

# Possessors of the Clow

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*It is six years after the last of Sakura's cards were changed into Star Cards and there seems to be new mysteries to solve and new enemies to fight.*

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# 1 - Distant Voices, part 1: Sakura and New Beginnings

## Distant Voices, part 1: Sakura and New Beginnings

The bare trees swayed in the blowing wind. Together they swayed, back and forth, a calm dance to a quiet ballad of harmony. In her bed a girl slept. Soundly she did with pleasant dreams of ones she loved and those she hoped or wished she had the love of. The soft white cloth of the window drapes gently swayed in the wind as it came across the open portal. The girl's amber hair rustled slightly as the wind picked up a small amount. The white light of the moon poured into this girl's room as if to light her way and protect her but it fell short of her only reaching the side of her bed.

The wind began to pick up and the creak of the swaying trees became louder as if mimicking voices of evil veiled in darkness. The girl, still in slumber felt the chill of this wind on the pail skin of her fair face. She shivered and gripped her sheets in her small hands. The wind continued to grow, as did the girl's discomfort. As it came across the open window it began to sound more and more like a rasping voice calling to her in a low murmur. The girl moved about in her bed as if trying to escape a frightening dream.

The wind blew, the trees creaked and the wind's voice continued to call. The girl was cold, very cold, as if she were in no bed at all but instead naked in a place alone with the wind swirling around her. With this state came an icy sweat making her all the more uncomfortable.

The wind grew stronger and the voice became louder. It's menacing call penetrated through to the girl's dreams. The window was suddenly thrown open and almost off it's hinges by a terrible gust and with it the voice became a shrill scream that reached the girl's very soul! She awoke suddenly with a scream of her own but as she looked about her dark room she saw nothing; the wind was gone and there was no evil lurking in the darkness as far as she could see. This girl however had learned throughout her life not to believe her eyes but her feelings and her heart. They told her something was wrong, something had been there, there in her room with her and she felt very strongly that it meant her the greatest of harm. What had driven it away she couldn't tell. All she knew was that she now sat bathed in a pool of white light by the moon and she felt safe by it.

The morning came and the girl bound down the stairs of her home dressed with her purse on her arm and her book bag on her back. She did so almost gracefully but at the bottom step she tripped over her own feet and fell forward. "Ahhh!" she squealed in a high tone as she plummeted forward. She was caught before hitting the ground however by the arms of a tall and kind faced man. The girl looked up at this man as her feet were firmly set upon the ground once again. "Daddy!" she bubbled. "Good morning!"

The man smiled down at his daughter. "Good morning, Sakura. Are you ready?"

"Yep!" Sakura bipped as she ran for the door to put on her skates.

"Wait!" her father called. "I have something for you."

"Really?" Sakura bubbled again at the prospect of an unexpected gift. She skipped back over to her father and beamed up at him with an incorrigible smile. She watched as he reached into his pocket and took out an envelope with the impression of something solid in it.

"Last night while downstairs in the library I came across something." He said. He removed something from the envelope. It was a beautiful faded-gold necklace with three clear red glimmering stones and a black cordage. Sakura's eyes grew wide with awe at its beauty. "I found this in the binding of a very old book. It seemed to be a page marker of sorts." He said with a laugh. "It was a very odd book and I'd like to do more research on it but I'll be in and out of town for quite a while so I'd like you to hold onto it for me and keep it safe."

"Thank you so much daddy! It's beautiful, I'll protect it! I promise!" Sakura said as her father fastened the necklace around her neck. She then went to put her skates on once again.

"Are you sure it's a good idea to give it to her? She might lose it." There came a voice from the other room.

"She'll do fine." Sakura's father said as a tall thin man with black hair walked into the room while still munching on breakfast.

"Don't fall on your head on the way over, monster." The man said.

"You don't have to worry about me, Touya." Sakura said to her brother as she went out the door and sped down her walkway only to fall down as she turned the corner.

Life for Sakura Kinomoto since the completion of her tasks with the magical Cards made by Clow Reed so long ago had been what she would call normal for the most part. Four years had passed and little had changed. She still knew most of her good friends from the fourth and fifth grade and was as happy as could be. As happy, that is, as with the way things went.

As Sakura skated she thought about her past, the things that happened, and the people she was and had been with. For some reason there seemed to be a heavy weight on her heart this morning since she left her house but she didn't know why, as if she was recalling a painful memory somewhere in within her mind. She suddenly felt something warm touch her face and she thought it odd, as it was the winter and very cold out. She felt it again and this time she gathered that it was wet. She suddenly stopped and leaned with one hand on a tree on the side of the street. She touched her cheek and was almost distressed by what she felt. Upon her hand and rosy cheeks were tears, she had not realized it but she had been crying.

She stood for a moment and felt a breeze. It was a cold breeze. She could hear it also wisping through the bare branches of rows of trees along the streets. She was suddenly reminded of that night and she felt a bit scared. She looked around perhaps to find something or someone that would bring her comfort or security but in all oddity there were no people and no cars around; the streets were barren. The wind came through the trees more strongly and the voice of the wind returned. It was a high-pitched moan, which Sakura felt was coming from all around her. Sakura's lower lip quivered with a short squeak of fear and she then bolted for her destination without incident, whatever it was seemed to have gone away

if it was there at all.

She came to the door of a large house huffing and gasping for air. She managed to get a hand off her knees and push the doorbell. The door opened and in the foyer of the house stood a beautiful girl with long wavy black hair wearing a pretty dress. "Sakura?!" the girl exclaimed as she rushed over to her side. Sakura managed to stand up straight. "Hi Tomoyo!" She said happily.

"That's a very pretty necklace!" The girl said taking immediate notice.

"Thanks, my dad gave it to me."

"You look so pretty with it on, but then again you can make anything look pretty!"

"T- Tomoyo."

The two friends went to Tomoyo's room. When they had closed the door behind them out from Sakura's purse came a little winged, orange, alive stuffed animal. "Why hello, Kero!" Tomoyo said as she gave him a cupcake and he would have proclaimed his undying love for her if his mouth didn't become immediately full.

Tomoyo and Sakura were planning to have a week-long sleep over with just the two of them and Kero. It was their winter break and school started soon so they decided to make the most of every second of it. First on Tomoyo's 'to do' list was to watch some of her old captures.

Turning her attention away from Kero's appetite, Tomoyo looked over to Sakura who was sitting by a window looking out with a blank stare. Tomoyo sensed that something was amiss. "Sakura." She said softly getting the girl's attention. "Is there something the matter?"

"What?" Sakura said slightly dazed. Tomoyo could tell that her mind was elsewhere. Sakura then looked away from the window and smiled mistily. "Oh, I'm fine. I've just been feeling a little weird today. On the way over I thought I. well." Sakura trailed off.

"What is it?" Tomoyo asked.

Sakura started unzipping her book bag and reached inside it. "I'm not really sure. It almost felt like someone was following me but there was no one around." She said, perplexed. Her hand then came across something unexpected in her bag. "Huh?" She then pulled from her bag a small pink book.

"The Clow?" Tomoyo asked.

"That's funny." Sakura said slowly holding the book with two hands examining it closely. "I don't remember putting it in my bag."

Kero flew over to the girl and put a paw on her head. "You feeln' all right, kid?"

"I'm not sure." Sakura said still starring at the cover of the book in a sort of trance. Sakura was beginning to feel very uneasy. "I must have put it in as I was packing." She said doubtfully. Setting the book aside she wished to place all her foreboding feeling aside with it but the feeling would only grow stronger throughout the day. She smiled and started unpacking the rest of her things and tried to forget it but in

vain.

Far away in the metropolitan area of Tomeda, the city of the Clow Mistress, there stood upon the top of a tall building an old inhabitant of the city. It was a boy with hair of dark brown and eyes that were deep with resolve and fortitude. He stared out over the city in search of something seemingly elusive, something hidden, something waiting for him. Waiting for he and the Clow Mistress. In his hands he held an ancient interment of Clow, the Derivator. With it he searched.

In the sky where only the previous day there was only blue there was now dark clouds that came with the wind. It blew and the boy's green robes whipped and fluttered as if the wind intended to steal them from him. The voice on the wind began to whale. The boy was struck with a sudden awareness. He knew what was on the wind, in the wind and all around him. His eyes narrowed and his teeth clenched. "I know you're here." He said in a deep voice. "I've got to find her." He then said to himself. The boy concentrated upon the board in his hands and in its center a blue light flickered. From the board shot a ray of the blue light and it traveled into the distance for him to follow. "Sakura. I hope I'm not too late."

For a time back at Tomoyo's house while the two girls were having tea and watching happenings of the past Sakura stayed strangely silent much of the time starrng off into space. In her hands she held something she had brought with her: a small green stuffed bear. Tomoyo was still concerned with the girl; in Tomoyo's mind there was no one else she would rather be with than Sakura and she knew that Sakura felt the same way but whenever they talked deeply about the past or watched the old captures, Sakura seemed down and Tomoyo knew why. "You miss him, don't you." She said softly.

Sakura looked up being snapped out of her trance by Tomoyo's seemingly out of the blue inquiry. Sakura was confused for only a second as she looked down at the bear in her hands. "It's been so long since he left." Sakura said sadly. "I. I wonder how he is."

Tomoyo sat down on the bed next to Sakura and took one of her hands. "I'm sure he's fine, after all he is Syaoran." She said trying to make her friend feel better. "By now I'll bet he's tall and hansom and charming!"

Sakura began to blush. "T- Tomoyo."

"And if he saw you now, now that you're older and cuter than ever he'd never want to leave here again!" Tomoyo bubbled seemingly off in her own little fantasy world again as she did every time she talked about Sakura or Saoran. This cheered Sakura up a bit but she still felt ill at ease. Though she was feeling sad that her good friend was gone and she didn't know if she'd ever see him again she also seemed to hear in the back of her mind the ominous voice on the wind. Sakura felt a sudden chill and the voice came to her conscious mind. She bit her lip and felt again worried but she didn't know why. She began to think that maybe it wasn't just the sound of the wind or the coincidental absence of people on a typically busy street but something more.

"Sakura!?"

Sakura snapped out of her trance once again by Tomoyo's call. Her eyes half closed an unseeing before in trance now shot open to see Kero in front of her. "Kid? what's the matter?" He said.

"Errmm. I'm not sure." She said seeming groggy or tired. She flopped on her back on Tomoyo's soft bed and looked at the ceiling. Tomoyo looked at Kero but he was as perplexed as she. Sakura didn't move for a while. She decided to try to forget her odd feelings to the softness of the linens she was upon. For a time she felt relaxed on the bed with the bear in her arms and her two dear friends at her side but she soon felt the same warmness on her cheek as before. She turned on her side and softly and silently wept. She did so but without any reason she could conceive; at that moment it just felt right to cry.

She felt Tomoyo's hand upon her shoulder and this brought a slight smile to her face but as she opened her eyes she saw out the window something that quite suddenly put her back into the state she was in before on the street with no one around and in her bed that night, a state of awareness of something near. Something near and dreadful. She now heard the pitter patter of rain and saw it running down the window and spattering off the leaves of the trees outside. "Whe- when did it start to rain?" She asked in a shaky voice.

"Good question." Kero said. At first Sakura though he was mocking her but she then looked away from the window to see him hovering with his arms and legs crossed and his head bowed. He looked serious enough for her.

"What do you mean?" Tomoyo asked.

Kero looked up with his gravity intact. "Can you recall when it started, Tomoyo?" He asked.

She thought for a moment. "No." She answered surprised with it herself.

"What does that mean?" Sakura asked.

Both the girls looked intently at Kero in anticipation and some fear of the answer. "I don't know." He said.

Sakura fell onto the floor and then jumped to her feet. "What do you mean you don't know!?" She yelled.

"Hey! I don't have all the answers ya know." He said in his defense. "But I can tell you this: there is something about this rain."

Sakura perked up. "Yah, you're right!" she said. "It feels almost. familiar. Almost."

"Like it's happened before." Both the girls looked at Kero.

"This rain isn't natural.' is what you said the day I started converting the cards. That rain was being made by Clow, do you mean he's doing it again? Is Eriol back?" Sakura felt herself fill with questions.

"No." Kero said. "This isn't the work of Clow but it does seem eerily familiar. And you're right, it's not natural."

"So what do we do?" Sakura asked.

"Only one thing to do!" Kero exclaimed.

Clad in rain coats and a small umbrella for Kero the three ventured outside to investigate. They walked

to the Penguin King slide in the park. It was a medium rain; not falling very hard but the feelings Sakura had felt earlier that day and night were about her and all around it seemed. Not yet had she release her Star Wand from its key, they still knew nothing of the situation, but she hoped she wouldn't have to.

Kero's tail flipped this way and that in frustration. "Mrrrrrrn." He would murmur to himself now and then heightening Sakura's apprehension. Tomoyo could see clearly that the two were worried. She wished to encourage them and lift their spirits but she had no advice or sentiments of hope or explanation to give. Tomoyo, though insightful, had no magic and no way of helping in this task. Though unfortunately it seemed that those with magic were at a similar loss. The look of confusion and worry on Sakura's face sank Tomoyo's usually strong heart.

Sakura looked around; it was dusk out and the heavy clouds made it very dim like there was a dark veil covering the skies and obscuring their view. The pitter patter of the rain seemed ominous like the sound of many small footsteps all around. The voice on the wind was now intermingled with the sound of the rain, distorting it. Sakura couldn't specifically discern any presence as her dream the night before had seemed to foretell but she knew she could feel something, something elusive, hidden, something waiting.

"I don't understand." Sakura said after some time of searching. Sakura had walked far and was now near the entrance to the Tsukimine Shrine. She turned to Kero and Tomoyo. "Why can't I sense any-th." Kero and Tomoyo weren't behind her. "thing?" She felt her heart skip a beat and she became short of breath. "Kero! Tomoyo? Where are you?" Her shouts echoed in the dark distances. The sun was down now and her only light was by the faint glimmers of distant lights from the shrine.

The rain had lifted but in its place was now a cold and harsh breeze that cut the air like a knife with the whale that had chased her all that day and night. The light from the shrine came dully through the trees. Suddenly, as if guided by that light, Sakura felt that she should enter the shrine. With each step more cautious than the one before she slowly made her way in.

Though she felt it very wrong to be walking alone in this night, Sakura felt compelled to keep going. Deeper and deeper into the shrine she went all the while she felt perused by the voice on the wind. It was sharper now, the voice, sounding more and more like summoning words as she went. The wind's call, so rhythmic and perhaps enchanting, lulled Sakura and she soon felt on the verge of sleep as she walked until she was taken back into the conscious world quite suddenly by an frigid sensation about her feet and legs. Her eyes opened wide as she realized that she was ankle deep in icy water, she had walked into the Tsukimine Shrine's Moon Reading pond.

She gasped and quickly hopped out of the near freezing water. The air was now still and silent. The voice of the wind had vanished once again. The clouds parted just enough so that the moon's light reached the pond. As Sakura looked out over it sudden fright filled her as she saw a dark figure standing upon the surface of the lake. There seemed a great flood of magic pouring from the figure Sakura thought, or perhaps it was only the numbness from the absence any strong powers that she had perhaps expected to sense that night. Either way, the power was there but it seemed somehow familiar to her. 'Is this it? Is this what this all is about?' Sakura asked herself silently.

The figure remained still and unmoving for a time. Shimmering ripples in the dark waters began flow outward as the figure began to walk toward Sakura. Though intrigued, Sakura was still frightened. She took a step back from the water's edge. For only a few moments more was Sakura in wonder and fear

for there then came the figure's voice; deep yet kind, familiar yet changed. "Sakura." it called.

To Be Continued.



## 2 - Distant Voices, part 2: Sakura and Fated Decisions

Distant Voices, part 2: Sakura and Fated Decisions

Out of the shadows and the darkness and onto the shore before Sakura stepped the figure and revealed was a boy of her age, tall and strong. "Syaoran?" Sakura ebbled, her voice almost leaving her. She looked at his face, into his deep brown eyes, and then at his flowing green robes and he spoke again, "You're alright. I wasn't sure if..." said the dark figure. Rimmed in the light of the crescent moon he strode to the water's edge and came into view. "...if I..."

"SYAORAN!" Sakura yelled as she jumped toward him and hugged him with happiness replacing wonder and fear. Syaoran held his breath as he blushed but as he exhaled he hugged her back with relief.

"What in blazes is the racket over there!" Came Kero's imposing voice from the distance startling the two out of their trance. They broke from one another and Sakura looked up into Syaoran's big brown eyes.

"C'mon!" Sakura said as she then grabbed Syaoran's hand and ran toward their friends.

"Li!?" Tomoyo exclaimed as the two pairs met.

"AH! The Brat!" Kero shouted.

"Kero!" Sakura scolded.

Sakura felt Syaoran's grip on her hand tighten slightly to get her attention. "We have to go!"

"What? ah, o- okay, but why?" Sakura asked.

"Because it's not safe here. It's still out there." He said ominously.

Sakura felt herself fill with fear once again and images of frightful things raced through her mind as she took in Syaoran's words. "Wh- what is?" She choked out.

Kero looked at his master, Sakura with similar concerns and then to Syaoran for the answers he didn't have for his master.

"The Voice on the Wind, a phantom spirit. It has come for you, Sakura." Syaoran said. There was then a gust of wind and a low wail in the distance now sounding more like a voice than ever, deep and bloody. "We've got to hurry. It's coming for us!" The wail then became a scream seeming to be very near and with it the four souls took to their feet and fled this accursed place.

They ran through the shrine and the wind began to whip. The creaking of the trees and the violent whipping of their branches was almost defining. The pursuing voice behind now seemed to come from

many directions. The whipping leaves and waving branches hindered their path out of the large shrine. Syaoran led them but he also took the brunt of the Voice's wrath; the leaves and branches struck him as he led the group and with the wind it seemed almost futile to attempt escape but he would not relinquish. With anger and determination he drew his sword from its sheath in his sash and cleared their path with a vengeance.

Finally out of the shrine and out of breath, Syaoran slowed to a stop though the wind still blew and rain now fell like sharp pins. The moon was gone once again and darkness was all about them. Sakura breathed hard but was still very frightened. She couldn't see anything, not Kero, not Tomoyo and not Syaoran the dark all around was so thick. "Syaoran?" She pleaded between breaths hoping that she was not once again alone. She felt a hand grasp her shoulder.

"I'm here." She heard him say. She stepped close to him and felt the cold dampness of a large wall. She then felt Tomoyo's hands on her arm. Sakura turned to her friend and embraced her close. Syaoran stood close to the girls and Kero rested on Sakura's shoulder. "Stay still." Syaoran said. He put his arms on either side of the girls. With his arms around them he closed his eyes and murmured a chant that Sakura couldn't make out. The words he spoke were similar to those he had in the past while casting a spell though these words sounded darker.

After a few moment of this he fell silent. The wind had died down and all that could be heard was the light pitter patter of raindrops and the breathing of the four souls. Sakura could just barely see Syaoran still standing over Tomoyo and she but suddenly he fell to his knees. "Syaoran!"- "Li?" The girls called out. Sakura dropped to the ground. "Syaoran, Syaoran?" She pleaded.

"I'm alright." He said. "I've cast a spell to hide us from it." He leaned back on the wall and the girls knelt beside him.

"I'm sure you felt it, Sakura, he's been expending a lot of magic. He's wiped out." Kero said and for once, Syaoran didn't argue.

"Oh." Sakura whispered.

Syaoran then started to get up. "Wait, Syaoran!" Sakura said as he stood. "You're still weak."

"I- don't know how long- the spell will last. I'll be fine. We have to keep moving." he huffed, still short of breath.

"Alright." Sakura said. "Where are we going?"

"I came here in a hurry but my family managed to make some arrangements while I was on my way. I have an apartment not far from here. Once we're there we can talk more."

"Okay." Sakura said. "What about you, Tomoyo? Are you okay?"

Tomoyo just smiled and said: "I'm with you and Li, how could anything possibly happen?"

"Good!" Kero biped. "Then let's go. Lead the way, Brat!"

Though very tired, Syaoran managed to swat at Kero a few times before he remembered something important. "Sakura?"

"Yah?"

"I probably don't have to ask you this but you have The Clow with you right?"

Sakura patted her pocket. "Right here." She said with a smile.

Syaoran's expression was anxious at best. "Good." He said after a pause. "Keep it closed."

Sakura wasn't sure where he was coming from, if she didn't open the book she couldn't use the cards or her magic. She had faith in his judgments and much trust in him though. "Okay, I won't."

With Kero concealed in Sakura's hands, Syaoran led them back into the city. In their past dealings with magical events there tended not to be anyone around for certain reasons but this was not the case this time. The three noticed some odd glances from people on the streets as they hurried on their way, most of them toward Syaoran in his robes with his large sword on his back.

Most of the way they jogged, slowing their pace to a fast walk only once in a while. Tomoyo was getting tired, as well was Sakura but Syaoran kept marching. Sakura, though ready to throw herself on the ground and refuse to get up for a week, was more worried about Syaoran than herself or Tomoyo. She knew his magic had already drained him and she was worried.

The four finally came to a three story apartment building and Syaoran stopped. No one said as much and it was no secret but they were very glad for having finally arrived. It was only a short distance further to the apartment and once inside all flopped down onto the floor. Sakura could sense nothing in the still of the night so she and Tomoyo rested for a while sprawled on the floor on their backs. After a while Sakura opened her eyes and looked around. There was no furniture yet in the apartment and on the second glance she realized that it was the same apartment that Syaoran had lived in before. She then realized that he was nowhere in sight.

She sat up and her eyes were suddenly bombarded with light coming from the hallway. The light hurt her eyes as she had been in the dark for what seemed like hours. Out of the light came Syaoran no longer dressed in his green battle robes. He now wore a simple pair of tan pants and a dark green T shirt and in his hands were several white towels. Sakura then realized that she was very damp from the rain. Tomoyo had already stood and taken off her rain coat and kindly accepted the towel from Syaoran. Sakura being cold and rather unhappy as a result, did the same.

"Thanks, Syaoran." She beamed as he handed her the towel and took her rain coat.

Syaoran made everyone some hot tea and the voice on the wind, the so called Phantom, seemed to pass out of their minds. They sat silently in a circle in the empty living room sipping their tea and drying themselves off. Syaoran sat with his sword and had placed four magic scrolls and several burning candles around them. Sakura guess right in that it was another protective spell. After a few minutes the four had finished their tea and it was evident that Kero wanted to talk.

He hovered in the air with his arms and legs crossed starring at Syaoran. "Well?" He asked in an irritated tone of voice. "When are you going to tell us exactly what's going on."

Syaoran sat with his eyes closed ignoring Kero for a few seconds before beginning. "My guess is we're safe for now." he said.

"I know that! that's not what I asked!" Kero shouted argumentatively.

"Kero! Just let Syaoran explain." Sakura said.

A short pause followed before he began again and in that time Sakura could sense his mood had become more serious. "What's going on" He said "is that we're being hunted." Sakura didn't like the sound of that and Tomoyo and Kero weren't too thrilled either. "It's after the cards. That's why I told you not to open the book, Sakura. As long as the seal is in place The Clow is impervious to almost anything except maybe Clow himself- er, themselves."

"Okay, I understand that," Sakura said. "but what do we do about this 'Phantom'?" Sakura said shakily.

"Wait just one second!" Kero shouted. "How is it that you know all this in the first place?" Kero accused Syaoran pointing a paw at him.

Syaoran looked away. "That's not important." He said quaintly sounding almost mournful in Sakura's opinion. Kero starred at Syaoran for a bit but gave up on prying as it seemed that it would be no use. "Anyway, I don't really know what to do about the Phantom. The truth is I don't actually know what it is. It could be anything with any motivation for its actions." Syaoran said.

"So what you're saying is that we don't know anything that we didn't know before?" Kero criticized.

"That's not true." Tomoyo said. "We know it's after The Clow."

"That's right!" Sakura agreed with optimism. She then looked at her friends. Everyone including Kero was exhausted. Tomoyo was laying on her side and Kero had fluttered down and was sitting on the floor with her. Syaoran was still sitting up but Sakura could tell he could barely keep his eyes open. "Hay everyone," Sakura said. "Why don't we get some sleep and talk more in the morning?"

"You guys go ahead. I'll keep watch." Syaoran said.

"No!" Sakura said surprising Syaoran. "You've worked the hardest and you deserve a break too."

"I hate to say it but Sakura is right about that." Kero said. "And besides, you look terrible, kid, like you're about to die or something so I think sleep is a good idea. I'll keep watch."  
Syaoran let out a deep breath of frustration. "Fine."

Without the aid of any pillows and in the dim flickering light of the candles the three quickly fell asleep and it was now up to Kero.

A few hours went by and despite his tireless efforts Kero fell asleep as well but fortunately Sakura had

been bothered by her dreams once again and was awake. She held the Clow in her hands and looked down upon it. The wind outside still blew. It sounded not like a voice this time but quiet whispers of many voices in the back of Sakura's mind. The rain did also still fall like the pitter patter of small footsteps. As she listened the rhythmic sounds she felt herself once again in a dreamlike state of mind, not quite asleep but not in the waking world. The whispers began to grow as if more and more voices surfaced in her mind from a turbulent place underneath. Though there were many, Sakura, in a not completely conscious way, could tell their message: they in so many words beckoned her to do what she knew she should not.

'open the door'

'free them'

'bring them out of the darkness'

The voices all became louder and all spoke to Sakura at once within her mind.

As if she was watching herself through someone else's eyes and through the hazy mist of trance Sakura opened the book in her hands. All was silent; the whispers gone, the footsteps stopped. The candles flickered and the shadows in the room jumped about. Sakura looked down at the first card. Windy was on the top of the deck just as it had been that first fateful night, and just as before she reached down and took it from the book.

'deliver them to me'

This time the voice was no whisper. It was a deep and raspy voice like the echoes of a voice coming from the other side. It was like nothing she had ever heard and with it came a new kind of fear and dread. And then, before anything could be done the wind that had chased them so mercilessly caught up with her. The hazy trance of which seemed to blind Sakura from her own actions vanished and she realized her erratum and the graveness of what she had done for there in the very room suddenly came the wind lacking none of its previous wrath. Sakura screamed and held the Clow to her chest as the wind blew like as a great gale around the room in a spiral around her.

The candles blinked out and were swept away along with the scroll and the other people withing the room. The wind drew in on Sakura but outward on the others throwing them to the edges of the room. Syaoran, before hitting the fast approaching wall, managed to grasp Tomoyo in his arms and he held her close to keep her from harm as he careened into the wall almost knocking him cold. The wind forced he and Tomoyo down into the corner and they could not move. Syaoran had lost grip of his sword so he was unable to cast any spells, all he could do was watch helplessly.

As the wind roared around her, Sakura clutched the book in her arms. In her heart she knew that it wished to take the cards from her. The wind drew closer and closer in seeming to want to crush Sakura as well as take the cards. Sakura held the Clow closed to her chest unwilling to give them up. She tucked her head over the top of the book to keep them more securer. "I won't let you have them!" Sakura yelled but her voice sounded small amid the thunderous roar of the wind. Despite all Sakura's efforts the Clow was gradually being pried from her grasp by what seemed like unseen hands pulling her from it. 'I can't let it go! everyone is counting on me! I can't let them down!' Sakura though in sadness and

desperation and then in an instant which seemed no more real than a dream, the book slipped from her arms. Time seemed to slow as she watched the book become farther from her as she was released from the wind's grasp to be cast aside like the others. Time for her caught up as she was thrown to the wall seemingly with a malice and hatred.

She looked forth toward the swirling wind and in its center the book spun open and there was heard the terrible cry of the Phantom voice shrieking out in what sounded to her as rage. A second later Sakura could not believe her eyes as from the book shot rays of light in every direction as it had before. The shrieking disappeared, fading away into the roar of the wind. Then suddenly the wind stopped and all in the room was still.

Sakura sat huddled on the opposite wall as Syaoran and Tomoyo, silent. She then slowly looked up to her friends across the room still safe and this brought her some happiness. She then looked to the center of the room where the Clow sat open, facing down.

Syaoran stood helping Tomoyo to her feet. As he looked toward Sakura he saw her sadness. She knelt before the book in the center of the room staring down on it and her tears fell to its face. Tomoyo opened her cupped hands and Kero popped out and fluttered to Sakura. Syaoran and Tomoyo looked at one another, Tomoyo with sadness for her beloved Sakura and Syaoran with regret and remorse. The two walked over to Sakura and knelt down at her sides.

"I..." Sakura said still sobbing quietly. "I couldn't protect them."

"You did your best." Tomoyo said.

Syaoran looked at the book and he then saw in Sakura's hand something that seemed to lift his spirits. He took Sakura's hand in his as if hold it up for her to see. "You didn't fail to protect all of them. You at least saved her." He said. Sakura looked to see that the Windy Card was still in her hand. She smiled slightly but her frown returned. "But what about the others?" She said.

"Not to worry I think." Kero said sounding optimistic. Sakura just looked at him with a blank star deducing nothing. "Whatever tried to take the cards you stopped dead in its tracks! Instead of letting them be taken you let them go! Now all we have to do is find them again!"

Sakura deduced what had happened in her mind: the cards had been released once again and they now awaited their master to find them. She smiled truly cheered by her friends' words of kindness. But she couldn't help but wonder; the whispers had told her to 'free them,' and it seemed that was just what she did. So she wondered: 'did I really do anything at all? was this its plan from the start?' it would be a very long time before she had the answer. For now she was content in the thought that there was hope. And appropriately with that hope came the dawn and morning's light poured in through the window as Kero opened it for his master in the knowledge that it would cheer her up. "Thank you, everyone." She said as she put Windy back into the book and stood with the others.

Now with hope for the future and her friends at her side she felt ready once again for the tasks laid out before her. She was Sakura, Master of the Clow and she would prevail.

To be continued...

### 3 - Sakura and her Angelic Wings

Sakura and her Angelic Wings

As the sun began to come up on the new day Sakura, Syaoran, Tomoyo and Kero went outside to see the damage the storm had caused that night. "It's not as bad as I thought it'd be." Syaoran said. Then there was heard the sound of a car pulling up. The four with Kero disguised as a stuffed animal once again looked to see a cab pull up to them. The passenger door on the opposite side of the car opened and out popped a tall black haired Chinese girl. She looked at the group and bounded over to them loudly. "Li!" she yelled as she threw her arms around Syaoran's neck.

"Meling, what are you doing here? I thought I told you to stay in Hong Kong!"

"Hi Meling!" Sakura bipped. "How have you been?" Tomoyo asked nicely.

"Hi Sakura, hi Tomoyo!" She said ignoring Syaoran's question.

"Meling," He said calling her attention back to the question.

"You mother sent me!" She answered.

"My mother!?" Syaoran gasped.

The cab driver had popped the trunk of the car and Meling was now taking out luggage. She fished out of a suitcase a white envelope. "I'm a messenger! She told me to give you this!"

"Couldn't she have just sent it though the mail?" Li argued.

"It's a pretty important letter." She paused with a look on her face that hinted bad news at the very least. "Well anyway, she wanted me to check on you anyway." She said as she handed Syaoran the letter and some of her baggage to take into the apartment. "So what's been going on?" She asked as she looked around at everyone.

"The cards have released again." Syaoran said.

"Yay!" Meling exclaimed to everyone's surprise. "That means we get to be cardcaptors again!" Syaoran let out a groan of unhappy frustration and the girls giggled. The future seemed to be set as Sakura and Tomoyo said goodbye to their old friends but only to see them again very soon. The two started back to their homes for some much needed rest and relaxation. As they walked, having left their friends with smiles, Sakura's heart still felt heavy. She stared up into the patchy gray sky. There were dark clouds on the horizon threatening to erase the partial blue above. It seemed ominous to Sakura as if a warning of the days to come. For the first time in quite some time it took an effort for her to smile her brightest. Somewhere deep inside she felt something had changed that would never return to its former self. Perhaps she knew it not then but this feeling would befall her all too commonly in the months to come.

The next morning came somewhat sooner than Sakura would have liked. She slept most of the previous day and all the night, her ordeal had taken so much out of her. Her hand came slamming down on her alarm clock as it's bothersome sound woke her out of a relaxing slumber. "Uug!" Sakura muttered in disgust that it was morning already. She got up and out of bed and walked down the hall and into the bathroom. She stood in front of the sink and looked at her reflection in the mirror. "Is this the mirror card? Or could it be the illusion card... or maybe - maybe it's just my reflection." Sakura thought to herself. She splashed some cold water on her face and rubbed her eyes.

"G'morning sunshine!" Kero said kiddingly as he flew into the bathroom.

"There's nothing good about this morning, Kero." Sakura said as she grabbed her brush and pulled at her hair. "There are fifty-one Star Cards on the loose, I look terrible and it's the first day of the new semester!"

"Sakura, you look fine, and I know for a fact that you're not as miserable as you think." Kero said reassuringly.

"What do you mean, Kero?" Sakura said as she washed her face.

"Well I hate to say it but it's probably more of a good thing than a bad one that the brat has come back." Kero said.

Sakura, despite her mood, couldn't help but smile at his mention. "Your right. Syaoran's always looking out for me, but..." Sakura thought about the previous night and Syaoran's words. "...but it feels like he's holding something back."

"I know what you mean." Kero said. "He knows something about what's going on that we don't. It's not just the cards being released that we have to worry about. Be sure and remember that."

"I know, I know." She said as she hopped into the shower.

"Be sure and hurry up in there, you're gonna be late!" Kero called over the sound of the water.

After showering she dressed in her school uniform in her room. As she stood at her dresser looking into the mirror she was reminded of something. Reaching down, she opened a drawer and saw the gold necklace her father had given her still safe. 'I'll keep it safe. It and everyone.' She said to herself. She then closed the drawer, said good-bye to Kero and walked down stairs.

"Morning monster, you're up early." Touya said.

"Not really, and I'm sixteen now, you can't call me that!" Sakura said with balled up fists.

"Alright you two that's enough, now come and eat some breakfast." Fujitaka, Sakura's father said. Sakura saw yummy looking pancakes on the table with maple syrup and juice, her favorite. 'Yay!' she thought. There was then the sound of a car horn coming from the street. 'no.' Sakura whimpered. "Sorry dad my ride is here. I gotta go!" Sakura said as she grabbed her backpack and ran out the door.



Sakura got in the back seat of a luxury sedan. "Hey everybody!" Sakura said happily. "Hi Sakura!" Tomoyo said from the driver's seat. "Hey Sakura." Yamazaki said leaning over the passenger's side seat. "Ya know Sakura, on the first day of the second semester of your sophomore year in high school it's tradition to wear all your cloths backwards." Yamazaki said still leaning over the seat. "Really?" Sakura said with a dumbfounded look on her face not noticing that everyone's clothes were on correctly. "No, he's lying!" Chiharu said from the seat next to Sakura's.

"Guess what guys!" Sakura bubbled.

"What?" Yamazaki and Chiharu said almost in unison.

"Syaoran is back!"

"Really? Li's back? When did he get here?" Chiharu asked.

"Yesterday, actually." Tomoyo said.

"And he'll be staying for a while so he'll be at school with us!" Sakura said rather excited.

They arrived at school a few minutes before the first bell. Tomoyo and Sakura walked slowly towards their homeroom class while Yamazaki ran off somewhere with Chiharu. Sakura saw Syaoran standing next to a tree so she and Tomoyo walked over to greet him. "Hi Syaoran." Sakura said in a playful voice. She then saw another person standing next to him latched onto his arm. "Oh, ah, hi Meling. I. didn't know you were going to stay."

"Of course I am!" Meling stated. "You think that I'm just going to leave my Li alone? We are still engaged you know."

"Hey." Syaoran said in a low voice seeming to be trying to ignore the clamp on his arm. Sakura looked at Syaoran's face, he had a bandage over his left eye from the lashing trees the previous night. "How ya feeling Syaoran?" Sakura asked in a supple tone.

"Not bad, some scrapes, I'm fine, how about you?" Syaoran asked.

"I'm fine." Sakura said. The warning bell rang and everyone started toward their the classroom.

Syaoran strode next to Sakura as they walked. "Just try and be careful. I..." he paused "...well, just be careful." Sakura looked up at him for a moment. It seemed as though he was going to say something more but hadn't. She wondered just how many secrets he was keeping from her. It made her want to frown but she couldn't blame him. She had never known him to keep anything from her that might harm her. She trusted him and so she let it go for the moment and smiled.

"Okay, Syaoran! I will!" Sakura said with happy enthusiasm.

Both Syaoran and Meling had homeroom with Sakura and Tomoyo. They were introduced to the class and given a relatively warm welcome. The day began going by without incident of any sort. The bell for

lunch rang and everyone poured out of their classrooms and migrated to the courtyard to eat and socialize. Sakura and Tomoyo sat down to have lunch. "I'm starving!" Sakura said. Syaoran later walked up with Meiling attached to his arm as always, and sat down. He still looked rather serious, but then again, that was relatively normal for him. He sat with a frown without looking at anyone. Sakura thought that maybe he was in deep thought. He'd looked this way since he arrived. She was still getting the nagging feeling that he was hiding something and that something was bothering him.

No one said anything for a while, they just sat there eating. "So, Syaoran, how are you doing so far, ya know with classes and your apartment and stuff? Are you getting settled in?" Sakura said trying to start a conversation to break the silence.

"We're settling in just fine and Li is so smart that no matter what the subject is he'll do great!" Meiling gloated for Syaoran. "Stop it, Meling." Syaoran said in a not so friendly tone. Meling sat there looking a bit melancholy at Syaoran's scolding.

"But you are!" she protested "there's no challenge you can't come out of on top!" she gloated some more, her usual arrogant light returning to her face.

"NO MELING! I CAN'T! YOU KNOW THAT - SO STOP SAYING OTHERWISE!" Syaoran almost shouted at her as he stood from his seat. Meling almost looked like she was about to cry. Syaoran looked down at her angrily for a moment and then turned and walked off without another word.

Sakura's and Tomoyo's eyes went back to Meling after Syaoran was out of sight. Her saddened expression had changed to desperate despair as she sat doing her best to fight back her tears. The girls decided lunch was over and they took Meling out of the crowded courtyard as Syaoran's raised voice had drawn some attention. They took her to a shady spot under a large tree elsewhere on the school campus and sat down with her.

The two girls hadn't many words of comfort to give Meling. She knew Syaoran better than anyone and very much loved him. "Don't worry, Meling," Sakura offered "he didn't mean it!"

"I- I know." Meling said with a small voice still sniffing back her tears. "It's just, I've tried so hard...ever since it happened he's been- and I haven't been able to help him." Meling began to cry and Sakura's mind began to race. 'So something did happen!' she thought. Sakura pushed it out of her mind for the moment though and turned her attention back to Meling. It was obvious to both Tomoyo and Sakura that Meling wasn't at all mad at Syaoran. Her tears weren't even for herself, they were tears for his pain. Touching though it was how utterly devoted Meling was to Syaoran, the pain she felt for him wrenched the two girls' hearts.

After a few minutes Meling was beginning to calm. The three girls sat for a time but then Sakura turned to Meling. She had to know, even if it meant going behind Syaoran's back. "Meling, you said he's been this way 'ever since,' ever since what?" Sakura asked as tenderly as she could not wanting to rush Meling.

"I-" Meling started to say but paused and bit her lip. "I don't really know."

"You don't know?" Sakura said confused.

"Well, he's been like this ever since a couple of months ago. I was away from the Li family compound when..."

"When what?" Sakura said as if on the edge of her seat.

"That's just it." Meling said leaving the other girls puzzled. "I wasn't there. Something happened but Li won't tell me either. But he's been different ever since. Whatever it was made him lose his confidence. He doesn't seem to believe in himself anymore! I've tried to tell him how wonderful he is and that he can do anything but he just- shuts me out. I had to beg his mother to let me come to him. I couldn't stand being away from him again, especially when he needs me." She fell silent.

Sakura didn't know what to say. Syaoran had lost his confidence, his belief in himself. It reminded her of what had happened years before. He felt like this then too and yet he was so strong and powerful now and then, Sakura thought. It occurred to her that he must be many times more powerful now that some years had gone by. She in fact knew of this for a fact. She remembered they're reunion just that last night when she felt his magical power sweep over her like a great wave. He was more powerful, and yet according to Meling, he thought himself to be weak. This troubled Sakura greatly.

The bell to return to classes came and the girls parted ways with Meling after making sure she'd be alright.

The rest of the school day went by and the dismissal bell rang. Sakura met Tomoyo in the parking lot to go home. Meling's story had stayed in her thoughts ever since lunch. Sakura was rather quiet as they walked to Tomoyo's car. She looked at the car and realized that it was just the two of them. "Hey, where's Yamazaki and Chiharu?" Sakura asked Tomoyo. They're off somewhere, said they'd walk home." Tomoyo answered. The two girls got in the car and started home. "You're worried about Li, aren't you" Tomoyo inquired.

"Yah." Sakura in a small voice.

"He seems even more depressed than before." Tomoyo said. "I'm worried about him too." She said more to comfort Sakura than to express her own feelings.

"Thanks, Tomoyo. You're a good friend."

Sakura got home and she and Tomoyo went up to her room to study. "So how was your first day back at hell-high?" Kero asked Sakura and Tomoyo.

"I wish you wouldn't repeat things you hear Yamazaki say." Sakura complained.

"Well as much as you complain about it, it sounds like an accurate description." Kero pointed out. Sakura then told Kero what Meling had told her and Tomoyo.

"AH HA!" he exclaimed. "I knew the brat was keeping things from us!"

"KERO!" Sakura scolded. "I'm worried about Syaoran here!"

"Ah come on, kid. He's a tough cookie as much as I hate to admit it, and you're right, I felt it too, he's a lot stronger than he was before. It'll be fine." Kero said as if it closed the case.

"Yah well, I'm still worried about hi-" Sakura stopped mid-word and turned her head toward the window. She stared intently out of it for a time and then Tomoyo asked, "Sakura what is it?"

"I sense a Clow Card!" Sakura exclaimed.

"Oh yah! Our first Clow Card!" Kero shouted. Sakura, Tomoyo and Kero left the house and started to search for the card. "Can you tell where it's coming from?" Tomoyo asked.

"Over there." Sakura pointed to the wooded area near her house.

"It's getting dark." Tomoyo said as she held onto Sakura's arm.

"Can you tell which card it is?" Kero asked Sakura. "It's familiar, one of my first." Sakura said, concentrating.

They walked a ways, Sakura leading them, following the distant magical vibrations of the Card. They passed into the woods and the dimming sky all but disappeared under the tree tops and all become very dim though they could still see where they were going.

"What's that?!" Tomoyo said as she pointed to a beam of bright blue light through the trees. "It's Syaoran! Remember? His darivitor." Sakura said with a hint of excitement. Sakura, Tomoyo and Kero ran toward the source of the beam. Sakura burst out of the bushes behind Syaoran. "SYAORAN!" Sakura she greeted loudly.

"Ahhhh!" Syaoran he yelled, startled. "Ahhiiii!" Sakura squealed and fell down having been startled by Syaoran's yell.

He turned around with and went to her. "Don't do that! You okay?" Syaoran said looking down at her. Tomoyo jumped out of the bushes and saw Sakura sitting on the ground. She knelt down next to her. "Sakura are you okay?"

"I'm fine, this root broke my fall." She said rubbing her backside.

"Sakura, what is wrong with you, I could have killed you!" Syaoran scolded.

"I'm sorry." Sakura whimpered looking down. "You just... scared me" she giggled as it all now seemed rather silly.

"I was the one who was scared!" Syaoran said as his hear went budump budumb. "Don't sneak up on me like that in the dark." Syaoran warned half in jest as he helped her up. Sakura could tell that despite his attempt at kindness, Syaoran was still troubled by whatever was bothering him. He turned from her to continue the search but Kero flew in front of him.

"You got alota nerve kid! Knocking Sakura down for no reason!" Kero growled at Syaoran as all Kero had seen when he came out of the bush with Tomoyo was Sakura on the ground and Syaoran standing in front of her. Syaoran stared at Kero for a moment and than swatted at him a few time and started off

again. "We've got a card to capture." Syaoran said as he stormed off, irritated more at Kero than anything else at that moment. Sakura and Tomoyo giggled.

Kero buzzed around Sakura and Tomoyo's heads waving his little fists in the air "That Li kid has gone too far!" Kero he complained.

"He didn't knock me down, I fell down." Sakura said. This didn't really surprise Kero, and it made more sense, but he didn't want to admit that. "You remember what I told you? About what Meling said?" Sakura said quietly.

"Yah yah, fine. We'll deal with that later, right now we have a card to catch." Kero said. "Sakura, where is it?"

"Close, I can feel it." Sakura said. After a short while more of searching, Syaoran called back to the girls and Kero, "I'm going to scout ahead, just shout if you need me." he said.

"Ah... okay." Sakura said a little unwilling to let him go off on his own.

"Good, get lost." Kero call after.

"KERO! Not funny!" Sakura shouted at him as Syaoran dashed off silently and stealthily.

Now without Syaoran the two girls and Kero walked through the now thick darkness. There was only the occasional patch of glowing ground from the white light of the moon above the trees. "We're very close!" Sakura said at length. She, Kero and Tomoyo all stopped and looked around.

"So then where's it comen' from?" Kero asked as his eyes darted to one dark, spooky hollow to the next.

"It's... It's, above us!" Sakura said as she looked toward the sky along with her two companions all with eyes wide. There was silence and then a hoot of an owl. Nothing was up there.

"Eh, it was just an owl." Kero said. "well, if it is up there it could be the Fly Card. Or maybe the Float Card." There was then a loud and long screech coming from above.

"Ah! That wasn't an owl!" Sakura said as she held her Star Key close to her chest. The area of sky above they could see through the trees vanished as the form of something massive that was white and glowing like the full moon swooped overhead. As it did the trees waved from the wind of it's wake. "Yep, defiantly the Fly. Sakura, you're up!" Kero said.

"The key that hides the powers of darkness show your true form before me, Release!" Sakura chanted as her Star Wand appeared. "Windy, bring fly down!" The windy burst from it's card and chased after the large bird. When it caught up with fly it wrapped itself around the bird and they fell from the sky. Sakura ran to where they fell; in a grove where the trees were scarce and found windy struggling to keep fly in its grasp. The bird was as large as before and it seemed to be stronger this time. "Seal it now!" Kero shouted. Just then, fly burst from windy's grasp and flapped it's wings once toward the three with gale force knocking them to the ground.

"Imperial Lightning! Strike!" A deep voice penetrated the air. A massive bolt of lightning left Syaoran's sword and impacted the bird and there was a blinding flash and a loud crack of thunder that shook the ground. An instant later, Sakura looked up from the ground where she and the others had been knocked to see the luminescent bird sprawled on its back in the clearing.

"PWWEEEEEE!!??" Sakura frantically exclaimed. "Oh NO! Did Syaoran kill it?"

The bird's long neck and wings then began to move again as it attempted to return to the sky.

"SAKURA! Seal it NOW!" Syaoran yelled from across the clearing.

"Right!" she yelled back as she jumped to her feet. "Return to your true form, Star Card!" Sakura yelled. The bird was pulled into its card in a beautiful stream of light. The card floated into Sakura's hand as they had so many times before.

"YAY! YOU DID IT!!!" Kero celebrated with Tomoyo.

Syaoran walked to the others and Sakura beamed at him. "Thanks for your help Syaoran, I, couldn't have done it without you." Sakura said and gave him a big hug. He blushed profusely but none could see it in the dim light of the moon above.

"Well, you- you're welcome." He said.

He smiled as Sakura let go of him and looked into his eyes. She thought of what Meling had said that day. "No, really! You've gotten so much stronger, Syaoran!" She stopped short for some unknown reason and Syaoran was puzzled. "Pwe- I'm mean, that's not to say you weren't powerful before! You were!" To Sakura's delight, Syaoran laughed. "What I mean is, I'm really glad you came back. I wouldn't have made it without you."

Still blushing, Syaoran suddenly felt as though he were being watched. He turned his head to see Tomoyo pointing her video camera right at them with stars in her eyes again. 'Such a perfect ending.' she said softly to her self over and over.

Sakura laughed. "Haha, Tomoyo, you're so weird sometimes!" both the girls giggled.

"Maybe so," Tomoyo giggled, "Let's try out your new wings!" she said cheerfully.

"Yah! Good idea!" Kero cheered.

"Okay!" Sakura said as she taped the fly card with her wand. And with that a pair of beautiful white wings appeared on her back and Sakura flew into the sky like an angel ascending to heaven with Kero fluttering around her still singing the praises of their first victory.

Syaoran stood next to Tomoyo who was still recording Sakura. He looked into the air and saw the angel in the light of the moon. Tomoyo lowered her camera and looked at Syaoran. "You know, she meant what she said."

"Yah, but, she probably didn't need me that much. She could have taken down Fly without me. I can't help her. I never could." Syaoran said.

"That's not true, Li." Tomoyo said and put her camera-free hand on his shoulder. "You give Sakura so

much. Let me ask you this: do you think I'm useless to Sakura? I certainly can't help her in battle and often times she has to protect me. Do you think she'd be better off without me?"

"Wh-wha- no! Of course not!" Syaoran said.

"Then why should you be any different? Hmm?" Tomoyo smiled at Syaoran. "You're just like me, Li. We both love her."

Syaoran's face turned bright red again. "WHA-What?"

Tomoyo giggled and started toward a spot on the other side of the clearing where Sakura and Kero and just touched down. "Come on. She's waiting for us."

To be Continued...