

Unveiled Revelations

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Submitted: May 26, 2005

Updated: May 26, 2005

The everlasting explorations of Lyoko, witnessed and partaken by an unexpected newcomer and exchange student to Kadic College. X.A.N.A.'s creations polluting the Real and Lyoko World, causing disasters worldwide. Will the one extra member be of use?

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1 - Preliminary

Unveiled Revelations...

Chapter One

Preliminary

Ever thought to yourself, sensed you were being kept from something? Denied the genuineness of all causes and defeated in being knowledgeable to something your schoolmates eye-witnessed Twenty-Four Seven?

Usually, someone in this situation would refer to attempting in interviewing their friends, asking questions that could possibly have an outer-connection towards the indication in which would answer your troublesome questions. Perhaps, a more confident being would spy on their links, lie and set up a network of sorts to force one of the 'links' in the chain to spill-the-beans for you. But when it had come to me almost a week ago, I simply stood by and said nothing that intertwined with their business.

Flashing back to the week before, I had all intentions of resolving the problem, but merely stepped aback when forth came my group of four contacts; avoided them at all costs and even hung about on my own for hours on end. Although my swift, dramatic change in characteristics - I am very well known for my wanting to talk to others - nevertheless, they found out.

What I would class as the 'group leader' in a way, spoke to me first, as he had noticed the strange intents of my behaviour firstly. Knowing I wasn't the one to let-the-cat-out-of-the-bag without a fight - as you might say - he approached me in a more persuasive and sombre figurative. He tried paying for my food at Lunch Times, requesting I partake in after school hour's activities, such as football and surfing the web, but at every occasion failed in grasping my interest.

Well-informed as towards the fact my friend wouldn't be able to persuade me with anything...he decided to *blackmail* me. I've almost always - personally - found blackmailing the perfect way to force information out of someone, but the way my mate did this...well, let's just say he outclassed me in *my* skills as to blackmailing. He got me into trouble on countless occasions in Class, threatened to reveal some of my secrets to the year group, and even told me to hang out with what I have known as 'the enemies' if I wasn't going to cooperate. So I gave in.

I told them.

And what do you know? It changed my life altogether.

Before I met these four friends, I had exchanged schools from England, and went to join them here now. I went approximately...one hour without talking to anyone I knew until Odd befriended me. He and I were in the same class and because of his 'mischievous' ways, landed himself in a seat besides me. Ironic,

eh? Anyway, he told me his full name, which he rarely told anyone because it was so...well...odd, really. His *fully*-lengthed name was... Odd Della Robbia.

He informed me about his other friends, who went by the name of Ulrich Stern, Yumi Ishiyama and Jeremie Belpois, and about the fact the `enemies' were Elisabeth Delmas (Sissy), Nicolas Pollakoff and Thierry Soares. I had to admit, the school was principally great - for a school that is. And since then, I had been in it for just topping over the two-month mark.

And guess what? It was about to get better. After the inquisitive problem I had with my `newly' formed friends, had been unravelled and answered, and Ulrich - etc. - were about to share with my their secret. Strangely enough, I already knew they had one...guess you could say I had a sixth sense. Nonetheless, there were also downsides to this secret...and over the past two days; I had been accompanied by different personalities. Ulrich hardly ever spoke...Odd was *serious*, Yumi was dedicated and hardly responsible and Jeremie was more attached to his computer than ever.

It was as if someone had replaced them...but I knew better. I knew what reality was and nothing could hit me shockingly...'Cause I knew what was real and what was make-believe. Well...along the lines I got mixed up with reality and a Virtual World trained on Destruction of one girl named Aelita, whom was in absolute danger of either being deleted or killed. Either way it was unbearable to stay by and watch on.

Yep...I *really* got mixed up along the lines. Like, if I told anyone anyway, they'd believe me? You see; if we told the Authorities about this `Virtual World', it would simultaneously be destroyed...ridding of Aelita once and for all. Like I said...who *would* believe us anyway?

So it was our secret...and no matter how eccentric or irrepressible situations appeared, still my friends and I could not reveal the truth. Then I understood why they had kept it a secret from me. Sure...they knew I was absolutely harmless towards things, besides people who called me names et cetera...but I can comprehend where their fears of letting me know came from. I probably would have done the same in their shoes, I guess.

This `Virtual World' they let me in on, was called The World of Lyoko, and the disastrous threat attempting to attack Aelita was known as X.A.N.A. (Pronounced: Zah-Nah). On countless circumstances, this `creature' - as you might say - would send what seems like a black tar to the Earth, the real world, and either take over people, lifeless objects or animas, or cause incredible catastrophes across the globe.

Sure, I'd never actually *been* into the World of Lyoko, but I had witnessed it from the comfort of the Factory - The Groups HQ - where Jeremie would access all sorts of improbable computerized networks and speak to the group over intercom. You see, Jeremie pixelized Odd, Ulrich and Yumi and downloaded them instantaneously onto the computer platform, which was known as Lyoko. It was like a path to another dimension...who would have thought eh?

Except, going to this alternate dimension would pose a threat. True, you wouldn't die in Real Life if you died there, but if you got hit there...your Life Points would decrease, and once your Life Points hit zero, you would concurrently be transported back to the Factory alongside me and Jeremie.

Well, I sort of lied when I said `never gone to the World of Lyoko', I was there right now, awaiting my

prey from a tower of rocks, structuring well above the commotion below. Ulrich and Odd were the only two - besides Aelita and I - were in Lyoko, and whilst the redhead retreated towards the Tower. If she made it there, she would enter the Code: Lyoko into what she described as a Pixelized Processor. As soon as this process was accomplished, the creatures under X.A.N.A.'s commands would disappear and we would take a trip into the past in the Real World.

Nonetheless this had yet to begin.

The heat was antagonizing, and the numbness of my legs for having to stand for such a long period of time as the group down below battled for their lives against the enemies of which X.A.N.A. has conjured up. I wasn't so sure about this oath at first, but witnessing the scene in which I stared down upon entwined and engaged me in inspiration. I loved writing stories...perhaps I'd write a story involving this one-day - when Aelita was saved.

Down below, Ulrich assailed against the nearest Blok - a block-headed creature with one eye on every face of the rock-type head -, swinging his sword from all angles in efforts to stab the eye. If my studies were correct...if you hit a Blok directly in any of it's four eyes, their Life Points drop to Zero. But no avail; in one strike, the creatures head turned clockwise and the eye shot a flare of fire towards Ulrich.

The sword-wielding friend of mine collided with the impact, and was sent hurdling towards the direction of Odd. Narrowly avoiding his collapse, Odd charged onwards, determined features on the Blok, and just before clashing in combat with the minion of X.A.N.A.'s, he pounced off the ground, somersaulted over the opponent and landed behind it. Just as he was about to shoot an arrow into it's eye, an electric current shot up his arm.

The blonde boy with a tint of purple hair fell forwards onto his front. From just metres behind him, was *another* Blok, and as I peered around at their odds of winning, they came last. Seven Blok's were bounded to them, charging their attacks and ready to rid of them. Just in case they needed of my assistance, I readied by weapon - a Bow and Arrows.

Distracted by Odd, the Blok's did not comprehend when Ulrich struck toward at the nearest Blok, and stabbed it with his sword, directly in it's icy-eye. Still attached to the sword, Ulrich swung the Blok towards the monster which had attacked Odd and hit it exactly in it's weak spot. Now there were only five left.

A voice erupted from the microphone in our ear, crackling several times before making sense: "Odd, Ulrich, you have seventy Life-Points left. Scarlet...I think it's about time you joined in. Brace yourself and good luck." It was Jeremie.

Good Luck indeed.

As I leapt down from the tower of rocks, I landed on my feet like a cat, rolled over and shot up off my right foot into the air just above two of the outer Blok's. This was a perfect angle for combat against these minions of X.A.N.A., for no eyes were formattable from aloft their heads. As I chose five arrows from my satchet and pulled them back, steadied them against the Bow, I released them.

They were compacted with a Droid-Malfunction, which when it hit the opponent - in this case the Blok's -

would simultaneously drain their powers and shut them down. Like I needed this energy anyway? Luckily for me, my aim united with me, and I hit each one - besides the furthest away - in their eyes. The one that I did not hit remained standing and as I landed, charged for me.

At times like this, I would refer to my common instinct and mirror the opponents' attack, in hope of hitting its weakness, but panicking, I hastily sailed to the side of me, performing a flying cartwheel as I went, and landed on my right hand. I gave in to the weight of the rest of my body willingly and, using my hand, rolled over sideways and stopped, hunched over on my knees.

Ulrich and Odd returned to their usual standing positions, readying themselves behind me, for attack on the Blok. I stood along with them, and aimed my Bow directly for the Blok's eye, which was facing, my friends and I. Odd aimed a fist towards the same target as me, whilst Ulrich thrust his Samurai sword directly for the `creature'. In tune to my brown-haired friends attack, I swiftly grasped three arrows from my satchel, which was easily tied around my waist, and pulled them back against the Bow steadily. The points of the Arrows pulled warningly against the fine string, and whence I felt the weapon was tight enough, released them.

They fired simultaneously at the Blok.

Odd, obeying our attacks, tightened his fist and two, thin Arrows shot from it. All in one, our weapons hit the Blok's eye, just prior to it releasing an immense blast of fire from it. There was an eerie silence before a thunderous explosion emitted, clouds of smoke hovering up towards the skies, in place where the Droid had once been. The mission was accomplished.

Seconds after now, my friends and I would be blasted into the past. But we didn't. Instead, our bodies evaporated into tiny specs, atom by atom, and within seconds, through my eyes, we were back in the Pods that pixelized us in the Real World. I stared blankly through the open space to where the computer geek sat, smiling whilst performing his obviously noticeable habit - pushing his spectacles up his nose a notch. I exited the pod, and stood amongst the three other boys - Odd and Ulrich had obviously been reincarnated to the real world from Lyoko.

"Um...so, when does that thing come along and blast us into the past, eh?" I enquired, sounding quite casual against my customary sheepish tone. Well, I wouldn't call it sheepish, but you know what I mean right? Right? Ah forget it.

"It was a meagre replication, Scarlet. We required scanning your aptitude, allegiance and awareness ahead of actually depend on you to enter the matrix of the *real* World of Lyoko." Jeremie explained. I barely understood him, with what his choice of scientific vocabulary, but managed to grasp his intentions of the explanation.

"We fooled ya, huh?" Odd remarked, with a wide grin to match.

I simply sighed and muttered. "Yep, you fooled me..." looking around, my eyes came to rest on Ulrich, whom was now unsamurai-fied (Yay a made up word!), then said: "so you guys were holding back against those Blok monsters...?"

"Mhm. Sorry, but Jeremie's right. We *can* trust you...its just...well trusting someone with Aelita's life is a

big responsibility. Understand?" Ulrich replied, his monotonous expression staring me back. I nodded comprehendingly.

"We've got an hour before school. Afterwards, we'll trust you with Lyoko - wanna meet Aelita?" Odd requested, I stared blankly at him once more and nodded correspondingly. Sure - Odd was roguish, but still even *he* deserved some respect once in a while...even though I highly doubted he deserved it anyway. But I had to hand I to him...I wouldn't even have been here if he hadn't landed himself next to me in class.

"Where's Yumi by the way?" I asked, receiving a band of shrugged shoulders amongst me - even Jeremie gesticulated his shoulders to show he wasn't knowledgeable to Yumi's whereabouts. Mustn't have mattered, afterall, she was always running off, and due to this, I had to spend most of my day around these three boys. Well, must have been the same for her when I wasn't around.

"Wanna get some food before morning tuck shuts?" Odd enquired, washing a hand through his purple slash blonde hair, ruffling it a little.

"Sure, why not." Ulrich answered, I motioned my head to the side to indicate the exiting of the Factory, and in tune to that, Jeremie nodded. We departed the building, and took the automatic lift down to the ground floor. We emerged into open air, following after that, we entered the usual Subway, where a skateboard, scooter and bike were untidily placed, and adding to the collection, was a pair of roller-blades - yep, I love em.

A while after journeying through the underground tunnel, we came to rest in the hall of Kadic College, which was set up for Morning Tuck as Odd had said. We queued up, bought our breakfast and took a seat amongst the other students, whilst Jeremie, Odd, Ulrich and I conversed about the World of Lyoko.

I could hardly wait.

2 - Message From Afar

Chapter Two

Message From Afar

At dinnertime that day, Jeremie had told us all that he was going to check on Aelita at the factory, whilst everyone else worked on their essay for Mr Fumet, their History teacher. Yumi, being the only one not assigned for the thesis, had exited school for her lunch.

Lastly, I, being new, was unable to write and finish the essay, seeing as I had 'no knowledge towards the subject'. The English Civil War? I *came* from England...what did he take me for anyway? So I decided to pay a visit to Jeremie and Aelita, after all, he *did* promise me being able to meet her, even if it wasn't in person.

I strode down the path to the oncoming forest, and swiftly examining the whereabouts of myself and whether any onlooker was staring my way, I came to the conclusion I was in the clear. So I dived into the forest - metaphorically - I tore through the assortment of branches, logs and leaves that came my way. I kept my arms outstretched before me, just in case I were to run into anything, and squinted my eyes in case anything flew in.

You had to be careful...you never know what could happen. Err...well, it *is* a little worse in the World of Lyoko, but...err...forget it.

I came into a clearing, and as I did, my eyes scanned the area. In a matter of half-seconds, my pupils came to focus on a metal trapdoor on the ground, and jogging over, I leant down and withdrew back as I pulled it up by the handle. The handle was cold, and when the trapdoor opened, a gust of frosty air breezed against my face, causing my hair to sway upwards.

Strange.

I gave a quizzical look before entering, pulling the door back down to the floor and climbing down the ladders to the subway. There, already waiting, were a set of three skateboards, a bike and roller blades. Only God knew why they had a *bike* there...weren't the forms of transport enough already? Shaking this thought from my mind, I selected the skateboard nearest to me, to try it out for the first time. Yes, I had been on one before, but pretty much fell off every time throughout my attempt.

I lifted the board up, and threw it securely onto its wheels upon the icy-looking concrete. I watched it roll ever so slightly across the floor, and in tune to it slowing down; I ran at it and lifted a foot to its surface. This speeded it up. I wobbled backwards at the sudden speed, but kept balanced as I kicked against the floor with my other foot. Hey, I could get used to this!

The same chilly manner of the air blew, this time, strongly against me, as with each kick from my right

foot, the skateboard sped faster and faster down the tunnel. This was easy...if I'd had known I was already a natural for skating, I'd have started *long ago*. But I spoke too soon. And coming closer was a curving turn.

If I had anticipated the fact I had to turn to get to the Factory, I probably would have gone by roller blades, as usual, but it was too late now to go back and get ready. Nonetheless, I was nearly there anyway, and turning back would be a complete waste of time, so reluctantly, I continued.

Depending on my memory to tell me how my friends told me to turn, I leant my weight against the right-hand-side of the plank with wheels and miraculously, *it turned right round the corner*. Wow, magic.

Now already learned my lesson on skating, I rapidly performed a half-run on the skateboard, and zipped down the Subway as if someone were following me. And that was exactly the feeling I had. I shrugged the eerie sensation off, but just to make sure, I hastened up the journey.

With scarcely any distance left, I leapt off the board on both feet, and landed just a metre away from the ladder. As I climbed, the roaring reverberations of the wheels rolling against the rough Earth groaned aloud, continuing the pattern it made when moving. Kinda' like a train...I'm sure you've heard it by now. If not...well...I advise a trip to London or something by Train.

I thrust my hands against the new trapdoor, and in opening it, I came to rest my eyes on a gargantuan building, complete with polymerised titanium structured walls and doors. I jogged up to the door, and noticing decoder, typed in the seven-digit number to gain access. Simultaneously the gate lifted up, and I walked through into the elevator.

I clicked the button that mentioned silently `Top Floor', and as I did, the entryway blocked me off from the rural region outside. A slight vibration filled the miniscule, square lift and received the strange sensation that I was shrinking. Once the vibrations stopped, and the room stopped at a halt, the doors reopened, and I walked through.

I soon came to another highly secured entry, this time with a fingerprint-scanner. *Greeaatt...* Jeremie was the only one able to work the computer that was told to be inside the door, and he hadn't added me as an admitted being yet. So...I did what any polite person would do - I knocked.

I waited, but no answers came, so I knocked once more...and still no answer. So I came to the conclusion Jeremie was either feeling dodgy about who might be knocking, or he couldn't hear. So I shouted: "Jeremie! Open up! It's me - Scarlet!"

I held my breath to listen to even the slightest of murmurs from the other side of the door, but when none came again, I decided it was enough. So I kicked the door, causing the large frame to shudder and squabble loudly. Ultimately, the gates opened themselves automatically.

Jeremie was nowhere to be seen. The high-tech mainframes were still in place, still functional and processing at this very moment. The seat was in the centre of the room, nearest to me, except an extra door on the opposite side of the room was left oddly ajar. I'd never even seen this door before, so I knew not where it led.

I shouted again, in attempt to grasp Jeremie's hearing: "*Jeremie!* Where are you dude?"

And that was when it hit me. I could check out the world of Lyoko and meet Aelita...all I had to do was comprehend how to work the computers and hey presto. I walked slowly towards the seat, and sat in it. Instantaneously, it lit up on the armrests, and swung around the room, reaching higher altitudes of the room. It halted abruptly, making me jerk somewhat to the side, and in tune to that, the computer screen blipped on, lighting my face.

A search bar opened up on the screen, and by now, I was at a loss for words and knowledge. What the hell was I supposed to search? Aelita? Ah well, I tried it, so I quickly typed my fingers against the keyboard before me, and spelt her name. As I commanded, images of Lyoko and Aelita came up. Nearly every picture was the same: a half-hearted smile, her head tilted to aside, and her pink hair affray. But the thing was, there were fifteen thousand pages of the same picture.

I noticed this as I clicked '*next page*' with the mouse each time round. Weird. Who would take fifteen thousand snapshots of the same person in the same pose? Ahem...apparently, Jeremie. All I needed now was the button that pixelized people and I'd be there in no time—

"Scarlet! Get down from there...I let you in 'cause I considered you'd be resistible to inspecting the central processing units." My focus shot startled towards the door, which was slightly ajar, and in the doorway, stood the same blonde-haired, geek-like boy whom I knew as my friend. I motioned myself so that the chair would spin to the side, and when it did, I slid myself off, landing firmly on the ground, hunched over.

I quickly stood, and smiled mischievously, but weakly.

"Uh...I thought you were...err...dead or something." I muttered, attempting in trying to take the situation off Jeremie's mind. I resumed. "Say, what's with the new built-in refrigerator? You gotta fever or are you just weird, or what?" My eyes skipped side to side in their sockets, and I quickly added, "no offence."

"None taken. Anyway, listen, I've got a favour to ask you—"

A head-splitting bleep sounded, echoing off the walls and interrupting my blonde haired friend. He hurried over to the chair - now in its starting position, low enough for someone to sit down in - and it circled round to the computer I was at previously. My heart sank. Did I make a mistake?

Almost as if he had read my mind, Jeremie said: "Don't worry, it wasn't your fault. I..." he broke off into silence.

"What?" I enquired, looking quizzically towards him as his silence replied to me. The only answer I received in turn was a somewhat terrified gawp at his computer, and an eerie stillness from Jeremie. I didn't understand, so I spoke up once more. "Jeremie, what is it?"

"N - nothing. It doesn't matter - doesn't concern you - I mean. It doesn't matter." He retreated from the computer he was staring at after switching it off, and wheeled round on his chair to the ground once more, then stood to face me. "Scarlet, I've got a favour to ask you."

“And what might that be?” I asked, trying to sound less *well-duh!* about it than I already did.

He replied: “I want you to take the bike in the Subway to the centre of town, and pick up a package for me. Can you? I mean if your not too busy...but if you are I can always—”

I listened to Jeremie natter on, trying to make the conversation between he and I sound less selfish on his behalf. It was almost as if he were nervous, and the Jeremie I knew, was *never* nervous...even if he was a techno-geek and one of the main bully-victims.

So I spoke up to prevent him from feeling bad about the way he was speaking, or whatever. “Sure I'll do it. What shop is the package at? And am I allowed to peek inside the box et cetera before I bring it back?”

“No!” Jeremie exclaimed pleadingly. I raised a brow at his sudden outburst. “Sorry. Just bring it back and I'll fill you and the others in later. Don't worry. Anyway, it's in the Post Office...I'd like you to take this.” Jeremie handed me a piece of paper with words written untidily across it. I looked up at him, and he answered. “Just give this to the person at the desk and they'll bring the package to you. If it doesn't work, say it belongs to a person called Jeremie Belpois and that the ID number is: 936583 okay?”

“Okay.”

“Don't go now. Go after school...wouldn't want you getting into detention...after all, X.A.N.A. might start up, and we may need your help. From what I've seen on the battlefield, you're a natural.” Jeremie complimented me, smiling slightly.

“Just like the skateboard then...” I said to myself quietly.

“Wha?”

“Oh nothing. Anyway, Jeremie? Mind answering some questions for me?” I asked, and he nodded vaguely. I took a deep breath and explained my question. “What was with the fifteen thousand or what have you on the computer of Aelita? I mean, they're all the same. And you've been acting strange since I've arrived here - something up? And only an idiot wouldn't notice the freezing cold temperature in here. Not to be rude or anything but you're beginning to sound like a hermit.”

“Uh...” Jeremie hesitated, flinching slightly, but answered: “It's nothing, honest. It just so happens the heating's gone, I was studying for a test and well. The Aelita thing - um...”

I need not ask, I simply smirked and muttered: “don't worry, your secret is safe with me.” And at this sentence, he smiled nervously. He showed me to the exit, gave me his farewells and I was, once again, off down the Subway on the skateboard. At least I had gotten the hang of skating now...but the thing was, I was new to this place, and I didn't know *where* exactly the Post Office was around here.

My bad...God I'm forgetful - I mean, who forgets to ask for directions when they're new?

I shrugged it off. It didn't matter to me much. I already understood what a town centre was, and had been to loads of them in England. Busy place, shopping markets, large shopping centre, tall buildings. I

just hoped France was like that.

When I reached the end of the tunnel, I began to have trouble with lifting the bike out of it. For one, it was greatly heavy, and two, I was worried about whether anyone would pass by. So I opened the trapdoor firstly, took the bike by the handles and body, then poked my head out from inside the Subway.

My arms strained painfully, keeping the form of transport firmly in my hands without dropping. And as I wrenched it out of the gap in the floor, my hands became sweaty and slippery, as I always dropped it. When eventually I made it up undetected, I tossed the Bike as far away from me as possible, shut the door and lay, resting, sprawled across the grass.

A light breeze blew by me, and then scarcely, I heard a muffled, ringing sound of the end-of-dinner bell going off. I groaned as I motioned to my feet, and left the Bike hidden under a mass of cut grass nearby. Although it wasn't the best of hiding places, it would have to do, and as I ran, remembered that I had forgotten the Art homework. Ah well...

—ICLI—

After the final bell for end of school sounded throughout Kadic, my friends and I brought ourselves to The Factory, where I left them to hang out or whatever, whilst I went to retrieve the Bike and bring back the package for Jeremie. When I found the bike, it was in perfect shape, and in exactly the same spot as I had hidden it before hand. All I needed now, was for the trip to the post office to go smooth, and I'd be coming back to the school in no time flat.

The only problem was the matter of being caught out of school, and getting lost halfway there, so in case of emergency, I took my mobile phone. And just to make sure I did not forget my objective - I am *very* forgetful - I wrote down a reminder on the phone.

I pulled the bike to its `feet' and sat on it, pushed my right foot against the pedal and it began to move. It wasn't exactly the most comfortable of transportation, but it had to make do...I wasn't exactly going to get better luxury on a *scooter*. As I tore through the forest to save time, trees came at me from all angles, and with each turn, I swiftly had to shift the handlebars to aside to avoid crashing.

When eventually I reached the gateway, I found the hole in it, which Odd had explained to me as his own doing, for emergency getaways about a month ago. I leapt sideways off the bike, grabbed hold of it before the wheels took it further, and jogged swiftly with it by my side, to the gate. Firstly, I thrust the tandem through the entry, causing it to wedge slightly, but using my strength, I managed to get it out on the other side. I followed suit.

Once on the other side, I positioned myself aloft it, and rode down the passageway towards the college exit. Thank god and all...it had been a while since I breathed non-school air, and finally escaping this place was a perfect point to start.

Just before I departed from class an hour ago, I had asked Yumi the directions to the post office, as she was always wandering about the city, seeing as she did not live in Kadic, but lived with her parents instead. If I remembered correctly, all I had to do was go down the road from school, take a first right, then left, go straight down until the end of the road, take a right, right again, and the post office would be

just around the corner.

And that was exactly what I did. The traffic was quite bad, especially as it was rush hour, and traffic jams were arising every here and there, but with my swift reflexes and remarkable awareness, I managed to cycle all the way there without a stop. At the end of my journey, I heaved a great sigh, and - using the padlock on the bike Jeremie had loaned me - I locked it up against a nearby bar.

Yumi had been true to her word - my destination *was* just around the corner...literally. I turned right, and began to walk quite hasty, avoiding the mad crowd rushing about. It was getting quite cold, and the long, gothic, baggy pants I was wearing didn't help - they were billowing about frantically thanks to the gale force winds surrounding me. The chains on them were clashing with each other, creating loud, metallic noises as I walked. *Eventually*, I reached the post office.

I barged against the door, becoming aware as to how heavy it was, but got through, ceasing the wind to blow any longer. I motioned gradually towards the front desk, ready to put into practise the script I had been rehearsing in my mind along the way, when something - or should I say someone - caught my eye. And I don't mean in the good way.

Just by the desk I was heading for, stood a girl, round about my height, who was wearing a maroon bandanna, which covered the sapphire, radiant hair beneath. The first impression I got off her, was 'attention seeker', as her clothes were the latest out, which were each set in bright, luminous colours, such as green, red, pink and yellow. Black bike gloves were worn over her hands, four spikes emerging from the knuckles on both hands, and just down her arm, were multicoloured bands of all shapes and sizes. She wore sandals, which crested a priceless-looking gemstone, on her face, was a pink tattoo of a heart and around her neck, was a sapphire, beaded necklace.

Azure - my sister. (Yes, that's her name).

Sure, all of my family, excluding my dad, had moved over to France, but seeing Azure again after all this time, after finally ridding of her for good, was a real shock. The second my eyes met her, she turned and saw me. Her face lit up in a way, like she was yearning for something or me to say hi at least, but I blinked, and the second I did so the expression vanished.

And then, she did what I dreaded most of all - spoke to me. You see, my sister caused a fire in our old house (and I mean our *old, old house*. Now the one we moved from to France). The fire trapped my dad inside, as Azure, my mum and I made it to safety...once the fire brigades doused the outburst of flames, he was nowhere to be found. The only thing I remembered of him was his pleading for help before he passed on.

And here she was - the mass murderer herself. I couldn't imagine how my mother was coping with Azure; especially after the depression she had caused our family.

"Hey...err...Scarlet." Azure muttered, showing just how obviously shy she was. "Been a while eh? Remember when we were in England?"

"All I remember, is what you did, and for that, *I hate you.*" I replied, gritting my teeth as I walked up to the desk. A woman was sat there, and once she noticed me, I started. "Do you have a package for

Jeremie Belpois? Here's the receipt..." I handed the paper over that Jeremie had given to me, and the woman took it.

She said something I didn't understand, probably in French, and walked away with the paper. Did she say okay or what? Suddenly, I was interrupted abruptly.

"So...how's Kadic College? Made any new friends or are you still a loner?" my sister enquired, putting her usual sarcastic smile on her face. I chose to ignore, and waited, watching through the pane of glass where the woman had once been, for the package to arrive.

The visit to town hadn't been *all* that bad - and by that I mean nearly not so bad. The weather may have been blue, and my sister may have shown up, but I was getting some fresh air, and it felt like I was a new person. Sure, it wasn't great, and if this was my new life, I certainly wouldn't have enjoyed it much, but it was fine.

"God, what's your problem? That accident was over *four years ago!* Don't tell me you haven't gotten over it? Mum and me have, everyone else in our family has, except for you? C'mon, at least give a sign that you can talk." Azure demanded. I was *now* aware, that she was becoming impatient...my sister never *was* the type to wait, even if it was three minutes.

I ignored her 'announcement' once again, and when the woman returned with a large box, wrapped nearly in brown, waterproof paper, I took it and began to exit the building. But *she* prevented me from doing so, my standing before me, and blocking my path to the door.

"You see your sister after three months or so, and you can't even be *arsed* to say hello?" Azure exclaimed, gaining attention from half of the people in the room, but still she continued (told you she was an attention-seeker). "Just so you know, I haven't exactly been having a nice sunny day in Spain either! I've been stuck in an adoption centre for—"

"*What?*" I asked through gritted teeth. My temper was getting the better of me, and when I was around Azure, my temper tended to reach extreme heights. For one, she was annoying, and two she was irritating. Wait - they're both the same things...my bad. Oh yeah, and third...I *HATED* her.

"You heard me."

"What do you *mean* you've been stuck in an adoption centre!"

This was when it hit me: "She's dead."

A dreaded, horrible sensational pit dropped in my stomach, my features, from my point of view, were somewhat muddled up. I didn't know what to think. Was Azure telling the truth, or lying to merely seek her attention once again? I couldn't trust her, but at the same time I had to. If I didn't believe my sibling, that our parents were both dead, how was I to truly know?

Silence erupted about us, until she broke it. "It's true. Mum and me were in town, not this town, another one, and I told her I was going to buy something. She waited by a building whilst I paid for it, then I called her over for help. She started to cross the road, then a group of joy riders came down the road

and...well..." she broke off into silence.

It was too late to control my anger now. I felt tears burning at the back of my eyes, but forced them to stay at bay. I clenched my fists, and out of the blue, I shoved Azure backwards...if it wasn't for her crying, I probably would have punched her. I know it was inappropriate, but she had, yet again, been the cause of my parents' death. *I couldn't believe it.*

The two people in the world whom I only truly relied on, the only two I could ever trust entirely had been taken by this sorry excuse for a sister of mine. I couldn't speak to her anymore. I never wanted to see her *ever* again. Azure had inflicted enough damage on me so far, and I couldn't bear for her to take someone else. We had only just moved to France, and already something bad had occurred. But it was the same with England. My dad had died there, and now I was a...well...an orphan.

Before I left the post office, I glared devious daggers at my sister, and with the package clenched immensely tightly within my grasp, I rode back to Kadic College on the bike, using one hand to steer and the other to hold the parcel. As I went, I tried my hardest, tensed myself to prevent me from crying. I never had been one to burst out into tears; I had never even attempted a proper goodbye to any of my parents. And now, because of my hatred towards Azure, I never would know the whereabouts of my mothers' grave.

Like I'd want to visit it anyway. Not because I didn't like her - but because I knew I'd be too upset to attend it. When I would get back to Kadic, I would drop the parcel off at the Factory, and leave Jeremie be with his present. After that I would want to be alone. I didn't want to believe Azure; I didn't want to believe my mum had gone...I didn't want to believe any of it. I couldn't even be sure...but something deep down told me it was true.

I mean, who would lie about their parents death?

—ICLI—

When I arrived back, I deposited the bike in the Subway, and walked it back to The Factory. Jeremie was already there waiting, along with Ulrich, Yumi and Odd. They were muttered amongst themselves, and when I entered the room, they silenced.

Jeremie walked up towards me, took the package, but did not walk away. He said his thanks, and then began to open it up. Inside, was a box, and when he opened it, I noticed a piece of paper and a necklace...a necklace of ruby. He looked up at my, then passed the two objects to me and explained. "We found out before you, and we set Azure up for you two to meet. The headmaster was going to tell you, but you were nowhere to be found...because I am well known for keeping my secret, I promised to tell you. Except I didn't...we thought it would be easier for you if a family relative did."

"But...why...you sent me there because you didn't want to...Azure did that for me? But I thought she hated me as much as I hated her?" I thought aloud.

Jeremie spoke up once more: "no. She doesn't hate you...she knew how you'd react to the news, but not telling you would be worse...especially delaying the inevitable. True...your mum has...passed on, but don't be upset. True, we don't know what it's like, but she's in a better place."

I knew how sloppy and uneasy the sentence Jeremie had said to me was, but I couldn't say that. It wouldn't be very respectful towards a dead person, and although I already missed my mum dearly, it didn't mean I had to be depressed. I lost my pets, dad and mum, and treating my sister how I did wasn't right. What if *she* was next? That was always my problem. I'd never say 'I love you', to my parents and I'd never hug them, I'd would just say and do that in my mind.

They didn't know how much they meant to me, and now Azure was the only person whom was in my family - in this country.

Later that day, whilst I was in my room (I had a room of my own), I read the will, and put the ruby necklace around my neck.

The will said...

Dear Scarlet Crystal,

When you get this, your mother and father will have passed on. Try not to be upset, we know it is hard to forget, but don't be sad...we don't want to know our daughter grew up to be depressed. I'm sorry.

Your sister, Azure, will be getting a letter identical to this, and I hope you both have gotten the necklaces...take care of them, protect them with your life. Remember on our anniversary when we were both wearing these? We wore it to every one up until now your father and I, and I hope you look after them.

By now, the family fortune would have been handed to the people in charge of adoption et cetera, and when you two have reached eighteen, you will both inherit it.

Take care Scarlet. We both love you and we'll make sure you are safe and treated fairly with a new family and your sister.

Jay and Debbie Crystal.

For a will, it was surprisingly short, but that didn't matter, the effort that was put into it, the gentleness put into the letter was great to know. And as I placed the letter down in my diary under the down the side of the bed nearest to the wall, I cried myself to sleep.

They were gone. Forever. And there was nothing I could have done to prevent it...