse for calling him chicken that morning. Beatrice must have known he wouldn't be able to resist. 'Oh, fine, you can tell Alphonse. But *no one else*, got it?'

Beatrice grinned fiendishly and nodded, turning back towards the Master's house. 'Don't forget, you still owe me ice cream!' August rolled his eyes.

A woman stood in the drive. Her hair was straight and black with a reddish tinge where the dappled sunlight hit it, her skin like overly creamed hot cocoa. Her eyes were hazel, with more green than brown. She wore a large black overcoat that covered her body, and faded black-and-white high-top chucks. The overcoat covered the rest of her clothing.

At the moment she was trying to build up the courage to go knock on those large, ornately carved double doors. She had gotten this far, but now that she was here, in the lane with the pale yellow leaves swirling down around her, she couldn't bring herself to do it. She sighed and turned, thinking she might come back later, only to find herself face-to-face with two kids.

'Hey, lady! What're you doing here?' The girl who had spoken had blonde hair, blue eyes, a dark grey shirt, green skirt, black- and grey-striped stockings and chucks like hers, only they were low-tops and someone had doodled on the toe of one.

The other kid (they were more teenagers, really) was a boy with black hair and orangey-gold eyes, in a black t-shirt with one of those white short-sleeved button down shirts tossed over it, and a pair of beige

cargo pants. He grabbed the girl's arm. 'C'mon, don't be rude,' he hissed in her ear.

The woman wanted dearly to give that girl a good cuff on her multiple-pierced ear, but she restrained herself. She picked up her small black suitcase, slinging it over one shoulder. 'No. It was a wrong address. I'll just go.' She turned and left, dark hair rippling in the gentle breeze.

August rounded on Beatrice. 'Why did you say that? She might've been visiting someone in the house!'

Beatrice turned away, sticking her lower lip out. 'Then why was she just standing there? Plus, she said it was her mistake.'

'Maybe ...' August said, still dubious. Beatrice walked toward the house, shrugging. Then August remembered the piece of paper he stuck in his pocket back in the mansion. He pulled it out.

To Celia

August's eyes went wide, and Beatrice's name was already on his lips but he choked it back down. He would show Alphonse, before anything else. He set off for the house at a sprint.

was written on it in spiky black writing. He felt a twang of guilt, then his curiosity got the better of him and he flipped it over ... It was an old, faded photograph in black and white, a group photo.

Author's note:

At this point I really don't have enough new characteres to update my lovely character guide, so that'll have to wait until next chapitre. xD;; Sorry ... but I hope whoever takes time out of their busy schedule to read this story finds it worth their time.

~Phantom~
