

A Beyblader's Story

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This is the diary of my made-up beyblade character, Mason. Sorry, I only got to after the Cina Tourny. Enjoy!

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Chapter 1 - Mason's Diary 1	2
Chapter 2 - America	27
Chapter 3 - Heather	29
Chapter 4 - Kiss	30
Chapter 5 - Dinner Party	31
Chapter 6 - Bus Ride	32
Chapter 7 - Welcome to the American BeyBlade Association	33
Chapter 8 - More Than Meets the Eye	34
Chapter 9 - All-Star Trouble	36
Chapter 10 - Friends or Foes?	38
Chapter 11 - Dreams of a Stormy Past	39
Chapter 12 - Heartfelt Candy	42
Chapter 13 - Charity Match	44
Chapter 14 - A Friendly Competition	47
Chapter 15 - Complicated	51
Chapter 16 - Memories Lost	54
Chapter 17 - Preparations	57
Chapter 18 - A Visit To Mr. D's Office	59
Chapter 19 - Final Arrangements	61

1 - Mason's Diary 1

The Secret Diaries of Mason

Day 1: I remember it was the third day since the Bladebreakers had arrived in Beijing for the China

Tournament. I had been hyped up about it all week and my uncle had even mentioned getting tickets to see the finals! That same week on Wednesday morning I woke up with nothing but beyblade on my mind, so I decided to stop by the town beydish for a morning practice. When I got there, there was a huge crowd gathered around my favorite dish. I tried to squeeze through the crowd to see what all the commotion was. And there, to my surprise, I saw the member of the

Bladebreakers, Tyson Granger, and a young boy having a battle! It was really cool! After he won,

Tyson turned to me and said, "Hey, you! How about a bey-battle?" Everyone stared at me awaiting

my answer. Finally, I said yes. The crowd roared as I approached the beydish. Excitement pulsed

through me like an electric surge. I was ready for anything! "Here we go, Pegasus", I thought.

"3 . .2 . .1 Let It Rip!", we both shouted. Our blades clashed together with such force I almost

fell over. Suddenly, Tyson called out his bit-beast to attack. Luckily I dodged it at the last second.

Then I called out Pegasus for a counterattack. "Blinding Assault", I cried. Then, in a flash of light,

the match was over. I couldn't tell who had one at first. But then I caught sight of my blade, still spinning in the dish. While Tyson's blade. . . was out! I had won! I couldn't believe it! I looked up

to

see Tyson walking towards me. “Awesome match dude! You've got some real talent. What's your

name?” I introduced myself, humbly thanked him for the match, and turned to leave. Then he said,

”Hey Mason! We're having a practice tomorrow at the Emporium bey-gym at 10. Will you be there?”

We? Did he mean the rest of the Bladebreakers? I whirled around in disbelief. “You want me to come?”

I asked. He nodded. I gratefully accepted the invitation. So, I guess I'll have a lot to write about tomorrow. I can't wait!

Day 2: This was the coolest day of my life!! I actually met and trained with the Bladebreaker team! When I arrived, everyone was already there. They all seemed really eager to meet me. I guess it was because of my match with Tyson the day before. It turns out they all have their own bit-beasts too! Anyway, before practice Tyson introduced me to everyone. Ray Kon: 13 year-old Chinese blader. A white tiger named Drigger is his bit-beast. He's definitely the brains of the bunch. Max Tate: Cheerful blonde kid. Has a turtle named Draciel for a bit-beast. Kai Hiwatari: Definitely the loner. He doesn't talk much, and when he does he's usually yelling at Tyson. He has a firey phoenix named Dranzer. Sora: Pretty much the same as Kai, except she's not at all hesitant about her anger . . . I hear she's also half demon or something. Her bit-beast is an ice phoenix named Articuno. Kaori: Nice and playful. I guess she's as normal as any of the other's get personality-wise, except for the part about being half demon . . . no. I take that back about the “normal” part. Her bit-beast is a fox-like creature named Sakuya. And of course, Tyson: Loud, outgoing guy.

I assumed that he and Kai weren't the best of friends. His bit-beast is a powerful dragon named Dragoon. They all seem like great guys. About the training session though; it was hard work! First,

we did some obstacle drills, (hard). Then, we matched up against each other for some one-on-one

matches. I battled Kaori. I guess because she's new and they wanted it to be fair and all. It ended up in a tie. Next, we all lifted some weights and ran the tread-mill; Something about both the blade

and the blader being in good, working order. (No offense, but how does TYSON contribute to that

factor?!) Finally, they had Kenny, their strategist, analyze our blades. When he looked at mine, he asked me if it was a home-made blade. I said yes, which was a lie. I had actually found it while

walking in the mountains one day, so I really had no idea where it came from. I guess Kenny suspected

something, because he asked if he could keep my blade until tomorrow. I wonder what he's going to

do with it?

Day 3: I was asked to meet Kenny and Tyson near the subway the next morning at eight, so I got up

Earlier than usual. When I got there, I found Kenny and Tyson waiting for me on a bench. We immediately boarded the train and took our seats. Once the train started moving, Kenny reached

into his pocket and presented me with a new blade! "I up-graded your blade a little," he said.

"Now you'll probably have more speed as well as stamina with the new attack ring. Do you like it?"

I was speechless. It was like a brand new blade! I repeatedly thanked him until he asked me to stop.

Finally, I asked, "Hey guys, where are we going anyway?" They both smiled. "You'll see," said Tyson. Well, we rode for about a half-hour to the next stop. When we departed the subway, I noticed a guy standing next to a limo, looking at us. "Granger Party?," the limo driver shouted.

Tyson waved for the driver and we all hopped in the limo. I was starting to get suspicious. We rode

for nearly twenty minutes when we stopped at a fancy restaurant. When we got out, I stopped.

"Guys, what is going on? Where are we?," I said. Kenny motioned for me to follow them. "Don't worry.

Just come on," he replied. I sighed and went in after them. It was the fanciest place I've ever seen;

mahogany tables and silk, crimson-red carpets. Suddenly, an old man from across the room waved to

us. Tyson grabbed my hand and pulled me over to the table. As soon as I sat down the old, rather

husky man stretched out his hand to me. "Nice to meet you, Mason," he said. I shook his hand, trying not to be rude. Then Tyson said, "This is Mr. Dickinson, head of the BBA and number one sponsor for the Bladebreakers." I was still confused. "But, what does this have to do with me?"

Mr. Dickinson leaned towards me. "Well," he whispered, "a few days ago, Tyson contacted me about

a tough new blader he uncovered while at a blading park in China. So I said "I must meet this blader and propose that he join the Bladebreakers in this year's Beyblade World Tournament!"

This week was just getting more exciting by the minute. I found myself wide-eyed and gaping at the other three. "I think we could really use a blader of your technique and character," said Kenny.

I was without words. "So, what do you think?," asked Tyson. I wasn't sure at first. I mean, what about

my uncle and little brother? I couldn't just go off to join the world tournament without saying anything.

After I said that, Mr. Dickinson said that he would notify my guardian tonight about the tournament.

After considering it, I happily accepted. Tyson practically leaped for joy as well as Kenny. So before I

knew it, I was headed for the Beyblade World Tournament in China!

After we left the restaurant, instead of heading back toward the subway station, Kenny and Tyson

invited me to stay at their hotel in Beijing. I really couldn't say no to that. So the limo took us to the hotel where we found our way back to the team's room. I guess the others must have not known

I would be there because once I stepped into the room, everyone was staring at me, then at Tyson, and

back at me. Kai scowled. "What's he doing here? Fans aren't allowed in this room," he said in a cold voice.

Tyson commented back and said, "FYI, Kai, Mason is the newest member of this team! So be nice!" Kai

glared at me with his firey eyes. Then, Max stood up and offered to show me my bed. The last thing I heard

Kai say was, "Tyson, we need to talk." I had a bad feeling I was not welcome.

Day 5: I was right. I didn't mean to eavesdrop, but I overheard Tyson and Kai talking about me last night.

I guess Kai was really angry with Tyson for not telling him about me joining the team on such short notice.

He also said, "He doesn't belong here, Tyson. He's too weak. He won't last a minute in his first match,

much less against the White Tigers. I don't know what you see in him Tyson, but whatever it is, it's not

worth the tournament.” I have to admit, that hurt. I was just about to leave when Tyson said, “You’re

wrong, Kai! Sure he’s new and it’ll take time for him to get used to all the pressure, but he’s got what

it takes! You may not see it, but I do! Just give him a chance and I know he’ll do incredible things in

this tournament!” I couldn’t believe it. No one had ever stood up for me like that before. From that

moment on I had a greater respect for Tyson than anyone. I would not forget what he did that night.

I knew what I had to do to return the favor. “Tyson, I will make you proud,” I thought, “and I’ll prove

Kai wrong! I will win the Beyblade World Tournament in China!”

Day 6: Following the previous night, I decided to do a little night training for the tournament. Every evening I

would sneak out of the room and go to the rooftop. I figured it was the best place to sneak away to

while not wandering too far. I’d practice and practice all night long. By morning I was pretty tired, but

I had to prove myself to Kai and the others. I knew my exhaustion would be worth it in the end. At last,

the first day of the Beyblade World Tournament in China had arrived. The others were waiting for me in the

lobby as I finished packing. But just as I was heading out the door, Sora walked in. She strode up to

me, and said, “Look, Mason, I know what you’ve been doing for the past several nights. What’s going on?”

I just turned away, not wanting to explain my reasons to her. “Mason,” she said, “If you want to be

considered a member of this team, you have to show me that I can trust you.” I gave a deep

sigh, and

turned to face her. I said, "I just want to show everyone that I can be just as good as them. That I'm

not just dead weight." She looked at me intently. Then she said, "Mason, I know Kai was a little cold

towards you at first, but he has his reasons. He just wants what's best for the team. Give it time and

he'll warm up to you." Her words gave me a significant feeling of pride and relief. "And another thing,"

she said, "if you want consideration and respect, you have to assert yourself and demand it. No one is

going to respect someone who is so vulnerable to other people's opinion." I smiled. I thanked her for

the advice and we both headed out the door. "Oh yeah, if you tell anyone about this, I'll make sure you

regret it," she said. That made me laugh. "I promise I won't tell," I said as I gave her the scout's honor

salute. I then realized something about Sora; that underneath the cold exterior of her words and actions

was a warm, reassuring essence to her.

Once Sora and I reached the lobby, the bus was ready to leave. So we hurried over and boarded the bus.

It was a nice, big bus. One I never had the experience of riding in. Sora took her seat behind Kai, and I

sat down in an empty seat behind Max. The bus gave a gentle lurch and began to move. As I glanced out

the window, I was overcome with adrenaline. "My first real tournament," I thought to myself. Then I

glanced down at my trusty, new blade, with the small depiction of Pegasus on its chip. "Well, I hope you're

ready buddy.” I could've sworn I had heard Pegasus give a thundering cry of excitement. Then, I looked over at Kai, just sitting there, deep in thought. “Sora's right,” I told myself. “I shouldn't let Kai get to me, especially now.” Suddenly, I noticed Max looking down at me from his seat. “What's that?” he said. I looked back out the window. “Nothing,” I said. Then Max whispered, “I bet you don't know who Kenny's placed in our second match today.” I looked at him curiously. “No. Who?,” I asked. Max just turned his head and laughed. Then, he pointed at me. “You!” he exclaimed. That seemed to catch Kai's attention. I was completely dumb-struck. “But why me?,” I exclaimed. “I mean, I-“ Max held up his hand. “Don't sweat it, Mason. You can do it,” he assured me. Kai gave a sigh of annoyance and shook his head. I couldn't conceal my nervousness. But then I looked at Sora, and all my anxiety evaporated. “I can do this,” I thought. “I can . . .”

I must have dozed off during the ride because the next thing I knew, we were just pulling up to the front of the China Bey-Tower. I'll never forget that place: Towering up so high it seemed to touch the clouds.

In the back of my mind, I wished to be up there. To be looking down at the world with no worries or worldly concerns. It looked like heaven. But returning to the events at hand, I tried to focus on what strategy I would use for my first match as we departed the bus and strode up the steps towards the entrance. But something was in our way. A group of people was standing at the entrance,

smirking at us.

Their leader, one with rather unusual sideburns, started toward us. Suddenly, I realized that Tyson and Ray

had been missing the whole trip! “Hey, where's Ray and Tyson?” Sideburns asked. Just at that second,

we heard a far off shouting from behind us. We all turned to see, and sure enough, it was Tyson and Ray.

However, for some reason, Tyson was carrying Ray on his back. We helped Ray into the building and into

the First Aid room to tend to his apparently broken ankle.

Once inside our meeting room, Kenny explained to us the line-up of matches and the strategies we would

be applying: Ray would go first, then me, and then Tyson. Although we weren't quite sure about Ray's

ankle and if it would be better for him to sit it out. But he insisted that he could and would fight. So

finally, we all agreed to let him battle. That being settled, we discussed strategy. Apparently, the

opposing team, the White Tigers, had once been close companions of Ray's, so we had Ray fill us in on

their strategy. Basic, evasive defense, but their attacks could be completely unpredictable. So, the game

plan was basically just to improvise. After everything was set, we heard the MC announce the start of

the next round. I guess all my anxiety had worn off by then. I wasn't the least bit nervous. I knew we

could do it; that we would do it. All I had to do was to go out there and to my best. Hopefully, that would

be enough

As we stepped out onto the stadium, I found myself surrounded by millions of cheering spectators. This

changed everything. I wasn't used to so many people watching me. I actually started to feel the butterflies in my stomach. But I wasn't going to back out now. Suddenly, the MC started to make an

announcement. "Alright! Let's get this tournament rolling! The next match will be . . . Bladebreakers vs.

the White Tigers!" The crowd erupted into a tidal wave of excitement as their cheering filled the stadium.

I looked to Ray. "I guess that means I'm up," he declared. "Good luck!" I shouted. I watched Ray step

up to the bey-dish to face his first opponent; A pink-haired girl with what looked like cat ears and fangs!

"What is this? A bey-battle or some carnie freak-show?," I thought to myself. "3 . .2 . .1 Let It Rip!,"

the MC shouted. Both bladers launched the blades and the match was underway. It seemed that Ray had

seized the upper hand almost instantly, but he looked somehow . . .dazed, as if he was off in his own world.

Just then, the pink-haired girl, Mariah, launched a combination of furious attacks and gained the advantage.

Suddenly, Ray started to say something to Mariah. "I don't want to win like this, Mariah. Not until I know

there are no hard feelings between us," he said pleadingly. I didn't understand. Had they been enemies?

Or, perhaps, close friends turned against each other by the tides of fate. I wasn't sure at first. But then,

Mariah spoke up. "Ray, I've never had any hard feelings toward you. It's just difficult, you know . . .

having your best friend abandon you." She looked near close to tears. "Mariah," Ray said, "I didn't abandon

you. I just felt it was time for me to test my skills in the outside world.” They looked at each other

longingly. “I've missed you Mariah.” Mariah grinned happily. “I've missed you too, Ray!” I finally understood.

It was strange, but I started to feel confident, knowing their friendship was restored. Then, Ray said, “Ok,

Mariah! Let's finish this as friends!” They both nodded, and their blades began to glow. It was amazing.

It was like two friends and their bit-beast dancing in celebration of their reunion. Then, the two blades

reared up for a final attack. At the second the blades clashed, the stadium was overcome by a cloud of

smoke. Once it cleared, both blades just lay there, motionless. “Uh, both blades have stopped spinning!

Therefore, the first match is declared a tie!” announced the MC. “Woo! Way to go, Ray,” Tyson and Max

shouted. As Ray stepped down from the bey-dish, I noticed that he had a somewhat somber look on his face.

He walked up to me and said, “Don't be nervous. Just block out everything but the match in order to focus.”

I nodded my head and took a deep breath. I walked up to the bey-dish, trying not to tremble. My

opponent, Gary, stepped up to face me. He was HUGE!! He towered over me like a brick wall! I

prepared to launch, trying to ignore the massive appearance of my opponent. “3 . . .2 . . .1 Let It Rip!”

the MC exclaimed. Gary and I launched our blades into the dish. I quickly took the offensive and charged at

the other blade. But once Pegasus made contact, it just bounced right back, as if Gary's blade was made of

steel or something. Then, I attempted to throw him off guard by zig-zagging around the dish. I slowly

zeroed in on him, making only brief contact with the blade. He still wouldn't budge. I was beginning to get

frustrated. Nothing could shake this guy! I had to find a weakness and fast because my blade was beginning

to lose momentum. Just then, I had an idea. If grounded attacks were no good, then maybe an aerial attack

would do it! I commanded Pegasus to leap into the air. Once high enough, I called out, "Blinding Assault!"

Pegasus made a direct nose dive for Gary's blade as it began to give off a brilliant light. Blinded by the flash

of light, I could only hear the sound of a brief clanging, then silence. It was a while before my eyesight

returned to normal. I glanced at the dish. Gary's blade was drilled right into the ground, while my

bladewas still spinning! "Gary's blade has stopped spinning! Therefore, this match goes to the

Bladebreakers!," exclaimed the MC. I took a deep sigh of relief. My teammates whooped and cheered for joy.

I called Pegasus back to my hand, and offered a handshake to Gary. But he just recoiled and slapped my hand

away. I just shrugged. It didn't matter. I had won! Only my first tournament match, and I had won!

As I stepped down from the dish, Kai approached me. He stared at me with the same cold eyes. Then, his

face broke into what seemed like a half-smile. "Not bad, for a beginner," he said. My face lit up as the

others ran up to congratulate me. Honestly, that moment couldn't have been any more rewarding, knowing I

had gained Kai's approval. But then again, Sora was right when she said I hadn't needed it. From then on, I

would have to earn and demand my respect. That much was certain.

Well, one more win was all we needed. We cheered as loud as we could for Tyson as he raced up the steps

toward the dish. I could tell he was ready and anxious to win. But this Lee person didn't seem like the type

that was going to go down easily. "3 . . 2 . . 1 Let It Rip!," the two bladers cried. Their blades sped head-

strong right towards each other. Then came a clash of such a mighty force, it sent the spectators reeling on

the edge of their seats; literally. After the two blades recovered from the blow, Lee's blade began to emit

an ultra-violet glow as he called out his bit-beast. "Galleon!," he cried. All of the sudden, Lee's blade began

moving at such speed I could barely follow it. Tyson was taking heavy damage and was completely immobilized

by Lee's assaults. But just when all seemed lost, Tyson called out Dragoon for a counterattack. A violent

wind began to pick up, which rendered Lee's blade off-balance. Tyson quickly took advantage of the moment

and delivered several damaging blows to Lee's blade. Well, by now, both bladers were pretty worn out, as

were their blades. I was overflowing with tension as Tyson and Lee called out for their final attacks. The

force of their collision resulted in a huge explosion and bits of the bey-dish were sent flying in all directions.

We were all on the edge of our seats as we waited for the dust to settle. Once the smoked cleared, there

was nothing left of the bey dish and both Tyson and Lee had been sent backwards from force of the

explosion. We all stared. Lee's blade lay still beside him, while Tyson's blade was still barely spinning!

We all leaped off the bench and shouted for joy. The MC declared Tyson the winner and Kenny, Max, Ray,

Kaori, Sora, Kai and I all ran up to congratulate our teammate.

Later, the team held a huge party in one of the China Tower conference rooms to celebrate our victory.

There was cake, pizza, games, and awards. Everything you would want after such a feat. But I still felt

empty, somehow, as if there was something missing. Suddenly, I realized what it was. I crept over

to the door, trying not to draw any attention. After I had slipped out unnoticed, I made my way toward

one of the stairwells.

Once I had reached the top floor, I opened the door leading out onto the roof. When I stepped through,

I could feel the warm sunshine across my face and a gentle breeze blowing by. I hurried over to the edge

of the rooftop. The second I looked down, I was blown away. You could see everything for miles and miles;

grassy hills, beautiful mountains, and the sparkling river. It was amazing. Funny, though. When we first

arrived, I had wondered what it would be like up here. Now, way up high in the clouds with such a scenic

view, I wished to stay there forever. I would always remember this place; this moment. Just like they say,

there is no place like home. I kept that in mind as I headed toward the stairwell and back to the party.

After the party, we all took the bus back to the hotel. Everyone was exhausted, especially me. I

guess it

was because I had never been in a tournament like this before and wasn't used to all the traveling yet. But it

sure was exciting. Anyway, once we arrived back at the hotel we all tucked in for a good night's sleep. I

kept thinking about my match as I dozed off into a gentle slumber.

. . . The sun is bright and the day is hot. I am standing in a beautiful garden. There are birds nesting in the oak

trees overhead, their branches swaying in the breeze. There is a fountain up ahead, the crystal water shimmering in the

sunlight. The air is filled with the scent of spice and flowers. Where am I? I don't remember this place, but I have the

surest feeling that I've been here before. Suddenly, I feel my hand in another's grasp. I turn to look up; a flash of

light; a face; nothing . . .

I sat up in my bed in the middle of the night, panting hard. "What a weird dream!" I thought to myself

as I got up and headed toward the door. It looked like everyone was still sleeping, so I tried to be as quiet

as possible. I slipped through the door and silently closed it behind me. Suddenly, I heard foot steps. I

looked up to see, and drew a sigh of relief when I saw it was only Sora. "Can't sleep?" I asked her. She

turned to face me. "Just jet-lag, you know," she replied. I nodded my head. We both just stood silent for a

while. Then she said, "You did well in your match today." I was glad it was dark, because that made me blush

a little. "Yeah," I answered. "Well, you were right before; about the whole earning respect thing." She

nodded, as if to say "you're welcome". Then she crossed her arms and looked away. "How are things between

you and Kai?" she asked. "A lot better, thanks," I replied. I could tell she had something else on her mind.

"Sora, I just want to thank you for helping me get through this first day. Without you I-" I stopped. She

turned back to me with a stern expression. "Listen," she said, "I can't give you advice all the time. You're

going to have to learn to figure things out for yourself from now on. Clear?" Of course, she was right. We

both nodded in agreement. Then, we said good night as Sora headed back to her room. "Sora, wait!" I

called out. She stopped and turned around. "I just need one more favor. Can we sit down?" She motioned me

over to a couch in the front room. I took a deep breath. "I need someone to hear my story, about when I

was little. I haven't really been able to cope with it ever since, but lately . ." She leaned forward on her

elbows, fixing her icy-blue eyes on me. "I'm listening," she said.

Eight Years Ago

"C'mon Mason! You'll have to run faster than that!" father shouted. I was running as fast as I could as the wet grass

slipped through my toes and the afternoon sun streamed across my face. Once close enough, I jumped onto my father's

back. He lost his balance, and we both went tumbling down the hill. Once at the bottom, we laughed and laughed

for what seemed like forever. Then, we both laid our heads down in the soft, green grass. "You know I'm leaving for

America tomorrow, don't you Mason?" my father asked. I nodded my head. "Why do you have to go without me?" I

asked. My father sighed with somberness. "Because," he explained, "I have to meet with the BBA about an important

matter." I turned on my side to face him. "Will you write me?" I asked. He turned to me and smiled. "Of course," he

replied. I turned back, looking up at the baby-blue sky. "Daddy, do you promise that you'll take me with you one day,

to America?" He nodded. "Yes, Mason. I promise." We picked ourselves up, and father and I headed home for supper.

The Next Day

I had come to see father off at the airport. It was a sad day for me as I gave my father one last hug and watched him

board the plane. I stood by the window, watching my father's plane as it took off into the sky and disappeared into

the clouds. My uncle called to me, for it was time to leave. All through the ride home, I sat in lonely silence. I don't

know why, but I began to feel very angry and bitter towards my father for leaving me behind. When we got home, I ran

to my room, locked the door, and lay on my bed for hours, until at last I fell asleep..

I woke up the next morning feeling so crummy I wanted to just stay in bed and rot there. But after I had remained in

my room for the next half-hour, my uncle came in and urged me to get up. "I can't uncle. I just can't," I groaned. He

shook me gently and said," Sure you can. It's a beautiful day outside. Go play in the park; make some friends." I just

shook my head, but uncle would not settle for that. He shook me harder and harder and danced around the room shouting

at the top of his lungs until I started getting a headache. Finally, I let up. I put on my clothes, grabbed my favorite

baseball cap, and set out for the park.

It was a beautiful day. The blossoms were in full bloom and it seemed everyone had given in to spring fever. As I

strolled through the park, I saw children walking their dogs, and mothers, fathers, and their children carrying picnic

gear. I badly wanted a friend to play with. Being an only child, the only real friend I ever had had been my father. He

would bring me here and we'd spend hours on end running and laughing. Suddenly, as I was strolling along, *Whomph*

Something struck the back of my head and I fell forward right on my face. "Ow," I groaned. I looked around to see

what had hit me. There, beside me, lay a bright red Frisbee. Suddenly, someone came running up to me, shouting," Hey!

Hey! Are you okay?" I turned around and saw a young girl, about my age, in a silky, white dress with fair, light skin,

hazel eyes, and long, shiny black hair. She knelt beside me, checking the back of my head with a frantic expression.

"I'm sorry! I'm so sorry! It was an accident! Are you hurt?" she exclaimed. I stood up and brushed myself off. "It's ok.

No harm done," I replied. She gave a deep sigh of relief. I leaned down to pick up her Frisbee and at the exact same

time, our hands met. She blushed slightly as I handed her the disc. "Thank you," she murmured. Then, she stuck out her

hand. "My name is Heather Lee." I kindly returned her handshake. "Mason Owens," I replied. She

turned away timidly.

Then she asked, "Would you... like to play with me?" I didn't want to hurt her feelings, so I said yes. We played

frisbee for quite a while. Right on through the afternoon until the sun began to set. By that time, we were both

laughing and having a wonderful time. After a while, though, she announced that she had to leave. I had this crazy

feeling inside. I didn't want her to go. I just needed a few more minutes with her; that was all. I ran after her and

shouted, "Wait! Heather, wait!" She turned around with a bewildered look on her face. "I want to show you something,"

I said. I grabbed her hand and took off through the park and into the city. The streets were lined with fruit stands,

antique shops, and butcheries. I led her down the lane and stopped at a huge, white gate. I pushed open the gate

to Memorial Garden, and led Heather through a labyrinth of flowery hedges and stopped in the center of the

gardens, where a magnificent fountain with stone statues of child-like angels squirting glistening water from their

mouths. Birds sat in the oak trees overhead, singing. Heather looked around in astonishment. "Oh, Mason! It's

beautiful!" she exclaimed. I turned to her, smiling. "I thought you'd like it," I said. But already, the sky had grown

dark. As Heather and I turned to leave, we both smiled at each other. I knew then that I had made a true friend that

day. After walking her home and saying good-night, I strode home with so many happy thoughts and feelings I thought I

was going nuts. I remembered a song that my father used to sing to my mother, when I was three or so. It went on in

my head the whole walk home under the moonlit, starry sky. "... Fly me to the moon... and let me play among the stars

. . . let me see what spring is like on . . . Jupiter and Mars . . . “

The Next Day

The next day, I awoke to the bright sunlight, shining through my window. I sat up in bed, trying to recollect all of

yesterday. After I was dressed, I walked into the kitchen, where I saw my uncle sitting at the table. But something

was wrong. My uncle was sulking with his face in his hands. He looked up at me, startled. “Uncle, what's wrong?” I

asked, worriedly. He motioned for me to come and sit on his lap. As I did, he said,” Mason, I'm so sorry.” He had a

serious and somber look on his face. Then, he said,” Your father, last night he . . . his plane . . . it crashed in the middle

of the ocean. . .it hasn't been recovered yet.” I had never seen him like this. I still didn't understand. I was so

frightened that I had to gather all the courage I had into one question. “Uncle, where is daddy?” He looked me

straight in the eye, and he said,” He's not coming back Mason. He's dead.” The words hit me like a slap in the face. I

stared at the floor, shocked and mortified. I couldn't stand it. I pushed off my uncle's knee and bolted out the

kitchen door.

My mind was a blur. My uncle's words blared loudly in my mind as I ran past the gate, through the park, and down

the city street. I caught a brief glimpse of Heather as I rushed past her, and headed towards a place where I knew I

could be alone; A place where my father had often enjoyed moonlit walks with mother Memorial Garden. I made my

way through the labyrinth, and stopped in the center of the garden, where the beautiful fountain of angels spouted

water from their mouths. I collapsed. There I lay, sobbing and racking with grief. Suddenly, I heard a faint shouting

coming from the labyrinth. I turned to see Heather rushing towards me; her long, raven-black hair streaming behind

her. She embraced me, and hugged me tightly. I told her what had happened, and we both sat there, crying and holding

each other for hours. It could have been an eternity, but I didn't care. I was glad to have Heather there with me. I

needed someone to hold and to share my sorrow with.

“ . . and that's what happened.” Sora just stared at the floor. “They gave the announcement two weeks

later that the plane had been found thirty miles off the coast of Maine. They concluded that there were no

survivors.” Sora turned to me and said “I lost my parents too, when I was very young.” I shook my head.

“It's strange,” I said. No matter how bad the situation, somehow, you always manage to get something good

out of it. For instance, if I had gone with my father, I wouldn't be here with you guys.” She nodded. “I

understand just how you feel,” she said. She sat up and looked at the clock. It was almost three-o'clock. I

gave a deep yawn. “Well, we better get some sleep, huh?” I said to her. We both stood up and headed

quietly back to our rooms. I whispered a thank-you to her as I shut the door. Then I settled down in my

bed and tried desperately to get back to sleep.

Day 7: I had barely slept a wink when I felt someone shaking me and yelling, "Hey! Mason! Wake up!" I gave a

deep groan. "C'mon, uncle! Five more minutes." "What are you talking about, Mason?" the voice exclaimed.

I rolled over and, to my surprise, saw Tyson kneeling over me. "About time dude! I was beginning to think

you were dead!" Tyson said jokingly. "Tyson!" I groaned. Finally, he stopped shaking me and stood up. "C'mon!

Kenny made pancakes!" I grabbed a pillow and threw it at him. "Ow!" he exclaimed, and we both started

throwing pillows at each other. By the time we were finished, we were both covered in white, downy

feathers. We walked out of the room laughing and still brushing the feathers off. Everyone at the table

started laughing too. "What happened to you guys?" Kaori giggled. Tyson pointed at me and said, "Don't

ever give this guy trouble, or you'll end up looking like this." Everyone laughed at that one, except for Kai

and Sora, who were just sitting broodily with their arms crossed. "Okay! Who wants pancakes?" Kenny

shouted. We all pounded on the table and chanted, "Pancakes! Pancakes! We want Pancakes!" I had no idea

Kenny was such a good cook. I swear I will have never tasted more delicious pancakes for the rest of my

life. Anyway, after breakfast, we all packed up and headed downstairs for the lobby, where our bus would

be waiting to take us to the airport. Once we boarded the bus, Tyson exclaimed, "American Tournament,

here we come!" I froze and stared at Tyson. "You mean, we're going to America?!" I asked. Tyson nodded

enthusiastically. "Yeah! We're going to take on the All-Stars!" he shouted. I just stood there. My dream

was finally coming true. I was finally going to America! But as I realized this, a deep sadness came over me.

Here I was, headed for America when my father. . . had never lived to see it. This same thought kept

going through my mind as we headed for the airport.

2 - America

The flight had been long, uncomfortable, exhausting, and crowded with snoring, over-weight passengers

(including Tyson) and mothers with their crying babies. While the others were contently snoring away in their

seats, I had to be stuck next to Tyson, who I swear had leaf-blower implanted in his throat because his

snores were both loud and turbulent. In the mean time, I got some reading done and Kenny fiddled with his

beloved computer. The minute I heard the pilot announce the landing it was like someone had saved me from

this never-ending boredom.

Once we had claimed our luggage and gone through about three gates we reached the pick-up zone, where a

BBA bus was waiting for us. I'm not sure whether it was just jet-lag or something else, but my footsteps felt twice as heavy as I boarded the bus with the rest of the team. I quickly took the first seat across from the bus driver and slumped down tiredly. I suddenly felt so tired I just wanted to sleep. I figured it was going to be a long ride to the hotel, so I leaned my head against the window and closed my eyes...

Two weeks passed since that day in the garden, and already the news about my father's death had spread across the entire town. Every time I went out, people I wasn't even sure I knew would come up to me and say how sorry they were for me and sometimes they would even bend down and hug me. I didn't like it. It was hard enough for me to try and forget about it, but every time these people tried to comfort me it was like a constant reminder. I just wanted to be left alone. So every afternoon after school, I would go off on my own to a place where no one could find me or bother me; the mountains. I had always looked out my bedroom window in the morning and gazed at those gigantic mountains and wondered what it would be like to climb them. That day, I walked past my house and headed straight for the mountains.

I don't know how long or how high I climbed up that mountain path. I became so tired, I couldn't walk anymore. So I stopped to rest by a small spring. Afterwards I kept walking up that path, going higher and higher. I could swear I almost touched a cloud. At one point, I came across an abandoned cave. It had

been another hot, summer's day and just the thought of cool, relaxing shade seemed like heaven. So I went deep into the darkest part of the cave and sat down on a moist rock. I closed my eyes and felt the soothing sensation of the cave's darkness. As I sat there, lost in this feeling, I began to hear whispers, and then those whispers turned to moans. It was like they were talking to me. I couldn't understand a single word, but somehow I knew what they were telling me.

"...go deeper... go back... it's waiting for you... go..."

I followed the voices, wandering deeper and deeper into the cave. It was pitch-black now, I couldn't see a thing, but the voices led me safely through the darkness. Further and further into the cave I went, until suddenly the voices disappeared, and I stumbled aimlessly through the blackened cave. I was scared, and lost. I just kept stepping forward, whichever way that was. Then, I found a light. It was faint, but it was the only light I had. So I ran towards it, thinking that it was a way out, but when I got there it turned out to be nothing but a pool of glimmering water.

But wait... no water could ever shine so brightly in this darkness. I leaned in closer and looked deep into the pool, searching for the source of light. All I could see was a glowing orb deep at the bottom of the pool. Without thinking, I plunged my arm into the pool, and pulled the orb from the water. I looked down at what I held in my hand. It was a beyblade; a glowing beyblade, and imprinted on the beychip was a white, winged horse.

"... it is time for your light to shine..."

3 - Heather

I was awakened by the sound of screeching tires and the lunging force of the bus coming to a halt. I jerked forward and hit my head on the driver's seat. He announced that we had arrived at the hotel, so we got off the bus, thanked the bus driver, and walked through the swinging doors of the prestigious hotel.

Once we had checked into our rooms, Tyson, Max, Rei, and Kaori all headed down for the pool in their bathing suits. Kai and Sora decided to wander off on their own, so that left me with nothing to do. Well heck! This was America, right? I wasn't just going to sit here and do nothing! I was headed for the city. I wanted to get a feel of what America was really like.

As I strolled down the sidewalks of New York City, I was hopelessly overwhelmed by the massive crowds, the speeding cars, and the thousands of shops that lined the streets. I had never imagined anything like it! How I wished my uncle and little brother could be here to see this! But most of all, I longed to see Heather's face again. Not long after my father's death, she had left with her family to go and live in America. I had missed her so much. Nothing would make me happier than to see her face again...

"Mason?" a familiar voice ringed. I turned around in utter disbelief, and saw the very face I had just been imagining. "Heather?!" This was unbelievable. It was like seeing my memories right in front of me. "Wow! This is incredible!" I exclaimed. "No kidding!" she smiled, still wide-eyed. "It's been so long!" I couldn't help but smile. Wow, she looked just like she had those many years ago. Her long, silky black hair fell down to her waist, those same hazel eyes stared back at him, and her skin was as fair as an angel's. She wore a brown, hooded sweater, a white T-shirt, denim blue-jeans and elegant high-heeled boots. Nothing about her had changed. "What are you doing here?" I asked. "Didn't you know?" she replied. "I live here with my mom, while my dad works in Albany." Of all the places, this is where she was this whole time. "But, what are *you* doing here?" she asked amazedly. "I'm here for the Beyblade Tournament" I answered. "You came all this way just to see the tournament?" she asked. "No, I'm in the tournament" I said, as if it was no big deal. "Oh wow! This is amazing!" she cried. "I had no idea!" This was amazing. I had longed for this moment for so many years. I wanted to take her somewhere so we could talk. "Do you want to get something to eat?" I offered. She nodded eagerly. "Yeah, I know this great café around the corner. Let's go!" she said excitedly. She grabbed his arm and we went off merrily down the street.

4 - Kiss

It was a nice little spot, the café. Heather and I ordered some fresh, hot cinnamon rolls and sat down at a tiny, round table near the window and began talking, like old friends. “So, tell me how you've been? I haven't seen you since...” she stopped. I knew what she meant to say, but neither one of us could bring ourselves to even mention it. “It's been tough” I said, not too seriously. “Before I left home for the tournament, I was working two jobs so we could have some money.” Heather looked down at her hands, trying not to show her pity. “Oh” she uttered somberly. “What about Jason? How is he?” I suddenly remembered my little brother, and wondered how he and uncle were doing back home. “He's actually doing great. He works hard, gets good grades, and helps out around the house whenever he can.” She finally looked up at me and smiled, slightly. “Oh, well then that's good, isn't it?” she said. I managed to smile and nodded back. “Yeah, that is good.” Wow, this conversation was getting more and more dismal by the minute. I changed the subject. “What about you? How have you been?” I asked in a convincingly upbeat tone. “Oh, well like I said. My dad is working out of town, so most of the time it's just me and my mom.” I tried to remember Heather's parents from when I first met them. Her father was difficult because I had only seen him a couple of times when he wasn't working, but I remembered her mother almost perfectly because she looked so much like Heather. She had long black hair, just like Heather's, and light, milky skin like Heather's too. She was always so nice to me. Whenever I came over she would make them a tray-full of her delicious cinnamon rolls and afterward even let me take the rest home with him. I finally realized that I hadn't said a word for a few seconds and turned my attention back to Heather. “I-uh, I don't know if you're busy today or anything, but my team and I are staying at this hotel. It's really nice and- well” C'mon stupid, say it already! “Would you like to come and visit for a while?” Her face light up with such an ecstatic spark I thought she might explode. “I'd love to!” she shouted, turning a few startled heads our way. I tried not to laugh, stood up, and took her hand. “Alright then, let's go!” I urged, and together we grabbed our rolls, left the café and made our way back to the hotel.

5 - Dinner Party

In the back of my mind I was praying to God that the room would be empty. I wasn't sure how the team would react to me bringing another girl into our suite, and I didn't want to risk angering Kai again. Fortunately, no one appeared to be in the room when I knocked, so I used my key and led Heather inside. I walked over to the coffee table and laid down the bag of rolls, as Heather continued to stare. "Oh wow!" she gasped. "I've never been in a suite before!" Her eyes were alit with awe as she gazed over the room, taking in every luxury. Then she looked at me, worriedly. "Are you sure your teammates won't be mad?" I played it cool and smiled at her. "Of course not" I reassured her. "What they don't know won't hurt them, right?" She giggled playfully. I offered to show her around, and she eagerly accepted. After that, we spent about a half an hour on the couch, talking and laughing about the old days. Then I looked at my watch and remembered we had a dinner meeting with the American BBA leader in just a half hour. I had to get her out of there before the rest of the team came back. I stood up and headed towards the door. "What's wrong, Mason?" Heather asked, confusedly. "I'm sorry. Heather. I completely forgot that we have a team meeting tonight and- well, the team will be here any minute" I explained. She understood and walked towards the door, where I stood waiting to say goodbye. Our bodies were now an inch apart from each other, mine leaning against the wall. "I'm so happy" she whispered "that I was able to see you again." I took her hands in mine, and held them tight. "Me too." I'm not sure if either of us knew it, but we were moving closer and closer together. "I missed you" I said, right before our lips embraced each other in a longing passion. This unexplainable feeling that sent his mind, body and soul rejoicing with newfound ecstasy, somehow I sensed that it had always been there, even since the first time we met. Even after she stepped back and rushed out the door, I still found myself trapped in that moment, and I didn't want to leave.

About five minutes later, the Tyson and the others walked in all dressed and ready to go. By that time it was already quarter past seven. I got up from the couch, giving the impression like I had been in that room all day, trying to look as bored as possible, no matter how difficult it was. "C'mon, dude!" Tyson said in his usual booming, hyper-active voice. "We're going to be late for the dinner party!" I swear, sometimes all that guy ever thinks about is food. "Alright, let's go then" I replied, and we all exited the room and headed for the lobby where Mr. Dickinson was waiting for us.

6 - Bus Ride

“So, what did you do all day, Mason?” Kaori asked inquisitively as the bus made its way to the ABBA. I tried to act as aloof as possible; didn't want the team to find out what I had been doing and with whom all day. “Nothing much; just hung out `round the hotel mostly.” Tyson gaped at me with disbelief. “You're telling me you just lounged about in that boring place all day?!” I nodded nonchalantly, with my legs and arms crossed and my head bent forward. “That's right.” Kaori, who was sitting just behind me, spoke again. “Well, I don't know about you guys, but I didn't notice any bistro's inside the hotel” and she held up the bag of rolls with the café logo on it that I had carelessly left on the coffee table back in the room. I whirled around and saw her, holding up the bag for everyone to see. “Oh, yeah, that” I had to think fast, tell a good lie. “Well, I got hungry, so I just took a little walk downtown and stopped at this café for a roll.” Kaori looked skeptically at me with her piercing, aquamarine eyes. “Okay” she said “then why are there two, uneaten rolls still inside?” I paused for a moment, trying to think my way out. “I just bought a couple extra ones in case I got hungry later.” Seemed like a logical explanation. No, there was no way that could sound suspicious. Kaori set the bag down, but did not take her eyes away from me. “I saw you leave the hotel, and I also saw you heading back to the room... with another girl.” Oh no, how had she seen that? I assumed she had been at the pool all day with the others. Suddenly, everyone was looking at me. Tyson gave me an insinuating look. “Mason, you dog! What have you really been up to?” It was no use. I was sunk.

“I can't believe you brought another girl into our room!” Tyson declared. Kai was sitting behind him, probably still glaring at me. What now? No one was going to trust me anymore. “You said she was an old friend?” Rei asked, rather curiously. “Yeah” I muttered. “I've known her since I was seven. She used to live in China, until her family moved here to New York. I hadn't seen or heard from her in seven years.” I hoped I was at least getting some sympathy out of this. Kaori let out a passionate sigh. “Aw! That's so romantic!” I looked up at my teammates, surprised at their positive reaction. “So, you're not mad?” I asked timidly. “Of course not. We understand completely” Max said cheerfully. Rei nodded. “I mean, just look at Mariah and me. We're old friends, and no one had a problem with our friendship even though we're o different teams.” I guess he was right. It was no big deal. Wow, that was sure a lot off my chest. I suddenly occurred to me that I had had these guys all wrong. They were a real team; guys who stuck together and accepted each other no matter what. Boy was I lucky and the best thing was that I didn't even have to mention my father. Nobody but Sora knew up until now, and I was going to make sure it stayed that way.

7 - Welcome to the American BeyBlade Association

The BBA bus pulled into the huge but mostly empty lot of the American Beyblade Association, but even bigger than the parking lot was the building itself. It was like a palace. Walls of glass and steel surrounded each corner of the building, and in the middle was a gigantic dome. As we walked towards the entrance, the front gates swung open and a guard came out of nowhere and ushered us inside.

The building was twice as big once we were inside! A huge fountain sat in the middle of the lounge. Two sets of stairs stood on either side of the room, leading up to the upper floor. Finally, a grand chandelier hung from high above the ground, embedded with hundreds of diamonds. A wave of ooh's and aah's escaped the team, and before we knew it we were being ushered, once again, through the building until we reached the grand dining hall. Large, round, polished-oak tables were scattered everywhere, and at the other end of the room was the impressive buffet. "Oh yeah! I'm starving!" Tyson exclaimed, and within five second's time Tyson had gone from right next to me to the line at the buffet. "C'mon" Kai ordered. "We better get in line before Tyson eats all the food." We all headed over towards the buffet, until, all of the sudden, a speaker came on. "Ladies and gentlemen, welcome!" It was a man; big, tall, but not husky like Mr. Dickinson. He had blonde hair, nicely slicked back, and wore an expensive black suit; bow-tie and all. "You have been cordially invited to our annual Beyblade opening ceremony" all of us stood where we were, looking up at the man from the upper balcony. "I hope you all do your share in cheering on our All-Star team this season, because we're going all the way!" Whoops and cheers erupted from every table in the room. Tyson came over with a plateful of food in both hands. "Huh! Who does that guy think he is? Making a scene about some cruddy All-Stars" Tyson resumed grumpily eating his food and walked over to an empty table. As soon as we all made our plates, we headed back to the table and sat down. "Wow! This place is incredible, huh guys?" Tyson sputtered between the wads of food crammed in his mouth. "What's amazing is how you're able to talk with all that food stuffed in your face" I joked. Kaori let out a high-pitched laugh. "Ha, very funny" Tyson retorted. "Seriously though, I wish we could take a little walk around, you know; just to see what kind of stuff they got." Kenny looked up from his plate. "Tyson, you're seriously not thinking of..." oh but he was. "Smell you later, guys! I'm taking the express tour!" Tyson got up from his seat and walked over towards a guard standing nearby. "Excuse me sir" he said, politely. "Where is the bathroom?" "Second floor, it's the third door to your right" the guard muttered irritably. Tyson thanked the guard and slipped through the giant double doors, out into the hallway. I looked over at Rei. "I'll follow him" I said. So, I got up and ran after Tyson. To be honest, I wanted to explore a little too.

8 - More Than Meets the Eye

You would expect the hallways to be dark. All the workers were either at the party or had gone home, but to my and Tyson's surprise, every hallway was lit. "Whoa! Mason, what are you doing here?" Tyson exclaimed as soon as he saw me coming. "Hey, I wasn't going to let you have all the fun" I scoffed. We continued walking through the twisting maze of hallways, until we came to a lonely elevator. "C'mon" Tyson urged, as he pressed the up button. "Are you sure?" I asked, hesitantly. "What's the matter, Mason? Are you going to chicken out on me?" Tyson mocked. I glared at him and grumpily stepped into the elevator after Tyson.

"Going up" Tyson joked, as the metal doors closed and we both rode up to the highest floor.

"This is really weird" I said. Tyson looked at me like I was crazy. "How's that?" "Well, for one thing no one is here; not even a single guard. Second, all the light are on and the elevator works." I started to get a weird feeling; like we were being followed, closely. "Hey guys!" shouted a familiar, happy-go-lucky voice. We both whirled around to see Max standing right behind us. "Jeez, Max! Don't scare us like that!" Tyson shouted back. "Sorry, I just couldn't help myself" Max teased. "What are you guys doing up here?" Once I recovered from Max's little prank, I answered back. "We're just taking a look around." Max seemed ever eager to join. "Cool! Let's keep going!" He ran off like a little kid down the hall, checking all the doors, which of course were locked. Then, unexpectedly, one of the doors actually opened. "Whoa! Come here you guys! This one's open!" he shouted excitedly. Tyson and I, too curious to heed our own conscience, ran after Max and slipped into the open room, unnoticed. Or at least, that's what we thought.

Up on the third floor, the man who had given the speech at the dinner party stood tall and erect, looking over every feed from the security cameras. Just then, a woman with short, blonde hair in a lab coat, and a short, red-headed girl in a tennis uniform walked into the room behind him. "It seems our special guests have found their way into the training room, Judy" said the tall, blonde man as he turned towards the woman wearing the lab coat. "I'll send in the reinforcements" she said, assuredly. The woman glanced at the young girl beside and gave a serious nod. The girl turned around and left the room, knowing what her mission was. Once she had left, the man spoke again. "Make sure they don't damage anything." The woman let out a slight chuckle. "Mayor, I highly doubt that these amateurs are capable of" The man glowered at her. "I was referring to those reckless, over-confident All-Stars of yours" he interrupted. The woman stood up tall so that her eyes leveled with his. "They are perfectly well-trained and controlled. You won't have to worry about your precious machines" she said, respectfully. The man gave a smug grin, keeping his eyes fixed on her. "Good." He turned back to the video monitors and dismissed the woman. The second she walked out that door, he knew there was going to be trouble.

9 - All-Star Trouble

“Whoa!” Tyson shouted. “Look at all this stuff!” The room they had entered appeared to be some kind of high-tech training room; emphasis on the high-tech part. Huge, humming machines, glistening in the soft moonlight coming from the window, were scattered at every corner of the room, surrounding a larger-than-average beydish in front of them. Everywhere else lay dozens of weight lifting contraptions I had never seen before. “I’ll bet these machines are for improving blades!” Tyson declared. Just as Tyson and Max began to move towards the beydish, a blaring sound rang through the entire building. Tyson, Max and I all covered our ears. I tried to shout something to them, but it was impossible to hear anything over the alarm. So, I headed back out the door and into the hallway, making sure Tyson and Max followed. As soon as we were all out, I slammed the door shut and sprinted after Max and Tyson, who had already started down the hallway ahead of me. We were just rounding the corner, when all of the sudden all three of us crashed and tumbled onto the floor on top of two other people. I looked down to see Rei and Kenny, lying helplessly under us. Then, the roaring sound just stopped, and all was eerily silent. “What in the world did you guys do?” Kenny asked, utterly bemused. “I don’t know! We were just looking around and all of the sudden the alarm went off!” Max explained, still shaken from the alarm. All at once we got up off the floor and pulled ourselves together. “We better get out of here” Rei implied. But suddenly, Max looked as if his eyeballs were about to eject from their sockets. “Mom?!” he shouted. Totally puzzled by this, we all turned and looked down at the other end of the hallway and saw a tall, blonde woman in a white overcoat, standing there and staring back at us. Max began running towards the woman, unaware that a double-pane glass wall was coming down right on top of him. Then, out of nowhere, Kai jumped down from the ceiling and tackled Max, hurling him safely out of the way. “No!” Max cried, as the glass security wall descended to the floor halfway between the woman and where we stood. Then, without a word, the woman walked off through the hallway and disappeared. Max got up and began shouting angrily at Kai. “Why did you do that, Kai?” Kai merely stood up and brushed past him. “I just saved your life” Kai shot back. “C’mon” Kai ordered. “Kaori and Sora are waiting for us downstairs. We’re leaving.” Without even being able to take another step, I looked up to see two large, shadowy figures standing in our way. “Where do you think you’re going?” one of the shadows snapped. Then the two strangers stepped forward to reveal themselves in the lighting of the hallway. They were just two teenage boys. One was short but unbelievably bulky, and the other towered over everyone else like a telephone pole. Both were cloaked in dark brown robes. The tall one suddenly spoke up. “They told us there were a bunch of brats running around our turf” he snarled. “I guess you unlucky guys are it.” The shorter, muscular one took a few steps forward, grinning mockingly at us. “So, which one of you wants to battle me and lose first?” Uh oh, apparently these guys were the reinforcements, and they weren’t looking too friendly at the moment. Rei, unshaken by this threat, stepped forward and took out his blade. “I’ll take you on” he said, challengingly. This only made the guy laugh. “Alright, it’s your funeral kid.” He then pulled out what looked like a football; no, it was a football! What in the world was this guy up to? “Be careful, Rei!” Tyson shouted. Rei pulled out his launcher and took his stance as the other guy held his football like he was about to kick it. Then, without warning, he punted the football into the air and, unfathomably, out shot a massive, light brown beyblade. Rei then

released his beyblade, and the match was on.

10 - Friends or Foes?

“C'mon Rei, you can do it!” Tyson shouted from behind. Everyone else watched in suspense as Rei and the footballer battled it out in the middle of the dimly lit hallway. “Go Drigger!” Rei cried, and Rei's blade immediately charged at the giant, brown blade that sat idly in its spot. However, Drigger did barely any damage as it ricocheted off the guy's blade and began to wobble slightly. Rei was losing! At that moment, the football player called out his attack and sent his blade charging at full speed towards Drigger, currently off-balance and defenseless. It was like trying to dodge a bull-dozer; impossible. The giant blade hit its target dead-on and Drigger was sent flying backwards with a violent force. Luckily though, Rei managed to regain his composure as Drigger, as cats always do, landed safe on his feet. “Tiger-claw attack!” Rei cried, and with its bit-chip glowing with an electric green, Drigger sped forward and collided with the massive blade, causing it to wobble rather unstably and spin out of control. The footballer grunted with frustration and shouted at his blade to keep going, almost like a child throwing a tantrum; no self-control. With no clear objective other than to make contact, his brown blade drove right towards Drigger, but missed and instead rammed into the wall beside us. As I gaped at the beach-ball sized crater in the wall, I couldn't even begin to imagine what that would've been like for Drigger except crushing and destructive. Rei's blade would've been smashed to pieces if he hadn't dodged that. Well, that was that. Rei's blade was spinning effortlessly in the hallway, while the other remained lodged in the concrete wall. Rei called back his blade and smiled. The football player looked nothing but crushed as he gawked helplessly at his motionless blade. “I- I don't believe it” he sputtered. “I lost!” Suddenly, another voice chimed in. Only this one was female. “Steven! What have you done?” The two shaken boys turned around. Standing behind them was a small, red-headed girl in a tennis uniform, holding a tennis racket and wearing unusually large glasses. “Emily” the tall one exclaimed, angrily. “What are you doing here?” The young girl named Emily stepped forward, glaring at the two sunken boys. “I had special orders from Judy to make sure that you guys were doing your job, and here I find you two with your fat heads up your butts, looking as dumb and as useless as ever.” Then she turned her attention toward us. Nobody moved. “As for you guys” she began “you'd best get out of here before you do something you'll really regret.” Kai walked forward, but suddenly stopped. “So you're the All-Stars, huh?” The three athletically dressed teens stared. “How did you know about us?” the tall, dark-skinned boy asked, dumb-struck. “Well, the way you strut about with your fancy blades making a ruckus pretty much gave it away” Kai mocked. The red-head glared harder and shot back. “Get out before I get security over here!” Kai smiled amusedly and motioned for us to follow him. Once we reached the stairwell, all of us hurried down as fast as we could and rushed into the front lobby, where Sora and Kaori stood impatiently, waiting for us. “Well it's about time!” Kaori shouted. “What the heck were you guys doing in the bathroom for twenty minutes?” All of us, except for Kai, looked at each and broke out in roaring laughter.

Sora scowled coldly at us. “I really don't see the humor this.” At this, we stopped out laughing and headed outside to board our bus that was waiting to take us back to the hotel.

11 - Dreams of a Stormy Past

The rest of the night was a blur to me. The last thing I remember was walking into our room and the feel

of the soft, silky pillow hitting my face. After that it was just..... nothing.

After that day in the mountains, I never let that blade out of my sight. I took it with me wherever I went and on weekends I would go to the park where I first met Heather and practice until sunset. Sometimes my uncle would even have to come get me if I didn't come home before supper. I loved that blade so much. I felt like what ever I was feeling I could see in this blade. Whatever I felt from then on, that's how I bladed. No one could beat me. Until one day.....

It was a dark, stormy summer's day and the weekly weather broadcast had predicted a violent rainstorm would be heading our way by noon today. It was already one, and there aside from the darkening sky, there was no sign of a storm. "Uncle, can I please go out today?" I pleaded. "No, Mason. You heard what the weather man said. There's going to be a storm." Uncle was so stubborn sometimes! "There's no storm, uncle! It hasn't rained all day. Please?" but I was just as persistent. Uncle looked out the window at the sky and then sighed. "All right, you can go." I jumped up and sprinted straight for the door. "But you better get back here if that storm comes, you here me?" he barked. "Yeah yeah. Bye uncle!" I happily slammed the door behind me and headed straight for the park under the nearly blackened sky.

There hadn't been any thunder or lightening the whole time I was practicing either, so I figured that whole storm warning was just a mistake. Still, nobody had been at the park that day at all. I was the only one there. Even so, I couldn't help but feel like I was being watched. It was really weird. Well, eventually I decided to call it quits and went into town to grab something to eat at my favorite place; Long's Pastry Shop.

To my surprise, it had actually started to rain as I walked through the town. By the time I walked into the pastry store I was soaking wet. "Hey, Mason!" Long called out from behind the counter. "Shouldn't you be at home? I hear there's a huge storm coming." I smiled and shook my head. "No, I don't believe there's really going to be a storm."

He shrugged at me and asked me what I wanted. I scanned the trays of mouth-watering treats under the glass. I decided on a chocolate éclair and slipped eighty yen onto the counter. Long put the doughnut into a little paper bag and handed it to me. "There you go." I thanked him and started for the door before he said something else. "Hey, maybe you should stay here until the storm passes, you know; just in case." I pushed the screen door open and stood there. "I told you, there isn't even going to be a

storm. I'll be fine" I said assuredly. Long shrugged again. "Okay, bye then" he waved to me as I stepped out into the now partially flooded street.

They had been right after all. The storm was getting worse as I sloshed through the ankle-high water running through the streets. The rain continued to pour. I knew I wasn't going to make it home in time. I stopped and looked around frantically, trying to find some kind of dry spot where the ground was higher and shielded from the rain. Finally, I found a dark, abandoned ally that seemed to be untouched by the flooding rain water, so I trudged through the mud, and made my way into the ally. As I watched the rushing water flow through the muddy streets, I thought I heard voices. I turned around and looked to see what was behind me, and caught a glimpse of movement in the darkness. "Who's there?" I asked, trembling from the cold. No one answered, but a pair of bright yellow eyes stared back at me from the darkest corner of the ally. I called out again, and this time the mysterious shadow came forward. He appeared to be only a kid, same age as me, but he was unbelievably huge! His height and his rigid posture reminded me of Frankenstein, and I was suddenly very scared. The kid then stopped and reached into his leather-jacket. He pulled something small and round out of his pocket and attached it to what looked like a blade launcher. I didn't know what to do, and even if I did I was too cold and too scared to even move. I watched as he aimed his launcher at me and ripped the cord. Before I knew I was lying on the hard, wet ground looking up at the stormy sky. My head hurt something awful, and no matter what I tried I couldn't get up. I tried shouting for help but I was so dizzy I could barely manage to groan out in pain. The last thing I remember before passing out was that kid, bending over me and running off with an éclair in his hand, leaving me out in that violent summer storm; my body cold and wet and my head throbbing like crazy. I could hear the roar of thunder as I slowly slipped into unconsciousness, at last realizing that the storm had come after all.....

Day 7: The moment I woke up I felt like I had run a marathon. I was so exhausted I could barely open my eyes. I

guess it must have been from all the excitement last night at the ABBA. Wow, what a bunch of freaks. I

slowly pulled myself out of bed and managed to stumble into the kitchen. Suddenly I realized something was

wrong. How come Tyson hadn't come in and woken him up with his usual routine of shouting at the top of his

lungs and jumping up and down? Why wasn't Kaori whining and fussing about her clothes and hair? Why was

everything so quiet? The minute I actually took a good look around the room, I realized that no one was

even there. I walked over to the table where someone had left a yellow sticky-note. It read "Out. Sorry

we didn't wake you. Be back around three- Tyson.” I looked at the cock over in the next room. It was

almost one. I had two hours all to myself and I knew just how I wanted to spend it. I reached for the

phone on the table, grabbed a phone book from the drawer, flipped through a few pages until I found what

I was looking for and punched in the magic numbers. On the third ring she answered. “Hello?” I smiled at

the sound of her voice. “Hey, it's me” I said, casually. “Oh! Hi” she said, excitedly. “How are you doing?”

“Good. Hey, are you busy today?” She paused for a moment before answering. “No why?” I walked over to

the window overlooking the ever bustling streets of New York City. “How would you like to go to a carnival?”

12 - Heartfelt Candy

I had heard about the charity carnival when I saw the flyer in the hotel lobby. I had never planned on actually going, but now it seemed like the perfect date for me and Heather; without the others around.

Now, Heather and I were walking through the crowded lanes of the city park where whirling rides, clowns

in stilts, cotton-candy stands and people galore were scattered about. It was another perfectly sunny day.

“Oh Mason! Look over there!” Heather squealed and pointed over to where a man and a striped uniform was

standing next to a giant box. “What is it?” I asked. She gasped and looked at me. “Don't tell me you've

never had cotton candy before!” I blinked twice in befuddlement. “Huh?” She grabbed my arm and pulled me

over to the man standing behind the big white box. “Two please!” she said. The man smiled and took out two

sticks and poured something into a spinning bowl inside the white box. Then, to my surprise, the man dipped

the two sticks into the spinning bowl, and within a few seconds, the two sticks were suddenly covered with

some kind of blue and pink fluff. The man handed one to each of us, and smiled. I pulled out my wallet, but

the man shook his head, saying it was “on the house.” Heather and I walked over to a nearby bench

together, so we could eat. First I kind of looked at the strange, fluff-covered stick, while Heather ate

hers with much enjoyment. “C'mon! Eat it! It's delicious!” she told me. I did as she said and took my first

bite of cotton-candy. I'll never forget how sugary and good it tasted, especially with her. We laughed

together, until suddenly, a huge roar could be heard over by the giant stage. A cheering crowd was

standing in front of it. Apparently there was some kind of show going on. I turned to Heather and smiled

excitedly. "Let's go see what's going on!" I said. We both stood up and ran over to the stage as fast as we

could, anxious to see what all the fuss was about.

13 - Charity Match

“Geez! This is crazy!” I shouted to Heather as we squeezed towards front through the screaming crowd.

I made sure that I held Heather's hand every inch of the way, until we finally got to the front. The instant

I looked up on that stage, I couldn't believe what I saw. “Hey Mason, isn't that blonde kid up there your

friend?” Heather asked. Suddenly, an all too loud and familiar voice came out of nowhere. “Hey Mason!” I

looked to my right to see Tyson and Kenny standing next to us. “Dude! What're you doing here? I thought

you were back at the hotel!” Tyson shouted over the steadily growing crowd. Tyson looked past me and

his eyes went wide with surprise. “Oh, who are you?” Tyson asked. I realized he was talking to Heather and

looked over at her. She smiled and nodded politely. “I'm Heather. It's nice to meet you, Tyson.” Tyson

smiled brightly and looked back at chief. “Hey! She knows my name!” he said excitedly. “Oh, Mason's told me

all about the BladeBreakers” Heather said happily. Kenny and Tyson both smiled. “He says you've already

won the Asian Tournament. That's great!” Suddenly, an announcer's voice came on to announce the opening

show, and I remembered what was going on. “Hey Tyson!” I called out. “What's Max doing up there

onstage?” Tyson paused and looked up at the stage, where the mayor from the dinner party last night and

the MC stood, saying something about a charity bey-battle. “I have no idea” Tyson replied, still fixed on

the huge stage in front of us. I stood, watching Max; standing in line next to a bunch of other kids, who

apparently were also participating in this battle. “Now remember folks” the Mayor spoke from his

microphone “the money collected from today's event will go straight to the BBA Children's Benefit Fund. So

give generously!” “Spoken like a true benefactor, mayor!” the MC added. “And now, ladies and gentlemen, let

the first match begin!” Tyson and I both stared at each other utterly confused. “Oh! I get it!” Kenny

said. “This is one of those charity beyblade tournaments where they charge you in order to raise money for

some benefit fund.” “So, Max is going to be in this tournament!” Tyson exclaimed. “Yeah” I said, still

overcome by surprise. Suddenly, the MC spoke again. “Now, do we have any volunteers for the first

match?” Tyson eagerly raised his hand and began jumping up and down. “Oh! Pick us! Pick us!” he shouted at

the top of his lungs. I tried to make Tyson be quiet, but I knew it was too late the second the MC called

us up onstage. “Oh hey! It's Tyson and Mason from the BladeBreakers! Come on up!” The crowd erupted into

a fanatic frenzy, and Heather hugged my arm and squealed with excitement. “Oh Mason! That's you! Go!”

Between Heather shoving me up front and the two men in black suits pulling me towards the stage, I didn't

have much choice. “Alright, now let's divide the teams!” The other kids stood in line across the stage,

including Max, who was just near the middle. For some reason though, he didn't look too happy. I got the

feeling he didn't really want to be here. “Okay!” the MC shouted. “The contestants will now

separate into

four teams, so since we only have twelve, there will be three members to each team.” Tyson looked like he

was about to explode from anxiety. That kid could never sit still for even a second. I wondered though;

what if we ended up battling each other? This was certainly going to be interesting.

14 - A Friendly Competition

Eventually, I ended being with neither Max nor Tyson. Instead, I was joined with a bongo-crazy Jamaican

boy with dread-locks and a small, French girl with short blonde hair; who for some reason kept eyeing me

the whole time we spent onstage, waiting for the match to begin. After about ten minutes, the center

stage opened up to unveil an incredible beydish; the whole thing was just a small wooden replica of the

capital and it's courtyard. I looked over to where Max stood with his group with looked to be none other

than a little grade-school soccer player and ... the red-headed girl from that night at the ABBA! We had

seen her walking away with Max's mom. What she was doing here though, I had no idea. "Okay folks! Let's

get this tournament rolling!" the MC announced as he called up the first two teams. "First up are Max,

Cody, and Emily versus Ohama, Brigitte, and Mason! Please step forward." Oh yeah, things were definitely

about to get interesting. My teammates and I stepped to the beydish to face Max and his team, as we

took out our launchers and readied our blades. Max looked like a total wreck. I was starting to worry. "Hey

Max!" I shouted. He looked up at me, nervously. I smiled at him and winked. "Good luck!" Suddenly, his eyes

went big and wide with joy, and he grinned back at me, looking focused and stronger than ever. "You too;

you're gonna need it!" Then, at the MC's signal, we released our blades, and I went straight into attack.

I wanted to get rid of the weaker player first, so I aimed straight for Cody's blade. I didn't even have to

worry about another blade intercepting my attack. So, with not even a second to spare, Cody's blade was

sent flying out of the dish upon impact and landed at the feet of its helpless blader. "Oh no! I'm out

already?" Cody cried. "Woohoo! Way to go Mason!" Heather shouted from the crowd. Nothing could stop me

now. Just then, I saw another blade go flying out of the dish. Brigitte was out fast. Once again it was an

even score, as me and Ohama faced off against Max and Emily. Ohama's blade was pretty big, and would

easily knock Emily's blade out with the right amount of speed. I whispered to Ohama and told him my plan.

He agreed and so he sent his blade directly in front of mine. I called forth Pegasus and summoned up his

speed. As soon as the time was right, Pegasus shot forward like a bullet, releasing all the speed he had

stored up for that moment. Emily didn't even have time to see it coming. In a single flash of light, Emily's

blade went spiraling out of the beydish and falling at her feet. She stared down at her beyblade, then

growled with frustration and stomped her foot. Then Max began to yell at me. "Mason!" I looked up at him,

a little confused. Why is he talking now? "Don't think that just because you got rid of my teammates you

can get rid of me. I've still got a few tricks up my sleeve." And with that, Max called out Draceil's special

attack and sent his blade on a collision course with Ohama's and pile-driven it into the ground like a power

drill. "Alright! Now that's what I'm talking about!" The MC shouted excitedly. "Now it's a

one-on-one

match-up between Mason and Max!” Up until that point, I hadn't noticed how much the crowd had increased

since we started the battle. Now it was like an entire ocean of fans, cheering and screaming their heads

off. Of course, I could still see Heather, standing there watching me and rooting for me. That brought me

back to the match and so I turned my focus back to Max. “You ready?” I said to him. He smiled. “You

better believe it!” And so he called on Draceil one last time, as I did Pegasus. This was going to be one

grand finale; one all-out attack; nothing else. As our blades neared each other, they seemed to glow

brighter than ever. Then, there came the huge explosion of their impact, knocking both Max and I on our

backs and smashing the remains of the white-house replica to bits, followed by the sound of a single blade

clinking against the floor. I sat up slowly against the falling bits of wood and dirt to see what had

happened. When I looked down, the only blade left inside and still spinning was ... *mine*. Max sat up too,

looking down at his side to see his fallen beyblade. He looked at me and, for a minute, didn't say anything.

Then he smiled and laughed. I laughed too. I picked up my blade and walked over to him. I held out my

hand, and helped him up. “Thanks for the great match” I said to him. “No problem! But just so you know,

this isn't over. I want a rematch after this tournament” he said challengingly. I laughed and called it a deal.

“Wow! That was incredible! Ladies and gentlemen, in the luck of a single blow, Mason is the winner!” The

crowd screamed even louder than before, and began throwing roses and toys of such onto the stage. Max

and I both bowed and waved to the ever-growing stream of fans. Suddenly, I felt a tap on my shoulder. I

turned around to see the mayor and all his blonde-headed, towering, stature. "I never expected to see such

an amazing display at a charity event; and just look at all the money it made us." He was right. The money

box was so full that now the men in black suits were giving out an second money box. The mayor thanked

I once again and left him to announce the second match. Just then, I turned to see Heather

running towards me from the edge of the stage. She jumped up and hugged me, over-joyed at his victory.

"You did Mason! You won! I'm so happy for you!" Well, this wasn't the date I had quite expected, but it was

better than anything else I could think of.

15 - Complicated

In the end, Tyson and his team pulled out a speedy win. So by the time the event was officially over, it was

nearly sunset; the perfect way to end a perfect date. Afterwards, Kenny, Tyson, Heather and I all headed

into town for a congratulatory ice-cream. We talked and laughed some about the up-coming tournament, said

good-bye to Heather, and headed back for the hotel.

The second we walked in the room I was both happy and exhausted, as Tyson and I plopped down on the

Sofa and turned on the TV while Max and Kenny retired to their room. "Jeez, what a day" Tyson said in an

exasperated breath, as he flipped through the channels, one by one. "Heather seems like a really cool girl"

Tyson said to me. I smiled, knowing just how right he was. "Yeah, she is." Suddenly, the startling sound of

the local news bulletin cause Tyson and I to jump. A video-clip of today's carnival popped up onto the screen

as the news anchor started talking. "Today's annual city carnival hosted a charity beyblade tournament,

headed by none other than the mayor himself. This rousing event resulted in a more than positive turn-out

as special guests of the coming American Tournament members of the BladeBreakers, Tyson Granger, Mason

Owens, and Max Tate attracted a huge crowd of paying fans with their spectacular display of professional

beyblading." Tyson leaned forward, gluing his eyes to the screen. "Look Mason! That's you and

Max!" Indeed,

overhead footage of my battle with Max was now playing across the screen. "I wonder if Heather's watching

the news" Tyson said. Just then, the front door swung open, and Rei, Kai, Sora, and Kaori all came barging

in weighed down by tons of shopping bags. Rei almost fell to his knees under the massive pile of clothes he

carried. "Kaori... went shopping" he grunted as he strenuously inched toward the kitchen with the heavy sack

of clothes. Tyson and I looked at each other and tried not to laugh. The rest of them followed, but Sora

caught a glimpse of the TV screen and watched with intrigue. "So, that's what you guys were up to this

whole time" she said, pryingly. "I figured as much. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm right now holding twenty

pounds worth of shoes, and they're getting awfully heavy." And so Sora disappeared into the kitchen with

her share of Kaori's shopping. By that time the news flash had already ended. Tyson turned off the TV,

and stood up to stretch his back. "I'm going to turn in" he said sleepily as he walked away, off through the

kitchen and into his room. I rotated my legs onto the couch so that I was lying down comfortably, my eyes

closed and my mind hopelessly stuck on Heather. That's when it hit me. There was no way this was ever

going to work. After the tournament, I would be leaving and possibly never see her again. I knew how it

always ended with long-distance relationships; nope. That never worked. I groaned in bitter frustration. I

had just found what I had been missing for most of my life and now, or sooner or later, I would have to let

it go! "What's wrong?" came Rei's voice. I looked up, kind of startled, but not surprised. "Oh, nothing" I

said absently as I massaged the middle part of my brow in aggravation. "It doesn't sound like nothing" Rei

commented. "Something wrong?" I sat up and tried not to look straight at him. "No." Rei shrugged and

looked away. "Alright, goodnight" he said before he left, leaving me once again, alone with my thoughts.

Well, the least thing I could do before I left was to invite her to come see me at the Tournament. Yeah,

that would work. That way she could at least see me one last time and not have to feel as bad about it.

I dwelled on this for the next hour, until I eventually got tired and fell to sleep on the couch, still thinking

on some conscious level about both Heather and the up-coming Tournament.

16 - Memories Lost

Day 8: The next morning, I could feel someone's hand against

my shoulder, urging me to get up. I groaned in

aggravation and turned slightly over onto my back. I had this awful crank in my neck and shoulder; guess

that's what I get for sleeping all night on a spring sofa. It took me a few seconds to finally open my eyes.

When I saw who had been standing next to me, I jumped and fell to the floor. My head, not to mention my

neck and shoulder, hurt even worse as I picked myself up and glanced over to where I could've sworn I saw

... no; no one there. It must've been a dream. I stood up and stretched my arms, and grunted from the

aching pain in my shoulder. There was a clock and a calendar hanging on the wall over the television; Eight o'

clock, Monday, July 5th. Everyone else had to be still sleeping. Suddenly, I was jumped by the startling ring

of the telephone near the window. I was starting to feel like this was going to be a horrible day. I

answered the phone on the second ring. "Hello?" I answered, still half asleep. The words I heard after that

shook the sleep right out of me. "Hello, I'm calling from Beijing Hospital for a Mason Owens."

After I hung up, I slowly walked over to the couch and plopped down, my head spinning in circles. I looked

up at the ceiling, almost catatonic; like I was in a trance. I never blinked. Everything was suddenly a blur.

One part of my mind felt like it was somewhere else, while the other half played bits and parts of the

conversation over and over again. "Uncle..... heart attack..... hospital..... brother... alone..... must return

home..... claim custody...or ... foster home" I hunched over and buried my face in my hands. Things couldn't

possibly get any worse. It was happening all over again. Wasn't there a way out? How could this have

happened- no. How could I have not been there? How could I be so selfish; so stupid? Just like before...

just like my father...

"Mason! Slow Down" Jason called from behind him as I continued to run while my little brother, the tiny thing

that he was, desperately made his way up the mountain pass.. "C'mon Jason! It's only a little farther!" I shouted back.

He was panting like a dog on a hot day, slowly dragging his tired little legs as he inched his way up; poor kid. I

stopped and went back for him, smiling amusedly at his constant efforts to keep up. "Here, hop on my back. I'll carry

you if you're that tired." So, Jason tiredly scrambled onto my back, wrapping his tiny arms around my neck. I hoisted

him up from the ground and continued walking higher up the side of the mountain. I couldn't wait to show him the

secret place.

When we finally reached the lonely tree growing near the edge of the cliff, I knew that the cave was just around

the corner. "Almost there" I whispered to my exhausted brother, barely awake and slumped heavily over my back.

Finally, I stopped and set Jason down on a nearby rock, as I went on ahead to make sure I was right. When I reached

The top, I stopped cold and stared at what I saw; or more likely what I didn't see. The entrance to the cave was gone!

Not blocked or hidden behind a giant stone; just plain gone! It was as if it were never there. At first I thought I

might have taken a wrong turn or gotten lost, but something told me that I wasn't. I knew this was the spot where I

had stumbled into that magical place. I couldn't figure it out. Wait... could I just have imagined that whole thing?

That day, I had been so tired, delirious, and thirsty; maybe I... no. This WAS the spot. I just knew it had to be. I

could just still barely hear the whispers. So, what had happened to it?

I went back to where I had left Jason, and found him there, sitting on the rock, waiting for me. He looked up at me

with excitedly. "Where is it? When can I see it?" he piped. I just frowned and did not look up from the ground. I

stopped in front of him and shook my head. "Sorry. It's... not here." Jason's face drooped to a disappointed frown.

"Oh..." he sighed. I bent down so that he could once again hop onto my back for the return trip down the mountain.

Without another word, my little brother and I slowly and sadly made our way back down the mountain side.

Even after that day, I would sometimes return to that same spot where the cave had been, and waited hour in rain,

sleet, and shine; hoping it would somehow magically reappear. But it never did. Eventually, I just stopped going. I had

convinced myself that it had all been just a dream, or had never happened; one or the other. My mind may have

forgotten it, but my heart just could never seem to let go of that memory...

17 - Preparations

“Uh, Mason? You alright there?” came a voice. Suddenly, I was jolted out of my daydream and finally

returned to my usual level of consciousness to see everyone standing in front of me, staring worriedly.

“Oh, hey guys” I said, airily. I stood up and rubbed the back of my head, which felt relatively heavier at

the moment. Tyson spoke again. “Are you sure you're okay?” I looked at him, trying to look suddenly

bewildered. “What do you mean?” I asked. Rei cut in this time. “Well, we came in and you were just sitting

there; you're head tilted back and staring up at the ceiling.” Kaori nodded and began talking. “That's not

all. We tried to wake you, because we thought you were in some kind of sleep, but you never blinked or

breathed or even moved!” “It was almost as if you were...” Sora started but couldn't finish. All this concern and attention was starting to get on my nerves. “Look, don't worry. I'm fine” I said, assuredly. “Now if you'll excuse me, I've got some stuff to take care of.” I almost managed to brush past the group until Rei stopped me. “Listen” he said, an urgent but surprisingly concerning tone in his voice “we all respect your privacy just as you do ours, but lately... well, we're worried about you.” I looked rather nervously at him and then at the rest of the team standing behind him. “You haven't been yourself.” Okay, now I was just plain aggravated. I brushed Rei's arm aside and tried to sound as polite and casual as possible. “I really don't have time. I've got to go now.” I headed back for the door and, without looking back, left the now silent

hotel room.

I probably could've handled that a little better, but under the circumstances I just didn't have the time.

There was so much to do in just one day before the tournament. I had to make sure everything was taken

care of. My first destination would be Mr. Dickinson's private office near the ABBA, where I would make

arrangements for Heather to come and watch the tournament. With my goals set firmly in mind, I headed

down the street for the nearest bus stop.

I arrived at the ABBA around the same time it had taken us the very first night. Luckily, there had been

no traffic, but the weather had seemed to darken during the course of the trip. Not all to my surprise, it

began to drizzle as I stepped out of the bus in front of the massive, chrome complex. I briskly entered

through the revolving doors and immediately went up to the front desk in the lobby, where a man in a neat

security uniform sat, typing on his computer. He seemed rather irritated, so I tried to sound as calm and

polite as possible. "Excuse me, could you tell me where Mr. Dickinson's office is?" The man glowered down at

me, clearly more annoyed than he had been not just ten seconds ago. "Mr. Dickinson is way too busy to

waste his time on fans and visitors. You'll have to leave." I remained adamant and tried again. "You don't

understand, I'm from the BladeBreakers. It's important that I see him right away" I insisted. The man

groaned and finally gave in. "Alright, it's the top floor, hallway D, room 13." I thanked him and ran off for

the elevator to the right side of the lobby.

18 - A Visit To Mr. D's Office

“Ah! Mason! What an unexpected but wonderful surprise” Mr. Dickinson beamed. “Do come in!” “Thank you, sir” I replied as I gently closed the door behind me. I walked over to his desk, and he stood to greet me. “What can I do for you?” he asked, gracious as ever. “Well, sir, it's kind of a long story” I explained “but in short I need to make a request.” His eyebrows perked and he chuckled. “Oho, what kind of request?” “Would you please allow a special guest of mine to attend the tournament tomorrow?” I kept casual, non-formal eye-contact with him, as he caressed his scruffy white beard between his fingers. “Well” he hesitated. “As you know, I've been extremely busy with the tournament as it is. There are so many preparations to make. Who is it that you plan to invite?” he asked curiously. “Just a friend; well, actually, a very close friend” I said, rather timidly. Mr. Dickinson paused to ponder for a moment, and then spoke again. “Well, here's what I'll do. If you give me the address, I'll send one of my private cars to go and bring your guest straight to the tournament. Then, he or she will have the honor of watching it with me in my private box.” I couldn't believe it. Everything was falling back into place. Tomorrow, Heather would have the most exciting time of her life. I walked over behind his desk and shook his hand. “Thank you so much, sir” Before Mr. Dickinson had time to say “you're welcome”, I was already out the door. I had to get back and

phone Heather to tell her both the good and the bad news.

The bus had already left, but Mr. Dickinson had generously called a cab for me, and it had arrived in no less than a minute. I told the driver that I was heading back to the city and needed to be dropped off at the hotel. With still little if any traffic on the streets, it was only a half-hour ride. So by the time I returned it was about 2:30. I took the elevator back up to the room, but when I took out my key and

inserted it into the slot, the light blinked red and rejected the card. “But, that could only mean...” I banged on the door, but no one answered. I pounded harder, but still got nothing. This couldn't be... they had checked out... without me!

After I had double-checked everything over down at the front desk, it was all clear. The Blade Breakers

had checked out of the hotel at promptly 2:00 that day. They had left no message or information as to

where they might be, so there was no way for me to find them. As I sat on the bench just outside the

lobby, I tried to think of how to get things back on track. I had really screwed up this time. Maybe...

maybe I should've been more honest with them. I had to find them and tell them everything. It probably

wouldn't be enough to fix everything, but at least they would know. I carefully went over my plans for

tomorrow, and then at around 3:00, grabbed another cab over to Heather's place.

19 - Final Arrangements

Heather lived in upstate New York with her mother in a relatively luxurious apartment. Since it was the

summer, she would probably be at home. At least, that's what I was hoping. I got out of the yellow cab

and strolled up the stone steps into the apartment. I asked the manager what room she was, and he

directed me to 204. I hesitated, then knocked three times on the white wooden door. I only had to wait

three seconds for Heather to open the door. She looked surprised, but then she smiled and invited me in. "I

wasn't really expecting anyone, but I'm glad you came!" she said. I took off my shoes at the front door and

followed her through the room. "I have something to tell you" I said as we headed into her kitchen. She

opened the fridge and took out a pitcher of lemonade. I sat down at the high marble counter, watching and

waiting as she took out two glasses and began pouring the drinks. When she was finished, she handed one of

the cups to me. "Thanks" I said. "So, what did you want to tell me?" she asked from across the counter. I

took a small sip and then cleared my throat. "Well, since I'll be leaving soon, I wanted to do something

special for you." She leaned in closer, her eyes peaked with intrigue. "So, I got you a first class limo-drive

to the ABBA tournament tomorrow." She nearly knocked her glass off the counter as she jumped back in

joyful shock. "Are you serious?" she gasped. I looked at her, a little unsure. "Is that okay?" She began

talking faster and faster. “Okay?! That's- That's fantastic! I couldn't ask for anything more! Oh my- I've got to tell my mom of course, but I still can't believe...” She was going hysterical. If I didn't know any better, I would have thought she'd have had a heart attack about now. “Um, yeah. You'll be sitting with Mr. Dickinson. Do you know who he is?” I asked her. Her eyes went wide with disbelief. “Honestly, Mason. You don't think I'm that clueless do you? Mr. Dickinson is the head chairman of the BBA!” She stopped, still trying to grasp all this at once. “I've never been to a tournament before. I mean, I always read about them on try and keep track on the news, but I've never actually been to one!” She ran around and hugged me so hard I almost fell out of my chair. “Thank you so much!” While I was happy for her, I couldn't hide a sadness that had been growing ever since that morning when uncle's doctor called. I wrapped my arms around, gently, but did not smile; just gazed lifelessly at the hardwood floor, lost in two different worlds.

Heather thanked me again for the tenth time before we said goody-bye and I headed out the door and

down the hallway for the stairs. I was glad that she had been so excited. Now, however, I had to make

last arrangements for tomorrow; my last day in America.