

Ninja Academy Power Rangers

By Ravie

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Young people start going missing around Blue Bay Harbor, Stone Canyon and Mariner Bay. Another prophecy may be about to come to fore. New Rangers are needed when the Shadow Ninja Academy makes itself known when it's five Shadow Generals begin to make their move. Join Taylor Hicks, Kane Watanabe, and their friends as they protect the three Ninja Academies.

-2008

-Ninja Storm Sequel

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Chapter 1 - Book of Wind : An Ill Wind Blows

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1 - Book of Wind : An Ill Wind Blows

Somewhere in the mountains near Blue Bay Harbor, California

Cameron Watanabe stood in a secret room under the already secret Wind Ninja Academy. The room was called Ninja Ops and it was essentially the nerve center of the Academy, though most of the staff and students had no idea it was even there. Cam was the Deputy Headmaster of the Wind Academy and had many responsibilities despite not being a Ninja himself. His father, Kanoi Watanabe was the true Headmaster of the Academy, a title inherited from his father before him, Kenji Watanabe.

Several screens around him were lit up as Cam and his artificially intelligent duplicate, Cyber Cam, analyzed data that was slowly trickling in from over the past year or so. "But what does it mean?" Cam wondered aloud.

Kanoi joined Cam quietly. "It means signs are pointing to the other prophecy your grandfather brought from his homeland. The Shadow is devouring the land," he said thoughtfully.

"But what does that mean?" Cam asked in exasperation. "What does that have to do with these petty incidents?" he asked as he looked at the series of reports. An uptick of criminal activity in the county, mostly caused by tweens and teenagers. It shouldn't have even registered with them. They weren't police, except three weeks ago, there was a blood moon over the harbor.

Kanoi had quietly freaked out and ran to the scroll room under the Academy and rifled through a particular section of shelves until he found the scroll he was looking for. It was one of their oldest pieces, Kenji Watanabe had been entrusted with it in since his own days as a ninja cadet in Japan. It spoke of the blood moon and a shadow devouring the land, one child at a time. Since then, Cam had been tasked with monitoring the area for anything unusual. So far, this is all that had been picked up on.

Blue Bay Harbor and the surrounding area had been quiet for four years, since Lothor had escaped from the Abyss of Evil and tried to join up with an evil being known as Mesagog. He was defeated but that marked the end of the Ninja Storm Ranger Powers.

Cam refused to let that be the end. He and two other super genius nerds had been working for the past few years to either restore the powers or create new ones. They had succeeded.

"Nothing happens on accident, Cam," Kanoi said. "We'll need the Power Rangers more than ever now. Come. It's late. You need to sleep. The new term starts tomorrow," he said and smiled at the face his son made.

"Keep working on this," Cam told his own face inside one of the screens.

"Will do," Cyber Cam said and saluted.

Cam and Kanoi left Ninja Ops.

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Taylor Hicks checked his watch and looked around. He sighed loudly and banged the back of his head on his locker. His friends were going to make him late. This did not surprise him from Kane, but Alex should really know better. In fact, it was usually Alex chewing them out for making *her* late.

Tay considered himself a rather ordinary guy. He was of average height, on the slim side and his sandy colored hair stuck up in odd angles sometimes. He had a fake tooth because of a treehouse accident when he was twelve. He had hazel eyes and he wore ordinary clothes. In Blue Bay Harbor, liking extreme sports wasn't unusual, but he was pretty much average at them as well.

He was even average at his top secret Ninja training. Which is where he had to be. If Kane and Alex would ever show up. He spotted them coming out of the science lab. Alexandra Roberts, though she swore she'd punch out anyone who called her Alexandra, was taller than Kane and almost as tall as Taylor. She was an outdoorsy girl with short brown hair and brown eyes. She had cute freckles and always seemed to be laughing, except for when she was chewing out Tay, Kane or anyone else who wasn't doing things in the way she deemed correct.

Kane Watanabe was seemingly an Asian kid whose features hinted at some mixed ethnicity. His dark hair was as mussed as the rest of him. Kane always seemed as though he just rolled out of bed after sleeping restlessly all night in his clothes.

"There you guys are. If we're late on the first day of term, your uncle is going to have our heads," he stated to Kane. "Not to mention what Sensei Shane will do to me," he remarked drily.

"Hey, it's all on Alex this time," Kane said and held up his hands.

Alex crossed her arms over her chest. "Mr. Henley overreacted to my suggestion that perhaps his thinking was so skewed and twisted up that he wouldn't know a hunk of pyrite from a lump of agate," she said and shrugged.

"Right. What's your excuse?" Tay asked Kane.

"Are you kidding? A chance to see Alex get chewed out by a teacher? Even Uncle and Cam can't fault me for wanting to see that," he declared.

"Yeah, they can," Tay said even though he'd have stayed to see that as well. "Let's go already. Aly left ages ago," he said.

"Well, let's not let Miss Priss show us up," Alex declared and quickly threw books into her locker. "Race you guys!" She said and began running as she soon as she passed the front doors of the school.

"Sneaky cheater!" Kane called after her and began running after her.

Tay sighed. "When did I become the mature responsible one?" he wondered aloud and began running behind them. They stayed pretty much neck and neck until they reached the outskirts of town. "You mud

brains can eat my dust," he shouted at them. He gripped at his clothes and revealed a black leathery uniform with red piping all over it underneath. There was also an insignia at his breast for the Wind Ninja Academy. He pulled a black mask up to conceal his face.

"You wish, fairy boy!" Kane retorted. He and Alex pulled at their clothes and revealed uniforms similar to Taylor's only the piping was yellow and Alex's was more feminine.

They kicked it into high gear, each putting on a burst of speed as they jumped and bounced their way deeper into the forest. Red and yellow streaks stretched out behind them.

Taylor was a Wind Ninja and since it was his specialty, he was lighter on his feet and more agile than his two friends. He arrived at the secluded waterfall before the two Earth Ninjas did. He didn't hesitate as he crossed what appeared to be a pool of water and entered the grounds of the Wind Ninja Academy. It was a sprawling complex of Japanese style buildings and training grounds.

Cam stood dressed in his traditional Deputy Headmaster's robes. He had his arms crossed over his chest. Tay slid to a halt. Coming in behind him, Alex and Kane didn't compensate quickly enough and crashed into Tay, who in turn crashed into Cam. They all went down in a tangle of limbs.

"Seriously, you three," Cam complained as he got to his feet. He shook his head and picked up a clipboard he'd dropped. "Late. All of you are late," he said as the trio scrambled to their feet and tried to make apologies.

"C'mon, Cam. Give it a break. It wasn't our fault. It was a teacher," Kane said and offered a winning grin.

Cam was less than moved. "All the new cadets have already arrived. You three coming in late and causing a scene on top of it doesn't look good. Join your instructors," he said.

"Yes, sensei," they murmured and gave him polite bows. He returned it and stalked away.

Tay sighed. He pulled down his mask and went to join the other Wind Ninja Cadets while Alex and Kane went to join the Earth Ninja Cadets. There were two other groups of Cadets. A group of Ninja in blue piped uniforms made up the Water Ninja Cadets and a fidgeting mass of Ninja in tan uniforms marked the newest arrivals.

"Nice going, Hicks," one of the other Wind Cadets muttered to him. Several others snickered.

"Be quiet," Shane Clarke told his students. The red clad ninja quieted down immediately. "We're going to jump straight into things. I want my senior cadets to group off to the side. The rest of you will be joining Kapri's intermediate techniques class for today," he said. There was a chorus of grumbling complaints. Shane raised an eyebrow at them. After teaching here at the academy for nearly five years now, he had his teacher look down. The group parted.

Taylor slid aside with the senior group. He noticed that the other classes were dividing up as well. Something was up. He looked across the yard at Kane who caught his look with a shrug. He didn't have any idea either.

"You sure you're in the right group, Hicks?"

Taylor held in a sigh. Daryl Brooks was a college aged guy. There wasn't an age limit on becoming a Ninja student. He'd progressed a lot in the two years he'd been studying. He was a pretty good Wind student and he let it go it his head often. Taylor, on the other hand, had been learning since freshman year and hadn't demonstrated any outstanding abilities.

"We're going to go through a battery of tests. Some of you showed up over the summer to train. Some of you," Shane gave a minute pause as his eyes flicked toward Taylor, "did not bother. Today we'll see where each of you stand," he said.

"Will that mean that some of us graduate?" a young woman asked.

"When the tests are over, we'll all know," Shane answered.

Taylor cocked his head. Something was definitely up. Shane led them away from the Academy's courtyard, and soon past the grounds themselves. Taylor briefly saw the other groups also being led off. Kane and Alex were both looking as confused as the rest of them. Of course, it was a no brainer who was going to be the top student of the Earth Ninjas. While Kane had been training nearly all his life, he didn't really put forth much effort to excel. Alex, however, was competitive and talented.

There was a sure winner in the Water group as well. Alice Whittaker went to school with them, but she was in a league of her own. Blonde, blue-eyed, popular, Aly was pretty much top girl of Blue Bay Harbor High. She was also a competitive swimmer and local surf prodigy. She was also a Water Ninja prodigy. She was every bit as competitive as Alex. Taylor thought that the reason the two girls didn't get along was less to do with school social politics and more to do with how much they were actually alike.

The Wind Ninjas, on the other hand, had Daryl and Sophia Cates. Sophia had broken her arm last winter, which set her back on her training. That's why she was eager to use this test to graduate. If she hadn't sustained such a serious injury, she'd have already graduated.

Taylor guessed that Sensei Shane probably put him somewhere in the middle-bottom of the line-up. He wasn't necessarily competitive. He pretty much took things as they came to him. He'd been getting into one scrape or another since he was a skid and that hadn't changed much. The only things that ever really pricked his temper is when people were being jerks to other people. That was usually the cause of his troubles. He had a habit of mouthing off when he shouldn't.

He took a moment to assess the newest students. Young people in tan uniforms without any other color indications of where they're talents lie. It would take a while of basic training before they began to show any aptitude. There were even some instances when they couldn't master using their Ki to channel nature at all.

Some people considered Taylor little better than one of these people. But today, today something was in the wind. So, he considered giving it his all on this test. He might even surprise himself.

Sensei Shane was on edge. More than usual. While Sensei was never a Cam-level stickler, he was still a pretty strict instructor. He was worse than usual. If anyone tried to have a whispered conversation on

the trip, they were quickly silenced. They eventually stopped trying. As they continued along in the near silence, Taylor heard something out of place. He couldn't identify it. He paused, and made a few hand gestures to stir up the wind and bring the sound closer, but it had already ceased.

"Hicks!" Taylor started when Sensei shouted his name. He'd fallen behind the others. Sensei looked more peeved than usual.

Taylor pointed in the general vicinity the sound had come from. "No one else heard that?" he asked. Wind Ninjas usually had exceptional hearing. When you worked with the wind, you became attuned with the air around you. Sound vibrations were sharper and clearer. Taylor found it odd that no one else heard it.

Shane sighed. He gestured for Taylor to catch up. The rangy blond kid jogged forward. Shane was never sure what to think about Taylor Hicks. He was the friend of Sensei Kanoi's nephew, Kane, son of Lothor. Taylor had shown an early aptitude for Wind, but aside from that just stayed average. Sometimes, however, just sometimes, he thought there might be something more to the kid. Shane himself hadn't been the best student. He supposed he was wont to give underdogs the benefit of the doubt. When given a chance, however, Taylor never seemed to exceed expectations.

After a while, the group arrived at a rickety old rope bridge that spanned across a deep ravine in the middle of the woods. Shane gestured to a high point on the horizon. "I'll be waiting in a Ranger station up on that foothill. Make your way there," he said. A smile stretched his face. "Good luck," he said. He threw something on the ground and a cloud of red smoke erupted. A spiral of wind dispersed it quickly, obscuring vision and sound. By the time the students cleared the smoke, Sensei Shane was gone.

Daryl smirked. "Not only are we racing, but we have to find him," he announced, as if this was something the rest of them couldn't figure out. No one actually paid him any attention as they began crossing the bridge, leaving streaks of red behind them.

Of course it wasn't as simple as finding a path through the woods and locating the Ranger station. That would have been far too easy for a test for Wind cadets. Each one quickly went their separate ways. Taylor moved along swiftly on a scraggly sort of trail. Every now and then, an obstacle came along. The woods were booby trapped. Things came flying at him from the trees, or sprung up from the ground. Depending on the circumstance, it was dodge, deflect or attack.

When his trail led nowhere, he jumped into the trees, agilely hopping from tree to tree. This was the safest route, plus, when he came to a good sized redwood, he scaled to the top and scanned the distance. He could just see the Ranger station in the distance. He glanced around, wondering if there would be signs of the others' progress. Unfortunately, there were a few who make too much noise, or allowed themselves to be seen.

He was about to put on a burst of speed, now that he had a clearer destination in mind, when he heard a startled cry of pain somewhere behind of him. There was a flash of movement and crash. Trees rippled with wind energy. Something was wrong. He launched himself from the tree, kicking off with a burst of wind energy. He aimed himself like a skydiver for a time, then twisted his body mid-air and landed soundlessly beside Sophia Cates.

She was gripping her leg and trying not to whimper. So focused was she on her pain, that she didn't even notice that Taylor had arrived until he asked her what had happened. "Was it a booby trap?" he asked. From what he'd experienced thus far, a talent like Sophia shouldn't have had any trouble with the traps.

Sophia shook her head. "Just go, Taylor. You'll fall behind," she said, her voice cracking with pain. Taylor ignored that and checked her leg. He gave her a grin. "No one's expecting me to win this thing anyway," he said as he found some sticks to use as a splint. He took off his outer tunic and removed the red-shirt beneath, and used air blades to shred it up.

"That's because you're always doing dumb stuff like this," she told him as he wrapped her leg.

Taylor didn't respond to that. There had been disturbances in the air before she cried out and even afterwards. He could see on the ground that she'd been bounced with a Wind attack even after her leg had been injured. "How's that?" he asked as he tied the last of strips of cloth for her splint.

"Better," she said and attempted to get to her feet. Since she was small, compact, and spritely, he just scooped her up into his arms. She didn't hamper him much, when he took to the trees again. He made good time and managed to avoid most of the traps. They were still the last to arrive at the Ranger station.

Sensei looked vaguely disappointed and Daryl looked highly smug. Taylor set Sophia on her feet and they bowed to him. "Daryl was the first to arrive. Taylor and Sophia, the last. We'll return to the Academy now. I'll announce the final evaluations tomorrow," Sensei said. He took over helping Sophia. It was clear she needed to go to the hospital and have her leg looked at. Daryl strutted around, and Taylor watched him as a low burn of anger began to fill his belly. He ignored all the pithy "better luck next time" remarked from the other students as they return to the Academy.

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Kane was watching his best friend as they walked along the streets of Blue Bay Harbor. Kane hadn't done well on his test either. He hadn't really given it his all. Even though he wasn't allowed in on the big stuff, he wasn't exactly stupid. He knew Uncle and Cam had been worrying about something lately. Something bad. He also knew that these sudden tests had to do with that. Kane put things together and came up with one answer. Power Rangers. In which case, he had a plan of his own and that didn't include being the Yellow Ranger.

He hadn't said anything to either of his friends about his theory yet, though. He'd look like an idiot if he was wrong. One thing he knew, however, was that ex-evil Rangers were never core. And Kane Watanabe had pulled a very brief stint as an evil Power Ranger. He hadn't told his friends about that either. How could he? He was the son of Lothor. What kind of excuse could he give? Would it really matter that he'd been under the control of an evil clay sword at the time? That Widow Repulsa put a spell on him?

When he disappeared a couple years ago, he'd made the excuse, with Uncle and Cam's help, that he'd been visiting family in Angel Grove. Which was technically not a lie since he'd been evil-Ranger-fied in order to defeat his second cousin, Tai Stapleton. Tai Stapleton was Uncle's uncle's grandson. Lucky for

Kane, Tai Stapleton wasn't easily defeated and he'd been returned to normal.

It's not like he would have beat Alex anyway. He was good. Better than he let on, usually. But Alex was amazing. She'd be a good champion for truth, justice and the American way. Taylor would, too. But no one else seemed to know that except him and Alex.

Finally, unable to take the brooding silence anymore, he let out a long exaggerated sigh. "What is eating you, dude?" he finally demanded.

Taylor glanced at him. "Let's go to the skate park," he said without answering the question.

"It's after six. The park is closed," Kane pointed out.

"Pee-Bo gave me a set of keys. Or would you rather go biking?" he asked.

Kane narrowed his eyes. "Neither. Come with me," he said. Taylor grunted when Kane dragged him off the street. Taylor eventually followed Kane to a deserted field.

"Why are we here?" Taylor asked.

Kane pulled at his clothes. "Because I'm not Shane, I'm not Cam or Uncle. I'm not Alex. I ain't going to throw my hands up and write you off. I ain't going roll my eyes and stomp off and let you stew. I just ain't going to hold back," he said and a wicked grin flashed across his face. He took a stance and a large plug of dirt floated from the ground. He struck out with a fist and the plug went flying through the air, right at the blond boy's head.

Taylor reacted immediately. He kicked out, a blade of air slicing apart the plug of dirt. He pulled at his clothes then went on the offensive. The two boys went at it for a while, neither holding back. It culminated in a barrage of rocks meeting a wall of air. The resulting explosion knocked them both off their feet and sent them flying through the air.

Kane landed hard on the ground. He lay there for a long moment, waiting for his breath to come back. When it did, he panted for long moment and sat up. He didn't see Taylor. He looked up. Taylor was sitting in a tree, panting. "You okay?" Kane asked.

Taylor gave him a thumbs up and scooted out of the tree. He landed on his feet lightly. He walked over and held a hand down to Kane and helped him to his feet. "I think Daryl used a wind technique on Sophia. Twice," he said. He pointed to a relatively large rock that was laying on the ground. A few hand movement wrapped a blanket of wind around it, and then began to compress until the rock began to crack under the pressure. When Taylor dissipated the energy, the rock fell apart.

Kane whistled. "If that's true, why wouldn't she say anything?" he asked.

"She wouldn't necessarily know it was him. I mean, I found it weird that she broke her arm to start with, but it's possible. But what happened today was no accident. Daryl doesn't know that I was out ahead and heard the attack. I didn't see him, but I know his type. He's like those apes that liked to throw me in dumpsters," he said.

Kane frowned. "Oh, this isn't good. If I'm right about these tests, this is very, very bad. You have to tell Shane," he said.

Taylor raised a brow at his friend. "What do you think the tests are about?" he asked.

"Just trust me. You have to say something. I'm gonna jet. I think I need a shower. And so do you. But seriously, tell Shane. Don't worry about being wrong," he said. "See ya," he said and streaked away, leaving Taylor to wallow in his moral quandary alone.

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As a senior at Blue Bay Harbor High School, Taylor was allowed to leave campus for his lunch break. He'd finally decided to talk to Sensei Shane. Alex and Kane were tagging along with him. He was so deep in thought that he nearly barreled over Kane when the other guy stopped short. "Dude," he complained.

Alex raised her eyebrows and followed his line of sight. "Oh," she said. Taylor cocked his head and looked at what was so captivating. He almost laughed.

Sitting down at an outdoor table was a cute Asian girl with earbuds in her ears. She was rocking knee-high canvas sneakers over stonewashed jeans, and a froofy purple blouse. She was exactly Kane's type. For a long time, he'd had a crush on a girl named Amy Chen, until he suddenly couldn't look at her any more.

"You just now noticing the new girl?" Taylor asked. "You really do zone out when you step onto campus, don't you?" he said.

"It's school. It does something to my brain. Any details, Alex?" he asked.

Alice Whittaker stopped beside them before Alex could answer. She seemed to be on her way off campus as well. "Her name is Sesami Elliot. We have art together. She's cool, so you don't have a chance," she said with a smile.

"Actually, we have physics together, and she says to call her Sissy, and she's nice. She's also a new cadet you somehow failed to notice," Alex said. She and Aly shared a steely eyed glance.

"Awesome," Kane said. Taylor shook his head. He clapped his hands on Kane's shoulders and began pushing him. Kane allowed himself to be pushed. Alex fell into step behind them. She glanced at Aly, who also seemed to be joining them.

She waited until they were away from school and other people before speaking. "What's going on?" she asked.

"What do you mean?" Alex asked her.

"I mean the tests. Sensei Tori didn't say much afterwards, just that she'd tell us more today. I was hoping

you three knew anything," she explained.

Kane grinned. "See, if you ever allowed yourself to be seen with us, you'd know by now," he said.

"So you *do* know something," she gloated.

Kane looked around and gestured for her to come closer. With a slight frown, she leaned in.

"This is something only Tay and Alex know, don't go spreading it around, okay?" he said. Aly gave an affirmative nod. Kane looked around again. "Okay, so it's like this," he gave a dramatic pause which earned him an annoyed look, "Uncle and Cam don't tell me anything important," he stated with a serious, deadpan expression. Taylor and Alex snickered.

Aly huffed and pushed him away. "I don't even know why I bothered with you people," she said. She tugged at her clothes as she began to run away, leaving a streak of blue behind her.

Alex was laughing so hard, she leaned against Taylor for support. "The look on her face was priceless. You really had her going, Kane," she declared.

"Yeah. I'm good like that. We'd better get going, too. Before Shane makes any important decisions," he said the last part somberly. Alex sobered as well and nodded. She was actually angry at Daryl herself. The three of them began running toward the Academy.

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The instructors were nowhere to be found. Neither was Cam. When questioned, Kane's cousins, Marah and Kapri, pretended not to know anything. The Amazonian blond Kapri pulled off the dense act rather well. It was harder to swallow from the shrewd, brunette Marah.

"They must be in Ninja Ops. I just wish I knew where it was," Kane said after a fruitless search.

"You've been living here for almost four years, and you still have no idea where it is? What kind of sneaky, evil space ninja are you?" Alex asked him.

"The kind that isn't. Okay, I'll give you the sneaky bit," Kane said.

Taylor shushed them. There was activity at the Academy this time of day, but he easily distinguished threads of conversation. He began pulling and pushing currents of air, listening briefly and discarding them just as quickly. He briefly heard Sensei Shane's voice, but where did it come from? He began following the sound.

Alex and Kane shared perplexed glances and followed him. They knew what he was doing. Taylor suddenly stopped. The conversation had ceased. He whipped around when the three instructors and Cam came out of the main building of the academy. That wasn't where they'd been.

"What are you three up to?" Cam asked them.

"We were looking for you," Kane answered.

"It'll have to wait. Alex, I need you to come with us. You, too, Alice," Cam said. "You two should just back to school," he said to Taylor and Kane.

"I'll find Daryl," Shane told Cam.

"That's what I need to talk about, Sensei," Taylor said.

"It'll have to wait. We're in the middle of something important. Please, just go back to school," Shane said impatiently.

"This *is* important," Taylor said, his temper starting to prick.

"Not *now*, Hicks. Just go back to school," Shane said a final time and dashed off to find Daryl.

"Cam!" Kane said.

"I don't know what you two are up to, but we don't have time," Cam said.

"Take the time. Before you make any *important* decisions, have all the facts. Watch the recordings," Taylor said. He'd finally realized what the sound was he'd heard before the test. It was cameras being remotely switched on. He stalked away, leaving Cam gaping after him.

"Yeah, watch the recordings," Kane told his cousin before jogging to catch up with Taylor, whose angry, long-legged stride had already carried him nearly out of the yard.

"How did Taylor know the tests had been recorded?" the blonde Water Instructor, Tori Hanson, asked Cam.

"Yeah. Did you accidentally tell Kane?" the dark featured Earth Instructor, Dustin Brooks, added.

"No. No I didn't," Cam said.

"You didn't need to. Taylor said he heard a weird sound before the test started," Alex said.

Cam didn't comment. "Come along," he said. The two girls followed Cam and their sensei's into the bowels of the Academy.

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Taylor's head full of steam had him going nowhere in particular. Kane was nearly running to keep up with him. "Stop already!" he said, and grabbed his friend's arm. "Cam knows something's up, now. He won't make any mistakes. He's Cam, after all. It'll be okay," he said.

Taylor took in a deep breath and then let it out. "I know. I know," he said. He looked around. "Where are we?" he asked.

"We're near the junior high, I think," Kane said.

Sure enough, Taylor could hear voices from young teens enjoying recess. "Ah, the memories," he said.

"You mean the nightmares," Kane corrected with an exaggerated shudder. Taylor grinned and started heading toward the school. Kane groaned and followed his friend. "Isn't that Gray?" he asked.

Taylor saw the other kid, too. Tall and kind of scrawny, Grayson Collier was walking down the street with his hands stuffed in his hoodie pouch. He and Taylor had been friends in elementary school. After his parents died, he'd turned into an anti-social loner that eschewed any attempts Taylor made to reconnect with him. "Yo, Gray!" he called. He and Kane caught up with him.

"Oh, hey," Gray mumbled and continued walking. Taylor was used to this and didn't force an attempt at conversation on him.

Kane slowed to a stop as they were passing the middle school's recess area. "Something's...off," he said. The hairs on the back of his neck were standing up.

Taylor paused as well. "Huh?" he looked around but didn't see anything out of the ordinary. Suddenly, Gray gave a startled yelp and began running back the other way. Kane and Taylor dashed to see what had frightened the timid boy. Just around the corner several, gray-black, featureless ninja-like creatures were surrounding a young girl. In front of their eyes, one of the gray-black creatures began taking on her features.

"What the...hey!" Taylor shouted. The featureless faced turned toward them.

"Shouting at the scary gray things was such a good idea," Kane said, but he was grinning slightly.

"Let that girl go. The real one," Taylor demanded.

There was a bodiless laugh moments before something seemed to step out of the shadows. It appeared to be mostly a man, but like a man that had fused with a falcon. Part of his face was human, and another part was bird. He had one wing that sprouted from his back like a lopsided angel. He was dressed reminiscent of a Wind Master. "Who's going to make, us, boys? You?" he asked in a surprisingly pleasant voice. "Shadelings. Let's add two more to the student body," he said.

More ninja creatures seemed to manifest from the shadows as they approached Taylor and Kane. The two boys tugged on their clothes to reveal their ninja attire. They stood back to back.

"Wind Cadets? Even better!" the bird-man declared with a smug laugh.

The Shadelings attacked. Taylor jumped and spun around, tossing blades of air that severed the creatures that melted into nothingness. Kane used plugs of earth and rocks like a floating shield. Occasionally he used a piece to block, or attack.

But there were a lot of the Shadelings. Suddenly, a stream of water tore through the Shadelings and

crashed into the bird-man. Chunks of dirt freed the young girl who'd been in the process of being kidnapped. A ninja in yellow helped her make a run for it and a ninja in blue ran up behind the boys.

"More Wind Cadets," the birdman, Falcore, said.

"You two get back to academy," the yellow ninja, Alex, said.

"Cam's fit to be tied," the blue ninja, Aly said. "I wouldn't want to be either of you," she added smugly.

"We're not leaving you alone," Taylor denied.

"We're equipped to handle this. You aren't," Alex said.

"Just because your top students--" Kane cut off his own words. "Wait, like literally equipped?" he asked.

"Literally equipped," Alex agreed.

Before Taylor could figure out what they meant, the bird-man suddenly launched a powerful wind attack at them. He muttered an oath and stepped forward with an attack of his own. The two forces met and knocked them all off their feet.

"Pathetic how you can't even take care of a few kids," a woman's voice said. An Asian-featured shark woman stepped out of the shadows with a monster that was a mangled bird-like thing. "Luckily for you, I've perfected the Shades. Manglore! Attack!"

The bird creature spread its wings and zoomed toward them. He let out a screeching sound that exploded toward them like a sonic boom. The ninja's scattered.

"Alex! It's time!" Aly shouted as she got to her feet.

"Right!" Alex agreed. They stood side by side as Taylor and Kane watched. They now saw the devices they wore on their wrists. "Ninja Storm, Ranger Form, ha!" They spun power discs on the devices.

"Power of Water!" Blue watery energy engulfed Aly.

Power of Earth!" Yellow energy surrounded Alex.

Power suits formed around them. Silvery arms and legs, colored tunics and skirts, blue for Aly, yellow for Alex, white V-necks formed. Colored boots with black accents. White, black, and colored gloves. Finally, symbols appeared as their helmets formed. A dolphin tail for Aly, and a lion's head for Alex.

The two Rangers drew swords that had appeared on their backs. They tried to attack the monster, but, he kept taking to the air.

"Isn't there supposed to be a Red one?" Taylor asked.

"Yeah. Daryl," Kane said.

"Then where is he?" Taylor grumbled.

"Daryl won't be allowed to practice Wind Academy ninjutsu anymore," Cam said from behind the two boys. He pushed his glasses up his nose. "Since you didn't come to me, I was forced to come to you," he declared. He reached into his sleeve and pulled out a third device. "Upon reviewing the recordings, we concluded that disabling his Ki would be the best course of action. We also concluded that Taylor would have been first in the test if he hadn't gone back to help Sophia. Therefore, you should hurry and help." he said and handed the Red Wind Morpher to Taylor.

Taylor didn't argue. he could see that the girls needed his help. He strapped the Morpher to his wrist and gave the power disc a spin. "Ninja Storm, Ranger form, ha!" Red wind energy enveloped him. "Power of Wind!" He was already moving as his red power suit and helmet formed around him. He jumped high, and began to spin, He used his cyclone like a drill and crashed down into Manglore. The monster squawked and retaliated with screeching blasts that he avoided by turned back flips as he joined the two girls.

"So, where's mine?" Kane asked Cam.

"You don't get one," Cam said.

"Yes, I do. It'll turn me green," Kane added.

"No idea what you're talking about," Cam said.

Kane shrugged. "Deny it all you want, but you'll give it to me eventually. Why else would you be teaching me bushido?" he said. Cam didn't comment.

In a coordinated attack, the three Rangers split up. Yellow was sucked down into the Earth. Red went high, and Blue dashed straight ahead.

"Sonic Finn!" A dolphin tail shaped weapon appeared in Blue's hand and she blasted her own sonic attack at the monster. He sparked wildly.

Yellow exploded from the earth behind him. "Lion Hammer!" A large yellow hammer slammed into the earth and send explosive energy toward him that sent him free falling wildly.

"Hawk Blaster!" A hawk-head shaped blaster appeared in Red's hand as he fell through the air. He did a mid-air backflip away as the creature exploded, landing beside his teammates.

Falcore scoffed. "Your Shades need more work, Sharkita," he said to the woman.

"I hate to agree, but I agree. At least they can do that," she added as the monster grew into a giant form. The two malformed people slipped back into the shadows.

The Rangers glanced up at the giant creature. "Time for Zords," Red said. He spun his power disc again. "Hawk Zord!"

Yellow and Blue summoned their Zords respectively.

"Lion Zord!"

"Dolphin Zord!"

Shimmering into existence behind holographic illusions, the three Zords made themselves known and the three Rangers jumped into the cockpits. The red hawk-shaped Zord's wings caught on fire and it dive bombed the monster. The dolphin Zord launched a missile attack. The Lion Zord's mane began to spin, attacking with thousands of Gs.

The monster sparked and smoked, but didn't go down.

"All right, ladies. Megazord time," Red said.

"Right!" they agreed.

The Zords began to shift and combined to form a Megazord with feudal flares and the Wind Academy symbol on its torso. "Storm Megazord!"

Manglore screeched at the new threat and hit it with a massive impact. Blue yelped and Yellow grunted with the impact as things inside the cockpit went a little haywire. "Hang on to your helmets," Red warned them. The Megazord charged forward and the symbol on its torso began to glow. The monster tried to run away, but spherical blasts of energy were discharged. A red one made of pure wind energy, a blue one made of water energy, a yellow one made of earth energy, and the last was made of white energy combining all three forces.

The energy blasts hit the monster, and exploded him. The Storm Megazord, skid to a stop on the other side of the explosion. "Looks like we closed the book on him," Red announced.

"Looks like we might make a pretty good team," Yellow said and leaned on one of his shoulders.

"Yeah, well. I got to admit, you both exceeded expectations," Blue agreed with a smile in her voice as a new team of Wind Ninja Rangers were born.

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Kane flitted around Ninja Ops like a kid in a candy store. Cam had tried to keep him out, but there was no way that was happening. Not when his two best friends had just become Power Rangers. "I knew Cam was a nerd, but I never realized how much of a nerd he really was," he commented, looking around.

"Right," Cam's voice startled Kane and he looked around before seeing Cyber Cam on a screen.

"A narcissistic nerd at that," Taylor said, eyeing the AI version of their deputy headmaster that introduced itself as Cyber Cam.

The real Cam cleared his throat. "Since I've let you in here, you should be quiet and stay in the background," he said.

"You've met me, right?" Kane asked with an unrepentant grin.

Aly rolled her eyes. "So, when are you going to tell us what's going on and why we were activated as Power Rangers?" she asked.

"Yeah. What are we up against?" Alex asked.

"I believe I can answer that," Sensei Kanoi entered Ninja Ops quietly. The four students lined up and gave him respectful bows and greetings. "There is a shadow devouring our land, one child at a time," he said. "Until today I didn't realize what that meant. After seeing the two people, I now know. We're dealing with Shadow Ninjas. Ninjas that practice dark arts. The forms you saw are the results of giving into the shadows," he explained as the students listened raptly.

"They appear to be taking children and replacing them with shadow duplicates. The only reason to do so is to train them. We must find the source of this problem and rescue the children. That is why you have been chosen as Power Rangers."

~~~The End~~~