

Return of the Orichalcos

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Takes place in the middle of Season Five- right after the Grand Prix tournament, and before they go on the memory journey to Egypt. I hope you guys like it! I'm not used to writing fanfictions! X]

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Chapter 1 - Chapter One	2
Chapter 2 - Chapter Two	12
Chapter 3 - Chapter Three	16
Chapter 4 - Chapter Four	27
Chapter 5 - Chapter Five	40
Chapter 6 - Chapter Six	43
Chapter 7 - Chapter Seven	52
Chapter 8 - Chapter Eight	56
Chapter 9 - Chapter Nine	63
Chapter 10 - Chapter Ten	68
Chapter 11 - Chapter Eleven	73
Chapter 12 - Chapter Twelve	78
Chapter 13 - Chapter Thirteen	84
Chapter 14 - Chapter Fourteen	98
Chapter 15 - Chapter Fifteen	105
Chapter 16 - Chapter Sixteen	112
Chapter 17 - Chapter Seventeen	120
Chapter 18 - Chapter Eighteen	124
Chapter 19 - Chapter Nineteen	127
Chapter 20 - Chapter Twenty	131

1 - Chapter One

Through narrowed eyes and a fixed glare I read the words: "MUSEUM EXHIBIT CLOSING- ARTIFACTS TO BE RETURNED TO EGYPT." Ishizu Ishtar, an important figure in the Egyptian government, had removed the ancient, encrypted stones from the Domino museum, to take them back to the tombs of Egypt. She believed that it was time for the stones to retire- that, and I quote, "the Pharaoh will soon go on his journey to regain his memories." *Whatever.*

I flipped the page of the newspaper in front of me. The air smelled crisp and fresh. I thought mildly to myself that maybe I should work outside more often. It was a beautiful day in late April; normally on a day like this, I would be stationed in front of a computer or two, sorting financial budgets for the next fiscal month. School was on a week-long break, with today being the first day that students had off.

I looked up for a moment. It was one o'clock in the afternoon; Mokuba was running around with a group of other boys his age; someone had brought a soccer ball, and the boys were playing a friendly game. Mokuba, the smartest (and richest, of course,) of his friends, was somewhat the leader of them; they nearly worshipped him, believed every word that he said, and did everything that he told them to do. Insisting that I needed to enjoy a bout of free time, he had dragged me here, not necessarily to watch him play; more to take just one breath away from my very hectic career.

I lowered my eyes back to the newspaper, and felt something shoot over my head. The wind blew my hair back with it, and I looked up, surprised; apparently, a soccer ball had missed me by mere centimeters.

"Sorry, bro!" I heard a desperate voice yell, and I looked back at the group of kids to see Mokuba waving at me. He was a handsome boy, but currently was covered in dirt; stray blades of grass stuck out of his long black hair in some places. His eyes, dusty purplish-gray, were currently slightly wide. "Are you okay?"

I gave him a silent thumbs-up and went back to my newspaper, and the boys continued playing. I didn't consider myself a very caring individual; I had no time to be compassionate. Mokuba, my kid brother, was the only person on the planet that I loved; almost five years separated our ages, but he was everything to me, and I was everything to him. Growing up without parents had given us an incredible bond that few other siblings really enjoyed. It was my sworn duty to protect him; his sworn duty was to keep

me from overworking, and therefore, killing, myself. Today he was putting this duty into action; I had made the mistake of passing out during yesterday's dinner because I hadn't slept in two days, and he realized that I had overworked myself again, so now he was forcing me to do anything but work for the entire week-long break from school. Originally he had wanted me to relax for seven whole days- I was able to convince him down to let me off for six. So, six it was.

The soccer ball bounced near me again; it splashed into a puddle immediately next to the bench that I was sitting on; some of the water hit the bottom of my left pant leg. "Sorry, bro!" he shouted again. I gave him a thumbs-up again; I lifted the ball out of the water and threw it back at them.

I looked down at the puddle and saw my own reflection staring back at me. I considered myself an attractive young man; thick brown hair framed my face; and my eyes had a kind of coldness to them that somehow complimented their striking blue color.

I looked up at the kids. Now Mokuba was involved in a huge wrestling match; the boys were all piled up on top of each other, punching and kicking and fighting. I frowned. Is this what normal twelve-year-olds did? When I was twelve, I was learning four languages at once. ...but then again, so was Mokuba.

"Kaiba? Is that you?"

I turned my head and saw Tristan Taylor approaching me. Tristan was one of the idiots who followed Yugi around like imprinted ducklings. He had a kind of tough-guy look to him, with his spiked brown hair and leather jacket. He stood nearly as tall as I did; in one arm he was holding a two-or-three-year-old child.

I raised my eyebrows at him. "Tristan," I responded.

I wasn't really friends with Yugi or his gang; however, the incredible amount of life-risking adventures we had all been on together at least had given us all a little bit of respect for one another... with the exception of my annoyance towards Joey Wheeler, Tristan's go-to man; his confidence in his dueling "skills" was infuriating, not knowing his place, in the slightest. Tristan, here, was a lousy duelist, but at least he never tried to make himself look stupid. I didn't mind him quite so much.

Tristan was looking at me in a way that suggested he was stunned to see me sitting on a park bench. He looked up at the wrestling boys and spotted Mokuba, before chuckling and saying, "I got stuck babysitting my nephew. Stupid brat."

The squirming boy propped on his hip proceeded to vomit all over Tristan's shirt. He groaned aloud and growled, "not again...!" as the child giggled, very pleased with what he had accomplished.

I smirked as he said, "bye, Kaiba," and left to clean himself up. At that time, Mokuba ran up to me, breathless and filthy, but looking happy with himself. "Let's go," he said.

The next thing I knew, I was behind the wheel of our expensive red sports car, and he was going on and on, telling me the story of how he had defeated the other boy in a wrestling match; somewhat paying attention because I had bothered to witness the match, I nodded and said "mmhmm," at regular intervals, so when we pulled up to our driveway, he was thrilled with himself and leapt out of the car and ran into the house. I frowned at the passenger's seat; he had gotten it all muddy. I stepped out of the car and one of my servants approached me. "Have someone clean this up," I told him, pointing to the seat, and he nodded and entered the garage.

I closed the car door and walked up the pathway to my house. Mokuba and I lived in a spectacular mansion purchased by my adoptive father; white and castle-like, this was among the biggest houses in the country. And yet, Mokuba and I lived here, alone... well, alongside fifteen butlers and maids, but that was it. And we were perfectly fine with that.

I entered the manor; five of the servants were waiting at the door for me. I removed my coat and shoes and handed them off, before climbing the staircase to my studying room. I looked at the clock; it was almost two o'clock. I had some free time, now; I could manage to get a little bit of work done passing papers for the theme park which was to open in Miami, soon...

I had barely sat down at my computer before the door to my study burst open. Startled, I looked up to see Mokuba, standing in the doorway, dripping wet and wearing only a towel.

"What are you doing?" I asked him, stunned. There was still shampoo in his hair, and he was soaked; it appeared that he had been interrupted in the middle of a bath?

"What are *you* doing?" he asked me angrily, holding his towel tied at his waist. "You shouldn't be in here! Don't you dare break your promise to me!"

I sighed, defeated. He had made me promise that I would do no work for six days. He had only made me agree to this by assuring me that the committee chair-people and

head financial officers were taking care of my job, this week- he worried constantly about my health and had finally found the courage to force me to eat and sleep and do things that I just didn't usually have time for, especially not when I was trying to open ten theme parks.

I stood up out of my chair. "You have to listen to me," he said, matter-of-factly, brushing dripping water out of his face with the hand that wasn't holding up his towel. When wet, his hair hung down to his lower back. "I am only one position below you, so all major decisions go by me, too. And I say you have to take a break for six days. This is only your first day. You know you can't be in here."

"Yes, yes, alright, you win," I told him, amazed at how well he knew me; somehow sensing that I would try to sneak some work in. Did he have a hidden camera set up in this room that he could monitor from anywhere? "I'll go..." I paused. What do people do on their days off?

He read the confusion on my face. "Go read a book or something! Or... watch a movie! Or go to sleep! You never sleep! You always look so tired!"

I did? "Well..." I said, thinking of something. "Will you play a board game with me?"

His mouth fell open and eyes went wide. "*Really?*" he asked, hardly daring to believe it.

"Sure," I said. "I have backgammon, and a go board, and chess..."

He looked as though I had just offered him a swimming pool full of chocolate pudding, which was his favorite food. "Yes! Of course!" he said.

"Well, go finish your bath," I laughed. He looked down at himself; had he forgotten that he was... well, naked?

"Oh. Oh, yeah," he laughed. "I'll be done in ten minutes. Don't you dare turn on that computer. I'll know if you do. I know you." He pointed his finger at his head, then pointed at mine. "I know you," he repeated.

He left my doorway and I chuckled, submitting to the fact that I couldn't cheat my way out of this promise. I went into my bedroom and took my chess board off of a bookshelf; it was dusty, not been used in a long time. I set it on my bed and set the pieces up. *It sure had been a while, old chessboard*, I thought.

Mokuba came in moments later, fully dressed and hair dry. “Awesome!” he said, when he saw me sitting cross-legged on my bed in front of the chessboard. “You know you’ll beat me, but it’ll still be fun!”

He sat across from me, and we played a few games; I hated to admit it, but it was relaxing to sit back and play a game without worrying about competition. I won every time, but I could tell that he was getting better.

“Seto,” he said, matter-of-factly, after the third game. “Since you obviously don’t know how to enjoy time off, can I make a suggestion?”

“What,” I asked, putting the pieces back into the box and folding up the board.

“Will you get me some ice cream?”

“Ice cream? Have a servant bring it up here,” I responded, sliding the box back onto the bookshelf.

“No,” he responded, hopping off of the bed. “Can we go get some ice cream? Like, go to a parlor?”

I looked over my shoulder at him; he was giving me his widest-eyed stare. Damn, he was cute. I sighed. “I have no idea where any ice cream parlors are...”

“I know where one is. I want you to get some ice cream!”

“Mokuba, I haven’t eaten ice cream in years...”

“Precisely why you need to have some. You’ve forgotten what it’s like to be happy, Seto! I’m going to teach you, and the first step is to give yourself a treat once in awhile.”

I frowned. “...alright, get in the car.”

“Nope!” he said happily.

“But I thought you said you wanted ice cream...”

“I sure do. But the parlor is only a block away. We’re walking!”

I didn’t know what to say. “Mokuba, the car is perfectly fine...”

“So is the weather! Come on.”

“You already made me go outside, once...”

“For the first time in weeks! Look at how much tanner than you I am. Come on!”

He ran out of the room. Defeated, I followed him. *Ice cream?* I was probably lactose-intolerant by now.

I followed him down the sidewalk ; on the way, he would run into other friends of his. I was unaware that he was this popular; his friends would run up and high-five him, and they’d run a few yards, and then he’d turn around to make sure I was still following him. We eventually reached the small parlor; it was almost like a large ice cream stand. I frowned.

Mokuba was at the front counter. “What flavor do you want, Seto?” he asked.

I looked up. Chocolate chip cookie dough? Oreo? Vanilla? I hadn’t eaten this sort of thing in years. What was good?

“Um...” I said, completely at a loss. He frowned at me. “Try the birthday cake flavor,” he said. “It has real icing.”

“Do... do I *like* icing...?” I asked, confused.

The clerk was frowning at us. Mokuba ordered and handed me a small cone with the funniest-looking food I’d ever seen; it was white ice cream with blue icing and sprinkles littered through it. He looked up at me, expectantly. “Eat it,” he said.

I looked at him hopelessly, before picking up a plastic spoon out of a cup on the counter and stuck it into the pile of ice cream on the cone. Mokuba frowned, a ring of chocolate now around his mouth. “You’re supposed to just lick it, Seto.”

“How about no, Mokuba,” I said, sticking a spoonful of ice cream into my mouth. It was overwhelmingly sweet; I cringed.

Mokuba laughed. “Sugary?”

I swallowed hard and thought for a moment. The aftertaste ...really tasted like a slice of

birthday cake. Maybe it was good.

“It’s... not bad,” I admitted.

We went back to the house, me routinely spooning ice cream into my mouth, liking it more and more, to my own surprise. Once we reached the house, Mokuba said, “I got an idea! Can I have five hundred dollars?”

“Yeah,” I said, finishing the ice cream, preparing to throw the cone in the trash; Mokuba said, “stop!”

I froze. “What?” I asked.

“You’re supposed to eat the cone,” he said.

“But it’s empty,” I said, not quite understanding.

He sighed, exasperated. “The cone is edible, Seto. It’s a waffle cone.”

“What? Really?” I asked, looking at it; it was slightly soggy with ice cream; it didn’t look all that appetizing. I frowned. “You eat it. I don’t want it.” I handed it to him; he frowned, before stuffing it in his mouth whole. I cringed slightly; he chuckled. “What do you want five hundred dollars for?” I asked.

“I got a good idea! You’ll see,” he said excitedly.

“You can get the cash out of my safe,” I said, confusedly. He ran off up the stairs. I wondered briefly what he was going to do... maybe buy a few video games, or something?

At seven o’clock that night, I was startled by fifteen middle-school kids bursting through the front door, shouting for Mokuba; he appeared at the head of the staircase and said, “It’s almost here!”

“What’s almost here,” I asked, setting down the book I had been reading, thoroughly confused.

Mokuba paid no attention to me; he ran into the backyard with his friends. I followed them outside; the sound of a helicopter was on the horizon. “Here it comes!” Mokuba shouted, over the sound of helicopter blades. My mouth fell open as I saw an enormous

trampoline attached to the helicopter; slowly, it lowered the trampoline onto our backyard. A few of Mokuba's friends leapt onto it and detached the ropes from the helicopter. Mokuba gave the pilot a thumbs-up; the helicopter flew off.

All fifteen of the kids climbed onto it; the thing must have been a hundred feet in diameter. They all bounced around for a half hour or so; I sighed. I wasn't entirely surprised that Mokuba had found yet another new stupid toy. The kids eventually left, winded and tired; Mokuba, now alone on the trampoline, was still bouncing. "Come up here!" he shouted cheerily. He was a few yards away from me; he had to raise his voice slightly to speak to me.

"Uh... no thanks," I told him, frowning.

"Come on," he laughed. "It's fun!"

"I don't think so, pal," I shouted back.

He frowned. "Can you think of anything better to do? Come, spend time with your little brother!" He stopped bouncing and just stood still for a moment. "That's also what this break is about. The only time we ever see each other is when we're passing papers!"

"I... then let's go play another game or something, Mokuba..." I stammered.

"Nope! I spent five hundred dollars on this thing, so let's at least use it for a little while!" he laughed as he bounced onto his behind. "Get up here, Seto!"

"You're the master of torture," I howled at him, not moving.

"Get up here, Seto!" he said again.

"No, Mokuba," I replied.

"I have a good idea, big brother!" he said, quitting bouncing again.

"What's your good idea," I asked, crossing my arms.

"Here's my idea. You should get up here!" he shouted.

"Stop it, Mokuba," I sighed.

“How about this,” he said, matter-of-factly. “How about you come up here and jump with me.”

“How about I don’t,” I said.

“How about you bring yourself up here,” he said firmly.

“How about I don’t,” I repeated, arms still crossed.

“How about you come up here, Seto,” he persisted, strong.

I kept my arms crossed. “I’m going to walk away,” I said, turning around. “Come find me when you think of something else to do.”

“I dare you to do that,” he said; now, his arms were crossed, too. “Unfortunately for you, I know where you live. Walk away, and tomorrow morning you’ll find a dead frog in your coffee, or dog poop in your underwear drawer, or a road-killed raccoon on your pillow. I dare you to walk away!”

I turned back around; I didn’t doubt at all that he would hire one of his goonies to plant something disgusting on some item of mine. I frowned. “Five minutes,” I said, climbing onto the trampoline. He said, “yes!” and started jumping again; I had hardly hoisted myself onto my feet before I fell; completely unable to stand on this thing.

“Stoppit, Mokuba, what are you doing,” I gasped as he jumped all around me, sending me flying in many undignified ways. He was loving this, laughing as I’ve never heard him laugh before. I felt mortified as he bounced me all over the place; he finally stopped, what felt like ten hours later, chest heaving, out of breath, but very happy. He fell to his behind, sitting next to me; I was lying sprawled on my back, long trench coat tangled around me, hair hopelessly messed up.

“Are you quite done,” I asked him, irritated, looking up at him; he was standing over me.

“Yeah!” he said. “Come on, wasn’t that fun!”

“No,” I said, with a sigh. He laughed and bounced onto his behind again, sending me flying six inches into the air, before I landed on my back, again. “Seto, you don’t have to be so cool. I know you’re a trillionaire. I know you’re awesome. Lighten up some!” He lied down next to me, sprawled onto his back, just like I was doing. I turned my head to look at him.

“You’re killing me, Mokuba,” I sighed.

He got angry. “*You’re killing yourself!*” he said. “Besides, if you want to have dignity, you might want to do what I’m suggesting, these days. You freaking fainted yesterday. *Splat!* Right into your salmon. I had to drag your face out of your food and have a servant carry you to your room, with bits of fish all over your face and in your hair. Do you think that entails dignity?”

I frowned. He was right... “That’s really what happened...?” I asked. “I don’t remember much of that night.”

“Yup,” he said. “I had to pick fish chunks off of your face... I felt like I was... like, an *orangutan*, pulling crap off of you. You just don’t remember because you woke up at like noon today!”

“You win for right now,” I said, shakily standing up, trying desperately to keep my balance. I leapt off of the trampoline and fell three feet to the ground. I straightened up and looked at him, crossing my arms again. He leapt off of the trampoline, landing next to me with impressive agility. “Good!” he said, anger gone. He smiled up at me and wiped his forehead; jumping around had worn him out. His smile lingered momentarily; then he said, “I’m starving. We haven’t eaten since before we went to the park. Are you hungry?”

I frowned. I was completely unused to eating at scheduled intervals. “Yes, I suppose,” I said.

2 - Chapter Two

I entered my room that night and dressed into my pajama shorts and a button-down white shirt. I tucked my locket necklace into my shirt and turned the desk lamp off. The darkness felt good on my eyes; I didn't realize how tired I was until now, even though it was only ten o'clock at night. Mokuba often got onto my case about how much I worked and how much I didn't sleep, thus why I was being put under this seven-day leave of absence; I had been taught a horrible work ethic by my cruel stepfather. Unfortunately, working nineteen-or-so hours a day became a habit that proved difficult to break. At least having him as a vice-president lightened my load, some; for a middle-school kid, he was extremely intelligent, doing many impressive tasks for our company.

I slid into my bed; sometimes I forgot how pleasant and warm sleeping could be. I closed my eyes, and sighed; instantly, the world went completely dark.

There was then a loud crash on the other side of the room. Was I dreaming? I felt myself on the edge of consciousness. There was no more noise; I relaxed more, feeling that I had dreamed it...

The crash came back; I jerked my eyes open and sat up. I flipped on my desk lamp and was startled to see a brownish monster the size of a small bear on the other side of my room, throwing books off of my desk and knocking over chairs. At its feet was a small green stone; the creature itself seemed to glow green. I recognized it immediately as a duel monster that was infused with the power of the...

"...*Orichalcos*...?" I whispered, narrowing my eyes, hardly believing it... hadn't we defeated that power months ago? Could this be? Was I still dreaming? I caught sight of the clock across the room from me; it was only four o'clock in the morning. I felt awake... but how could this be?

The monster roared, and the green symbol on its forehead glowed brightly. Whipping up my hand to block the light from my eyes, I managed to see that it shot a green beam in my direction; quickly I slid down out of the beam's way, and it sailed over my head, missing me by inches... I threw myself out of the bed and ran out of the room, elbowing the monster out of my way as I passed. I heard it crash into my desk and heard glass break.

There were monsters, just like the one in my room, crawling around the foyer; I could see

from the hallway that overlooked the first floor. Everyone in the house was panicking; maids and butlers running out of the front door. Briefly I wondered if anyone had been hurt, but I had bigger problems to worry about... I bolted across the second floor hallway and stopped in horror when I saw a monster sniffing around right outside of Mokuba's bedroom door. The door was closed; could it open it?

I leapt on the monster from behind and punched it backwards, away from the door; it stumbled, and I took that second to kick it down the staircase, conveniently down to my left. I then burst into Mokuba's room.

No monsters were in here; in fact, he was still curled up, asleep. I took just a second to chuckle; he had a knack for being able to sleep through anything. I then was hit by a biting worry... what if one of them had attacked him in his sleep?

I rushed over to the bed and leaned over him. Quickly I put my hands under his arms and knees and lifted him out of his bed; his eyelids fluttered but he didn't wake. He was warm; seemed unhurt.

I rushed out of his room and frowned; I saw the monster that I had just battered still standing at the bottom of the staircase. The symbol on its forehead glowed, and a laser beam shot at me, again missing me by mere inches, and only because I leapt out of the way; instead, the laser hit the wall less than a foot to the left of where I was now standing. I ran out of its reach, clutching Mokuba tightly.

Now where was I supposed to go? Over anything, I had to protect Mokuba... I had a large underground walk-in safe in the fifth basement. I could go there... it was a room as large as my bedroom, but had three feet of steel encasing it on each side, and a door that only opened once it had scanned either mine or Mokuba's retinas. Could a monster get down there?

It was fifty feet underground. I ran to the elevator and shifted Mokuba's weight and pushed the elevator button. The elevator dinged open; no monsters were on the elevator. I entered it and pressed the button to the fifth basement.

The elevator landed at the fifth floor basement and I exited. The giant safe was just down the hall; everything down here was quiet. Mokuba yawned and shifted in my arms; he was waking up. As I walked down the long hallway towards the safe, his eyes opened and I felt his head lift up off of my chest.

"Wh... what's going on," he mumbled sleepily.

“I’ll explain everything in a minute,” I told him. He yawned and put his head back down onto my chest.

As I walked down the hallway, I willed my pulse rate to go down; my pounding, rapid heartbeat was probably what woke Mokuba up. I couldn’t help but feel just frightened... what was going on with the Orichalcos? It was a dangerous seal that, according to Yugi, had the ability to tear the soul out of anyone. I swallowed hard as I thought about the duel where I had witnessed the true power of the seal. But, I had been so sure that Yugi had gotten rid of it. Where did it come from, now?

I reached the safe and pressed the button that would beam a computer laser into my eye to scan it. I winced briefly from the intense light; the door dinged and opened. I entered it; the door shut behind me. I turned on the light; the room was flooded with a golden glow. I could see all of my bookshelves and drawers where I stored some vital documents and expensive jewelry; also, in case of emergency, a stash of clothes for both of us.

I set Mokuba down on one of the large armchairs. He rubbed his eyes and sat up. “What’s going on,” he asked again. “Why did we come down here?”

“I’m glad you slept through it; Orichalcos monsters are swarming the house,” I told him, going through the closet and grabbing my second purple coat and black turtleneck and slacks. I found his clothes, as well, and tossed them to him.

“*Orichalcos?*” he asked, startled and frightened, and suddenly much more awake. I looked over my shoulder at him, and I knew what he was thinking- he had seen just what the seal was capable of. He had witnessed even me succumb to it, during the duel with Dartz...

Dartz. Just the thought of that teal-haired bastard made my blood boil. Not only had he taken over my company and ruined its reputation, but in a battle against Yugi and me, had used his horrible seal to steal my soul to “feed” some stupid snake... Mokuba had watched the whole thing. I hated Dartz; I wasn’t entirely sure what Yugi had done to him, but I had been only too glad to hear that he had been taken care of. Was he back?

“Did... did a monster hurt you?” he asked timidly.

“One was only standing in my room,” I said, figuring it best not to mention that it had attacked us both, but missed. “I was able to get out of the room before it did anything.”

He nodded mildly and started pulling on his jeans and sneakers after taking off his pajamas. "Are you sure it was an Orichalcos monster?"

"I think so," I said. "I recognized the symbol on its forehead."

He frowned. "What are we going to do? Are there a lot of them?"

"There were some in our house," I said, thinking about what I should do next. Find Yugi? He had the Egyptian god cards, which could prove useful...

I frowned at the door. I didn't want to ask for Yugi's help. But...

"Should... should we call Yugi?" Mokuba timidly asked. I said nothing for a second, then said, "Let's go to headquarters. We can think of a plan there."

He followed me out of the door and into the elevator. As we passed the first basement, the ground shook violently, and the lights flickered. Mokuba yelped, startled; I hit the emergency button that shot the elevator to the ground floor with its last burst of energy.

The elevator stopped and I forced the doors open. "Come on!" I yelled; we ran out of the elevator. My first instinct was to run to the garage and get the car. I pulled the door open and Mokuba yelled, "They're in the front yard!"

I looked over my shoulder to see several of them leaving the front door and entering the yard; now only fifty or so feet away from us.

"Quickly," I said, running into the garage and getting into the small red car that I had bought the last time we were trying to escape monsters. I jammed the key into the ignition and wildly backed out of the driveway, and tore down the street towards downtown, leaving behind the several monsters in the yard.

3 - Chapter Three

“What do they want, Seto?” Mokuba asked, frightened, as I drove down the highways that led to my office building. The KaibaCorp headquarters building was the tallest and most fantastic in the area- standing directly in the heart of Domino City, it stood as a symbol of financial and social power. “Why were there so many in our house?”

I frowned. “I don’t know,” I said. “I don’t know if that lizard in the sky is back, or anything...”

“Does... does he... do they... want your *soul*? ...Like last time?”

His voice was so quiet, timid; I looked down at him for just a second. His eyes were wide and fearful; searching my face for answers.

“I... I don’t know,” I said again, wishing I could say more, because I wondered, myself, what the monsters were after... and how they would go about getting what they were after.

We skidded to a stop in front of headquarters. “Come on,” I told him; I opened the front door to the building and we entered; I then locked it behind us. “Let’s go to my office.”

We rode the elevator to the top floor of the building. Everything was quiet and still.

We entered my office and I locked the door behind us again. Immediately I sat down at my computer and looked online for information about these monster sightings. Did anyone know who was responsible?

My heart sank as a horrible thought dawned on me. What if history was just going to repeat, completely? What if *my company* was blamed for the sightings, again? I had *just* held that tournament to restore my profits and stock value... only a month ago, we had opened some of our theme parks... if these monsters were to ruin me now... because of Dartz, my company had become crippled, because the world had thought that my technology was responsible for sending people into comas. It had proven hugely difficult to build even the small amount of amusement centers that I did; now, because of Dartz, my profits had been smaller, and I had been forced to put the building of the Atlanta, Georgia amusement park on hiatus... I had held the tournament to restore my reputation, and my stock value was high again, so finally I was starting to build the remaining parks

that I had originally intended be finished by now.

There was nothing as far as news on the internet; this must be a completely new occurrence. “Turn on the television,” I told Mokuba, and he did, flipping through the channels to find a news station.

I sat at my desk, clenching my hands together in fury, waiting for something to come on the television. If Dartz was going to try to ruin the reputation of my company, again... *I swear, I will tear him apart, personally...*

“Look, big brother!” Mokuba said, startled; he had found a news station that was reporting on a swarm of monsters. “They’re all over the place! Downtown and everything!”

I growled under my breath. *Dartz, you son of a dog...*

The door to my office violently slammed open; Mokuba yelled and I leapt out of my chair, startled. “*What the hell!*” I shouted.

Three monsters entered the room, rapidly. Mokuba yelled again and backed away from the couch, against the wall. They started tearing up my office; I opened my desk and took out the gun and knife that I kept hidden in the top drawer.

I fired bullets at the monsters; most of them hit, and two of the monsters fell and stopped glowing before disappearing in puffs of smoke. The third monster was faster and was nimble; I was startled when it jumped up and was clinging to the walls and ceiling, like a giant spider. I kept firing the gun; the symbol on its forehead glowed and a laser shot from it and in just the blink of an eye, hit me squarely in the chest.

I dropped the gun in shock; it landed on the floor but didn’t discharge. Crippling pain shot from the middle of my chest where the continuous laser beam was hitting me; I couldn’t breathe, and the world was spinning... colors swirling in front of my eyes, I could feel my own warmth draining...

I knew only milliseconds were passing, but it seemed like years went by... I was overwhelmingly cold, immobilized by the shooting pain... I heard a far-away voice shout, “*Seto! No!*”

There was a loud bang in the room; some of the intense pain lifted, and through blurred eyes, I saw that the green light was gone, and I heard a thud in front of me; the monster

had fallen from the ceiling and then disappeared like the others. I felt my knees hit the ground; I fell forward, catching myself with my hands. I was now looking at the floor, but my vision was foggy...

Chest heaving, I felt cold sweat drip off of my forehead. My chest was stinging angrily; a small jolt of pain shot through me, and I winced and flinched from it. Then, vaguely I felt hands on my shoulders; somewhere, a voice was shouting my name...

I swallowed hard and shakily sat down, on the floor. I looked down at my hands; involuntarily, they were trembling... I had hardly ever felt so cold...

I took a deep breath and blinked a few times; another small jolt of pain shot through the spot on my chest where the beam had hit me; I winced again, but managed to lift my head slightly. Slowly, Mokuba swam into view in front of me; his face was pale, and eyes wide with terror. His hands were on my shoulders, and he was shaking me lightly, asking my name over and over...

"Mokuba," I whispered.

The relief was evident in his eyes, but he still seemed frightened. He took his hands off of my shoulders. "I killed it," he whimpered, voice shaky, still worried and upset. "Are you okay? Speak to me...!"

I was cold, and it was very hard to breathe... I wanted to say something. Chest heaving, I tried to bring myself to talk... I was still involuntarily trembling all over...a jolt of pain would still shoot through me, every few seconds...

The world was slowly starting to become more visually clear. Mokuba was standing over me, still, looking very upset. I took another deep breath and shakily pushed myself up. I was standing, but dizzy and winded, sick... I had to lean my hand on my desk, or else I might have collapsed again...

"It only shot the laser for like a few seconds," he said, trembling. "Only like a few seconds, but... but... you look sick... really white... are you okay?" he asked again.

I managed to nod and then sat down and leaned back in my computer chair, hand planted firmly to the spot where the laser had hit me. Every heartbeat brought a sting of pain; I swallowed hard again, chest heaving. Mokuba was standing right next to the chair, worriedly staring at me; I looked at him, and whispered, voice shaky, "...you shot it?"

He nodded shortly, wide eyes still staring intently at my face, desperately wanting to know if I was okay.

I managed to curl my mouth into a mild smile after wincing from a jolt of pain again. "I'm... I'm impressed. You're a good shot; not even I could hit it..."

He laughed shakily. "It was standing still..."

"I think I'm okay..." I said. I pushed myself out of my chair and shakily walked towards the couch, and collapsed onto it. Mokuba was still hovering over me, looking very upset.

I was on my back, on the couch, now. "I'm okay," I muttered sleepily, rubbing my forehead. I wasn't really in constant pain anymore... just cold, and tired...

"Can I do something to help?" Mokuba asked, but then the phone rang. He left the couch and went to answer it.

I closed my eyes. This was so strange... it wasn't quite like when Dartz had defeated me. When Dartz had defeated me, I didn't feel *pain*, like that... I only had felt uncontrollably tired, not quite so cold... was this different?

I supposed that the monsters were different than the seal, itself... I sighed. I wasn't so cold anymore. What had it done to me... my mind wasn't so foggy anymore. Even the periodic pain surges were getting weaker.

Vaguely I heard Mokuba talking on the phone. I wondered who he was talking to. Who would think to call the office so early in the morning?

I sighed again. The TV's voices were becoming clearer. I felt better...

I heard Mokuba hang up the phone. I opened my eyes and lifted my head somewhat so that I could see that he was walking towards me. "Who...was it?" I asked.

He sat down on the couch next to me. "Yugi," he said.

I was surprised. "What?" I asked.

"He said he called here because we didn't pick up at home, of course... he's dealing with a lot of monsters, too..."

I frowned and put my head down again. I wasn't surprised. So did he want my help in dueling, again? *It was happening all over again...*

"They want to come here," he continued. "They want to figure out a plan to stop these monsters soon..."

"Fine," I said, closing my eyes, mildly irritated; but, I supposed that his Egyptian god cards were the best weapon against the monsters, again. Last time we didn't have them; at least, this time, we did.

There was silence for a second, again... I opened my eyes and saw that Mokuba was still sadly looking at me. "Are you okay?" I asked him.

"Y... yeah..." was the weak response.

I pushed myself into a sitting position; it was slightly hard to do. His mouth twitched into a smile when he saw me do that; but he went back to frowning after only a second. Was he still worried about me?

I stood up off of the couch slowly. "Don't worry," I said, once I balanced myself on my feet, which took a moment; my head felt just light. "I'm okay. I promise." He got off of the couch, too, but immediately proceeded to throw his arms around my hips. I was surprised; he whimpered, "Let's do everything we can to get rid of the monsters! Work with Yugi, or get new cards, or..."

I didn't know what he was talking about. He continued, somewhat on the verge of tears, "I'm scared! I don't want to lose you again... not like last time..."

He gripped my shirt, cheek to my stomach, sniffing but not crying; I put one hand on the top of his head and the other on his shoulder. What could I tell him? Could I promise that nobody would get hurt this time? He had just watched me get hurt... I was fine, but I was fine *this time*... would there be a next time?

He looked up at me. "Please?" he asked. "Please, let's do whatever it takes to get rid of them... if it means working with Yugi, or Joey, or anyone like that... let's do it, okay? *Please?*"

My heart broke. "Alright," I said.

He smiled and let go of me. "Good, because they're all coming here in a little while. I

gave Yugi the guest pass-code so that he can open the front doors. Yugi said he had bad news.”

“Bad news?” I asked, heart sinking. “What do you mean?”

“I don’t know... but he said he had bad news.”

The phone rang again. I passed Mokuba and picked it up. “Yes?” I asked.

“Kaiba-boy!” came the cheerful reply on the other line.

“*Pegasus?*” I asked, slightly horrified. I looked down at the video phone’s screen; it certainly was him. He was leaning back in a chair, feet up on his desk, looking just *delighted* to see me.

“The one and only,” he continued. “I... wow, my dear boy, you don’t look so good... have you been working too hard? You should let yourself rest once in awhile!”

“Don’t worry about that,” I snapped; it infuriated me to even see this man, let alone hear him speak. “What do you want?”

“What do you *think* I want?” he asked, with a giggle. I frowned deeply; he was so annoying... “Surely you’ve seen these rotten monsters running around, too? Don’t tell me you haven’t!”

“I have seen them,” I growled. “Yugi is coming over here soon to work with me about them. What do you need about it?”

“I’m inviting you to a party, Kaiba-boy!”

I wondered if I had heard that correctly. I looked up at Mokuba, briefly; he looked as shocked as I felt. “What?” I asked, stunned.

“A dinner party! You and Mokuba-boy simply must come to Duelist Kingdom tonight!”

“Tonight?” I gasped. “*Tonight?* That’s... not a lot of notice, you idiot...”

He ignored me. “I’m meeting with many other corporation heads and we’ll discuss this nasty monster problem.”

“Why do I need to come all that way for that, especially tonight? Don’t waste my time; just tell me your plan here, now!” I shouted.

“Now, now, that’s not any fun at all,” he replied, bouncing on his chair. My insides boiled. “Attending this meeting will be to your benefit. It will prevent the world from believing that you’re at fault for this monster problem, again!”

“My fault?” I roared into the phone. *“You know these monsters didn’t come from any of my games or machines, Pegasus! I’d sooner believe that they’re your fault!”*

“I don’t think they’re your fault, Kaiba-boy, so you don’t need to jump down my throat!” Pegasus retorted, sounding hurt. *“I don’t think you’re the guilty one, but everyone else in the whole world might. This media-covered party is where I’ll hold a press meeting to show the world that this is an ancient problem, and has nothing to do with your company or mine!”*

I stood, silent, for a moment. I wasn’t sure what I believed about where the monsters came from, but I desperately didn’t want this to happen to my company all over again... I’d do anything to prove that my company is innocent.

“...Fine.” I said, thoroughly irate. “Fine. I’ll fly out this afternoon. But, I swear, Pegasus- if you’re turning this into some sort of sick game-”

“Oh, wonderful!” Pegasus said. *“The party starts at eight-thirty. Wear your finest garb! This will be huge!”* And with that, the phone’s screen went black, and I set the phone down on the receiver.

“So... Pegasus is throwing a dinner party... to tell the media where the monsters are coming from?” Mokuba asked slowly.

“Yes,” I said, brushing my hand through my hair and sitting down at my desk chair. “Fine. We can fly out at six and be there on time.”

The door then opened and Yugi and his entire party walked in. I expected this; I wasn’t surprised to see Yugi surrounded by Duke Devlin, Tristan, Téa Gardner, Joey Wheeler, and Serenity Wheeler. Yugi was the one person in the world whom I considered to be a truly talented duelist; he was the only person who could actually defeat me without cheating. I had quickly learned not to judge a book by its cover, with Yugi- he stood hardly four and a half feet tall... well, maybe five feet including his unbelievably weird hairstyle.

“Woah, Kaiba, you look sicker than usual, what’s wrong?” Joey Wheeler immediately asked, shaking messy blonde hair out of his face, fixing narrowed amber eyes on me. This guy was also in my grand prix tournament, and had lost hilariously to Ziegfried von Schroder, a feminine male duelist whom I had crushed without much of a sweat. He was among the many banes of my existence.

I frowned. “Nothing. What happened to you, Yugi? What’s the bad news?”

There was a loud crash from several floors down. Everyone gasped in surprise; when there was silence again, I said, “Let’s go kill those things.”

I had another gun stashed in this room; I took it out of my desk and picked up the other gun that Mokuba had left on the floor. “Use these,” I said, setting them on the desk next to the knife. Tristan, Duke and Joey, immediately interested, proceeded to go through the weapons and argue over them. They ended up fist-fighting for just a second; Joey nearly tore out Duke’s dangling dice earrings, Tristan nearly lost an eye... the girls were shrieking at them, telling them to grow up. I sighed, irritated, and picked up one gun before exiting the room, Mokuba at my heels. If there were monsters downstairs, we had no time to waste...

“Stay right with me,” I told him, as everyone else followed.

“Where did it sound like it came from?” Téa, a frustratingly headstrong brunette girl who I knew had a thing for Yugi, asked, as we walked down the hallways.

“Try the first floor,” I said, and we all entered the large elevator that sent us shooting to the ground floor.

The elevator door opened, and immediately a monster was there, right in front of us; Tristan, with albeit impressive aim, shot it right through the head, and it dropped to the ground and disappeared in a puff of smoke.

“Yeehaw,” he said, as Joey high-fived him. We all cautiously exited the elevator. The lobby was quiet, until Serenity, Joey’s innocent redheaded sister, gasped and shrieked; we all whipped around to see her pointing to a figure on the ground.

“*Roland!*” Mokuba yelled, leaving my side and rushing to him and turning him over. My stomach dropped when I saw that Roland, one of my top employees, was completely motionless on the ground, eyes closed, face stark white...

"Call an ambulance!" I roared, and saw, from the corner of my eye, Duke go to the phone on the receptionist's desk; Mokuba moved aside so that I could now lean over Roland, looking for his pulse... *nothing...* his skin was cold...

"Damn," I whispered under my breath, heart pounding. *This couldn't be happening.*

"Seto," Mokuba said desperately, "He's not breathing... *what do we do...*"

It took only two or three minutes... long, horrible minutes... for the ambulance to skid up to the front door and for some paramedics to rush in with a gurney. They kneeled over him, ripping off his shirt and taking his pulse; after several seconds of jabbing him with needles and shocking him, one paramedic looked up and said, "Mr. Kaiba...we've lost him... he was gone before we got here..."

I stood in shock. Time could have been at a standstill, at that point; the ground seemed to be swirling under my feet. My top henchman and advisor was *dead?*

"That can't be!" I shouted. "He looks untouched! Who did this?"

But it hit me, as Mokuba clung to my sleeve, shaking with silent tears. The monster. *That monster had killed him...*

"Keep him alive," I ordered the paramedics. "It's only been a few minutes. Take him to my hospital and put him on life support. *Now!*"

They both looked at me for a second, and then, sticking several more IVs into him, lifted Roland onto the stretcher and left the building with him.

Yugi's friends were all standing, silent, until Serenity squeaked, "so that's what the monsters can do...?"

I turned around to face all of them. "Have you run into them?"

"There was one in my house," Joey said. "I killed that one, and we met at Yugi's store, where the place was swarming with them..."

"Did any of you get attacked?" I asked. Mokuba was still clinging to my sleeve, not paying much attention to anything other than worrying about Roland.

“No, I don’t think so,” Joey responded.

I looked down at Mokuba. He sniffled and let go of my sleeve, but proceeded to gently take my hand, wiping his eyes.

“That’s where the bad news comes in,” Yugi said. I looked back up at him. “The monsters that broke into the store were able to steal the Egyptian god cards ...again.”

A horrible wave of disappointment washed over me. “Really?” I asked angrily. “They stole the cards?”

“Yes,” Yugi responded. “I believe they took them to the same place that Dartz did. I think the best thing we can do is go straight to where Dartz kept them last time.”

I frowned. “What, you want me to go, too?”

“We need your duelist skills,” Yugi said. I wasn’t moved; Mokuba gripped my hand tighter. “Without a duelist of your caliber, we stand no chance. I believe that the enemy we might face this time may even be stronger than Dartz was.”

I didn’t even bother to wonder why Yugi thought this... personally; I thought it was Dartz, himself. “Pegasus insists I go to a dinner party in Duelist Kingdom tonight. Figure out a plan and tell me about it on Saturday,” I said shortly.

Yugi smiled; I could tell that he was almost surprised that I wasn’t putting up much of a fight to avoid going. “I’m glad you are involved, Kaiba,” he said. “Come on, guys.”

They all left the lobby of my building. I sighed. I didn’t particularly like working with these people... but... I had promised...

Mokuba sniffled again. I knelt down so that we could make eye contact. “Roland’s going to be alright,” I told him, because I somewhat believed it. “We’ll keep him alive until we can figure out what’s going on with those monsters. He’ll be okay.”

Mokuba nodded, but tears continued to leak their ways out of the corners of his eyes. I smiled at him. “Okay?” I asked reassuringly.

“Yeah, but...” he began, voice very choked up. “But, Seto... that monster stopped his heart. That monster killed him...”

I sighed. "I know," I said sadly.

"And... and... what if... what if I hadn't shot the monster in your office? What if we hadn't had the gun... or something?"

I knitted my eyebrows. "What..." I began, but he started crying harder, and whimpered, "That could have happened to *you*, Seto! That could have been *you*, twenty minutes ago! This time... this time... the monsters...they'll stop your heart! *They'll kill you!* Can... can we really bring Roland back? Would we have been able to bring *you* back, if I hadn't killed it...?"

He threw his arms around my neck and sobbed into my shoulder. I didn't know what to say... was he right...? What would have happened to me if he hadn't shot the monster...? He had saved my life... yes, he had. I hadn't thought of that, at the time. I held him, back, leaning my head against his.

"I d...don't want to lose you, big brother... not again," he whimpered, clutching my shirt, not really crying anymore, now. "...*Roland...*"

"Don't worry," I said, in the most soothing voice I possessed, after a moment. "Don't worry..." we let go of each other. I ruffled his hair and stood up, before saying, "So, thank you for shooting that monster, huh?"

He chuckled stuffily, hugged me around the waist for just a second, and then ran off, outside. I followed him; he said, "Come on, I want to wear my tuxedo!"

4 - Chapter Four

I stepped out of the jet at eight-thirty, and Mokuba followed me. I quickly brushed some dust off of my lapel and walked towards Pegasus' ballroom. We were in Duelist Kingdom, now; the air was nippy and the sound of the sea washing up on the island's shore reverberated around. It was windy; Mokuba was patting his hair down every few seconds.

I liked this tuxedo, fine. It was a symbol of my financial power; it was pearl-white, with bright blue trimming around the collar, vest and cuffs. A silk cape hung from my shoulders and down to my ankles, suspended by pure golden buttons. I looked handsome; Mokuba had a tuxedo just like mine, except his was lined with a dusty purple instead of blue. On our right ring fingers and left middle fingers were golden bands, each embellished with one enormous diamond in the symbol of KaibaCorp's logo. We reached the entrance of the building; I opened the doors and we entered.

I was not surprised to see that Pegasus had taken the liberty to decorate this place as fancy and overdone as he possibly could. A large fountain was in the middle of the room, and on a balcony overlooking the room that had been turned into a stage was a small orchestra playing quiet classical music. Animatronic duel monsters were stationed here and there, alongside the golden tapestries and floors; I felt myself go a little cold with hate when I saw a robotic Toon Blue-Eyes-White-Dragon in one of the corners.

I frowned and approached the Toon Blue-Eyes statue. There were people near me; but, none of them were looking at me. I carefully and quickly 'accidentally' leaned against the statue; it fell over and broke into several pieces when it hit the floor. I heard it clatter, but the chatter and music in the room drowned out the noise to anyone but me.

"Oops," I said, with a smile, kicking the severed head of the statue under a table swiftly and walking away. Nobody noticed a thing.

Lots of people were here; most of whom I didn't recognize, but a few I did- sitting at a table were the Schroder brothers. Leon, the younger, looked classy enough in a black suit, but Ziegfried looked right at home with his flamboyant hot-pink tuxedo and enormous fur coat; a real, huge rose sat pinned to his lapel. It was the largest rose I had ever seen... it took up about a third of his chest... it was nearly the size of his *head!* I looked down at my own boutonniere. My sky-blue lily took up perhaps a fifth of my chest. I chuckled darkly.

Mokuba waved mildly at Leon; they were the same age and got along well enough. Leon got up from the table and approached Mokuba, greeting him; they both walked off, laughing about games and tournaments. Leon wasn't a bad duelist.

I suddenly felt a pair of arms wrap themselves, out of nowhere, quickly and very tightly around my shoulders from behind me; I felt my feet leave the floor a few inches. Startled, angry, arms pinned to my sides, and feeling myself fully suspended in the air, I growled, *"Who is that?"*

Whoever was hugging me set me back down and let go of me. I turned around to see the beaming face of Pegasus; the tall, childish creator of Duel Monsters. He looked rather dressed like Ziegfried, I thought to myself, observing his fancy frilly magenta suit with disgust.

"Kaiba-boy!" he said, with all the delight of a grandmother greeting her favorite grandson. I wondered where he developed this feeling of friendship; I was sure I was sending out a vibe of absolute despise, because that's what I felt. "I'm so glad you came! I'm so sorry to hear about your friend Roland."

"You would do well to not hug me," I said poisonously. He didn't reply to that; he instead took a step back from me and sighed lovingly. "Oh, Kaiba-boy, you get more handsome every time I see you!"

I frowned even deeper than I already was frowning. "Thank you for having me here," I forced myself to say, but not bothering to put a very polite tone to my voice. "What will we accomplish tonight? I'm not here to socialize."

"Oh, I will explain so much as soon as all of the guests are here and have finished dinner! Join me at my table with Zieg-boy and Leon-boy. It will be fun!"

He swept off gaily, greeting other guests with enthusiasm. I then noticed that my fists were tightly clenched with fury; I forced them to relax, slightly afraid that I might make my palms bleed if I didn't stop. The lily pinned to my lapel was slightly crushed and crooked, now; I took a moment to re-pin it.

I exhaled deeply and lightened my frown, until I heard a young voice shout, *"What? Let go of me, you stupid freak!"*

I saw, through the crowd, that Pegasus was doing to Mokuba just what he had been

doing to me a moment ago, except that poor Mokuba was suspended several feet in the air. Pegasus set him down happily and patted his head; I went over to where they were. Mokuba moved closer to me; Pegasus sighed lovingly again. “So *protective!* You boys are just amazing. Your bond just warms my heart so!”

He left again. Mokuba looked up at me, obviously not knowing what to say. “Are you okay?” I quietly asked him. He shrugged and nodded; Leon was laughing at him. Mokuba scoffed at Leon and went back over to him; they engaged in a friendly argument.

Pegasus never ceased to amaze me, but this was certainly a negative thing. He had done to both me and Mokuba what Dartz had done to me... now that I thought about it, why were our souls such prizes, anyway? Except that Pegasus had left us both to die, souls imprisoned in his special cards... he had stolen my company, kidnapped my brother... *I hated him so much...*

“Come on, Mokuba,” I said to him and, inadvertently, Leon; both boys looked up and stopped play-fighting. “Let’s eat dinner so that Pegasus can get his crap started.”

The boys nodded and followed me to the table where Ziegfried was sitting, blathering on in his infuriating drone, talking about his milk baths and fur coats. I sat next to him, Mokuba on my other side, and Leon on Ziegfried’s other side; Ziegfried smiled adoringly at me. Why did everyone whom I hated seem to like me?

“Ah, Herr Kaiba,” he said. His voice had a naturally sultry tone to it that never ceased to frighten me. “It has been such a while! Business is good, yes?”

I nodded shortly. No, it hadn’t been ‘such a while;’ he had participated in my tournament just a month or so ago... at the thought of my grand prix tournament, I allowed a small, victorious smile to creep onto my face... if anything, the tournament had been spectacular because after everything he tried to do to ruin my company and destroy my computers, I had completely crushed him in every way. He had suffered a horrible and humiliating defeat at my hands... I allowed my air of superiority to dominate my mood, at this table.

“Good, good,” he went on, in response to my nod. “You look very, very sharp. Blue is a wonderful color for you; it brings out ze fantastic cerulean color of your eyes. Just *beautiful!*” He chuckled and turned to a female guest who was sitting across the table whom I didn’t recognize. “I am ze go-to god for fashion. Zis coat cost upwards of a million dollars... but money must be sacrificed when quality... und a good designer... is in order.”

I thought I might gag. I busied myself in slicing a piece of bread from the appetizer loaf in the middle of the table. I chewed lazily on it as more people sat down at the table, and finally, the waiters brought out plate after plate of food. At least it looked and smelled delicious; seafood of every kind, vegetables that looked as though they had been picked minutes ago, fruits with spectacular colors. *Maybe Pegasus could do one thing right*, I thought for a millisecond, before realizing that all of the food was being served on colorful, childish plates; all of them had pictures of cartoons on them. A waiter sat a glass of water in front of me, and I sighed when I saw that the glass was sort of shaped like a red-and-gold goblet, with decorations of diamonds on the sides. Mokuba was observing his glass with a confused look on his face.

I ate quietly, mildly tuning into conversations that were going on around me; even though Pegasus had told me to join him at this table, he never showed up. An old man on the other side of Mokuba was complimenting our company on our technological advances, and I heard him gasp aloud when Mokuba told him that he was the vice president, and that I was the president. The man went on with more compliments, among which I heard, “brilliant children” and “genius” and those sorts of things. I smirked to myself. It had been a while since someone had referred to me as a child, owing to as I hadn’t ever really been one, anyway.

Food gone from my plate, I took a sip from my water goblet and looked over at Ziegfried, who had taken the liberty of bringing his own wine and was pouring himself a glass. I had forgotten that, where he was from, he could legally tote alcohol around as early as the age of sixteen; I had just less than three years to go before I could. Ziegfried looked over at me and chuckled darkly. “Oh, *seventeen-year-old Kaiba*, would you like to try some of my wine?”

“No,” I said dryly, sure that he would try to slip poison or drugs into it, or something. Ziegfried chuckled again and took a sip from his glass, before saying, “Pegasus has done a lovely job of gathering all of zees people. I am impressed.”

I gave him a sort of approving hum as a response, not bothering to look up from my glass. He continued, eyeing me, “What is ze brand of ze suit you are wearing? I’ve never seen zat style before.”

I looked up, ready to roll my eyes into next week; I grumbled, “I don’t know.”

“Do you have your own designer? Zey do a very good job.” He flipped his long, weird pink hair out of his face with an elegant toss of his head; I now noticed that his hair was

the same color as his suit; it almost hurt my eyes to look at him for too long. “Oh, your suit matches Mokuba’s. How darling! Ze capes are a nice touch. Ze suit makes ze man, Herr Kaiba.”

Or the woman, I thought to myself, chuckling quietly despite my attitude; he looked so very pink and flowery.

“Yes!” he said, mistaking my chuckle for an agreement to his statement. “My suit gives me a delicate flair zat gives a visual metaphor to how I describe myself as a rose... even ze most tender flower can be quite thorny und dangerous...” The girl across the table giggled; Ziegfried was *loving* this. “Und you, Herr Kaiba, look like a prince, as you are ze prince of gaming. Magnificent!”

I leaned my head in my hand, exasperated. Ziegfried chuckled again and sipped from his wine glass. I then felt a tug on my sleeve, and I looked down at Mokuba, water goblet still in my hand. “Yes?” I asked him.

“What is Pegasus doing?” he asked me, pointing over his other shoulder. I looked up and saw Pegasus on the inside balcony, speaking with the conductor of the orchestra, all of which the members were sitting up there with their instruments.

I frowned. Was he requesting a song? Asking them to stop playing?

Pegasus picked up a microphone, and everyone looked up at him when he said, “Greetings, my lovely guests!”

What was he doing? Was he going to make his big announcement from up there? “I am pleased you’re all here! Tonight, we will make history with the gathering of the most powerful CEOs of the most powerful companies in the world!”

Everyone applauded. “Thank you!” Pegasus said. “Now, I have a proposition for you all.”

I set my water chalice down. This was it.

“I know what the world thinks of us. I know the world thinks of us and sees us as a bunch of stuck-up tightwads who don’t know how to have fun.”

That sounds about right, I angrily thought to myself. *Stop being an idiot and get to your point, already.*

“And you know what?” he continued. “That is so *wrong!* Tonight I’d like to introduce you to the Illusions Orchestra!”

What? Everyone clapped for them.

“I know very well that we all have actual lives! I believe we should take a few moments from our fine dinners and meetings and have a dance! Shouldn’t we?”

A few more people clapped. My stomach seemed to explode. *He had to be kidding.*

“So! I have hired these fine musicians to play a waltz for us, while we wait for the meeting to start! Everyone, find a partner and prepare for a fine dance!”

Oh, please, be shooting me, I thought hopelessly, as Ziegfried got up and offered his hand to the girl across the table from him. Mokuba looked up at me and shrugged, before leaving the table, too. I stared in shock at him and stood up, but couldn’t manage to take even one step to run away before someone had grabbed my hand from behind me. Realizing that I wasn’t going to get away from this because my hand was now in some sort of vice grip, I turned around slowly and looked down at Vivian Wong.

I recognized her; she was the daughter of the man who owned a large string of Chinese restaurants in Shanghai and Beijing. She had also participated in my tournament. Dressed in her finest oriental dress, she looked pretty enough, I supposed. I didn’t really have anything against her; she wasn’t a bad duelist.

“*Seto Kaiba! Seto Kaiba!*” she squealed breathlessly, causing some of the hairs on the back of my neck to stand on end. “I had to make sure I got you before anyone else did.”

I raised my eyebrows. She continued, absolutely star-struck, “I saw you at the tournament’s opening party. You’re so smart! So smart... It was so great to be in your tournament. Me... in a tournament hosted by the Seto Kaiba.”

I wondered briefly if she ever bothered to stop and breathe between paragraphs. She started walking towards the dance floor, still holding my hand tightly, going on about, “so talented in dueling... *so strikingly handsome...* always wanted to spend time with you...” *Blah, blah, blah,* I thought to myself, grudgingly following her.

We reached the floor; I saw that Mokuba had found the courage to ask to dance with a girl his age whom I didn’t recognize; she had curly black hair and was wearing a huge

green tulle dress. *How cute*, I thought, rolling my eyes. He actually was taking this seriously.

The music started, and Vivian positively *threw* her arms around me and nestled her face in my chest. I cringed, annoyed. She moved her feet, at least, in the steps of a waltz, and I followed her moves; Mokuba and I had been taught to waltz a few years ago, at part of one of my stepfather's similar fancy parties.

The music ended, and Vivian let go of me, beside herself with delight; she bid me an enthusiastic goodbye and ran off to go giggle with her friends. Relieved that this was over, I looked up at the balcony and saw Pegasus picking up the microphone.

"Please!" he said, also very happy. "Take your seats. I would like to begin the discussion that is the reason we all are gathered here tonight."

Finally, I thought, and sat back down at my seat. I watched Mokuba slightly reluctantly leave the girl he had been dancing with. *Did he like her?* I smirked to myself. He sat next to me, blushing, as news stations began to set up their cameras near the balcony. I looked up at Pegasus. Finally, the media was here; the truth about these monsters would come out.

"As we all are aware, my poor duel monsters have been roaming the Earth unattended, just like they were a few months ago."

There was a breakout of murmurs from the crowd. "I would like to address the media on the causes of these problems so that the public can be aware of where the monsters come from and what to do about them!"

Good, I thought. Pegasus and I were basically enemies, but I knew he wouldn't blame these monsters on me, especially since such an accusation would be false.

"Well... I would like to address the media, but I believe there's a man here who can do a better job of explaining what's happening, than I can. I'd like to introduce you to the C.E.O. of the Paradius company..."

My heart stopped... *Paradius?* Mokuba gasped, "*What!?*" I stared, horrified, at the balcony, as a man entered it from a door behind it; the man walked up next to Pegasus, smiling down at all of us. He had teal hair that reached to his ankles, and an immediately-recognizable calm-before-the-storm smile. It was him. My insides turned to ice. *Dartz*.

“Good evening, ladies and gentlemen,” Dartz said. His voice always sounded calm. “My name is Dartz; I am pleased to be here tonight to speak with all of you.”

“Seto,” Mokuba gasped shakily, looking, horrified, at me. “What’s he doing here? I thought Yugi sent him back to Atlantis or something...”

I couldn’t believe he was here. I hated him almost as much as I hated Pegasus; but knew that while Pegasus was a dangerous man, mostly, he was a foolish child; Dartz, on the other hand, was extremely intelligent, and thusly, I saw him as much more of a threat. He claimed to have been living for thousands of years... so he told the Pharaoh during their duel. I wasn’t sure what to believe about his age, but knew that he was significantly smarter than Pegasus was...

“Currently, I am not only the president of Paradius; I also reign over the reborn kingdom of Atlantis. Monsters sealed away, and banished of my own darkness, I have been rebuilding my glorious civilization in honor.”

Murmurs broke throughout the room. I narrowed my eyes. Is that what the Pharaoh had done to him? Sent him back to his land? So, Atlantis was no longer underwater... but, he said the monsters had been sealed away, not really totally defeated. Did Yugi trust him, too much? Should I trust him when he says he’s stopped being evil?

“As you may know,” he continued, “months ago, I led a quest to resurrect the Great Leviathan, a creature that existed in the golden age of my country long ago. I abandoned this quest when I realized that humankind is not purely evil; however, not everyone in my nation agrees with me. And that is what leads us to our current situation.

“My two top advisors are powerful, intelligent people. Disagreeing with my change of heart and believing that Atlantis can only be truly paradise once the Great Leviathan destroys everything on Earth, they managed to break into my palace and steal a large fragment of the stone that I had hidden; the green stone, from which fragments power the Orichalcos seal and allow the bearer to control it, and summon monsters.

“They are now continuing what I had foolishly begun. Using the light of human souls, the Great Beast is gaining strength; originally, it had taken me tens of thousands of years to bring it to the brink of consciousness; my advisors have manipulated the power of the seal so that now, it has taken them mere weeks.

“I advise you all to be alert and, perhaps, frightened. I will work with Mr. Pegasus to bring

down the Great Beast, as it was defeated before. Until then, I understand that the monsters have been roaming the globe; the monsters, infused with new powers, now killing them instead of merely sending them into comas after extracting the souls of their victims, are extremely dangerous, but as I understand it, can be defeated if the fragment of the Orichalcos stone that they appeared from is destroyed.”

I frowned. I remembered I had seen the stones at the feet of the monsters. The monsters could be killed with physical force, but perhaps it was more effective to crush the stones. I hadn't thought of that earlier.

“Good luck to you all. I want to express to the world the absolute fact that, while they appear similar to those featured on Duel Monsters trading cards, the monsters and attacks do not, by any means, come as a fault of the technology developed by Industrial Illusions or KaibaCorp.”

Everyone in the room clapped. I felt better, slightly. Mokuba looked up at me for a moment. I narrowed my eyes back up at Dartz, who was now talking with Pegasus, on the balcony, again. The news cameras were being packed and put away. Dartz and Pegasus left the balcony, and I couldn't see them anymore.

“What do you think?” Mokuba asked me. I looked down at him. “Do you think he's lying?”

“I don't know,” I said. “Yugi seemed to believe he isn't a threat anymore. I don't know if Yugi was wrong.”

We both stood up from our table. “All that matters, now, though, is that at least the public understands that KaibaCorp is innocent. At least that will save us from losing money, right?” Mokuba asked.

“I don't see why it wouldn't,” I said, agreeing with him; it did feel like a load was lifted off of me. One less thing to worry about, perhaps.

I felt a hand on my shoulder; a bucket of ice seemed to drop into my stomach. I turned around slowly and looked right into Dartz' face.

He had that calm smile on his face, and I scowled. “Good evening, Kaiba,” he said. I felt Mokuba grab my hand, standing very closely to me; Dartz looked down at him and chuckled. “Don't worry. I won't take your brother from you.”

Mokuba said nothing; only moved closer to me. “What do you need,” I asked Dartz, glaring at him.

“I wanted to apologize for my monsters’ assailment on you this morning. While I am aware of all of their actions, visible through the Orichalcos stones, I cannot control them any longer. I am sorry my creatures attacked you.”

Mokuba looked up at me, not knowing whether to be frightened of him, or to believe him; I felt the same way. I looked back up at Dartz. “I wasn’t harmed,” I said shortly.

“Good.” He sighed when he saw that I was absolutely not going to be friendly. “We’re in the same boat, now, Kaiba...” he began, but I said, “You’ll understand if I am reluctant to work with you.”

“I do understand, my poor friend,” he said, closing his eyes and nodding. *Friend?* “But I’m in as much danger as you are. We’re in this together, now... yes?”

I didn’t smile or give any approval to his statement. Mokuba gripped my hand tighter and said, “We don’t trust you,” quietly.

“I understand very much, and know that I will now work to earn your trust,” he said, extending his hand to me. I wondered if I should shake it or not. Should I believe him?

I was saved making this decision right now by Pegasus, coming suddenly out of nowhere. “Kaiba-boy!” he said cheerily, clapping me on the back. “May I have a word with you in private?”

I frowned; Dartz withdrew his hand, nodded at me and Pegasus, and walked off. Mokuba let go of my hand. “What do you want,” I asked Pegasus.

“Follow me, my dear boy. We have serious business to attend to.”

I sighed, irritated, and followed him out of the main ballroom; Mokuba frowned as I walked off with Pegasus; I gave him an assuring nod before I was out of his sight. He led me to a balcony not far from the ballroom; the balcony overlooked the ocean. The sky was spectacularly clear; I took a moment to marvel at the amount of stars overhead, very visible even with the light of the full moon. The sky seemed silver, with them.

“So. Our companies are safe!” he giggled.

I looked down from the sky and at him. It was dark out here; I could only see him in the light of the moon. "I suppose I should thank you for that," I said shortly. "Although, I'm not entirely sure how many people will accept as true Dartz' story; how believable is it that he's ten thousand years old, and the king of a supposedly-lost civilization?"

"Kaiba-boy, you're the only one in the world who refuses to believe that sometimes, strange things can just happen. Don't you worry for a second. Your company's reputation will be fine!"

"Yes," I said. That's all that mattered.

"But," he continued, with a dramatic sigh, "That still doesn't say enough. We still have the problem of the monsters running around all over the place! Oh, they are so after us..."

"Rabid duel monsters, huh?" I asked lamely.

Pegasus, wide-eyed, approached me. I crossed my arms. "You know what happened to all of us last time the Orichalcos was around! Such wonderful prizes we all were, for Dartz and his people, back before the Pharaoh banished his darkness... his people, the ones who are still bad guys, don't want to give up us, the prizes, because they know what we're worth!"

My frown was so deep that my face was starting to hurt. "I will not let what happened to me last time happen again," I insisted, incensed.

"I'd hope so, Kaiba, but we can't really be sure of that, can we? At least not until we get rid of the monsters once and for all, and especially since they have already had a glimpse of what kind of power we can offer them!" He lightly prodded a finger into the middle of my chest. "That strong little spirit of yours almost single-handedly rose the Great Beast! They'd just love to have their hands on you again. You know they would!"

I brushed his hand away from me and scowled, but albeit felt as though the fact that there were swarms of creatures that happened to always be around me, Joey and Yugi made more sense. "Don't be like that!" he said happily, walking away from me and standing between me and the main building. "They're after me, too. I had to fight off several of them this morning, in my own home!"

I didn't say anything. He smiled up at me. "You know what you need to do, Kaiba-boy."

I glared at him. "What do you mean," I demanded.

“You have a duty to go to Atlantis and stop whoever has betrayed Dartz this time. You know it.”

“I have a duty?” I growled at him. “This is nonsense!”

“My cards are in such *wrong* hands,” Pegasus sighed sadly. “My poor god cards. You must help Yugi get them back! You are among the rare few people in the world who can control them!”

“You are asking me,” I said, injecting every ounce of venom I could, possibly, into my voice, “to go to an island, the birthplace of those creatures, and use my *duel monsters trading cards* to fight an enemy that’s after my *soul*? Yes?”

Pegasus nodded pleasantly. I couldn’t believe it.

“I am not going to bet my soul getting your precious cards for you,” I snarled, grabbing his frilly collar and lividly pulling his face closer to mine. It infuriated me that he thought this was a game or a joke. “I am not going to do your bidding.”

His hand lifted to mine and he placed it on my wrist gently. I let go of his collar and retreated my arm. “You’re not quite doing my *bidding*, Kaiba-boy. These monsters are after you, and my Millennium Eye allowed me to put real power into your cards when I created them... your cards, and Yugi’s, and Joey’s... they’re not just cards; they’re *weapons*! You’d be protecting yourself by getting rid of the monsters!”

“What, by walking right into their trap?” I asked furiously, not bothering to try to calm down.

“They’ll keep coming for you, Kaiba-boy. They’d love nothing more than to possess your soul, and mine, and Yugi-boy’s, and Joey-boy’s... and well, Mokuba’s, too, why not.”

Chest still heaving with vehemence, I didn’t say anything. Was he right? One had been approaching his room, that night...

“This is about revenge against the Pharaoh,” Pegasus continued, finally injecting some seriousness into his voice, which, in turn, made me feel less blindly irate about this conversation. “These people want to finish what Dartz started, and Dartz can’t do much to stop them. They know just what they need, too. They’ll keep churning out those

monsters in swarms. You can't fight them off forever!"

I felt myself grow colder, no longer quite so mad. "Going to that temple and helping Yugi-boy get rid of those things and get the god cards back is the best thing you can do for Mokuba-boy, or else those monsters will keep showing up, and the next thing you know, they've attacked you in your sleep."

I stood silent for a moment, and then slowly turned away from him and put my hands on the railing of the balcony and looked over at the full moon's incredible reflection over the water. I was still frowning. But... "You're right," I said quietly, successfully dwindling my anger. "...You're right. ...okay."

"That's a brave boy, Kaiba!" Pegasus said cheerily, walking over and standing next to me and clapping me on the back happily, before leaving my side, re-entering the building, and disappearing. I sighed and looked back over the balcony's railing. I didn't want to be a part of this... but I had promised Mokuba I would, and I owed it to him to do everything I could to keep us both safe.

I left the balcony and re-entered the dining hall. Guests were starting to leave; it was nearing midnight. Mokuba was on the other side of the room, still talking to that black-haired girl; I chuckled mildly and sat down at a table and waited for him to finish his conversation. A moment later, he noticed me and waved goodbye to the girl, and approached me.

"There you are. I'm tired," he said. "Can we go home?"

"Yes," I said, standing up. I felt awake enough to fly the two hour-trip. "Come on, we can leave now."

We exited out of the front doors. "That girl is pretty," Mokuba said mildly. I ruffled his hair a little bit and we reached the jet. I climbed into the pilot's seat and he climbed into the passenger's; within moments, we were soaring across the spectacular night sky.

5 - Chapter Five

I was standing in a large, open castle. I could feel the weight of golden bands on my chest and upper arms. I lifted a hat off of my head and shook dark hair out of my face. My sky-blue robes draped to the ground; a cape was pinned to my shoulders.

The Pharaoh was standing on a balcony about fifty feet away from me, also adorned in gold; long purple cape whipping around in the wind. I approached him; he looked up at me. "Look at the sky," he said, trouble haunting his voice.

I set my tall hat, also lined with real gold, on the railing of the balcony and looked up. The sky was dark, and clouds swirled angrily overhead. "What does it mean," I asked him. "Bakura...?"

"I can sense a great evil," he said quietly. "We don't have much time to strengthen our forces."

"Akhenaden and I are still holding the girl in the castle..."

"Are you sure she possesses the White Dragon? Incredible... so many people have been searching for it, for so long. It was only said to have been a monster rumored to exist..."

"Yes, we are sure. I do not know how to harness its power effectively; I do not want to harm the girl." There was a golden scepter attached to my waist; I lifted it up. It was the Millennium Rod; gold, glittering and spectacular.

The Pharaoh was smiling at me. "You have never been a tender man, Seto," he chuckled. "I have never seen you hesitate to remove the beast from a person's soul!"

I chuckled, too, feeling my face go just barely hot. "I... I am surprised with myself, as well," I replied.

I heard rushing footsteps not far behind us; we both turned around as several guards entered the balcony area.

"My Lords," one guard said. "I have wonderful news."

"News?" the Pharaoh asked; he wasn't expecting news. "Go on."

“We have apprehended the man believed to have burned down several villages in search of the White Dragon, four years ago.”

I felt my heart leap. “*Really?*” I gasped. “Take me to him!”

“I knew you would be excited to see him, Priest Seto,” the guard said. “We have proof that he was involved in the burning of your village and death of your mother.”

Every inch of me was trembling with triumph. I wanted to see this man personally; look into the face of the man who had burned my mother alive. I set my hat back on my head and left the balcony.

The Pharaoh and I followed the guard into the dungeons where the prisoners were seated. We reached a cell where a man was sitting; he was the most peculiar-looking man I had ever seen. He had long, straight hair that seemed to be green; I could tell even in the low light. Clearly, he was some kind of a foreigner... There was as smug sort of smirk on his face as the Pharaoh and I approached the cell.

“Ah, your highnesses,” he said, with mock respect. I felt my hand go to the Millennium Rod. I stepped forward. The Pharaoh had no business with this man, really; but, I did. I entered his cell.

“You killed my mother,” I said deeply. Hatred coursed through me; because of this man, I had no family. He laughed. “Don’t trouble yourself, Seto. It was a worthless village anyway... the place you were born.” he laughed again. I unsheathed the Millennium Rod; it had a knife built into its lower half. I held it to his neck.

“Speak disrespect to me one more time,” I said in the most threatening voice I possessed. “I would feel no remorse with knocking off your head.”

He said nothing; only smiled up at me; smug, unworried. I re-sheathed the Millennium Rod. “See to it that this man is tortured,” I growled to the guards, fixing the man with a stare of absolute odium. “For taking the lives of my mother and neighbors, sentence him to our strictest regimen.”

The man stood up; my hand went back to the Millennium Rod. “I don’t like that idea,” he said, casually. I hadn’t noticed before, but there was a stone in his hand; a small, oval-shaped green stone, only as wide, and a third as long, as his thumb. What was it? He tossed it into the air lazily; a large, brownish monster burst from it. A green symbol

was on its forehead; I didn't recognize it...

It all happened so fast. The Pharaoh lunged forward; I felt his hand hit my side and shove me out of the way just in time for the monster to miss hitting me with a thin, green laser; the Pharaoh snatched a spear from one of the guards nearby and stab the monster through the skull; it fell to the ground and disappeared, dissolving into steam.

"He's gone!" I gasped, noticing that the Pharaoh and I were alone with the guards in this cell. I ran out of the cell and through the hallways of the dungeon; he was nowhere to be found. *Where did he go?*

I swore under my breath. Even with the confusion of the presence of the monster, I would have noticed him run out of the cell...

"Seto!" the Pharaoh yelled, running up to me; the guards were behind him. "Are you alright?"

"What? Yes," I snapped, angry. "Did you see the man leave?"

"No," the Pharaoh said. "I am stunned at the evil I felt in that man... what an unbelievable power that came from the stone he threw..."

I turned away from the Pharaoh and walked out of the dungeon; alone, I now stood in the foyer of the palace.

"Seto," came a voice from somewhere.

"What," I responded, turning around to look at where the voice came from. "Who is it?"

"Come on, Seto," someone was saying. I was alone in the foyer. Who was talking?

"I am here," I said. "Who is it?"

I felt a prodding pressure on my shoulder, and the world became dark... my heart became very slow, and all of a sudden I was very warm...

6 - Chapter Six

I jerked my eyes open. I was lying, on my back, in my bed; Mokuba was leaning over me; he retreated his hand from me, no longer gently poking me in the shoulder, and stepped back from my bedside.

I lifted my head off of the pillow. I had just experienced a dream? How realistic... it almost frightened me!

It had been a quiet night; no sign of monsters in the house- the maids and butlers had evacuated yesterday morning at the same time I had left, and the monsters had all disappeared. The window allowed the bright morning light to flood the room.

“Good morning,” Mokuba said quickly.

“The same,” I told him, with a sleepy yawn, putting my head back down for a moment. “What time is it?”

“Ten o’clock,” was the reply; he then eyed me unhappily.

“What,” I asked, rubbing my eyes and slowly sitting up. I ran my hand through my hair. What an emotional dream, I thought quickly to myself. Strange. I frowned. It felt... more like a memory, than a dream.

“I’m sorry to wake you up,” Mokuba said despondently. “But, I got an important call a while ago... it’s about Roland.”

“Roland?” I asked, now fully awake. “What... what about Roland?”

“We have to go see him,” Mokuba said, frowning. “The doctor wants us to go...”

I frowned; my heart sank.

We pulled up to the hospital owned by KaibaCorp a half-hour later. Mokuba leapt out of the car as soon as it was parked, and we both walked up to the sliding double doors.

The bored-looking receptionist at the desk didn’t look up when we entered; only said, “Visitor? What’s the last name of your patient?”

“Roland,” I said. She looked up and jolted out of her stupor. “Oh! Mr. Kaiba! Yes, of course. His room is number 541.”

I nodded and we entered the elevator and rode it to the fifth floor; the next thing we knew, we were in the hospital room where Roland was lying, hooked up to a countless number of machines. I could hear his pulse on one of the machines; I was glad to see that they had, even if artificially, started his heart.

Mokuba sadly went to the side of the bed. “He’s not getting better,” he whimpered.

A doctor entered the room. “Good morning,” he told us. I nodded at him; Mokuba asked, “Is Roland okay?”

The doctor frowned. “He... well, he isn’t brain-dead, but he’s not showing signs of recovery. His symptoms are similar to many other patients who have come in contact with those creatures. That’s why we need you boys here... thank you for coming. Do either of you know anything about them? How do they hurt their victims?”

“It’s some sort of a laser,” I began. I wondered how I should tell the doctor what Dartz had said. Would he believe me? And then again, did I believe Dartz enough to say what he described?

The doctor scribbled this on a clipboard. “Have you boys witnessed this?”

“Yes,” I said. “The monsters appear with some sort of a green stone. They’ve got a symbol on their foreheads that from which they beam a continuous laser.”

“Well, it appears that the lasers paralyze the heart,” the doctor muttered.

“That’s what happened to Roland?” Mokuba gasped. “But, he’s got a pulse now...”

“Artificially, but that’s what we don’t understand; why he isn’t regaining consciousness. We’ll do an MRI on him later to see if they do brain damage, too. He shouldn’t have brain damage, really... he was only deprived of oxygen for about five minutes.”

I frowned. I hated to think that Dartz was right about the monsters stealing their victims’ souls, leaving them dead, but it began to appear more and more realistic. “One of them shot me about a half-hour before Roland was hurt,” I added lazily.

“What? *Really?*” the doctor gasped. “You were hit with the laser from a monster? Where?”

“Yes, here,” I said, pointing to the middle of my chest. “But it stopped hurting after I lied down for a moment. I’m fine.”

“Mr. Kaiba... please, let us make sure of that. These creatures may do more harm than you realize. It very well may have damaged your heart.”

I instantly regretted admitting to the attack; I didn’t want to have a physical examination. There was nothing wrong with me; I felt now as though the incident yesterday had never happened. Mokuba looked up at me, worried. He could tell that I was thinking of the politest way to ask the doctor to put his head in his @\$\$; Mokuba said, “Please do it, Seto...”

I frowned down at him, before turning back to the doctor and saying, “Quickly.”

The next thing I knew, I was standing in just my black slacks on a weighing scale that had a vertical height scale built next to it. The weight scale read a little more than 143 lbs, the height, around 73 inches. More than six feet... I liked being tall.

“I really don’t feel that this is necessary,” I told the nurse, who led me back to the examination table. I sat on it, and she put a blood-pressure cuff on my arm. “I feel fine. Really.”

Mokuba was sitting in a chair in the room, listening to music on his headphones. The nurse read my blood pressure readings on the cuff’s meter, before saying, “your blood pressure is a bit high, Mr. Kaiba.”

I frowned. “I don’t think that has much to do with what the monster did to me yesterday,” I said.

The nurse took the cuff off of my arm and took a small, plastic ring out of a drawer. “Give me your hand,” she said, and I did; she slid the ring onto the tip of my right pointer finger. “This will take your pulse and temperature.”

After a few seconds of this, she took the ring off of my finger and said, “Heart rate 75 beats per minute, core temperature around 99. You’re in good shape, doesn’t look like that monster did any damage to your heart... if anything, I would suggest relaxing once in a while, though... that blood pressure may give you problems later. You could experience

fainting spells or a suppressed immune system from your high stress levels.”

“Fine,” I said, picking up my shirt and sliding it over my head. Mokuba saw me do this and looked up from his music. “There,” I told him, as he took his headphones off; I stuck my arms through the sleeves of my shirt. “I’m fine. Are you happy?”

He smiled and nodded. “Good!” he said, happily watching me tuck my shirt in and turn my coat right-side in.

“Let me ask you about the attack,” the nurse continued. “Please tell me how it played out.”

“I was in my office, and a couple of them burst through my door. I had a gun on hand and shot a few of them, but the third one was faster, and managed to position itself on the ceiling and shoot me, here,” I said, setting down my trench coat and pointing to the middle of my chest.

“How long did the laser come in contact with you?”

I frowned. Time had seemed so slow during the attack, that I wasn’t sure. “What do you think?” I asked Mokuba.

“Like four seconds or something,” he said. “Not very long.”

The nurse was scribbling all of this down. “What did you feel?”

“It was painful, and it made me turn cold,” I replied.

“How painful? Compare it to something else.”

“Would you like me to demonstrate on you?” I asked.

She looked up from her clipboard. “Mr. Kaiba,” she said, as though telling a rowdy child to calm down.

“...Getting punched in the chest very hard, I suppose.”

“How did you get rid of the monster?”

“I picked up the gun and shot it,” Mokuba said. “It turned to smoke and disappeared.”

“When the laser stopped, what happened?”

“My knees gave way,” I said. “I fell and sat on the floor for a little while. I was kind of out of breath and shaky.”

“Did you still feel pain?”

“Somewhat, but it wasn’t bad. Mostly I was dizzy. I lied down on the couch in my office for a moment and my mind cleared up.”

“So you never lost consciousness. How long did it take for you to feel completely normal again?”

“Maybe twenty minutes. Not even that.”

“Was there anything else interesting about the attack?”

“Not really,” I said, glad that this seemed to be finally over. I picked up my metal wrist plates off of the table and fastened them on my forearms. “Is that all?”

“Yes, and thank you,” the nurse said. “Hopefully we can tie your symptoms into finding out what happened to your employee.”

We exited the hospital. “What about Yugi,” Mokuba asked, as we re-entered the car.

“What about him,” I replied, fastening my seat belt and sticking the key into the ignition.

“He wanted to go to Atlantis like, today or tomorrow. Are you going?”

I sighed. “I guess I don’t have a choice. I don’t particularly want to, but it seems they need me...”

He was smiling at me. “I’m glad you’re working with them! I mean... I’m scared about you going...” he paused. “Are you taking me with you?”

I looked down at him and frowned. Was leaving him here as dangerous as taking him? Monsters showed up here, just as easily as they did, there... I could protect him better, if he stayed with me.

“Do you want to come?” I asked. “I feel like we’re in danger here or there... I guess, yes, I’d like you to come.”

Not surprisingly, he seemed somewhat excited now. “Yeah!” he said. “You might need my gunman skills.” He laughed; I felt better, slightly, and smirked. “Let’s go to the office and prepare the helicopter,” I said. “We can leave tomorrow.”

We re-entered my office twenty minutes later; we had barely taken two steps in the door before the phone on my desk rang. I picked it up; the phone’s screen showed the Pharaoh sitting at his computer’s webcam. I wasn’t surprised.

“I spoke with Dartz and Pegasus today,” he told me instantly.

“I saw them yesterday,” I said. “Did Dartz explain to you where the monsters are coming from, this time?”

“He told me everything,” the Pharaoh replied. “He also told me that he would fly us to Atlantis tomorrow morning.”

“He’s flying all of us in?” I asked, surprised. “With what? He has a plane?”

“I suppose,” he said. “He wants us to all be at your headquarters at five o’clock tomorrow morning. He says it is a long flight.”

I frowned, saying nothing for a moment, until I asked, “Do you really trust Dartz? After everything he did to us, I have some trouble believing that he’s turned around completely, like he claims he has.”

“I have full confidence that I banished every shred of darkness that he once harbored in his heart,” he replied immediately. “I do believe that he’s turned himself into a good king who is rebuilding his kingdom to be the best that it can be, without the intentions of harming anyone. I know he can still somewhat control the Orichalcos, but he had chosen not to; his advisors are the ones who now hold its power and are the ones who are dangerous. I truly believe that we can trust Dartz. Now I even consider him a friend.”

I didn’t say anything, again. The Pharaoh never ceased to stun me with how readily he forgave people who did unspeakable things to him. “Fine,” I said, finally. Yugi never seemed to be wrong with this sort of thing. “But if you want my help, you’d better not be wrong about Dartz.”

“I’m glad you’re working with us, Kaiba,” he said, with a smirk, knowing well that I was really mostly cooperating because Mokuba had put me up to this. “Thank you.”

I gave him a sort of approving hum as a response, before we both hung up. Mokuba was standing next to my desk. “Five o’clock in the morning?” he muttered. “Lame.” He looked at the clock on my desk; it was noon.

“Can we go back to the house? There’s... something I want to do,” he said.

I was startled; I looked up at him. He had almost never looked and sounded so nervous. What was he going to do? “Are you okay?” I asked him.

“Yeah,” he said, face very pink. “But, I want to go home.”

I stood up from my desk. “Alright,” I said.

Once home, Mokuba leapt out of the car and ran up to the house. I re-entered the house; now, he had abandoned me, leaving me on my own to find something *‘fun’* to do. What should I do? My stepfather had given me violin lessons for six years; I hadn’t played it since I had taken control of KaibaCorp; but maybe I still remembered how to play some songs.

I entered my room and took the violin case off of the top shelf of my closet. I opened it; the case’s outside was dusty, but the violin inside was polished beautifully; shiny, brown, wooden. I lifted it up and set it on my shoulder and leaned my chin against it. I slid the bow across the strings. I was surprised at how it didn’t sound flat or sharp; it hadn’t been used in over a year, but seemed to still be perfectly tuned.

The music was relaxing; I closed my eyes and let my hand draw the bow across the strings. It surrounded me; nothing was in the room with me other than the swirling melodies. I had forgotten that I was actually halfway good at playing music.

I was later interrupted by an intensely strong smell from the doorway. Eyes watering, I turned around to see Mokuba standing in my doorway. He was wearing his most expensive red suit shirt, buttoned all the way up to the top of his neck, and black slacks; it was an outfit almost formal enough in itself to wear to a fancy party. I could practically see fumes wafting off of him. His hair seemed completely straight; usually, it hung in messy layers, but now, it was completely tame.

“Mokuba, are... are you... *wearing my cologne?*” I asked, stunned, dropping my arm

holding the violin to my side.

“Yes,” he said quickly. “I’ve booked a helicopter. I just wanted to let you know, I’m... I’m going out.”

I was at a loss for words. “...Going out?” I stammered.

He frowned. “I... yes. Going out.”

I felt my mouth creep into a smile. I set my violin down. “Are you... going on a *date*?” I asked, incredulous.

I could have fried an egg on his face. He broke eye contact with me and said “Um...”

I chuckled. “Let me help you, kiddo,” I said. He looked up, stunned. “Really?” he asked. He then frowned. “What do you know about ...about going on a date, Seto?” he asked, almost angrily. “You’ve either rejected or alienated all sixteen million of the girls who have ever liked you...”

Sixteen million? Was it that many? Yeah, something like that... “Touché- I’m afraid my hatred for every human being on the planet other than you has made me into a relatively bad prom partner, but even with my ignorance, I do know that if you sit within six miles of your date today, you’ll choke her with your smell,” I chortled, approaching the bedroom door and motioning for him to follow me. “Wash some of that off.”

“I didn’t know how much to put on...” he laughed nervously. We went to the bathroom; I sat on the rim of the bathtub as he pulled his shirt down and started splashing water onto his neck and wrists.

“You look good. Is it the girl that you met at the party last night?” I asked, once he had gotten to the point where he smelled nice and had pulled his sleeves back down and propped his collar back up.

“Uh-huh,” he said, picking his locket necklace off of the bathroom sink and slipping it over his head. “She lives, like, an hour away. We’re going to see a movie.”

“Oh, leave the top button undone. A movie date at one o’clock in the afternoon?” I asked.

“Seto, I’m twelve,” he said shortly. “Plus, we have to wake up early tomorrow.” He

brushed his shirt off, tucked it in, and turned to face me. “How do I look?”

“Very sharp,” I said, standing up off of the bathtub. He smiled. “Thanks for the advice,” he said. “Wish me luck... she’s a nice girl. I think I like her.”

I patted the top of his head; to my surprise, he batted my hand away from him and gasped, “*Don’t!* I spent a lot of time trying to get my hair to lie straight!”

7 - Chapter Seven

Mindlessly, I flipped through the television channels. How long had it been since I had watched television for any reason other than to check a news station? Today, I had drawn pictures of dragons, and then played the violin again, and now, I was sitting on a couch in the living room, watching the enormous television sitting twenty feet in front of me.

I sighed, still flipping channels. Now I was almost bored. Doing work for the company may be tedious, but I never really found it *boring*.

I looked at the coffee table in front of me; a newspaper was sitting neatly folded on it. I sat the television's remote down and picked up the newspaper, leaving the television turned to whatever it had last landed on; not paying attention to it.

I opened the newspaper; the comics fell out. Comics, huh... I had actually never read them. I picked them up and scanned them. None of these were about dragons or fighting; I was surprised. I saw tons of kids and babies and pets and teenagers... these are supposed to be funny? What's funny about that?

I then suddenly felt the hairs on the back of my neck stand on end. I looked up from my newspaper; the room was empty. My heart rate steadily increased. I could *feel* that something was wrong.

I stood up from the couch slowly. The television's voices were muffled with the sound of my heartbeat in my ears. Was I being paranoid, or going crazy? I had barely taken three steps from the couch when the door burst open; one of my servants burst in, gasping for breath, and said, "Master Seto ... the creatures are back..."

I swore under my breath and rushed past him; somehow, not surprised. I left the living room and entered the foyer; sure enough, three monsters were in here. Immediately I began to scan the floor for the Orichalcos stones that they came from; knowing that crushing the stones was the easiest way to get rid of the monsters.

"*Everyone, get out of here!*" I roared at my panicking servants; one of them shouted, "But, Master Seto..."

"*Go!*" I yelled at her; "I'm fine! I know how to get rid of them! Just get out of here!"

I snatched one of the swords that were on display on the wall off of the hanger and rushed at the monsters; I spotted one stone on the ground and slammed the side of the sword onto it; one monster shrieked and disappeared. Yes, I thought briefly; but had no more time to think, when another monster leapt at me; surprised, because the monsters had never actually physically approached me like that before, I slashed at it, and ended up stabbing it in the stomach; it, too, disappeared, and I noticed out of the corner of my eye, one of the stones had given off a flash of light and vanished.

I felt a cold, rough arm grab me around the shoulders; its clawed hand was fastened on my shirt's collar; I heard the ripping of fabric; from the corner of my eye, saw a glowing, clawed hand rise next to me. The world slowed down... thinking quickly, I sliced the arm with my sword; shrieking, the creature let go of me; I whipped around, ready.... Wounded, but not defeated, it lunged at me again, but I impaled it through the stomach, as I had done to the first monster. It vanished.

I let the sword fall to the ground. They were all gone. Chest heaving, I stood for a moment in the middle of the foyer, thinking about what had just happened. Pegasus was right; they would keep showing up... I frowned. Those monsters hadn't tried to hit me with lasers; those monsters actually used physical force against me. The third monster had pinned me; raised its glowing hand in my direction. What would it have done, if I hadn't stopped it? Shot a laser from its hand? Maybe... were there different kinds of monsters? They all looked the same, but maybe some of them had different abilities...?

A few butlers and maids re-entered the foyer, winded and frightened. "Are you okay, Master Seto?" one asked me.

I nodded and set the sword back on its plaque. "Fine," I said, before raising my hand to my shirt's collar; there was a large rip where the monster's claws had fastened to it.

They were all looking worriedly at me. I frowned. "Don't worry," I said. "Were any of you hurt?"

"No, sir," a timid maid said. "Just scared us."

"Go to bed," I told them. They all bowed their heads in my direction and left the foyer, leaving me alone there. I swallowed hard and caught my breath. I was hot and mildly sweaty from the fight; I wiped my forehead.

It was just before ten o'clock; I heard the telltale whipping sound of a helicopter landing

in our back yard. A few moments later I saw Mokuba enter the front door; he was back from his date. He ran up to me, looking pleased with himself.

“Seto! I...” he paused once he reached me, and frowned. “Are you okay? You’re all out of breath and sweaty...”

“I... I just fought off a couple of monsters that showed up here,” I said, wiping my forehead again. His eyes widened. “Wait... monsters? More of them?”

“Yeah,” I said. “I stabbed them with that sword,” I said, pointing to the wall hanging.

He looked upset. “Are you okay? Did anyone get hurt?”

“No. All of the servants got out of the room and I stabbed all of the monsters; none of them hurt me or the servants.” He nodded just slightly. “How did your date go?” I asked, lightening the mood.

“Good!” he said happily, ruffling his own hair; instantly, it poofed back into its normally choppy look. “I had fun! ...did you do any work while I was gone?”

“No,” I said truthfully. “Unless you count monster fighting as work... I watched television for the first time in years. You know, Pokémon is a strangely addictive show.”

He was just *beaming* up at me. “I like this!” he said. “Look at you, big brother! You’re smiling so much! You never usually smile this much! You seem happy! See? This isn’t so unbearable, is it? Don’t you feel better?”

“I do feel more patient,” I said, with a sigh. “Maybe sleeping isn’t such a bad thing.”

“Are you actually learning how to take care of yourself?” he asked, aghast, eyes wide. “I’m proud of you!” he laughed and turned down the hallway towards his room; “Good night,” he told me, walking away from me. I saw, as he passed, the light from a table lamp nearby make something on his cheek sparkle- it took me a moment to recognize the thing on his cheek as a glittery lip-gloss mark in the shape of a pair of little lips.

“Uh, Mokuba...” I said.

He turned around. “Huh?”

I pointed at my left cheek. He looked at me, confused, for a moment, before lifting his

hand to his own left cheek and feeling the lip gloss; his eyes widened for a second, and he smiled at me again, before turning again and walking to his room. I chuckled darkly and retreated to my own room.

8 - Chapter Eight

So ended the third day of being work-free, I thought with a sigh as I slid into my bed; I was unused to going to bed at ten o'clock at night, but, despite myself, liked it. Maybe doing everything but working wasn't so bad. Mokuba seemed to be happy with my stress-free personality.

I felt less exhausted, tonight. I lied in bed, wearing only a plain white t-shirt and boxers for the first time in my life, staring up at the ceiling of my canopy. My mind was racing. So Yugi wanted to go to Atlantis. Did he even know where that was?

Another thought crossed my mind. The monsters had shown up in my bedroom and office. How did they get there? Could they just ...materialize wherever they wanted? If that was the case, then we weren't safe anywhere.... Especially not at Atlantis! But, despite how I didn't really like Yugi, I somehow- and only somewhat- trusted him. Maybe he knew what he was doing.

I turned onto my stomach and embraced one of my feather pillows. Maybe I was making the right decision in joining Yugi and his friends out tomorrow. My Blue-Eyes-White dragons were a formidable enemy to these monsters; if Yugi were to fail, that meant that the monsters would keep showing up in my house, just like Pegasus said.

And what about that dream that I'd had, last night... I had been so busy poring over Roland that I had forgotten about it until now. During my last duel with Yugi, I had seen a similar vision... myself, wearing those elaborate gold dressings, fighting against the Pharaoh, with my Blue-Eyes White Dragon... why did I see those sorts of things? I didn't know what to believe about them. I'd had trouble believing Ishizu Ishtar when she had told me that I had existed 5,000 years ago as the Pharaoh's High Priest, until I found that I could read Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphs, without having ever seen them before... it was how I knew how to defeat the Ra card, when Marik possessed it. Ishizu had said that I once held the Millennium Rod and had been the Pharaoh's best friend, as well as greatest rival...Mostly, I didn't think about the possibility of there being an Egyptian lineage in my family. I was too busy building theme parks.

I closed my eyes, warm and now tired. Tomorrow would be a big day. I enjoyed the lone moment of sleepy tranquility, before a terrible sensation of horror crashed violently through me; I sat up quickly and jerked the bed sheets off of myself; there was then an anguished yell and a loud crash from the end of the hallway. My heart stopped; I tore out

of my bedroom and down the hall.

The ground beneath my feet seemed to vanish when I reached Mokuba's room; two monsters were in here; he had a similar sword wall hanging on his wall, and had grabbed a sword, and was in the process of stabbing one monster; but, I had barely entered the room when the second grabbed him around the shoulders, and in a movement quicker than the speed of light, fastened its clawed, glowing hand to his chest.

He gasped in pain and dropped the sword, immobilized; I leapt on the monster and wrenched it off of him. I tumbled to the ground, with the monster. I was kneeled on top of it, pinning it to the ground; it shrieked as I snatched the sword off of the floor and stabbed it through its head; when it disappeared, I fell two feet to the ground.

"*Mokuba!*" I yelled, whipping around and seeing him crumpled to the floor a few feet behind me.

I could hardly breathe with worry; I kneeled beside him, frantically... he was conscious, whimpering with pain, clutching at his chest...

"Speak to me," I whispered shakily, lifting him up, some; he looked up and said, equally quietly, but injected with fear, "I'm... so cold..."

A butler rushed into the room, and gasped, "Masters...!"

"*Get a doctor in here!*" I roared at him; he left the room. I was extremely frightened. Mokuba's voice was weak and shaky, and he was trembling... I lifted him off of the floor and into my lap; together we were sitting on the ground in his bedroom, leaning against his bed; he put his arms around my neck and head on my collarbone, just *shaking*, clutching at my shirt painstakingly.

I had almost never felt so scared; he was completely cold, and moved only to barely shiver... what if his heart stopped? His face was stark white, completely pale... he wasn't crying. I wanted to... my hand was on his back, directly over his heart, protectively... how could I have let this happen... *how could I have been so stupid as to not check our rooms for more monsters...*

He whimpered again and I felt his grip on me grow tighter. "It hurts..." he whispered. What could I do, other than to also hold him tighter, using my own warmth as a medicine?

Finally, a kind-looking doctor entered the room. “Thank you for coming here so late,” I told her. She smiled at me before kneeling down beside us. She looked gently at Mokuba and whispered, “Do you want to get in your bed?”

I felt him shake his head weakly. The woman nodded and said, “Stay with your brother,” before pulling a stethoscope out of her bag and sticking its ends into her ears and pressing the other end to his back, up his shirt; I moved my hand, and she moved it to the spot where my hand had just been.

“Oh, my,” she said softly. “Pulse rate is very irregular. A monster attack, right? About how many seconds?”

I nodded shortly and thought for a moment; I had been so panicked, I wasn’t sure... it had seemed like a million seconds, but realistically, it was probably less than five, and I told her that. She took the stethoscope off and put her hand on the back of Mokuba’s head gently. “Can you answer some questions for me?” she asked.

I felt him turn his head to look at her; he weakly nodded.

“Are you in any pain right now?”

He nodded again, still lightly trembling. “About how much?” the doctor continued.

“It’s... getting better...” he said, voice shaky.

“Can you breathe well?” she asked. I felt him just barely shrug and nod.

The doctor pulled a small vial of liquid medicine out of her bag and set it on the ground, before pulling a small notebook out of her bag and scribbling something down. “I recognize his symptoms. We’ve found this medicine to be very effective in restoring regular heart rate and temperature. He’s going to be okay. Keep him warm and have him drink this right now. He’ll feel better within thirty minutes and be completely back-to-normal in a few hours.” She stood up. “I’m sorry they hurt you, honey,” she said, patting his head gently and turning to leave.

“Thank you,” I told her. “Take your money out of my account.”

“Thank you, sir,” she said brightly, and left the room, leaving us alone.

Mokuba lifted his head off of my chest and said, “I should... drink that...”

“Yes,” I said, picking the small bottle off of the ground and uncapping it. “Here,” I handed it to him. He took it from me and downed it; I felt him recoil momentarily. “It’s... gross,” he said, with a small chuckle.

I put my arm under his knees and stood up. He wasn’t shaking anymore; “Hold on to me,” I said, and felt his arms tighten around my neck. I walked back to my room and sat down on my bed. He lifted his head off of my collarbone and let go of me; I laid him in my bed. He looked better, now; face re-gaining color, and he didn’t appear to be in much pain. He pulled the thick, heavy covers over himself and lied there, eyes closed tightly, voluntarily trying to steady his own breathing.

“How do you feel,” I asked nervously, poring over him.

He shrugged somewhat, on his back, not bothering to open his eyes now. “Not... too bad, I guess,” he said.

I frowned. I was still very upset. I knew it had only taken twenty-or-so minutes for me to feel better when I had been hurt, but who knows how comparable this was, to that- he was smaller, younger; and who knows how long the monster had been in contact with him. Maybe five seconds... it was such a blur. I was sitting on my bed, facing him.

He cracked open one eye and said, “Don’t worry, big brother... I’m okay. Really. Go to sleep... we have to get up early tomorrow...”

“I...” I began, not knowing if I could even fall asleep, now. “I’m sorry that I didn’t know that there were more monsters in the house...”

He opened both eyes now and turned his head slightly to face me, more. “I feel so stupid...” I continued miserably. “That was... way too close a call.”

He frowned. “But... I’m convinced more than ever, now, to go with Yugi to Atlantis,” I said. “I will not stand for those things to enter our house anymore. We’ve gotten lucky too many times...”

He smiled. “That’s the attitude I like to hear from you, Seto,” he said, with a light chuckle. The medicine was working quickly; I could hear his voice grow steadier. “Now... the next time I want you to work with someone whom you don’t like, please don’t make me risk losing my soul in order to get you to do it, okay?”

He laughed quietly. For some reason, his joking made me feel better... I laughed, too, and ruffled his hair before sliding down next to him, under the covers. He sighed. "When was the last time we had a sleepover, like this?" he asked.

A sleepover? Is that what this was turning into? "I suppose it's been a while," I said.

"You know, before we met Gozaburo, you used to tell me bedtime stories," he said, matter-of-factly.

"Did I?" I laughed, turning off the bedside lamp; the room became completely dark. "I don't remember."

"I bet you do!" he said angrily. "I remember. Every night you used to tell me about the duck and the cat who would go on adventures. They had a new adventure every night. I think you used to make up the new adventures."

"A duck and a cat?" I asked, in disbelief. "Why would a duck and a cat go on adventures together? Wouldn't the cat just eat the duck?"

"Seto, you were *ten!*" he said. "In the mind of a genius child, anything is possible, except for the reality of animal violence. And you know..." he nestled himself against my side, still curled up, "I want you to tell me a story, now."

"You want me to tell you a story?" I asked, happy to feel that he wasn't cold anymore. "But you're *twelve!* Do twelve-year-olds like stories?"

"Twelve-year-olds who haven't had sleepovers with their brothers in six years like stories very much," he said firmly, somewhat concealing a yawn. I sighed. "Fine," I said. "Um... so, let me think of what that cat and that duck will do tonight..." After a moment of thinking, I came up with a stupid idea, good enough for a bedtime story. "Once upon a time, there was a little yellow duck and a little white cat. The duck was annoying, loud, and stupid; the cat was a coward who threw up hairballs every five minutes."

"The duck wasn't *stupid!*" Mokuba gasped, almost as though he was offended. "And the cat didn't throw up hairballs! Don't you remember? The duck was a famous opera singer because he had a beautiful voice, and the cat was a queen, because she had blue eyes and was gorgeous!"

I laughed. Had my ten-year-old mind really been so fertile as to imagine characters like those? "No, let me tell the story this new way. I have a plot going, you see."

He scoffed and I felt him rub his eyes. "Fine. Go on."

"So, one day, the stupid duck walked up to the coward cat and said, 'Hey, Coward Cat, I learned that some new neighbors are moving into town.' Coward Cat was surprised and scared. 'Who are they?' she asked. Droning Duck replied..."

"*Droning Duck?*" Mokuba asked sleepily, unable to control himself. "No, he wasn't droning; he had a beautiful voice."

"Let me tell the story!" I said, with mock exasperation. "So, Droning Duck replied, 'It's Dumb Brown Dog and Obese Lazy Kitty.' He paused dramatically. 'You know... the ladies who are...'"

"Obese Lazy Kitty has no alliteration in her name," Mokuba yawned, interrupting again. "And why do the bad guys get three words in their names?"

"I couldn't think of a synonym for 'fat' that starts with a c or k," I said. "And three is an evil number in this story, so all of the evil characters have three names."

"Chunky? Chunky Lazy Kitty? That's..." he yawned widely again, "...alliteration."

"Oh, sort of. Well, forget it. I like Obese Lazy Kitty. It's more extreme. Droning Duck replied, 'You know... the ladies who are prostituting themselves and going around spreading Ebola.' So, Coward Cat, after hacking up ten pounds of hairball mass, says, 'We should spy on them, because we know they're up to no good.' So Droning Duck and Coward Cat went to the house of Obese Lazy Kitty and Dumb Brown Dog and they caught Ebola. All of the animals then began to bleed profusely from every pore because the tissues of their blood vessels had deteriorated. Each of them drowning face-down in each others' blood, they all died slowly and painfully, each of them proceeding to empty their bowels as they died. Dumb Brown Dog even had an epileptic seizure that sent her twitching across the floor, smearing blood all over the entire house, and the police had to come get their horrible, bloody, feces-covered, decomposing corpses out of Dumb Brown Dog's and Obese Lazy Kitty's house. The end. Now, wasn't that a great story?"

I would never know how good a story it was; Mokuba had fallen asleep. Maybe the story was boring, or maybe he was tired from nearly having his heart violently stopped. I frowned and turned onto my side and embraced him; he was warm, and I could feel his steady breaths on my collarbone. I sighed; a twinge of unhappiness was still possessing my mood. I was glad that he felt safe enough in his big brother's arms to fall asleep, but I

still felt uneasy... I let my eyes close. Tomorrow, we would find the Egyptian god cards, and get rid of these creatures.

9 - Chapter Nine

Too soon, I was jolted awake by the radio on my bedside table, announcing a cheery 4:15 A.M. weather report. I forced my eyes open; Mokuba was still asleep, nestled against me, gently clutching at my shirt. I took my arms away from around him and turned onto my back, before saying, “come on, Mokuba, wake up,” lazily.

My voice, louder and closer to him, stirred him; he yawned and stretched and turned onto his other side.

“Come on,” I said, sitting up and turning the radio off.

Mokuba was yawning and rubbing his eyes, standing at the front door, as I approached the exit of my house a half-hour later. I was still tired, too, for some reason; I yawned, as well; a black limousine pulled up in front of the house.

“There it is,” Mokuba mumbled sleepily. “Let’s go.” Servants carried our suitcases out after us; we arrived at my headquarters moments later. An enormous, blue helicopter was sitting on the roof of my building, on my own landing port. That’s them, I thought, with a sigh.

The next thing I knew, it was 5:45 in the morning, and I was sitting next to Mokuba in a seat, across from Yugi and all of his friends. Everyone was sleepy, still; Mokuba had leaned his head on the window and gone back to sleep; everyone was following his suit. I yawned and crossed my arms and leaned back in my seat, and the world became dark.

The sky was dark; I could see my surroundings by the stunningly bright light of the blinking stars above my head. There was no moon; the sky was nearly silver with stars. There had been swirling clouds, earlier in the day... but... right now, they were gone. It was strange... I knew the Pharaoh still felt the presence of evil; and deep down, so did I... but, the sky was clear, now, nonetheless.

I felt hot and furious. I threw my gold-lined hat into the sand and pulled off the top of my robes. Now wearing only the shawl tied around my waist, I entered the river; the water was cool and refreshing. I didn’t care that my clothes were getting so wet. I felt myself become just calmer; but, I was still angry. That man had escaped me. I had finally had my mother’s revenge in my hands... and he had just *disappeared*.

I adjusted the golden bands around my forearms and wrists; they hadn't come off with my shirt. I looked back up at the sky. Knee-deep in the water and feeling a slight marvel at the night sky, it was somewhat hard to feel too angry, right now...

I sighed. He'd show up again. We could truly apprehend him then.

"Good evening," a quiet, timid voice came, from behind me. Not expecting anyone to find me here, I turned around, surprised. It was the girl that I had found, being stoned... the girl with the long, white hair. I could just see her in the light of the stars. She was wearing a long, light robe. What was she doing here?

"The guards let me out to get a drink from the river," she told me. "I need to go back to them soon."

"Okay," I said. I felt well and calm now. She entered the river, and passed me; in the water, up to her waist. The long sleeves of her robe floated elegantly on the surface of the water, as did her long hair. I narrowed my eyes. *She looked...*

"I wish I could marvel at the splendor of the world," she said sadly, looking up at the spectacular night sky. "But, I... I can not bring myself to, because of the dragon, in my soul... I have no family... no love. But... you are the man who saved me from those villagers, aren't you? Thank you for saving my life."

...beautiful.

I didn't say anything; only walked up next to her. She heard me coming and turned around slowly.

"What is your name," I asked her, once I was level with her. A strange feeling was beginning to brew inside of my heart. "Where did you come from?"

"My name is Kisara; I am only sixteen years old... I do not know where I came from. I was abandoned at birth because of my looks... and my dragon. I had only one friend..."

"One friend?" I asked. I felt... *warm.*

"A boy saved me once," she said. "One time I was apprehended by criminals who desired my power, a boy saved me from them. He..."

"...gave you his horse, and allowed you to escape," I said, with a smile. I knew I had

recognized her; I was happy she remembered me. She stared at me, stunned. "...you? Are you that boy?"

"Yes," I said.

She gasped. "But... I know that, because of me, your village was burned down... your mother died..."

"Those villains would have burned my village, whether you were there or not," I said firmly, because that's what I actually believed. "I do not regret giving you my horse." I smiled at her. *What was this feeling...?*

She beamed up at me. "Then... then, thank you. Thank you so very much... your highness. It is an honor to be near you and speak to you."

"I am happy to be your friend," I told her. "I am sorry you have been through so much."

"You know how I feel, don't you? Your family members died when you were young... do you have many friends?"

"I have the fellow priests and the Pharaoh," I said. "They support me, but... it is not the same. I miss my mother sometimes."

She smiled at me; then, put her arms around me. I was rather taller than she was; she was just tall enough to put her head on my chest. Time could have stopped; the world could have been at a standstill. Nobody had ever held me, like that. My heart, normally encased in ice, felt... *so different...*

"You are very warm," she whispered, not letting go of me.

I closed my eyes for a moment. I could feel the current of the river hitting the backs of my legs, and could feel her robe's excess material swirling around us both... we were alone in a world of gentle water, twinkling stars, and soothing darkness.

I opened my eyes and looked up at the sky for just a moment. I gasped, "*Look! Look up!*"

She did; she, too, gasped. The stars were streaking across the sky... hundreds, thousands, millions of them, like a silver rainstorm that engulfed the entire world. I had never seen anything like that; the stars fell endlessly, disappearing into the darkness after just a brief second. It was the most spectacular thing I had ever seen.

After a second that seemed like an eternity, the sky became still again; the stars went back to twinkling, instead of falling. Kisara looked up at me, in wonder. "I have... I have never seen anything so beautiful," she whispered, amazed.

I looked down at her; she was still pressed against me, arms gently wrapped around my waist. The stars seemed to glitter in her hair and eyes. I, too, had never seen anything so beautiful... not so beautiful as the sky, for me, though... this feeling I had... what was it...?

She blinked. "Your eyes are so deep..." she whispered.

But, I felt them close. I leaned my head forward... I wasn't doing it; it was just... happening. I felt my lips meet hers. We stayed for a minute, or an hour, or a year, locked in one kiss...

There was a jolt in the world, and I took a sharp breath and opened my eyes. I was in the green, crystal-like helicopter, lying slightly on my side, somewhat propped up, arms crossed. What had I just seen... another dream...? I looked up. In my sleep I had leaned over almost horizontally; my head was on Mokuba's side, and he was still sleeping peacefully, probably unaware that I had ever slumped on to him.

I sat up. My heart was pounding, as though I was still... still *there*, standing in that river... I put my hand to my chest. I could feel my heart through my clothes, through my ribs... what... *what was that feeling?* That girl... I had seen her before. I had seen a vision of her, with the Blue-Eyes White Dragon... I gently clenched my shirt. Was it love? It wasn't love, like the brotherly, family love that I felt for Mokuba... it was just as strong, but... different.

I swallowed hard and sighed. It had just been a dream ...a very, very realistic dream. And yet, I felt... *sad*. Sad, like I knew something terrible was going to happen to that girl...

I looked back down at Mokuba, then up at everyone else in the helicopter. I was the only one awake; nobody else had felt the small jolt of turbulence. I looked outside; through the window, I could see that the sun was starting to rise spectacularly over the ocean. I frowned and yawned; I was still tired...

I sighed again and shifted in my seat, crossing my arms again. I looked down at Mokuba. Would he mind if I used him as a pillow, again? Probably not. I put my head back down on the side of his waist and closed my eyes.

I awoke, not much time later, to muffled voices in the aircraft. I cracked open one eye and

saw that Yugi was standing in front of all of the seats, facing a screen, on which Dartz' face was projected.

"...in my palace," my foggy mind heard Dartz say. I opened my eyes, fully, and sat up. I watched the projection; Dartz was continuing, "I will meet you as soon as you land."

"Thank you," Yugi said. I saw Joey snort and then awake suddenly; he looked up, and said, "Ey, it's Dartz!" he stood up out of his chair and stood next to Yugi.

"Good morning, Joey Wheeler," Dartz said. Joey frowned. "Don't try any funny business," he said, before clapping Yugi on the shoulder and returning to his seat. I frowned, too. I kind of agreed with Joey.

The helicopter descended; it was still early- even though we had left many hours ago, we were going against the Earth's rotation- essentially, back in time. It was only seven o'clock in the morning. I looked out of the window and couldn't help but be impressed and, perhaps, startled; the land below me was incredibly beautiful. Everything was lush and green; the buildings all seemed to be made of this light-green crystal. It all looked enormously high-tech and wealthy; Dartz had done a good job of resurrecting this place. The sun shone spectacularly over the water; turning the ocean gold.

The helicopter landed in front of an enormous crystal palace, and we all stepped out. Serenity gasped, "Wow!" and Tristan and Duke said, "*Awesome!*" The weather was warm; it was a pleasant morning in late April.

Dartz was standing in front of the majestic double-doors. "Greetings," he said, as we approached him.

10 - Chapter Ten

We all sat at his breakfast table an hour later. Dartz seemed solemn; usually, he had a confident smirk, but now... I could tell that he felt like he couldn't stop his advisors. Was it because he couldn't use the god cards? But, neither could they, right?

"Thank you for coming," Dartz said. "I feel like I have a lot to explain."

I frowned and set down my fork (the table was spread with every imaginably edible sea animal). Dartz sighed.

"When I began to rebuild my country, I set up a cabinet to serve as my head advisors. I chose a very intelligent man and woman to be my right-hand people. Their names are Donno and Adella. They are a married couple, aged 25 years and 24 years, respectively.

"I believe now that my earlier attempts to resurrect my country by destroying the rest of the world was a terrible, evil idea that I assure you I have abandoned. However, not everyone agrees with my change of heart. Donno and Adella still believe that the only way we can truly rebuild Atlantis is to awaken the Leviathan and destroy everyone who does not agree with them... they have convinced many people in my nation to believe them. They broke into my quarters in the palace, into the room where the Orichalcos Stone rests, and stole it; they learned how to control the Seal with cards, and have even created new, powerful monsters. They have harmed people all over the world... their new monsters have powers that even I did not once possess. I understand that each of you has had experiences with the monsters... I can still control the Orichalcos, and am aware of when it is used."

"Yeah," Duke said, annoyed. "There was a monster in my living room. I killed it, but not before it broke a lot of my furniture."

"Ours too!" Serenity gasped. Joey nodded. "I had to fight off about five of 'em," he added.

"Try fighting them off while you're trying to take a piss," Tristan laughed. Téa slapped his hand angrily and demanded that he not be gross at the lunch table.

I frowned at all of them. "Be quiet, you dolts," I told them; "Let Dartz finish."

Joey flipped me off; I ignored him, and everyone looked back at Dartz. He nodded in my direction and continued, "The limit of my power is simply to remove the soul from the person I am fighting. I cannot directly kill people with my power... my power simply leaves the body as a shell, which will eventually shut down over, on average, a day; Adella and Donno can kill immediately. Their monsters are extremely effective in damaging and paralyzing the heart... the damage depends on how long the monster's attack is in contact with the victim."

Everyone was listening intently; even I couldn't bring myself to completely think of Dartz as a fool. He continued, "I have found, from observation, that it takes roughly ten seconds of a continuous attack to complete the process of removing the soul and stopping the victim's heart. A continuous attack lasting two seconds or less will leave the victim in pain, cold, and feeling breathless, but will not necessarily even knock them off of their feet; it is very easy to recover from this brief an attack. An attack that lasts three, four or five seconds will be enough to make the victim dizzy or maybe even disoriented on top of having all of the same symptoms as the shorter attacks; they will not be able to stay on their feet, but will not necessarily lose consciousness; usually, this results in no permanent damage, and the victim can recover quickly enough. Once you hit six or seven seconds, you're looking at an attack that could leave the heart permanently damaged. This usually makes the victim unconscious, and this is where it gets dangerous; once unconscious, of course the victim cannot fight back. An eight- or nine-second attack could easily kill the victim, even if the monster is removed; that usually results in serious permanent damage to the heart... but, it is better than a ten-second attack, because the monster will be unsuccessful in retrieving a victim's soul after only nine seconds. Ten seconds seems to be the threshold for when the monster's attack fully completes what the monsters intend to do."

I frowned. This made sense. Mokuba and I seemed to have four-second attacks. So... did this mean that I believed Dartz....?

Yugi frowned. "Thank you for telling us that," he said. "But... my grandpa had the cards in his store, and Donno and Adella stole them from his store. Where are they?"

"The god cards have an incredible energy to them. They proved to be very valuable to me, and they're very valuable to Donno and Adella... their energy continually supplies much power to the Leviathan, even though Donno and Adella cannot control the god cards in battle. I know that Donno and Adella are keeping them in three isolated, deserted temples.

"There are two things that can defeat the power of the Orichalcos in battle. The three

Legendary Knights, Sirs Timaeus, Critias and Hermos... and the god cards. The Legendary Knights have gone to the afterlife, to their resting places... the god cards are now your ultimate weapons. I know you can control the god cards, great Pharaoh... you can defeat the Leviathan permanently and destroy the power of the Orichalcos if you were to bring them together.”

“What did I do to the Leviathan the first time,” the Pharaoh asked. “I brought together the Legendary Knights. Why didn’t the Leviathan die?”

“The Knights cannot kill the Leviathan. Only the god cards can. The Knights can only destroy the power of the Orichalcos, in a duel... in a sense, weakening the Leviathan because the Leviathan uses the Orichalcos to collect its energy sources... but the Knights can only imprison the Leviathan within the depths of the earth, just like they did thousands of years ago. That is all they did this time, too. The god cards are the only ones who can go as far as to kill the Leviathan. They can kill the Leviathan and permanently destroy the Orichalcos. That is what must be done now.”

I frowned. Dartz had called me and Yugi here because we were the only people who could control the god cards in battle.

“*Aw, yeah!*” Tristan yelled. “These guys are going down. Don’t worry, Dartz. We’ll get rid of the Orichalcos and the Leviathan once and for all.”

Dartz’ expression flickered; he then smiled. “Yes,” he said. “I have faith in you. Thank you. I am at your service; if there is anything you need, do not hesitate to ask me. You may stay in my castle overnight. I have arranged sleeping rooms for each of you; I will also be happy to arrange transportation for you; I know that the nearest temple contains the Sky Dragon, Slifer. As far as I am concerned, Donno and Adella do not know that anyone is coming to stop them.” He stood up. “Come,” he said. “I must show you where the temples are located.” We all stood up from the table; he led us out of the dining hall.

“Yugi,” I said, in the back of the group. “Wait. Let me ask you something.”

He stopped and turned around to face me. “What is it, Kaiba?” He asked when I had reached him.

“You... you really trust Dartz, don’t you...?” I asked unhappily.

He frowned up at me. “Yes...” he said.

“Dartz doesn’t seem to be happy with the idea of destroying the Orichalcos,” I said. “Did you see his face, when Tristan said that he would destroy the Orichalcos? He wasn’t happy about it.”

Yugi glowered. “I didn’t notice that,” he said. “Do you think he still likes the Orichalcos?”

“I’m not sure. But... I don’t feel like we can fully trust him. Really.”

“Well... maybe,” Yugi said. “I guess let’s not let ourselves get cornered by him...”

Dartz led us all to another giant, seafoam-green room; it was completely empty. I wondered why...

“Here,” Dartz said. The lights dimmed; I had to then shield my eyes from a flash that burst from the ceiling. When it was gone, a map became suspended in midair; it nearly filled the entire room. It was a map of Atlantis. It was a surprisingly large island; there was an X marked on the map where the castle was located- directly in the middle of the island.

Dartz pointed to a spot not far from the castle. “This is where the temple where Slifer is being held is located. It is a mile south of the castle, located on the outskirts of a small village called Nereid.”

“Nereid,” Joey repeated.

“Nereid is one of the small cities that prides itself in our technological advances. They have developed such incredible machines as transportation pods, trains that can travel at upwards of five hundred miles per hour, swords that are strong enough to slice a block of lead in half, with ease...” Dartz said proudly. “It isn’t a large place, but it is spectacular and beautiful.”

“Everything here is spectacular and beautiful,” Serenity said, in awe.

Dartz smiled at her for a moment before pulling a laser pointer out of his pocket. He shone the laser to the northern tip of the island. “Here is where the Obelisk card is located,” he said. “This is an ice temple located on the peak of the mountain called Galatea- this is where I had once imprisoned the three Legendary Knights. Even in April, it is snowy and cold, there- but the mountains are majestic. You will enjoy the scenery.”

He then pointed to the most southern tip of the island."This is where the Ra card is located; it is also nearest to where Donno and Adella live, and where they are keeping their fragments of the Orichalcos stone. The southern cities of Atlantis are the ones with the most technology; they are the larger cities. This temple is located on the outskirts of Despina City."

I frowned. It made sense to go for the Slifer card, first. It was the nearest, and we would probably need the help of one god card on our travels to the other two, further-away temples.

"This doesn't seem like it will be too hard, right?" Téa asked nobody in particular, still looking up at the map. "Should we get Slifer first?"

"Yeah," Yugi said. "We can go there now."

"Good," Dartz said. "I must add that Donno and Adella have, of course, tried to make the temples as secure as possible. You will be faced with many monsters; and the cards should be well-hidden. So, I advise you to seek a woman named Cleito. She lives in Nereid; her husband, Thalas, has been famous throughout our land for his incredible weapon-building skills. I know that he had built hundreds of weapons designed to fight monsters, and had given them out to the citizens... I'm sure he would be pleased to share with you all."

"Cool," Duke said. "We get to use monster-blasting swords?"

"Precisely," Dartz said. "Cleito lives in a small home not far from the temple; Donno and Adella do not know where to find her, because nobody would ever think to look for such an incredible couple in such a humble place. Cleito, in particular, will be useful to you- she was given a natural gift of healing, and can easily mend any wounds you may receive."

We left the room. It was time to stop this nonsense. Whether or not Dartz was trustworthy, I would make sure that the power that he had tried to harness was destroyed.

11 - Chapter Eleven

The first temple was a short walk from the castle; visible, even, from the castle's front steps. The first temple was, unlike the rest of the buildings here, made of stone- it was relatively small, and hidden beneath a plethora of trees and forest shrubs. It looked like nobody had visited it in a long time.

"We should find that woman... Cleito," Serenity said. "She has weapons, right?"

"Yeah," Joey said. "If we see any monsters..."

"We will," I said. "Where does she live?"

"Dartz said to find a cottage near here," Tristan said. "I don't see any cottage."

"There's a pathway," Mokuba said, pointing at the ground. He was right; there was a path leading back the way we came; in front of us, to the right, was the temple- to the left, the path forked through the forest. "Think it's that way?"

Duke shrugged. "Sure, why not," he said.

I frowned. Was this a trap? I almost didn't want to go try to find Cleito. Monsters could be defeated with duel monsters cards, or by us stepping on the stones. Why were the scepters so much more necessary? I voiced this thought.

Everyone considered me for a moment. Joey said, "Yeah, I got my Red-Eyes...those monsters are weak when it comes to cards."

The Pharaoh looked up at the temple. "I think Cleito does live down that path, but perhaps we are in better condition to not go looking for her right now. The faster we find the god cards, the weaker the Leviathan becomes."

I was glad that they agreed with me. We walked up the short path to the right; up to the stairs of the first temple.

It was very dark in here. The first foyer was open and echoing and empty. What had this temple once stood for?

There was suddenly a rustling on the other side of the room. Everyone heard it.

“What was that,” Téa gasped. It was too dark to see very much; I strained my eyes against the blackness and grabbed Mokuba by the shirt collar; he stayed close to my side.

Suddenly Tristan gasped. “*Look out!*” he yelled; we all whipped around to see the outline of what looked like a monster that was at least five times bigger than the ones we’d already seen, standing not far from where we all were.

It all seemed to happen so fast... the beam of light shot forward, and Tristan jumped forward to block it from Serenity... he shoved her out of the way, and it hit him square in the chest...

And at that moment, everything became so slow. A horrible green light flashed through the room, blinding all of us, momentarily... I was aware of nothing but Mokuba clinging to the front of my shirt, for a moment. The light began to die, and I looked up and saw Tristan... grimacing in pain, he looked over at me, the person standing closest to him at that time... and I read a thought in his fading eyes: “get Serenity out of here,” before he crumpled to the ground and the light was gone.

The monster was roaring; the room was rumbling. Serenity was sitting on the ground, stunned, staring open-mouthed at Tristan’s lifeless figure only feet in front of her. Yugi shouted for everyone to run; he whipped his deck out of his jacket pocket, and I took that moment to do the same. Téa took Serenity by the wrists; Duke hurriedly picked Tristan up off of the floor. He didn’t respond at all, only laid limply in Duke’s arms, eyes closed. Mokuba clung to my waist as Téa yelled, “We’ll meet you back at Cleito’s house!” and the four of them left hurriedly.

Joey held up a monster card- it was the Red-Eyes Black Dragon, his strongest monster.

“*Nail it, red-eyes!*” he shouted; the dragon shot its black fire bullet at the monster. It hit the monster in the forehead; it was gone with a shriek and a puff of light. “Tristan...” Joey then muttered, looking back at the door.

The Pharaoh glowered, and spoke solemnly. “Duke and Téa will take him to Cleito’s house. If what Dartz says is true about her, then we shouldn’t worry about him...”

That was precisely how I felt. I didn’t say anything; I just walked forward, with Mokuba at my heels. It seemed like the temple was shaped like a giant T- there was a large foyer in

the front, and one long hallway leading from it. "I've never seen a monster like that," he muttered.

"I'm not surprised," I said. "There must be more of them. Keep your Red-Eyes out, Wheeler."

"Yo," he replied; I could hear the gentle beating of the dragon's wings as it flew behind us.

The hallways grew steadily lighter as we walked forward; lit candles were now nailed to the walls. I could now see the end of the hallway- it dead-ended into an enormous door. The doors were made of stone; Joey ran forward and tugged at the giant, steel handle. The doors didn't budge; were they just too heavy for one man to open, or was there something else...

The Pharaoh went forward and tugged at the doors, with Joey. No luck; the stone didn't even seem to give way even slightly. I looked up. A carving was on the doors, which read:

LXXXXV

"Lixxxev?" Joey said stupidly, noticing what I was looking at. "What does that mean? Is that Atlantian?"

Perhaps. To me, it looked like Roman numerals. Ninety-five. "Ninety-five," I said aloud.

"I believe those are Roman numerals, as well," the Pharaoh said. "But, the proper way to write ninety-five is with an X, a C and a V."

"Duh... what?" Joey asked.

"Right..." I said, rubbing my chin. "This isn't the right way to write it."

The Pharaoh frowned. "I believe that the Atlantean culture influenced the Romans," he said. "I know that the fall of Atlantis took place approximately in the year 9500 B.C. Perhaps this temple was built as a tribute... perhaps this was the first way to write numbers, and the Romans adapted it."

I frowned. Yes, perhaps, but what good did that do us? Joey's Red-Eyes was growling. The Pharaoh looked up at it. "It knows that Slifer is close," he said.

I agreed. I could feel a powerful light, nearby... it was the same feeling that I had experienced when Yugi and I had dueled with these cards. Slifer was on the other side of this door.

“Red-Eyes!” Joey said. “Bust through this door!”

The dragon shot a black fire bullet at the door; there was a rumbling explosion; but when it died down, we saw that the doors were completely unscathed. It wasn't that I thought his dragon was too weak to break the stone... no monster could break the stone.

“It's a spell,” the Pharaoh said. “It has something to do with that number. Ninety-five.”

“How do you know,” I asked.

He ignored me. He approached the doors again and looked up at the carving.

“Donno and Adella would make it hard, to protect Slifer,” Mokuba said. “We have to think in a way that they think anyone else other than them won't.”

The Pharaoh removed his deck from his jacket again and held his cards in his hand, like a fan. “Joey... Kaiba... I think I know. Hold up your decks.”

Each of us had a 40-card deck. I held mine the same way that the Pharaoh was holding his. “Why,” I asked.

“Kaiba, you know that Slifer's attack power is based upon the number of cards the player has in their hand. As does this door. We must be holding a total of ninety-five cards.”

I frowned. That... *actually seemed to make sense...*

“Yugi, you got forty... Kaiba, you got forty... so... how many do I have to have?” Joey asked, shuffling his cards.

Really? He really didn't know... he was *really* that dumb? “*Fifteen,*” I said angrily.

“Oh yeah,” he said, counting his cards. “Fifteen.” He counted out fifteen cards and stuck the other twenty-five back into his jacket.

“Hold them all up,” the Pharaoh said.

We did; suddenly, I felt my arm freeze in the air. Stunned, I watched, amazed, as each of the cards in my hand lit up; as did Joey’s and as did the Pharaoh’s- then, the doors rumbled, and creaked open.

“Aw, *yeah!*” Joey yelled happily, running forward. I was amazed and couldn’t help but be impressed with the Pharaoh’s problem-solving.

The Pharaoh entered the room behind Joey; Mokuba and I followed them. The next room was small; in the middle was a pedestal, and sitting on it... *was the Slifer card.*

“There it is,” the Pharaoh whispered. He walked forward; I followed him. We were now standing only feet from the card.

Spectacular. The card, one of the most powerful in existence. It was a beautiful monster; Slifer, a powerful dragon. The card shined red; lightning seemed to pulse through it. The Pharaoh reached forward and picked up the card; the temple rumbled somewhat, but nothing else happened.

“One down, three to go,” Joey said happily. “Let’s get the hell out of here. I want to see Tristan.”

“Me too,” the Pharaoh said. “I’m very worried...”

I followed them out of the room and down the hallway, feeling triumphant. I hated everything about being at this place- but, we had defeated them once, and they would fall pathetically at our hands, again.

12 - Chapter Twelve

I could see, from where we were, now, a small cottage surrounded by an enormous field of brightly-colored flowers. The air smelled like roses; it was the type of vibe that could relax anyone. We had followed the other path that led away from the castle and away from the temple. We had been right to think that Cleito lived down this path; she only lived a few hundred yards past where the path forked.

We approached the front door of the cottage; Joey knocked on it. Téa opened the door. “Hey, guys,” she said brightly. We entered the cottage; Téa closed the door behind us.

I looked around the room we were now in. It appeared that everything here was tiny- there was one central sitting room, and then, I could see a few doors leading to what I assumed were bedrooms, bathrooms and the kitchen. There was a warm sense to the house; the lights were low and comforting, and flowers and candles were stuck in a few places.

“Everyone’s in here,” Téa said, leading us through one of the side doors. We entered what I figured was a guest bedroom; Tristan was lying on a bed in the middle of the room. Serenity was in a chair at the foot of the bed, looking less unhappy and scared; a large cat was curled up on her lap, and she seemed focused on looking down and petting it.

Bustling about the bed was a little old woman. She had every sense of the comforting grandmother that I had somehow expected her to have. She wore little gold-rimmed glasses and had a face that was wrinkled from smiles and laughs. This was Cleito.

“How is he doing?” Yugi asked- he was the original Yugi. “I’ve been really worried...”

Cleito smiled. “He’s great!” she said happily. Even her voice was soothing. “Although, I think you-all must know about the kinds of monsters that you might encounter. You don’t want an attack like this to happen again. This was a bit of a close call.”

“Close call?” Serenity asked, quietly, looking up from the cat. “Why... close?”

Cleito pursed her lips for a moment. “I recognize these symptoms... I assume King Dartz informed you of the laser and claw monsters?”

Laser and claw monsters? Is that what those are called? “Uh, I guess,” Joey said. “I don’t know what a claw monster is.”

“I do,” I said. “It’s a monster that uses physical force to attack, instead of a long-range laser.” It was the type of monster that had been in my house last night.

“Precisely,” Cleito said. “There are more types of monsters, too- the one that hurt your friend... what is his name?”

“Tristan,” Duke said.

“Tristan. The type of monster that hurt him is called a beam monster. They are the most dangerous. You know that the laser and claw monsters have a kill time of ten seconds, on average. Beam monsters don’t. Beam monsters judge the size of their target and use just the right amount of power to do in an instant what the other two types of monsters do in ten seconds.” She looked gently at Serenity. “Your friend is alive because the monster didn’t use enough power on him... the monster was aiming for a slightly smaller target.”

“It was trying to hit *me*?” she asked timidly. Joey went and sat down next to her; she kind of nestled herself against him, cat still on her lap. She looked upset again.

“I think so, honey,” Cleito said. “Your friend saved your life.”

Serenity sniffled. “But, don’t worry!” Cleito said. “I’ve been taking good care of him. I’m sure King Dartz told you about my ability. I was able to restore his normal heart rate. See? Watch this.”

Serenity looked up; all of us stared at Cleito as she held her hands about a foot over Tristan’s chest. A sort of golden light shot from her fingertips and hit him; after another few seconds, his eyelids fluttered.

“Tristan...!” Yugi gasped, as they all moved closer to his bed. He blinked slowly and quietly muttered, “What...”

I was impressed. Cleito had completely restored him- in the temple, he had looked dead. Now, color was in his face and I could tell that he was breathing steadily. He looked, now, merely tired.

Tristan looked up at Yugi. “Did you... did you get the card?” he asked, voice growing stronger.

Yugi held up the magnificent dragon. Tristan smiled and lifted his hand; Joey recognized that gesture and leapt up to high-five him. They both laughed.

“How do you feel,” Téa asked.

“Pretty good,” he said, putting his head back down. “Not bad. Are you guys alright?”

“Yes,” Serenity said, smiling at him, warmly- “Thank you... thank you...”

He smiled at her, back. “How could I do anything else,” he said. “I’m glad everything worked out.”

“Take it easy, and you’ll be fine,” Cleito said happily and busily.

I remembered the other reason we had needed to see Cleito. “Is Thalás here?” I asked. “May we speak with him about weapons?”

I didn’t think that it was possible for Cleito to frown; she surprised me when she did, at my question. Her lips parted for a moment as though she wanted to talk, but she didn’t; she remained silent. I was confused.

“What’s wrong,” Téa asked. “Is everything okay?”

Cleito looked at her, and said, “Thalás...is not here.”

The way she said it immediately told me what had happened; I didn’t have to ask any more questions, but I was not surprised to see that Joey Wheeler was too dumb to get the idea. “He’s not here? Where is he? Can we see him when he gets back?”

Cleito swallowed hard. “A little less than a week ago, Thalás was... out, giving weapons to people, in the south... he gave out his last weapon, and then Donno showed up.”

I frowned. I knew it.

“I have another friend who lives on the southern tip of the island... she saw the Seal become activated, and went to investigate... and... she brought his body to me...”

My lips parted. I felt bad for her.

“I am keeping him alive,” she sighed, trying to keep herself composed. “I have the power to keep him in suspended animation for... a few days.”

“I’m so sorry,” Téa said; Joey looked a little bit ashamed, like he knew he had asked too many questions.

Cleito forced a smile. “It’s alright,” she said. “That’s why I’m so happy to help you kids. Thalás would want it.”

I frowned. I was in this mess in order to protect my brother and company... but, when it came down to it, we were helping a great deal of the world, too.

“But,” Cleito said. “I know he has more weapons here. I would be honored to give them to you. I’m sure there’s enough for everyone.” She left the room.

I sat down in an armchair as Téa and Duke asked questions about what else we had done in the temple. I looked out of the window. It was late in the afternoon, now; I was hungry. I listened to Joey and Yugi explain the stone doors and how the temple had rumbled when we had removed Slifer from the pedestal. Yugi guessed it was because the Leviathan had a burst of weakness. I agreed.

Cleito re-entered the room, holding what looked like eight large sticks in her arms. I stared at them. There was a diamond-shaped, light green crystal stuck to the top of a glass rod- they were each about a two and a half feet long. Strange. Cleito handed one to everybody; I turned mine over in my hands. It seemed so *plain*. Had Thalás put a spell on the crystal at the top? I assumed you were supposed to stab the monsters with them?

“These are great physical weapons,” Cleito said, once everybody was holding one. “But, they have a secret. All you have to do is touch a monster with the crystal at the top... just touch it, and you’ll pull the life right out of it. Very handy... but, be careful getting that close to the monsters!”

Well, better than nothing, I supposed.

“Can we do that to Donno or Adella?” Duke asked. “Maybe we can go right to them and just beat them like that, right?”

Cleito chuckled. “My husband is talented, but he’s not *that* talented! I suppose you could use these like a knife against them... but, no, it only works on the monsters to pull the power out of. Although... I’m glad you’ve mentioned Donno and Adella. I must warn you

about them.”

I set my scepter down and looked at Cleito. “They are powerful people,” she said. “They have manipulated the power of the Orichalcos so far that they, themselves, hold in their hands the power to feed the Leviathan. They still sometimes choose to duel, playing the Seal... I suppose they think that’s more effective or more certain of their victory... but, I have heard that they will simply lay a finger on the neck or chest of their victim... and that’s all that need be done.”

“Damn,” Tristan said. “That’s scary.”

“Yes,” Cleito said. “Be very careful. Keep your duel monsters at hand and watch each other. I have faith in you kids.”

I stood up. Something inside of me didn’t want to disappoint her... she somewhat reminded me of the grandmother that I’d never had.

“Goodnight, Seto,” Mokuba said, disappearing into his room, later that night. We had returned to the castle; during dinner, nobody had mentioned Slifer; I was glad. Mostly, Tristan and Joey talked loudly and braggingly about the monster that had attacked Tristan; Dartz didn’t ask about the card. Part of me wondered why... but, part of me didn’t want to tell him, anyway, so it was all for the better.

“Goodnight,” I responded. I clicked open the door to my room; I heard Yugi say goodnight to Téa and then walk past me. I turned around. “Yugi,” I said.

He turned around. “Yeah?”

“I think we should not tell Dartz that we found the card,” I said.

“Really?” He asked, surprised. “Why not?”

“Just, trust me. Keep the card hidden, okay?” I said firmly.

He frowned. “I guess I don’t see why not...”

“Good. It’s the right thing,” I said, before entering my room, flipping a switch on the wall that illuminated the room from a large chandelier in the middle of the ceiling, and closing and locking the door behind me. I took my trench coat off and tossed it carelessly over

the back of one of the armchairs to my right. My suitcases were on the ground; I opened my largest one and removed my white button-down nightshirt and long white pants before changing into them.

After dressing, I frowned and took a look around my room. It was fairly large and empty, but elegant-looking. The canopy bed was against the wall to the left; the linens appeared to be made of silk. There was a sort of crystal bedside table near it; in the middle of the room was a floor lamp, and two armchairs in front of a coffee table loaded with books about Atlantian history.

I raised my eyebrows. *Interesting.*

I turned off the wall light, sat in an armchair, turned on the lamp, and picked up a very old book. I opened it; it was somewhat dusty.

I scanned the table of contents. One of the last chapters was one about the Orichalcos. I frowned and opened the book to that chapter.

I read the book, interested, despite myself. I learned that the Orichalcos Stone had landed on the island of Atlantis ten thousand years ago, and that it had revealed the corruptness of the Atlantian people. Dartz had been the last king before eventually the island had self-destructed and sank to the bottom of the ocean.

I knitted my eyebrows. Yugi had said he was a 10,000-year-old man. How did he survive all this time, then? How did Chris and Ironheart ...and Donno and Adella, and basically everyone else in Atlantis? Had the Orichalcos sustained everyone, somehow? Or, was Yugi just an idiot for believing everything that Dartz said.

It went on about the Leviathan, and how Dartz had used the power of the Orichalcos stone to revive it and destroy all of the world's people who seemed to be evil. The three Atlantian Knights- Timaeus, Critias and Hermos- had weakened and imprisoned the Leviathan in the depths of the Earth. Using his last bits of power as the island was destroyed, Dartz turned the three men into dragons and imprisoned them in an ice temple. The island had then crumbled, and Dartz had taken to roaming the Earth for ten thousand years, feeding the Leviathan with his collection of human souls.

I wondered how much of this to believe. Dartz had told all of this during our last duel with him. I yawned. It was still early, but I felt tired from reading. I closed my eyes and leaned back in the armchair.

13 - Chapter Thirteen

My eyes were closed, but I was awake. I felt short of breath and ...and... *devastated*.

I opened my eyes; my vision was blurry with tears. It felt as though my heart had been ripped right out of me. I was alone and cold. I looked up; in front of me was an enormous stone slab, engraved with a picture of the Blue-Eyes White Dragon.

I looked down and had to repress a sob; a woman was lying in my arms. She wasn't moving, or breathing... she was dead. Someone had killed her. A terrible evil had torn the soul out of her in order to use its power. But... but I had known that there was so much more to this girl; that she was more than just a powerhouse, or a container for a monster. She was a beautiful person, full of light... the only person who had ever even brought a shred of true happiness into my life...

Tears streamed from my eyes. I didn't want this girl's dragon. I had wanted *her*... I gripped her tighter. I was alone. She had died in front of my eyes; I had watched it. Someone had killed her, and I'd been forced to witness it.

Vaguely I could feel my long, heavy cape being moved around by the light wind. Vaguely I felt the weight of the solid gold bands on my arm and ankh fastened to my chest. *Vaguely*. I was mostly aware only of the incredible sadness that gripped me. The world was silent and empty; I had been in love with the girl in my arms. Now, she was gone.

I took a deep breath and opened my eyes; I was in the room in Dartz' castle. I swallowed hard and lifted my head off of my chest. My vision was blurry. Something... was strange. I felt short of breath and... and... *devastated*.

What was wrong with me? I had seen that vision before, during my duel with Ishizu... but...

I lifted my hand to my left cheek. To my surprise, it was wet... *wet!* Like I was crying... I looked down at the heavy book in my lap. Its pages had a few scattered teardrops staining it. *Unbelievable*. I wiped my eyes. Why did I feel so sad? *Geez...*

I looked at the clock on the other side of the room, sitting on the bedside table. It was only 9:30 at night; I had fallen asleep early and not stayed that way for very long. I ran my hand through my hair and sighed. I was very unused to this ...*emotion*. I had conditioned myself to get rid of every shred of emotion I possessed, in order to succeed as a child;

and, more recently, in order to deal with my enormous work load. This sadness was *weird*.

There was a knock on my door a moment later. I wiped my eyes again, set the history book back onto the coffee table, and grumbled, "Come in."

To my surprise, Joey Wheeler walked into my room, wearing a light-yellow jacket over his night clothes, which made him look stupid- but, he was also looking angry.

"Ey, Kaiba, we gotta-"he began, but paused when he looked at my face. "You... your face is red... have you been... *crying*?" He asked, incredulous.

"No. What do you want, Wheeler," I asked, thoroughly irritated.

"Now, I don't like you, and you don't like me," he said quickly.

"That about sums it up," I replied.

He ignored me. "But, I think you're the only one here who agrees with me in believin' that Dartz is still a no-good son of a dog."

I raised my eyebrows. "Tell Yugi that," I said.

"I'm tryin'!" he said, exasperated. "He don't listen. I think you and me need to do some searchin' or somethin'. What makes you think that Dartz isn't trustworthy? Do you just... *think* he's not? That's the way I'm thinkin' of him. I got a bad feeling."

"Wheeler, don't be an idiot. I actually have reasoning behind my thought- the fact that Dartz didn't throw away the Orichalcos stone when the Pharaoh defeated him last time; and that he still wears an Orichalcos stone fragment," I said.

He looked stunned; didn't say anything for a moment. Then he shouted, "Yes!" and punched the air. I sighed.

"Damnit, Kaiba, I swear," he said, enthralled. "Sometimes, you piss me off so bad, I just want to *rip your balls off* with my bare hands-" *What??* I thought, horrified- "...but I gotta say, you're right on the dot. Who made you so smart?"

"My verbally-abusive stepfather, whom I drove to suicide a year and a half ago," I replied.

“Well, yeah,” he said, dismissing my statement. “Come on, grab your coat! Let’s go annihilate that asshole!”

“With what,” I asked dully.

“*Slifer*,” he said, with a tone of voice that suggested that *I* was the idiot, completely contradicting the ...uh... *compliment* that he had just given me. He held up the card after removing it from his pocket; I was surprised. “How did you get that...” I stammered.

He chuckled. “Yugi and me are sharin’ a bathroom. Yugi had put this in the under-the-sink safe... but, I got a key to the safe, too...” he said carelessly. I frowned. “Ain’t really stealin’, right? Come on.”

I stood up. “I don’t exactly enjoy working with you...” I began angrily, but he said, “Look, what else can I do? Yugi kinda don’t believe me. He wouldn’t want to do anything that might hurt Dartz. I’m afraid that he’ll hold back if we have to fight Dartz, because he’d be scared to hurt him.” He sighed. “Yugi... and the Pharaoh... they’re great duelists... *amazin’* duelists, and they’re geniuses and pretty much always knowin’ what they’re doin’... but, I just think they’re wrong this time. And I don’t like you, but I wanna get this done, and I know you wanna do it too.”

I frowned. Joey was completely in-tune with Yugi, usually- sort of like a shadow. I was somewhat surprised to hear him doubt Yugi; but, I felt the same way he did. “Fine,” I said irritably. I didn’t think that Joey was an entirely good duelist, but *I* could beat Dartz if we were faced with him. “What do you want to find?”

“I’m thinkin’ we break into the room where he keeps the big Orichalcos rock and use Slifer to blast it off of the face of the Earth. It’ll stop those monsters from coming! Those other guys can’t use it to create more monsters, right?”

“Well, they have their own fragment of the Orichalcos stone,” I said.

“Yeah, but they get a lot of power from this big main one, don’t they?” he asked. “If we beat up this thing, then those other guys are gonna be weaker. Let’s go get Slifer to dissolve that thing, and if Dartz don’t like it, then we can make Dartz dissolve too.”

“Very well,” I said, taking my coat off of the chair that I had thrown it over and putting my arms through the sleeves. “Give me the card.”

“*What?*” he asked, angry. “I don’t think so, pal! *I* want to use it!”

I laughed. “Nice try, you scrub duelist. Give me the card. Do you even know how to use it?”

“Sure, I do!” he growled. “You... it’s... you get the attack power from... uh...”

I smirked as he stammered, at a loss for ideas. *What a retard.*

He scowled and grudgingly handed me the card. “Good,” I said, pocketing it.

We left my room and went to the hallway that led to Dartz’ quarters. The castle seemed somewhat eerie at night; the crystal walls seemed to glow in the sunlight, but at night... even the candles lighting the hallway didn’t help brighten it, much.

We could see the door in front of us. Joey, walking in front of me, reached for it; it burst open before he could open it, and I reacted quickly, grabbing the back of his shirt and wrenching him out of the way barely in time to miss being hit by a thin, green laser- a monster was just on the other side of the door. Joey and I were now pressed against the wall, somewhat concealed in the darkness, five feet away from the door.

The monster exited the room, and I saw the fragment of the Orichalcos stone next to the door- I quickly grabbed it from behind the door and crushed it by stomping on it; the monster vanished. Cautiously I peered around the corner through the doors; no more monsters were ahead.

“Be more careful, you stupid dog,” I told Joey, who was leaning against the wall in shock; he came to himself and frowned, and said, “Thanks for saving me, you stuck-up jerk. Come on, let’s go.”

We entered the enormous room that held the Orichalcos stone; this room was completely bright, owing to the enormous meteorite in the center. It was glowing, dark-green... chipped and cratered in many places, and a large chunk missing out of the side of it, where Donno and Adella had stolen a few pieces. I hadn’t known that the stone was this large; it towered perhaps twenty feet in diameter.

“Damn,” Joey said, in awe, when he saw it. I frowned and reached for my pocket to remove the Slifer card.

“Good evening, Gentlemen,” a misty voice came from behind us; it felt as though I had

been electrocuted. Joey and I whipped around to make eye contact with Dartz, who was standing in the doorway, frowning at us.

“Dartz,” I whispered. “Get out of here. We’ve got a plan to weaken Donno and Adella. We’re going to destroy the stone.”

Dartz slowly approached us. “I can’t let you do that,” he said softly.

Joey yelled in rage. “*I knew it!*” he shouted. “I knew you hadn’t changed, you piece of slime! You’re gonna pay for brainwashing Mai into stealing my soul!”

“*Wheeler, don’t!*” I yelled, as Joey leapt forward to physically beat up Dartz; Dartz lazily reached out his hand and grabbed Joey by the throat when he got close; Dartz lifted Joey a few inches off of the floor by his throat. I lunged at them and grabbed Dartz’ arm, trying to pry him off of Joey, who was choking and could hardly breathe; Dartz’ arm wouldn’t budge. His hand was a vice grip around Joey’s neck.

“My advisors are right,” he said calmly, as I continued to tug hopelessly at his arm, and Joey cringed with pain. “Right all along. I know what is good for my nation. The Orichalcos will make my nation paradise again.”

His eyes turned slowly to me; they met mine, and after a split second, I felt a horrible, invisible force violently throw me off of his arm and send me flying into the wall; I felt my back crash into the crystal. Stars blinking in my eyes, stunned by splitting pain, I looked up and saw Dartz toss Joey aside just like he did, me; Joey crumpled to the ground next to me. Was he breathing? Still somewhat disoriented, and on the ground, I leaned over and turned him on to his back; his eyes were closed, and he was trembling, and he shakily whispered, “*That... bastard...*” I frowned at the sight of the enormous bruise on his neck.

Dartz was now standing over both of us, holding a card that featured the Seal of Orichalcos. I realized, with a rush of horror, what he was going to do-

“Good-bye, gentlemen,” Dartz whispered, sinister look back in his eye. This was the look that he had sported so famously the last time I had dueled against him. “This time, you will not escape.”

I reached for the Slifer card, in my pocket; at that moment, a strong voice yelled, “*Dartz!*”

I looked up. It was the Pharaoh. His eyes darted to us for a moment; I saw them widen in shock just briefly, before he looked up at Dartz.

Dartz smiled and left me, now approaching the Pharaoh. “Ah, Pharaoh...” he said softly. “I’m glad you’re here.” He lifted his hand; the crystal doors slammed shut. “My, it is my lucky day,” Dartz continued casually. “Three of the most powerful souls on earth, right in the room with me.”

He lifted his hand, holding the Orichalcos card; the stone on his chest shone brightly. Wind rushed the room; I shielded my eyes from the huge flash of light that burst from beneath Dartz’ feet. In a second, the seal had expanded to the entire room; I felt my breath catch in my chest for a split second; Joey recoiled, flat on the ground. We were trapped.

“Unarmed... you have no chance,” Dartz continued.

“No,” I said, shakily pushing myself off of the floor; I was now standing, and the Pharaoh rushed over to me. “Nice try,” I told Dartz. His eyes narrowed; he didn’t know that I held the Slifer card. As far as he was concerned, we had no cards; I knew he held his deck. He thought he would just summon a bunch of monsters... *wrong*.

“No?” Dartz asked. “I am not challenging you to a duel. I, the king of Atlantis, invoke the powers of the cards and monsters, without the annoying rules of a game- this is no duel.” He held up a card; it was a monster that I recognized: Orichalcos Malevolence. Immediately the monster appeared. “With the new power of the Seal, this monster can send a shockwave that will capture each of you,” Dartz continued, with a chuckle. “*Deliver to me the souls of all three of them!*” he shouted, triumphantly.

The Pharaoh grabbed the Slifer card from my hand and held it up. Dartz’ eyes widened; immediately, his face went completely white. The ground shook, and lightning filled the room wildly; Slifer the Sky Dragon appeared in a spectacular burst of white light. I watched in awe as the sky dragon coiled itself in front of the Pharaoh; it was a magnificent beast.

“Dartz! You don’t know what you’re doing!” The Pharaoh yelled, as Dartz took several steps back, in shock. “Stop this! Stop this nonsense now! “

Dartz did nothing, only stared, horrified, at the superior god monster. Then he whispered, “Slifer the Sky Dragon... you found it...”

“Dartz,” The Pharaoh persisted, desperately. “Please don’t make me destroy you; I don’t want to do it, but you’re beginning to leave me with no choice... please, remove the Seal from this room...”

Dartz still looked up, with, now, a pained look in his eye. He was now a shadow of the man who had once stood in battle against me and the Pharaoh, breaking immediately when he looked death in the face. “I cannot... allow you to destroy this great power. I must do... what I can... Orichalcos Malevolence... attack...”

It was, of course, useless. Slifer immediately destroyed the monster with a single blast of lightning; Dartz was thrown off of his feet. The fight was over. The Pharaoh had won and saved himself, me, and Joey.

The Seal began to slowly contract around Dartz; the Pharaoh ran towards him, shouting his name. It had gotten smaller, and was no longer under my feet, or Joey’s. I watched as the Pharaoh propped Dartz up on his arm, saying, “You made such a foolish mistake... to believe Adella and Donno...”

Dartz closed his eyes slowly and smiled. “No... no, they are right,” he whispered, as if satisfied, even though he lost the duel. “My kingdom... I have done my part for my kingdom. My soul will feed the Great Beast... it will be strong. You kids... will fail.”

His head fell back off of the Pharaoh’s arm. The Seal circled Dartz; the Pharaoh was thrown out of it. He landed a few feet away; in a flash, the Seal was gone, and Dartz was still, on the ground, there. The Pharaoh cursed silently; I bent down and lifted Joey’s arm and slung it around my shoulder and lifted him up; he was conscious, but disoriented from pain. Propped up on my arm, he shakily shouted, “Yuge! Are you alright?”

The Pharaoh turned around. “Yes,” he said. He was unhurt, but looked very unhappy. “What a shame. Now, we are in a worse position than ever. His soul is powerful; it was the final piece that resurrected the Great Beast last time.” The Pharaoh walked up to us. “Are you two alright? Did he hurt you?”

I felt Joey plant his feet on the ground, sturdy; I let go of his arm and he remained standing, wobbling for a moment, but he balanced himself. “We came in here to smash that big stone,” he said, pointing at the Orichalcos Stone. The Pharaoh frowned. “Joey, your neck... it’s very badly bruised...”

“Dartz found us... tried to choke me, sent Kaiba smashing into the wall...”

I, all of a sudden, felt dull, throbbing pain in my back and a sharp pain on the back of my neck; I had been so involved with Dartz, I had forgotten until just now that he had actually hurt me when he sent me flying into that wall- I looked over my shoulder at the place I had hit. It was cracked; a jagged piece of the crystal was sticking out of it. I placed my hand on the spot on my neck that hurt; when I looked at my hand, I saw that a little bit of blood was on my fingers.

“We’re okay, though,” Joey continued. “Not too badly hurt.”

Tea, Mokuba, Duke, Tristan and Serenity entered the room. “What’s going on in here? What’s all the noise about?” Duke asked.

Mokuba gasped and ran up to me. “Big brother, you’re *bleeding!*”

“I’m alright, kiddo,” I smiled down at him. “Don’t worry about it.”

“What happened to Dartz?” Tristan gasped, looking at the crumpled man.

“Come back to my room,” the Pharaoh said. “I’ll explain everything.”

Minutes later, after Yugi had told some of Dartz’ men to get him to a hospital, I was sitting on Yugi’s bed, while Mokuba had a first-aid kit with its contents sprawled out everywhere. The Pharaoh was telling everyone else the story, sitting in an armchair, while everyone else sat on the floor, sitting in front of him- I was forcefully reminded of a grandfather telling his grandchildren a compelling bedtime story.

I cringed and flinched as Mokuba stuck an antibiotic-soaked bandage to the cut on the back of my neck; he said, “Sorry!” but he was done fixing my wound; he closed the first-aid kit and sat next to me and continued to listen to the story.

“Dartz appeared, and summoned an Orichalcos monster; I destroyed him with Slifer,” he said. “Dartz used the Seal; it engulfed all four of us. He was never on our side.”

“You were in the *Seal?*” Téa asked, horrified; the Pharaoh nodded, and she threw her arms around him. I knew she was frightened of the seal, as well as she should be- she had been so destroyed when the seal had defeated Yugi last time. When Téa let go of him, I realized that he had switched back to the regular Yugi.

“I’m okay,” he told us all; we had all walked towards him. “We’re all okay. We’re not hurt. But... I feel like an idiot for believing Dartz. I wanted to believe him... I wanted to

believe that he was good. I'm... I'm really sorry, guys," he said, directing that at me and Joey. Joey said, "Ey, it's only the first time you've ever been wrong," with a laugh. I frowned. "We should finish what Wheeler and I started," I said irritably. "Summon Slifer and destroy the Orichalcos Stone."

"Yeah," Yugi said, standing up. "Let's go."

We followed him out of his bedroom and back down the hallway to the room where the stone was kept. As we walked down the hallway, everyone seemed nervous or upset- Serenity kept very close to Joey, and Mokuba was looking up at me sadly. Serenity whimpered, "I can't believe he used the Seal on you guys..." and I could tell that Mokuba was thinking the same thing. I held out my hand to him; he took it quickly. I smiled down at him for a moment. "It's alright. I promise."

He smiled mildly; we reached the room where the Orichalcos stone was. Yugi held up the Slifer card; with another incredible burst of lightning and wind the beast appeared. Yugi commanded it to destroy the Orichalcos stone; Slifer shot a sparkling blue beam out of its mouth that shattered the stone into dust. It was gone.

"Good," Yugi said. "The Orichalcos' power isn't gone completely, since Adella and Donno still have a large piece of it... but that should make it weaker."

My back was throbbing angrily; I felt lightheaded and irritable. "Good," I said. "I'm going to bed."

I left the room, with Mokuba at my heels; I heard everyone else tell each other good night and follow me down the hall, to their own rooms. I reached the door of my room. Mokuba looked up at me with sad, worried eyes; I patted the top of his head sleepily and opened the door to my room.

I collapsed onto my bed, cringing from a surge of pain from my back. The pain subsided and returned to its normal sore throbbing; I sighed. It was only eleven o'clock; I was exhausted, but my mind still raced, now that I was alone, stomach-down on my bed.

So I had known it all along. Dartz never wanted to help us. He brought us here to be easy targets for Donno and Adella; he had been sure that we would fail to retrieve the god cards. He had been a good actor; actually giving us useful advice. But, he certainly believed in his assistants more than he believed in us.

I sighed again. He had used the Seal of Orichalcos. ...his assistants believed in him as

much as he believed in them. Perhaps they had purposely left the majority of the stone to Dartz, knowing that he would use it- why else would they not just steal the whole thing? I frowned in the darkness. We had been saved by Slifer. I closed my eyes. At least, if anything, Dartz was out of the picture... and it was about time. *Damn, I hated him.*

I slowly awoke to a quiet voice and a gentle prodding on my arm. I opened my eyes; through blurry vision I saw that Mokuba was standing over me.

“Sorry to wake you up,” he said. “But Ironheart wants you and Joey and Yugi to be looked at by a doctor. Yugi told him about what happened last night.”

I groaned. I was still tired and didn’t want to get up yet. Face buried in my pillow, I grumbled, “tell Ironheart to shove his doctor up his @\$\$,” voice muffled by my pillow.

Mokuba chuckled. “Come on,” he said, happy but exasperated. “This is the new Orichalcos. It might have hurt you.”

“I think my bleeding neck and broken back hurt more,” I replied.

“Well, there you go,” Mokuba said. “Please see the doctor, Seto.”

I cracked open one eye and looked up at him through my messed-up hair. “What’s in it for me,” I finally asked.

He frowned. “Are you *bribing* me?”

“Yup,” I said, closing my eye again. “What’s in it for me.”

He sighed. “Um... I’ll draw a picture of a Blue-Eyes-White dragon...”

“Go on...” I said.

“... um... behind a picture of you dressed as the overlord of the Earth?”

“I like it,” I said groggily, lifting my head off of the pillow. I sat up slowly, because my back was still sore.

Mokuba smiled as I shakily stood up and opened my suitcase. “Ironheart is in the main foyer,” he said. “I’ll see you down there.”

I gave him a sort of approving hum as a response; he left the room. I changed into my day clothes; after brushing my teeth and taming my hair, I went down to the foyer. Joey Wheeler and Yugi were already in here; a doctor was shining a pen light into Yugi's eyes.

"Pupil reaction normal..." he muttered, before noticing me and saying, "Ah, Mr. Kaiba. Please sit down, and thank you for coming. I apologize for what our king did to you... all three of you. It's my pleasure to provide this free service to make sure that the Seal hadn't harmed you."

"Seal ain't the one that harmed us," Joey said angrily. "Dartz is the one who choked me!"

I frowned at him, but he was right. The Seal itself had done nothing to us. Maybe it could give new powers to monsters played within it, but the golden rule remained the same: only the loser of a fight- whether it was really a duel or not- would succumb to it.

The doctor finished with Yugi, dismissing him as healthy; Yugi said goodbye to us and left the room. The doctor went over to Joey and lifted his chin to get a look at the bruise on his neck. In the light, I could see the imprint of Dartz' hand; it was an angry bruise. He had been hurt worse than I had.

"Here," the doctor said, taking a small, square device out of his pocket. "What's that," Joey asked.

"This will illuminate your blood vessels, so that I can see if any major ones were damaged," he replied. He held the box about four inches away from Joey's neck; a purple beam shot from it, and I gasped; all that I could see of Joey's neck was a network of blood vessels- no muscle, or skin, or anything; like his head was simply suspended by a large aorta and millions of tiny capillaries. I could almost see through his veins to the wall on the other side of him. Joey laughed, "Heh, that tickles."

"Nifty device, isn't it," the doctor said, in reply to the stunned look on my face. I was mesmerized. *What technology!* The doctor turned the device off; his neck looked normal again. "A lot of small capillaries are broken, but they'll heal by themselves. You'll be fine, Mr. Wheeler."

"Yo," Joey said, getting out of his seat. "Hey, Yuge, wait up!" he shouted, rushing out of the room.

The doctor turned to me. "I've been told that you were thrown into a wall?"

"Correct," I said.

"Are you still in any pain?"

"My back is sore, but not so much that I am crippled by it."

"Very good. Let me make sure that none of your bones were fractured or broken." He re-pocketed the first device and took another one out of another pocket; it looked the same. "This one works the same way, but illuminates bones instead of blood vessels."

"A portable X-ray device?" I asked. "That's interesting."

"It's a wonderful invention. It's much less harmful than X-rays. Please remove your coat and shirt."

I did so; the doctor held the device a few inches from my back. I turned my head over my shoulder as much as I could, to see; a purple beam shot from the device and hit me; a sort of tingling sensation engulfed my back, and I was astounded to see that it appeared that my entire torso had disappeared, except for my spine and ribs. It was the most fascinating thing that I had ever seen.

Mokuba entered the room and gasped, "*Woah!*" at the sight of me. I chuckled. "Cool, isn't it," I said. He ran up to us; I felt his finger poke my side; but saw his finger simply stop in midair a few inches from my spine. Of course the rest of me was still there, but it was made invisible in the light of the device.

The doctor muttered, "hmm..." a few times; then, turned the device off. My flesh re-appeared. "Nothing seems to be wrong. Your skin is red... but, you're okay. Tell me about the cut on your neck."

"It was small," I said. "I can't feel it, now. When I hit the wall, part of the crystal buckled and a piece stuck out and nicked me."

"Did you take care of it?" the doctor asked. "I see a bandage..."

"We put antibiotics on it," Mokuba said. The doctor nodded approvingly and said, "I'll take your word for that. You boys are very lucky."

I put my shirt back on. "What about Dartz," I asked carelessly. I kind of didn't care what had happened to him.

"I do have an announcement about that..." the doctor said hesitantly.

I frowned. An announcement? The doctor left the room, bidding me good day; I put my coat back on. Mokuba shrugged up at me.

"Alright," I told him, with a yawn. "You know what you owe me, now."

He sighed. "What color robes would you like to be wearing," he asked, with a laugh.

"How about red?" I asked. "And don't forget to give me a tall crown."

"Deal," he said. "Let's go find Yugi and them. They were all in the main dining hall, last time I saw them."

"Dining hall? Did they serve breakfast?" I asked.

"Yeah," Mokuba replied. "I had, like, eighty pancakes."

"I'm proud of you," I said, and followed him back to the dining hall. Indeed, Yugi and all of his friends were in here, some with syrup-slicked plates in front of them. But, I was surprised to see Ironheart in here, too. He was sitting on a chair, head in his hands. The Pharaoh looked up at me as I entered the room. I supposed the Pharaoh had just told Ironheart about Dartz losing his soul. I frowned. I felt bad for Ironheart; Ironheart had been a righteous king who never believed in using the power of the Orichalcos.

The Pharaoh frowned up at me. "I have heard from some of Dartz' men... his heart did not start again. He doesn't have the will to live... he let himself die."

I frowned. Somehow, I wasn't surprised. Chris, Dartz' 10-year-old daughter, ran into the room, looking cheery, but stopped in her tracks at the sight of her sobbing grandfather.

"What... what's the matter?" she asked.

"Dartz... your father... is no longer with us," he replied quietly. "They took him to the hospital... but, he just shut down."

Chris didn't say anything for a moment; then, she threw her arms around Ironheart's

neck and sobbed. I felt a twinge of empathy for her; she was only slightly older than I had been when I lost my real father. Ironheart, also destroyed, held her, and they stayed that way for a moment, before Chris said, "How... *how?*" shakily. "Daddy... daddy was a good guy!"

Ironheart stroked her hair sadly. "He... he just couldn't resist the Orichalcos' power," he said gently. "He's a good man who wanted to help his kingdom."

The girl continued sobbing; Ironheart held her, and looked up at us. "It is more urgent than ever, now, for you all to retrieve the god cards and foil Adella and Donno," he said. "My son... while falling to power... is a strong soul that will give the Leviathan great strength. Please. For the sake of my family, don't lose hope... finish your quest."

"Of course," the Pharaoh said. "We can travel to the second temple immediately."

"The quickest way to get there is by the bullet train," Ironheart said. "There are one-way transportation pods from the temple to the castle, but we have yet to install the ones that go both ways, so you must take the train."

"That's cool! I'd rather take the train anyway!" Téa said. "Those are the trains that go five hundred miles per hour, right?"

"Yes," Ironheart said. "They are enjoyable."

"Come on, then," Duke said, standing up from the table. We all followed him outside and down the road from the castle. The Pharaoh kept his hand pressed to his pocket; I was sure that he held the Slifer card, there. I was unafraid of the next temple. Slifer would get rid of any monsters that might have given us trouble.

We boarded one small train- it was shaped like a bullet, made of the same crystal that everything else here was made of. Mokuba sat down next to me; the doors closed and immediately the train was moving. I marveled at the view, outside- everything was a blur. I had never traveled this fast before. The technology was stunning; even the highest military planes couldn't travel this fast. The change of scenery was spectacular and quick- it seemed to go from lush and green to icy and snowy in only a matter of minutes. After winding through mountains and plateaus, the train skidded to a stop.

14 - Chapter Fourteen

There stood the second temple. I had been here, before; I had removed the cursed sword from Critias' neck and had freed him from the ice, here. The temple was enormous and circular; the three dragons had once stood right in the middle of it.

It was cold outside, but I couldn't help but agree with Dartz in considering the scenery spectacular. Whereas everything in the southern parts of Atlantis seemed to be made from a seafoam-green crystal, everything here seemed to be made of stone and ice. Maybe the northern parts of the country were being kept historical; it didn't appear that much of the technology had made it up here. The train had only one stop to the entire Northern region; there was a one-way transportation pod to the castle near the train station.

The temple was nestled in a large mountain chain; snow gently fell to the ground in front of us. I pulled my coat tighter around me; everyone else was either shivering or complaining about the temperature. It wasn't horribly cold, but the air was certainly crisp and nippy.

I approached the front steps of the temple, following Duke and Yugi, who were walking in the front of the pack. There was a bridge leading to the ice temple; a river and waterfall flowed under the bridge. The water's surface hadn't frozen over; the sound of it rushing was actually somewhat calming. I looked up at the mountains behind the temple. Everything was so *white*.

Inside, the temple's walls were lit by isolated candles scattered here and there. I knew this temple was built somewhat like an arena- there were rooms built in a circle around a large, open center. So, where would Obelisk be hidden...

We exited the main hallway and looked down at the two branches of the temple that I knew formed a circle around the center room. It was a large temple, though; I felt that it would be more effective to split up, so I voiced this opinion.

Everyone else shrugged- nobody disagreed, so I headed down the hallway to the right- Joey and Tristan followed me, and everyone else went down the left hall.

We walked down the hallway. It was dark; the ice was very thick, so even its transparency didn't allow for much sunlight- the corridors were dimly lit by isolated

candles sticking off of the ice walls. It was somewhat cold in here. I was dressed appropriately, but mostly everyone else was not; Mokuba kept close to me, seeking warmth. Tristan and Joey walked in front of me.

“Can’t see a damn thing,” Tristan muttered, squinting through the mild darkness. “How’re we supposed to know where Obelisk is?”

Nobody answered him. I sighed. I began to wonder if the card was even here. Had Donno and Adella known that we had found the Slifer card? Maybe so, and then maybe they would have moved the other god cards. Removing them from their pedestals wouldn’t have hurt the Leviathan so badly... it would have less energy, but would still be able to go around destroying things. Maybe Donno and Adella were hiding the god cards. Or, was it ever even here? Dartz might have lied to us.

I then heard Mokuba gasp; I felt him leave my side. Confused and nervous, I turned around, and was stunned into shock when I saw that a man was trapping him; pinning Mokuba to the man’s side by a firm arm across his shoulders.

The man was tall and thin, dressed in elaborate robes not unlike Dartz’. He had straight, green hair that reached to his waist; and seafoam-colored eyes that had a sinister sort of confidence to them. This had to be Donno.

“*Mokuba!*” I shouted, lunging at them - the man lazily lifted his hand, and suddenly I stopped in my tracks. I couldn’t move; I was standing, but I was completely stuck, as though invisible ropes had wound around me, holding me to where I stood. I could speak, breathe... but not move at all.

Tristan and Joey came up next to me, shocked and scared; as soon as they got parallel to me, they, too, became affixed with the same problem I had. Mokuba, just feet from me, didn’t stir as I shouted his name; his head drooped over Donno’s arm. Was he unconscious? I could see him breathing peacefully, as though he were simply asleep... *I had to get to him...* I struggled against the invisible force that held me still, a prisoner in my own body. My attempts to get free were futile; I couldn’t move at all.

“*Get away from him!*” I yelled, with all of the power and venom I could possibly inject into my voice. Anyone else would have cowered at my tone... I saw, from the corners of my eyes, Tristan and Joey wince... but this damned spell made me useless to helping...

I had to wake him up. He could defend himself if he was awake- he had a scepter that could seriously wound Donno. What had Donno done to him? “*Mokuba!*” I shouted, as

loudly as I could. He was only feet from me, but he didn't stir... *"Wake up! Wake up, please!"*

He didn't budge. Donno smiled at me; I read a horrible look in his eyes. A wave of biting cold and horror washed over me. *"No!"* I yelled. *"Let him go! He's only a child! Fight me instead!"*

Donno ignored me; time slowed down considerably as I watched; still straining hopelessly against myself, needing to do something- *anything*- to stop what I knew was going to come. I watched in terrified shock as he simply placed his pointer finger almost gently to the side of Mokuba's neck. There was a quick, blinding flash of light, and Donno released him- he crumpled to the floor. Donno seemed satisfied with himself.

"You dirty bastard!" Joey yelled. *"This is cheating!"*

"Yeah!" Tristan said, just as angrily. *"Challenge us to a duel or something!"*

I could feel that my heart was literally stopped. I couldn't have just seen that. That... *was exactly what Cleito had described...* *"No!"* I shouted, and suddenly, I felt myself break free from the spell that held me captive; Donno, wide-eyed, gasped in surprise as I lunged at him, scepter in hand; he disappeared when I was mere inches from him.

"Get back here!" I roared into the darkness. *"Get back here and fight me, you damned coward!"*

My voice echoed through the room. I was jerked out of my swirling stupor by Tristan's hands grabbing my shoulders; he was now in front of me, both hands on my shoulders, shaking me angrily, shouting, *"He's not coming back! We have to get out of here!"*

I took a sharp breath and came back to myself; I felt myself go completely cold when I turned around and saw Joey leaning over Mokuba's lifeless form, on the floor... I ran back to them and picked up my brother; he was completely limp, cold...

I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe it. We ran out of the temple and I leapt into the transportation pod. In the blink of an eye, we were back in front of the castle. I kept running- I had to reach Cleito's house. Not once did I feel out of breath... as far as I was concerned, it was only two steps, even though it was actually several hundred yards...

We entered the house; Cleito, immediately looking up at us and knowing what had happened, urgently ran up to me and gently but swiftly scooped Mokuba out of my arms.

I didn't want to let go of him. Putting him in the bed would mean there was even an atom of distance between us, and that was the worst thing in the world... in my arms, my brother was safest, warmest... but, I forced myself to let her have him, because she would make everything alright...

He was on the bed, now; Yugi and everyone who was in his group burst into the cottage- I assumed that Joey had ran after the other group, back in the temple, and told them what had happened. Cleito lifted her hands about five inches above his chest; a warm golden beam somehow not the same as the one that she had given Tristan zapped from her fingers and hit my brother; immediately his hands twitched and he took a shuddering breath, before falling still again. Relief swarmed my mind for a moment, but I knew that everything wasn't okay... he was breathing again, but...

"He...he is not inside of his body," she said slowly, looking up at me.

...I knew this, deep down, and yet, to hear her say it sent horrible shockwaves through me. Cleito might as well have shoved a knife through my heart; that would have hurt less than her words did... she had basically just said that Donno had... *killed my baby brother*... this was different than what Pegasus had done...

I stared at him, in the bed, eyes fixed on his face... willing him to wake up, willing him to open his eyes and smile at me, or say, "big brother!" or hug me... he didn't move. He was completely still... barely breathing.

"Wake up," I whispered, feeling hot tears burn at my eyes.

He didn't. He didn't move... just lied there, eyes closed.

My lip twitched. I had never felt so alone and cold. "P...please, wake up..." I felt my hands begin to tremble. My knees collapsed from under me; I felt them hit the ground, and now, I was kneeling down by the bed, face buried in the sheets, gripping them tightly, as quiet tears poured from my eyes. I didn't care that the room was populated with Yugi and his friends. As far as I was concerned, I was alone. Perfect posture and emotionless mood gone, I quietly wept, here. For me, there was no light, in the world... I would have given everything I owned, every cent I was worth, to see him awake, and to hear him speak to me, for one more minute; I would have given my own soul to have his, back.

I heard rustling near me, and I lifted my head from the sheets. Cleito was here, looking sadly at me. "I'm sorry..." she said. "I can sustain him for... for a little while, but unless you get him back within a few days... there's... nothing more I can do..."

I put my head back down onto the sheets. I was in more pain than I had ever been; every inch of me was aching violently as though hot knives were constantly stabbing me.

I felt a small pressure on my shoulder. I lifted my head slightly again and saw that Yugi was standing over me, gently resting his hand on my shoulder. Nobody had ever done that to me before... I didn't know what to do. At any other instant, I would have thrown his hand off of me and demanded that he not touch me, but right now... right now, I didn't care.

I said nothing to Yugi; only looked at him for a moment, and put my head back down. Yugi stayed that way for just a second longer before removing his hand and saying, "I'm so sorry..."

Those words, surprisingly, inspired a spark inside of me. Cleito could sustain Mokuba for a few days... well, that meant that we had a few days to get him back... this wasn't the end. I just had to find those people and defeat them. I had to get him back; not sit here, sniveling...

Right! What was I doing? Proving right my outlook on life... that's what I was doing! I was sitting here, bawling my stupid eyes out, letting emotion overwhelm me, which was doing nothing to solve this situation. I had to get back into that temple and fix this.

"Don't feel sorry for me," I told Yugi, voice deeper than usual, opening my eyes. "I will see to it that those people suffer... I will rip the life out of them." I stood up, feeling nothing; not the warmth of the room or the weight of my coat. "Come on," I told them all, as I passed them. "We have business in that temple." They followed me out of Cleito's house and back to where the trains were landed.

The train ride back to the North temple seemed to go by in a millisecond; my mind was a blur. Nothing was in my head other than the idea that I would never stop trying to get my brother back. Donno could fight me all he wanted- he would never win.

We reached the temple again; I leapt out of the train and led the group back across the icy bridge and inside. I felt completely numb; I knew it was cold, but I was completely cold on the inside, already...

I entered the front doors again. "I'm going this way," I told the rest of them, immediately going down the same hallway.

I didn't hear footsteps behind me- nobody was following me. Had I lost them? Well, screw them, then. Good that if we split up, we'll cover more of this temple, faster. I kept walking.

The circular hallway branched off into another room. I looked at a large object on the other side of the room; across from where I was standing. It looked like some sort of a grave stone.

I approached it. Three swords were sticking up from a stone slab. Each of the stones had a different-colored gem in its handle. I frowned- the one in the middle was a sort of grassy green, the one on the right, dark blue, and the one on the left was red.

I remembered where I had seen these three colors here, before. They were the signature colors of the three Legendary Knights. The swords had held the dragons in their places, until Yugi, Joey and I had released them from the ice. So, what were the swords doing, here?

I saw that there was another door behind the stone. So, maybe I had to break open the door with a sword.

There had to be some sort of trick. Maybe the swords had some kind of enchantment on them that made it so I had to summon a monster, to remove them... or, maybe they had to be removed in a certain order... or, maybe only one could be removed.

I grasped the handle of Critias' sword. Maybe the swords could only be removed by people who had once controlled the cards. I tugged at it; what felt like a jolt of electricity shot through my arm. I gasped in pain and stepped backwards, away from the sword; immediately, the sword stopped sparking.

I sighed, rubbing my hand. The pain was gone. So, there was a protection on the swords. But, I had to figure out what to do with them... I knew they were the keys to opening the door... and I could somehow feel that Obelisk was just in front of me. The swords were the only things that stood in my way.

I narrowed my eyes and looked down. Donno and Adella would put some kind of protection that they think nobody else would figure out... with only three swords, it was probably relatively simple; but, it had to feature some sort of information that nobody really knew.

I supposed I'd try another one of my ideas: maybe they had to be removed in a certain

order. I tried to think back to the Atlantian history book that I'd read. Was there anything about the dragons? Maybe they had to be removed in the order that they were defeated. I decided to try that. Hermos was first. I took the handle and gently pulled upward; only to be afflicted with the same problem that I'd had with Critias' sword. I swore and shook my hand; the electricity died down. So, Hermos' sword was not supposed to be removed first, either.

Well, I thought, that left Timaeus. His sword was the one that should be removed first, right? I grasped that sword's handle and pulled up; amazingly, the sword slid out of the ice. I laid it on the ground. So, what pattern would require Timaeus coming first? Timaeus was the last knight to be set in ice; he was the first knight to be freed. So, it appeared that either way, the pattern would be Timaeus, Critias, Hermos.

I put my hand on Critias' sword handle and lifted up; it slid equally easily out of the pedestal. Yes. This was easy- Donno and Adella hadn't counted on anyone knowing the minute detail of who had summoned the dragons first. Stupid. Hermos' sword came quietly, too- the pedestal flashed, and the door in front of me disappeared.

Perfect.

The card was right in front of me, shining with incredible strength. I reached for it; I lifted it off of the pedestal where it had been rooted to supply power to the Leviathan. There was a sort of rumbling noise for a moment; then, everything became quiet. I smirked. The Leviathan now only had one more god card to suck power from.

I looked down at the card in my hand; it was as though I could feel a pulse within it. I had once held this card... Ishizu had given it to me. Yugi had won it in a duel against me, and I grudgingly knew that I had to return it to him. But, for now, I held it.

It was a spectacular card, pouring with power that rivaled my Blue-Eyes Ultimate Dragon. The card seemed to shine, even with the lack of light sources in this room... fueled by a mysterious power that it possessed, or, perhaps, fueled by my intense battle spirit, now. I knew where Donno was. It was time to destroy him.

15 - Chapter Fifteen

I slid open the ice doors and entered the center of the temple, where the three dragons had once stood. It was huge, entirely made of stone; the ceiling stood nearly fifty feet above my head, and the walls were a hundred feet on each side of me, now that I was standing in the middle of the room. Directly in front of me, there was a sort of ice throne; and sitting on it... was *Donno*.

“Seto Kaiba,” he said calmly.

In that second, I could have lunged forward and strangled him with my bare hands. I could have taken the knife in my pocket and plunged it into him. I stood in the middle of the room, hating him with every thread that held me together, as he stood up and approached me slowly.

“Where is my brother,” I asked poisonously, when he was a foot away from me. Donno smiled, calm and confident; as if expecting me to show up and challenge him. I was not surprised. He said, “You want his soul?”

It was everything I could do to not shred him to pieces. “Return him to me,” I said in the most threatening voice I possessed.

He frowned. “I won’t be so quick to give up the precious fuel that powers my beast,” he said, almost *casually*. “You’re brave to come here,” he said, lifting his hand again; again, I felt my limbs freeze. I knew what he was going to do. I was not afraid.

He lifted his hand and placed the tips of his fingers onto the middle of my chest. From what Cleito described, I knew that I should feel colder because of this... but, I didn’t. I felt nothing. He smiled. “Thank you for coming here,” he said. “You’ve been a great help.”

“That’s it?” I asked deeply, knowing that my heart would be stopped the instant he removed his hand. “You’re a coward. Are you afraid to fight me?”

His eyes narrowed; I assumed he wasn’t used to being stood up to. “Coward?” he asked, allowing a small smirk to creep onto his face. He removed his hand from me; I felt my breath catch in my chest for just a moment, but otherwise felt unharmed- he had cancelled his power. “Do you challenge me?”

I narrowed my eyes, too. He took that as a 'yes,' which was what I intended. He chuckled. "Okay, Seto Kaiba. If you're interested in wasting my time, I will fight a duel with you."

This was exactly what I had been wanting. He turned and walked a few feet away from me; I felt the immobilizing spell lift. My heart was pounding violently with vehemence. He stopped, turned around to face me again, and lifted a card; I immediately recognized the green symbol on it as the Seal of Orichalcos. I frowned; I realized suddenly what he was going to do.

"I might be convinced to part with your brother," Donno continued slyly, still holding up the card. "Fight me, then; let our greatest monsters clash. This is a battle of history."

"What do you mean, history," I snarled. "I'm fighting for my brother. Fight me, and if I win, you must return him to me."

He still smiled darkly at me. "So I hear you're the reincarnated soul of the High Priest to the Pharaoh," he said softly.

I frowned. This had nothing to do with Yugi's Egyptian past. "You're wasting my time. Don't lecture me," I said.

"You seem more like him every second. I don't know quite what to believe about you; only that if you are the priest, then... ah, isn't it ironic, that you lost your family in the past, as well?"

What was he talking about? "This has nothing to do with that!" I shouted. "Duel me!"

"You lost your mother as a child, so long ago... lost her to the shadows, as you have now lost your brother... sad. What a sad fate destiny has set for you."

I scowled so *very* deeply. "Stop talking about that," I said, furious; but then, it hit me; I knew where I had seen this man, before. I had dreamt about him, the night before we arrived in Atlantis. I had seen him in that... that memory of the past... this was the same man, the same man who had sent his men and monsters to burn my village, so very long ago.

"You asked for a fight; I accept your challenge. My duels are simple," he said. "Choose four cards. Any four cards... magic cards, trap cards, monsters... the cards that you happen to trust. After four turns, whoever has the strongest monster, or the most

effective magic cards to enhance their monster, wins.” He smiled; completely confident. ...did he know that I possessed Obelisk the Tormentor? Four cards... I couldn't help but feel confident, myself. This was perfect.

He pulled three more cards out of his shirt pocket. I took four out of my deck... X-head cannon, Y-Dragon cannon, and Z-metal cannon... and Obelisk the Tormentor. I knew just what I was going to do.

“Let us begin,” Donno shouted, holding up the card that depicted the Seal of Orichalcos. “Allow me to go first.”

There was a blinding flash of a forest-green light; it was as though wind had burst into the room. The ground shook mildly; from Donno's feet spread a green circle that grew and passed under my feet. A wave of cold spread over me; I felt my breath catch in my chest for just a moment. We were both locked in the Seal now. This was the fifth time that I had ever been inside of it.

Donno was smiling as the rumbling and wind stopped; his hair stopped blowing around, and I felt my own hair fall back into place. Everything was still and silent, but the Seal shone at our feet.

“The game begins,” he said slyly. “You may play one card at a time during your turn. Pick a card; hope that it will sustain you.”

“I play Z-metal cannon in attack mode,” I said, holding up the card; the monster appeared in front of me. “Turn end.”

Donno chuckled. “A plain monster,” he said. “My beasts are infused with the power of the Orichalcos. This is no ordinary duel, Seto Kaiba. You may be a top contender in the world of Duel Monsters... but we are no longer in that world. “I play my first monster, Eye of Eldis, in attack mode.”

A monster appeared on his side of the field; it looked somewhat like a monster that Dartz had once used against me... in a sense, it was nothing but a giant, flying eyeball.

“It has zero attack points for right now,” he said casually, “but, thanks to the Orichalcos and its special ability, it is invincible for three turns. Your metal cannon cannot destroy it. Once those three turns are up, my Eldis will possess infinite attack points; it will be able to destroy any monster.” He chuckled. “I have yet to be defeated by anyone.”

I wasn't moved. "I play Y-dragon cannon in defense mode," I said, holding up that card; now the Y-dragon cannon appeared next to the Z-metal cannon.

Donno was clearly not afraid. He had no idea... he chuckled. "My, my, lucky you. I only bothered to put one monster in my deck; you might survive an extra turn, with another monster... but, I'd rather not drag this out. I play my third card; a magic card that permanently switches all of your monsters into attack mode."

I frowned. Donno was making it so that it was almost pointless to include life points, in this game... it didn't matter. His next turn would be the beginning of his downfall. "I play X-head cannon in attack mode," I said. "When all three cannons are on the field, they can materialize together to form X-Y-Z Dragon Cannon... but, I choose not to let them materialize. I see no point in it."

My third monster appeared on my side of the field. Donno chuckled. "A cute group of monsters, there, Kaiba. Why not let them materialize... ah, I see. More monsters for me to destroy. Drag this out for as long as you wish. I'm glad you see no point."

I smirked slightly. He had misread me. I chose not to let them materialize because, completely truthfully, it was utterly pointless; the monsters served as perfect sacrifices to Obelisk the Tormentor, fused or not. Why not let him think I was 'dragging this out...'

"But, I don't wish to continue the duel for longer than we have to. Really. So, I play my final card- a spell; Diffusion Wave Motion. When my Eldis gains its infinite attack power on my next turn, it will destroy all of your monsters at once. Good-bye, Seto Kaiba." He chuckled. "Enjoy your last turn."

I frowned. To anyone who didn't possess a card that could defeat everything Orichalcos-related, this duel would have been completely unfair. The god card was in my hand; it was the only card left in my hand. I could feel its power surging through me. "Very well," I told him.

He frowned. "How can you be so confident..."

I held up the god card. "I sacrifice my three monsters to summon Obelisk the Tormentor!"

"So... you found the god card," Donno said uneasily. He was finally breaking; I could see sweat on his forehead. He frowned deeper. "I'd like to see you try to use it. You won't be the first fool that I've battled to try to summon a god card and fail- the god cards can

only destroy the Orichalcos if you can actually summon them. You wasted your choice.”

“Nice try,” I sneered. “I have controlled Obelisk before. The gods obey me. I’m not a scrub duelist, like the ones you’ve fought before. You say you’d like to see me try to use it? I’d be happy to satisfy you.”

Donno’s eyebrows knitted. “You can’t control the god cards. Only the Pharaoh’s chosen people can control the god cards. Only those who possess Millennium Items.”

“Descend to Earth, Obelisk the Tormentor!” I yelled triumphantly, holding the card as high as my arm could reach; there was a tremendous roar, and the ground beneath our feet rumbled significantly more violently than it did when the Orichalcos was first played. It was as if a bolt of lightning had struck the ground, ten feet in front of me; through the intense light, I could hardly see that Donno was staring, wide-eyed, in horror, at me. “How... can you control the god cards without a Millennium Item...when not even I can,” he stammered. “You... you *are* the Great Priest, right-hand advisor of the Pharaoh...”

I paid little attention to him. I saw, in front of me, the incredible form of Obelisk the Tormentor materialize in front of me. I was laughing proudly; I beamed in victory as my glorious beast shot its fist forward, going right through his pathetic monster and socking the man head-on. He cringed and flinched as Eldis disappeared; its ‘invincibility’ was granted by the Orichalcos, and thus, vanished when shown the face of Obelisk. An incredible burst of light exploded from Obelisk’s fist; the stupid duel was over. I had won; it had been fantastic and simple.

The light from Obelisk’s attack began to die down, but I was already running away from my side of the battlefield; running towards Donno, who had now fallen to his knees. I grabbed the front of his shirt and lifted him to my eye level; *“where is my brother?”* I shouted. The light of the seal was intense as it slowly contracted closer and closer to us; I knew it wouldn’t harm me, the victor; but Donno was doomed, and in his last seconds of life I had to get the truth out of him.

He said nothing; only half-grinned at me. *“Where is my brother?”* I yelled again, shaking him violently. *“Give me his soul, you bastard! Give him to me!”*

The seal was getting closer; I could see my hands turn green as the light from the seal’s edges reflected over everything. I was running out of time. Finally, Donno spoke... he laughed. With his last bits of energy, he chuckled, “I don’t know why... I didn’t see it... and immediately believe it before. You *are* the Great Priest... who followed in the footsteps of royalty. I recognize your eyes; that look of pure, deep hatred... that you gave

me... thousands of years ago.” He laughed again; my blood curdled. “Your brother? You’ll never see him again. The Leviathan will awaken. The end of the world is nigh.”

And with that, his eyes closed and head slumped forward; there was a blinding light and I felt as though a giant invisible hand had socked me in the stomach, sending me flying backwards, wrenching my hands off of Donno’s shirt. Sitting on the floor, feet away, I watched as the seal finally constricted around him; with another blinding flash of green light, the seal was gone, and he crumpled to the floor. It was over; he was gone, soul lost to the Great Beast, killed by the power he had tried to harness.

I swore under my breath and pushed myself off of the floor, and approached his body. I was now standing over him, swarmed with the utmost abhor... I had defeated him, but what good had it done me? If anything, we were now in worse shape, because Adella could easily control the Leviathan by herself, and now, Donno’s soul fed it, so it was stronger, too...

I bent down over him. The large Orichalcos stone fastened to his chest, which gave him the power to control the seal, was dully flashing. I tore it off of his shirt and turned around to face Yugi and Joey; they had just entered the room and were approaching me.

“You were in a duel with that guy? Nice @\$-kicking, Kaiba,” Joey said, giving me a thumbs-up. I frowned at him. “He told me nothing,” I growled.

Now the Pharaoh frowned. “I wondered if he would have kept a promise,” he said slowly.

I held the stone out to the Pharaoh. “Will we ever have a need for this?” I asked him. “Do you want it?”

He said nothing; only took it from me and pocketed it. My heart was racing furiously. Now what should we do? Find Adella ...yes. She was in that far-away temple; so, then, we would go there. The Ra card would be there, too.

“We must go to the third temple,” the Pharaoh said. “Once we have all three of the god cards, we can defeat the Leviathan. We are getting close.” He smiled kindly at me; I didn’t return the emotion. “I’m glad you found the second god card, Kaiba,” he said. “It appeared to have just saved you in that duel?”

“Saved me? I was saved by the fact that Donno is a load of bullshoot,” I growled.

“Ey, don’t worry, Kaiba. We’ll find Mokuba. Adella’s keepin’ him somewhere, and we’ll find him,” Joey said, flashing a grin at me, in what was perhaps an attempt to make me feel enthusiastic about following him and Yugi to the third temple. I frowned at him. “Yes,” I replied, and followed them out of this room.

We were halfway down the hallway, leading to the exit of the temple, when there was a roar in a nearby room, signaling that monsters still roamed this temple. Yugi and Joey stopped in their tracks and pulled their scepters out of their back pockets; I frowned. “Yuge! We gotta kill those things!” Joey shouted.

“Yes,” the Pharaoh said urgently. I raised an eyebrow at them both; the Pharaoh said, “these creatures are easy to defeat, and the more fragments of the Orichalcos Stone we can defeat, the weaker it will become.”

Yugi and Joey bolted into a room to our right. I sighed and turned to follow them, pulling my own scepter out of my back pocket, before I heard a crash in the room to our left; I went in there, instead, sure that I could defeat a few monsters on my own. I had become rather good at it.

There were a few in this room. I shot the bright blue laser from my scepter at one; it vanished. I had now attracted the attention of the several others; all of them lunged at me.

I zapped them all blindly with the blue laser, aware of nothing but the fact that the faster that I got rid of these things, and the faster that we left this temple and went to the third, the sooner I would see Mokuba again. Monsters kept coming... I hadn’t realized there were so many in here. This was a relatively large room; I assumed that Joey and Yugi were fighting this many, as well... maybe they had even more? Who knew.

I was surrounded by a swarm of monsters. I was fighting them off relatively well; keeping them at a decent distance from me. I had never seen so many at once, but I was fueled by a fire, now... this wasn’t so many.

I had now destroyed all of the monsters in front of me; I turned around and was stunned to see one last monster right behind me, raising its clawed arm; I lifted my scepter to blast it, but its arm was moving down, so quickly, faster than I was...

I cringed; ...but no attack ever came.

16 - Chapter Sixteen

I opened my eyes and saw the familiar puff of smoke that meant that the monster had disappeared. The monsters were all gone; I was okay, unhurt; aware of that fact only by that I could feel my chest heaving in surprise. What had made the monster disappear?

I looked down and felt my heart stop. There was ...*Mokuba*, positively beaming up at me, holding a scepter in his hand. "Need some help?" he asked me, cheerily.

I couldn't move or speak; only looked down at ... *at my baby brother*, standing there, smiling up at me, holding a scepter. *Could this be real? Was this really him?*

He gasped and pointed at a spot that was behind me, and yelled, "There's one more!" He passed me and ran off to stab the monster; I slowly turned around on the spot, and saw him pin it to the ground and zap it; it disappeared like the others did. "Yes!" he shouted, pleased with himself.

The next thing I knew, I was moving towards him. My trembling hand was reaching forward, and lied on his shoulder.

He turned around, wearing a bright smile. I withdrew my hand, and after a heartbeat of a pause, felt my face break into a kind of relieved agony; I collapsed to my knees, threw my arms around him, and broke down completely.

I sobbed into his shoulder, so relieved... I quieted after a moment, but kept holding him. Everything was fine as it was, right here, right now. Warmth rushed into me, as we stood there, together again at last. I wanted to never let go. I had him, again... I didn't know how it could be possible, but I didn't care... I had been so afraid that I would never feel his little arms around me again, like this, but here he was, standing and running as if in perfect health. Now I could feel, again; his little arms around me, and the joyful tears that dripped down my cheek.

He laughed. "I've never seen you cry like this, Seto," he said happily. I sniffled and pulled my arms from around him, and put my hands on his shoulders, still kneeling, at level with him. I couldn't look into his eyes enough. His eyes had light... he really was here. I really did have him again. I was at ease with the world, right now.

"Let's get out of here," he said. "Did you get the Obelisk card?"

I nodded and stood up, not crying anymore. "I used it in a duel against Donno," I said stuffily; it was interesting to hear what my voice sounded like when I had been crying.

"You dueled Donno?" Mokuba asked, stunned and interested. "*Really? What happened?*"

"I beat him," I said, smiling down at him. "He was one of the easiest opponents I'd ever fought."

Mokuba's eyes were wide. "*Awesome! You're amazing!*" He gasped, completely taken by excitement.

"He didn't stand a chance," I said.

"He's a no-good son of a dog," Mokuba said grumpily. "I'm glad you put him in his place, Seto."

"Kaiba?" The Pharaoh's voice came from the door. "Are you in here?" I turned around; Joey and Yugi entered, out of breath, but obviously they had defeated all of their monsters. Joey stopped in his tracks when he saw Mokuba; he gasped.

"Mokuba!" The Pharaoh said. "What... you're okay!"

"Yeah, I am," he laughed. "I came in here just now."

Joey leapt forward and grabbed Mokuba in a headlock and gave him a noogie, laughing, "It's good to see you up, man!" Mokuba, irritated, grabbed at Joey's arm, trying to squirm out of his grasp; Joey finally let go of him. He patted his hair back into place and raised his eyebrow at Joey, who only laughed.

"Let us return to the castle," the Pharaoh said; we all followed him out of the room.

"Hey, you guys," Mokuba said, at the dinner table, that night. Mostly, everyone had stopped eating; it was late. "I've got to tell you something."

Everyone looked at him. I was surprised. What did he have to say?

"I want to tell you about what happened to me. It's important."

I swallowed the piece of shrimp that was in my mouth and looked softly at him. The Pharaoh said, "Yes, I'd like to hear about what Donno and Adella's power does after an attack. Are you sure you're okay talking about it?"

"Yeah!" Mokuba said, now, almost excited. Part of me wanted to hear, too... but, part of me was scared to learn what he had really gone through.

"The last thing I really remember was following you, Seto... but, then, there was a cold hand on my neck, and that was the last of it. Then, I found myself in a large, green room," he began. "It wasn't like in Pegasus' card...it was light, and not really cold. Like another giant, green crystal castle, except it wasn't like... seafoam green, like everything is, here. It was a lot darker... you know, the color of the Orichalcos stone..." he thought for a moment. "Yeah, like that. We weren't inside of the Leviathan, I'm sure. I know that last time, people were sent to that temple that's an isolated island, in the sea. Maybe Dartz built another one of those, and that's where we were this time. I don't know.

"Anyway, there were a lot of people, all just standing around quietly. I ran up to some people and asked them what they were doing... they all just kind of looked at me, said, 'It's okay, little boy,' but didn't really do anything... I asked them where we were, and they all said nothing, but, 'Donno defeated us...' sort of thing." He shrugged. "That's why I was surprised that you said you had beaten Donno easily, Seto. There were a lot of people in there who had been defeated by Donno..." He laughed. "But then again, you're like, the best duelist in the world."

I smiled at him; he continued his story. "Then I recognized someone! Remember that photo of Cleito and her husband, in her house? I saw Thalas in the green castle! I ran up to him, and I said that I knew his wife. He kind of smiled at me and said, 'I'm glad she's doing well.'

"He was holding something tightly. I could see his hands clenched; I didn't know what he was holding, but I was surprised he was holding anything, because how could he still have anything in his possession? I wasn't in the clothes I had been wearing before I got caught... everyone was wearing these white suit-things. So I asked him what he was holding."

I stared open-mouthed, as he told his story. "He opened his hand, and I was shocked to see that he was holding the *Ra card!*"

"The Ra card?" Serenity gasped. "The Ra card... was captured with Thalas?"

“Yeah,” Mokuba said, with a shrug. “I guess since the card kind of has a soul of its own, the Orichalcos took it, too, because the man lost the duel against Donno. I asked him why he had the Ra card. He said he stole it from Donno, and Donno played the Seal against him in a duel, and the man tried to use the Ra card, but of course he couldn’t, because he couldn’t read the hieratic text and didn’t have a Millennium Item. So he ended up losing that duel.”

I swallowed hard. I was afraid to believe that only people who were connected to the Millennium Items could use the god cards, because... well, because / could use the god cards and read the hieratic text. The hieroglyphs on the card told of Ra’s powers; only if you knew what these powers were, could you control the card; only the people connected to the Millennium Items could read the hieratic text. I frowned.

“But I got an idea! There are only a few things that can beat the Orichalcos, right? The Atlantian Legendary Knights... and the god cards! So I asked Thalás if I could have the Ra card. He kind of reluctantly gave it to me... and ...well, I played the card!”

My lips parted in confusion; Joey beat me to the question I was just about to ask: “How could you control the god cards? You don’t have a Millennium Item...”

“Nope,” Mokuba said, shaking his head, “But I have the blood of someone who does!”

He smiled up at me. I stared, shocked, at him. I didn’t know what to say.

“You told me all about Ra, big brother,” he continued. “So, I’m somewhat connected to a Millennium Item, I knew what to say to summon it, and I knew what its powers are- and those were the conditions that nobody else had! So I said it right, and Ra appeared! It was awesome! Like, a huge, sparkly, golden chicken!” He laughed again. Everyone else was sitting in stunned silence. He continued, “So I commanded Ra to break through the crystal walls that we were all trapped in. And it did! There was this incredible burst of light, and the next thing I knew, I was lying in the bed in Cleito’s house.

“I was kind of dizzy for a moment... but, I didn’t feel sick or anything. I sat up, and I heard sobbing from the other bedroom. I felt strong enough to stand up; I went into that room and saw that Thalás was also awake; Cleito was holding him and crying, and he was just saying over and over that he’s okay and that he loves her. It was great.”

Tea wiped her eyes; everyone was smiling, now. Even I felt a strange warmth in the depths of my heart.

“When Thalás saw me enter the room, he got out of the bed and clapped my shoulders and thanked me for releasing him with the Ra card. He told Cleito about how he’d had the card and let me use it. So, Cleito thanked me for saving Thalás with the wettest, nastiest old-lady kiss to the cheek, and I thanked her for keeping me alive!” he laughed. “I asked if she knew where everyone else was, and she told me you were all still looking for the Obelisk card in the second temple. I took the train back to the temple and saw you guys!”

“Did you see Dartz or Donno?” Duke asked.

Mokuba shrugged. “No, but I’m sure they were there somewhere. I didn’t really talk to a lot of people.”

I frowned. He had set all of those people free... including Donno. Was Donno still alive? Maybe it had been more than ten minutes between when I had defeated him and when Mokuba had set everyone free. I then had an interesting thought.

“What about Roland?” I asked. “Did you see him?”

Mokuba’s eyes widened. “You know what... I didn’t! I didn’t think to look for him! But I’m sure he was there, too. We should check on him tomorrow, Seto! I bet he’s okay!”

“What happened to the Ra card?” Yugi asked.

Mokuba smiled, reached his hand into his pocket, and held up... *the card*. It shined gold in the light; the picture of a mighty yellow dragon was featured on the front. Below the picture was a paragraph of hieroglyphs. “It stayed with me,” he said cheerily, handing it to Yugi. “It’s a nice card if you aren’t using it for evil.”

Yugi, stunned, took the card from him. Now we had all three of the cards. Defeating the Leviathan would be easy, now. My mouth was still open with surprise. Mokuba looked up at me, and laughed.

“I’m very impressed, Mokuba,” the Pharaoh said with a chuckle. “You’ve done a wonderful thing, here.”

“Thanks,” Mokuba said. He stood up from the table; it was now just after nine-o’clock. We all left the dining hall and went to our rooms; I had my hand on my doorknob, when Mokuba said, “Seto,” quietly. I looked at him; immediately I recognized a look on his

face that suggested, "Please come sit with me for a little while." I smiled at him and approached him; he smiled, back, and entered his room. I followed him; once in the room, I sat down on one of the big armchairs; he sat down in another one.

"Are you okay?" I asked him.

He shrugged. "Yeah, I'm cool," he said. "I don't feel sick or anything."

"I'm glad," I said adoringly. "I'm impressed; I'd be pretty battered if I was you, after everything you went through."

"I just... I want to make you proud, Seto," he said, going back to giving me that precious smile.

I was at a loss for words. I couldn't take my eyes off of him, watching him sitting there, beaming at me. My heart could have been positively *glowing*. "Proud?" I whispered, finally; "I've never been so proud."

He stood up off of his seat and walked the few feet to where I was sitting; he then climbed into my lap and put his arms around my neck. My entire body tingled with warmth and happiness, feelings that I was mostly very unused to experiencing.

"I love you, big brother," he said, voice muffled by my shoulder. I turned my head and gently kissed his forehead, before holding him tighter and whispering, "I love you so much."

He didn't let go of me; I wondered briefly if he was scarred or frightened by what had happened to him... as for me, I needed nothing more than the reassurance that I hadn't lost the one person whom I loved. I let my hand rest on the side of his head, holding it to my chest. A lapse of time went by; he knew nothing but comfort, I knew nothing but relief.

"I wasn't really scared, ever," he said, thoughtfully, after a while. "I didn't really think about the fact that this time, you die if they get their hands on you. You took me back to Cleito's?"

"Yes," I said. "I left you with Cleito and went back to the temple; I found Obelisk quickly. My mind was such a blur; I was so upset and rushed..."

He chuckled lightly. "I'm sorry," he said. "I'm glad you got the card... what about Donno?"

“I went looking for Donno. I knew I could beat him... especially since I had Obelisk and Yugi had Slifer. Yugi wasn't there with me, but I beat him with just Obelisk.”

He yawned. “I never really asked, Seto... what did you see, when the Orichalcos got you, last time?”

I frowned. I had spent the last few months trying to erase that from my memory. “Well...” I began. “It was very different from what you described. I could see Yugi, and Pegasus, and Wheeler... it was somewhat like we were all trapped in some kind of bubble, floating together in space.”

He lifted his head off of my chest and looked up at me, confused. “Really?”

“Yes,” I said. “Above all of our heads, there was a giant eyeball... sometimes, it would flash, and then people around me would disappear. It was a part of the temple that the Leviathan raided from time to time... like a pantry of souls, I suppose.”

He frowned. I put my hand on the side of his head and pressed it to my chest again; he sighed unhappily. “You know what I just thought,” he muttered. “I saw all of those people... but, I bet none of them are alive right now.”

I hadn't thought of that. I frowned. He continued, “Thalas and I... we just got lucky, right? Cleito didn't have anyone else in her house. The rest of those people are ... well, probably dead, right?”

I didn't know what to say. He was probably right. Maybe some people had been more like in Roland's position- on life support in the hospital- but surely not all of them had.

I sighed, too. “I suppose that's true,” I said gently. “But, I promise you- tomorrow, we're going to take the god cards straight to Adella. She doesn't stand a chance.” I felt him sit up; arms no longer around my neck, he looked up at me, searching my face for reassurance. “Do you realize how many people you've saved, by being smart enough to know what to do about the Ra card?” I asked.

He shrugged. “I guess a lot,” he said, but not looking much happier about it. Now, he looked tired and sad.

I looked softly at him, and said, “I wish that there was something that could have been done for the people who were in there with you. But because of what you did, we're

going to prevent so many more people from getting hurt. Right?”

He said nothing; only put his head back down onto my chest and kind of curled up as much as he could, on this chair. Hand back on the side of his head, I said, “You know, Dumb Brown Dog, once she got over her Ebola, became the emperor of China,” after a moment.

He chuckled, finally. “Emperor of China?”

“She sure did,” I said. “So, Droning Duck and Coward Cat went to China, because they knew that Dumb Brown Dog was really just an ugly prostitute. She and Obese Lazy Kitty were the best prostitutes in the world.”

“Why would...” he stopped to yawn, “...Obese Lazy Kitty be a good prostitute?”

“Some people like fat girls, Mokuba. Anyway, Coward Cat and Droning Duck knew that Dumb Brown Dog would pass a law in China stating that everyone had to have their toenails violently ripped off. Dumb Brown Dog hates toenails.”

He chuckled sleepily. “I wouldn’t want to live there.”

“Well, unfortunately, billions of people do, so Droning Duck and Coward Cat went to the Forbidden City and shot Dumb Brown Dog. Her brains went all over the palace- bits of her dismembered skull were found lodged in the ceiling and floor...”

“Seto, you’re a really bad storyteller,” he said in a rather pleasant manner, interrupting me.

I chuckled. “Sorry. I haven’t had a lot of practice.”

Soon, he became quiet and limp; he had fallen asleep. Smiling, I carried him to his bed and gently set him down; I pulled the heavy covers over him and knelt by his bedside for a moment. I was the luckiest man on Earth; I could barely fathom how close I had come to never being able to hear, “I love you, big brother,” again. I stood up; he was sleeping silently and peacefully... I hoped he wasn’t traumatized by what had happened. I left his room and entered mine. It took me only a moment of staring at my bed to realize that I was exhausted; the emotional drain I had suffered today had taken a serious toll on me that revealed itself, now, for the first time. I slid into bed without bothering to take off my day clothes and closed my eyes.

17 - Chapter Seventeen

My eyes were tightly closed; I was on the ground, doubled over in dull pain. Every inch of me was throbbing; there was a horrible rumbling and clashing all around me.

I forced my eyes open, chest heaving. I was in the midst of an enormous battle. My monster, Duos, had been destroyed, and I was taking the physical toll for it.

Pain slowly alleviating, I looked up; standing over me was an enormous, looming figure. It was Akhenaden; my teacher, my guide... only, he had sold his soul to darkness. It showed in his physical form; he wore a mask to hide the hideousness of his face; and his dark robes gave off a horrible, bloodthirsty vibe that intimidated even me.

"Come with me," he said, almost gently. I felt anger and frustration towards him- it was he who had destroyed my Duos, hurting me this badly. He held his hand out; I didn't take it, but I didn't need to- a brief purple light surrounded us both, and I felt the ground disappear from under my knees and re-appear a moment later.

I shook my head and forced myself standing. I looked around. Akhenaden had brought us to the front gates of the palace. I stared daggers at him; "Why..." I asked.

"You are destined to be king, Seto," he said. "It is you who should rightfully hold the throne."

Why did he suddenly feel this way? "We swore an oath of loyalty to the Pharaoh!" I shouted. "You speak of treason! Stop this madness!"

He laughed. "Do not deny your royal blood!"

"Royal blood..." I muttered, confused. *He was lying.* He knew that I grew up in a village, raised by my mother, alone.

"It is your destiny to remove the soul from that girl and rule Egypt as Pharaoh!"

"*Stop it!*" I shouted, approaching him for a moment; then, there was a horrendous crash from behind me, and guards from the palace began shouting and running. I turned around; the entire palace was crumbling in front of my eyes.

“You... you are doing this...” I stammered, hardly able to believe it. “The palace...” I was suddenly struck by a terrible sinking feeling... *Kisara!* She was still in the palace! Would the guards have bothered to open her gates and let her free? Probably not!

I tore towards the palace. Akhenaden laughed. “The girl is yours! Retrieve her and use her!”

My heart was pounding furiously. I couldn't believe it. “*Shut up!*” I yelled, no longer caring about respecting my teacher. “*You'll never succeed! I refuse to harm her!*” I turned away from him again; he then lowered his voice to speak... somehow I could still hear him... he said, “You must do the right thing, my son.”

Those horrible words stabbed me like a knife- I stopped in my tracks. He had said, ‘my son...’ *son?* I had never known my father... *Akhenaden was my father?*

I turned around. He was holding his hand out to me. *I couldn't believe it.* After all this time... after all this time, he was guiding me as his *son?* Had he planned this all along? To secretly raise me so that someday he could overthrow the Pharaoh and force me into power?

“My son,” he repeated, again. “You are meant for the throne in ways I was never. Akhemnankhanen, my brother... and his son, never...”

“*No!*” I shouted, not wanting to hear any more. He couldn't have been brothers to the former Pharaoh... it was impossible. “*Shut up! Do not say another word!*”

I was wasting time, standing here, yelling at him. I would think about this, later. I ran back towards the palace. Kisara was in danger, every second...

Guards ran past me, begging me not to go into the palace, but I ignored them- swiftly dodging falling chunks of stone from the ceiling and walls, I ran through the castle, passing the rooms that I had come to know so well- the study where I was educated... the throne room where I was given my position... gone; disintegrating into the sand.

Finally I reached the cellars; Kisara was huddled under her bed; scared.

“*Kisara!*” I shouted. “*Can you hear me?*”

She stood up from under her bed; she looked unhurt. “*Lord Seto...!*” she gasped.

I wrenched the lock off of the gate and swung the door open. "Quickly!" I yelled, grabbing the stunned girl's wrist and running back through the palace with her. We reached the exit; I let go of her wrist and grabbed her shoulders.

"Listen to me," I said, urgently. "Get out of here. Go as far away as you can, from this place. Do you understand me?"

"But..." she started; I read an agony in her eyes that I knew stemmed from how she didn't want to leave me... I was frightened for her. I knew the best thing for her was to distance herself...

"I will find you someday," I told her, meaning every word. "I will find you, and then..."

She smiled. She believed me. "Thank you... thank you for everything..." she squeezed my hand gently and ran off in the other direction. My heart ached. ...I would see her again. I would do everything to see her again, someday, when it was safe for me to be in love with her.

"*Stop her, Seto!*" a voice shrieked from behind me- I whipped around to see that Akhenaden was standing not ten feet from me, now.

"*Leave her alone! I will fight you!*" I yelled, holding the Millennium Rod, forward- but, in a flash quicker than I could ever hope to move, he lifted his hands, and from them burst a bolt of crackling lightning that rushed forward and...

...hit Kisara squarely in the back...

Time slowed down considerably as I watched her limply fall... no... this couldn't be happening... *no...*

"*No!*" I shouted, and felt my back hit the ground- I jerked my eyes open to see that I had halfway fallen off of my bed; my back was on the ground, but my right leg was still up on the bed. The sheets were tangled around me; it appeared that I had been thrashing around in my sleep before finally falling off of the bed.

I sat up and pulled my leg down with me and pulled the sheets from around my waist and shoulders. Another vivid dream... my heart was pounding, as though I was still standing in the palace, faced with the man who claimed to be my father...

I shook my head and got back into bed; it was only three o'clock in the morning. I wiped

my sweating forehead. A sense of panic gripped me... I sighed and thought of nothing but what would happen later today... I wouldn't have to fear for my own life anymore... or for Mokuba's.

The next morning started slowly. I dragged my feet out of bed at eight o'clock and after making myself look acceptable, went to the breakfast table. Mokuba was sitting with Chris, Ironheart, Duke and Serenity- they were all talking about the trains. He looked up as I entered; he told me good morning, and I replied before getting a plate of breakfast.

Everyone else gradually showed up; once we had all eaten, a still-solemn Ironheart spoke. "I must congratulate you all for coming so far. You have an excellent chance of defeating the Leviathan, now. The Leviathan was resurrected in the third temple; Adella should be there; it, too, should be there."

"I have this," the Pharaoh said, holding up the fragment of Orichalcos stone that I had taken off of Donno's shirt. It looked dull now, but it had been flashing immediately after our duel ended. The Pharaoh told Ironheart this; Ironheart narrowed his eyes at the stone.

"I'm not sure what it might do," he said. "I imagine it's just another fragment of the Orichalcos stone... Donno held it so that he could control the Orichalcos? I don't know what benefits it might bring you."

The Pharaoh frowned. "I thought of something... I want to hold on to it. I fear that if an Orichalcos monster is summoned within the limits of a duel, at least if we possess a fragment of the stone, we can control those monsters."

I frowned. Maybe. "What can it hurt to hold onto it, then," Ironheart said, with a shrug. "I trust that you are a master duelist who knows the correct methods for defeating an opponent."

"Yes," the Pharaoh said. He stood up. "We should go to the train. The sooner we get this done, the more we will save people."

"Let's kill that dog!" Tristan yelled happily, also standing up. "Adella don't know what she's up against!"

But, the thing was... I was sure that she did know what she was up against.

18 - Chapter Eighteen

The third temple was made of the same crystal as the castle... in fact, it looked so very much like the castle. It was enormous and elaborate; modern. *Adella was in there.*

We walked through the front doors. This temple looked just like Dartz' stone temple, on the island, that was now destroyed- it was just one enormous, central room. The last large shard of the Orichalcos stone was on the other side of the room, directly across from us.

We were alone, here. There was no sign of Adella... or of the Leviathan... had Ironheart been wrong?

"No!" the Pharaoh gasped. *"No!"*

"What?" everyone else asked, worried, as he ran to the left side of the enormous room. Something was embedded in the crystal wall, twenty feet above our heads. We all ran up to him; he was staring, horrified, at the thing in the wall. I had never seen it before... it looked like a set of scales, with a Millennium Item symbol in the middle. It shined gold in the light.

"Dude! That's the *Millennium Scales!* What's it doing here?" Tristan yelled.

"Did she steal it when she stole the god cards?" Tea asked the Pharaoh.

"I... I didn't know..." he replied, horrified.

There was then a small "clink" noise. I looked down- at Duke's feet was a small fragment of the Orichalcos stone.

"What the hell-"he barely had time to mutter, before there was an enormous explosion that sent us all off of our feet- the light died down after a moment. Dazed and disoriented, on the ground, I shoved Joey angrily off of my back and stood up; the Pharaoh gasped. The Seal surrounded the entire room. I was stunned and horrified- it had been summoned without a card? All of us were trapped; the room was very cold.

"Look!" Serenity gasped, pointing forward- standing in the circle, on the edge of it in front of the fragment of stone, was a tall, thin, long-haired woman- adorned in green jewels

and a dress that swept to the floor, she gave off a vibe of hatred and... power. *Adella.*

A horrible green light burst from the Pharaoh's pocket; he yelled in shock, and the next thing I knew, Adella was chuckling. The Pharaoh gasped, "The Ra card..."

My heart sank. Adella was standing on the other side of the field, holding the Ra card. *How did she get it...!*

"That's cheating!" Joey yelled. "You can't do that!"

"You should have been wiser than to hold my husband's Orichalcos fragment," she said. "His vengeful soul has served me well."

I couldn't believe it. *Donno's soul was in the fragment of the stone that I had given to Yugi?*

Adella held the Ra card above her head; a chant, visible to her because of the Millennium Scale, poured from her mouth. I watched in horror as the incredible dragon appeared in a burst of blinding yellow light- I would have marveled at its spectacular power and beauty had it not been standing against me.

"Destroy Seto Kaiba, great god!" Adella yelled. "Destroy the man who killed my husband!"

I barely had time to register what she had said before an enormous light filled the room, and a surging pain hit me squarely in the chest; in just an instant, the white light overwhelmed my vision; I felt my knees buckle, and then, I was aware of nothing else... but...

...nothing.

But... I felt as though my eyes were open. I felt like I was conscious and standing. So, where was I? All that was around me was nothing, but white... white, on every side. The ground was white; the sky was white. I could feel the weight of my trench coat on my shoulders and locket necklace around my neck. It was as though I was still standing in the duel. Was I?

"Yugi?" I yelled. "Wheeler?"

My voice sounded just like it always did. Nothing was unusual about me, except for that I

had no idea where I was. Everything was completely quiet. Was this part of Ra's attack? Was I being tricked? The only other time a god monster had attacked me was during my duel with Yugi, where Slifer and Obelisk had fought each other; then, when their powers clashed, Yugi and I were sent a vision of the past. Was something like that happening again?

I then noticed something curious: I wasn't breathing. I simply felt no need to. Confused, I put my hand on my forehead for a moment; I could feel my own warmth. What was going on...?

"Seto," came a voice from behind me. Even before turning around, I was shocked. *That voice...*

I turned around. Someone was standing ten feet away from me.

I couldn't believe it. It was *him*.

19 - Chapter Nineteen

A man was behind me, wearing elaborate golden bands and a tall crown. His long red robes swept to the ground; he looked majestic, powerful. It was *him*- the Pharaoh's High Priest. He looked somewhat different than I remembered... he had a higher sense of wisdom and strength. I'd also never seen him in these clothes, before- usually, he wore blue robes; now, they were strikingly red and exquisite, and he was dressed in more solid gold than ever.

He approached me, wearing a sort of smug smirk... the exact facial expression which I wore so often. "You..." I whispered, hardly daring to believe it.

He stopped when he was two feet away from me. He was exactly as tall as I was... his skin was darker, and he was somewhat more built, but, otherwise...looked *just like I did*.

"You need to be more careful," he said grudgingly. His voice was deep and commanding, just like mine was- we were speaking different languages, yet somehow, I understood him. "Not too many people can get hit by Ra and survive."

"I don't understand..." I muttered, looking desperately into the blue eyes that I looked into every time I stood in front of a mirror. "Where are we? Who... are you?"

"You know who I am," he said, now with a pleasant tone to his voice.

I frowned. "Why am I seeing you all the time?" I asked, frustrated. "I'm seeing moments of your life in my dreams almost every time I fall asleep, these days."

"The Millennium Items have been brought together. The Pharaoh will discover his lost memories, soon- the union of the Millennium Items is awakening various random memories in him, as well as in you."

"Why in *me*, too," I asked, somewhat irritated.

"You mean, why are you connected to the Pharaoh?" he asked. "Yes, well... he was once your cousin!"

"My cousin?" I asked, incredulous. "What... *once my cousin*? What do you mean?"

“Well... I mean, you, Seto Kaiba, are not related to Yugi Muto... but, I am related to the Pharaoh that you know.”

“I... don't believe it,” I said, incredulous... but... I realized now that I had never processed what had happened in the most recent dream. He had said something about royal blood...

He chuckled. “Headstrong, I know. But... “

“I didn't know you'd met Donno,” I said.

“Yes...” he said. “I have a lot of hatred for him. You know that he was responsible for killing my mother.”

“Tried to kill my brother, too,” I said.

“I'm glad you defeated him!” he said, somewhat smiling. I bit my lip. Another question was weighing on my mind. “And, I saw Kisara...”

He frowned; a twinge of sadness ate at his face. I could immediately tell that he was upset.

“You loved her,” I continued.

“Very much so,” he said sadly. “And she loved me. She lives on with you, in the form of the Blue-Eyes White Dragon...”

I frowned. I didn't bother to think that this was why I felt so connected to the cards. He went on, “She was kind, and selfless... the only person whom I really loved.”

“You're pretty alone, too, huh?” I asked, crossing my arms.

He smiled. “Well, I am not naturally a very nice man... I regret to admit that I imprisoned many men before they even committed crimes...”

“That's nothing,” I said. “I once tortured an old man into cardiac arrest.”

He laughed. “I forced prisoners to fight against each other so that I could see whose Ka was more powerful,” he said.

I raised my eyebrows. “Not bad,” I said. “But, how many times have you ever led

someone to commit suicide?" I asked.

He frowned. "None..." he said.

"Try me. I've done that to two people."

"Two!" he said with a laugh, clapping his hand on my shoulder. We were so, so alike. "I do not doubt it at all," he said. "But. I must speak with you regarding your duel."

"You know about my duel?" I asked. "But..."

"Once, long ago, someone saved my life. I was given that power... so, I have saved yours."

"Saved mine?" I asked. "What, from Ra?"

"An attack from Ra, especially in these conditions, easily stops the heart. Under normal circumstances, you would have been killed instantly."

I frowned. Geez...

"As for your duel... you are on the wrong path. You are fighting a monster that cannot be destroyed. The great dragon Ra... Obelisk and Slifer cannot destroy it."

I frowned. "Then how can we beat it? If we lose this duel, we're dead! She's keeping our god cards in check, so the Orichalcos can still exist and would only be too happy to feed our souls to the Leviathan..."

"I am not asking to you defeat Ra," he said. "There is something you do not realize. Adella is controlling the Ra card. Now, the Egyptian gods have another interesting ability. Anyone who holds a Millennium Item can control the god cards, but only the Pharaoh can control the ultimate god monster- Horakhty."

"Horakhty," I repeated. Somehow, it was... *familiar*.

"Horakhty comes from the union of the god cards when they are all together on the same team. It does not matter which team- Horakhty always fights for the Pharaoh. Horakhty can destroy any monster. Have it attack the Leviathan, and you will win. "

"But, Yugi and I have two god cards, and she has the third. How do we get them

together?”

“Give them to Adella,” he replied.

I stood, shocked, for a moment, before it hit me- even though the monster would form on her side of the field, only the Pharaoh could control it... so it was as good as being on our side of the field. “*Brilliant...*” I whispered.

“Of course, you will immediately defeat Adella with that, and crush with her, the fragment of Orichalcos Stone that she held. This will allow you to attack the Leviathan. You will win.”

“How do you know all of this?” I asked, amazed. For being so young, he was so smart... then, for the first time, I noticed that the Millennium Puzzle was hanging from his neck. I gasped. “Wait... wait, I thought you carried the Millennium Rod...”

“Not anymore,” he said. “I gave it to another priest.”

“But, why? Why are you wearing that?”

He looked down at the Puzzle. “This? This is the pendant of the Pharaoh,” he said.

“Why do you have it?” I asked him.

He said nothing; only smiled at me, then turned around again.

20 - Chapter Twenty

I took a sharp breath and jerked my eyes open. I was on the ground, in the third temple- the Pharaoh was propping me up on his arm, shaking me, looking horrified; Mokuba was kneeling over us with a look of utmost terror on his face. I looked up at them; the Pharaoh gasped. “*Kaiba!* Are you okay? Say something!”

I pushed myself off of the floor. When Mokuba saw me stand, he yelled, “*Big brother...!*”

Somewhat dazed, I smiled at him and gave him a thumbs-up; I turned back to the Pharaoh, who was standing again, and said, “Sorry about that.”

Adella gasped. “How are you...” she stammered. I ignored her and looked at the Pharaoh. “...Do you trust me,” I asked him.

He looked stunned; obviously didn’t understand.

“Do you trust my dueling skills?” I asked him.

“Y... yes...” he said. “Yes.”

“Then,” I said, firmly, “Give me Slifer.”

“*Slifer?*” he gasped. “I... what is your plan...”

“Trust me,” I said.

Hesitantly he handed the card to me. I looked up at Adella, who clearly couldn’t believe that I was standing.

“Your attack showed me something,” I said, walking up to Adella, who frowned. I held out the god cards. She stared at me, stunned.

“Take them,” I said. “You’re right.”

“*Kaiba!* What the *hell* are you doing?” Joey asked, horrified. “Don’t give her the god cards! *She’s gonna win!*”

"I don't care," I said. "She can take my soul, then. I want her to have them."

Adella eyed me, searching my face for signs of lies. Unfortunately for her...

"Fine," she said, snatching the cards from me. "I'm glad you surrender."

...I was a very convincing liar.

"I summon Obelisk the Tormentor and Slifer the Sky Dragon!" she yelled, holding up both of the cards. The Pharaoh stared daggers at me; he yelled, "*Do you realize what you have done? What are you trying to prove? You've killed us all!*"

"Watch carefully," I told him; clearly he thought that I was giving Adella the cards in order to see if I could defeat them on my own. Now that I thought about it, that idea actually was something that I would consider acting on, if so much wasn't at stake.

The three god cards formed together in a spectacular explosion of light; when the light subsided, we all gazed at a spectacular, huge monster- completely white and golden, it was a woman, towering thirty feet above our heads. I knew that when Slifer and Ra were sacrificed, their power fueled Obelisk to infinite strength- but this is what happened when the three god cards were combined.

The Pharaoh gasped. "...*Horakhty*," he whispered. I smirked. I could tell that now he understood my plan. Even though he didn't have his memories... Horakhty had awoken something inside of him.

"Attack all three of them, my great beast!" Adella shrieked. Joey swore loudly; Horakhty did nothing. Adella turned around to face Horakhty, furious. "*Obey me! I possess the Millennium Scales! Attack them!*"

Horakhty stepped forward and beamed down at me and the Pharaoh. "I am honored to be in the presence of the two greatest pharaohs Egypt has ever known," she said, in a soothing voice.

The Pharaoh smiled at her. "Thank you," he said. Joey gasped, "*What? This is our monster now?*"

Adella was standing, horrified and unarmed, staring at Horakhty. With a single burst of lightning from Horakhty, the seal of Orichalcos surrounding us was destroyed; Adella shrieked in fury.

Horakhty then turned to Adella. "It is my duty to protect the Pharaohs," she said. "For endangering the souls of the two great Pharaohs and their loved ones, I will send you into the darkness which you deserve."

And with another bolt of lightning, Adella disappeared. She was gone; defeated. The large shard of Orichalcos stone dissolved; the Orichalcos was gone, finally. Now, all that was left was the pathetic, weakened Leviathan.

"Come on!" the Pharaoh shouted, and we all ran out of the temple; immediately outside, the giant snake was lying on the ground; alive, but useless.

Horakhty disposed of it with another bolt of lightning; the snake dissolved.

It was over.

There was some sort of happiness explosion in front of the temple; Tristan, Duke and Joey all yelled aloud in victory and ran up to high-five each other; Tea planted an enormous kiss on Yugi's cheek, and, now done with his high-fives, Joey was dancing with Serenity. Mokuba had thrown himself at me, like a little missile; arms around my hips, he was whimpering, "don't scare me like that again, big brother! When you fell, I thought you were actually hurt!"

He let go of me; I knelt down so that we could make eye contact. He wasn't crying or anything; I smiled at him. "I'm sorry," I said. "How long was I down?"

"Only like one second," he replied.

I paused and decided not to tell him about the insane conversation I'd had with... well, myself. "Don't worry; the attack just knocked me off of my feet. I'm fine, but I'll tell you what... to make up for scaring you, I'll call off the order I've placed on your artistic skills."

"*What?*" he gasped. "You don't want the picture anymore?"

"Well, it's not that I don't want it, but I'll let you draw a picture on your own terms. We're even now. Is that good?"

"*No!*" he said, almost angrily. "I already drew the picture!" He took a folded piece of paper out of his pocket and handed it to me; I unfolded it and saw that he had drawn a picture of me in long red, king-like robes, holding a golden scepter, standing on top of the

Earth, with the Blue-Eyes White Dragon behind me.

I smiled uncharacteristically warmly; “So, you still owe me!” he said.

“I bid you farewell, Great Pharaohs.” I stood up to face Horakhty. “May you have luck in your lives... and to you,” she nodded towards Yugi- “good luck in finding your lost memories. We will meet again.”

“I look forward to the day we do,” the Pharaoh replied. Horakhty nodded, bowed to him, then bowed to me, then disappeared in a flash of light- when the light died down, the three god cards were lying neatly on the ground. The Pharaoh picked them up.

A horrible shockwave then crashed through me. *Pharaohs?* Horakhty had used it in a plural form. ...who was the other pharaoh...? Could it be... *possibly*...he had been wearing the Millennium Puzzle...

The Pharaoh approached me. “Kaiba,” he said seriously. “How could you have known that Adella wouldn’t be able to control the combined form of the god cards?”

I frowned. “You said you trusted my judgment,” I said. “Call yourself the king of duelists, but don’t forget that I once held that title- I know everything about every duel monsters card.”

He smirked. I could tell that he didn’t quite believe me... well, he knew that I knew everything about the game, but somehow, he could tell that I’d had some help in coming up with that plan. Something inside of me didn’t necessarily want to try to correct him.

“Ey, Kaiba... I still hate you, you know, but I gotta say, you’re a pretty good teammate,” Joey said, giving me a thumbs-up. “Nice thinkin’ up that plan, you know.”

I scowled at him. “Don’t misunderstand me,” I said. “I would never enjoy being a teammate to a duelist as pathetic as you are. You, be my partner in dueling? You barely have enough dignity to wash my shoes!”

Joey could have exploded on the spot; Duke and Tristan had to hold him back from leaping on me and beating me up. “*You damned son-of-a-dog! I’m gonna kick your @\$\$ so hard you’re gonna have to take your stupid money and buy yourself a new @\$\$! And then I’m gonna kick that one!*”

I smiled. “That’s more like it,” I said.

The helicopter landed on our front lawn, hours later. Mokuba sighed. "Aw, dang..." he said, looking up at the setting sun. "Your days of freedom are up. Our employees aren't going to do our jobs anymore."

"Oh, really?" I asked. For the first time in my life, I had actually forgotten about work. "I suppose we'd better get started on the Miami park, then."

"Fine," he said. "I can set up a meeting to meet with the spokesperson in Miami. School starts soon, but we can fly out this weekend and be back in time to go to school on Monday. I'll go do that now."

He left my side and went towards the house. I paused. "Mokuba," I said.

He turned around. "What," he said.

"...how about we jump on the trampoline for ten minutes," I said hesitantly.

His jaw dropped. "No... you... *really?*" he gasped, in total disbelief.

"Just ten minutes," I said.

"But the park in Miami..."

"Oh. Hmm... then, I have a good idea," I said.

"What?" he asked, walking back towards me.

"How about you jump on the trampoline with me for ten minutes."

He frowned, and then smiled widely. "Alright, just for ten minutes," he laughed.