

foedus angelus de caelum

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Yu-Gi-Oh story. I do not own yu-gi-oh, or any of the cahracters in this story, except Ana-Gaelle and Marc.

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Chapter 1 - Chapter 1	3
Chapter 2 - Chapter 2	9
Chapter 3 - Chapter 3	15
Chapter 4 - Chapter 4	22
Chapter 5 - Chapter 5	25
Chapter 6 - Chapter 6	30
Chapter 7 - Chapter 7	34
Chapter 8 - Chapter 8	40
Chapter 9 - Chapter 9	48
Chapter 10 - Chapter 10	52
Chapter 11 - Chapter 11	55
Chapter 12 - Chapter 12	60
Chapter 13 - Chapter 13	63
Chapter 14 - Chapter 14	68
Chapter 15 - Chapter 15	73
Chapter 16 - Chapter 16	81
Chapter 17 - Chapter 17	87
Chapter 18 - Chapter 18	91
Chapter 19 - Chapter 19	96
Chapter 20 - Chapter 20	100
Chapter 21 - Chapter 21	104
Chapter 22 - Chapter 21	112

Chapter 23 - Chapter 23	119
Chapter 24 - Chapter 24	127
Chapter 25 - Chapter 25	133
Chapter 26 - A New Chapter	138
Chapter 27 - Chapter 2 again	143
Chapter 28 - Chapter three...again	147
Chapter 29 - Chapter the Fourth	152
Chapter 30 - Chapter the fifth	157

1 - Chapter 1

I slowly opened my eyes and looked around the room. It was so different. How I longed for my old bed, and my old way of life. I longed for my home once more, and yet this was now my home, this new place, new town, new country. New everything. It was all so different. France was such a beautiful country, with its friendly people, and its kind atmosphere. The small village in which I had lived had seemed bright and beautiful to me, and the people wonderful and colourful. I had held them so close to me. And then I had had to leave.

Had to travel halfway across the world. To here. To this place. Japan. So different. I was now living in a large house in the middle of Domino City, and large town, in which I knew no one, well, other than my brother, a 19 year-old student. We looked nothing alike. He was tall, verging on 6 foot 5, and slim, with shortish dirty blonde/light brown hair, and deep green eyes. He had always looked out for me in France, until he had moved away, when he was 17, to study in Japan. And then I had come to, to live with him.

I remembered the night before, when I had arrived. He hadn't been there to pick me up from the airport, so I'd caught a taxi, which then got lost. When I eventually found the house, it was raining. The large wet sort that sunk into my clothes leaving me drenched. I hadn't seen my brother in two years, and when I stood on the doorstep, waiting for him to answer the bell. I stood, with my clothes clinging to my thin frame. My hair was wet, and stuck to my clothes, framing my figure even more, with the black jeans and black hair contrasting heavily with what had been pale blue t-shirt, that had now turned a sort of see-through colour. My pale blue eyes were tired and all I wanted to do was sleep.

When Marc eventually answered the door, he nearly jumped out of his skin. He barely recognised me, as I had grown nearly a foot, and was now verging on 5 foot 11. He gave me a quick hug and paid the taxi driver, before helping me to lug my stuff up the stairs and into a large easterly facing room that was to be my bedroom. It had a large bed in it, which had obviously been hurriedly made, as all it had on it was a simple white duvet, and a few pillows thrown into it.

"I haven't had a chance to do anything since I moved in," he explained, "Maybe that can be your project, redoing the place."

I could barely nod, and he left me to unpack, and settle in. I did this quickly, and soon rolled up into a

ball on the bed, letting the waves of sleep overcome me.

When the previous night had worked its way through my mind, I thought to the coming day, thinking that I was indeed going to be sent to school, and thinking right. I changed quickly into a long flowing skirt, made in a cream material, and adding to it a thin beige jumper, finishing off the look with a thick plait that soon began to unravel. I walked softly down the stairs, and after experimenting, I found a rather messy kitchen, in which my brother was sitting, shovelling cereal into his mouth, reading the paper.

“Morning,” he acknowledged my presence, and as I greeted him back, with a quick kiss on each cheek I commented on how smart and different he looked in a suit. He smiled, and when I sat down, soon brought about the subject of school with me. “I know you've only just got here, and all, but it is important, and I do need to get it sorted. I have had you enrolled in the local high school, and if its ok with you, you can start today.” He raised his eyebrows at me, questioning.

I nodded my acquiescence. He smiled, “Great then, I'll take you just now, and speak to the head. You'll need to get a uniform some time, but not just yet.”

I was a bit bemused, and simply sat there, so he sighed and got up, before walking out of the room, and then walking back in again, “Oh yeah, you'll need a bag, and some pens and stuff, can you get that sorted out?”

I cocked an ear towards him and nodded slightly. He hesitated slightly, and was about to leave, when I started to talk, “Has my horse come yet?”

“Yes.”

“Ok.”

He hesitated once more, and walked slowly over to me, embracing me quickly, “I'm glad you're here.”

And a silent teardrop rolled down my cheek.

Half an hour later we were sitting in the car, a smart dark blue BMW sports, soft-top, and listening quite loudly to Japanese radio. I pulled down the visor in front of me, and took a pencil out of my bag. Noticing Marc looking at me out of the corner of the eye, I peered deep into the mirror on the visor, and started to outline my eyes with the pencil, my kohl eyeliner.

“Don't put too much on,” he instructed me.

“Why not?”

“Just...because....I don't know.”

I shrugged, and continued, before moving through my bag and gradually putting on a little of a pale coloured eye shadow and mascara that doubled the length of my already long eyelashes. I put on a little bit of lip-gloss, and replaced all the things in my bag, before turning to Marc. “When can we go and see my horse?”

“Tonight?”

“Ok. And how do I get home from school?”

“I'll pick you up, if you don't mind waiting outside for me for a bit. My uni is just down the road.”

“Ok.” Before I knew it we had pulled up at a big building. School. I climbed out of the car, at the same

time as Marc climbed out of the other side. He looked incredibly smart for a student, in stonewash blue jeans, with a green and yellow t-shirt and a jacket. All the girls around started to look at him, and 'casually' pose. I smirked, and we walked towards where the reception was, according to the signposts. As we walked we conversed in French, bewildering everyone around us, even though we were simply talking gibberish. We had done it since we were little, apart from then we had lived in France, and rather than jabbering in French we would jabber in Japanese, and really unnerve people. It could be quite funny.

By the time we reached the reception, we were both laughing quite hard, however the sight of the principal's door soon made me stop. I looked at it nervously, and we entered, entering something new and scary.

I emerged from the principal's office just after first bell, and studying my timetable and the map given to me, I made my way to my first lesson, music. As I knocked on the door and entered the classroom, I blushed heavily, being not one of the most confident people in the world. I took a seat quickly, and when the teacher had passed me several books I was going to need, and introduced herself, I began to take notes, as the other kids were doing. As my curly writing began to fill the page, my mind began to wander, and only snapped back when the teacher asked me something. To my horror, without realising, I quickly answered first in French, then English, and then Japanese. I hated the thick French accent that sounded, and quickly reprimanded myself, before tuning into Japanese mode. No more French for me.

The morning passed quickly, and before I knew it, it was lunchtime. I made my way down the corridors and towards the canteen, receiving odd looks as I went, due to my colouring that was slightly Mediterranean, but mostly very French with oriental eyes, and hair. Also the fact that I was the new girl, and not wearing school uniform.

I walked through the cafeteria with my tray, and found an empty table to sit at. I pulled a book out my bag, in French of course, and slowly began to pick at my food, wishing for a plate of steaming Ratatouille and instead finding a plate of mouldy looking pasta. I lost myself in my book, 'Un long dimanche de fiançailles', and didn't even notice the other people sit at my table. They were the same age as me, and soon began talking, distracting me from my book, so I quickly finished my meal, before walking away, clearly stating the fact that they had disturbed me. I found my homeroom, and sat down in that, reading and waiting for the rest of my class to appear.

The class had filled by the time the bell rang yet again, and I put my book away and waited for the teacher, who soon appeared, commencing the start of the afternoon.

The day had seemed to drag slowly past, and I was glad of the end of it, when I strode what I hope was confidently out of the school, and stood at the gates waiting for my brother. The whole school emptied, until it was just me standing outside of it. Then I heard a group of voices, and nine people, from my own homeroom appeared, chatting happily. They were the ones who had interrupted me at lunch. One of them, a very short guy, with spiky multicoloured hair walked over to me, and asked me if I was ok.

“Yes, thank you, I am waiting for my brother.”

“You're new here, aren't you?” asked one of the girls. She was fairly tall, and had tanned skin. “My name's Kaede, and this is,” she began indicating and pointing, but before she could do so, she was stopped, and everyone began to interrupt her, trying to introduce themselves. I stood there, blank faced, until I was directly addressed, again by Kaede, “so, did you get all that?”

I didn't say anything. She sighed, “Ok, so I'm Kaede,” I nodded, “And this is Yuula,” she pointed to a girl of medium height, with long blonde hair, and a slight tan. “This is Sakura,” another tanned girl with medium length brown hair, “Tea,” short brown hair, female, “Honda and Joey,” both tall, one with a random quiff, the other with messy blonde hair, “Yugi,” weird very short guy with multi-coloured hair, “Duke,” since when did guys where make-up?! “and Ryou,” A fairly tall guy with whitish messy hair.

“Um, hi?!”

They stared at me expectantly.

“I'm Ana-Gaelle Osculaix.”

They stared blankly.

2 - Chapter 2

"I'm Ana-Gaelle Osculaix."

They stared blankly.

"I'm French-Japanese."

Still with the staring.

"I just moved here."

Finally, the awkward staring ended, thanks to Marc, well, Marc's car, which just pulled up. I jumped into it, without another word, and the car and I drove off instantly. I left the others standing behind, with a face-full of exhaust fumes. "Well, she's polite," said Sakura, and they all walked off.

I sat in the car, relieved that the day was over. Marc began chatting to me in French, but I wasn't really listening, but instead looking out of the window. It was only when he poked me that I finally heard him. "I said, how was your day?"

"Ok. It's just a day at school. No big deal."

"Ok. If you're sure. You have homework?"

"Nope. At least, I hope not."

“Ok.”

“Can we go and see Angelicus?”

“Who?!”

“Horse!”

“Oh, him. Yeah. Whatever. Sure. Why not? You going to ride?”

“Maybe, I might just lunge him, and let him and me get a feel for the place.”

“Ok.” He pulled into the driveway, “ Meet in the car in 20 minutes.” He climbed out and rushed into the house. I sat and waited for a minute, before following him in. I leaped up the stairs and straight to my bedroom, where I ripped off the clothes I had been wearing, and pulled on some riding clothes, that happened to be lying on top of the suitcase that I had as yet not unpacked. As I pulled on my jodhpurs, and a t-shirt, I remembered the last time I had been riding my horse, Angelicus Daemon. It had been quite a warm day, in France, in our stables. I had just got into the school, and was warming Daemon up, trotting him, and walking serpentines and circles, when I noticed her standing there. Her being my father's future wife. She was wearing a loose top and skirt that was flapping in the steady wind. I decided to ignore her and start doing some harder work, and as I legged my horse into a canter, we floated past her. At that exact same moment, her phone started to ring, spooking Daemon. He cantered still faster, and then went into a gallop, which was highly dangerous in the small school. I tried to calm him, but I couldn't. He sped up again, and charged straight at the fence of the school. Before I knew it, he had jumped, and I became unseated and went flying off. I landed on the floor with a dull thud. And she just stood there. And laughed.

I wiped a tear off my face. Not a tear of sadness, but one of anger. I hated her. She had ruined my life. I looked at the clock, and noticing the time, quickly searched for my riding hat, and brushed. Finding a few boxes full of my riding stuff, I started to walk down the stairs, and then, making several trips, managed to

load them all into the back of the car. When I had loaded all this up, I climbed into the front seat to wait for Marc. He came out shortly, wearing jeans and a t-shirt, and as he climbed into the driver's seat, I smiled at him.

“Thanks.”

“For what?”

“Everything.”

He shrugged. “It's nothing.” He guided the car through the city, and then out of it, and he drove expertly down the roads that got smaller. Eventually, the car turned into a driveway, and as we drove down it, I saw a few stables at the end of it, by a field, where there were two horses. As we got closer, I recognised them both, one of them was Angelicus Daemon, my beautiful horse. He was a selle francais, a beautiful red colour, with a pure white stripe running down his face. Hearing the car, he threw his head up, and galloped towards the stables. I smiled. I had missed him. The other horse, a stocky little thing, was my brother's mare. She was a good horse, and very reliable. “I take it you're trying to breed them, then?”

“Yes.” He smiled at me, “you don't mind?”

I shook my head, and we pulled into a car park. Climbing out, I walked over to the fence, where my horse stood, waiting, “Hello, beautiful.” I stroked his fine nose, and he nudged me. I walked over to the gate, and opened it, letting him out.

“Don't you need a head collar?” marc called to me from the car.

“No, he's well-trained,” and he really was. He followed me into the main yard, and I stood there, waiting for Marc, whilst Daemon sniffed at me, and nudged me, nearly pushing me over. Eventually Marc came into the yard leading his mare, Puella. He pointed Daemon's stable out to me, and led Puella into the one next to it.

When I had got Daemon into his stable, I went back to the car, and unloaded all my stuff, before grabbing my grooming kit and going back to Daemon. I worked on his coat for 45 minutes before I was satisfied that he was sufficiently clean enough. I then went in search of his bridle, which I put on him, before leading him into the large school situated next to the stables. Apparently we were renting the stables, and had them to ourselves. Our mother had bred the French Saddle horses, so we were very used to hard work, especially with horses. When we got to the school, I removed the bridle, as I had forgot a lunge rein, and it would just get in the way. Using my body language and voice, I sent Daemon to the outside of the school, and he was soon cantering around, paying attention to me. I turned my back on him, encouraging him to join up with me, showing trust and patience. He did this, and came over, breathing down my neck, and tickling me, making me laugh. I turned and stroked him, and he looked at me, with those large trusting eyes. As he looked at me, he started to go down to his knees. I guessed what he was doing, and encouraged him to stay standing up. I walked over to the fence, and he followed me. I climbed onto the fence, and he stood patiently beside it, before I swung one of my legs over his back. I loved doing this. I asked him to walk on, and he did so. I asked him to trot. Done. Canter. Leg yield. Shoulder in. Half pass. All carried out perfectly. I rode him back to the yard, and dismounted. I put him away, and put a rug on him, before saying goodbye.

Marc was all done with Puella, and waiting for me in the car. I climbed in, and we started for home once more.

The evening passed well, and I went to bed at 9 o'clock, as I was still really jet-lagged. I settled into my large bed, and rolled into a small ball under the covers, falling asleep quickly. I slept deeply, and soon began to dream. It was dark, first light came. The snow, bright snow. The sounds, so happy, so peaceful. Laughter. The girl and her mother, having so much fun. The sudden snowfall. The trail on the mountains. The echo. The falling. The breaking away of the cliff. The screaming, more than one voice. Louder, and louder. Not stopping. I was shaking. Something was calling me, shaking me. "Ana, Ana. Wake up." I opened my eyes, the tears streaming down my face, looking at Marc. "Are you alright?" I was shaking, and crying, letting it all go. "No," I whispered, and he put his arms around me, drawing me into a deep hug, "No, I'm not alright."

We sat at the kitchen table, me in my pyjamas with Marc's uni jumper on top, and him still in the clothes he had been wearing earlier. My hands were encircling a mug of hot chocolate, and my face was red and blotchy from crying. "Start when you're ready," Marc said.

I sighed, "It was nearly Christmas. You'd been gone for a few months, and we, well mum and I knew you wouldn't be back. Father was still waiting for you. We were in the house by the Pyrenees, you know, the one on the mountain? It was Christmas Eve, and I woke up really early, and went to see my pony. Do you remember Ange? I went to see her, and mum was there too, so we decided to go for a ride. It was nice and snowy, and we were doing one of the rides up the mountain, chatting and laughing, when it started to snow. It was all so beautiful. I was so happy. Our laughter was echoing, and making us laugh more. Then there was a slight avalanche, up ahead, so we went quieter. Mum went on first, and I watched her. I watched her go," the tears began to flow again. "She warily mounted the snow on the path, and her horse took a few steps, before she turned to me. I remember her telling me it was fine. Perfectly safe. And then, and then. And then I followed her, and we went slowly, when all of a sudden, her horse slipped. And she wasn't in front of me anymore. She wasn't there at all. I remember hearing her screaming, and I called her, but she didn't answer. She wasn't there at all. And then it was all so quiet. So I stood and waited, and more snow fell, and I seemed to freeze, and then they came, and they found me."

Marc sighed, his eyes filled with tears.

"They never found her body. The horse's, but not hers. Father was so upset. And you never came back, not even for the memorial. And then, after Christmas, she came. Elena. She was 27, and father told her everything. He told her what he wouldn't tell me. By summer she was living with us. By the next Christmas she was pregnant. And by the next summer they were engaged. And by this Christmas, well, they're married, and I'm here, I think that explains it all."

Marc stood up, and came to me, silently. He knelt in front of me, and looked into my eyes, "Ana, I'm sorry I never came back. But I'm here now. And I'll never hurt you. I'm your family now, and we'll stick together."

I threw my arms around his neck. And cried, we both cried. That was one of the saddest nights of my life, but one of the most memorable.

The next day came, and school happened, in a melancholy fashion. Lunchtime came around, and I sat at the same table as the day before. The group of people I had met the day before again came and sat down, apart from this time they spoke to me. The guy called Joey looked at me, and started to speak, "Hey, you're Ana-Gaëlle, right? Do you EVER shorten your name?"

"JOEY, that's so rude!" exclaimed Kaede.

I couldn't help but smile shyly, "Call me Ana, all my friends do." And that was it, they were stuck with me.

3 - Chapter 3

“Call me Ana, all my friends do.”

I was greeted by a chorus of, “Hey Ana,” and I smiled, glad that I was managing to fit in so well, and only on my second day. We all ate lunch together, and I smiled as they laughed and joked, talking about card games, and other such things. They kept going on about this fad in Japan, Duel Monsters, a card game in which the contestants duelled against each other to win. Yugi, it turned out was quite a pro at this, due to the fact that a spirit, who played shadow games, possessed him. Joey, on the other hand, was crap. And he always lost, much to everyone's annoyance, as he always insisted on another game. I was lost when they talked about this, and it was only when they spoke to me, asking me what I was interested in.

“I play the piano, and I read a lot. Oh yes, and I am one of the top dressage riders in the world for my age.”

They all made sounds of awe, so I quickly added, “But I'm out of practice at the moment.” I blushed, and they all laughed. It was fun, having friends, a new experience.

It soon turned out that we had most of our lessons together, apart from a few different, like Music, and some of the others took Drama, and Dance. One morning, we were sitting in Physics, and there were huge rumours going around that Kaede was going out with Joey, no, she was going out with some guy called Kaiba, and it was all slightly alarming. So we were just trying to get all this sorted out, and having a fun physics lesson, in the boy-girl layout. There was Yuula on the end of the middle bench, with Ryou next to her, then Kaede, then Honda, then me, and on the front bench, there was Duke, Tea, Joey, then Sakura, and then Yugi. We sat like this, and I was doodling all over my physics book, whilst Kaede talked with Honda and Ryou, Yuula was doing the same thing as me. I wasn't sure about the others, and didn't even notice that the teacher had walked in, and started to talk about gravitational forces and waves....blahblahblah. I had totally turned off.

The day passed, and it came to the end of school, and the ten of us walking towards the entrance, having got rid of any book we didn't need. I was walking along, and finding myself a bit tense, so I swung my bag round to face me, and pulled out a lighter, and a packet of cigarettes. Lighting one up, I began to inhale, and let the smoke act as a relaxant, enjoying the sensation, I exhaled, and felt the smoke rush from my body. The others had stopped, and were staring at me. Sakura nearly had heart failure, and I could feel that a huge lecture might be coming, so I simply explained that it was what everyone in Paris did.

"You're not from Paris, you come from a little village near Toulouse!"

"Merde!" I forgot I had told them all that. I continued smoking, until Tea began to cough, at which point Kaede walked over and tore up my cigarette, warning me against ever smoking again. Or never to smoke in front of her again, anyway.

After that, I would have thought things might have been awkward, but they weren't, and we were soon out of school, and laughing again. We stood there, and said goodbye before all going our separate way, Ryou and Sakura going home, Yuula and Kaede going somewhere, and Joey, Yugi and Tea going to Yugi's family's shop. Duke, Honda and I started to wonder in the direction of the Mall, to think about doing some shopping, and the like. We walked into the mall, and started going in and out of shops, when Duke realised the time, "Hey, guys, I've gotta go, there's um something I need to do."

"Oh, ok," I acknowledged, "Like what?"

"It's nothing." He was blushing, "Just something which I never really sorted out. Well, something which I need to get round to doing. Well, something..."

"WHAT?!" Honda and I both shouted.

"I need to get Yuula's stuff sorted out and give it all back to her."

“What do you mean, Yuula's stuff?”

“I mean the stuff she left at my house, when we were going out, like t-shirts and pictures, and...”

“Hang on, did you just say `when we were going out', meaning you went out with Yuula?”

“Yes.”

“YUULA and YOU went out?”

“Yes.”

“NO WAY. She like, totally wouldn't.”

“Well she did.”

“Whoa! Totally unexpected.”

“Well, anyway mate,” Honda interrupted, seeing Duke's nervousness, “See you tomorrow, right?”

“Yeah, ok. Well, bye!” and he left.

“So, what do you want to do now?” he said, turning to me.

“Can we go get a coffee?”

“Sure.”

We walked into the big coffee shop, and whilst Honda went and got our drinks, I settle into one of the big sofas in the café, resting my eyes for a minute. Shopping sure was hard work, and all I'd bought was a few new tops, a new skirt, dungarees, and curtains. I had been so tired lately, due to the fact that I had been redesigning our whole house, and had done every single room, and was finally doing a loft conversion. It was nearly done, it just needed one final coat of paint, and furniture, and then it would be finished. Marc and I were planning to have a party at the weekend, to `celebrate' it all.

Honda came back, and passed me a vanilla latte, before fwomping onto the couch next to me. We sat and talked for half an hour, before noting that it was nearly 6 o'clock, and I was meant to be home, helping Marc to finish the painting. “I'd better go. Thanks for today. It was fun.”

“Yeah, it was.”

“Anyway, better go.” I stood up to leave, and then turned round, “Do you want to come back with me? You can help me, and Marc.”

“Sure, why not?” He stood up with me, and helped me carry some of the bags. My house wasn't that far from the mall, so we soon got there, and dumped loads of stuff in the hall. I called up the stair, “Marc, we're home!”

“We?” he was in the loft already, so I ran up the stairs, and stood at the bottom of the ladder, “I brought a friend with me, he said he's help for a bit.”

“He?”

“Oh, shut up.”

“Ok, hang on, I'm coming down.”

Honda stood beside me, looking confused, as we had just spoken very fast and in French. I smiled, “Honda, this is my brother, Marc. Marc, Honda.”

They shook hands, and did the manly thing. “ Honda is one of my FRIENDS, Marc,” I told my brother. “He said he's come and help finish the loft, and maybe stay for dinner.”

“Oh, ok cool. What is for dinner?”

“Umm...no comment. Pasta?”

“Ok. Do you wanna come and see what I've been doing then?”

The three of us climbed into the loft, and I was shocked at what Marc had done. Not only had he finished painting, but he had also got it totally furnished, with really nice furniture. “Did you get the curtains?” he asked.

“Yep.”

I climbed back down the ladder, and ran down the stairs, grabbing the curtains, before running back up the stairs, and up the ladder. The three of us soon managed to hang them, and the room looked brilliant. It was hopefully going to be my little roomie thing, where I could bring friends. Marc had got another TV for in there, and had it fitted with loads of good movie channels, and a DVD player. My piano wouldn't fit, unfortunately, and was still sitting in the dining room. It would just have to stay there.

We all climbed back down the ladder, and shut it all away, before Marc walked off to his bedroom, telling me to call him when supper was ready. I led Honda to my room, and told him to wait in there while I got changed. I went into the bathroom, and quickly pulled off my school uniform, and changed into the short skirt I had bought earlier. It hugged my figure, and looked great with the black t-shirt I combined it with, that read *angelus de caelum*, a Latin inscription that I had written on it, for fun. It meant 'angel out of heaven', and I actually loved the t-shirt. I pulled a fitted jumper on over my head; it was getting white cold, now that winter was coming.

Opening the door, I walked into my bedroom, to find Honda walking around the room, looking at all the pictures. At random, he began pointing at all of them, and asking me what they were, "What's that one?"

"A horse."

"Well, duh, but what kind of horse?"

"An Arab."

"That one?"

"Thoroughbred...French saddle horse...my horse...Marc's horse...my old horse...my mum's horse...my mum...my dad...Marc aged three...me aged two...me and Marc...random horse...that's enough...let's go make supper."

I walked out of the room, and he followed me into the kitchen. I was big, and modern, with high-tech equipment. The floor was slate, and the metallic cupboards contrasted with the blue-grey of the walls and the floor. The counter was black, and I lit the hob, and out and pan with tater in it on top, starting to cook. Under my instruction, Honda managed to make a salad, and also create a dressing. The pasta and sauce were soon done too, and I yelled for Marc, who came down.

Supper was fun, with the two boys laughing and joking, whilst I sat and listened. I was glad that they were getting on.

After dinner, we left Marc to do the washing up, and went into the lounge to watch TV. Whilst I channel hopped, Honda was looking at my feet weirdly. "What happened there?" he asked.

I looked at my foot, and remembered the large scar that covered part of it, "When I was about 6, and Marc was 8, he took one of my horse toys, and wouldn't give it back. I got really mad with him, and he stood on a chair so I couldn't reach it, so I stood on the glass coffee table to try and reach it. He was laughing, and I got more and more stressed, and I stamped my foot, and it went through the coffee table, cutting it. I then tried to pull it back out, and it got even more cut. I remember there was blood everywhere. And then Marc got some tissue, and helped to stop the blood flow."

"Does it ever hurt?"

"You mean like a phantom pain?" He nodded. "No, not really. I get that more with this one," I pointed out the one on the back of my leg, "this one was when I was having a piggyback from my dad, and I got caught on the top of a railing spike, and it dug in. I had to have like, 12 stitches, all the way along."

He cringed, "That's gross."

I shoved him playfully, "Thanks."

We spent the rest of the evening together, and he finally went home, and I went to bed. I hoped everyday with friends could be as good as that afternoon had been. And it looked like it could be. And I still had the party to look forwards too!

4 - Chapter 4

The week passed, and Friday came. I spent my time being a good girl, doing all my work, keeping my room tidy, and planning a party with my brother. I loved sit-down dinners, and this one was going to be perfect. I was going to have all my friends there, and Marc a few of his. I had the most beautiful dress, a dusky pick, with a low neckline, and flowing skirt. I just had to tell everyone now.

I fairly ran to school that morning, doing my best, but hindered slightly by my long school skirt. I flew into the classroom, making everyone stare, "Guess what guys, I'm having a party. It's at my house, and you're all invited!" This was going to be so ultra and incredibly cool, "It's tomorrow, and you'd better all be there!"

The day passed too slowly, and I spent most of that night preparing for the party. On Saturday I went to see Daemon, and rode for a bit, before going home. Marc said he had organised the catering, so all I needed to worry about was making myself look pretty. I spent most of the rest of the morning in the bath, before styling my hair. I carefully put it into rollers, blow-dried it, and then removed the rollers, leaving my hair with lots of cute curls. I looked at the clock, and, noticing it was nearing 5 o'clock, and people would be arriving by 6, I went and changed into my dress. The last thing to do was my make-up, which I quickly applied, before going downstairs. Marc wasn't around, so I sat down on one of the sofas, waiting for something to happen.

At last the doorbell rang, and I went to answer it, hearing Marc coming down the stairs at the same time. I opened the door, and nearly died when I saw how casually all my friends were dressed. "What the hell are you wearing? Why aren't you in formal dress? Oh well, I suppose you'll do."

I lead my shocked friends into the lounge, were they stood, and looked around, gaping at the house, and then at Marc, who appeared from nowhere, and sat down, grabbing a beer from the mini-fridge beside him. "Do you have to be so vulgar?" I asked him in French.

"Oui."

“le bâtard idiot vulgaire” I sighed. Boys were so strange. At that moment the doorbell rang again, and I went to answer it, greeted by a crowd of people, there was silence for a second, and then noise. I was so scared; it was like nothing I'd ever seen before. They all burst in, and before I knew it, there was very loud music, mixed with about 300 uni students, or what felt like that. Marc soon had them sorted out, and I had no control. Luckily enough, Kaede came to my aid, and lead me up to my room. The first thing she did was try to get me changed. She threw a pair of jeans at me, along with a fitted blue top. The jeans hung off my hips, and I rolled them up slightly, and put on a pair of bright blue shoes, before turning the jeans back down. I then went back downstairs, and found everyone outside, because Sakura had arrived with a car full of alcohol. Next thing, Yuula had arrived, and her brother too. They had also brought Seto Kaiba with them. I had met him only once, and then only briefly, but I knew that he might cause trouble, so I prayed that he wouldn't.

I didn't know what to do, so I began to enjoy myself, by drinking some wine. And then some more wine. Ok, so then a whole bottle of wine. And it was now empty, but I knew JUST what to do with it. I ran around the house, assembling all my friends in one room upstairs. I found Kaede and Seto last, and as I dragged them upstairs, I entered the room, and then noticed everyone looking at me weirdly. So what! I was hyper and drunk! Was that a bad thing?

I sat on the floor, and we made a circle, with everyone listening to me as I explained the rules. And then we started. I spun to see who would spin first. Yugi. He spun, and it landed on an ecstatic Sakura, whom he kissed, gently, on the lips. I loved all this romance stuff. Next, Sakura spun, and it landed on Honda. I felt something stirring up inside of me, but I ignored it. She offered him her cheek, and cringed as he kissed her. I smiled. Honda took the bottle, and spun it. As it swivelled, my mind wondered and I found myself feeling a little dizzy and a bit happy. So when I realised that Honda was smiling at me, and everyone else was pulling weird faces, I had no idea what was going on. And then he kissed me. And I melted into his mouth, searching it. It was only when Yuula started groaning in an extremely demonic manner that we stopped, giggling.

I spun, hoping that it might land on Honda, but instead it landed on Duke. Oh well. He kissed my hand quickly, before spinning, looking about nervously as he did, his eyes constantly flicking back to Yuula. The bottle slowed down, and landed on her. She shrieked, and only calmed down into a soporific state when Duke had kissed her. She then got her dream however, and kissed Ryou, who went on to kiss Tea. Her spin landed on Joey, who then moved onto Kaede, ending with Kaiba. And then Kaede stormed out, and Joey followed her. Kaiba wandered off, Sakura and Yugi went in search of water, and Tea went in search of, well she just went in search. Ryou went to use the bathroom, leaving just me, Yuula, Honda and Duke. I saw the way Duke was looking at Yuula, so grabbing Honda's hand; I lead him downstairs, and back to the music. Whilst he collapsed on one of the chairs in the lounge, I went to speak to the self-appointed DJ, requesting a song, in my drunken state. I then quickly took a vodka shot, and waited for the music to begin, standing expectantly by a table.

The music I had chosen started, and a heavy beat started pulsating through the room, making everyone stop. I jumped lithely up onto the table, and started to dance, moving with the music. I didn't know everyone was watching me. I started to sing along with the music, and then I noticed Honda was standing there, so I focused in on him. Before I knew it Kaede had joined me, and the Sakura. And we stood there, dancing, the boys all cheering us on.

The track ended, and Joey pulled Kaede off the table, as I jumped and landed in a heap of Ana on the floor. Honda helped me up, and took me upstairs, to the landing, "You ok?"

"I feel sick." And I rushed into the bathroom, only just making it in time. Half an hour later, I re-appeared, feeling slightly better, and a lot more sober. I groaned, and then jumped when I noticed that Honda was still there, "you didn't have to wait."

"I wanted to. Can we go upstairs?"

"Um, yeah. Sure." I opened the door to the attic, and pulled the ladder down, before climbing up it. Marc had brought the futon up, and also a duvet, so it looked nice and cosy. When Honda climber up behind me, he pulled the ladder up too, but I decided not to question him. I went over to the futon, and pulled it out to its full length, laying the duvet on top of it. I sat down, and Honda came and sat next to me.

He touched my hair slowly, and stroked it. I stood up, quickly, "I need to go and get something," and I quickly climbed down the ladder, and ran to my room. I ran in, and nearly died when I noticed Yuula and Duke in there, so I ran out again, slammed the door, and then entered again after knocking. They were now on different sides of the room. "Sorry, I just need to grab some things," I explained, as I hurried over to my dresser, and pulled out a nighty, and some other essentials, before I ran out, shutting the door, and leaping up the ladder.

I dumped the stuff, on the floor, and walked over to the futon, and stood, looking at Honda. After a while of unnerving him in such, a way, he got angry, and frustrated. He grabbed my hand and pulled me onto the bed, so that I was lying down. And slowly, he began to lean in towards me.

5 - Chapter 5

I lay on the futon, Honda leaning over me, and I could tell something was about to happen. It was pretty obvious. Before anything did though, Honda spoke, "Ana?"

"HmMMM?"

"Are you still a virgin?"

I was so annoyed. Why did he want to know that? "Why do boys ALWAYS ask girls that?"

"I dunno."

"I mean, its not like we ever ask guys. Are YOU still a virgin?"

"Yes."

I was shocked.

"I was saving myself for someone special, so that I could share a special place in my heart with them."

Awww, it was so sweet.

“So, are you still a virgin?”

“No.” I said quietly. I felt so disappointed in myself, like I'd done something really bad, and disgusting.

“Oh, ok.” He looked shocked. “It's just, well, I was hoping that you would be the special person.” He looked away, embarrassed.

“Sure I will,” I whispered, sitting up towards him, and gently kissing him, before pulling him down so that he was lying next to me.

That night I fell asleep curled up in my usual tight ball, with Honda's arms wrapped round me. I slept well, or the best that I had since I came to Japan, and with the duvet over the top to keep us warm, I felt as safe as possibly could. I woke up the next morning when I heard someone using the bathroom, and it took me a while to realise where I was. I climbed out of bed, and found my nightie, pulling it on over my head. It was made of a soft satin, and it was a slate blue/grey, the same colour as my eyes. It just about covered parts of me.

I climbed down the ladder, and decided to go into Marc's room, as I needed to ask him a question. I knocked quietly, and then went in, seeing a massive pile of duvet on the bed, I lent over it, and lying there, fast asleep was...

“WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU ARE DOING IN HERE? GET OUT. GETOUTGETOUTGETOUT! I THOUGH YOU WERE MY FRIEND?”

What the hell did Tea think she was doing in Marc's room? In Marc's bed. With Marc. I was so mad at her. How could she do this to me, I thought she was my friend. Not only did my shouts wake her up, but also Marc and Honda came down as well. I told her to get downstairs at once, before running down myself, Honda and Marc followed, in their boxers, and then Tea in not very much at all. I stood in the living room, amongst the debris of the night before, with everyone watching as I yelled at Tea. I was still just getting started when we heard more shouting, this time coming from Yuula, who ran/fell down the stairs surrounded by my blanket, Duke was following her, again in just his boxers. It was like a massive boxer orgy. I spoke under my breath, “anyone else want to wander round my house in their boxers?” and Honda heard me, and gave me a weird look.

Next thing we knew Yuula had stormed out the house, leaving us to clean up and comfort a forlorn Duke.

We got most of the cleaning up done, and then everyone went home, as I called in a cleaning service for the next day. The house was filthy in any case, so whatever it needed doing. They came, they cleaned, they left. Simple really.

The week passed, stuff happened, people came and went. Actually, what happened the most were arguments, conversations about cake and the like, and also a hell of a lot of kissing. Or maybe that was just Honda and I. Friday came, and we all attacked Yuula by encamping ourselves at her house, and whilst the boys were watching the game with Yuula's brother, Takumi, us girls had taken over Yuula's bedroom, and were having fun giving each other manicures, doing our hair, and putting on face masks. We were doing this when the boys walked in, and had a fit at the state of our faces. Kaede ran around the house, trying to attack Joey with a face mask, whilst the rest of us did the other boys, Duke moaning the whole time about his make up. Soon they all looked as fabulous as us, and nearly as content.

That night the boys all slept in Takumi's room, whilst us girls pulled out spare mattresses and duvets, and settled down for the night in Yuula's room, with Me, Yuula and Tea on the bed, Yuula separating the two of us.

The following morning, I woke up bright and early, and started talking about the beach. I loved it so much. A day of sun, sea and more sun. Having woken up all the girls, I ran to Takumi's bedroom to wake up the guys, shouting as I did so. When I walked in, I bounded over to Honda whilst the other shouted at me to get out, seeing as they had literally no clothes on. Well some of them didn't. Then they shoved me out, violently, well Honda didn't, but the others did.

We all drove to the beach, and when we got there were surprised to see Seto Kaiba there, as well as his little brother, Mokuba, and Mokuba's `special friend', Tenshi. We all settled down, and whilst the others splashed about in the water, I lay on my towel, reading a romance novel. I was wearing a halter neck black one piece, with a very low cut back, and high cut legs. I pulled on my very large eyed glasses, and

an elegant straw hat, and lay down on the white towel, making an interesting image.

Honda walked over to me, in his blue boardies. "You look like a black and white photo."

"Are you saying I look old?" I pulled the sunglasses up to give him an evil look.

"I'm saying you look gorgeous. You coming into the water?"

"Is it warm?"

"Um...no."

"Good. Yeah, I'll come in."

I folded my legs up, and stood up, whipping off my sunglasses, and hat, before running to the edge of the water. I turned to look back at Honda, "Hurry up then!" and I waded until the water was thigh high before diving into it, and disappearing under the surface. I stayed under water for about a minute, until I felt something pulling me to the surface. Honda was holding me by one hand, his other arm around my waist, "Are you trying to drown, or do you just take pleasure in freaking me out?"

"How should I answer that?"

Everyone else was on the beach, and we waded in to join them, where they all began a ball game. I sat on my towel, and watched, as the pearls of moisture dripped off me, and the sun dried my tanning skin. Ryou called to me, "Aren't you going to join in, Ana?"

I shook my head, as Honda pleaded, "Awww, go on!"

“No way, you just want me to play so that I'll take my one item of clothing off. I'd rather read.” I picked up my book, and began to read, listening to their shouts. It was so obvious that they were all ganging up on poor Seto, which wasn't entirely fair.

The day ended nicely, and as we all drove home, I wondered if there was still enough time to see Daemon quickly. There wasn't, well there might have been, but there wasn't for me as I fell asleep as soon as I got home, leaving an exasperated Marc to cook his own food.

6 - Chapter 6

I woke up early on the Monday, and showered quickly, ate breakfast and gathered all my school stuff together. I waited for Marc, and he seemed to get from his bed to the car in ten minutes.

“Aren't you even going to wash?”

He shook his head, climbing into the car. He started it, and pulled out of the driveway, and in the direction of school. At the other end I got out, and walked through the entrance to the classroom, laughing at how sleepy everyone was looking. I bounced around the classroom, using up enough energy to fuel a few thousand people, and thoroughly annoying everyone.

My first lesson was English, and the only person in it with me, from our group, was Duke and he spent most of it asking me why Yuula didn't love him anymore. I sat there trying not to be too mean throughout the whole lesson. It finally ended, and I grabbed his hand and dragged him back to the classroom for break. We all sat, whilst Sakura and Kaede ate something, and I took a drink out of my flask. Immediately they looked at me suspiciously, “What you got in there, Ana?”

I looked at them, wide-eyed. “Um, its coffee? You know, the stuff that people drink to stay awake, the stuff that people drink too socialise, the stuff that I drink to keep me semi-sane.”

“You mean without you'd be worse than this,” Duke looked at me in fear, still not recovered from me sprinting down the corridors with him.

“Um, guys,” Sakura began, “We need to get to Physics.”

Yes, at last, Physics, one of the few lessons I had with Honda, in which I actually sat next to him. We all quickly made our way to the Physics lab, and took our seats. Honda and I immediately started to kiss, whilst Yami and Sakura talked about something, Yuula muttered away to herself, Joey listened to Tea

warbling on about Marc, and Ryou talked to Kaede. Honda and I were oblivious to all of this, until Kaede shouted at him, telling him to take me out. Then the teacher came in and the lesson began.

At the end of the day, Honda decided to take me to a place that Kaede had suggested, and I grabbed his hand and skipped across the schoolyard, with him flying along behind me, leaving everyone else shocked and miles away. We reached the café in no time, and soon settled ourselves into a tiny corner in the basement room, that was nearly deserted, when the waitress came to take our order (an iced tea for me, and a cappuccino for Honda) I listened to the music playing in the background, it was the sleazy sort that they ALWAYS played in cafes, that actually as quite strange and annoying.

We kissed until the drinks came, a passionate kiss, that seemed to last forever. After the drinks came, we talked for a while, before going back to my house. I lead Honda up to my room, and we sat on the Iron four-poster bed. It was new, and had recently been delivered. Curtains of crimson tulle hung around it, so that when on the bed with the curtain shut, one felt very romantic. The bed was covered with a cream satin throw, and a crimson one as well. Cushions were everywhere on it, and it was so comfortable.

We sat in the middle of the bed, and pulled the curtains around. We lay, in each other arms for what felt like an eternity, just enjoying the togetherness, well, that and the fact that we were asleep. Marc came home, and he walked into my room to find me, saw us, smiled, and walked out again, and just left us.

We woke up, and Honda looked at the clock that was hanging on the wall, before swearing quite loudly. "What?" I asked sleepily.

"It's 7 o'clock."

"At night?"

"No! In the morning!"

I was awake by now, and I looked at the clock myself, not believing him. We both looked very scruffy,

having slept in our school uniform. I got up off the bed, and Honda got off as well, and together we went down to the kitchen, to have breakfast. As I cooked some toast, Honda made us both a cup of tea. Having eaten our food, I wrote a quick note to Marc, explaining that we were going to walk to school. It was a long way, but we were leaving very early.

I shut and locked the front door behind us, and Honda took my hand in his, as we made our way to school, getting loads of weird looks because of our appearance. We were the first ones into school, and we sat in the classroom, waiting for the others, in our normal position of Honda sitting on the desk with his feet resting on a chair, and me sitting on the chair, leaning my head against his leg. Gradually the others started to appear, and one of the last ones to appear was Kaede, dragging in with her this random guy, who was slightly shorter than her, with blonde hair and purple eyes.

Honda and I stared at him, whilst the others didn't seem to notice. Kaede finally realised, and she turned to us, "Ana, Honda, this is Marik, my friend from Egypt. Marik, this is Ana and Honda."

"Hey." We all exchanged a net greeting, before the bell went, and we all rushed off to different lessons. I had Music. I listened as the teacher droned on, before letting us wander off and practice our own music. I played the piano and mucked around for the rest of the lesson, because it continued through break and on afterwards. I loved music, but it was slightly tedious.

By the end of the day I was exhausted, and I stumbled home, after nearly dieing from an excess of kissyness from Honda. I mean, kissing is great, but I was tired. At home, I prepared supper, and waited for Marc to get home, doing my homework while I waited. He finally got back, and we ate the lamb, which I had cooked. Marc then disappeared, so I went to my room, and read for a little while, before going to bed.

I lay awake for a while, and somehow my mind wandered back to France, and a memorable moment.

I had just finished riding Paegan, my pony, and I put him away, and settled him in. As I left the stable, I walked into Sebastien. He was 16, and worked in the stables for my father. I was 15. It had been a warm summers day, and a beautiful one too. My father, and his fiancé had spent the day together by the pool, being very disgusting.

Sebastien was a close friend of mine, whom had helped me deal with my mother's death. You could say we were seeing each other, well, more than that. We were a couple and nearly everyone knew, except my father and her. And then she found out, and used it to bribe me. She was evil about it, and knew my father would completely overreact if she told him. And then I got fed up of the bribe, and she told my father. And Sebastien was fired. The guy I loved was ripped away, and we spent one final, glorious day together.

We walked through the meadows, hand in hand, and lay under a tree in the scorching sun. We read poetry to each other, and drowned in each others love. It was dark when I returned home, and I snuck into my room. And the next morning, when I went o look for him, he was gone. He had left in the night. I cried, and ignored my father, angering him still more. Enough to have me sent away.

Sleep overpowered me, and I wallowed in it, the waves washing through my subconscious. The next morning I woke up, and was downstairs in my dressing gown, shocked that Marc was already up, very unlike him. The doorbell went, and Marc asked me to get it, so I padded slowly down the hall, and opened the door. And he was standing there. Sebastien.

I fainted.

7 - Chapter 7

I woke up, lying on my own bed, to find Sebastien sitting in my room. I watched him watching me, and we continued looking at each other, until the phone rang, so I answered it, propping myself up on one elbow.

“Hi Ana, its Sakura.”

“Oh, hi.” I came back to the hear and now.

“Are you ok? Are you sick or something?”

“Um, yeah. Or something. I fainted. But yeah, no I'm ok.”

“YOU FAINTED?! Why? When? What? HONDA GET LOST!” there was the sound of a struggle, and then Honda came on the line, “You fainted? Why? Are you ok? Do you need me? Are you ok?”

“I'm fine. No, I'll be fine by myself. Look, I'll see you guys soon, I'm sorta tired. I'll see you later.” I hurriedly concluded the conversation, and hung up, expecting that I had left them in stunned silence.

Sebastien looked at me, “Qui etait ca?”

“C'etait mon ami.”

“Your friend?”

“Yes.”

“Ok. How are you?”

“I've been better. You?”

“I'm fine. I've missed you.”

I felt so uneasy. I couldn't do this. It would be wrong. “What do you want, Sebastien?”

“You. I came to find you. I never wanted to leave you.”

I felt even worse, could I trust him? He looked so different now. He felt colder to me, so I tried to make an excuse. “I'm sorry. I'm really tired, can we talk later?”

He looked at me suspiciously, but didn't pursue it, as he stood up and walked out of the room. I was glad he had gone. He wasn't my Sebastien any more.

I didn't sleep. I just sat and thought, about a lot of things, and I needed this time to do this. I was brought out of my reverie by the sound of the doorbell, and I looked out of the window to see whom it was.

It was Honda. I thought to myself, `shoot!' and opened my door, running down the stairs, forgetting that I was still in my dressing gown. He and Sebastien were talking to each other at the front door, so I slowed down.

Honda was talking, "Is Ana in please?"

"Um, she's sick at the moment," Sebastien told him, "can I ask who you are?"

"I'm Honda, and you are?"

"Sebastien, Ana's boyfriend."

shootshootshoot!!!! That wasn't meant to happen. That was so wrong. NO! I screamed inside my head, as Sebastien invited Honda in, and they walked into the lounge. NO! I was not his girlfriend, I was with Honda. I stood outside the door listening to their conversation. Sebastien was talking,

"...So I haven't seen her for a while, but I'm hoping to stay here for a while, so that things could continue where they left off."

I couldn't take it any more, so I walked in, and both guys stood up, but before Honda could do anything, Sebastien grabbed my hand, "Oh, hi honey, I was just talking to your friend here about us." And Honda took one look at us, and walked out.

I hissed at him, as he was making me angry, "There is no us, that what I was trying to tell you. I've moved on. I don't feel that I even like you anymore."

"What was that sweetie?"

"I don't like you any more. Your ruined my life!"

“What do you mean?”

“I mean, if it hadn't been for you, playing games with *her*. Then, well, then my life would have been different.” I didn't know where that had come from, but suddenly everything fell into place. How did she find out, no one would've told her, no one who knew, they were all too loyal to my mother. So she must have heard from either me, which she definitely didn't, or him. And then I noticed a certain similarity between them. “You, you.” I began to shake in fury, “You're her brother, aren't you?”

“Well done, darling. You finally realised.”

“You faked it all.”

He looked shifty, “Well, maybe, but...”

“You lying, evil, bastard. You stole what I thought was going to be true love, and ruined it for me. You bastard. You deserve to rot in hell. I hate you.” And I lifted my hand to slap him, but he was too fast, and he got there first. He hit me across the face with the back of his hand, and I went flying across the room. And the next moment Sebastien was gone.

I lifted my hand to my mouth and touched it gingerly, feeling the blood there, and a huge bruise appearing, and then I sagged to the floor.

The next day, I went to school, and everyone gave me weird looks. I had a huge bruise across my face, and I slight cut by my mouth, that was swollen. My eyes were red and blotchy from crying lots. And then school wasn't much better, with Honda avoiding me. His eyes were red as well, and I felt so bad.

I waited for something to happen, but nothing did. Our friends tiptoed around us, talking to one or other

of us, and never addressing any problems. People asked what had happened to my face, and I said I had walked into a doorframe. Some people began to think it was Honda, but he would never do that.

The week passed slowly, and I began to feel even more lonely and depressed. Saturday was a sad day, and it was cloudy and cold. I did all my work, and spent the rest of the time moping around the house. And then on Sunday I decided to go for a walk, and found myself in the park.

I went and sat on a bench near the pond, sharing it with another person, but I ignored them. And then they moved, so I looked up, and realised it was Honda. He realised too, and stood up to leave.

“No, wait. Please don't go.” I beseeched.

“I have nothing to say, and you have nothing to say that I want to hear.” He spoke coldly.

“Please. Just listen.” And I began to talk, crying as I did so. I told him everything. Right from the beginning. Marc, my mother, my father, Sebastien. I told him about everything that had happened, and how I felt about it all.

He stood, and listened, and when I paused, and he still didn't speak, I decided to finish.

“Someone once told me that they were saving themselves for that special person, so that they could share with them a special place in their heart. And I believe that, and I want to go on believing that.”

He collapsed on the bench beside me, and it began to rain, the big heavy drops that soon soaked us through.

“I want to...” the tears choked me. “I want to share that special place with you.”

He threw his arms around me, and together we sat and cried. We sat in the rain, and the oncoming dark.

8 - Chapter 8

It was a dark night, and hand in hand, we walked through the park in the rain. When we got to my house, Honda lifted his hand to my cheek, and I flinched, as he touched the bruise. At once concern came into his eyes, and he stroked my hair gently, before kissing me, and walking off. I watched him go, and waited until he had disappeared into the rain and fog before walking into the house. Marc spoke to me, but I didn't hear, and I went and fell into a hot bath.

I lay and soaked in the warm water, before climbing out and pulling on a thick dressing gown. I wandered down stairs in search of food, when Marc shouted out to me, "Ana, one of your friends called, Sakura. She said she's coming round tomorrow night."

"Ok."

Hmm, a night of Sakura. Sounded like fun. I needed some girly time. I sniffed, and wandered into the kitchen, flicking the kettle on for a mug of hot chocolate, so that I could rid the shiver that had struck my bones. As I did this I grabbed some bread, and shoved it in the oven to warm it up, taking a jar of Nutella out of the cupboard to spread on it.

I ate slowly, and enjoyed the food, thinking about how yummy chocolate stuff was. When I had finished eating, I went and collapsed on one of the sofas in the lounge, and flicked the TV onto some movie or other, I watched for a little while, before I returned to my room, and fell onto the bed, and then asleep.

The next day I went to school, feeling really ill, thank to spending most of the day in the rain. I looked so awful that even Honda didn't want to come near me, and so I spent most of the day by myself, snuffling away, and dying from a really bad cold. The day went really slowly, and that evening, Sakura and I walked home, with her all hyper and excited, and me trying really hard to breathe.

We eventually reached the house, and Sakura and I went into my room, where she nearly died, before saying excitedly, "its so pink!"

I didn't have the voice to agree with her, but instead just opened one of the wardrobe doors to reveal a television and DVD player, into which I inserted a DVD, before turning to her, and asking, "Is it ok in French?"

"Yeah, that's fine. You know I'm a linguist."

I nodded, pressing play at the same time.

"What we watching?"

"Save The Last Dance," I croaked. "Its American. Its great. You'll love it. Its like Dirty Dancing, but not. Its excellent."

It came on, and we both lay down on my bed, and began to watch. By the end we were in tears, both of us. Jumping off the bed, we went downstairs to see about supper, and as I was cooking some noodles, Marc came in. He greeted me in French, and then Sakura in Japanese, and was shocked when she then began to speak to him in slightly hesitant, but still excellent French. I laughed at his facial expression, and he glared at me before disappearing. "Stupid idiot." I muttered.

"Don't let Tea hear you say that!" Sakura said, jokingly.

"What's that supposed to mean?" I asked darkly.

"Um, nothing?!" she stuttered nervously, as I lapsed into a coughing fit. "You're sick."

"I know."

"So, Ana, what actually happened to your face? Was it Honda, like everyone says it was? Or did you walked into a doorframe?"

"No, of course it wasn't Honda!"

"Well, you never know."

"WELL IT WASN'T!"

"Ok then."

"I didn't walk into a doorframe either. It was this guy..." and I told her the whole story.

"Oh dear," she said, supportively.

The noodles were done, and we began to seat them, enjoying the sweet juice, and the lashings of seasoning we had added. After we had eaten, we again made our way to my room, and settled down with a music channel, a few magazines, and chocolate.

It got to be about 10 o'clock, and we decided to go to bed, seeing as it was a school night. I had got under the duvet, and was settling in for sleep. Sakura climbed in the other side, and began to talk, when all of a sudden I noticed her sniffing.

“What?” I asked, “don't tell me you're getting ill as well?”

“No, but is it just me, or can you smell aftershave on this duvet as well.”

“It probably is aftershave. As I haven't washed it for a while. And Honda stayed over a week ago.”

She jumped out of bed, “WHAT?!”

“Honda stayed over about a week ago.”

“AND YOU DIDN'T WASH IT?! THAT'S GROSS!”

“It is? Well, we can always go into the loft. Actually, no, I haven't washed that one either. Or the spare room. Dammit, do you mean I have to go clean duvet searching?”

“YES!”

I heaved myself off the bed, and went into a cupboard, pulling out a large duvet. That was actually clean. I pulled mine off the bed, and climbed back onto the bed, pulling the clean one behind me. “There you go, all new.”

Sakura climbed hesitantly onto the bed, and got under the duvet. We slept well, and Sakura didn't talk too much, and at least she didn't snore.

I was woken up the next morning by Sakura shaking me violently. She was already dressed, “Ana, Ana, are you ok? `Cause we need to get up, school starts in half an hour. Marc said he'd drive us. Ana, wake up.”

"I feel sick." I muttered.

"I know, but we need to go to school."

"I think I have a temperature."

She felt my forehead. "OH MY GOD! You're burning up! You are so NOT going to school today. You are staying RIGHT HERE! I'll tell Marc. See you later!"

And she ran out the room, shutting the door behind her. I felt so ill. I heard the sound of the car leaving the driveway, and rolled off the bed and onto the floor, landing with a thud. I pulled on my school uniform. I couldn't not go to school; I had assignments to hand in. They were due today. I stumbled down the stairs, bleary eyed, and managed to pick up the phone, and call a cab. They came soon, and I got into it, not caring about how awful I looked.

The cab got me to school just in time for morning registration, and as I ran to the classroom, I fell into the door, making everyone look up at me. And exclaim. Yuula spoke to me, "You look awful, why did you bother coming in today?"

"Because I have assignments to hand in," I breathed.

"You are such a goody goody. AND an idiot. You should have stayed at home, you doofus!"

I sank into a chair, and rested my eyes for a moment. English was first, and if I could just get there, that would be enough.

Registration finished, and Duke and I set off for English. We walked to the classroom, and took our seats, next to each other, much to his disgust. The lesson started, and about half way through I raised my hand, the teacher raised an eyebrow, and asked, "Yes, Miss Osculaix?"

"Can I have a bathroom pass, please?"

The teacher handed me one, and I made my way to the toilet. The guys and girls were right next door to each other, and I opened the door, and walked in, nearly falling into a cubicle. I finished, and walked out, breathing deeply and trying to clear my head. I walked to the washbasin, and splashed cold water onto my face, before looking into the mirror. And screaming. Duke was standing right behind me, "WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING IN HERE?!"

I looked at him, uncertainly, "Using the bathroom? What are you doing in here?"

"The same thing, BUT THIS IS THE MENS!"

"Ooops." And I collapsed onto the floor, totally unconscious. Duke lifted me up, and made his way to the nurse's office, walking past the class where some of our other friends were, including Honda, who happened to be looking out of the window. He raised his hand, and asked for a hall pass, and rushed out of the classroom, to the struggling Duke.

"What happened?"

"She was using the men's toilets and collapsed, and I had to carry her out. And she's heavy."

Honda took me out of Duke's arms, "No she isn't. Have you called an ambulance or something?"

"Um, or something?!"

“Well, are we taking her to the nurses office?”

“Yup.”

The tow guys got me to the school nurse's office, where she called an ambulance, that pulled up outside. She sent Duke back to English to explain to the teacher what had happened. Honda refused to go back to his lesson, and instead stayed with me, travelling in the ambulance with me to the hospital.

I woke up that afternoon, and smiled at Honda, who sat by my bed. And then I noticed the machines and the tubes linked to me, and I screamed, causing a nurse to come rushing, and Honda to stand up, looking terrified.

The nurse spoke to him, “it looks like we might need to give her a sedative.” And she rushed out, before returning with a massive needle.

I looked at it warily, and stopped screaming, “You stick that fracking huge needle into me, and I will scream even louder. Get these dumb tubes off of me, and let me go home.”

“But, my dear, you're ill. These tubes will make you better. Now just give me your arm.”

“I said, No. I am not having a stupid injection. I don't want hospital treatment. I wan to go home.”

“But you're ill,” I wasn't making the nurse's life very easy. “You have pneumonia.”

“I have a cold. Now take these tubes off me. I'm going home.”

The nurse hesitantly took the tubes off me, and gave me back my clothes, that Honda helped me change into, before he helped me to get home. It took a fair long time, as I still felt a bit weak, but when we finally got back to my house, I collapsed onto the sofa, whilst Honda went and made me a cup of tea. I drunk it, and gradually began to feel better, as my strength returned.

The next day, I did stay home from school, and felt much better for it, well enough to go to school on Thursday, where everyone knew that Honda and I were back together, and I was greeted by disgust and congratulations in equal measures. It was November, and starting to get chilly.

The year was soon coming to a close, and I was looking forward to the New Year, and the excitement it would bring (such as my birthday). There wasn't that much longer now.

9 - Chapter 9

The European New Year came, and Marc and I decided to have yet another party to celebrate it, only this time we rented out a large and posh hotel. Invitations were sent out, and buffet and music sorted. It was again a party of mostly university students, with few of my friends, but there were enough. Marc and I had taken rooms at the hotel, so we wouldn't have to get home afterwards, as had many of the other guests. Between us, my friends and I had a whole floor to ourselves.

I changed in my hotel room, and pulled on a floor length strapless black gown, that laced up at the back, and had a long slit up the left hand side. It had a fringe of beads along the bust line, and also on the bottom. I put on a pair of black stilettos, which laced up to my knees. Sat down at the dressing table in my room, and began to curl my hair into ringlets, and I then fixed them in a swirl at the back of my head, threading white feathers in with them.

I surrounded my eyes with a bit of kohl, and extended my eyelashes with mascara, before adding a silver eye-shadow and very dark red lipstick. I opened a box that had been sitting on the dressing table, and pulled out an extravagant diamond necklace/choker. As I did up the clasp around my neck, I thought about how expensive it was. Pulling on a pair of elbow-length white gloves, I put a matching bracelet on as well. I walked out into the corridor into the hotel room, at the exact same time as Honda came out of the room opposite (he had come early to help). He had styled his hair differently, so that it was slightly less triangular, and had little less quiff and a bit more backcombing. He was wearing an electric blue shirt, with a black suit and tie, and trilby. He looked like the perfect Rat Pack member, and was even trying to perfect a Chicago-style drawl. I smiled at him, as he checked me out, "You look amazing!" he exclaimed

"You're not so bad yourself."

He took my hand in his, and we walked in the direction of the elevator, and climbed into it, asking for the ground floor. When the doors again opened, we walked out, and I went to stand next to my brother, who was already greeting guests that had started to arrive. He wore black trousers, and a black and white stripy top with a beret and a string of onions round his neck. "You stink," I told him.

"You look nice. My little sister all growing up."

I kicked him. And then smiled as another guest walked past.

Finally my friends started to arrive, and they all looked out of breath, "What happened to you guys?"

"We were all chasing Sakura, `cause she thought the guy who worked here had stolen the car, when in fact he was going to park it."

Sakura looked sheepish, yet radiant on Yami's arm, with him dressed as an Egyptian pharaoh, and she as his princess. Her blonde hair was loose and glowing; looking stunning with the gold and turquoise jewellery she was matching it up with, and the long white dress.

Yuula was wearing a golden coloured dress with cat ears and a tail. The top of the dress was like a corset, and the lower part flounced out in many layers. She was laughing about something with Ryou, who had come as a cricketer, in cricket whites and a funny looking cap thing.

Joey had come as an America footballer, and looked extremely strange with the mask on and the pads that padded out his shoulders, and increased the weirdness of his look. He looked fine, until he noticed Kaede and Seto and then he bristled with hostility.

Kaede was wearing a kimono, and her hair was down and very straight. She had tied to her back what looked like two swords. I hoped they weren't. Seto was wearing a tux, that looked really good on him. He had obviously come as 007.

Duke, it appeared had forgotten that it was a costume party, and Tea was wearing a pink frilly tutu. We all walked into the ballroom together, and I laughed as my friends gasped at the sight of it. There were hundreds of balloons on the ceiling, and lots of glitter, ready to be released at midnight. The room was lit by white lights, which were reflected in the mirrored ceiling, and bounded off all the light fittings.

The party was just getting started and few people were on the dance floor yet, so I grabbed Honda's hand, and laughed as the other couples in our group did the same, as we fled to the dance floor, at the

exact same moment as an upbeat and hard piece of music started. It was an old song, one of the classics, called 'Mambo Italiano'. At once the girls started twirling, and swinging to the music, as the boys slowly got into it. The music was perfect for the clothes that Honda and I were wearing, in our 1930s style. We swung in style, and didn't notice that my brother's friends had all stopped to watch, and then every-one else who had been dancing stopped to watch, as us, the youngsters, swung in the old-timers way.

The music changed, and I wandered over to the bar, and perched myself on one of the stools. Seto came over, and leaned on the bar beside me. We began to talk, and when the bar man came over to see what we wanted I laughed when Seto put on his best Sean Connery voice, "I'll have a martini, shaken, not stirred."

The barman had looked at him blankly, and when Seto and I had stopped laughing, he again asked for a drink, "I'll have a champagne, and whatever the lady wants."

The barman looked at me enquiringly, and I wasn't sure if I'd get away with buying alcohol, as I was only 15, and the youngest out of my friends. I hesitated and then asked for a cool breeze, a cocktail with lime and sorbet.

Whilst I was elegantly sipping my drink, Honda came up, and took my hand, leading me back to the dance floor. It was a slower number this time, and as he held me in his arms, I leaned my head on his shoulder, smiling at Sakura as I waltzed past her and Yami. The song ended, and another fast one came on. People left the dance floor, and soon the only people left were Sakura, Tea, Kaede and me. And the music. So we danced, and boy, did we dance. We danced the Macarena, to a very upbeat piece of music. By the end of it nearly everyone had joined in, and we were in hysterics.

The evening went really well, and everyone seemed to be having a really good time. As it came to a close, towards 11.45, Marc and I tried to assemble everyone in the main ballroom, ready for the countdown. We had done our best to explain the concept of such a new year and most people had grasped it. We all stood in a huge circle, everyone in completely different costumes, and as it got to 11.59, we began the countdown, and as we got to shouting Happy New Year, the balloons fell, landing on kissing couples, and hugging friends. It was perfect. The perfect end to the perfect evening.

After that, people began to drift off, and it was only the people who were staying at the hotel left behind. Honda and I were once again slow dancing, and holding each other close. When the music stopped, and

we noticed that nearly everyone had gone, we too decided to go upstairs.

We went to my room, and closed the door behind us, pulling across the `Do not Disturb' sign, and putting the chain on the door.

10 - Chapter 10

We stood in the middle of the softly lit room, just gazing into each other arms, and then he pulled me towards him, and once more held me close to him. After a while of standing that, he lent and whispered in my ear, "I'll be right back." I nodded, and while he was gone, I removed the jewellery, and put it safely back in its case.

He came back in, and once again embraced me, before holding me away a little and pulling me into a deep and passionate kiss. When we again paused for breath, I took the jacket off his shoulders, and began to undo his shirt, pulling that off him also. He then gently took the fingertip of my left glove, and slowly and delicately pulled it off, before doing the same with the other one. We once again came together for another kiss, before stopping. He bent down to take his shoes off, and I stood and watched.

We stood up again, and I turned so that Honda could unlace the back of my dress, he did it, and the dress fell to the floor, leaving me standing in my strapless black bra, lacy black panties, and stilettos. I stepped out of the dress, and seductively bent to the floor, without bending my legs I picked up the dress, and hung it over a chair, before being down once more to undo my shoes. I stepped out of them, and shrunk by about 3 inches.

Honda undid his belt, and then his trousers, until he was just standing in his boxers. I took his hand, and led him to the bed. I sat on it, and slid backwards, as he came on top of me.

I woke up the next morning resting on Honda's chest. As he breathed in and out, my head rose and fell. I lifted my eyes to look at his face. He looked so happy and at peace, and there was sunlight streaming in through the window, lighting his features.

He woke up shortly after me, and we called for room service, ordering a champagne breakfast for two. I went into the bathroom to freshen up, and grabbed one of the bathrobes hanging off the door, throwing it to Honda. I took the other one, and pulled it on. It was fluffy and white, and nice and warm.

I looked into the mirror, and with the help of water and soap, managed to get off the makeup that had smeared across my face. I emerged from the bathroom at the same time as room service knocked on the door, and when I answered it, the spotty faced guy standing there glared at me, until Honda got up, smelling the food, and glared evilly at the guy.

We took the tray back onto the bed, and laughed and talked whilst eating croissants and yoghurt and strawberries and champagne. The morning drew out, and as it got closer to midday, we knew we needed to make a move. But not to myself. For the first time, in the couple of months that we had been going out, Honda was going to be taking me to his apartment.

He warned me that it was ugly, smelly and filthy, to which I had replied that we would simply have to clean it up then. We walked through Domino City, he in his suit from the night before, and me in the dress. We acquired plenty of strange looks.

When we reached his apartment, we took the elevator up to the top floor. There were two doors, and Honda pointed to one, "My sister lives there."

He went to the other one, and opened it. My first impression was of a dank and dismal room. The curtains, that hung limply, were still shut. Empty food packets were strewn everywhere. I turned to him, "Can I borrow some clothes?"

"Um, yeah sure," he said uncertainly. He led me into his bedroom, and found me a shirt. As he was looking for trousers, I spoke again, "Oh, don't worry. This'll do fine."

I took the dress off, and pulled the shirt on, "Right then. Methinks that this place needs a good tidy up. And we have very little time to do it in."

He just looked at me as if I was crazy, so I continued, "We will need, a phone, and a phonebook, for operation clean-up."

No he looked at me, even more worriedly.

“Fetch!”

He hurriedly ran to the living room, and ran back again with the phone book, and phone. I leafed through the phone book; until I found the number I wanted.

11 - Chapter 11

I called a cleaning firm. And they moved in, and treated the flat like a major war zone. By the end of the day, it was as clean as possible, and looked amazing for it. Honda didn't recognise his own apartment. We stayed there for the night, and it was only when I realised that I hadn't showered for a while, and I did actually need some clothes of mine, that I eventually went home, after beating Honda off me (not literally).

It was the 2nd January, and in a few days time it was my birthday. I had so far decided that I wanted to have a black tie, sit down dinner, at a fancy hotel, and afterwards I hoped that the hotel would have dancing. It was just my friends who were invited. The dinner was to start at eight, and then finish at, well, sometime. I had arranged for a white Rolls Royce to pick them all up, after picking me up first. I hoped it would be big enough.

I woke up early that morning, as I was going out to have my hair and nails done, and also my makeup. I needed to pick up my dress as well. I leafed through the post that morning, whilst waiting for the taxi. There were a few cards for me, from family around the world, and my dad. It was a short card, not too sweet either, but at least he had remembered. There was also a hefty check inside, which would be useful.

I arrived at the beauty salon at 9 o'clock, and left at 3. The car was coming at 6.30, giving me a few hours. I only needed to put my dress on, so decided to watch TV for a little bit. Which was then spoiled by Marc coming in. He wanted to give me a present, which consisted of a new pair of jods, and also a new saddle. It was black leather, and obviously worth a bomb. "Thank you so much," I gushed, and would've continued had the doorbell not rung. I answered it and found it was a deliveryman, brandishing a huge bouquet of red roses. They looked beautiful. I took the card, and read it quickly,

To my Cinderella,

May she always come to the ball on time.

The doorbell rang again, and I went to answer it, still holding the huge bouquet. All I could see over the top of it was a mass of bubblegum blue curls. I moved the bouquet slightly, and shrieked with joy.

“YUMIKO!”

Yumiko Akimota, one of my best friends. She was Australian-Japanese, and an old friend of the family. Our fathers had attended university together, in England, and our mothers had also known each other in Japan. We had often been on holiday to each others houses, and many a time she and I had got lost on mountains when skiing in the Pyrenees. She was one of my closest and oldest friends.

“What the hell are you doing here?”

“I came. Marc called. Let me in, its freezing.”

I hurriedly let her in, and led her through to the kitchen, so I could put my flowers in a vase.

“Who're they from?”

“My boyfriend.”

She nodded, “Well, don't you need to take me to your room, so we can get dressed, and ready?”

“Ok. All I need to do is put my dress on. I had my hair and makeup done this morning. Your hair is looking so cool!”

“I know.” She followed me up the stairs to my room, and as we changed we had a massive gossip about what we had been up to, as we had not seen each other for so long. I told her about all my friends who would be there that evening, and she laughed her head off when I told her about Honda.

“He...sounds...like...a...prick!”

“Well, he might be a bit of a prick, but he is my prick.”

She smirked, and gave me an odd look.

I gasped as she pulled her dress out of a bag. It was a blue and black patterned bodice, which then came out into this beautiful blue skirt, with black netting over it to give it more volume. She did her hair up into a tight bun, and added a black choker to it, looking beautiful.

“You look gorgeous,” I told her.

“Don't go lezzy on me.”

I went into my wardrobe (walk in) and pulled out a dress bag. I removed it, and admired my dress. I had only seen it in the shop, and I hoped it would fit. I laid it down on the bed, while I carefully took off the top I had been wearing, and Miko helped me to put the dress on. It was a strapless red gown, that had a fitted bodice, and a flowing skirt, that was gathered up on my left hip, although still floor length, and seeming held there with a fabric rose. I pulled out a pair of red satin slippers, and carefully slid my small feet into them. I wore no jewellery, instead letting my neck show its own elegance.

My hair had already been twisted and curled into a beautiful style, by the crafty stylists, and it was pinned up slightly on one side, and still cascaded in beautifully glossy ringlets down my back. I grabbed one of the roses Honda had given me, and attached it to the part of my hair that had been pulled up. My makeup was so gentle that it was barely there.

Yumiko and I were both done when the cars came to pick us up. We climbed into the first one, which was gorgeously elegant, being white. I directed the driver to Honda's apartment, where he was standing outside, with a red corsage in his buttonhole, and a red sash round his waist. How he had managed to dress to match, I didn't know.

He climbed into the car beside me, and courteously greeted Yumiko, with a handshake, before giving me a quick kiss, and wishing me a happy birthday. Next stop was the Kaiba mansion, and Kaede and

Seto also climbed into the car with us. I introduced them to Yumi too. Kaede looked resplendent in an electric pink and black dress, which suited her perfectly. Seto wore a tux, with a black sash, and he had somehow managed to find a bright pink rose for his corsage.

Our car was no full, so when we stopped for Yuula and Sakura, they climbed into the second car. I had forgotten that Marc was also in that one. Yuula wore a lilac dress that had off the shoulder sleeves and her hair was tied up and threaded with ribbons. Sakura wore a white strapless dress, with black flowers on both the bust, and on the hemline, and on the left hand side in an intricate design.

We picked Tea up, and I saw he quickly kiss Marc as she climbed into the car with them. But I was going to let it pass. They both deserved happiness, and I missed her as a friend. She wore an outrageous pink gown, which only she could carry off.

We finally stopped for the last few people, Joey, Yami, Duke, and Ryou. Well, that was all there were meant to be. But there was a girl with them, who was wearing a shocking short dress, in a bright green. She had blonde curly hair, which was down, and I presumed that she was Joey's new girlfriend. I didn't mind him bringing her, but he could have called me. At that moment the in-car phone rang, and I answered. It was Joey, and he sounded sheepish. "Um, hi Ana. I bought my girlfriend. I hope you don't mind."

"Well, I have to not mind don't I? I t would have been nice to have a LITTLE notice. GUYS! Honestly. Its gonna have to do. Never mind. Ok. See you later."

We drove through the town, and up to a large hotel. The cars pulled up to the large marble staircase out front, and the doormen hurried to open the doors, as we all climbed out, looking extremely elegant and like the posh and beautiful people you see in magazines.

We walked through the hotel, and were seated in their best table, and treated with the utmost courtesy. The best part was, my father had agreed to pay for it all. Our meal started, and everyone held polite conversation, when Yuula had the bright idea that we should all speak English. Which was ok for most people, except me, as with my heavy French accent it was very strange. And some of the boys couldn't actually speak English. So when they tried to include me in the conversation, everyone began to laugh at my accent.

“Eet eez not zat funny. Yoo should try to speak zee Français. Eet would be very deefeecult for yoo.”

Yumiko spoke up then, pointing out the fact that she could actually speak Japanese.

The meal finished spectacularly with a big chocolate cake and sparklers, which were beautiful. We then all proceeded into the ballroom, for dancing with the other guests in the hotel.

12 - Chapter 12

We walked into the ballroom in couples, first me and Honda, then Sakura and Yami, Marc and Tea, Kaede and Seto, Yuula had grabbed Ryou, who looked incredibly nervous, Joey and Mai, and Yumiko had been left with Duke, more fool her. The music was a beautiful waltz, and we all immediately joined the dancefloor, the girls darrging the guys, and Yuula and Ryou being pushed into it.

As we all waltzed around in each others arms, I felt laughter rising up inside of me, and I laughed, letting my joy escape in a bubble. The music changed, and the live orchestra began a lively two-step, and many couples left the floor. I had recently dragged Honda to some ballroom dancing lessons, and so we knew the basic steps, although we were nowhere near as good as Kaede and Seto. As we all quick-stepped round the call, swirlin and twisting, I spoke with Honda, about nothing in particular. The dance ended, and Honda took my arm leading me out into the large grounds of the hotel. He led me down a walkway to a fountain that was lit with beautiful lighting.

He began to talk, “Ana, I just wanted to tell you, well. This is so hard... I wanted to let you know.”

I gave him a quck kiss to encourage him. He looked at me, longingly. “I wanted to say, that I Love you.”

I nearly choked, “Y'what?!?!?!?!?”

“I love you.”

I threw my arms around him, burying myself in his embrace. “I love you two,” I sighed into his shoulder, as I started to shiver with the cold.

“Can we just stay here for a minute more?” he asked pulling me away. I nodded, as he pulled a long rectangular box out of his pocket, and handed it to me. I opened it, and sighed when I saw the beautiful diamond necklace in there.

“Thank you,” I breathed. It was beautiful, a choker. He lifted it out of the box, and swirled me around to attach it around my neck. I gave him a quick twirl, and he smiled, before grabbing my hand, and leading me back to the ballroom.

When we returned, I was quickly whisked away by my brother, who wanted to dance the next the dance with me. Little did I know what he had requested. One of our old servants had been a dancer, and she had taught Marc and I a few dances, in France. One of them was a dance an American friend had taught her. It was fast and ferocious dance.

As Marc and I made our way to the dance floor he leant and whispered in my ear, “Happy Birthday, sis. Now, lets Jitterbug.”

The orchestra started a very fast piece, and the dance floor soon emptied, completely, bar Marc and I. He began by swinging me slowly, around him releasing my one hand and pushing me outwards, before pulling me in again. And then he began lifting me, and twirling me faster, until I was soaring through the air, around his head, around his waist. We got faster and faster, until the music stopped. We walked to some seats, and collapsed, exhausted.

My friends all came up to us, gobsmacked. “Where did you learn to dance like that?” they all asked.

“France.”

At that moment, a waiter arrived with several bottles of champagne, which we all enjoyed, as a live singer came on stage, and began to speak.

“Now, I understand we have a birthday girl here today?”

My friends all smiled at me, as I glared.

“And that she is also a bit of a musician?”

I was going to kill them.

“So, would she liked to come and sing a duet, with me?”

Honda grabbed me, and escorted me to the stage picking me up, and depositing me on it. The singer spoke to me, and we arranged a song quickly. I hoped that I didn't go red like my dress.

As the orchestra began to play, I warmed to the song. It was from an old film, High Society, and the music was by one of my favourite composers, Cole Porter. The song was beautiful, and could easily be arranged as a duet. It was called, `True Love', and as we sung, couples began to waltz. But the singer wouldn't let me finish at just that. He kept me up there, and we sung a few other old classics, like `Well, did you Evah?', and `Somethin' Stupid'. To finish, he made me sing one song by myself, and I chose another great one, that I hoped most people would know, `Moon River' again couples were waltzing, and when I jumped off the stage, helped by Honda, who was looking at me with admiration, I too began to dance, slowly, whilst he held me in his arms.

The night ended perfectly, and we again drove everyone home, with at last only Honda, Yumiko, Marc and I left in the car. I was tired, so after settling Yumiko in the guest room, Honda and I went to my room. I wasn't sure about him, but I wanted to sleep, so I undressed and pulled on a chemise before jumping into bed.

13 - Chapter 13

The days passed, and we returned to school. Yumiko left, and went home, and as the others all began to concentrate on their schoolwork, I began to concentrate more on my riding. I started off by training myself, and then I found a professional to come and help me. She was amazing, and had me training constantly, I would ride in the morning before school, and again afterwards. I had so little time to do other things, and would often find myself asleep in lessons.

One night, after a particularly hard lesson, in which I had been improving my position when sitting to the trot, in the rain, I practically collapsed into bed. I was just dozing off to sleep, when the phone began me began to ring. I felt for it, and answered lifting it to my ear. "Hello?" I whispered into the headpiece.

"Hi, Ana, its Honda."

"Oh, hi." I settled back onto the pillow. "How are you?"

"Yeah, I wasn't sure if you'd remember how I was, `cause you haven't seen me for ages."

"What do you mean? I saw you at school today!"

"You did? I don't remember. I don't remember the last time I saw you, actually. I though we were going out?"

"We are!"

"We are? So when was the last time we went out? I think it was your birthday!"

“Don't shout at me. Please. I'm sorry. I hadn't realised.”

“WELL IT ISNT GOOD ENOUGH.” He stopped, and then spoke again, quieter now. “Ana, I really love you. Well, I did. But I don't think this can work out. I'm not sure you like me anymore. So, well. I'm gonna call it off. I'm sorry. But it's over.”

I heard the click of the receiver, and the line went dead. I was so shocked. I didn't understand. And then it hit me, like a ton of bricks. He. Had. Dumped. Me.

But I had loved him. So why? I was so confused.

Without realising it, I dialled Kaede's number, and was shocked when her grandfather answered. “Hello? This is the Mishua residence.”

“Hello, is Kaede there please?”

“No, I'm afraid she isn't. She is at The Kaiba mansion at the moment, I am afraid.”

“Oh, ok. Thank you.” I hung up, and thought about what to do. It was late, and rude to call at such and hour, but I needed to speak to a friend. So I phoned the Kaiba mansion, and a servant answered.

“Hello, is Miss Mishua there please?”

“I am afraid she is busy at the moment, may I take a message?”

"I need to talk to her. It is urgent. Please. Tell her it is Ana," I begged the servant, and tears sprung to my eyes. Whilst he went to find her, they fell slowly down my cheeks, and landed on my covers. Then I heard another voice, and this time it was Kaede. She sounded angry.

"What do you want, Ana?"

I burst into louder tears, and she sounded shocked.

"What's wrong?"

"Honda..." was all I could utter.

"What about him?"

"He...he...he just dumped me."

The tears consumed my body, and I gave way to them, letting them fill me.

"WHAT? Why?"

"Because I haven't been spending enough time with him. Because I have been too busy. And I'm so sorry. And I loved him, and he said he doesn't love me anymore, and it's all so sad."

Kaede did the little she could to comfort me, over the phone, but then she had to go, and I was left, all alone. So I did my best to sleep, and I cried the whole night lone.

I didn't go to my training session the next morning, and at school everyone was ignoring me, because I had been so busy, and had no time for them. My eyes were all puffed up, and I was finding it hard to concentrate.

I ate nothing at lunch, and after school again skipped my riding. I ate no dinner, and spent the evening locked in my room. And so the days went on. I ate and drunk little. I slept little. I did no work. I spoke to no one.

And then my riding instructor called, and said that she was going to give up if I didn't turn up soon. So I told her to give up. She refused, and when Marc told her why I was so upset, she laughed. "Is that all?" she had said.

Then the school asked to see Marc, about my schoolwork. They told him it was getting progressively worse. I, who had always been the bright student, was now not working. I was flunking science and maths, and making little effort in music and my other classes.

My friends weren't talking to me, and so when the next day came, I simply didn't go to school. I just didn't feel like it. I skipped school for a week, spending my time crying. I was wasting away, and Marc had told me, that at this rate, I would be dead within the year. He had forcibly driven me to school the next week, and accompanied me the classroom. My friends were shocked by my emaciated form, and tried to talk to me, but I was a shadow of myself.

So they tried to talk to Honda about it, that lunchtime. He got mad, and was shouting at them all, asking how it was his fault. He was right, it was my entire fault. My fault for forgetting my friends. He was so mad, and he got so angry with me when I said that, and even more angry with the tears that were falling from my eyes. He looked about to hit me, and I willed it to come. Any pain would be better than this one.

But he was stopped, by himself, and just as I flinched, he lowered his arm. The pain in his eyes as great as what I felt.

"I'm so, so sorry," I sighed. "I never meant for it to be like this."

He looked at me, softly, "Marc spoke to me the other day, and he said how you were acting. It made me so angry, that you were treating yourself like this. And it made me feel so bad, for how I had behaved. He told me about your trainer, and how you had missed so many sessions. He said that you had potential, and might have become an international rider, but not anymore. He said that if you didn't come out of this, then it would all be over for you."

I cried even harder, wanting all the pain to finally end. I closed my eyes, and laid my head on the desk, wallowing in my depression. I didn't realise that the others had left the room, and that it was just Honda and I. He crouched down by my desk, and lifted my head, holding my chin, and looking me in the eyes. He lifted his hand, and wiped away a tear. "I never stopped loving you, after we broke up. I tried to, but I couldn't bring myself to. I saw how much I was hurting you, and for a minute I enjoyed it. But then I stopped wanting to hurt you, and I just wanted to protect you again. I wanted you again. I'm sorry."

I looked at him, and tried to stop the tears, but couldn't. And then he began to cry as well. The next thing I knew, he had stood up, and pulled me up too, into his arms. And he held me there, not letting me go, not ever letting me go.

"Will you teach me to ride?" he spoke softly into my hair.

I smiled, "I thought you'd never ask."

14 - Chapter 14

Whilst he held me in his arms, his hand slid from my waist and up my body. All of a sudden, with a sharp intake of breath, he pushed me away. "Ana, I can feel your ribs. Every one of them." He lifted up my top (the classroom was still deserted). "Ana, I can see everyone of your ribs. Have you not been eating?"

I shook my head.

"Why not? You normally love your food!"

"I just haven't been hungry."

He pulled me close to him once again, "You stupid, stupid girl."

We were still standing like that when the others returned, and at once Honda asked them if any of them had any food. They all teased him about watching his weight. He said it wasn't for him, and before I could say anything, he had grabbed me, and pulled my shirt up to show them, despite my protestations.

They were all shocked, and immediately I was showered in packets of crisps, apples and chocolates. Honda picked up one of the apples, and offered it to me. It was blood red, "Its not poisoned is it?"

He laughed, and took a bite, then devouring the whole apple. I laughed and gave him a playful shove, but before he could retaliate, Sensei walked in. As she took the register, I thought about what I was now going to have to do. To start off with, I needed to work a lot harder, because I needed to get my grades up once again.

I began to concentrate once more on my work, and also my riding, as well as dedicating time to Honda and my friends. It was difficult, but I could do it all, if I was careful. I began to gain once again the weight I had lost, but I had to be careful, so as not to get sick, from eating the wrong things, and not getting enough iron.

I lived up to my promise, and I began to teach Honda to ride. He had started off learning to ride on Marc's horse, and was doing fine on her, as she was a calm and quiet horse. But he wanted to run before he could walk, and one evening, before I had my lesson, he asked if he could ride Daemon.

"Maybe it would be better if you waited until after I rode, because he can be a bit hyper."

"I'm sure I am strong enough to handle him!" he showed his non-existent, well, existent, but not very big, muscles, and I shrugged. It was pointless to resist.

I went and saddled up Daemon, who was prancing about like a part in his stable. I led him out, ready for Honda to mount. Daemon stood, impatiently pawing the ground. I held him still, and waited for Honda to mount, commenting on the way he did this, and helpfully criticising him.

I led the horse into the school, and let him go, while I turned to shut the gate. As Honda walked off round the outside of the school, I climbed onto the fence, and sat to watch him warm my horse up; in the way I had taught him.

"Ask him to trot on." I suggested, and watched as Daemon trotted on. "That's good!" I called. I spoke too soon, for at that moment, Daemon sped up into a fast canter, and went straight towards the fence, where he stopped suddenly, causing Honda to go soaring over his head, and straight into a pile of...horse shit.

I ran over to him, smothering my laughter as I did so, "Are you ok?"

He struggled to his feet, brushing himself off as he did so, "Um, and yeah. I think so."

"Broken anything? Hurt anything."

"Only my pride." He looked so sad, and pitiful, that I could no longer control myself. I burst out laughing, and he soon joined in, realising that the fact that he was covered in horseshoot was pretty hilarious.

I went to grab hold of Daemon, and Honda held him for me, whilst I pulled on my hat, and sorted out some music that I was today going to ride to. It started to play, and had a strong beat. She was a Welsh singer, Jem. The music was good, and had the right rhythms for me to ride to, so whilst I rode and made my naughty horse do some work, Honda sat and watched.

I finished riding, and rugged up my horse, before letting him and Puella out into the field. Honda helped me to finish the stable work, before we went home, well, back to his apartment.

I was nice enough to let him have first shower, and while he did that, I prepared a salad for supper, hoping he would make an omelette or something whilst I showered. He finally came out of the shower (he spent nearly as long in there as Tea or Sakura would), and I went and got into it, warming myself up, and cleaning all the icky horse mess off. When I came out of the shower, wearing one of Honda's t-shirts and my panties, with a pair of his jeans over the top, he had made omelette's and we ate immediately, sitting on the sofa and watching pointless television.

I slept in his arms that night, and when I woke up in the morning, I slid out of bed, helping my self to some coffee before going to brush my teeth. I quietly called a cab, to take us to school, as I didn't feel like walking, and I returned to the bathroom, where there was a big mirror, so I could see to plait my hair.

I walked back into his bedroom, and woke him up, by shaking him, at first gently, and then getting harder. He groaned.

"Taxi'll be here in ten minutes."

“Taxi? We are living the highlife!”

“Well, one must travel to school in style.”

He got dressed in no time at all, as boys do, and we were outside and waiting for the taxi. It soon pulled up, and as we piled into the back, I landed on Honda's lap. I was trying to get off, when he took me by the waist, and kept me, there, so I swivelled round to do my best at facing him.

Although it was uncomfortable sitting like this, the situation was bettered by him kissing me, and as he did so, me kissing him back (obviously). I let my hands clasp around the back of his head, and then as we kissed, whilst he was totally absorbed in me, I began to mess up his normally perfectly triangular shaped hair. And he didn't notice.

By the time we got to school his hair actually looked quite nice, in all its scruffiness, and as we made our way to the classroom, holding hands, I noticed some of the girls looking at him in a different light. We got to the classroom, and as we made our way to a pair of seats by the window, the others greeted us.

Then, all of a sudden, there was a loud squeal, coming from Kaede. “Honda?! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO YOUR HAIR?!?”

At once all the other's noticed, and whilst I sat there and tried to laugh innocently, Honda was in a state of panic. He felt for the triangle, and noticing it wasn't there, he ran off in the direction of the bathroom, whilst I sat, and exploded with laughter.

When he came back, he tried to ignore me, and succeeded, well sort of, until I started to whisper in his ear, and give him secretive pecks on the cheek. This finally annoyed him, and as I went to kiss him on the cheek, he turned around, and caught me head on, full on the lips. I wasn't prepared for this, and nearly died from lack of oxygen thanks to him. It got better though, and it might have continued, had we not been annoyed by Yuula coming over and punching him the stomach, telling him to let me go, or else.

15 - Chapter 15

The term passed, and I did well in the exams, which was a good thing. I also took some riding exams, which I passed with flying colours, as well as winning most of the competitions I entered. Even Honda was becoming quite a good little rider.

It was spring break at last, and we had not a lot planned. I was having a break from competing, and therefore had more free time to spend with all my friends. We had already met up to go the mall, and do other things like that, but by the second week I was bored.

I happened to be sitting in my room one day, reading a book, when the phone rang. I answered and something squealed in my ear, something that could only be described as Kaede. She was mega excited about something. "GUESS WHAT?"

"Um, what?"

"SETO SAYS YOU CAN ALL COME OVER, TO HIS HOUSE, TOMORROW!!!!!"

"Oh, ok. Cool. What do I need to bring?"

"UMMM, actually, hang on, SETO, WHAT DO THEY NEED TO BRING?" I heard Seto's voice in the background. "OK, YOU NEED TO BRING-"

"KAEDE, You don't need to shout, I can hear you perfectly."

"EEP, but I'm so excited. Ok, well, well, um, what was I saying, um? Oh yeah. You need to bring a swimming costume, and pyjamas. Oh, and Seto wants to know if you and Honda will share a room or

not?"

"Um, ok, ok, and yes please. What time?"

"Um, 11?"

"Sure thing. See you then."

"Uhuh, ok.... BYEEEE!"

I hung up, and nursed my poor eardrums. Too much Kaede was bad for one's health. I looked around my room, glad that it was quite tidy. Sakura was meant to be coming around that evening, and maybe Yuula too, if they survived Kaede's phone calls.

They both arrived at about 6 o'clock, baring DVDs and sweets. We ordered Pizza, and totally crashed onto the sofa, with our buckets of food. Whilst we sat and munched our yummy supper, we watched some fantastic films, before conversation turned to tomorrow, at Seto's house.

"Does he have a swimming pool then?" I asked.

"Yup, you doofus," Yuula was polite as ever.

"Heh. Apparently Yami and I have to share a room."

"Poor you." Sakura playfully slapped me, before angrily retorting, "well, he's better than Honda."

“Well, Kaede asked me if I wanted to share a room with Duke.”

“Awww” Sakura and I replied in synchronisation.

“Grrrr....You guys are SO mean.”

“Are we?” Sakura asked, smiling wickedly.

“YES!”

“oh, ok then. So you don't want the chocolate?”

“YES!”

“Yes you do want it, or yes you don't want it?”

“YES, awaa, I don't know. Yes, I do want it!”

“Yes? You DON'T want it?”

“Yes, all the more for us then, Sakura.” I spoke over Yuula's head, as she had proceeded into a deep sulk. She then started to squirm as Sakura and I poked her, “QUIT IT!”

We all collapsed into a fit of the giggles, and stayed pretty hyper until the wee hours of the morning,

when we fell onto my bed, in a state of exhaustion.

The next morning Sakura and Yuula went home to grab some clean stuff, saying they would pick me up later. I pulled on a brown skirt, that was slightly boho in style, and very long, accessorizing it with a frilly white shirt, much like that worn by men in the 17th century, with a military-style waistcoat over the top. I had on an oversized and intricate belt, made of leather circles and large bronze discs, and coupled it with a similarly bronze necklace. I pulled on a pair of semi-high, but still slightly stiletto-ish, leather boots, that were again intricately carved.

I had time to kill, for about half an hour, so I went to the piano and practised a beautiful Allemande by Mozart, that I was meant to be learning. I was a self-taught piano player, and singer; well, self-taught since I came to Japan. I used to have lessons in France.

Finally, the doorbell rang, and as I rushed to answer it, I beamed happily at Sakura, who had turned up in her kombi, which was already nearly full, to take us all to Seto's. I climbed into the back, and squished myself in between Honda and Yuula, who muttered about it, for some unknown reason. Joey wasn't in the car, and I asked if he was coming later with Marc and Takumi (who had both also been invited).

"Oh, Joey wasn't invited. Kaede thought it might be awkward." Sakura informed me, looking quickly at me in her rear-view mirror.

"Oh, ok then." I settled into the kombi, relaxing a little in the small space I had. In order to stretch my legs out a little more, I put them over Honda, who was sitting by the door, and proceeded to squish him. At least he didn't moan too much. And I was a little more comfortable.

We finally reached the Kaiba mansion, and as Sakura rolled down the window, to talk to the little speaker thingy, the gates rolled open, and she drove on up, closing the window as she went. We pulled up right outside the front door, and all piled out, shaking out our aching limbs.

Kaede came running down the stairs that led to the front door, and greeted us all in turn, before leading us into the main hall, where Seto, and what must have been his million and two servants were waiting. As he too greeted us, I looked around in awe at the marble floor, and large staircase. Well, not really in awe, as it was quite similar to my old home, just much bigger. And Japanese.

First of all we were all shown to our rooms, and as we were each led to separate corridors, I had the sensation that at least one of us was going to get lost. I asked Seto, who was leading Honda and I, if he ever got lost.

“I tend to leave a trail of bread crumbs.”

“Good idea.”

He pointed to a door on his left, “That's Mokuba's bedroom, and his friend, Tenshi, will be staying next door.

We nodded, and he led us to another staircase, which we mounted. Down another long corridor, we finally came to a door, which Seto opened and announced to be our room, “Kaede chose it.”

It was huge, and had a soft carpet, with a large four-poster bed. It had an ensuite bathroom, and a large pair of French windows, that were open, and allowing a soft breeze that was allowing the blind in front of them to blow gently in the wind. The room was a soft cream colour, with beautiful pictures hanging in it. I turned to Seto, who was still standing in the doorway, “It's beautiful.”

“I'm glad you like it. If you need anything, take the second door on the left, and it will lead you to the entrance hall. Also, the phone will take you to my operator, who can connect you to anywhere in the house.”

I nodded.

“I guess such luxury is unusual to you?” he smirked.

I looked at my attire, and guessed it might be because I was dressed in slightly hippyish clothing, so I looked at him, and spoke confidently, "You guess wrong."

His face fell, "What do you mean?"

"What I mean is, yes your house is big, but it is similar to your house in France. And the house in Australia is quite big too. And the one in England."

"So you are rich?! Kaede said you were, but I wasn't so sure."

"My father is one of France's best lawyers. My mother was one of the best international riders. And my grandparents discovered some cure for something or other, so yes, I am pretty rich. Most of my money, well, my personal money, is in a trust fund until I am 21."

"Oh," he paused. "Well then, I shall leave you to settle in. Lunch is at 1. I think we might be swimming after lunch."

Honda spoke up, "Ok, cool. Thanks, Kaiba."

He nodded and left the room, and when he had gone, Honda spoke, "Well, this is pretty amazing."

"Uhuh." And we both collapsed into fits of giggles.

Whilst Honda continued to explore the room, in typical male fashion, I went out of the French windows,

and onto a large balcony. I was standing, looking out over the Kaiba grounds, when I heard a voice, “It not very pretty is it. Well, not as pretty as me, anyway. Prettier than you though.”

I looked around, searching for the voice. I could see no one, not even anyone standing on the balcony next to me. “Who are you?” I asked.

And then I saw her. “It is I, Tenshi, angel of those who are beautiful and perfect. And Mokuba's girlfriend.”

“Oh, I remember you now. We met at the beach, right?”

“Yes, you did have the pleasure of meeting me there. And now you have come here to see your friend. The strange one.”

“Um, yes. I suppose so. Do you mean Seto?”

“No, I mean *her*.”

“Oh, Kaede. Ok. Well, um yeah, I have.”

“Poor her. Who'd want to be friends with you?” and before I could say another word she had disappeared again. I had no idea that little kids were so unpleasant. Well, she was only a few months younger than me, but still, what gave her the right?

I walked back into the room, and must have had a confused look on my face, because Honda looked at me weirdly, “What's wrong, honey?”

“Well, a lot will be wrong if you EVER call me that again.”

“Ahem, ok. But what's wrong?”

“Oh, I was just insulted by some random little kid, that's all. Nothing much. Anyways, don't we need to get downstairs?”

“Uh, yeah. Good point.”

He took my hand, and together we made our way downstairs, to see what awaited us on this fine spring day.

16 - Chapter 16

We all ate lunch together, and it was kind of awkward, as Yami and Seto don't really get on, but it was sort of ok, as he just talked to Takumi most of the time. I sat, and politely toyed with my food. It was fish. One of worst things ever, I actually hated it. It made me feel so ill. So when the servants came to take away our plates, I felt extremely embarrassed, as I was one of the few who actually had not eaten a thing.

After lunch, we had a rest period which consisted of nothing much, other than me totally thrashing Honda at a game of Pool, and he then getting a bit stroppy. And then all of a sudden, Kaede went scarily weird, and sort of, hyperactive, and decided we were all going to go swimming.

We all went to our various rooms around the house, and grabbed our swimming stuff, changing into it, and assembling once again by Seto's massive and extremely cool and posh swimming pool. There was a hot tub beside it, and also a sauna room.

I had changed into a bikini, and pulled a sarong around my middle, and also just pulled on a t-shirt, as I was quiet self-conscious, especially after what had happened. I was still also quite underweight, for my height, with my ribs showing a little bit, but it wasn't too bad.

My swimming costume was a pale blue gingham check bikini, halter neck, and it looked great with my tanned skin, and dark hair, with the matching ice blue eyes. The t-shirt I had pulled on over the top was quite low cut, and a beautiful and pale blue as well. The sarong matched my t-shirt, and it was so soft and silky, and then I also pulled on a pair of flip-flops that were a bright blue. Honda changed into a pair of dark blue boardies, and he too pulled on a pair of flip-flops, his made of a sort of leathery material.

We again went downstairs, and made our way to the pool. Most of the others were already there, and were either in the pool, in the hot tub, or lounging beside it. Honda went and did a massive bomb thing into the pool, whilst I went and sat on one of the sun loungers. The day was a warm one, and the sun large and hot. I lay down, and pulled on my huge sunglasses, when one of the servants came up to me, "Excuse me, Miss Osculaix," I smothered laughter when he tries to pronounce my name, "But you have a phone call."

“Oh, ok. Where can I take it?”

“If you'll follow me, miss, you can take it just this way.”

“Um, ok. Thanks.”

I followed the servant into the house, and took the phone that he held out to me. It was a portable, so I walked over to a chair and sat down, “Hello?”

“Hey!”

“Yumiko?”

“You guessed it!”

“What're you doing calling me? And how did you know where I was? And how did you get the number?”

“Marc.”

“Oh, ok. Um, cool.”

“Uhuh.”

“Um, so what did you want?”

“Oh yeah. What I wanted was...”

“Ok, hurry up about it.”

“Ooh, little miss tetchy, are we? Fine then. I won't tell you.”

“TELL ME.”

“Tell you what?”

“WHY YOU CALLED ME!”

“Oh yeah, I forgot.”

She was so strange.

“Oh yeah, I remember. GUESS WHAT?”

“What?”

“I just moved to Domino City!!!”

“WTF?”

“I JUST MOVED HERE!”

“Yay! Hang on, why?”

“My dad's job. He got transferred here.”

“Oh, ok. Cool.”

“And, well, mum always wanted to come back to Japan.”

“That is so awesome. Can I, like, come around sometime?”

“Um, no.”

“Why not?”

“Jetlag must sleep. Bye!”

“Um, ok. Bye!”

And she hung up. Weird child that she was, but it was so cool that she now lived in Domino City! I made my way back outside again, and thankfully took the drink offered to me. I took a sip, and nearly died.

How much vodka was in this? I wasn't complaining, but a little warning might have been useful.

I made my way over to a sun lounger, and rather than sitting, this time I removed my sarong, revealing the little shorts of my bikini, and then taking my top off. I was facing the house, so everyone could see my back. As I pulled the t-shirt over my head, I felt people staring. And then I remembered, the vivid scar that stood out at the bottom of my back. It would be just above my shorts. I was very self-conscious about it, and I knew immediately that everyone had noticed it. Of course, Honda already knew about it, but I didn't want anyone else to know, so I hurriedly pulled the t-shirt back on.

The scar was from an operation that I had had after my last riding fall. When I had fallen, I had dislodged a vertebra, without realising, and I was lucky that it hadn't damaged the spinal cord as well. It had to be put back into place, which was quite a difficult operation, and had left me in a back cast for a while, explaining why I hadn't ridden for a while before I came to Japan.

With my t-shirt back on, I settled once again on the sun lounger. Everyone began to ask me if I was coming in, to which I declined. Finally, Yuula got annoyed with me, and came over, demanding that I at least get in the hot tub.

"I don't want to."

"Is it `cause of that gross scar thing on your back?"

I looked at her, "Yes."

"Well don't worry about it, it's only a scar. I mean, its not like it totally deforms you, or anything."

"I just don't like people seeing it."

"Why not?"

“Because it increases some of my biggest fears inside of me, and people always ask about it, making my fear grow.”

“Well then, none of us will talk about it. Just get in the hot tub, or the pool you doofus!”

I smiled at her; she was such a supportive friend. So once again, I took my t-shirt off, and made my way to the side of the pool. I stood at the deep end, and did one of the most spectacular dives, before swimming along the bottom of the pool. This time Honda didn't attempt to stop me, and I managed to swim a few lengths underwater, thoroughly enjoying myself. When I finally appeared again, we all had great fun, splashing around together, and totally enjoying ourselves.

We all spent nearly the whole afternoon in the pool, until evening came, and we all went inside to change for dinner. I had already presumed that it might be quite posh, so I had made Honda bring a suit, as Kaede had forewarned me that it was to be quite a smart dinner, and that we yet again had another opportunity to dress in black tie dresses, thanks to her having persuaded Seto that it would be fun. So Honda was grumbling about having to wear a suit. It was dark blue, with a very thin grey pinstripe, and he wore a blue, slightly shimmery, shirt beneath it, which was open necked.

I was wearing an ice blue satin dress, to match my eyes. It was rouched and hooked together at the back, and had double straps, that were very thin, and crossed over behind my back.

We walked downstairs together, and everyone else looked similarly elegant, and as we walked into the massive dining room, the evening began, in all its style.

17 - Chapter 17

We ate a splendid dinner, and Seto was obviously trying to make us feel welcome. It sort of succeeded. After we had all eaten, we retired to one of the reception rooms, where everyone took a seat, and began to settle down. Honda took a seat on one of the large sofas in the room, and I sat on the floor at his feet, which was no mean feat in my long and not too puffy out dress.

After a while we had all settled, and were talking amongst ourselves. I had just taken another sip out of my wine, when Mokuba and Tenshi walked in. Immediately we all stopped talking, and looked at them expectantly, and they came and sat down in our midst. Seto spoke, "Mokuba, what do you want?"

Before he had a chance to answer, Tenshi, who was wearing a long dark purple dress, that would have barely reached my hips, but was floor-length on her, interrupted, "We want to play a game."

"Then go and play a game!"

"With you."

We all looked at each other nervously, and Seto again spoke, looking quiet angry, "Ok then. We'll all play a game. What game?"

"Truth or Dare."

"Oh god" we all groaned. How childish. It was the game we had played when we were, like, well, her age.

But then she spoke or again, "Truth or Dare...or Kidd, Command or Torture."

Now this was sounding more interesting. Yami/Yugi spoke, "and there are rules?"

"No, you can make them do ANYTHING."

Everyone once again looked around nervously, I mean, who wouldn't be scared if some random 12 year old was telling them what to do.

"I'll start," Tenshi announced, whilst glaring at me evilly. I was afraid, very afraid. "I chose you," she pointed at me, and I began to shake ever so slightly, partly from the cold (as it was a little cold, and very dark outside). "And you have to," she looked as if she was thinking hard, "I command you to stand outside, with no clothes on. For five minutes. Actually, no, ten minutes."

Honda spoke, "C'mon, let her wear something."

"No!"

Everyone looked at this weird psychopathic child.

"Fine then. You have to take your dress off and stand outside."

"Mon Dieu!" I said as I asked Honda to undo my dress. There were doors into the grounds in the room we were in, so as I let my dress fall to the floor, I stepped out of it. I was yet again wearing stilettos. That were this time white and very strappy. I stood, in my underwear, that was a strapless cream, and very lacy bra, with matching shorts (that were pant, just short pants), as Seto unlocked the doors. He opened them for me, and as I walked out of them, he apologised.

"Its fine."

I took a step onto the gravel path and as I did so, the heavens opened, and rain began to fall heavily from the vastly ominous black clouds. But I was not going to give in that easily. I looked back into the room, and asked Honda to pass me my bag, which he did. As I took the small purse from him, I turned my back on my friends, and began to walk deeper into the dark and the gardens.

Walking whilst unzipping a bag proved to be quite difficult, especially in stilettos, and as I made my way along the dark path, I pulled a cigarette out of my bag and lit up. I knew my friends would kill me if they knew, but sometimes you just sort of needed to, well, go with the flow.

Meanwhile After Ana had been made to go and stand in the rain; there was outrage in the room. Kaede was fuming, "How could you let her go out?" she looked at Seto, who looked at Tenshi, "Um, maybe we had better get her back in."

"No." Tenshi was adamant. It'll spoil the game.

"But she might get pneumonia!" exclaimed Honda.

The conversation continued as such until they noticed that Ana was indeed not standing there anymore.

"She'll be back in a minute, she's probably gone to get in another way," Yuula was getting bored, and wished to hurry up, "Lets play again."

"Ok," said Tenshi in a sinister way, "Yuula, I command you as a torture to kiss Duke."

"WHAT?! NO WAY!"

"It's a command."

"NO WAY!"

"Ok then, Duke, I command you to kiss Yuula."

Duke looked up from where he had been sitting, red-faced. "Um, ok then." He slowly stood up, and walked over to where Yuula was sitting, before leaning down and lifting her face to his. Her face contained a look of pure horror, and as they got closer, she pulled away, "NO WAY AM I KISSING HIM. GET LOST!" and she stormed off. Sakura went after her, and soon the whole group stopped the game, that had been so proudly suggested.

I came back in, after my cigarette, and the allotted ten minutes were up, and I was absolutely soaking wet, my hair hanging down, and covering the whole of my top half. I went back into the room, which was so warm after the absolute freezing-ness if outside, and sat down by Honda, who wrapped his arms around me, in an attempt to warm me up.

"What happened to the game?" I asked.

"Yuula."

"Oh, ok."

After that we once again fell back into a regime of chatter, and were yet again having a fun time, more than ever after Tenshi and Mokuba went to bed. I never actually put my dress back on, and I gradually started to get warmer, and let Honda absorb all my wetness.

We stayed up until about two in the morning, when everyone had had enough to drink, and was pretty shattered, so we all made our way to our various bedrooms, and got changed for the night. I pulled on a long nightdress that was midnight blue, and soft and silky.

I climbed into the large bed, settling in between the heavy silk sheets, and wriggling as close to Honda's warm body as I could, still trying to rid a chill from my bones.

We had passed a great time At Seto's, and the whole holiday had been pretty good, and it was with regret that we all returned to school. Work started again for the finals at the end of the year, and all seemed to be going quite well. I once again had less time for my friends, as I began to concentrate more on my riding, although this time I kept a healthy balance.

One evening, when Marc and I were enjoying a quiet time at home together (most of the time either I was at Honda's, or Honda was at mine) when the phone rang, making us both jump. Marc answered, but I couldn't gather too much from the phone call, other than it was our father. Well, it must have been, Marc was speaking in French. It sounded like he was asking us to France, and my suspicions were confirmed when Marc said, "we'd love to come! You want to talk to Ana-Gaelle (my father always called me by my full name)? Yeah, sure I'll just pass you over." As he was saying this I had been furiously shaking my head, and gestulating wildly. When he passed me the phone I shot daggers at him, and politely spoke into it.

"Hello, father."

"Hello, Ana-Gaelle. I presume you knew what I asked?"

"Yes, and I too accept, on the condition that I may bring a friend."

"Why, of course. We have plenty enough rooms for them."

"Oh, don't worry, we can share."

"Oh, ok then. Well, are your studies going well?"

"Yes, father. Oh, and I am now one of the best riders in Japan. For my age."

"That's...nice."

"I might compete when I come over. Please could you enter me in some competitions?"

"I'll try dear," I heard a woman's voice calling in the background, and a child crying, "Oh, I must go, Ana-Gaelle, Angelicque and Luca need me. I'll see you this summer, the tickets will come soon. Say goodbye to Marc for me."

"Bye."

I hung up, and looked blank and miserable. "This summer is going to be great."

On the Sunday night I went around to Honda's house. It was going to be a non-school uniform day at school the next day, so I took around clothes for that, but somehow forgot my nightclothes, and toothbrush. As I went up the stairs to his apartment, my bag broke, and all the stuff fell out of it, well, most of the stuff, causing me to go running down the stairs hunting for it all.

Honda, hearing the loud exhortations emitting from my mouth, opened his apartment door, and together we managed to retrieve everything, before remounting the stairs and going into his flat.

18 - Chapter 18

The sun streamed in through the window, seeing as we had yet again left the blinds open. I was lying in Honda's arms, our limbs intertwined. I slowly untangled myself, trying to be gentle and not awaken him, as I fell out of the bed, landing on the floor, and hurting my butt and hip. I stood up, rubbing my sore spots, and walked into the bathroom. I was wearing one of his t-shirts, and it came to just about my hips, and I pulled it down as I walked into the bathroom. I grabbed my toothbrush, and began to brush my teeth.

Leaning over the basin, I spat out the mouthful of toothpaste I had in my mouth, and leant over for a while, to wash out my mouth with water from the tap. I had just finished this when I nearly jumped out of my skin, feeling someone putting their arms around me. I swivelled around, and found myself face to face with Honda. He tried to kiss me, but before he could, I shoved his toothbrush in his mouth, "your breath stinks."

I stood and watched him brushing his teeth, and when he had done he once more came and grabbed me around the waist, holding me close to him. "I'm tired," he announced spectacularly.

"We only just got up."

"Well, lets go back to bed then."

"Um, ok..."

He took my hand, and dragged me back to bed, pulling the duvet over both of us, and we began to doze once again, not noticing the time.

I woke up once more, to find the space beside me in bed totally empty. I got up, and sleepily rubbed my eye, whilst I walked off in search of Honda. I found him in the kitchen, hurriedly gulping a glass of OJ. He looked at me in panic, "You're not dressed yet?!"

"Um, neither are you?"

"SO, have you seen the time?"

"No," I looked at the clock on the microwave. It read 10 o'clock. "shoot!"

"I know!"

We both hurried to the bedroom, and pulled on some clothes, so glad that it was a non-uniform day. As Honda pulled on a pair of dark blue, slightly loose, jeans, and a creamy-weird coloured t-shirt, I pulled on a pair of black stone-washed drainpipe jeans, and a loose and baggy grey jumper. I was wearing a red bra underneath (which you could sort of see, as the jumper collar hung off one shoulder), and over the top of my jeans I pulled on a pair of black leather boots, that had stiletto heels (as did most of my shoes) and pointy toes. Honda pulled on a red and black leather jacket, as I waited for him. He picked up some keys, and we walked out of the flat, shutting the door behind us. We were so late for school.

Leaving the apartment building, I began to walk in the direction of the bus stop, when Honda grabbed my arm and pulled me the other way. He led me to a motorbike, that was parked on the walkway. It was black, and had two helmets hanging on it, which Honda went and grabbed, passing a black one to me. "Put it on."

"You have a motorbike?"

"I didn't tell you?"

“NO!” I walked around it, admiring it, and laughed when I saw the make, “It's a Honda.”

“Well done.”

“It's Honda's Honda.”

“Well done.

“There is a Honda belonging to Honda.”

He groaned.

“There is a Honda of Honda.”

“There is an Ana to Honda, who is being annoying.”

“Honda's Honda!” I erupted with laughter, as he picked me up, and shoved me onto the seat of the bike, climbing on in front of me. He grabbed my arms, and wrapped them around him, before putting the keys into the ignition, and starting the bike. We roared off into the steady flow of traffic, and arrived at school in no time.

It was break, and loads of kids who were in the schoolyard stopped and stared as we both climbed off the bike, me still in fits of laughter, and walked into the school, having hung our helmets back on the bike. We made our way to reception, and told them that yes we were here, but we'd had to go to the doctor's. A little white lie couldn't hurt THAT much.

When we walked into the classroom, our friends attacked us, demanding to know where we had been.

“I CANT BELIVE YOU MISSED THE FIRST TWO HOURS OF SCHOOL!” Yuula shouted at me.
“WHERE WERE YOU?”

At first we insisted that we had gone to the doctors, but after a while of pertinent insistence, we gave in, and told them the truth. “We overslept.”

“WHAT?!” they all shouted at once.

“Well, we didn't really oversleep, as we both got up at about 6, we just went back to sleep afterwards.”

“WHAT?!”

“Doofuses.”

“Idiots.”

“Lucky.”

“I hate you.”

“Guys, we need to go to Maths.”

The last contributions from Ryou.

19 - Chapter 19

We all sat down in Maths, and got out the really heavy books that we have to lug to every lesson. We had just finished a doing quadratic equations, and had no idea what our next topic was to be, although we hoped it would be easy.

Our teacher walked in, and we stood to greet her, or face her wrath. She was a pretty cool teacher, and at least explained everything, so that even the dumbest people, well, person (Joey), could understand. She began to talk, and my mind began to wander, only coming back to it all when I noticed that she was explaining something. Triangles. Great fun. I soon stopped listening to the lesson, and realised that everyone, well, all of our friends, were looking at me and laughing. After a while, I realised that they were actually laughing at Honda, and I soon joined in the laughter, as we all tried to work out the area of Honda's perfectly triangular hair.

I began to feel sorry for him, however, and I noticed that he was getting quite mad with everyone, so I turned to him, and spoke soothingly in French, "Why don't you let me cut it off?"

Everyone stopped laughing and looked at me, some of them (Sakura) understanding me. Sakura spoke, again in French, "Um, Ana, I know you guys have been going out for ages, but you do know that Honda doesn't speak French?"

Before I could answer, Honda spoke. And, he spoke in French shocking everyone, "Actually, I do. Ana has taught me."

"And we're going to France this summer," I added.

"Yes, and we're going to....WHAT?!?!"

"I didn't tell you?"

“NO!”

“Oh. Oops. Do you want to come to France with Marc and I this summer?”

“Ok.”

“Cool!”

“Yeah, so where was I, oh yeah. And yes! We're going to France this summer.”

Everyone just stared.

For the first evening in a long time, I didn't spend it with Honda, and I went to see Daemon as usual. He was hopefully going to be coming to France with us, as we were to be there for the whole summer, and was going to be transported soon.

I rode, and practiced a dressage test for a show at the weekend, and also did a bit of show jumping, before returning home, and having a shower. I showered quickly, and changed into a linen skirt and a white gypsy-like blouse, that was now more appropriate for the approaching summer.

That evening we were to have guests, and for once, Marc had cooked. He had prepared what I knew to be one Of Yumiko's favourite meals, which was perfect, as she was one of our guests. Well, half of our guests. Her brother was the other half, as they were the two that had just moved to Domino City from Australia, as her brother had wished to attend the university here also, to study architecture.

Yumiko had moved with him, as she had always wanted to live in Japan, and this was the perfect opportunity. She was going to come to our school, but occasionally got to Art College as well. Good excuse to miss lessons.

The doorbell rang, and I answered, as Marc was in the kitchen, cooking noodles, and other weird things. Strange boy. Standing on the doorstep were Yumiko, whose hair had now become a greeny colour, wearing a pair of baggy jeans, with a strappy blue top on, holding a fleecy jumper around her for warmth. "Hey," she greeted me, as she walked into the house, and on into the kitchen, "smells good," and she disappeared; yet I could hear her talking to Marc.

I stood on the doorstep, and waited for her brother to appear. And then he did. He was tall, and had short dark hair, and green eyes. The same age as Marc, his name was Peter, and he had a very strong sense of masculinity about him. I greeted him cordially, and invited him in. He was so unlike Marc, yet they were such good friends. Marc was the posh one, yet Pete was almost the opposite, he wore ill-fitting trousers, and a loose t-shirt, that was bright blue with some sort of logo on it. I didn't really take much notice. He strode purposefully into the house, and spoke to me in English, "Sweet digs, much better than the dump we've rented."

"Yoo are welcome to stay `ere whenever yoo weesh. Yoo know that."

He looked at me, as if I was totally crazy, and then burst out laughing, "Your...accent...is...soo...funny!" He was still laughing when Marc came out, and the old friends greeted each other in English. Stupid Marc, who could speak it so well. I went back over to Yumiko, and was quietly muttering to myself when she looked at me, and spoke in Japanese, "don't look so moody."

"Why not?"

"It's not becoming."

"I DON'T CARE!" I snarled.

The two guys looked at us, as if we were crazy. And then I laughed, starting everyone off, although the two guys laughed quite nervously.

We ate quickly, and the two boys disappeared to do, well, I dunno, boy's stuff. Yumiko and I sat in the kitchen for a while, before deciding to invite a few more people over. Well, I decided, and she agreed. She already knew the girls pretty well, so when I called them, she didn't mind too much. Before I knew it, the girls and I were all settled into the living room, with our favourite movie, duvets, and chocolate. We sat laughed and talked long into the night, and the boys found us, still in the lounge, when they came through in the morning.

We tidied up, and they all left, and soon Yumiko and I were the only one's left, and I nearly fainted when she finally left, and told me she's see me at school, on Monday. Turned out she was going to be in my class.

The rest of the school year passed quickly and in a blur. I spent most of the rest of it laughing, and did well in my finals. Honda and I missed the last couple of weeks of term, and before we knew it we were on a plane, travelling half way across the world, to France.

20 - Chapter 20

I sat in the plush seat of the aeroplane. I loved flying, as it gave me a chance to think. Unfortunately, the thoughts were not all that pleasant, as every time I was happy about returning to France, I remembered that she, my father's new wife was going to be there.

We had all dressed quite smartly for going on the plane, as we were travelling first class. Honda and Marc were both in suits, and I was wearing a knee-length dress that was cut in the traditional Chinese style and was a beautiful pale blue, with flowers embroidered on it.

Honda and I had two seats together, and he was happily snoring away in a reclining position, whilst I was watching one of the in-flight movies, and looking out of the window beside me. Marc was sitting in front of us, and I think he was reclining, snoring AND watching an in-flight movie. Strange boy. Again.

The flight was a long one, and after the film, I too fell asleep, and began to doze in my own little world.

I was awoken by the sound of the pilot speaking to us, and bleary-eyed, I looked out of the window, and saw the beautiful countryside of France below us. Slowly, we began to get closer to the ground, and I nudged Honda awake, and pointed it out to him. We were flying into the airport at Charles de Gaulle, and I had already prepared myself for speaking French. I was hoping Honda had too.

We landed, smoothly and everyone finally managed to get off the plane, and get our luggage. As we went through customs, I walked in front, and I turned to talk to Honda, already speaking, when I noticed he was no longer behind me. In a panic, I spun round, looking in all directions for him. Marc came, and helped me look, and we still couldn't see him. And then we did. He was stuck at customs, gesticulating wildly and speaking a mixture of French and Japanese.

I ran over, to see what was happening. Asking one of the customs men, I felt Honda's gaze, and I knew that he wasn't feeling too good, humiliation and embarrassment burning him from the inside. I spoke to the customs man, and explained that Honda was doing nothing illegal, other than sleeping with an underage (well, in France anyway) girl (well, I didn't say that...but I was thinking it). So after checking our

passports, well, both of my passports, as I had a French one and a Japanese one, he let us into the country, and gruffly told us to enjoy our stay.

Next we had to take a train to Toulouse, and then another to a smaller station, and finally, my father would send the car to pick us up, and take us to the summer house by the beach, with the big posh equestrian centre nearby, where I planned to do a lot of competing.

The train ride to Toulouse was long, and busy, and when we got off it I was glad, although the smaller one wasn't much better, filled with tourists and other people, who wanted a day by the beach. When we finally reached the small station, after travelling for nearly three days, I was just glad to be able to breathe the free fresh air once again. The salt caught on my lips, and I licked it off, enjoying the smell of the sea air, and the thought that in a few hours, I could be enjoying the warmth of the sea, although I would rather sleep first.

The car was there and waiting, as father had promised, and we all slid into it, Marc in the front passenger seat, and Honda and I in the back, whilst the driver loaded the luggage we had been lugging around for what felt ages. I settled into the leather seats, and took a deep breath. It was a new car, and it smelt like it. Honda was admiring it, appreciatively. I gave him a teasing look, and said jokingly, "Is it a Honda?"

He hit me playfully, and we had a play fight, until Marc told us to grow up, sounding bored. Stupid older brother. Honda settled back into the seat, and I rested my head on his shoulder, as the car pulled out of the small car park, and into a small road. The journey was quite a short one, but enough to take us away from any civilisation, and I enjoyed the drive along the coast, my heart only stopping when we came into the sight of the house.

It wasn't as big as the other house, but big enough, with its whitewashed walls, and slate roof. The house was old, with the original diagonally lead-piped windows and green wooden shutters that were firmly fixed back, until close of day. It was a squarish house, apart from the southern wing, which curved into a circular tower, although it wasn't that big. This was my part of the house, with its small windows, and wisteria and creeper coloured walls that looked amazing, even at this time of the year.

We all walked through the large front door, the driver bringing in the luggage, once again, and Marc called out for our father, Jonathan, to say that we were here. Finally, after what felt like ages, he came. Honda had gone for a wee somewhere, so it was just Marc and I, and although he greeted us fondly

enough, I was not feeling totally the same way. Father had just asked where my friend was, or if she hadn't come, when Honda walked in, and I spoke, "Father, this is my friend, my boyfriend, Honda." I turned to Honda, "I'd like you to meet my father, Jonothan Osculaix." They awkwardly shook hands, and I tried to smile encouragingly at Honda, but it became more of a grimace.

Then I heard the sound of stilettos, and I looked up, to see a shot, thin, blonde woman. Her. "Bonjour, Angelicque," I greeted her formerly, and kissed her on each cheek, although she simply glared at me. She then greeted Marc, simpering how handsome he was. I was going to be sick.

"Little Luca is asleep at the moment, but he was so looking forward to meeting his big brother, he will be so happy to see you later." I noticed that I wasn't mentioned. And also that she had ignored Honda. So I put emphasis on it.

"This is my boyfriend, Honda, Angelicque."

She laughed, a pathetic sound, "Aren't you a little too young for a boyfriend."

"Your brother didn't complain."

She laughed nervously, "what brother? I have no brother." She looked at my father, but he didn't seem to notice, before she turned her vindictive eyes on me once again.

Before she could speak, I did, "I am tired. I am going to bed." Brat mode had automatically come back to me, and I was going to become exactly the spoiled dog she thought I was. I picked up my suitcase, and made my way to my wing of the house, Honda docilely following me.

"Honda, your room is this way?" that stupid voice again.

I spun around, my eyes flashing, "Oh, don't worry we'll share."

Honda looked between us, and then followed me once more, leaving my brother, father and stepmother standing there uncertainly.

I was the only one who had a key for my part of the house, other than the servants, who cleaned when we were away, so I was glad that it kept my family out. I pulled the key out of my pocket, having put it there in preparation earlier (I was now in jeans, changing when on the train, as I was filthy). The door swung open, to reveal a well lit circular room, with a sofa fitted on one wall, and an open fire on part of the wall. There were large bookcases, and a wrought iron spiral staircase, which went up the middle, and right to the top floor, where the bed was (three floors in all).

I went up the stairs, Honda still following on behind, and walked through the second room, in which there was a piano, and a computer and desk, another sofa (although smaller), and a TV, with a huge collection of DVDs beside it. Up another flight, and we were in my room.

The ceiling was midnight blue, with star constellations painted all over it. The other cylindrical walls were painted a blank white, and the only windows were slight slits in the walls, that let in a little light, but not much. A chandelier hung from the ceiling, modern and made of lots of little wires with tiny lights on the end of each.

The staircase came up in the centre of the room, and ended in a beautiful balustrade, and the bed lay to the left of it. It was large, and another wrought iron bed, this time weathered and white, although still four-poster. It had a plain white duvet, and pillows, and looked so innocent, and pure.

I walked across the varnished wooden floor to the bed, and pulling off my shoes, I climbed onto it, pulling the duvet over the top of me. I think I was asleep before Honda had even sat down on the bed.

21 - Chapter 21

I woke up, and as I opened my eyes, I saw Honda was already awake, and staring at me. I uttered a small scream, and fell off the bed in shock. As I stood up, I rubbed my sore butt, and cursed quietly. Still muttering (*Maria-styley*), I went down a light of stairs, and walked over to my suitcase, pulling out some clothes. I shouted up to Honda, "Hey, we need to changed for dinner."

"Ok," he called back, and I heard him padding across the floor, and hopping down the stairs. He walked over to his suitcase, and I stood and watched, as he pulled out a pair of black jeans, and a white shirt. He put them on, and collapsed into a chair. I just stood and stared.

"What?"

I shook my head, "Boys scare me."

He smirked.

I pulled on a black linen halter-neck dress, and a pair of strappy sandals, before walking over to the mirror and applying my usual kohl, and mascara. Finally, I was ready, and grabbing Honda's hand, I pulled him down the stairs, and then out into the main house, we walked calmly into the dining room, and took our places opposite each other at the table.

The others were already at the table, and when Honda and I had settled ourselves, the cook came, and began to serve everyone. It was Coq-au-Vin, which I personally found absolutely disgusting, and French beans as well. Which I hated. So I was left to just drink water, as I didn't want the wine, because I was planning to ride early the next day. And also because I was so embarrassing when drunk.

Honda and Marc were typical guys, and shovelled endless amounts of food into their mouth, washing it all down with beer, and then looking very pleased with themselves. Urgh.

My father ate sparingly, and I knew it to be that he too did not particularly like this meal. He sat there and drunk quite a lot of wine, whilst trying to maintain a polite conversation.

I did not hate my father, even though I did not particularly like him that much at that point in time, but I just hated her. She had ruined my life. She was acting so stupidly right now, drinking too much, and becoming all giggly and obtuse. She was wearing a disgustingly vile pale pink dress, which was much too low-cut, and looked even worse when she leant forward in laughter.

By the end of the meal I was nearly ready to throttle her, and when we all moved into another room, she went upstairs to bed, claiming to have a headache. I saw my father give her a disgusted look. I felt myself hoping that maybe their marriage was ending. I could only hope.

We all settled into the living room, with its big leather sofa, and comfortable chairs. My father lifted a silver box, and opened it, offering it first to Marc, and then to Honda. Honda declined, when he saw what it was, but Marc accepted, and my father took one too. Marc produced a lighter, and lit up his own cigar, before lighting my father's. I, meanwhile, had grabbed another box, and pulled a cigarette out of it, which Marc then lit for me. I could feel Honda's disapproval, and I wished it away, as it covered me with its density. In the end, I killed the cigarette in an ashtray, and sat there, watching.

We all talked about any plans for the holiday, and my father kindly suggested that Honda and I, and maybe Marc should go and stay in one of the other houses for a while. It was a brilliant idea. We could go and stay in the Pyrenees, and spend a few days skiing. It was a brilliant idea.

The night got steadily later, and in the end, it was Marc who went to bed first. I went to make myself a cup of coffee, making the great mistake of leaving my father and Honda in a room together.

“So, Honda, who are you?” Jonathan asked, conversationally.

Honda looked around him, nervously, "Um, I'm Honda?!"

Jonathan frowned, and shook his head, "I know that. What I meant is, in my way, what are you doing with my daughter?"

Honda still looked bemused, as he was having trouble trying to translate the French, let alone answer, and then respond again in French. Jonathan, understanding this, switched into Japanese (Ana's mother was Japanese, so he speaks it fluently). Honda understood now, and found himself able to answer, "Uh, I'm going out with her?"

"And sleeping with her?" Jonathan put it bluntly. "You do know that's illegal?"

Honda looked startled, "WHAT?!"

"It is illegal to sleep with a minor."

"But she isn't a minor. She's 16!"

Jonathan stared at him, "I think I know my own daughter. She's only 15."

Honda was dumbstruck.

I was shattered, and so I decided to go to bed, forgetting about Honda. I made my way to my room, with

my mug of coffee, and settled myself into bed with a book, slowly beginning to dose off.

“What do you mean? She turned 16 in January!” Honda looked confused.

“No, she turned 15 in January. I should know, I am her father.”

Honda was trying not to shake, trying to deal with the knowledge that he had slept with a child. “I don't understand.”

He was trying to think back to a time when she had ever mentioned her age. She hadn't, and had they not, her friends, ever though to ask?

But she was in their year, surely, if she was only fifteen, she shouldn't be.

Jonathan noticed his puzzlement, “You are wondering how you never knew? Why she never told you? Why she was in your year? Because there was no space in the year below, and she was far enough ahead in her studies. Because she was embarrassed to be considered younger, more immature. I might not get on very well with my daughter, but I do know her. We are too similar.”

Honda did his best to smile, but merely grimaced, and his voice came out hoarse, “But that made her only 14. Why didn't she tell me?”

“She was only 14!”

Honda nodded miserably. “I'm sorry, sir. But I love her. Well, I thought I did. She has lied to me. It is as if

it is all one huge lie.”

Jonathan nodded. “I know what you mean. Don't doubt her heart, only her reason,” he took a deep breath. “Now, it is getting late. I suggest we return to our rooms.”

“Um, sir. If you don't mind, I'd like a different room?”

“That's fine. If you follow me, we have one made up.”

Honda miserably followed him up the stairs, “Sir, may I make a phone call?”

“Yes, of course. Please, feel free to use the phone in your room whenever.”

Honda thanked him, and entered the room. Sitting on the bed, he picked up the phone, and slowly dialed a phone call through to Japan. He heard someone answer, and hearing a familiar voice, he smiled slightly, as the person on the other end spoke.

“sup?” said Joey.

“Hey, its Honda.”

“WOAH! Dude, aren't you, like, in France or something?”

“Um, yeah. But I might be coming back.”

“COOL? Hang on, why? Everything not ok wit' you?”

“Not really,” and he settled down and explained everything, agreeing with the sounds of shock that Joey was making over the phone. Little did Honda realise that Joey had put him on speakerphone, and that Joey wasn't actually listening, although his sister, Serenity, was.

When Honda finally finished speaking, and asked Joey what he should do. “Dump her.”

“JOEY...NOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!” he heard a girl's voice, and jumped, thinking that it might be Ana. He could hear a slight shuffle, and then the girl's clear voice spoke into the phone.

“Hi, Honda, its Serenity.”

“Oh, hey.”

“DON'T YOU DARE DUMP HER! That is one way to break a girl's heart. So what, she didn't tell you. She probably was ashamed, and thought that you might have known. But if you didn't, what does it matter? Does it make you love her any less? Just sleep on it, and talk it over with her in the morning. And if you dump her, well, something bad will happen, like, I don't know. You'll both be miserable forever, and you'll come back here and be miserable, and she'll be in France being miserable, and then no-one will be happy.”

“Um, ok.”

“Just, DON'T BREAK UP WITH HER. Seriously.”

“Yeah, you'd better listen to my little sis, man. She's serious when she's mad.”

Honda finished the conversation quickly, and said his goodbyes, before hanging up. Still maintaining his reservations, he decided to follow Serenity's advice, and lay back, closing his eyes, falling asleep quickly, due to jetlag.

The sun entered the room, and I opened my eyes, blinking in the bright light. It was going to be a gorgeous day, and I couldn't wait to go to the beach, although I was going to ride first.

I stretched out my arms for Honda, but found only empty space and pillows. I focused my eyes, and sat up, looking for him, but seeing no evidence of him having been there for the night. Thinking nothing of it, I went down to the kitchen, and grabbed some breakfast, before making my way out onto the roads and towards the stables.

Reaching the yard, I made my way through it, and came to Daemon's box. They had cared for him well, and his coat gleamed, and his muscles stood out well. I went into a room around the back, and grabbed his tack, before tacking him up, and leading him into the school.

I mounted up, and took him through a quick warm-up before doing a simple dressage routine, and then practicing some of the harder moves. To let him relax after all the hard work, I let him fist trot freely around the ring, and then led him into a canter, letting him keep it up for as long as he wished. We were just starting a second circuit when I noticed Honda on the side of the ring. I smiled and waved, not noticing that anything was wrong.

He shouted something to me, and I didn't hear, so I turned in my seat, as he shouted again, "Why didn't you tell me?"

I was puzzled, "Tell you what?"

"Well, for example, that you are only 15?"

I didn't notice the coming corner, and I turned still further in the saddle to see Honda, slipping as I did so, and falling to the ground. I landed with a dull thud, and laughed unconsciously, as I felt the crunch of my back. Then I saw only stars.

My head burned with an intense pain, as if I had a very bad hangover. I tried to sit up, but couldn't, feeling things restraining me. I tried to open my eyes. At least this worked. I opened my eyes and saw myself in a bright white room. I listened for any people, and heard no one. I tried turning my head and couldn't, although I wanted to. It hurt too much. I tried to speak, and my voice came out quietly, "Help."

"I'm here." My father. "Honda is too."

Honda. Falling. Falling off Daemon. My back.

"What happened?" the words barely sounded, and pain rushed through my body when they did.

"You fell, off your horse, and fractured one of the vertebrae in your spine. The doctors operated, to see if they could mend it, and they did their best. You'll be in a wheelchair for a while, and might not be able to ride again. At the moment you just need to keep very still, but by the end of the week, we're hoping that we can get you home, although you will have to have plenty of rest."

I was in a deep state of shock, and distress. Never ride again? The words struck chords deep in my heart, and I felt pain encasing my soul.

I was home by the end of a second week.

22 - Chapter 21

I was lying on my bed of depression and morbidness, feeling that the world was about to end. I could just about move, but only with great pain, and much difficulty. I had had it all out with Honda, and it was all just about sorted out, thanks to the strength of our love. I regretted my lies, but he seemed to understand my logic and reasons, and hadn't stopped loving me because of it.

I was lying on my bed, almost a month and a half after the accident, having the day before managed to sit up for the first time in a very long time, even though Honda had helped me, and it had still caused me great pain. I had already been able to move my fingers, and sometimes my arms with great difficulty, but as yet had recovered nothing from my legs.

I lay on the bed, and Honda was sitting on a chair by my side, chattering away, about nothing in particular. Lying flat on your back isn't the most fun way to spend your time, and I was utterly bored, with nothing to do. Well, I had nothing to do, until that point, when the phone started ringing. It was within my reach, and I had an earpiece in my ear, so I simply had to move one little finger, and then I would be able to press the button and answer. I did so, "Hello?" I answered inquiringly. There was no answer, and I proceeded for a while to say hello, until I could hear a voice, one that I did not recognise.

"...We are gathered here today to celebrate the joining of this man, Seto Kaiba, and this woman, Kaede Mishua, in holy matrimony..."

WHAT THE HELL? I clicked it onto speakerphone, so that Honda could hear it as well, and his face reflected what I was feeling, we would have spoken, had not the voice continued.

"If any of you present today know any reason of why this man and this woman cannot be married, speak now or forever hold your peace..."

I couldn't hold my peace, and before I even managed to stop myself, a load of loud French expletives erupted from my mouth and sounded down the phone. I could hear the shock and silence they caused in the church, or wherever it was they were getting married. And then I heard Yuula.

“Um, sorry,” she spoke, and I could imagine the look on her face, “thought Ana might want to know,” and then she spoke into the phone, “Hey, Ana, yeah, I've gotta go now. By-eeeeee” and she hung up.

She phoned back again, in what I presumed was the reception, and I spoke to her briefly, before speaking to Kaede, “I can't believe you didn't tell me!”

“I'm so sorry, Ana, we wanted to. Well, I did, its just I don't have you number in France.”

“You have my mobile number!!!! And I gave it to Seto, for if anything bad happened, and you forgot how to use your phone, and needed to tell me something!!! WELL YOU DID NEED TO TELL ME SOMETHING!!”

“Um, sorry?!”

“Hmph. And congratulations.”

“Thank you!” she fairly squeaked down the phone, before handing it over to Seto. I quickly congratulated him, and we spoke briefly, before I heard someone asking politely for the phone, in the form of Sakura.

“Hiya!” she sounded happy, maybe a little tipsy, and like she was having a good time. The opposite of me. I felt left out, and very lonely.

“Hey,” I spoke dejectedly.

“How are you?”

“Not too great. You?”

“WHAT DO YOU MEAN? Not too great?”

“I mean, not to great.”

“Oh, ok. I'm absolutely brilliant. I've been having loads of fun, doing loads of dancing.”

I burst into tears, and it hurt, as my body shook, causing me to start to moan and scream in pain, as well as cry.

“Um...was it something I said?”

Honda came and took the phone from me, and spoke into it, although Sakura had gone, and I somehow gathered that he was talking to Ryou, he not getting on with Sakura.

Honda had taken the phone off Ana, when she had begun to cry, and he spoke into it, thinking he would speak to Sakura. He was shocked, therefore, when Ryou came onto the line. It didn't really matter who he told, about the accident, he supposed, but he thought that maybe Sakura would have been better.

“Hey, Ryou.”

“Hello, how are you? And are you having a good time?”

“I'm fine, and yeah, we were having a great time.”

“What do you mean, were?”

“I mean, the first evening wasn't bad. After that, things got steadily worse.”

“Tell me!”

Ana was lying on the bed, stiller now, but tears still streaming down her face.

“Ana had an accident.”

“What sort of accident?”

“She fell of her horse.”

“HOW? What? Is it bad?”

“Yeah, sorta. She broke her back.”

“WHAT???”

Honda heard Ryou repeat it to their friends, and could hear their gasps of shock, and pity. What she didn't want. He looked down at her, and tried to smile, brighten her fears. It didn't seem to work. Finally, Ryou came back to him.

"That's awful, is she ok?"

"Well, she can't feel her legs, but she managed to sit up for the first time yesterday, which is good."

"Oh, ok then. Well, Yuula is telling me I have to go, as this is costing her money. So, we'll all see you guys soon, ok? Tell Ana we all hope she feels better soon."

"Will do. Bye!"

He hung up, and looked at Ana sadly, "Do you need a drink or anything?"

She shook her head, and he decided to leave her for a while. Placing the phone once more within her reach, he left the room.

A few more weeks passed, and the date drew nearer for when we were due to return to France. I was sitting in a chair, by an open window in my room, my legs covered by a thin blanket, when the phone rang. I had been listening to the wildlife surrounding the creeper.

I answered the phone, and listened carefully to the caller. I had since regained usage of my arms, and was then able to move, albeit slowly and painfully, but it was better than nothing.

By the time I had finished the phone call, and large smile had spread across my face, and, nearly laughing, I called Honda, Marc and my father.

The three men came rushing into the room, and I told them all the news I had just received, "I just got a phone call from the Japanese Olympic Riding Team. They've offered me a place. I start training as soon as I return to Japan. Isn't that incredible?"

They didn't seem to share my enthusiasm. I waited expectantly for their congratulations, but received none. I repeated myself, "Isn't that incredible?"

My father spoke. "It is, honey. But it just isn't possible."

"What do you mean? What do you mean it isn't possible?"

"Honey, we didn't want to tell you before, we couldn't bear to. But, darling, the doctors think that you could be paralysed..."

"Well, I am at the moment, but I won't be for long."

"They think you might be paralysed for life."

All were silent, as the words sunk in. I was shocked, they hadn't told me? They all seemed to know, even Honda. They all knew my fate, before I did. I was bursting with emotions of pain, sadness, sheer grief. How could they not? I was angry.

"My life is ruined, and you didn't tell me? My dreams are destroyed, and you didn't say, because you wanted to protect me? How could you? How could you do that to me?" I rounded on Honda, "it's all your fault. It's your fault I had the accident. You've ruined my life. I hate you. I hate you all."

I broke down into tears.

“I hate you.”

23 - Chapter 23

"I hate you all."

The three of them stood there staring at me, but I still needed to vent my anger, rid myself of my pain and misery.

"I hate you all, get out and leave me alone."

The three males looked at each other nervously, before turning their backs on me, and leaving the room. I turned my head to look out of the window once more, as the tears fell. They seemed never to stop.

Honda, Marc and Jonothan stood outside of Ana's rooms, talking quietly amongst themselves, although Marc and Jonothan appeared to be doing most of the talking. Honda was being exceptionally quiet, thinking things over to himself. Eventually, he spoke, "I'm going to go back to Domino City."

The two older men just looked at him, so he decided to explain, "I think it'll be better. Ana was right. It's all my fault; it'll be better if I'm not here. Could I get a lift to the station? I'll just wait at the airports until I can get a flight."

Jonothan and Marc could say nothing to persuade him otherwise, try as they might. Honda really did believe that he was right on this one, and nothing in the world was going to change it for him. He was gone by nightfall.

I couldn't believe he had left me, turned his back on me. He had done what I had asked, and it was truly all my fault. If I had never lied in the first place. Guilt-ridden, I did not enjoy the remainder of my stay in France, and counted the days until I could return to Japan. My father arranged appointments for me with top physicians, who could see nothing that could possibly ever make me walk again. I went to see physiotherapists, but the ones in France were mostly useless, so my father spent many hours on long-distance telephone calls to Japan, arranging physicians and physiotherapists for me there.

My father tried to make me stay in France, saying that I was only a child, and should stay with him. I refused. I would've, if she wasn't there, and the little brat, who seemed to hate me upon sight.

Marc and I flew back to Japan, and soon we were back in our own house, which I was glad to see. Unfortunately, we had to then move most of the furniture in the house, to make it more 'wheelchair-friendly'. My room was moved to one of the downstairs rooms, and vice versa. We had to have safety rails put in in the downstairs bathroom, and such the like, just for me.

And then, I went back to school.

The new year was different, and though I was still in the same form, I was with different people for classes. And then there was the fact that Kaede wasn't even there anymore, so everything was quite a bit quieter.

As I wheeled myself into the classroom that morning, everything went quiet. No one had come to see me since I got back, and they all seemed shocked to see me, even more so as I was in a wheelchair. I had presumed that Honda might have told them, since he came back. Turned out he hadn't.

The morning was boring, with all the usual administrative things that were handled on the first day of term. We were all given our timetables, and the whole friendship group had biology together, as it had been with physics the first year. We had it that afternoon, and all of them made their way up the stairs, whilst I took the lift. I was so glad that the school had disabled facilities, although I hated to think of myself as disabled.

We all entered the classroom, and the teacher told us to take our places, asking us to sit in a boy-girl seating plan, as usual. She told us where to sit, and I was so glad that I wasn't next to Honda, which I could've been. Everyone else took their seats on their stool, whilst I wheeled round to my seat, in between Duke and Joey. Unfortunately whilst in my chair, I couldn't see over the desk, well, I could, but just. I looked up to Joey, and asked him very politely if he would lift me onto the stool, as I myself couldn't get up.

He looked at me, and burst out laughing, "You must be joking!" he said in between, gasping for breath.

Tears immediately came to my eyes, and were pouring down my face before I could stop them. I couldn't stop them, and they flowed, although I emitted no sound.

And then, without a word, Duke got out of his chair, and came to help me. Putting his arms gently under mine, he lifted me, with what appeared to be very little effort, and placed me gently on the chair. Sitting down on his own stool again, he looked at me and spoke, "Ignore him. And you're so light, for someone so tall!"

I tried to smile, albeit that it was very watery, and gradually the tears dried up. I listened little to what the teacher spoke of, and was glad as the day drew to an end, and I knew that I could go outside, and hide from everyone, and get into the car, as Marc would whisk me off home.

Ana disappeared, and her friends watched her go, except Honda, who was sitting in the corner, leaning his head on the desk. He had been like this ever since he had come back, and even Joey couldn't get through to him. Well, Joey hadn't actually tried, but they doubted that he would be able to. Once they had watched Ana leave, the others went to talk to him, and find out more about what had happened, and why he had actually come back early. They questioned him, and gradually he opened up, telling them everything.

"We hadn't even been there a day, and it was after supper. Ana's stepmother had gone to bed, and Marc had as well. And then Ana went to make herself a drink, and I was left alone with her father. He

didn't seem that bad, until he began to interrogate me, and cross-examine me,”

“Well, he is a lawyer,” chipped in Sakura, until she noticed everyone glaring at her, “oops, sorry.”

“Well, anyway, he asked me what I was doing with his daughter, and so I told him, basically, and then he told me something that really shocked me. He told me that she had been lying. She had been lying to me, to all of us, about her age. She's a year younger than we thought.”

“You mean she's only 15?” Yuula asked.

“Yes.”

“You mean, she was only 14?” Joey spoke.

“Yes.”

“Man, that's wrong.”

“I know, I was as shocked as you guys when I found out. But I was more hurt than anything. Hurt that she hadn't told me. I slept in a separate room that night, as I did for the rest of the holiday, and was still pretty angry the following morning.

“Ana wasn't around the house, and the cook told me she'd gone to the stables, to ride. So I went as well, and followed the lanes to the stable yard. It was huge, and really, really, posh. And deserted. I found her in the school, riding, and she was cantering around, letting the horse ride on a free rein. I shouted to her, asking why she didn't tell me, but she didn't hear, so she turned right around in the saddle. I shouted again, and then she fell. It seemed to be in slow motion, as I watched her tip from the saddle, my heart in my mouth. She laughed, and I thought she was ok, but then I heard this sickening crunch, and I ran towards her, shouting for help as I did so.

“She was out cold, and I went with her in the ambulance to the hospital. They said she'd broken her back, and they had to operate immediately, to check for other damage, and make sure she was ok internally. They did this, and kept her in hospital for just over a week. And then the doctors told me, and Marc and her father that she was paralysed, for life. But Jonothan, her father, said not to tell her yet. So we didn't.

“And then, ages later, she had a phone call, and she seemed really happy, because when it was over she called us all to her room, and told us the good news. She told us,” Honda's voice started to break up, as he choked up, “She told us that she had just been offered a place on the Japanese Olympic Team, for riding.

“Jonothan told her, and she got very upset, and sat there, crying that she hated us. And she blamed me. She was right to, it was all my fault. Everything was my fault. Her whole life is ruined, because of me.”

“Can they not fix it?” Ryou asked.

“No, Jonothan has tried everywhere, I think. She's going to be having physiotherapy, and...well...” he couldn't stop them anymore, and the tears streamed down Honda's face. He forgot about putting on the brave face, maintaining the cold front. He truly did love her, and would do anything for her.

Sakura summed up the situation, and took control of it, asking Yumiko, Ana's oldest friend, for help. Together, the two of them plotted, and somehow managed to come up with a simple plan, well, very simple. To get Honda to tell Ana how he feels.

Grabbing Honda, and ignoring his protestations, they dragged him halfway across the town, quite literally, to Ana's house. Knocking on the door, they stood waiting on the doorstep, holding a shaking and tear-stained Honda firmly in their grasp.

I was sitting in my new room, and listening to a compilation of songs I had made, that were mainly depressing ones. I was listening to a song by The Rasmus, "Funeral Song" when the doorbell rang, though I ignored it, and waited for Marc to answer. He eventually did, and I was really shocked when my bedroom door opened, and Sakura and Yumiko entered, followed by Honda, whom they appeared to be dragging.

His face was tear-stained, and he looked shattered, as though he had had very little sleep recently. Sakura and Yumiko greeted me, before running out the room, and slamming the door behind them, and shouting through it that neither of us were allowed out, until we had talked. A lot.

I sat in silence, my head hanging low, as I listened to the music, Christina Aguilera, Voice Within. Honda sat down on a chair, and looked at me. Finally, we spoke, in unison, "I'm so sorry," I burst into tears, and he was on the verge of it. We both tried to speak again, until he let me go first.

"I'm sorry. I really am. I shouldn't have got so mad. And I don't hate you, I love you. And it wasn't your fault, it was mine. I shouldn't have lied to you. I love you, and I just forgot. But, this past month has been another of the worst of my life, and without you it was even worse. I am so sorry."

"I am too. I love you as well. And it was my fault, partly. You wouldn't have fallen if it hadn't been for me."

"I could've of hurt myself some other way."

"Yes, but not so badly. I'm sorry, and I love you."

He stood up, and came and knelt beside my chair, throwing his arms around me. I clasped him close to me, and cried all the more harder, as he too began to cry.

And then the song changed, to Hero, by Enrique Iglesias,

“Would you dance, if I asked you to dance, would you run and never look back, would you cry, if you saw me crying, and would you save my soul tonight?”

The words were perfect, and as Honda's tears dried, mine flowed more, empowered by the theme of the song.

*Would you tremble
if I touched your lips?
Would you laugh?
Oh please tell me this.
Now would you die
for the one you loved?
Hold me in your arms, tonight.*

*I can be your hero, baby.
I can kiss away the pain.
I will stand by you forever.
You can take my breath away.*

*Would you swear
that you'll always be mine?
Or would you lie?
would you run and hide?
Am I in too deep?
Have I lost my mind?
I don't care...*

You're here tonight.

*I can be your hero, baby.
I can kiss away the pain.
I will stand by you forever.
You can take my breath away.*

*Oh, I just want to hold you.
I just want to hold you.
Am I in too deep?
Have I lost my mind?
I don't care...
You're here tonight.*

*I can be your hero, baby.
I can kiss away the pain.
I will stand by your forever.
You can take my breath away.*

*I can be your hero.
I can kiss away the pain.
And I will stand by you forever.
You can take my breath away.
You can take my breath away.*

I can be your hero.

24 - Chapter 24

I sat in the chair, looking at my happy friends with a smile playing across my face. I had gone to visit Seto and Kaede, and together, they looked so happy. So full of joy, that it was all I could do not to want to have a share in it, with the jealousies in my heart.

This was one of the few times I had been to see them, since I had returned, and now I was to leave again, although I was not going to France, but even further afield to America. I had come to say my farewells, although they did not yet know this.

The conversation had been quite stilted, and after nearly an hour of my intrusion, I felt it was almost time to go, and so I hit them with my big news, "Um, Kaede, Seto, I came here with more of a reason than just to see you today. I came because I needed to tell you something..."

"And?" Kaede tried to help me continue, as I was shaking with the nerves that overpowered me continuously.

"They've made a discovery in America. An operation. They think it will heal paralysis. But, they need someone to try it on. And I am going."

"YOU ARE WHAT?"

"I am going to America."

"YOU CAN'T!!"

"Why not? It'll be bound to help me. And I really do need it. There is nothing else for me to do."

“There is so much for you to do. Like...” she trailed off, trying to think, “Seto, you're not helping me!”

“I think you should go for it, Ana, if that's what you want to do.”

“Thanks, Seto. It is. It could all go wrong, and I could be even worse of than I am now, or it could work. It could be a complete success.”

“But what if it isn't?” Kaede whined.

“If it isn't? I don't tend to think about what might happen.”

Tears had welled up in her eyes, and in mine as well, especially when we made our farewells, perhaps forever.

I had told everyone else already, and said goodbye to everyone, except Honda, who was taking me to the airport. Marc was too busy to take me anywhere, so I was flying alone, and staying alone. Even my own father was too busy to help his fifteen year old daughter. He had promised to phone, but he would probably forget. He always forgot.

We reached the airport, and the announcements were heard, the plane would leave very soon.

My luggage already aboard, I sat in my chair by the gate entrance, embracing Honda as we said our final goodbyes. Both in tears, I managed to wrench myself away, and slowly wheel myself around and down the tunnel, onto the waiting plane. As I rolled away, I heard Honda say one last thing, “Don't look

back.”

I wiped away the tears with my right hand, trying to control the wheelchair with the other, as I went down the sloping tunnel, and, with the help of an air stewardess, boarded the plane.

Sitting in a seat, that I had been transferred too, I was listening to the world news, in English (the air company was American), and daydreaming simultaneously. And then I heard some of the most shocking news ever, which forced me to tune into what was being said.

“...Shocking news just in that a private jet has crashed over the Atlantic Ocean. Cause was unknown, although believed to be assassination. The plane was carrying a light load of a pilot, a co-pilot and a stewardess, all who died, as did the passengers, an unknown man, and a small family. The owner of the plane, who was journeying to America with his family...”

I knew before they even said it. He hadn't forgotten. He had wanted to surprise me.

“...Was Jonothan Osculaix, top international lawyer, kind parent and good husband. After tragically losing his talented first-wife two years ago, the shock to his family will be devastating. His second wife and very young son also died in the accident.”

I watched as the newsreaders rustled their papers once more, “And now onto what might prove to be more satisfying news. In the coming weeks, an advance is to be made in medical science. The first ever operation on the new found cure for paralysis is to be carried out on a fifteen year old girl, Ana-Gaelle Osculaix,” here the newsreader began to falter, “Daughter of Jonothan Osculaix, the great lawyer.”

The newsreader pressed her earpiece closer into his ear, and then spoke again, “That's all for the moment, we will be back with you later. Goodbye.”

My mind swam, and head pounded with the shock of what I had just heard. And what a way to hear it.

My father was dead.

I didn't sleep for the rest of the journey, as long as it was. My heart wouldn't let me. I finally arrived in America, absolutely exhausted, from lack of sleep, and having to deal with so many emotions in such a short amount of time.

I was met at the airport by a car driver, who then took me onto a private hospital, where I was to be spending god knows how long for an operation. Not that I really believed in God, I was more of an agnostic, and preferred to believe in many gods, as did the Romans and the Greeks.

The car swerved into the entrance of the hospital, parking under a huge archway, where he came to help me out of the car, first lifting me into a wheelchair, and then pushing me, before returning to the car to bring in my bags. A young male nurse came and pushed me into the lift, taking me to what was to be my room for the next month, or however long it would be. It felt like a cell. At least I had a phone.

When at last everyone had left me, I picked up the phone and soon dialled my home number, in Domino City. I was shocked when a female voice answered.

“Hey, this is Marc's house. Marc is a little, ur, unavailable right now, can I take a message?”

I then worked out who it was, “HEY! Its my house too!”

“Ana?”

“Uhuh.”

“Hang on, I'll go and get Marc. Don't go anywhere.”

Well, I obviously couldn't go anywhere.

Then he came onto the line, “Hey, how was the flight?”

“It was ok. I watched the news on it, y'know, the world news, and then I felt ill for the rest of the journey.”

“shoot. So that's how you found out. I didn't want to tell you. But I didn't want you to find out like that, either.”

“YOU WEREN'T GOING TO TELL ME?!?!?”

“Umm, did I just say that?”

“YES!”

“Well, I was going to tell you, but, like, not for a while.”

I hung up.

The doctors visited me so many times in that week, endlessly going over all the minute details of the operation. By the end of the week, I started to feel more and more like a guinea pig, or a toy. And then the day came, and I was taken into another room, in the plain hospital robe. The first doctor was the anaesthetist, and he came, and blessed me with what was simple and unknowing sleep. As my eyes slowly closed, I found myself thinking...

25 - Chapter 25

Honda couldn't keep still all day. She was finally coming back, two and a half months later she was coming back. Eventually, Yuula lost her temper with him, and yelled at him, telling him to just sit still, or go and do something. They were sitting in Chemistry, and it was their last lesson. Ten minutes left, then he could go and see her. She would be there, waiting for him. He watched the second hand of the clock slowly tick on.

Nine minutes.

Eight minutes.

Seven minutes.

Six minutes.

Five.

Four.

Three.

Two.

One.

The bell rung, loud and clear, and Honda shoved his stuff into his bag, and sprinted from the classroom, leaving his friends behind, slowly packing their things away. He was long gone.

“What's wrong with him?” asked Sakura, aiming the question at Yuula, who wasn't listening, but was instead fiddling with Duke's ponytail, and trying to persuade him to let her make it really mega high, “but it would look so cute.”

Finally, Joey answered her question, but only after a long while, and he had scratched his head like an orang-utan, and muttered a few monosyllabic unidentifiable words, “Urh, uh, urgh...I think its `cause Ana's come home today.”

“WHAT?! And no one told us?!?!”

Yugi spoke up, “Actually, it was on the local news the other night, that the first person who has successfully been cured from paralysis was returning home to Domino City sometime this week.”

“IT WAS?!”

He nodded.

“Oh, ok. Well, when can we go and see her?”

“I'll ask Marc tomorrow, when we go out,” said Tea.

“HE'S GONNA GO OUT, AND LEAVE HER ALL ALONE?!”

“Uh, yeah.”

“BUT, she's just got home. From America. From an operation. AND, he wasn't going to tell her that their father was dead. AND she's only fifteen. AND...”

“She's got Honda?” said Duke.

“Good point.”

“But, who would want a Honda?” asked Yuula. “In fact, who would want any guy?”

Duke looked hurt at this, and Sakura noticed, and poked Yuula, pointing out his sad face to her. Yuula, being Yuula, thought she was pointing out his ponytail, and commented on it, “Yeah, Sakura, I know! Duke has a cute ponytail!”

They all just shook their head, and walked away.

Honda rode his Honda (Honda's Honda, the Honda belonging to Honda) to Ana's house, and jumped off it, running to the door, and persistently ringing the bell. He had missed her so much, and she hadn't spoken to him on the phone for at least a week. He knew the experiment had went well, and that she had learnt to walk again, yet needed to build up muscles in her legs, so that she would be able to ride again, id she wanted too.

But he would help her.

Marc finally answered the bell, and before Honda had even spoken, he did, "She's out the back, in the garden."

He ran through the house, and into the back garden, and saw a single chair sitting on the neat and tidy looking lawn, that seemed to be almost perfect. The chair was facing away from him, and overlooking a small water feature, made of bamboo, that flowed through the hollowed out bamboo storks, down a long path and into an ornamental pond. The sound of the flowing water, and the clunk of bamboo hitting bamboo sounding gently in the background, Honda walked slowly over to her. Standing a few feet away, he softly called her name, "Ana?"

He heard her gasp, and watched the chair move, as she tried to stand up. He was rooted to the spot, and finally she was up, and spinning around to face him, nearly falling as she did so. Wearing an overly large jumper, and ill-fitting jeans, her face and eyes lit up in a deep and soulful smile, her large ice blue eyes gleaming in the late afternoon sun. And so, she began to walk towards him, slowly, but still walk. Ana finally reached him, and as she fell into his open arms, he buried his face into her hair, to bury his tears, tears of joy at seeing her walk once more.

I was so happy to see him again. I had hated being away, knowing no one. It was awful. But it had all gone well, I could walk again. I could move again. He held me in his arms, in the last rays of the evening sun, for what felt like forever. And I wished it could be.

I loved him.

The next day, the rest of my friends came round, except for Tea, who had gone out with Marc. Honda was going to stay the night, and keep me company, but at that moment, the house was pretty full, what with Sakura and Yami/Yugi, Ryou, Duke and Yuula, Kaede and Seto, and Joey, that I wished they would all leave. It was brilliant to see them all again though. They all made me parade in front of them, to prove I could walk again, and after that, the guy all drank Marc's beers, as did Sakura and Kaede, whilst Yuula drunk OJ, and I was on tap water. Since Honda had found out about my true age, he refused to let me drink or smoke. And I think if I hade done either, Kaede and Sakura would never have spoken to me ever again.

As it was, they were now either all 17, or just turning 17, making me feel really young, although I wasn't. It was nearing the end of December, and soon it would be Christmas, then New Year, well, European New Year, and then my birthday. Finally, sweet sixteen at last.

And then I could legally smoke.

Not that I would, of course.

And I could legally do other things.

`Cause of course I had never done that before.

But until then, Honda might be put under a certain restraint.

Or not.

And so, Christmas came, and passed, New Year came, and passed. And my birthday came. And was absolutely amazing.

26 - A New Chapter

I woke up to a coldly bright morning, seeing as I had left the curtains open, and the bright winter sunshine glared into the room, shedding light upon the bed, and the rest of the room. I stood up, and pulled off my pyjamas, and then pulling on a pair of black jeans and a red and white stripy strappy top, that showed off my pale complexion. I wrenched the door open, and jumped down all the stairs. I had left Honda fast asleep, as usual, ignoring the fact that he was meant to be at work soon. Actually, it was a Saturday, so he wasn't really.

I loved the summer, with its warm sunshine that stayed in the garden all day long. I skipped through the grass, and went and looked over the edge of the cliff, to see the beautiful blue sea glistening below me, waiting expectantly for me to reach it. I longed to go for a swim, but restrained myself, and instead ran back to the house, and into the bedroom once more. Honda was still fast asleep, so I climbed onto the bed, and began to poke him into consciousness.

I was then 27, and as full as energy as ever. Honda and I had moved to France the year before, and just finished sorting out the house. He had meanwhile bought a garage near the beach, at which he was manager, and chief mechanic, whilst I owned the stables down the road, and had turned it into an equitation centre, having got back into training my riding about a year after the operation.

Honda finally woke up, and I pulled him off the bed, and threw some clothes at him, making him change. He was 28, going on 29, and had recently been persuaded to let me restyle his hair. It was now longish, and a bit floppy, but suited him much better. I watched as he ran some wax through it, and styled it a little bit, but I stopped him before he could too much.

We had got married just before we left Japan, and moving to France had been a sort of honeymoon, although it had taken a lot of preparation. The wedding had been wonderfully unusual, as we decided to do it all in costumes, and had an extremely medieval wedding. The highlight had to be Marc dressed as a fat and balding monk. He had looked anything but pretty.

Mind you, we had been engaged for ages. I was 20 when he asked me to marry him, so we sure took our time getting married. Each time we tried to set a date, something would happen to make us change it. Our friends used to joke that it wasn't meant to be, until I got seriously upset with them.

So, after we had moved to France, and to one of my houses (after my father's death, Marc had inherited the big house, and I the summer house, and the one in the Pyrenees. The money had been shared between us, and both of us had used it to go into business, as Marc was now a top car manufacturer, of rare, yet beautiful, cars, one of which I owned.), the house by the sea, as it was beautiful in all weather. We had done it up nicely, but kept the same room as mine, after installing bigger windows with shutters, and blinds. The whole house had been decorated, and the garden extended, as well as us adding a heated swimming pool, and hot tub, that was nice in winter and summer.

Our businesses were both going very well, and I had many people working at my yard, where we took lessons, and treks out over the coastal paths, and along the beach, that we nearly always had to ourselves.

That day was going to be a special one, as we had most of our friends coming over from Japan for a short while, the house being large enough, just, to accommodate them all. They were all coming on the same plane, and would hopefully get to the airport at about 11 o'clock in the morning, and we were to meet them there. Sadly, though, out of all those invited, Ryou and Joey couldn't come, due to prior commitments. However, we were stuck with the other.

I was so looking forward to seeing them all, and told Honda so as we sped along the small roads, with me driving. The car, designed by Marc, was a black convertible, consisting of smooth line, and stylish ideas. Its roof was made of a sort of beige leatherette material, but the whole car was awesomely cool, and very modern. I sat in it, still wearing the black satin hot pants and now a sleeveless fitted white blouse, with frills of material on it, making it look like a man's baroque show shirt. I wore a pair of big white vintage Chanel sunglasses, and also a pair of black Chanel wedge sandals, making me even taller. My hair was intricately pulled up on top of my head, and Honda was holding my hand that wasn't on the wheel. The car was an automatic, and so didn't need much concentration to drive, instead letting me talk to Honda and drive very fast along the roads.

Honda himself looked smart in a pair of loose fitting beige linen trousers, and leather sandals. He wore an open shirt as well, showing off his ne mechanic muscles, and wonderful suntan, thanks to the glorious weather we'd had since June. It was too hot to move some days, like today, but we had to, and I was getting very hyperactive.

“Stop acting so childish,” Honda attempted to whine, as a joke.

I gave him one of my withering looks. It didn't work, through the black lenses of the glasses. He couldn't see my eyes, and so I just looked rather stupid, and he was sent into convulsions of laughter.

"You know, the others can't really call you Honda any more," I said.

"Why not?" I could see him looking at me out of the corner of my eye as I concentrated on the road.

"Cause I'm a Honda too, so really, they might be calling me."

"But no one thinks of you as a Honda, do they?"

"S'pose not." When we had married, I had kept my maiden name, and we had created a double barrelled name, which was actually quite funny, so we were now 'the Osculaix-Honda's' which is always amusingly funny to watch French and Japanese people alike try to pronounce.

We finally drove into the airport. It was very small, and new, having only recently been built, but much more easily accessible as it did linking flights inter-France. Climbing out of the car, we waited at the end of the runway, and watched the small plane land, and then finally, our friends climb off it. I stood, uncertain now at what to do, having that old feeling that something might be wrong. Nothing was, though, and I needn't have worried, for as soon as they spotted us, Sakura, Yuula, Yumiko, Kaede and Tea ran over, leaving the guys to carry their luggage, although Honda did go to help them. We all had a massive Group hug, and glomping session, before going to retrieve their luggage from the plane, and check them in properly.

Back at the house, having lost Tenshi and Mokuba to their hotel, we all sat outside, enjoying a light lunch, prepared by the cook. It was simply cold meat, and fresh bread with salad, always nice on a summer day. Whilst Honda wandered around passing out drinks, we spoke of what everyone had been doing, and how hot it was here in France. I told everyone that the beach was a five-minute walk away; we could always go riding if they wanted, and then pointed in the vague direction of the swimming pool.

“But I'm sure you guys want to rest, right? I know it's a really long journey.”

They all nodded their agreement, and so we showed them all to their rooms. I had chosen them all according to the person, and added little home comforts for them all. I had given Kaede and Seto the biggest spare room, and the next biggest to Yuula and Duke, although all were about the same size. Marc and Tea shared their old room from before, Yumiko had a westerly facing room, that overlooked the sea as well, so that she could watch the sun set over the sea, and Yami and Sakura had adjoining rooms.

After leaving them all in their individual rooms, I decided to go and check on the stables quickly, and I told Honda where I was going, before jumping into the car, and quickly driving to the yard. My first stop was to see Daemon, who was now an old horse, nearing retirement. Well, he wasn't that old, but he wasn't used for hard work, mainly just for lessons. With some people he was a firm favourite, providing a bit of a challenge. He whickered as I neared him, and I stroked him down the nose, before walking on around the yard. The ponies tried to stick their heads over their doors, and whinny. They managed the whinnying, but not the heads over the doors.

I came to my new horse, a ton of a fellow, gelding, who'd come from England as a colt. He was an English thoroughbred, and was a very dark bay, well, eh should have been, for at the end of his mane, the colour changed from black to a very dark brown to an amazing gold colour. His name was Vacca, and he was a beautifully kind and gentle four year old.

I got the work I needed, and at the same time collected my dog and cats, that had been left here the day before, to get out of the way. As a bit of a joke, the dog, which was female, was called Chatte. I was one of the few people who found this funny. I'd let Honda name the two male cats, which was a mistake, as before long I had cats called Harley and Mitsubishi. Big mistake.

It could have been worse.

They could have been Volkswagen and Volvo.

I think their names were ok, I mean, Harley I could deal with, and Mitsu was a great shortening.

The guests slept for ages, and in that time I managed to do a lot of paperwork, and the like, whilst Honda took the dog for a walk. When he returned, we went for a swim in the pool, and were still in it when people gradually started to wake up.

Then the fun could begin.

27 - Chapter 2 again

I was sitting on the bottom of the pool, when I saw Honda's hand waving in front of my face. I clasped it, and he pulled me to the surface of the water once again. Smiling, he swam over to the steps, pulling me with him. Chatte was standing on these, her feet in the water, and her tail wagging furiously, causing waves to span out everywhere. She wasn't really a big dog, and as an English foxhound, was small for her breed as well, but she did have a hell of a lot of energy, having just turned one, and being extremely excitable. After standing on the steps for a while, and seeing us swimming over towards her, she bent down to the steps a bit more, and then jumped into the water, causing a tidal wave of water to cascade over Honda and myself, as she came paddling towards us.

We were laughing and pointing at her as she pounced all over us, when I heard someone speak, "You guys look like your having fun, but what about your guests?" and looked up to see Sakura standing there, looking very pretty with her blonde hair messily pulled back, wearing a pair of long white board shorts, decorated with different colour pink hibiscus flowers, and also a pale pink strappy top. She smiled at us, and sat down on one of the chairs by the pool, starting to talk to us, and gradually more of the guests started to appear, with Duke and Yuula being the last to emerge from the rooms.

"Are you guys all ok with a BBQ tonight?" Honda asked, climbing out of the pool, which the two of us were still in. I was leaning on the side of the pool, and kicking my legs out behind me.

There was a chorus of acquiescence, and Honda made his way to the house, to change. I stayed in the pool a little longer, and spoke with my friends, before noticing how wrinkly my skin was getting. I jumped out of the pool, and grabbed the towel off Sakura, before jogging to the house, Chatte following me, and yelling behind me that I would be back soon. I quickly jumped into a shower, and washed my hair, before pulling on a white summer dress, that floated out behind me. I pulled my wavy hair up into a thick ponytail-bun thing, and finding a sunflower in the hall, inserted that into the tie, before making my way back outside, still shoeless.

My friends were now sitting on the lawn, with Honda, as the servants had laid out the table for us, and Honda had pulled the barbeque onto the lawn, which was happily sizzling and smoking. There was laughter, and I leapt across the lawn to join them, laying my hand on Honda's arm in a quick greeting as I sat in the chair close to him. I soon gathered that their conversation was about what everyone had been up to in the past years, and it was quite fast moving.

Tea was speaking, and I began to half-listen to what she was saying, "Yeah, Marc and I, we've been wanting kids for a while now, so now that I am actually pregnant—"

"WHAT?!" I exploded. It had taken me long enough to accept their relationship, and then there marriage...but this? "I mean, I'm really happy for you guys, congrats!" I swallowed my surprise.

At that moment, Honda turned to me, and asked me to go and get the salads from the kitchen, "Urh, yeah, sure." I jumped up, and rushed to the kitchen, grabbing Yuula and Sakura to take them with me. I

would need their help to carry the bowls of salad and garlic bread prepared earlier, as there was a number. I noticed that Honda was following, presumably to get the wine that came from a local vineyard that belonged to a family friend.

When we had all returned to the table, and taken our seats, everyone began to tuck into the delicious looking meal of barbecued sausages, veggie burgers and spare ribs, with the warm and home-made garlic bread, and the large and different salads. Honda poured everyone some wine, and we raised a toast, "To friendship", before taking a sip. It was a good wine, not too dry, and not too sweet. The grapes were delicious too, as I had gone along to help with the harvest, and somehow eaten a lot of grapes in the progress.

When all eating was done, the sun was still quite high in the sky, and so we decided to go for a walk, to ease off our meal. Whilst everyone grabbed some shoes, and I grabbed the dog, the servants quickly cleared the table, before returning home for the night. And so, the group of us slowly made our way down to the beach, Chatte bounding in front of us like the very mad mad-thing she was. Climbing down the cliff face, along the coastal path, the air filled with our laughter, and happiness. Finally on the beach, the white sand squishing between our feet, we made our way down to the softly splashing waves, and I waded into them, holding my skirt up, although swathes of it were soon floating on the surface of the sea.

"Uh, Ana, you're sorta ruining you dress," Kaede informed me, from where she was sitting, dabbling her feet in the water.

I looked at her, and smiled mischievously, before pulling the dress over my head, and rolling it into a ball, throwing it back onto the sand, "Sod the dress." Having discarded the dress, and standing only in my underwear, I began to swim, only returning to the shore to encourage everyone else in, "Come on, its so warm. The sun's been on it all day."

Eventually they all got in...and so we swum, in the light of the setting sun, and mucked about in the warm water, the guys in their boxers, the girls in their underwear. After about half an hour, we were all pretty bored, and so we climbed out, and sat in the last rays of the sun, talking.

"How are your kids then, Yuula?" I asked.

"What kids?" she looked at me, her face a blank. Duke hit her over the head, "Our kids, you idiot."

"What're you hitting me for? How dare you hit me, you scum!"

We all laughed at them, and then Duke answered the question, "They're fine, thanks. Kaiba managed to get a babysitter for their kids, as well as ours." The old habit of calling everyone by the surname hadn't gone away, but I hoped the two's hostilities had.

"Heh, I hope Esme and Haru haven't been murdered by your kids yet, Yuu," Kaede spoke, from where she was sitting, leaning against Seto.

"Heh, I hope they have, I hope they all die," Yuula muttered in an undertone, obviously not meant to be heard by anyone. "Stupid Duke-children."

“HEY!” we all yelled, “WE HEARD THAT!” and everyone grabbed sand and threw it at her, causing her to yell out, and Duke to still protect her.

“WHAT?!?! What did I say?”

We ignored her after that, for a little while, as she sat and fumed.

“So, Kara, when are you and Honda going to have kids?” Yumiko asked.

A small smile appeared on Honda's face, as his hand found mine and squeezed it. I sat bolt upright in the sand, a look of pure terror on my face, “WHAT?!?! I'M SUPPOSED TO BE HAVING KIDS???????”

Everyone butts out laughing, and I tried to calm down, “No, I meant are you planning to have kids?”

“I'd like to,” said Honda quietly. “They'd be so cute! Lots of little me's.”

“NO! NO WAY! I am NOT having little you's...Dream on.”

He looked at me, a hurt expression on his face.

“Look, I'm not ready for little you's, or little anyones. I'm just not ready yet. I'm too young!!!”

“No you're not.”

“We are not having this conversation now,” I indicated our guests, and he looked as if he wanted to say more, but held back.

Together, we all slowly made our ways back to the house, as the evening drew in, and the others were tired. I quickly fed the cats, and then made my own way to our room, in which Honda was waiting, already getting ready for bed. I shut the door behind me, and began to take my own clothes off, pulling on my pyjamas as I took off the clothes. He started speaking.

“I meant what I said earlier, Ana.”

“About what?”

“About kids.”

I looked at him in surprise.

“I've always wanted them, I suppose. I mean, my nephew was annoying, but I didn't mind looking after him occasionally, and I suppose its different with your own, isn't it.”

I was now looking uncertain.

“Don't you want them?” he asked.

“Not yet. I'm not ready, yet. I'm still growing up. You know me, you know me so well. I'm not ready. Give me a few more years.”

He smiled, one of understanding, and hugged me, “Ok.” Pulling me with him, he fell onto the bed, turning out the bedside light, and pulling us both under the covers, in the thick summer night.

28 - Chapter three...again

The next day, we decided to make a trip to our friend's vineyard, and so we all clambered into the decrepit old open-top jeep, all eleven of us squeezing into it, with Honda driving, and Marc sitting next to him in the front of the vehicle. The rest of us all piled into the back, completely squishing each other, reminiscent of the old days with, being shoved into the back of Sakura's combie in order to get someplace.

Luckily enough, the vineyard was only a twenty minute drive away, and so we soon arrived, and jumped out of the jeep. A morning of wine-tasting had been proposed, and so I climbed the steps to our friend, Mattieu's, house, and knocked on the door. Mattieu was the same age as me, and a tall and broad man, brought up on a farm in Brittany. He had claimed that the climate there hadn't suited him, and so he had moved to the South of France, and started a vineyard. He had then married a local girl, Taloise, and together they were very happily living on the vineyard, harvesting every year with help from friends and family. They had been a great help when we first moved over.

It was Taloise that answered the door, and she greeted me with a kiss on either cheek, informing me that Mattieu would be down in a minute. We walked together towards the car, and I began to introduce her to everyone, first speaking in French, and then switching to Japanese, for those among us who did not speak French.

"Ana," Marc said, "Why don't we all just speak English, 'cause most of us know that?"

"Good point. Taloise, is that ok with you?"

"Should be fine," she answered in a thick English accent. We had all been taught English in schools, as it was an important language to learn, although those of us who were French spoke it with difficulty, our accents very strong. In fact, Yumiko was the best out of us at it, having lived in Australia for most of her life.

The morning was wonderfully spent, with the gorgeously hunky Mattieu showing us around his incredible

vineyard, and then taking us into a barn, where we could taste the different vintages of wine, and also some of the organic win that Taloise had made. It was all incredible.

And then, in the afternoon, we all went to the beach again, this time with Tenshi and Mokuba joining us. It was yet again a warm day, and as well lay on the hot sand, or relaxed in the sea, we enjoyed ourselves greatly. Yumiko went off rock pooling, with Kaede and Sakura, and Yuula was looking vaguely bemused as she built things with sand.

Tea was sunbathing with Marc, and Duke and Yugi were having a heated conversation, whilst Seto held a conversation on his phone. Mokuba and Tenshi were collecting seaweed, and shells. Honda was setting up the volleyball net, with my help, and when it wall up, we shouted for everyone who wanted to play, to come and join us. A vicious game ensued, with Kaede almost killing Yuula; she whacked the ball at her head so hard.

We were home by about six o'clock, and Tenshi and Mokuba had returned to their hotel. Whilst I watched and helped to organise some food, Sakura and Yuula took the dog for a walk, as everyone else relaxed and chilled in the evening sun.

“AAAAAAAAAAHHHHH!”

I heard shouting, and Chatte barking, as Sakura sprinted into the kitchen.

“Sakura, what's wrong?” I looked at her, “And where's Yuula?”

“AAAAAAHHHHHH!!”

“WHAT?”

“AAAHHH! The press attacked us. And so I ran screaming.”

“The press?”

“Yes.” She nodded, panting for breath, as Chatte bounced around her feet, thinking it was all a game. “They’re here to find out who it is that is staying with ‘Ana Osculaix, world renowned rider’. They want to know who the hell we all are. They started asking questions, and then recognised me, from that charity do, I helped to organise last year. So I turned, and ran.” She collapsed in a chair, “BUT I LOST YUULA!!”

At that moment, as I was looking panic-stricken, and Sakura was still recovering, Yuula walked into the room, looking very calm. “You didn’t lose me. Those nice people were asking me lots of nice questions, all about where I met Ana, and how I knew her. And so I answered. And I told them everything I could.”

“YOU WHAT?!” I exploded.

“I told them everything I knew about you.”

“Everything?”

“Yes, everything. Stuff like, how your husband was a scary Honda and had Honda hair, and how you dance on tables when you’re drunk, and...”

“Yuula, did they say what paper they came from?” I tried to speak calmly, and think rationally.

“Oh yes, they said they came from...”

I was on the phone to them within minutes, trying to bribe them. Eventually, we came to an agreement. They could spend some time among us, and get an article, as long as I could proof-read it, and check the content, and then they would burn what Yuula had told them, or give it to me to burn.

Piled into several cars, all filled with luggage, we drove to the airport, hopping on a plane when we got there, and allowing it to take us across the country, and to the centre, towards Paris, and a short stay with people from the press. We were to stay in a large hotel, and the press members would also be staying there.

When we pulled up in front of the large hotel, and checked into our many rooms, I asked the receptionist to let the people we were meant to be meeting to meet me in one of the lounges in fifteen minutes, giving me time to run up stairs and change into a low cut dress, that was white, and that had a clingy and 30s-style top, with wide straps, and intricate swathing in material over the bust line, with a large, yet very short, puffy skirt, that stuck out like a mushroom. Accompanying this with a pair of slightly high strappy white sandals, that increased my heart even further. Grabbing a small white clutch, I shook my hair out of its loose ponytail, letting the waves of very dark hair flow down my back.

I ran along the corridor, and jumped in the lift, asking to be taken to reception, from where I walked into the lounge in which I would meet the journalists. Putting on my most snobby and condescending face, I stalked into the room, and seeing the journalists, walked over them. There were three men sitting there, the youngest about the same age as me, the next about the same age as Honda, and the other maybe thirty, or a bit older. They all greeted me formally and introduced themselves, apologising for an inconvenience they were causing.

“Oh, do not trouble yourselves with such trivial matters,” I assured them, “It was no inconvenience. Please, let us sit.” I was towering over them, quite literally, and so they sat down quite gratefully.

“So, Madame, what had you planned to do whilst staying in Paris?” the man named Franc asked. He was the oldest of the three, and had a mean look about him, the ruthless one that sometimes seems to possess journalists. I would soon sort him...I was plotting to leave him with Seto. Heh!

“Well, tomorrow I decided that my friends and I would go touring Paris, maybe we will go to the Champs-Elysees, and do some shopping.” The designer shops were always good fun to get into, and with Seto, and me, we should get in.

“Ah, ok. And anything else?”

“I believe that I might send part of our group off on a tour. Maybe you could accompany them, and the other two accompany the rest of us?” the two younger ones looked like a lot more fun. And it would be hilarious to send this scary man out with the guys. My plan was set. “Yes, I believe that would be good. If you were to go with the boys, and Arnaud,” I indicated the youngest one, “and Luc,” the other, “were to come with the girls and I. I am glad that is all sorted. I believe we will see you at dinner this evening? There is meant to be a dance is there not? I shall see you then. For now, farewell.”

I flounced out of the room without so much as another word, not even waiting for their answers.

29 - Chapter the Fourth

Jumping out of the bath athletically, I noticed that my skin was steaming, from the heat of the bath. I quickly padded my skin dry with one of the fluffy hotel towels, before wrapping it around me, and walking out of the bathroom, and into the bedroom. Honda and some of the other guys, who were already dressed in their suits, had gone down to the bar, leaving us girls to get ready and meet them down there.

I shook my mane of hair out a little, and then let the towel drop. The dress I was going to wear was lying on the bed. It was a deep burgundy, and made of a Chinese material, and so the burgundy was emphasised with embroidered gold flowers. There was no collar, and it only covered one shoulder, and when on, fell to the ground, in a more flowing skirt. I sat down at the dressing table mirror, and quickly brushed on a bit of kohl, and blusher, extending my eyelashes with mascara. I pulled on a pair of high black sandals, which laced up to my knees with a wide black satin ribbon, and stood up, moving to a seat upon the bed.

I sat on the edge of the bed, and grabbed the phone, dialling the number of Sakura's room. She answered crabbily, "WHAT?!"

"Urh, hey. It's Ana. Are you nearly ready?"

"No, I'm not." She snapped.

"Well, might you be soon?"

"NO!"

"Urh, ok then. Well, I'll see you downstairs." I was afraid, very afraid.

Sakura muttered ominously as she hung up.

I too hung up, and was just about to dial Yumiko's number, when there was a knock on the door. I let the phone drop, and stepped lightly over to the door. I jumped to see Yumiko standing there, and pointed to her and then to the phone, my mouth opening and closing like a goldfish. After a while, she got annoyed with me, "Are we going down, or what?"

I nodded, and followed her, shutting the door behind me, before running down the hall after Yumiko. She wore a strappy green dress, that hung straight down, and was laced with thousands of different colour greens, ranging from bright green to a very deep foresty colour.

We walked out of the elevator, and into the lobby, before making our way to the bar, Yumiko swishing as she walked, whilst I seemed to glide in my heels, and long dress. Entering the bar, I at once saw all the guys in their suits, and we made our way over, as I reminded myself to be haughty and cold towards the press reporters, and to seem aloof and conceited, with little thought for others. It worked quite well, and I could see that they were beginning to find me quite snooty and snobby.

Within half an hour, the others were all down, Tea in something horrid and fluffily pink, as usual. Tenshi wore a back pencil dress that hung so straight, yet at the same time accentuated her petite figure. Kaede was in a strapless navy-blue dress, that sparkled with an almost indecent slit right up to her hip, well, almost. Sakura wore a short halter neck dress, that looked incredible on her, as did most things, whilst Yuula wore a dark strappy dress, that only just covered everything, with a paler lilac chiffony dress over the top, that reached down to the floor.

We all had a quick drink in the bar, and as I genteelly sipped on my champagne cocktail, and maintained my ice maiden demeanour, laughing only very occasionally. We were ushered to a large table in the dining hall, and all took our places, casting glances at the menu. It was nearly all fish. Which was just brilliant.

None of us ate fish, or very few.

When the waiter came to take our order, I calmly explained our disposition, and asked if there was

anything else we could possible eat.

He said no.

And then I lost it, and stood up, not shouting at him, but demanding to see the hotel manager.

“Is there a problem, Madame?”

“Yes, there is a very very big problem.”

“And can we solve it?”

“No, I don't think you can. Come on, guys, lets go find some other place to eat.” I nodded to the manager, only slightly, and flounced out, my friends following in my wake, laughing their heads off, as the manger and waiter stared after us in shock. We rushed out of the hotel, and began walking down the roads, all of us in very over the top clothes.

Finally, we found a small café that was almost deserted, and pushed Seto and Kaede in to order us some decent food, that was utterly non-fishy.

Ten minutes later, we were all happily eating pasta and pizza, left only with the idea of what to do for the rest of the evening, rather than sit outside in the late evening warmth. And then it was decided.

We were going to go clubbing.

In a real live nightclub.

With real live people.

Heh.

Hehehehe.

Inside, the club was noisy, boisterous, and incredibly loud.

Exactly what we all needed. Immediately, us girls faded into the crowd, leaving the guys to buy us drinks, and then come and find us, and the journalists to just stand there in shock. Once in the middle of the crowd, we all began dancing, except for Tenshi who hadn't come with us. Whilst Kaede did some decent dancing, and Sakura tried to force Yuula to dance, and Tea tried to look cool, Yumiko and I gave up all hope of at all trying to look good in our posh dresses, as we all already looked very ridiculous, and rather than doing proper dancing, we started to do the Macarena. Very badly.

Laughing hysterically, we were still doing the Macarena when the guys found us, although by now we were taking up lots of space, as Kaede and Sakura had joined us, whilst Tea shot us evils, and Yuula looked very, very scared.

When Honda had passed me my drink, I took sip, and then took his hand, and began to dance with him, pulsating with the rhythm. Our friends all did likewise, beginning to loosen up more. The fourth track was just ending, when Kaede called over to me, "Urh, Ana, you appear to have lost your press."

"MERDE! Where the hell are they?"

I left Honda's side to search for them, and found them at the bar, drinking, and looking very sorry for themselves. I leant against the bar, and spoke to them, "Why aren't you dancing?"

“Because we don't dance. We are here to work.”

“Oh, for gods sake, loosen up. Come on, lets go dance.” I grabbed the younger two, leaving their `boss' to follow on behind, and we were once again sucked into the crowd.

So when we had finally had our fill of dancing, we took a table near the bar, and with all fourteen of us seated around it, started drinking shots, and telling shocking home truths, well, not so shocking, but hilariously funny as we got more and more pissed, and completely off our face.

Still laughing, we piled into several taxis, and made our ways back to the hotel.

The party was just getting started.

30 - Chapter the fifth

However, we didn't get far in the taxis, as the leading one stopped, and Yuula collapsed out of it, with Sakura on top of her, and both looking very sick. Yugi climbed out of the car after them, and finally a very green looking Duke climbed out.

And so the rest of us emerged from the taxis to see what had happened, as Sakura and I tried to explain that we were very sorry, and would reimburse the taxi driver. Sakura did most of the talking, as I was extremely giggly, and couldn't really stand up straight. It wasn't long before I set Sakura off as well, and soon we were both completely incapable of talking, and so I simply handed some money over to the taxi driver, and all our taxis scooted off into the night, leaving all of us stranded somewhere in the middle of Paris. None of us knew where.

"Well, this is fun, isn't it?" Tenshi's voice, as per normal, dripped with sarcasm. She rounded on me, "You've gone and got us lost, AGAIN, haven't you?"

"What do you mean, again? I don't recall getting lost before. In any case, I can see the Eiffel Tower, and I presume that if we head there, we will soon find somebody, who can show us where to hotel is. Is that not so?" My reasoning was brilliant in my drunken state, and so grabbing Yumiko with one hand, and Honda with the other, I started to lead everyone towards the Eiffel Tower, completely ignoring the press, who seemed to know sort of where we were. I had to be irrational.

Two hours later, we were still wandering the streets in an amusing fashion. Every now and then, someone would fall over, or burst out laughing, and in our drunken states, it took forever to reach our destination.

With much ado, we did finally reach the Eiffel Tower, only to find it deserted. As some of the party sat dejectedly on chairs, Tea spoke up, "I need to pee."

"But there aren't any toilets open," someone helpfully pointed out.

“But I really need to pee!”

“So do I,” I joined in, and soon all of the girls, bar Yuula and Tenshi, needed the toilet.

“Just go in the bushes,” Marc laughed.

“EW! No way!” I hit him. “That is just gross. And it's dark and scary. And there could be ANYONE out there waiting to take us away.”

“Just go.”

“But it's scary.”

“Well, lets hold hands,” Kaede suggested.

“Like a crocodile?” Sakura was slowly catching on, and so as we linked arms, Kaede leading us, and Yumiko at the back, we all disappeared into the bushes, leaving the others to sit and wait for us.

Moments later they heard a scream, and then a volley of shouts.

“What happened?” Honda called out.

Raucous laughter was heard from the bushes, and moments later, Yumiko, Kaede and Tea reappeared, completely red in the face, due to laughing so hard. They rejoined the others, only to be asked yet again what had happened, and where Sakura and myself were.

“They’re,” Yumiko was the first to almost recover, “Still in the bushes.”

“Why?”

“Because Ana started to pee, and sat on a prickle, and then fell over in the mud, knocking Sakura over at the same time. Hahahahahah! HAHAHAHHA!”

The men from the press looked very afraid, in fact, they looked positively petrified. Tea turned to them, “Don’t worry. We’re not always this bad together. We’re normally worse.”

At this point, Sakura and I returned, both covered in mud, and neither capable of walking in a straight line, Sakura propping me up, as both of us were crying with laughter. Honda and Yugi rushed over to us, “Are you guys ok?”

I turned my eyes, which were a little unfocussed, to Honda, “I felleded over, and I think I broke something.”

“What?” he looked worried.

I looked at Sakura, and both of us burst out laughing again.

“I broke my shoe,” I held up the sorry looking object, “And I hurted my ankle.”

He tried to keep a straight face, and looked at the very broken shoe.

The shoe was completely broken, and my ankle slightly sprained, and with much ado, and some very well orientated journalists, we managed to eventually find the hotel. But alas, us girls were still not satisfied with sleeping, and so sat up late, some of us drinking even more, and others drinking coffee. One by one, all the guys began to fall asleep, including Yuula, and it was then that the rest of us began to plot. Hunting in all of our miniature handbags, we all pulled out as much makeup as we could, and set to work.

Honda ended up with a handlebar moustache, and very long eyelashes, Duke wore some electric blue eye shadow, and very red lipstick, and etcetera. Before long, our cameras were out, and endless reams of digital photos were taken, none very flattering, before we left the boys to it, and made our way to our own rooms to sleep.

I awoke bright and early in the morning, and decided to use the hotel pool. It was deserted, well it would be at 7:00, but after only three hours of sleep, and excessive drinking, I was still full of energy, and enjoyed a good hour of swimming, before returning to my room, and finding Honda still fast asleep. I could judge that none of my other friends would be awake, and so ordered room service to my room, and enjoyed a nice quiet breakfast all to myself, used for contemplation, and sorting out some business over the phone. We were to return home that evening, and then stay there for another week. I had just finished eating at the same time as making a phone-call, when I suddenly felt incredibly sick, and so ran to the bathroom, just making it in time.

Having thrown up repeatedly, I slowly walked back to the bedroom, feeling and looking incredibly grey. I lay down again beside Honda, and groaned. Just as I did so, he slowly began to wake up, and dozily opening his eyes, he rolled over to look at me. When his eyes had finally focused, he frowned.

“Are you ok?” he asked, looking concerned.

“I'm fine,” I assured him. “I've just been a little sick.”

“Too much to drink again?” he smirked.

“No. I don't get sick the next morning. I don't know what it is. I feel ok again now, though,” to prove this I

stood up. "I probably ate too quickly or something.

He looked confused, and seemed to be thinking deeply.

"What?" I asked.

"Oh...its nothing. I was just thinking."

"Thinking what?" I frowned at him, and gave him a warning stare.

"Nothing."

"Tell me."

"You won't like it."

"Tell me."

"Ana, is there any chance?" he faltered. "Might you...could you...is there any way..."

"What?"

"I think you might be pregnant."