

# Tale of the Crystal Legend

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*Upon her tutor's return Alexia is suddenly thrown headfirst into an adventure. She visits elves, fights demons, and unearths lost secrets. Will she be able to discover the crystal shards in time to stop an evil sorcerer, or will the world fall into chaos?*

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the back for her monkey tail. Her platinum hair was shining with a tint of gold due to the light cast from the chandelier.

“Hiya Alexia, about time you got up.” She said turning around to greet Alexia. “My apologies, I truly desired to see you in.” Alexia apologized bowing. “It’s ok. No need for you to bow. I was only teasing you. Besides I haven’t been here all that long.” Kyla replied grinning as she scratched through her short hair. Suddenly a low growling sound was audible causing Kyla to quickly grab her stomach. “Hey is dinner ready? I’m starving!” She whimpered a frown appearing on her face. “It should be... Have you not already eaten?” Alexia inquired though she had already guessed an answer. “Yeah before I left Demiri... but that was about an hour ago...” Kyla squeaked. Alexia giggled at her friend’s child like personality before leading her into the dining hall.

Once the meal was over, the two walked side-by-side back into the great hall. “Kyla?” Alexia asked looking down at her companion. The girl was only 4’5” causing her head to come up to a little less than chest level on Alexia. Kyla was picking at her teeth as she looked up in response. “That song you were singing earlier, would you mind singing it for me?” Alexia asked politely intrigued by the soft melody. “Sure. I don’t mind.” Kyla answered smiling, her eyes shining a bright blue.

They walked back to Alexia’s room where she set out a couple of chairs for the recital. Taking in a deep breath Kyla began her song:

“Now go to sleep and let the darkness creep around.

The light inside will keep you safe and sound.

I know you’ll find

That some things don’t come out right.

It’s what’s in your heart

That keeps our love with you each night.

And suddenly

You look at your reflection

And you don’t like

What is looking back at you.

Then suddenly

Those who care

Fly down like angels

In hopes to save you

From the rest of the world.

Look around you will find

that love is all around you.

You’ll grow up to see

That all your dreams will come true.

Now take these words and keep them with you

You are my angel

And I love you.”

“Truly a wonderful performance.” Alexia cheered once Kyla finished singing. “It’s a lullaby... my mother used to sing it to me...” Kyla replied softly. “Your mother?” Alexia inquired though she was barely able to hear Kyla. Kyla never talked about her parents, her friends, or anything about her life, and Alexia never really thought about asking until now that Kyla opened up the subject. “Yeah... she would sing it to me whenever I was having a bad day or something... No matter what it always cheered me up and helped me sleep...” She whispered glancing at the floor. Pain seemed to fill her eyes as multiple things came back to her at once. “I have never seen your mother before. Why do you not bring her by the palace occasionally?” Alexia asked not seeing the signs that Kyla didn’t really care for this topic. “I

can't..." Kyla muttered. "Why not?" Alexia continued to pry. "It's none of your business!" Kyla retorted shooting out of her seat, her eyes glimmering red with frustration her jaw tightening. Alexia had never seen Kyla like these. Kyla would never even raise her voice at Alexia, and now this. Alexia must have found the breaking point.

Silence filled the room as Kyla stood there calming down, her eyes slowly changing from the violent red to a silver-blue and her countenance softened. She looked almost sad in a painful way. "I'm sorry..." She whispered. Alexia seemed shocked by this behavior. Kyla took in a deep breath. "I'm bushed..." She yawned. "I'm going to put my bags in my room and hit the hay." She said walking away. What was she not telling me? Why doesn't she want to talk about her family... her past? These questions bothered Alexia and were on her mind all night and into the next day. Alexia wanted to toss these thoughts aside, especially after seeing the pained look on Kyla's face, but her curiosity was getting the best of her.

Though Alexia didn't get much sleep she was up early and was able to greet Ash when he arrived at the palace with the kids from the orphanage. Whenever Kyla was here Zack would bring the children so they could listen to her stories while Alexia worked on the studies Kyla gave her.

Ash is a teenage boy the same age as Alexia who has slightly spiky brown hair and is about 5'7". His eyes are similar to Alexia's except his left eye is brown and his right eye is green. He is really quick witted but is a good and kind person. He grew up in the orphanage since he was never adopted. He doesn't really have much and pretty much wears the same things each day, a green tee-shirt and tattered blue jeans. He and Alexia have known each other for practically forever and are best friends. She feels sorry for him sometimes due to his past and has offered to buy him whatever he wants but he won't let her. If Alexia had it her way he would be living with her at the palace but for some reason her mother won't let it.

"Hey, how's it going?" Ash greeted as the guards allowed him to enter into the palace. "Good morning Ash." Alexia replied cheerfully running down the stairs to him. "What are you up to?" He asked glaring accusingly at her. "Who said I was 'up' to something?" Alexia gasped. "Come on Alexia. We've known each other forever. I think I should know you by now." He countered. "Well yesterday Kyla mentioned her mother, but when I pursued the topic further she became-" "Angry?" Ash said cutting her off. "So you want to know what she's hiding, right?" He asked. "Yes but-" "You always were too curious for your own good." He interrupted once more. Alexia scoffed. "Where is she now?" Ash inquired. "She is still asleep..." "Well, why don't you just break into her things and take what you want while she's still asleep." He instructed giving a slight chuckle at the thought of Alexia playing ninja. "But that would be-" "Stealing? Not exactly when you're done just put everything back." She pondered what he said. "Well if you say so..." She mumbled still a little unsure. "Come on it'll be fine, what's the worst that could happen? Whenever you're done snooping meet us outside at the usual spot." He said confidently. "Just remember curiosity killed the cat. You might not like what you find." He warned waving as he walked out the door.

Following Ash's advice Alexia walked quietly up the stairs and to the room that Kyla stays in while here. Kyla was still soundly sleeping, curled up like a puppy. Alexia tiptoed over to Kyla's travel trunks. She opened one finding only clothes. With a sigh she opened the other chest to find a photo album, a video recorder as well as an album of video photos. "Eureka." She breathed pulling out the two albums. She first looked through the still photos but for the most part found only pictures of Kyla with her friends. "Kyla has a brother?" Alexia questioned as she found a photo labeled "Kyla and her brother." It must have been put in by someone other than Kyla since the handwriting was different. She found another picture labeled "the cousins" of Kyla and a tall blond haired boy. A smile found its way to Alexia's face. So far she saw nothing bad, though she was curious as to why she had not found any photos of Kyla's parents.

Still not satisfied Alexia placed the photo album back into the trunk and started to look through the other album. Video Photos are an interesting invention that has been around for many years. They are photos that have a video recorded on them making them easy to store and watch. To record one you take a blank photo and slide it into the recorder. From there you set the recorder to record and you're good to go. To watch all you have to do is hold them and watch, they are touch activated. You can also place one in a recorder and attach the recorder to a monitor gaining a larger screen.

Alexia grabbed the first video in the album and holding it in front of her face she started watching it. It was some sort of party, a birthday party for Kyla and her brother. It seemed like it was fun. Kyla danced around with a large smile on her face though with each of her movements pain flashed across her face for a split second. Alexia watched this happily as the party continued. The recorder was given to the boy. His young face lit up as he took it and started recording.

It went black. Alexia set the video in her lap, though she still had hold of its sides. She was confused. What was Kyla hiding? She considered just giving up her search when something caught her attention. She looked back down to see that the video was still rolling it just had an intermission.

It was in a dark room. The boy had entered it and was looking around. A small girl was sleeping soundly. The boy tiptoed around the room as if trying to find something to maybe embarrass his sister with.

Suddenly there was a loud bang, fire lit up the sky outside, and the room began the shake. The boy cursed as he along with the camera shook. The girl on the other hand remained asleep. A man ran into the room. He looked in the direction of the camera, looking at the boy. "Are you okay?" The man asked.

"Y-yeah... What's going on out there?" Kyla's brother inquired. "We're under attack. There's not many of us left. We're trying to get as many people out as possible. Is Kyla ok?" The man explained.

"She's fine she sleeps like the dead. What about father and mother?" The boy questioned. "I'm sorry Rikku... but they're... they're dead." The man said sadness in his voice as he walked over to where Kyla was sleeping. "B-B-but how?" Rikku whimpered. "They were the first to try and fight. They wanted to protect you." The man replied picking Kyla up and draping her over his shoulder. "Come on Rikku I need to get the two of you out of here." The man said running out of the door the boy following.

It was a small city. Everything around them was on fire. Dead bodies littered the ground. They ran frantically trying to escape the destruction. The buildings were flying by. Soon Rikku outran the man carrying Kyla, removing them from sight.

"Niroshi!" Kyla screamed. Rikku turned around to see Kyla pushing the man aside in time to avoid the blade of an unknown warrior. The warrior was shielded from our sight by the smoke. There wasn't enough space between Kyla and the warrior in time for her to evade. She caught the blade across her stomach and fell harshly to the ground. Her body bounced before settling there, motionless, blood pouring from her wound. By the time the man, named Niroshi, regained composure or Rikku had reached Kyla the warrior was gone. "Kyla!" Rikku shouted as he slid over to her dropping the recorder in the progress. Now all that was visible was Kyla laying there and the bodies and arms of the two males. "N-N-Niroshi is she going to be ok!?" Rikku, lost and terrified, asked the man. "I don't know." Niroshi breathed as he gently lifted Kyla. "But if we don't hurry neither of you will be 'ok.'" He added looking around trying to spot more survivors. "There's Damian with his kids. Come on Rikku." He commanded holding Kyla close to him as he started to run again. Rikku grabbed the recorder as he quickly followed.

Soon they were in what appeared to be a docking area. The sea was slightly visible glowing orange as it reflected the flames. "Rikku go. Damion will help you get a warp pod set up. I'm going back to look for more survivors." Niroshi instructed as he placed Kyla inside a warp pod. He typed coordinates in on the pod's key panel before he left. The door went to close but Rikku prevented it. He turned the recorder around to show his face. "Everything is going to be ok, Sis... I'm here whenever you need me..." He said smiling as tears formed in the corners of his eyes. "Prince Rikku!" An unidentified voice called. "Alright

already!” He retorted. “Love you sis.” He whispered wiping away the tears and smiling once more before setting the recorder down on the back of the seat facing out the window. You could hear his footsteps as he left. There was a hiss and a clang as the door closed and the pod started to leave the burning town. Kyla’s groans were audible as she stirred from her sleep. All that was visible by the recorder was the town as the buildings crumbled under the heat and explosions scattered bodies everywhere. Something hit the recorder causing it to spin around to where Kyla’s face was visible. She had slipped as she sat up to look out the window and her elbow nudged the recorder. Horror was spread across her face. Her lips were partially parted as she was thrown into a trance, her eyes were wide and the bright flames were reflected in her silver colored irises.

Finally the recording ended. Alexia was feeling a mixture of sadness and horror. At this moment Kyla woke up. She jumped from the bed and doing a front-flip over Alexia snatched the video photo in the process. “What do you think you’re doing!?” She hissed glaring at Alexia arching her back like a cat ready to strike. “I-I was curious... I desired to learn what you were retaining.” Alexia replied trying to sound calm and miraculously succeeding somewhat. “Well... you always were too curious for your own good.” Kyla said looking amused as she straightened her back. “I guess... it wouldn’t have hurt to tell you... it’s not much of a secret, though it appears that nobody across the globe seems to care that practically an entire race was exterminated.” She said almost to herself glancing down at the video, sadness filling her eyes. “I-I just don’t like talking about my past. How I lost so many friends... my home... my parents... The pain is still so close...” She continued clenching the blue sphere pendant around her neck. It started to glow at her touch. “But you shouldn’t have looked through my personal belongings.” She lectured looking at the opened chest. “My apologies.” Alexia apologized. “Eh... whatever...” Kyla shrugged having already forgiven Alexia.

## 2 - Chapter 2

As our heroine and her teacher exited the castle in order to meet Ash at their usual hangout, Kyla shared things that she had never told anyone. After all, Alexia had already seen what had happened to her home, why not open up to her about it? Kyla told Alexia of what her home was like before and after she was born. Before her birth the monkey-demons were cruel people who lived off the suffering of others. They were pirates. And since they had strength far beyond humans it was easy for them to pillage anything they laid their eyes on, killing anyone in their way. But when Kyla and her twin brother were born a change came over her people for reasons unknown. Something about this pure child melted her father's cold heart. They stopped their killing and raiding and turned over a new leaf. They kept to themselves and lived their lives practicing martial arts, a few families turning to farming to sustain the village.

The children born in this time of peace had it easy since most people adapted easily and gratefully to this new lifestyle. Kyla's older brother wasn't one of those people. He would constantly attack her verbally and physically due to her being different. The family line was filled with males with black hair and black eyes, but she was female with white hair and changing eyes, getting most of her traits from their mother. For the most part nobody knew of his beating her. Her twin brother was able to figure it out though and begged for her to either fight back or let someone help her. But she tossed his advice aside. Though she was incredibly strong she wouldn't fight back against her older brother, she practically let him beat her and spit curses at her. She also would never tell anyone about it, especially not her parents. She didn't believe in asking others for help.

At the young age of four Kyla along with a group of other children were playing around the warp pods. They were forbidden from touching them, but one of the kids dared her to go inside one. She was never one to brush off a dare so she climbed up in one, and in the process she pressed some buttons on the control panel causing it to fly off with her inside. When she finally landed she was on this continent, Lucaria. She wandered around training for a while in the wild. It was during this time that she was appointed Alexia's tutor. After which she returned home where she lived for a year going through the same abuse she had before, and still hiding it from everyone. It was the day of her 7th birthday that would haunt her for the rest of her life, an event that Alexia had seen.

By the time Kyla's tale had ended they were making their way through town. To Kyla's waist was attached her travel pack that magically contained all of her belongings. She never explained to Alexia how it held everything all she would say is that it was some kind of technology that a friend of her was working on. Draped around her shoulder was a satchel of books for Alexia to study once they reached their usual hangout outside of town. Now that Kyla had finished talking everything was quite except for Kyla humming happily and the soft buzz of people attending to their daily lives. The people in town loved to see Alexia when she went on her walks through town which was practically every day. Of course people would stop to stare and wave at her. If Alexia was alone all the boys would run up to her trying to talk to her, but it isn't often that Alexia is alone, she is normally with Kyla and/or Ash. On a normal day Alexia would smile and wave back. She would giggle at the children that ran at her and her companion's heels, but today was different she was lost in thought processing Kyla's story. How can she endure everything that she has and still remain this cheerful healthy child? Alexia pondered. She had already made up her mind to never repeat the story to anyone. If Kyla wanted it told she would tell it herself, besides Alexia wouldn't even know how to begin to retell this tale.

As they walked, and were just outside of town, the silence was cut by an explosion. The ground shook

slightly where they were and a cloud of dust and smoke rose in the distance. The people in town started screaming scrambling around trying to get to safety, as another explosion went off in the same area a couple miles up the road. Alexia ducked down shielding her head as if the explosion was right there. Seriousness flashed across Kyla's face where it stayed. She stared at the smoke measuring up the distance from here to there. "That was near our place..." She whispered as fear started to darken her gaze. "Do you mean that Ash and the children could have been caught up in that!?" Alexia squeaked looking up at the cloud as it started to fade away in the wind. "That is exactly what I mean. Alexia, go back to the palace and don't come out 'til I get back. I'm goin to check on them." Kyla commanded couching down to place her front feet on the ground preparing to pounce away. Something gripped her shirt catching her off guard. She looked back to see that Alexia had fallen to her knees yet was able to have a stern grip on Kyla's shirt. "Please take me with you. I cannot go back without knowing about their well being. Please do not leave me here." Alexia pleaded desperately tears forming in her eyes as she worried about her friends. She was already fighting placing her fingers to her mouth. She had a horrible habit of biting her nails when nervous, a habit her caretakers were trying to break her from. Kyla's face softened as she saw the pure desperation on Alexia's face. "Fine but I'm not carrying you." She teased a grin stretching across her face.

"We should make haste then." Alexia said standing up. "You don't walk or run fast enough. You'll slow me down." Kyla countered sighing. "How do you suppose we proceed?" Alexia inquired. "Well we can hitch a ride." Kyla grinned. Alexia went to ask further but Kyla cut her off telling her to just wait. Alexia watched trembling with anxiety not longer able to fight nibbling on her nails. Kyla placed her fingers in her mouth and let out a long, loud, high pitched whistle. "How will that assist us?" Alexia questioned. "Just watch." Kyla whispered. Alexia watched eagerly for a sign of what Kyla was talking about. Her nails were murdered by the time she saw something approaching them quickly. It was a beautiful white horse whose healthy coat glistened in the sun and long white mane flowed behind her in the wind.

The horse reached them and came to a stop nodding her head as she stomped around in place. Kyla easily jumped onto the horse's back positioning herself before extending her hand to help Alexia up. Alexia hesitated glancing at the animal nervously. "You want to come don't you!?" Kyla shouted at her. This was all it took to encourage her. Alexia took Kyla's hand. With a smile Kyla pulled Alexia effortlessly up onto the horse. "Hold on tight." Kyla instructed. Alexia gripped her tightly around the waist, fearing that is she fell she would drag Kyla with her. "Curre." Kyla whispered. The horse started running quickly down the trail. "I thought horses were extinct!" Alexia shouted barely able to hear over her rapid heartbeat. "Not at all. They just live away from humans. Humans scare them. They're actually all over. Aries here was actually raised by the elves. She's a very good horse." Kyla informed Alexia. They traveled quickly, the horse covering ground ten times faster than if Kyla and Alexia had been running it on foot. They covered the couple of miles in a few minutes and soon Ash's head was visible. Kyla gracefully stood up in front of Alexia. She managed to balance with ease. "Alrighty... I'm going to jump. After I jump I need you to count to five and tell her to stop. She doesn't really understand English so you will need to say 'Siste.'" Kyla instructed. Alexia managed to make a sound in order to let Kyla know she heard her. She released Kyla gripping onto the horses sides as best as she could. She was terrified that she would fall off. They were approaching Ash quickly. Kyla chuckled before leaping from the horse. Alexia clenched her eyes closed as she threw her arms around the horse's neck. She counted in her head. One... two... three... four... "Five. Siste!" She squeaked trying to pronounce the word the same way Kyla had. The horse understood and immediately slowed to a stop. Alexia exhaled in relief.

After she had jumped from the horse, Kyla landed in a roll which she quickly turned into a series of flips before she landed gracefully in front of Ash. Ash was kneeling there with his arms shielding a couple of

children that were clinging to him for protection. He was covered with dirt as he looked up to see Kyla standing protectively over him. "Where are the rest of the kids?" Kyla asked before even starting to inspect the man who was causing all of this trouble, who was standing ten feet in front of her. "They were able to get away. They're probably wondering through the woods on the way back to town for help." Ash replied. Finally Kyla looked up at the assailant. He was a teenage boy 15 years in age. He had reasonably long dark blond hair. The top of it was chin length that fell into his face. The rest was pulled back into a tiny ponytail. His bright green eyes shone through his bangs. He was wearing a loose fitting green sweater and blue jeans that were ripped at the knees. He wasn't very tall for a male, only 5'5".

"What's the matter Ash, couldn't take the shrimp?" Kyla teased taking up a fighting stance. "Come on he had grenades!" Ash retorted. "Hey I'm taller than you!" The blond haired boy shouted at Kyla. "So what-did-ya come here for?" Kyla asked the boy. "I was sent here for the princess." He replied. "Do you really think I'm just going to let you take her? Besides why did you attack a group of kids?" Kyla questioned sounding offended. "I was told that she often hangs out with this group." He sighed. "But it seems she's not here. Well I just hope I get to her before the other guy does." He added sounding almost disappointed. "What other guy?" Kyla barked. "That's not important right now. Where is the princess chick?" The boy countered. "What do you desire with me?" Alexia asked finally finding the courage to speak; she was still shaken from the horse ride here. "Ah, bingo!" The boy chirped looking over at her and smiling. He picked his hover bored up off the ground and started walking towards Alexia. Kyla jumped in his way and started fighting him off. "Alexia go!" She shouted. But Alexia was frozen. The horse pranced restless beneath her sensing the urgency in Kyla's voice but awaiting a command. "Alexia go NOW!" Kyla growled. But Alexia didn't know what to do. She had never ridden anything other than a hover car, and she couldn't remember the word Kyla said earlier to make the horse go. Kyla managed to get a good kick to the boy's chest causing him to fall to the ground. She turned to Alexia and shouted "Curre!" At this one word the horse took off running. It ran past Kyla and the boy. The boy hopped to his feet and went to climb onto his hover board in order to chase Alexia, but Kyla tackled him knocking him down. "Curre!" She shouted again causing the horse to run faster. The horse started running deep into the woods. All Alexia could do was hold on tightly to the horse's neck and pray that she didn't fall off. The only sounds Alexia could hear were the horse's hooves pounding against the earth. After traveling far into the woods the horse slowed down to a walk. They were in an area with no trees, where flowers covered the ground. The sun was shining brightly down on Alexia warming and relaxing her. The horse came to a stop in order to nibble on the grass. A smile found its way to Alexia's face as she patted the horses back and enjoyed the sun on her skin. Out of nowhere a rope flew down over her tightening around her waist. She let out a scream as she was pulled off of the horse and into the sky. The rope started to burn as it tightened with each tug. She couldn't scream anymore and could only kick at the air since her arms were bound to her sides.

Kyla emerged from the woods followed by the blond haired boy. "Alexia!" She yelled jumping into the air teleporting a dagger into her hand. She was going to attempt to cut the rope but a lightning spell struck her in the back of the neck. She fell to the ground unconscious.

The young man's hair blew wildly in the wind as he finished pulling the princess up to him. His lightning spell worked well to buy him some time. "Kyla!" The princess screamed once he loosened the rope so she could breathe. He lifted her over his shoulder and started carrying her into the cabin of his hover ship. "Kyla!" Alexia continued to scream in fear that her friend was injured. She was also afraid that she was in a worse situation. She kicked at the air but the boy didn't lose his grip on her.

He carried her into the cabin and placed her on the floor so he could close the hatch. Alexia took this chance to look him over. He was taller than her probably 5'10. He had spiky white hair though he was only a year older than her. His clothes were mostly black, a black tank top and a black jeans, but a bright

red cape added color to his attire. A large silver two handed sword rested on his back. His cold blue eyes shone brightly against his pale face. Walking back over to her he knelt down to where they were face-to-face. "I'm sorry to tie you up like this but I must be cautious. Once we fly over Caim you will be free to roam around the ship." He instructed as he tied her arms behind her back and her ankles together. To finish it off he tied a cloth around her mouth in order to gag her. He looked into her eyes, his icy gaze showing no emotion. "My name is Felix. Your brother hired me to take you to him. I'm not going to hurt you so don't be afraid." He informed her before standing up and walking towards the piloting room. Suddenly he paused and turned back to her pressed his hand to his forehead. "Oh... and don't try to struggle." He added running his fingers through his bangs and walking away to pilot the hover ship.

Alexia hung her head and just sat there; she didn't know what else to do. Her only skill that she could think of was her marksmanship but that wasn't going to help her now. As she pouted she thought about what Felix had said: "Your brother hired me to take you to him." What could that possible be about. Something caught her attention from the crates behind her. It felt like someone was watching her and now she heard a soft rustle as if someone was moving among the boxes. She let out a muffled squeak as a form emerged from them. "Shhh." Kyla whispered as she set to work untying Alexia. "I want you to stay here while I go and have a word with the driver." She instructed standing up and walking off to the piloting room. Alexia watched her leave desiring to follow her. Even though Kyla clearly said for her to stay behind she wanted to see what would happen. Well curiosity killed the cat. She chirped as she pranced through the door.

Alexia had already missed the few if any words said between the two when she entered. Felix swung at Kyla. She did a back flip avoiding it. He threw several more punches at her but she ducked and blocked each of them. Finally she leaped in the air to avoid a kick and twirling, kicked him across the face sending him backwards into the power shift. The lever went all the way up to full power before breaking under his weight. He steadied himself and shook the pain from his face before taking a boxer's stance. He threw several swift punches and kicks all of which Kyla skillfully dodged.

An ear splintering blast erupted through the air as the ship began to rock uncontrollably. "What's happening?" Kyla shouted shrinking close to the ground, steadying herself. "The engine blew from too much strain." Felix retorted running over to the power gear. He gasped as he examined what was left of it. "You idiot, you broke it now we're going to crash into the forest!" He added glaring at Kyla. She gave a weak grin and a nervous chuckle. Alexia looked out towards the deck and watched as the trees got closer. She was mesmerized suddenly it felt like something was calling out to her. She began walking out onto the deck in a trance ignoring as Kyla called out to her. As Alexia walked out towards the end of the deck it started to crumble away being destroyed by the trees. She walked straight to the edge and was about to fall when Felix grabbed her twirled around and pushed her back towards the cabin. She fell back onto the floor and was drawn from her trance as her head bounced against the wall.

Felix twirled his arms trying to gain balance but instead fell over the edge in place of Alexia. He managed to grab onto the remaining deck with one arm. Alexia wanted to scream out to him but couldn't find the words. Kyla swiftly ran out to Felix, grabbing his arm just as he was about to let go. She twirled fiercely and threw him. He collided with the floor and slid over to Alexia. Kyla started flailing her arms in order to regain the balance she lost when she tossed Felix. She sighed in relief as she caught herself and started running back to her companions. As she was on her way back another explosion occurred scattering more pieces of the deck. A stray piece of wood flew up and hit her in the back of the neck. She let out a soft groan as she staggered a few more steps. Her eyes fluttering half closed as she fell forward, unconscious.

Alexia tried to scramble to her feet to run for Kyla but Felix gripped her arm holding her back. She glanced up at him. "We'll hit the ground any second now. Go inside and brace yourself for impact."

Felix instructed a scowl on his face as he shoved Alexia inside the cabin. She went in reluctantly though looked out the window trying to see what was going to happen. Felix rushed towards Kyla, but before he could reach her the Ship crashed into the ground. The force of the impact sent everything on the deck flying. Alexia fell, her head colliding with the control panels rendering her unconscious.

Dreams came to Alexia while she was asleep. She was in a ring of fire. Everything around was in ruins. "Alexia!" That one shout echoed through the still sky. She looked up and saw something falling quickly. It was a body about the size of a child. It smashed harshly against the ground, hard enough to bounce before settling there, motionless. Alexia instantly recognized the white hair and angel face. "Kyla!" She tried to scream but no sound passed her moving lips. The flames started to draw in closer making a tighter circle around her. She tried to call out to her friend for help but she couldn't find her words, and Kyla just continued to lay there the flames glowing on her dirt smeared face. Alexia feared that death had found the two of them and decided to take Kyla first. She fell backwards hugging herself with tears rolling down her face as the heat of the flames was becoming unbearable. There was virtually no space between her and the fire. "Awaken..." A calm voice instructed. Alexia glanced once more at Kyla before closing her eyes, a white light emerging from her.

When Alexia opened her eyes she found the walls of the hover ship around her. She struggled for breath as smoke entered her lungs. As she sat up she noticed that everything was covered in flames. Climbing to her feet she glanced around; she had to find an exit before she died of either the fire or smoke inhalation. The ship was tilted making it hard for her to walk and keep balance, but she couldn't let herself slip and lose the progress she was making. Finally she found a door that appeared to be untouched by the flames. She pressed her hand to the door to feel for heat and it was cool to the touch. She hesitantly grabbed the door handle, no heat. Happily she started to twist the doorknob and push on the door but it wouldn't budge. She groaned and gave up.

"You alright princess?" A voice called down to her. She looked up to see the blond haired boy from earlier glancing at her from a hole in the ceiling. "I am fine but I am unable to escape." She replied coughing due to the smoke. "Hold on. Coming down!" He said taking in a gust of breath and dropped down to the floor next to Alexia. He slid when he landed and fell. "Are you alright?" Alexia choked out. He nodded struggling to continue to hold his breath. He climbed to his feet careful not to slip again. He pointed at the door and Alexia nodded. She covered her face with her hands as she started to cough again. He walked over to the door and twisted the handle. He pushed against the door and even shoved it with his shoulder but it wouldn't move. Seeming to give up he walked back towards Alexia, giving a shrug. Suddenly with a smile he twirled around kicking the door. It splintered and shook. He took a couple steps back examining the door as it started to open moving towards them. "Oh... it's a pull not push... why didn't I think of that?" He muttered sheepishly scratching through his hair. He opened the door the rest of the way then stepped aside. "After you." He said bowing. Alexia bowed slightly in return and walked through the door.

She walked into a bedroom that was untouched by the flames. Pausing she looked at how simple everything was, a single bed, a desk, and a book shelf filled with books that was now flipped over spilling its books due to the crash. The air in here had yet been disturbed by the smoke from the rest of the ship. "Um sir?" Alexia started turning to look at the boy. "Name's Matt." He told her attempting to close the door before giving up and walking to the window. "Matt... How do you suppose we escape from here?" She asked watching him. "Through here." He told her opening the window and climbing up onto its edge. Smiling and giving a thumb up, he leapt from the window. She watched this then gulping walked to the window.

Climbing onto the seal she looked out at everything around her, the clean breeze hitting her in the face. She inhaled this air gratefully as she went to step down from the window, but there was nothing to step down onto. She squeaked as she fell from the window and managed to grab onto the window seal. She

tried desperately to pull herself back up but lacked the upper body strength. "Hey help her down!" Ash yelled. "Yo why don't you!?" Matt retorted. It was starting to become difficult for her to hold on. It wasn't long until her hands slipped and she fell.

Her falling was stopped as someone wrapped his arms around her catching her. "Are you ok Alexia?" Ash asked cradling her close to him. "I am fine. Thank you for helping me." She breathed looking up into his eyes, much like her own. He smiled as he placed her on her own feet. She watched him jump swiftly and easily down the rocks. She gulped as she climbed slowly and uneasily down them.

Once at the bottom Alexia fell to the ground out of breath. "You've gotten lazy since Kyla's been on break." Ash teased sitting next to her. She laughed between gasps of air. "How did you find me?" She asked once her breathing got under control. "The smoke of course." Matt replied collapsing onto the ground. "Have you seen either Kyla or Felix?" She inquired once she remembered the two were thrown by the crash. "I don't know this... Felix... but I haven't seen Kyla since she teleported to save you." Matt sighed. "Can you be any ruder?" Ash snapped at him. "I do not believe he is rude. I think he is quite... charming." She told Ash honestly. In fact she found it refreshing to meet someone new who didn't treat her special because of her heritage. She truthfully hates it when people treat her different that is why Ash and Kyla are her best friends, her only real friends. "Yeah Ash! You should try and be more like me, more... what's the word? Oh yeah charming." Matt joked busting into laughter. "Why you..." Ash growled. "Will the two of you please try not to fight?" She requested giggling at the two, but they ignored her.

"Hey guys! Whatcha up to?" Kyla asked hopping down the rocks into the gorge they were in. She reached the bottom and ran over to the group. "Waiting for you... Hey it's him!" Matt hissed standing up as he saw Felix jumping down the cliff to join them. "Don't worry, he's cool." Kyla barked holding her arm out protectively. Felix glanced up and looked at the group as he walked. "We can make it to Caim on foot. If we leave now we can get there before the inn closes." Felix instructed once he reached them. "We don't have to walk." Kyla chirped glancing up at him. "What are you going to do magically 'poof' us there?" He groaned criticizing her. "That wasn't what I had in mind. I was thinking more along the lines of riding horses there. At that pace we could get there before sundown, if we leave now. But first Alexia needs to disguise herself." She told him ignoring as he rolled his eyes at her. "Why would she need to 'disguise' herself!?" Ash questioned sounding upset at the fact that Alexia would have to change a few of her qualities. "The way she is now we would stand no chance getting to Anvalia to see her brother. That is if she wants to go. We could always take her back to Zandoria and get arrested for kidnapping." Kyla replied.

"No I truly do want to go and visit my brother I have much I need to discuss with him. What all shall I need to change?" Alexia inquired rather excited. "Well let's see... You're clothes and your name." Kyla listed. "I still think that's a lot to change..." Ash groaned. "No matter I believe this shall be enjoyable like an adventure, and I am an undercover agent." Alexia dreamed clasping her hands together.

"Whatever... wherever Alexia goes I will to..." Ash sighed. "Somebody say adventure!?" Matt said exited, volunteering himself to go with them. "This is exciting what shall I change my name to?" Alexia squeaked. "Well I was always fond of the name Sarah. Also work on talking less formal. Use smaller words and more conjugations. If you mimic us you will get it down in no time." Kyla instructed teleporting a traveling trunk into her arms and giving it to Alexia. "Almighty Sarah it is." Sarah replied trying to sound like Kyla.

### 3 - Chapter 3

Sarah excitedly changed clothes in the woods away from the boys. She had never chosen her own clothes before since there were people at the palace who did that for her. She pondered what words she would replace with others as she pulled her short white pleated skirt over her hips. "I suppose shall be replaced with I guess... and quite possible could be changed to maybe... I fear I shall never get this down." She sighed tying her green corset like vest. She really liked the way the tail of it flowed down to her knees. All she had left was to put on and tie her brown hiking boots.

Matt hid behind a tree craning his neck trying to get a better view as he attempted to catch a glimpse of Sarah changing. But she was out of his sight and he didn't dare try and get closer. He thought she was really cute and since he helped save her life maybe she would fall for him. "What do you think you're doing?" Someone hissed hitting him on the head. He turned to see Ash standing there. "Nothing really... I didn't pick very good seats..." Matt groaned pouting slightly. "You're trying to peak at Alexia." Ash growled. "Maybe... what like you haven't tried?" Matt shot back. "Well to be honest I did when I was younger... but I almost got murdered by her nanny... Kyla didn't really get what I was trying to do..." Ash admitted blushing. "So there you go. Oh yeah. Try and remember her name is Sarah now. That's the least you could do if you don't want us to get thrown in prison. I guess not everyone is cut out to be an adventurer." Matt said folding his arms triumphantly. Ash gritted his teeth as he started to get angry. In a rage he snatched Matt by the ear and started dragging him. "Ow OW where are we going!?" Matt squealed following his ear. "Back to where Kyla and Felix are waiting." Ash barked pulling him all the way back.

"Ash, Matt, have fun in the woods? Why are you dragging him by his ear?" Kyla asked as Ash and Matt rejoined her. "I caught this little pervert trying to sneak a peek-" Ash started. "Pervert look who's talkin!" Matt interrupted. "Hey I was only a curious little boy!" "Ha what's changed!?" The two continued to argue. "Hel-I mean-Hi!" Sarah greeted walking out of the woods in her new duds. Both Ash's and Matt's jaws dropped. "Wow just wow." Matt commented. "Y-you look a lot different." Ash added gulping. Felix scoffed and rolled his eyes as he turned his back in order to find something more worth his time. "Come on boys. Better close your traps or you'll catch some flies." Kyla cackled standing between them and pushing their jaws up. "So do I look grand... I mean good?" Sarah asked twirling around. "Yeah that looks good on you. Though I hope you don't plan on doing much fighting. White gets dirty easy... and if you did one kick we could see right up your skirt, so it's not really my style." Kyla critiqued. "Sounds good to me." Matt grinned, imagining Sarah trying to do martial arts. He gasped as Ash elbowed him in the side. "What are you doing with clothes like that anyway? It's not like you could wear them." Ash interrogated Kyla. "Come on not all my friends are my height. Believe it or not most of my friends are long legged and pretty tall." Kyla replied.

"These are for you also." Kyla said giving Sarah a pair of twin pistols. Sarah examined them taking note of the fine detailing in them. The keychain with a tiny doll on it hanging from one of them down to the trigger crafted into the shape of a panther. "They're beautiful, such wonderful craftsmanship." Sarah said forgetting to edit her words. "Thanks but I don't like to give myself too much credit..." Kyla giggled. "You made these!?" Sarah questioned astonished. "Yeah I learned weapon forgery when I lived in the mountains. I made those for a friend of mine but I haven't had the chance to see how well they work so you get to take them for a test run until I can make you your own. Please don't tell her though. She'll hate me if she finds out." Kyla told her before picking up some more weapons. "Now what?" Felix growled watching her. "Hold on everyone needs to be armed you know how all those random battles

occur when you're not in a town. You have your sword and I have my whole arsenal of weapons." Kyla replied patting her travel pack. "I have my fists." Matt chipped in. "Now Sarah has some guns I need to give Ash something." Kyla added turning to Ash and handing him a beautifully carved pair of tonfa. "That's my own personal pair... Don't worry you'll have your own soon." She told him smiling. "Thanks." Ash said smiling brightly.

"When are we going to leave?" Felix sighed glaring at Kyla. "Hey don't be in such a hurry. We'll get there before the inn closes no problem." She told him walking into the woods. Felix growled and hit the ground in frustration. "What's with him?" Matt asked. Ash shrugged. "Guys these are for you." Kyla chirped coming back holding the reins attached to several horses. She walked around giving a different colored one to each person. To Ash a dapple gray horse, Matt, a black and white paint, Sarah a solid white mare, and Felix a black stallion who had a splash of white on his forehead. Each of the horses had been saddled and was waiting for them to climb on and ride.

"Now what are you doing?" Felix questioned Kyla as she was strapping a saddle to her horse. "I'm looking for the great wall of China... What does it look like I'm doing?" Kyla replied wittily. "What's the great wall of China?" Ash asked. Everyone shrugged. "It looks like your saddling a horse... but why?" Felix growled. "Well I just don't think it's fair for all of the other horses to have to have saddles while she doesn't." Kyla replied looping the strap one last time. "Well just-" "Are you coming? We don't have all night you know." She interrupted him. He looked over to see her already sitting on her horse gripping the reins. Matt hopped easily onto his horse, while Ash helped Sarah climb onto hers before boarding his own. Felix rolled his eyes with a scoff and spat at the ground. He started running for his horse he jumped and did a handless cartwheel. Landing on his feet he jumped high into the air flipping gracefully and landing smoothly in his saddle. "Dude doesn't that hurt." Matt squinted. "Show off..." Ash glared. Kyla giggled as she rode past them. Felix took the lead as they rode down the trail on their way to Caim.

Sarah rode up beside Kyla. "Is it just me or does something seem strange about Felix? Didn't he used to have a cape?" She asked noticing for the first time that he no longer was wearing his bright red cape. "Well he kinda lost it." Kyla replied holding back a giggle. "What happened?" Sarah inquired "See what happened was I woke up hanging in a tree. The back of my shirt got caught in the branches. I looked around trying to find Felix and saw him running around below me with his cape on fire. He was trying to tear it off. I kinda kept laughing at him so when he finally did get it off he was kinda miffed at me." Kyla recalled working hard to prevent from braking into laughter. "What happened next?" Sarah requested. "Well I asked him to help me down but he refused to help and told me to get myself down. He started mumbling something about if I was so strong and could fly and everything then I wouldn't need anyone to help me. I couldn't really hear what else he said; I was too distracted by the sound of the branch breaking. I fell from the tree but used the other branches to flip back onto my feet. After that we came to find ya'll." She told Sarah her laughter became too much to hold back and Sarah found herself laughing along with her. Felix glared back at the two of them. "Sorry if our laughter disturbed you... we won't to it again." Kyla told him quieting her laughter to a quiet smirk. Sarah did the same and looked ahead to where they were going. Many new questions were filling her mind. She could sense that something had passed between Kyla and Felix, but she was afraid to ask either of them about it though.

The sun had fallen behind the horizon; dark blue was starting to engulf the sky. Stars were coming out of hiding to play upon the night sky and lights were twinkling on in the distance. They were moments from arriving in Caim. Kyla gave a soft click with her tongue and rode ahead of everyone, up to the gates of the village. A man opened a slide in the gate and peered out at Kyla and her troupe. "Hey we need to spend the night at the inn." Kyla said smiling brightly. "Might I ask who you are?" The man inquired an accent in his voice. "It's me Kyla." She replied. "How can I be sure that it is you?" The man questioned. Kyla's smile faded as she was starting to become annoyed. "Frank you know darn well it's

me. Are you going to open the gate or do I need to hop over there and do it myself?" Kyla retorted. "No need to get in such a tizzy... I'll open the gate. You can't be too careful these days though." The man told her closing the peep hole and opening the gate itself. Everyone started riding through the gate. As Kyla went by she paused and leaned down to where the Gates-man could whisper something into her ear. Whatever it was it brought a grin to Kyla's face. She nodded and thanked him as she continued with the group on the way to the inn.

"Hey go on ahead in. I'll be there in a little bit after I stable the horses." Kyla told everyone as she jumped down from her horse. "Hey Matt have you ever been here before?" Sarah asked as she slid off her horse and bowed to Kyla as she gave her the reins. "Yeah... a couple times." Matt replied looking up at the inn. "What kind of place is it?" Sarah asked as they made their way up the steps. "Well this is a town that was built because of people traveling though now days people have hover cars and everything so they get places much quicker and often bypass here. So over the years it's become more of a place for fighters to come. People come here to compete in their weekly mini tournaments. Though for the most part it's only people who think they're tough and wouldn't recognize a good martial artist if one punched them in the face." Matt explained.

"Get a load of this place. It's packed we'll be lucky to even get a seat in the dining hall." Ash said walking close behind Sarah. "Wow I wouldn't have thought this many people would be here to fight in a miniature tournament." Sarah commented as people pushed by her as she tried to keep up with Felix as he weaved his way through the people towards the front desk. "People just seem to like going out of their way to prove they're a tough guy." Matt sighed. "Like you're not one of them..." Ash criticized. Matt didn't reply but just glared back at him.

The three of them relaxed close to the wall, and out of the way, as Felix checked them in. "You're lucky, you just got the last room available." The owner said. "Now where is that slacker? Billy where's Ralph to show them to their room?" He questioned a young boy who was walking through the room with an armful of dishes. "I don't know sir. Last I seen him he was going to the stables." The boy replied scurrying off to the dining hall. The door opened and Kyla walked into the room along with a tall, slender, clumsy looking boy. "Ralph there you are, show these people to their room." The owner commanded. "It's ok Mr. Johnson. I know where everything is." Kyla said walking up to the store owner. "Miss Kyla it is good to see you again." Mr. Johnson greeted. "My pleasure. I assume business is going good." Kyla returned bowing politely. "Yeah... too good. We can't even take a five minute break for all the people we have here." Mr. Johnson told her. "Well then I won't keep you. We'll go to our room real quick before going to the dining hall. I assume since there are no more rooms you'll be helping out in there." She said twirling around and smiling. "See you later then." He said waving. She waved back as she pranced away leading everyone up the stairs.

"And this is our room. Now if everyone doesn't mind I'm getting hungry." Kyla grinned opening the door to the room then turning to look at everyone. "I'll come too." Matt chirped patting his stomach. "How about we all go?" Sarah suggested smiling.

Everyone walked down the stairs, even Felix followed them. They filed into the dining hall managing to find a table in the crowded room. "I'll be back." Kyla chirped prancing off to explore. Felix wondered off to sit in a corner by himself. Sarah, Ash, and Matt gathered around the table and watched the people around them. "I want one of those!" Matt shouted watching a large bearded man walk by with a large pitcher of beer. "As if you were old enough to drink." Ash critiqued grabbing Matt's shirt before he could run off to purchase alcohol. "Awwww." Matt pouted. "Hey is it just me or does it seem like there's something going on between those two?" Sarah asked lowering her head to glance towards Felix then to Kyla who was looking around the room. "What do you mean?" Ash inquired glancing at the two as well. "It just seems like there is some past between them." Sarah replied. "Who knows they're both closed books..." Matt sighed.

After a while they ate dinner. Kyla made her way back over to them and stood there looking slightly disappointed. "Were you looking for something?" Sarah asked her. "Yeah... I thought someone was here but it seems not..." She sighed. The same large bearded man from earlier started to walk by, his pitcher half way full of beer. He walked into Kyla. She gasped as she stumbled forward a little; the man dropped his pitcher causing the beer to spill all over her. She started to cough as she tried to shake off the coat of alcohol. "You little runt look what you made me do!" He yelled at her. She turned to look at him, shock flashing across her eyes as the man grabbed her by the collar of her shirt and lifted her off the ground to where they were face-to-face. "Dude you're the one who ran into me, making me smell horrible." She growled looking him dead in the eye. "Are you looking for a fight?" He barked back at her. "I should be asking you that..." She mumbled. He gritted his teeth angrily as he tossed her across the room. She did a flip landing lightly on a table. Everyone in the room clapped at her "performance." "Don't go ruining my place! You break it you buy it!" Mr. Johnson yelled running out onto the dining room floor. "Yes sir. Hey if you think you're so tough let's take this little brawl outside." Kyla suggested hopping down from the table and running swiftly out of the room the man chasing her. Everyone started piling out of the door at once eager to see the fight.

Ash, Sarah, and Matt managed to get outside and close to where they could watch the fight. Felix even trudged out and stood under the shadows of the porch interested in seeing some of Kyla's fighting. Kyla and the man stood in the middle of the crowd. Kyla stretched a smile playing on her face. The man took off his shirt and passed it back to one of his friends. She looked him over measuring up his strength. A smirk came to her face. "How would you like to spice this up?" She asked. He glared at her waiting for her to talk again. "I'll fight you blind folded." She suggested. He smirked and started laughing everyone around doing the same. "I'm serious. This cloth is too thick for me to see through. You can't even see my eyes glowing behind it." She told him taking a cloth and trying it around her face, over her eyes. She was right her glow in the dark eyes were in no way visible behind the cloth. Everyone around started placing bets, most of them on the guy. "I want 50 on the shorty!" Matt shouted pulling money out of his pocket and handing it to the girl who was accepting the bets.

Kyla took in a deep breath and took a fighting stance. The man ran at her. She leapt in the air and flipped over him landing behind him, a smile playing on her lips. He charged at her time after time trying to strike her but she easily dodged each of his punches. After a few moments of toying with him she stopped playing. He punched at her and she jumped back planting her feet firmly before fighting back. She jumped through his defense landing a strong knee under chin. He started to fall backwards. She kicked off of his chest doing a back flip as he collapsed on the ground. "Well that should do it." She chirped peeking out from under her mask to see the man lying on the ground groaning. "Kid you just made me richer." Matt grinned walking over to Kyla and patting her on the shoulder. She giggled and looked back up at him. "How did you know when he was near you?" Sarah asked bending down close to her shoulder. "He sounded like a freight train coming at me and smelt like a distillery." Kyla replied chuckling.

After the eventful evening they retired to their room. It was a small room with only 4 tiny beds. Kyla would have been glad to sleep on the floor but Felix had already claimed a chair in the corner of the room propping his feet up on a table and leaning back with book in hand. "You sure you don't want the bed?" Kyla inquired he just waved it off dismissively.

Sarah dreamed. She was in a burning village in front of her she could see a ring of fire with 4 children inside. She wanted to do anything to help them. The brown headed girl looked up at her with pleading eyes exactly like her own. The smallest child with white hair stood protectively in front of them looking for some way to shield them from the flames. The boy who was almost identical to the brown headed girl hugged her tightly to him he didn't want to lose her. The white haired boy stood there indifferently. He didn't fear the flames. Sarah watched them when a quick movement flashed across the sky, catching

her attention. She looked up to see a dark blue dragon hovering in the sky above them. It opened its mouth wide, a bright orb of electricity forming. It gripped the orb, its claws cutting into it releasing some of the static. Fear started to grip Sarah. She didn't want anything to happen to those kids. She started to run but not away, towards the ring of fire. The dragon arched back his and threw the electric ball at them. It reached them before Sarah could she held her arms out in front of her as the wind started rushing past, nearly knocking her off her feet, the large boom of the explosion sounding in her ears. She sat up straight the sound woke her from her dream. She was breathing heavily as she convinced herself it was a dream. Suddenly there was another explosion lighting up the sky and shaking the room. She stood up and looked out the window seeing everyone out there fighting. She gasped and quickly searched for her pistols locked away in the night stand. Gripping them she ran out of the room and made her way for the exit of the building. She ran out the door and saw Kyla a smile coming to her face. She went to run for her friend when something caught her eye. She looked up to see girl on a hover bike. The girl was a fox-demon with black and pink hair with matching ears and tail. The hover bike was heavily customized. Mechanical arms came out of a compartment on the front, and the hover bike was headed straight for Sarah. Fear gripped her as she raised her guns but she was having difficulties getting a good aim. The arms were about to grab her when everything seemed to move in slow motion. Kyla shouted her name as she jumped swiftly in front of her. The mechanical arms gripped Kyla's right arm awkwardly behind her back. Pain filled her eyes as she was yanked back the hands doing a twisting motion. A horrible cracking sound filled the air before a final snap sounded. Kyla's eyes clouded over as she fell unconscious from the pain.

The girl flew the hover bike high into the air pulling the unconscious girl with her. The fox-demon's cackles filled the night as she flew off leaving the rest of the group behind. She flew a couple miles out of the town. Sarah watched as the tiny dot she knew was Kyla dropped from the sky. She tried to chase after but a girl bounced from the house tops and landed gracefully in front of her holding out an arm to stop her. She had shoulder length dirty blond hair a red head band decorating it. For clothes she was sporting a red tank top under a tan jacket and blue cargo Capri's. The girl was 18, three years older than Kyla, and around 5'6" in height. Something crashed in front of them sending dust into the air. It was curled up in a large ball at first but quickly unfolded to reveal a large three headed dog. Everyone gathered around the creature ready to fight.

Everyone attacked it though it didn't really seem to faze it. Finally the blond headed girl jumped in the air landing on the dogs back. The dog started thrashing around trying to knock her off but she held on tightly until it tired out and fell to the ground breathing heavily. A pink light surrounded it as it turned into a tiny glowing orb. The girl fell to the ground landing on her feet and watched as the orb flew off into the distance. Sarah fell wearily to her knees as she remembered Kyla was now lost out there in the wilderness. "Hey don't worry about her. We have friends out there that will take care of her. Let's sit on the porch." The blond haired girl suggested placing a hand on Sarah's shoulder. Sarah looked up at the girl, looking into her gray eyes that showed little emotion. With a nod Sarah got to her feet and followed the girl to the porch. She took a seat on the steps the girl sitting beside her. Matt and Ash stood on the porch looking out into the distance. Felix just scoffed and walked back inside the inn.

"Ummm do you mind me asking who you are?" Sarah inquired glancing over at the girl again. "Oh I'm Britt. I'm an old friend of Kyla's." She told Sarah scratching through her hair as she attempted to give her a smile. "I'm Sarah and these are my friends Matt and Ash." "Nice meetin you." Britt greeted. Ash waved at her as Matt gave her a bright smile. "Are you sure that Kyla will be alright?" Sarah inquired. "Yeah she's tough. Besides some friends of ours went for a walk and of course with this kind of situation they will conveniently find her." Britt groaned placing her head in her hands with boredom. Sarah watched the road eagerly hoping to see some kind of sign of these "friends" that Britt was speaking of. After 10, 20 minutes figures could be seen in the distance. Slowly they became clear

revealing two boys and a girl. And in one of the boy's arms was a sleeping Kyla.

The boy carrying Kyla was short, a couple inches taller than Kyla. He was wearing a pair of loose fitting blue jeans and a turquoise shirt, and he had black hair the bangs coming down over his eyes in the shape of a heart, the length of his hair coming around chin length maybe longer. The other boy looked almost identical to the first, the only differences were he was wearing a white button down shirt and a pair of black jeans, that his bangs came down in sharp spikes, and the top half of his hair was a lovely green color while the bottom was black. The girl that walked with them was a smidge shorter than them and had shoulder length reddish brown hair. All of them had eyes that changed color, all of them were 15 years in age, and all of them had a brown monkey tail swaying behind them.

"Kyla!" Sarah called running out to them. She knelt down to where she was to their level and ran her fingers through Kyla's hair. Felix actually came to the door way and look out from the shadows. "Don't worry she is ok. It seems that her arm was broken so we'll need a doctor to come look at her." The boy with the pure black hair said. "I'll go get one then meet everyone back in the room." Matt said running off. "Come on let's go back to the room." Ash said walking up behind Sarah and putting his hand on her shoulder. Sarah nodded her head and stood up. She smiled down at the boys and girl able to tell that they were also monkey-demons. She also recognized the green and black haired boy; she had seen him in the video.

"So you're Kyla's brother, correct?" Sarah asked the green and black hair boy as they all traveled back to the room. "Yeah I'm Rikku. How'd you know?" He replied looking up at her his eyes turning purple with curiosity. "I kind of watched a video on what happened to your home..." She admitted feeling nervous suddenly. "So you know!?" He asked shocked. She nodded solemnly. "She told me a lot of other things as well." She added. "Wow I can't believe she actually told someone. She never told anyone about our home and definitely never said a word about what our older brother used to do..." He said dropping his voice trying to prevent his companions from hearing. "How did you know she told me all that?" She squeaked her face turning red. "Oh sorry... I guess I read your mind by accident. I would recommend not saying anything about that to anyone especially not to those two." He suggested gesturing towards the boy carrying Kyla and the girl. "Don't worry I don't plan to." She told him nodding in understanding.

They entered the room and the black haired boy walked over and placed Kyla gently on her bed. He looked down at her and brushed the hair out of her peaceful face a smile coming to his. "Are they close?" Sarah asked the red haired girl, crouching down and wrapping her arms around her knees. "Yeah really close, Kyla is Domon's GIRLFRIEND!" She teased giggling. The boy twirled around to glare at her his face completely red. "She's not my girlfriend." He denied. "So you don't like her then?" Sarah inquired. "N-n-no it's not that... It's just that we're not officially dating..." He stammered twiddling his thumbs. "By the way I'm Rain." The red haired girl said turning and smiling at Sarah. "Oh yeah, and I'm Domon. We're good friends with Kyla." The black hair boy added. "It is nice to meet the two of you. I'm Sarah." Sarah greeted. "And I'm Ash." Ash chirped. Felix just ignored all as he sat in his corner reading his book. "That's Felix... And the boy that left earlier was Matt. He should be back any minute." Ash added. "It's nice to meet you. Kyla said a lot about you. I'm Rikku." Rikku introduced himself to Ash and Felix. "Hey here's the doc!" Matt shouted running into the room dragging an elderly man with him. "Kids these days always in such a hurry..." The doctor grumbled cleaning his glasses as he worked to catch his breath.

"So where is the patient?" He asked looking around the room. Everyone looked at him in disbelief. Felix just scoffed and continued flipping through his book. "She is." Domon replied recovering from his stupor and pointing at Kyla. "Right... right... Well let's see here. What seems to be the problem?" He questioned walking over to her. "We are pretty sure her arm is broken so if you would put it in a cast and everything that would be great... And I would recommend doing it before she wakes up. She doesn't

really like Doctors.” Rikku suggested.

The doctor took about an hour to prepare and cast the arm. Kyla remained asleep for the whole thing. “Hey we’ll see you in the morning. Please have a good night.” Domon said bowing to Sarah before walking out of the room with their entire group. “Night.” Sarah returned closing the door behind them. She and the others went to bed as well gathering sleep for the next day.

## 4 - Chapter 4

When Sarah awoke the next morning everyone else was already awake and wondering around the room. “No taking off the cast early.” “But Rikku!” “No buts! You wonder why your bones are so fragile and awkward, and why getting hit in that one place on the back of your neck knocks you out. It’s because you can’t wait for it to heal naturally so you use healing magic first chance you get.” “Sarah you’re awake!” “Don’t run away from me!” Kyla ran over to Sarah, Rikku chasing after her. “Good morning. Everyone is up early.” Sarah greeted sitting up and stretching. “Actually we all should have been up hours ago. Ow!” Kyla said then yelped as Rikku elbowed her missing her side and hitting her in the broken arm. “I’m sorry!” He shouted hugging her. “Just don’t make a habit of it.” She squeaked. “I’m sorry. I must be what is holding us back from our journey.” Sarah said jumping out of bed and rushing to get ready. “It’s ok no need to rush.” Kyla commented.

“Miss Sarah I have a request.” Domon said walking over to Sarah as she entered the room. “What is it?” Sarah asked taking note of the polite way the boy spoke. “I was hoping it would be alright if we were to travel with you.” He requested. Sarah didn’t know how to respond to this. “He’s only wanting to go because Kyla is with you.” Rain teased. Domon’s face flashed red as he glanced away. “You know how she is. When she is alone she travels just fine but with a group she would sacrifice herself for their well being. Somebody needs to be there to make sure she doesn’t do anything too reckless. Besides we still have a while left of our vacation. We will have to return to Demiri once it is over.” He stated. Sarah thought about his words. He was right Kyla was reckless. The way she jumped in front of Sarah in order to protect her. Her arm is broken all because of my recklessness... Sarah said to herself. Domon looked up at her waiting for her answer. “Yes, I would be honored if you joined us.” She told him. “Thank you. Don’t worry we won’t slow you down or anything. We may not look like it but we are really strong martial artist.” He said bowing to her. Sarah knew they were strong; they came from the same monkey-demon city as Kyla.

“Good if are all happy can we please leave. We need to start heading towards Anvalia or we will never end this ‘journey.’” Felix critiqued gathering the last of his things and strapping his sword to his back. “Actually I was hoping we could go by the elf village.” Kyla suggested. Her travel pack flew off of the night stand and tied onto her belt. “No we can’t risk being out in the open longer than we must. We are going straight to Anvalia.” He hissed. “This is her journey and seeing the elves is a big opportunity.” She retorted. “and I said no!” He barked. A scowl came to her face as she glared at him but suddenly her face softened as she sighed. “Felix can I talk to you for a moment?” She inquired walking past him motioning for him to follow her. They walked out into the hallway, leaving the door open. Everyone watched as the two talked. Kyla stood on her tip toes and Felix leaned down to where she could whisper in his ear. “Hey you do this one thing and I’ll let you use me as a punching bag both verbally and physically.” She suggested. Felix thought about it for awhile then nodded in agreement. “Thank you.” She replied turning around and walking back to the group. “Alrighty we’re goin to Celene to visit the elves.” She chirped. “Wow I wonder how she did it.” Matt pondered. “You know what I don’t think I want to know...” Britt sighed, standing up and grabbing her backpack ready to leave.

They all walked outside Kyla had already prepared the horses, two new horses joining the team. Kyla ran ahead and leapt onto the back of her horse, the cast in no way hindering her movement. Domon joined her, sitting behind her. Rikku and Rain also shared a horse. Britt climbed up on one for herself. “We all set?” Kyla asked as everyone else got on they’re horses. She looked at everyone noting that they were ready. With a soft click of her tongue the horses all started their smooth trip out of town.

They rode north-east into the forest. Sarah was starting to ponder more and more things, mostly about Kyla. She never thought to ask her where she went when she left the palace. Maybe she left to visit the friends that were traveling with them right now. "Hey are you ok?" Ash inquired riding up next to her. "Yes. I'm only lost in thought." She replied. "Still wondering more about Kyla?" He asked smirking. "Indeed. There is so much I don't know about her and I have known her for ten years now." She said looking up at Kyla who was chatting merrily with Domon and the others. "I would like to learn more about Felix as well, and the others if I can." She added glancing at them. "Good luck with that." Ash sighed.

Sarah spent the rest of the trip in silence. The only sounds were from the others talking and the forest itself, the wind blowing through the trees, animals playing in the bushes, the leaves dancing in the breeze. It was past noon when they finally arrived at the elf village hidden among the trees. "Wow do elves really live here?" Sarah squeaked taking note all the tall pearly white buildings. "Yup and what's even better they're having a festival. If everyone doesn't mind I think I'll help out with the preparations. They city is really awesome so explore and have fun." Kyla said climbing off her horse followed by Domon. She turned to start taking the saddle off when he stopped her. "Hey go on I got all this." He told her. "Are you sure?" She inquired looking him in the eyes. He blushed and nodded. She tossed her arms around him, thanking him, before running off into the city. Everyone climbed off of their horses. "Ummm what are we supposed to do with the saddles and everything?" Matt asked trying to untie the saddle strap. "Well... There is a stable right there... Kyla probably wants to let them run free though. They'll be back when we're ready to leave." Domon answered easily untying the tight knots. He removed the riding gear then walked over to assist Matt. Sarah and Ash were also having difficulties untying the straps, but Britt and Rikku easily undressed their horses and placed their equipment in the stables. Rain stood there bored unwilling to help as Felix managed to untie the saddle strap with great difficulty. Britt walked back over and stood beside Rain, while Rikku helped Domon carry stuff to the stables before helping Ash with his horse. Sarah just stood there and watched feeling useless because she couldn't undo the knot. Felix sighed and walked over to help her. With a strong tug the knot came undone and he finished taking off the saddle before handing it over to Sarah. She took it from him though found it too heavy and nearly fell from the weight. Felix groaned as he took the saddle from her and carried both it and the reins to the building.

"So now what?" Ash asked stretching. "We can pair up and explore. Rikku you're coming with me!" Rain said grabbing Rikku by the wrist and dragging him off. "Domon's going to show me around." Britt said tapping Domon on the head and walking off. He waved back at everyone as he followed. "I'm going to teach Ash how to fight and stuff." Matt said high-fiving Ash as the two ran off. "It's rather strange that those two are getting along now... I guess it is you and me then." Sarah chirped looking at Felix. He glared over at her. "Well that is if you don't mind. I just didn't think it would be good for me to wonder off on my own. And everything... ummm yeah..." Sarah stammered. Felix scoffed and started to walk waving for her to come with him. She grinned as she pranced after him.

They walked around the town finding a water fall with a bench near it for people to sit and enjoy its beauty. "It's so beautiful here." Sarah said running to the fence that separated people from the edge of the cliff. Felix just sat on the bench and looked out at the waterfall. "So what's our plan now?" Rain asked. She and Rikku were sitting at the picnic tables on the other side of the waterfall. You could reach that area by walking around and under the water fall. "I guess we travel with them for as long as we can." Rikku replied looking up at the sky. "No not that! Our new plan for getting Domon and Kyla together." She hissed. "When are you going to give that up? If they want to be together they'll get together on their own." He sighed. "But we may not have that long. You never know when she is going to go off and do something stupid that gets her killed. That's how we found her to begin with... Who knows maybe having a boyfriend would calm her down and she would stop leaving and doing so many

dangerous things.” Rain suggested. “That would be nice... but there is a couple of problems. Domon is too shy to admit his feeling and Kyla doesn’t really understand her feelings, even if she did she wouldn’t be able to get it through her thick skull that he feels the same way.” Rakku groaned. “I’ve had enough of this. Let’s go!” Felix shouted standing up sharply, tired of listening to Rikku and Rain’s conversation. He shoved his hands into his pockets and started stomping off. Sarah followed him. He led her to a place surrounded by trees. He collapsed on the bench and crossed his legs at his ankles as he stared at the ground. She sat down next to him. They sat there in silence for while. Finally Sarah got up the courage to speak. “You must like to think.” She said looking over at him. He looked over at her with that same look of anger in his eyes. “I’m sorry. I just meant you’re so quite. Whenever everything is so quite I can’t help but think.” She added fearing that she may have upset him. He looked back down at the ground unable to really find an answer to her question. Yeah he liked to think, he preferred it when everything was quite. It wasn’t necessarily the noise that angered him. It was the subject of his thoughts that kept him in a foul mood. “Can I ask you a question? Why are you so angry all the time? Did something happen between you and Kyla?” She questioned. He shot a glare at her. He hated talking about his past and the tiny brat was something he didn’t want to discuss at all. “Please... just let me in... I want to help you.” She added. This was the last he could handle. “Who says I need anyone’s help! You don’t even know me! I’m fine the way I am I don’t care what you or that little mongrel thinks!” He yelled at her. His cold blue eyes like ice stabbing at her. “F-Felix... I d-d-didn’t mean.” She squeaked standing up and reaching out to him. “Get away from me! J-j-just LEAVE ME ALONE!” He screamed knocking her hand away and running away.

She watched him run off, tears in her eyes. She just wanted him to open up and talk to her. She didn’t mean to make him hate her. “What’s all the shouting about?” Kyla asked coming out from the bushes behind Sarah. Turns out that where they were sitting was right next to the town square. “Felix...” Sarah whispered lowering her eyes. “So Felix was with you? Don’t worry about him he can take care of himself. Just give him some time to cool off.” Kyla told her sitting down on the stone bench. “He hates me...” Sarah sighed sitting next to her. “He doesn’t hate you... he’s just really steamed...” Kyla told her. “Do you know why he is like that?” Sarah asked looking at her. “Sorta... though why it’s escalated like this I don’t know...” Kyla whispered glancing down almost sadly. “Hey the festival’s gonna start soon. Let’s get everyone together so we can eat and enjoy everything.” Kyla suggested standing up and grabbing Sarah by the wrists and dragging her with her.

“How are we to find everyone?” Sarah asked trying to keep up with Kyla. “I have canine sense of smell remember!” Kyla chirped as she sniffed the air. “This way!” Kyla shouted changing directions and pulling Sarah harshly. Finally Kyla came to a stop at the edge of a field. Sarah worked hard to catch her breath. “No disrespect but your sense of smell may be failing you.” She wheezed unable to see any of their friends. “Nope right there.” Kyla said pointing. Sarah strained her eyes and saw a few figures running quickly towards them. It was Britt, Rain, Rikku and Domon. They were racing. Suddenly something flew in front of them. They all quickly came to a stop in order to prevent colliding with Ash who was riding Matt’s hover-board. “Sorry!” Matt shouted chasing after Ash. “I’ll be right back.” Kyla said grinning as she took off running. She worked hard to prevent herself from running on all fours like a dog. She runs faster that way but with a broken arm she would only hurt herself. Pouncing on the hover-board with Ash, she gained control of it and rode it back to where Sarah was waiting before landing it.

“Hahaha that was awesome.” Rikku laughed as he and the others finished their race, Sarah as the finish line. They laughed giddily as they worked to catch their breath, who knew how long they had been running. “Why’d ya’ll leave me back there?” Matt wheezed reaching the group. “We can’t help that you run too slow.” Britt shot at him. He gulped as he sensed harshness in her words. Kyla started laughing. “Is there something you need?” Domon asked looking at Kyla. “I figured it was about time to

start heading to where we're staying tonight, so we could eat before going to the festival." Kyla said. "Sounds good to me." Rain smirked.

Everyone started walking back into town. Sarah paused and sighed. They didn't even look for Felix. "Worried about Felix huh." Kyla stated stopping next to her. It was almost scary how she always seemed to know what people were thinking, though it was even scarier that it was because she could actually read minds. "Hey ya'll go on ahead. We're going to go find Felix." Kyla chirped then smiled up at Sarah. Sarah smiled back down in appreciation of the small teenager. "Wow I actually kind of forgot about him..." Matt sighed sounding almost disappointed. Kyla started running off out of town with Sarah following her. "Wait... but she didn't tell us where we were going..." Ash squeaked. The rest of the group stood there and stared at the two girls, confused as to what they were supposed to do.

"Are you able to catch his scent?" Sarah questioned as Kyla started to slow down to a walk. She nodded and pointed ahead at Felix who was a few paces from them slashing at the air with his sword. She held out her hand signaling for Sarah to wait, and Sarah did as she was silently instructed. Kyla smirked as she walked up behind Felix making little if any sound at all. SNAP A twig broke beneath Kyla's feet as she came to a stop right behind Felix. He seemed to jump in fear as he twirled around and swung harshly at her. She threw up her arm to block the blade and it appeared to stop there in mid air. Waves of light separated Kyla from Felix's sword as a sword became visible there. At the last second Kyla had teleported a sword to shield her. Sarah was shocked. She didn't even want to think what would have happened if Kyla hadn't acted so quickly. "Hey just thought you might would be hungry." Kyla said grinning as Felix sheathed his sword. She lowered hers and teleported it away. She motioned with her head before turning and leading the way back. He glared at her as he began to follow, Sarah walking at his side.

"That was scary you know! What if you did not react as fast as you did!?" Sarah lectured. Kyla only answered with laughter. This made Felix grit his teeth. "She had it planned..." He growled. Sarah glanced over at him confused. "She knew I would attack like that if she snuck up behind me. The way she crossed over without making a sound only to step on a twig when she is right behind me. She wanted me to attack her." He explained. Sarah was slightly shocked by this. She didn't expect for Kyla to be so precognitive. Kyla turned back and grinned broadly at Sarah.

The trio walked into town on their way to where they were to spend the night. "Hey 'bout time you got back!" Rain shouted anger darkening her face. "What are ya'll still doing out here?" Kyla asked as they reached the group that was relaxing on each side of the road where Kyla and Sarah had left them. "You forgot to tell us where we were going you idiot." Britt hissed glaring at Kyla from beneath her golden bangs. "Oh... woops... I guess I did forget to mention we were going to the Elder's house." Kyla giggled nervously. "We're staying with the elder?" Sarah questioned with a squeak of excitement in her voice. "Yeah! Me and him go way back. Well we better hurry if we want to eat." Kyla chirped scratching through her hair.

Kyla led them through town and up a hill to the house of the Elder. At the door an elf maiden with long brown hair waited. "Evening travelers, we are honored that you will be joining us for dinner." She greeted motioning towards the door. "And we are honored to be welcomed into this home." Kyla replied bowing before leading everyone inside. The house was large and spacious. "Kyla it is good to see you again." An elfish man said walking over to the large group. "I am pleased to meet you, friends of Kyla. I hope you will enjoy your stay in Celene." He added speaking to the group. "Everyone this is Xelpher the elder of Celene." Kyla said introducing the man. He bowed; most of the group bowing in return. "Let us dine so we may go and enjoy the festivities." He suggested taking everyone to the dining hall where dinner was already laid out on the table.

Everyone gathered around the table for the wonderful feast, Kyla hastily started eating barely leaving time to chew between mouthfuls. Sarah glanced around watching everyone. She paused when she saw

Rain stealing food off Rikku's plate. "Hey get your own!" He shouted as she came back for more food. "Why would I do that when I can try yours beforehand?" She hissed. The two of them started to argue. "Can they two of you please calm down? I am literally in the middle of your fight." Domon sighed eating his food slowly and politely as they fought over his head. "Fine... Rikku Switch places with Domon!" Rain commanded. "Why do I have to move?" He retorted. "So you can sit next to me and Domon can sit next to his girlfriend." Rain teased referring to Kyla who wasn't paying any attention. At this statement Domon spit out his food and started to choke on what he accidentally swallowed. "Fine..." Rikku groaned standing up paying no attention to the choking boy. Domon fell out of his seat allowing Rikku to take it. "Ummm shouldn't someone help him?" Sarah suggested. She wasn't the only one watching this in astonishment. "He'll be fine... Give it a minute." Rain sighed, stealing more of Rikku's food this time without having to reach over Domon. Kyla took a large gulp of water before she glanced down at Domon who laid on the floor struggling for air. "What are you doing down there?" She chirped picking him up and sitting him in his seat. "So you switched spots so you could sit next to me? Awesome!" She added pressing her nose to his face and nuzzling him like a puppy. His face went completely blood shot as he suddenly got over his choking. "What complete idiots..." Britt sighed. What interesting people... Sarah said to herself going back to her meal.

"There's nothing like a good meal." Kyla yawned stretching as everyone gathered outside. "Are we going to the festival now!" Sarah chirped excitedly. Xelpher smiled and nodded. "Hey race yah into town!" Matt shouted patting Sarah on the shoulder before running ahead of the group. "Hey no fair after all we just ate!" Kyla retorted chasing after him along with Ash, Britt, Rain, and Rikku. "You're not going to race with them?" Domon inquired walking along side Sarah. "No I don't think my stomach can handle it. What about you?" Sarah replied. "Well I guess I just don't feel like racing. I'm the more laid back one out of all of us." He answered with a chuckle.

Domon and Sarah chatted quietly as they walked into town. Xelpher listened to their conversation the whole time though seemed to be more fascinated with the silent Felix who only seemed to be coming along because of everyone else. "It's so pretty!" Sarah exclaimed as they entered the town square. Vendors lined the road offering games, festival apparel and other souvenirs. Little firefly like orbs of light fluttering in the air and in jars hanging from the stands illuminated the night air.

"Want to try little girl it's an easy game." A vendor offered. Sarah twirled around to find Kyla at one of the games. "Well... I'm not exactly left handed..." She muttered examining her casted arm. "I would like to try." Domon said walking up beside her. The vendor quickly explained the game as Domon paid the fee. It was a simple game where you had to knock down all the bottles by throwing a ball. "Man all games like this are rigged." Matt groaned walking past Sarah accompanied by Ash. He paused suddenly as Domon arched his arm back and threw the ball that easily knocked the bottles down. "Choose a prize" He said to Kyla who was hopping up and down with glee. "That's not fair..." Ash hissed. It seemed as though him and Matt were already having a foul time with the games. "Wow this is so pretty!" Sarah squeaked looking over at one of the other stands. She ran over and picked up a brightly colored scarf up. "It's only 5 gold pieces." The elf said. A smile lit up her face as she started to check her pockets but the smile faded when she realized she didn't have any money. Felix was keeping all the money they found while traveling and unlike the others she didn't have her own money. She gently folded the scarf and put back where it was before trudging off to find where one of the others had pranced off to.

Felix stared at the scarf in thought. He was curious as to why she left the scarf there though she seemed so interested in buying it. Did she not have any money? If that is the case why didn't she pester her friends for some... He pondered this as he walked up to the stall and examined the scarf closer.

"Hey are you going to participate in anything?" Sarah asked walking over to Britt who decided to sit on a bench watching everyone. "I think this is all kind of stupid... It's not exactly my kind of fun." She

sighed. "I know you probably thinking about Tristan." Rain chanted prancing over and taking a seat next to Britt. "If you know what is good for you, you would shut up..." Britt hissed. "Really who is Tristan?" Sarah inquired. "He's her man candy." Rain joked giggling. "No he's not!" Britt growled swinging at Rain, but Rain smoothly fell back avoiding the punch and rolled onto her feet. "Oh what is he then?" Sarah questioned smiling. "I'm just going to let you clear this one up." Rain chuckled, running back into the crowd of people. "He's just this guy that Kyla's been trying to set me up with... but all he's good for is trouble. I hope you heard me too!" She replied. "He's here!?" Sarah squeaked glancing around. "Probably... I can never tell, but he's around more often than you'd think." Britt sighed. Sarah just stared at her confused. "You'll understand later.... The writer of this probably wants to make it dramatic and hold out the suspense." Britt added. "What are you talking about?" Sarah asked completely thrown off by this "writer" nonsense. "It's a bunch of fourth wall stuff not everyone gets it." Britt said with a soft laugh as if she was having some kind of strange fun with this little mind game. "You know what never mind it can get a bit confusing." She laughed. "See now you're having fun. Hey why don't you hang out with me and who knows you might actually have a good time." Sarah chirped. "Naaa I think I'll just hang out here." Britt insisted, but Sarah wouldn't hear it. "Come on you'll have fun!" She shouted grabbing Britt's wrist and pulling her along.

"Do you have any gold pieces?" Sarah inquired stopping near some of the games. "You drag me out on this little field trip and don't even have any money to fund it?" Britt critiqued frowning. "I'm sorry. I didn't have any when I left home and Felix has been keeping everything we've earned from the random battles on the road." Sarah squeaked feeling bad. "Its fine no need to be upset. I have some money what would you like to do?" Britt sighed. "Your jackets ripped..." Sarah said as she randomly noticed a tear in the shoulder her friend's jacket. "shoot! It must have happened in the fight against Cerberus last night. And I liked this jacket." She hissed. "Actually this is the first time you wore it because all of your other ones are dirty up." Rikku said popping out of nowhere. "What is it with all you shorter people just appearing like that?" Britt questioned. "Actually I've been here for a while. You just didn't see me." He replied seeming slightly peeved at the fact she called him short, thought it's not like she is lying when he is practically a foot shorter than her. "Don't you have something better to do?" She asked. "Actually I was looking for Rain." He told her. "She's around her somewhere just not with me." She informed him. "Oh thanks. Well I guess I'll catch the two of you later, and Britt! Please just relax and try to have fun." He said waving at them. She glared at him as he walked away.

She and Sarah stood there. Britt was relieved that she had the dweebs out of her hair but still had to decide on what to do, if she didn't Sarah would probably just keep pestering her. Well I guess now is a good a time as any to get a new jacket. Maybe that will satisfy her... Britt said to herself before turning to Sarah. "Do you think we could find me a new jacket?" She asked scratching through her hair. "Yeah! That sounds like fun!"

Britt spent the next hour or so searching for a new jacket with Sarah. This wasn't what Britt would consider fun but it kept Sarah happy, and honestly it wasn't all that bad. Finally she settled on a brand new blue jacket.

"Hey check this out." Britt muttered watching what appeared to be some kind of competition. Both she and Sarah started watching. It was a brick breaking contest. Sarah didn't understand the attraction of breaking a bunch of bricks. "Hey hold my jacket. I want to try." Britt said handing both her old and new jacket over to Sarah to where she was down to just her tank top. "O... ok." Sarah squeaked watching the girl sign up for the contest.

All of the contestants lined up in front of stacks of bricks. Apparently the point was they would all keep breaking bricks until they reached their limit. They started off with one brick and each time another brick was added, so the second round was two bricks, third would have three, and so on so forth until there was one person left. Britt was the only girl up there with a bunch of men.

Round after round past with them breaking bricks and people were steadily dropping out of the ranks. Britt was actually flying through really smoothly, usually only a fraction of her strength to break through the stack of bricks. A smile lit up her face as she tore through each pile of rock with ease. Finally it was down to her and a dwarf who had attended the festival in attempt to sell his wares. They were up to a stack of 20 bricks. The dwarf seemed to be getting tired as he watched her in disbelief, a confident grin stretched across her face. The dwarf gulped as he looked at the large stack in front of him. He gathered as much strength as he could and slammed his hand down onto the bricks. They shattered beneath his might, but he didn't have enough to break all of the bricks. It was down to Britt. If she didn't break all of her bricks they would do a count to see who broke the most and if it was a tie they would have to redo. She took in a deep breath. The dwarf seemed to be worried fretting that she would be able to break all of them when he couldn't. She laid her hand on the top brick as if enjoying the feel of it, almost showing respect before slamming her fist into it. With ease the bricks shattered and crumbled beneath her fist as she sliced through all 20 bricks. She withdrew her hand. It didn't even seem to faze her that she had slammed her fist through so many bricks, though she appeared quite happy to have arrived victorious. Sarah was happy to see this genuine smile on her face.

"Hey that was really neat!" Sarah congratulated as the two of them traveled back to the elder's house. Britt just smiled as she walked with her jacket drape over her shoulder. She seemed pleased with the prize money she won. "We're back." Sarah greeted as they entered the elder's house. "Welcome back. Most of your companions have already arrived and went to their rooms. It appears you are rooming with Miss Kyla, so let me show you to your room. And you Miss Britt are with Miss Rain." The elfish servant informed them leading them through the house. "Here you are Miss Britt." She said stopping at one of the many rooms along the hallway. "Goodnight, Britt. Tonight was really fun." Sarah said smiling. "Yeah... night" Britt replied entering her room.

"So why are there so many rooms?" Sarah inquired looking at the numerous doors they passed. "The elder likes to house travelers. Something he started several years ago at the suggestion of Miss Kyla who had wandered here half starved one day." She replied. Sarah nodded her head showing that she understood since she couldn't come up with a verbal response. "And here is your room." The elf said stopping. Sarah stopped as well. "Thank you." She told her bowing. The elf returned the gesture before walking away. Sarah watched her until she was out of sight before entering the room.

"Hey you're back rather late." Kyla greeted from the dark. Sarah looked up to where her friend's voice came from and nearly jumped out of her skin when she was met by Kyla's blue glowing eyes. "I'm sorry I didn't mean to scare you." Kyla said with a slight giggle as she used her magic to light a candle that was on the night stand next to her. "I still can't get used to that..." Sarah squeaked calming down and walking over to her friend's bed. "I guess anyone would find it creepy to walk into a dark room and see two glowing eyes staring at them, friend or not." Kyla replied grinning. "Why do your eyes glow like that? Does all of your kind do it?" Sarah inquired sitting on the edge of Kyla's bed. "Nope, I'm just weird." Kyla chuckled. "So what are you doing?" Sarah asked. "Just drawing." She chirped holding up her sketch book. "I didn't know you could draw! Is there anything you can't do?" Sarah questioned looking over the group picture Kyla had drawn. "Well when I think about it I guess I try to do a little bit of everything. It's kinda how I earn a living." She replied taking back her sketch book and closing it. "Hey we should be getting some sleep. Big day tomorrow, you know. We should reach Anvalia by mid-day if we leave early enough." She added. "Right... well I guess good night then." Sarah said standing up and climbing into her own bed. "Night." Kyla chirped leaning towards the candle and softly blowing it out.

## 5 - Chapter 5

It was early the next morning when Kyla started shaking Sarah awake. The sun was just starting to rise. "Hey you need to get ready we'll be leaving soon." Kyla told the drowsy girl before leaving the room. Though reluctant to climb out of bed Sarah did as told and quickly prepared for the day.

"Why do we have to leave so early the sun hasn't even woken up yet?" Rain groaned as everyone gathered outside. "By leaving now we'll be able to get to Anvalia in time to actually enjoy everything." Kyla chirped climbing onto her horse that she and Domon had tacked earlier along with the rest of the horses. Felix watched her. I'm just ready to get rid of you... He said to himself. He was already ready to go, the way he saw it the faster he got there the faster he could quit "babysitting" and start a new job. "What fun could we possibly have if we're asleep the whole time!?" Rain retorted as she and Rikku got onto their horse. Britt just scowled as she tossed her back pack over her horse and climbed up. Everyone else just followed suit and soon they were on their way to what appeared to be their final destination. "Hey are you ok?" Matt asked riding up next to Sarah as she yawned once more. "Yeah I'm just really tired. I didn't get much sleep." She replied stifling yet another yawn. "How come?" He questioned flashing a charming smile, he was still hoping to try and win her over. "No reason... I guess I just had something on my mind." She told him. She had spent most of the night pondering what would happen once they reached Anvalia. Would she have to stay there? Would they all leave her? But what she wondered most of all, would she never see them again? She didn't want to say goodbye to all her friends, she wanted to keep journeying, for there was so much left to learn. But would she really even have a choice in the matter? "Hey Earth to Sarah! Yoo Hoo!" Matt called trying to get her attention. She shook her head realizing she had spaced out. "You know if you're that tired I guess you could ride with me and do like they are." Matt proposed pointing at Rain and Rikku. Rikku was carefully steering the horse as Rain slept in front of him. He had to be careful not to jerk and wake Rain up as well as make sure she didn't fall, if either of those happened he would certainly pay. "I appreciate your offer but I am fine." She said smiling at him. She started riding ahead of him. His smile broadened as he continued to watch her.

"Don't be getting any ideas." Ash said appearing next to Matt nearly scaring him out of his skin. "I don't know what you mean." Matt replied trying to play innocent. "You think Sarah is cute. I can tell and I say don't get any ideas. She is naïve and doesn't understand a lot of things. So do realize that if you try to pull anything then I will be forced to pummel you. No hard feelings." Ash informed him smiling the whole time. Ash slapped Matt hard on the shoulder before riding ahead. "Sometimes that guy scares me..." Ash muttered rubbing his arm.

It took them hours to travel on to Anvalia, fighting the random battles, growing stronger with each one. Sarah was almost exhausted when they arrived at Anvalia's gates at the base of the mountains. "Alrighty Well I guess I'll handle this while everyone heads on in. I'm sure Sid is anxious to see you." Kyla said glancing at Alexia as they all came to a stop. "You know go on with them. I can handle everything." Domon said. "Are you sure? I'd hate for you to do it two days in a row. Plus you'd have to separate from the group." She said turning to look at him. "Yeah it's fine. I was going to part with you to go into town. So I can unsaddle the horses then go into town, this way you don't have to leave them." He told her. "Don't worry I'll stay back and help him. Any specific place you want us to put everything?" Rikku stated as he tried to shake Rain awake. "I don't think she's waking up... I'll carry her when we're done." He added giving up on trying to wake her up. "Ok... thanks guys." Kyla said with

a hint of sadness. Everyone climbed off of their horses. She gave Domon and Rikku a hug before walking into the city with the rest of the group.

Our group of heroes walked through the gates which led straight into the factory, the basis of this whole town. "You know this seems like it's just going to be boring visit... I'm going into town." Britt sighed shoving her hands into her pockets and walking out the door into town. Kyla just shrugged as she pranced over to the elevator. "You are not allowed to the upper levels." A guard said walking in front of her. "Excuse me sir. My name is Kyla and I need to go see Sid." She told him trying to walk around him. "You do not have proper clearance." The guard said intercepting her again. "Snow Cat reporting in with a bounty for Sid." Felix informed the guard grabbing Sarah by the arm and dragging her with him as he walked past. "That's my bounty too! Come on man." Matt said walking through pulling Ash with him. "Is the little one with you?" The guard inquired still holding off Kyla. Felix turned and looked at the small girl who gave him a weak pleading smile. "No..." Felix sighed turning his back on her and dragging Alexia into the elevator. "Wait- What!?" Matt shouted looking at Kyla before running after Felix. Ash looked sympathetically at her; he didn't want to leave her behind. She mouthed the words "go on" to him urging him to go, somebody needed to keep an eye on Sarah. He nodded in understanding before joining everyone in the elevator. "Felix why did you do that!" Sarah shouted as the elevator started to the next floor. "Yeah that was just mean!" Matt added. Felix just gave a light smile.

Kyla gave up and trudged to sit on one of the sofas. "I said he could use me as a punching bag... but I don't this falls under that category." She sighed propping her head up with her hands. She could have gotten through easily, though not without causing a scene. "Domon and Rikku must still be taking care of the horses." She groaned. She was thinking about going to help them but she would be useless anyway. They would make her stand back while they did all the work in fear that she "would hurt herself." She didn't like being treated like this, it made her feel useless. If she couldn't do normal tasks like that then how could she do more important things like protecting everyone? A shiver went up her spine as memories started flooding in, it was like the ghosts of the friends she failed had come back to haunt her. She normally repressed these but this sense of uselessness brought them back. If I couldn't help them then how could I hope to help anyone now...

"Hey Kyla!" Domon yelled pulling her out of her depressing thoughts. She looked up as him and Rikku ran towards her. "What are you doing out here?" Rikku asked stopping and repositioning the sleeping Rain on his back. "The guard wouldn't let me through..." She sighed looking towards the elevator. "Then where's everyone else?" Domon inquired. "He let them through... Felix seems to be of more importance." She sighed. "Why didn't Felix speak up for you?" "He did... He said he didn't know me..." She let out another sigh as she rested her head in her hands again. "I thought you were pretty close to Sid?" Rikku stated sitting down next to his sister. "I am... It must be a new guy... he doesn't really smell familiar..." She told him. Rikku went on talking and she happened to notice that Domon was being really quite. She looked up to find a scowl on his face.

Domon has always been rather protective over Kyla, possible because of his "secret" crush. People being rude and cruel to her generally have to deal with him if she can't handle it. "What's wrong?" Kyla asked looking up at him with her large blue eyes. "I'm going to have a word with this guard." He growled walking over to the elevators. "Citizens are not allowed on the upper levels." The guard said positioning himself between Domon and the Elevator. "I understand your position sir, but my friend is needed for an important conference with Sid. You have upset everyone by not allowing her access and I am sure that your superior will be angered by your treatment towards his guest." Domon retorted using his way with words. "Is there something wrong?" Another guard asked as the first one was trying to find a way to respond. "Yeah they're saying that the kid with the white hair over there is supposed to be meeting with Sid though the only person that Sid is awaiting council with is Felix, aka Snow Cat." Guard

#1 explained. "Was she with Snow Cat?" Guard #2 asked. "He said she was not part of his group." "Then she is probably a spy or some thief of sorts wanting information on upcoming projects." "Probably you can never trust the cute innocent ones." The guards discussed this, each of their words angering him further. They made Kyla sound like some kind of low life.

They looked down at him unfazed by the look of rage that was appearing on his face. "Move it along pipsqueak we don't have time to entertain you." Guard #2 said shoving him. What Domon wanted to do was grab the guy's arm, throw him to the ground and pound him to a pulp, fighting off the other guard in the process. But using his outstanding control the he has perfected in order to deal with uncooperative customers at work, he suppressed this urge and instead allowed the guy to push him onto the ground. Kyla's eyes flashed red as she saw this and within seconds she was standing in front of Domon ready to beat down the guards. She was having problems finding the words she wanted to hiss at the men, but who needs words when their fist can do the talking for them. "Kyla, such a wonderful surprise! Is there a problem here?" A tall man said walking over to her. She snapped out of her trance and looked up at the man. He had reasonably short black hair and kind yet narrow brown eyes that were hid behind a pair of glasses. "Sid! Awesome to see you again! Yeah we're kinda having problem getting through your security. Apparently we're not high on the priority list." Kyla chirped back with a hint of malice in her voice as she helped Domon to his feet. A frown came to Sid's face as he took in her words. "Men it appears you don't realize that this is Kyla, a renowned martial artists. If I had not have interfered she may have caused you some serious harm if you continued to anger her. Be aware that she is always allowed here for she is a close friend to me and my family." Sid lectured the two guards before turning to Kyla and her friends, Rikku now joining them with Rain in tote. "You wish to accompany me? I'm on my way up to my meeting room where I have guests waiting." Sid offered. "Of course!" Kyla chirped. "I must apologize for my men. Those two are new and have yet to learn my vip list. You mind me inquiring as to who your friends are?" Sid said making conversation as they climbed onto the elevator and rode it to one of the higher floors. "It's fine. Now that I think back on it I'm kind of worried about their safety. That could have ended badly. But this is my brother Rikku and one of my awesome friends Domon. Oh and the girl sleeping is his sister Rain." Kyla informed him introducing her group. "It is nice to meet you. Especially since those really close to Kyla is a rare site around here. Are you martial artist like Kyla?" Sid inquired. "Yeah, though we have stable jobs at Depp Mechanics." Domon replied. "Come on don't be modest! Domon is actually up for the position of store manager or an apprentice mechanic." Kyla chirped ruffling Domon's hair causing him to blush. "That is quite an achievement. How would you possible like a part time internship here? It would be in your time off there and it might give you some good skills to take with you there. I and the Depp family collaborate quite often on our work so I am sure we can work something out." Sid offered. "Really!? Sir that would be an honor!" Domon said excitedly. "And what about you Rikku, do you have any special skills?" Sid questioned. "Not really... I guess I'm the normal one in the group." Rikku frowned realizing he didn't have any neat attributes like Kyla and Domon. "Rikku you know that you are next in line for store manager if I get a different job. We've been there for the same amount of time and your better with inventory then I am." Domon complemented trying to cheer him up. "Yeah but I'm not as people friendly nor tech-savvy like you." He retorted. "But it still sounds like a bright future awaits you at Depp Mechanics. All of you are like family to them so I don't believe they will treat you wrong." Sid commented. "Well I'm afraid I have a meeting to attend." Sid said stopping at his meeting room. "With Felix." Kyla said with a slight growl. "Yes, how did you know?" He asked astounded. "We traveled here with him... he kinda decided to bail on me down in the lobby..." She informed him. "Oh. Well since you already know then would you like to attend as well?" He offered. She just shrugged and followed him in. "Kyla I am so glad that you were able to come up!" Sarah greeted running over to them. "Yeah it was a good thing Sid came along." Kyla said. "Yeah or we'd be on the run from the cops for double

homicide.” Rikku joked walking around and propping Rain up in a chair before finding his own seat. “Brother it has been a while since I last saw you.” Sarah said hugging her brother. “Yes. I apologize for taking such rash measures to bring you here but it seemed the best way to get you out of Zandoria without drawing suspicion onto us.” Sid replied. “It’s ok. I’ve actually been having fun.” She told him taking a seat. “So pop’s what our reward for a job well done?” Matt inquired propping his feet up on the table. “So it was a collaborative effort?” Sid inquired. “As much as I hate to admit it, yes, under the circumstances we were forced to work together and managed to bring Alexia here without much trouble.” Felix reported. “And how did the hover ship fair?” Sir requested. “To our misfortune it crashed not long after taking the princess into my custody, playing a part in the delay of arriving here.” Felix replied. He was speaking more formal for this report than he normally did. Though what others think of him generally don’t faze him, he does like to leave a good impression on his employers. “That is unfortunate for that hover ship was going to be your pay. I guess I will have to award the both of you with something else. Until then please make use of our hospitality. We will be glad to house and feed all of you.” Sid commented.

For the most part the meeting was now over and they were spending time with friendly conversation before it was time for dinner. “Kyla are you still taking odd jobs?” Sid inquired. “Yeah. That’s kinda how I make most of my living. I’m more well known for that than my fighting.” Kyla chirped. “That doesn’t have anything to do with your skill. Most people don’t want to believe that the current champion is a vertically challenged 16 year old girl.” Rikku commented. “Very true.” Kyla giggled. “Well I would like to hire you if that is ok with you. I know I would generally have to contact Depp Mechanic’s but I thought since you were already here I would request your services in person.” Sid said. “Wow this sounds like it’s going down a bad road...” Matt commented. “What do you mean?” Sarah asked. “If you don’t get it then try not to pay attention to it.” Ash suggested. Sarah nodded. “Alrighty I’m game for pretty much anything.” Kyla replied. “That didn’t help much...” Ash muttered to Matt. “Well I was hoping maybe you could perform for the city. It doesn’t have to be much. You can do as little as a speech, but just something to raise the moral of the people.” Sid requested. “Sure that sounds like fun!” Kyla agreed. This sounded strange to Sarah. She didn’t understand why their moral needed to be boosted. Was there something going on that had the spirits of Anvalia down? Maybe she would ask about this when she has her personal audience with her older brother.

“Now that I am thinking about it, might I inquire as to why your arm is in a cast?” Sid asked Kyla. “Oh... well... It kinda got broke during a fight we had in Caim. A fox demon girl attacked us.” Kyla informed him. “A fox demon girl? I have heard rumors of someone like that making appearances around town. It is really strange to see them here.” Sid noted. I wonder if it is her? Sarah pondered.

Days passed since that get together. Sarah spent most of her time alone. Yeah all of them stayed together at the factory but they only spent a few hours together at night and by the time Sarah woke the next day everyone was gone. They apparently had better things to do. Kyla spent most of her time training due to her casted arm. She was trying to develop a way to fight without using that arm, her dominant arm, in this way she wouldn’t be as useless. Matt and Ash would spend time with Sarah but for the most part hung out together in town, enjoying the big city. Britt, Rain, Rikku, and Domon trained along with Kyla, apparently one of their favorite pastimes. Felix on the other hand was not heard from since the meeting with Sid. He disappeared into the city, who knows he may have been on a new job already.

Sarah stood out on a balcony that over looked the city. She wasn’t allowed to go out in fear that something would happen to her in the big city. “I wonder if everyone is having fun.” She sighed resting her head on the rail. I wonder if Felix is ok... Is he still mad at me? She pondered but her thoughts were soon interrupted by light rapid footsteps behind her. “Hey Sarah! Or are you wanting to go by Alexia

now?" Kyla greeted running up next to her. "I think I prefer the name Sarah..." Sarah told her looking over at her friend. "How has your training been going?" She added. "Pretty good.... I've kinda reached a limit for now so I thought I would stop by and see what you were up to?" Kyla told her grinning. "Any news on Felix?" Sarah inquired looking back at the city. "Yeah I actually have sent Rain, Rikku, and Domon to keep an eye on him. So far he's still in the city." Kyla chirped. "That's good." Sarah sighed. "You're that worried about him huh?" Kyla asked hopping up to sit on the rail of the balcony. Sarah nodded. "Come on I told you before he can take care of himself." Kyla encouraged her. "I know... but I fear that he hates me." Sarah admitted. "No way. He's probably already forgotten about that. So cheer up!" Kyla requested. "Why is Felix called 'Snow Cat?'" Sarah questioned. "It's not obvious? It's because Felix is like a cat's name and he has white hair like snow. Makes sense huh?" Kyla giggled. "Oh..."

"How is the job that Sid hired you for going?" Sarah asked standing up straight. "Pretty good. I've almost got it all worked out. I perform in a couple days." Kyla told her. "Care to run it by me?" Sarah offered. "Sure let me go get my notes!" Kyla said hopping off the rail. "I'll be right back!" She added running towards the door. Suddenly she started to wobble. Images started appearing in Kyla's head, but they were blurred beyond the point of comprehension. She tried hard to make out what was going on. She lost control of her body as it collapsed on the floor and started to spasm as though she was having a seizure. "Kyla!" Sarah yelled running over to her friend. She quickly started to call for a guard as the girl's body slowly stopped its thrusting about. "Did something happen?" The guard inquired. "S-s-s-she just collapsed!" Sarah squeaked. "I'll take her back to her room and call a doctor." The guard told her picking the girl up and carrying her to the living quarters.

The doctor came and gone, unable to find anything wrong. He said if her condition didn't improve in the next couple of hours for them to call him back. So Sarah was left alone to watch over her friend. "Hey how long have I been out?" A weak voice sounded. "Kyla you're awake!" Sarah squeaked. "Yeah... The sun already gone down?" She inquired. "Yes. Not too long ago though. You've been asleep for about 2 hours." Sarah informed her. "Wow that was intense... I'm sorry just to fall out on you." Kyla apologized working hard to sit up. "What happened?" Sarah asked. "Well... I hate to say it... and it's not really all that believable... but it was a vision." She said blushing. "A vision?" Sarah repeated somehow not really surprised. "Yeah... they're not really all that much... and kind of limited, more annoying than anything..." She said managing to sit up and dangle her feet over the edge of the bed. "What did you see?" Sarah questioned. "Nothing... Sucks huh? Having visions aren't all what they're cracked up to be. Though something was strange it was like my vision was being intercepted. I can usually seeing something though it's often useless..." Kyla replied. "Hey... I need to go meet up with Domon and them." Kyla said getting to her feet and forcing her feet to move. Right as she was about to open the door it swung open hitting her. She tumbled back a little but wasn't knocked off her feet till Rain came charging in and collided with her. "Kyla!" Rain shouted catching her balance. "Awesome running into you." Kyla joked. Rain helped Kyla to her feet then assisted her back to bed.

"Are you ok? Domon said that something happened to you." Rain asked. "Yeah... it was no big deal a stupid worthless vision..." Kyla told her. "How did Domon know that something occurred?" Sarah inquired. "I don't know... He's kind of always had like a Kyla sense. He pretty much knows when something bad happens. 'Quick my senses are tingling!'" Rain said before bursting into laughter. "Wow that sounded wrong when I think about it." She added. "So how is everything with Felix?" Kyla asked. "Well ummm we kind of lost him. There was a fight at the restaurant with him and before we knew it he was gone..." Rain reported. "Was he hurt!?" Sarah asked. "I don't know it was kind of a huge mess... Domon and Rikku are looking for him now." Rain said.

Footsteps were audible outside the door. "That must be them." Rain said as Rikku and Domon ran

through the door out of breath. "Any luck?" Rain asked. "No we... couldn't find him..." Rikku wheezed. Domon looked up at Kyla. "Are you ok?" He breathed. "Yeah I'm fine. It just knocked me out for a bit." Kyla told him. He nodded then walked with Rikku over to collapse on the bed. Sarah watched the two of them move almost simultaneously. It astounded her how much they looked alike and they weren't even related. I guess everyone has their twin in the world... She noted. "Well in either case I hope that he is ok." Kyla sighed, bringing attention back to Felix. "Yeah... " Sarah whispered.

## 6 - Chapter 6

A couple of days passed and the time came for Sarah's personal audience with her brother.

"I suppose you know rumors that a ghost has been seen roaming around the palace." Sid started as he paced around the room. He liked to pace it helped him think, it was why the carpet in his office was so worn down. "I see... those rumors have floated all the way here..." Sarah sighed taking a seat, folding one leg over the other and resting her hands in her lap. "Yes, I am afraid to say that gossip indeed flies farther and faster than one would like to imagine. It is also said that said ghost is responsible for the sudden change that has come over mother. Is there any truth to these allegations?" Sid inquired looking over to his sister as he made yet another lap. "I can't say for sure that these rumors are correct, but I have noticed some differences in mother's behavior. I have also caught quick glimpses of a strange man skulking around the palace. Whether the two are connected and whether this person is spirit or not is beyond my knowledge." Sarah informed him taking note of the formal speech she used. She still has a way to go before she sounded like an average person, but that didn't really matter now... now that her journey was over. "I see..." Sid said growing quiet as he was thrown further into thought.

The room was quiet as Sid finally took a seat next to his sister. He had his head lowered in thought. "Brother?" Sarah whispered breaking the silence. He looked over at her, his brown eyes gleaming over his glasses as they slid slightly down the bridge of his nose. "What is all this really about? Why did you go through so much trouble to bring me here?" She added. He sat there, quiet for a moment as he attempted to formulate an answer, then with a sigh he pushed his glasses back into place and started his explanation. "I have to admit, these rumors did play a part in this, though I have yet decided how big of a role. There is danger rising, everyone can feel the tension in the air, their instincts driving them to hide like beasts. It wasn't long ago when I was walking through town and came upon an old seer. She spoke of a great evil foretelling that a war between the elements would soon begin. As much as I would like to toss her words aside as insane babble, I must heed her warning for I too sense the peril. Though we could probably protect ourselves with ease due to our advanced technology, we have always relied on Zandoria for our defenses. In fact I would say we are dependent on Zandoria for their army since we don't have one of our own. But suddenly Mother has all but tossed us aside with this new change in demeanor. She is blind to the danger. That is why I wanted you out of there. I believe it may be better here where we are aware of the danger. But then there is the matter of the people of Anvalia. They are on edge fearing that when the time comes Zandoria will not send out their forces leaving us defenseless. Thus-" "You hired Kyla to put the people at ease." Sarah interrupted giving Sid a break from his long explanation. He nodded.

Sarah understood what he was saying, but something troubled her: why didn't she sense the danger? Was it because she was being sheltered by her mother or was she just that naive? "But what will you do if battle does break out and mother's forces never come? As you said Anvalia has no planned military." She inquired. "Well... We'll just have to do our best to fight back and have hope. The seer also told of heroes of multiple lands joining together to combat the evil." He told her. She nodded letting him know that she heard him. Things went quiet between them as they both fell into thought.

Can we really put so much trust in the words of a seer? Kyla has visions that she describes as "worthless." Are there any differences between her visions and a seer's prophecy? Although... when it all comes down to it... if a great evil were to rise would it really matter? Can anyone do anything about it? And more importantly is there any place that would be safe?"

Time continued to pass. No matter how much they looked Felix was still nowhere to be seen. Sarah spent the time when she was alone out on the balcony overlooking the city, hoping to catch a glimpse of one of her friends. For the next few days that followed her conversation with Sid, Kyla spent most of her time with Sarah keeping her entertained with stories. Kyla laughed merrily from behind her happy mask, but suddenly Sarah was starting to see things differently. For the first time she glimpsed the frightened pup in Kyla, the frightened pup that was seeking shelter from the upcoming storm but had nowhere to go. It was then that Sarah realized that danger was real and Kyla felt it.

The day that Kyla was preparing for had finally come. She took care to memorize all of her notes. There were so many possible things she could have done: a play, a song, a plain out motivational speech, but she chose to do a story. All she hoped for was that she would get the correct message through and that he would hear it. She was hoping to kill two birds with one stone she may never get this chance again. The whole city was to attend; even Sarah was allowed to escape the factory.

“Hey are you ok?” Domon asked bringing her a glass of water. He noticed that her hands were shaking and that her legs wobbled when she walked. “Yeah... just a little stage fright, no big deal, I thrive off the fear lets me know I’m still sane.” She said smiling at him. He blushed slightly as he handed her the glass of water. “Thanks.” She whispered gulping it down. She handed him back the glass and started to stretch. Only 3 minutes before I go on... She noted doing a mental countdown. Did Sarah get here ok?” She asked rotating her shoulders trying to loosen them up. “Yeah I walked with them here. She and everyone else is sitting in the reserved section with Sid.” He told her. She smiled. Two more minutes... She told herself as she closed her eyes and opened her mind doing a mental search of the area. She sifted through the crowd’s thoughts before she managed to find her friends Rain, Rikku, Britt were using their mental powers to send her their good mojo. She wanted to search for him but she was running out of time. 1 minute left. She realized. Why didn’t I think of searching for him earlier? She scolded herself then turned to Domon. “Well you’re about to go on.” He sighed “Hey can I have a hug for luck?” She requested. 40 seconds left... Domon quickly wrapped his arms around her and held her close, she was still trembling. He could tell she had something else on her mind and he had a pretty good idea what... or should he say who it was. Those last few seconds ticked by quickly to his dismay. It was time for her to go. He wanted to say something to her, something comforting, so words of luck, but nothing would form. All he managed was a shy smile as he released her. She smiled back as she quickly made her way to the stage. “I better find a seat...” He whispered forcing his way through the crowds hoping that Rain and Rikku left him a seat.

Kyla walked out to the center of the stage waving as a few people cheered for her. Her stage fright had vanishing leaving her only with the jittery feeling due to the adrenaline. Taking in a deep breath and giving a broad smile she began her monologue, moving her hands and walking around the stage slightly as she talked.

“Hello everyone, a few of you may know me but to those who don’t my name is Kyla. I do a bit of everything really, but we’re not here to learn about me. Instead I am here to promote something very valuable, especially during dark times... hope. I’m not going to give a long dull emotional speech, instead I am going to share a little story, and hopefully it won’t fall into either of those categories.

“A long time ago there was a boy, an orphan wondering the wild. He was young and lacked the abilities to survive on his own. It was then he met a girl, she helped him, built him up to be able to survive on his own. One day the time came and the girl had to leave him but she promised she would come back. Time passed without her returning and more than a year went by. During the time frame the boy grew tired of waiting for her and he went to live life on his own. Finally the girl came back, it took her years due to multiple incidents along the way, but she did come back only to find that the boy wasn’t where she left him. After that the girl went on a hunt for the boy she wanted to keep her promise but above all she

wanted to say 'I'm sorry.' She wanted more than anything to apologize for abandoning him in the first place.

"Now I know everyone is probably wondering what this has to do with hope, but think about what the girl is searching for. If you think about it the boy was hope unable to live at first without someone to believe in him but she helped him grow. Then she abandoned it only to come back and find it wasn't where she left it. Hope will not wait for you, you have to find it on your own, and when the time is right you will find it, just like one day the girl will find the boy as long as she keeps searching and never gives up on him. The boy is her hope that she is sorry for leaving for so long. Many things may happen that will try and prevent you from believing in hope but please never give up on it.

"My name is Kyla and I hope you enjoyed and were able to draw something out of this message." She finished and bowed deeply before leaving the stage. She got backstage and listened to the crowds the applauded but she couldn't tell if it was because she enjoyed it or if it was out of courtesy, and she was afraid to listen to their thoughts and learn the true answer to that. Domon pushed through the crowds to find her pacing. He walked up to her and was about to congratulate her on a job well done when she turned to him worriedly. "I should have sung... Everything is always magically solved by song. That's what I should have done." She ranted second guessing herself. "Stop beating yourself up, you did perfectly fine." Domon said gripping her shoulders tightly. "You really think so?" She whimpered looking up at him. "Y-y-y-yeah." He stuttered blushing as he quickly released her. Domon... thanks... She said to herself as she took his hand in hers. A chill ran up his spine as his face turned completely red. "Come on lets go join the others." She suggested. He gulped and nodded as he led her through the crowds. They went up to their friends who congratulated her and began chatting merrily. She laughed along with them as she opened her mind once more. She didn't have time to do a mental sweep of the area but she was going to send out a message and hope that he heard it. She didn't care if anyone else heard it; if they did they would probably disregard it as a snippet from a conversation close by. If only it will get to him. "I'm sorry..."

Felix stood there leaning against the wall. There was no way he was going to skip this event and miss seeing the little beast make a complete fool of herself. But the thing was... she didn't. In fact the story she told struck a nerve with him. He knew the story well though the boy being hope and the girl chasing it was an interesting twist. He let out a sigh as he continued to think about how she told the story. Was there a hidden message in there? Yeah he's not that stupid, but did she mean it... Another sigh escaped his lips as he ran his fingers through his hair. "I'm sorry..." He jumped as those words were close enough to be whispered in his ear. He instantly recognized it as the kid's voice, but she was nowhere to be seen. Was this just his imagination? Or was it another one of her tricks? He was able to hear so much sorrow and sincerity in her voice it was more than just a trick. It was her going out of her way to apologize to him, and this time there was no mistake that she meant it.

Felix continued to think this through there was so much he had to wrap his mind around, but one question remained: Would he forgive her?

## 7 - Chapter 7

That night Sarah barely slept. Her mind was busy plotting. She knew Kyla was not going to stay in Anvalia forever; the time would come when she would be needed elsewhere, and Kyla's friends would eventually have to return to work. She feared that even Ash and Matt would tire of the city. It was time for her to make a move, whether to rot away here or to find a way to leave this boring life. If only I could find Felix... would he come with me if I asked?

Morning came swiftly and though she was only functioning off a few hours of sleep her excitement and determination had her wide awake. To her dismay, by the time she woke up everyone else had already left to spend the day in the city, but maybe this could work to her advantage. She quickly got dressed in the clothes Kyla gave her on the day they started their adventure. Suddenly she realized she would need something to hide her face with, a hood maybe? She searched the room but couldn't find a hooded article of clothing, so when in need make your own. Swiftly she stripped a sheet from one of the beds. She glanced in the mirror as she draped it over her head and shoulders, then pinned it around her neck. She twirled around examining her work. As childish as it looked it would have to do.

The time had come for her to attempt her escape. She had her disguise and her weapons securely in a holster around her waist, she was ready. Sneaking to the door she glanced around, there wasn't a guard in sight. She swiftly darted across the hall to another hiding place so she could look around some more, but there appeared to be no guards on this floor. This was strange. Taking in a deep breath she started skulking down the hall careful to keep an eye out in case a guard suddenly appeared. The elevator was in sight. Taking one more look around she dashed into it and pressed the button for it to go to the ground floor. That was strange usually there are a few guards on that level. Where could they all be? Oh well better not look a gift horse in the mouth. She pondered as the elevator clanged to a halt. She walked calmly to avoid drawing attention to herself. When she walked past a group of guards she was careful to hide her face inconspicuously. Her disguise appeared to be working as she walked right out the door without anyone stopping her.

Yes I did it! Sarah congratulated herself. "Good Job!" A voice called out to her. Great why did I have to go and jinx myself. She scolded as she turned around slowly. "Don't worry I'm not turning you in." The voice said. It was Kyla; she was leaning against the wall as if waiting for Sarah to come out. "You're lucky security was messed up since someone broke into the Sid's office as well as the upper levels where the manufacturing goes on." Kyla said walking over to Sarah. "You didn't-" "It wasn't me... I considered it to give you a chance to break out... but someone else beat me to it... this was someone else with different intentions." Kyla looked up to the top of the large building her eyes shined purple with curiosity but worry was darkening her gaze. Suddenly she shook her head as if chasing off dark thoughts then looked up at Sarah with a smile. "You don't really need that any more so you can toss it." She said referring to the makeshift hood. "Right..." Sarah whispered unpinning it and walking over to place it in the waste basket. She noticed something in Kyla's smile. She knew that something was troubling her but what it was she could not guess. "You ready?" Kyla asked when Sarah got back to her. Sarah nodded.

"How did you know I was going to leave today?" Sarah inquired as they walked down the street. "You were kinda plotting out loud this morning." Kyla replied. "Oh so you were awake for that?" "Yep..." "Then you know that I want to continue adventuring. There are so many things that I want to see and learn." "I know... And I'm here to make it possible." "Does everyone else know?" Kyla nodded. "Yeah... They're in town picking up some last minute things." Things went quiet. Kyla seemed lost in thought.

This silence threw Sarah to her own contemplations as she began to worry about Felix once more. Suddenly Kyla froze her eyes shooting wide open as something caught her attention. Sarah stopped next to her wondering what was wrong until she heard the same things Kyla was hearing. "On your knees girly and beg for your life. If you're lucky we may let you live. It depends on what you can do for us." A gruff voice said. Sarah and Kyla both glared down the alley next to them. There was group of seven men gather around a girl. One of them was tall and muscular, obviously the leader from the way he spoke. The girl was on the ground crying. "Don't make me hurt you!" She screamed desperately as she tried to slide backwards only to run into the legs of one of the goons. She weaved her fingers through her bright red hair as if struggling to prevent from losing her mind.

"Sick bastard..." Sarah hissed drawing her guns and charging at the guys. She slid to a stop and pressed a gun to the leaders head. "Leave her alone if you wish to escape with your life." Sarah threatened. There was a soft click as she pulled back on the hammer. "Wow...." Kyla gasped. She had never seen this side of Sarah. "She is starting to truly see things... and realizing she has strength to do something about it... I just hope she isn't getting in over her head." Kyla whispered taking in the full situation ready to assist if she needed to."So another brave girly who dares to cross me, boys show her how we deal with heroes." The leader said grinning smugly. His six comrades quickly drew their weapons; they each carried a large knife and a hand gun.

Sarah gritted her teeth as fear started to grip her. What did I get myself into? She pondered raising her other gun trying to keep an eye on all seven men. One of the men shifted up behind her and there was a soft click as he prepared to fire. Sarah wanted to close her eyes in fear of the shot by managed to resist. But nothing happened except a sudden loud thud as the thug fell to the ground. "Don't worry I got your back." Kyla said now standing next to Sarah. "Do I even want to ask about what just transpired?" Sarah suggested a smile stretched across Kyla's face.

Only seconds had passed after the man prepared to shoot. Kyla saw this as the most opportune moment to step in. She ran forward and leapt. The man had felt her presence and turned only to be kned in the face and sent to the ground. Kyla then took her place at Sarah's side.

"Follow my lead" Kyla said waiting for the moment to strike. She heard one of the goons shift his weight, readying his weapon. Now! She noted leaping forward and grabbing Sarah's hands. She pulled Sarah with her just in time for a bullet to speed by without hitting her. "Weapons energy mode." Kyla commanded. The guns began to glow as they transformed. Kyla pulled Sarah with her almost like they were doing a dance. Bullets flashed by them as they moved just in time to evade. They rotated to where they were aiming at one of the men. Sarah felt as Kyla pressed her finger into the trigger shooting a ball of light at one of the men, knocking him out. A grin came to Kyla's face as a familiar scent reached her. "Switch partners!" She announced releasing Sarah and running to the girl on the ground in order to shield her. Another figure swooped down taking Kyla's place. He wrapped one arm firmly around her waist and took her hand fitting it to hers where his finger was also on the trigger. He led her around in a graceful waltz easily avoiding bullets and firing when they had a clear shot. It was an easy trick knowing when the other men were going to fire and when to dodge. There was almost a pattern to it, a rhythm to the sound of the bullets. They danced to this rhythm.

Two men, three men, four men, five men, it didn't take long till they had shot the final 6th man leaving only the leader to be dealt with. The dance had now ended with one final spin. Sarah now took the chance to look up at her dance partner. Instantly she recognized the white hair and the light blue eyes. "Felix!" She squeaked happy to see him. He smiled down at her causing her to blush. When she thought about it she couldn't really remember him smiling. She saw him smirk once but not an actual warm smile. Is this a dream? She wondered.

Felix looked over at the brat who was shielding the red-haired girl. He had no idea why he had smiled at the princess, he didn't think he was able to truly smile any more. His change in attitude was going

smoother and quicker than he would have imagined.

"Felix... so that is your name. Are you ready to finish what you started at the restaurant?" The leader of the small gang said. Felix now recognized the jerk from a few nights ago. He was at the restaurant when this man stupidly got angry because the women there appeared to pay more attention to him. When the man confronted him about it, yelling and spitting in his face, Felix replied with a smug, "I can't help it if I am better looking than you..." Felix always knew that his mouth would get him into trouble and that was when the man pulled a knife on him. Felix didn't care he continued to disregard the challenge, it's not like it would be a difficult fight to win. The man was more bark than bite. Felix sipped his coffee as the man stabbed at him, easily dodging each attempt. Suddenly something caught his attention out the corner of his eye. It was the brat's friends there spying on him. It wasn't the first time he noticed them, but this time they were inclined to interfere. They started to run over to help Felix but somehow they tripped into the waiter and were covered in the orders the waiter was carrying. IDIOTS! His mind screamed as he became fully distracted, the gang leader took this chance and sliced at Felix's chest, he managed to dodge in time for the main casualty to be his shirt and obtaining a small cut along his chest that drew only a small amount of blood. Felix growled this was his favorite shirt but he couldn't allow himself to be drawn into a fight, not with the monster's lackeys here to watch him and possibly screw it up. Instead he pulled all the strength he had and ran, it was harder to run than it was to fight but at least now that they were distracted he could escape them for good. Taking this chance they would never be able to find him.

And now that stupid gorilla of a man stood before him, the only thing between them was the kid and a girl he did not care about. Another grin came to his face as he thought of something worse for the man to bear, losing his pride. Kyla looked over at Felix who motioned his head toward the leader. She smiled. This could be fun. "No I think I will deal with you." Kyla interfered taking a fighting stance. The red-haired girl glimpsed up at Kyla before sliding back against the wall of the building where Felix and Sarah were standing. "Hiding behind this little runt!? What kind of a man are you." The man asked. "You're not even worth my time, besides it will hurt more when you are beaten by a child." Felix retorted. "Come on I'm only two years younger than you." Kyla groaned. "Fine kid, if you really want to challenge me... Your funeral." The man sighed ignoring Kyla's statement, after all she looked like a ten-year-old, if that.

The man charged at Kyla and like her usual fights she leapt into the air doing a flip over him in order to avoid. The man stopped, drew a knife and thrust upward hoping to stab her, or that she would at least land on the blade. Kyla was millimeters from the tip when she froze in midair. "Not bad... This may prove to be interesting." She said rising higher into the air. She can fly!? Everyone's minds shouted. "So that explains how she managed to get from place to place so quickly." Sarah stated watching as Kyla flew backwards and softly landed on the ground. "Ok let's try this again." Kyla said taking a different stance. Suddenly Sarah glimpsed Kyla's cast and remembered that the girl's arm was still healing. "Kyla what about your arm!?" She worried. "Don't worry, I have another arm and two legs to work with." Kyla chirped glimpsing over her shoulder at her friends. The man took this as a distraction and took the chance to attack. I've got to watch closely. Felix told himself paying close attention to Kyla's movements not wanting to miss a single twitch. The man went to stab her but the blade went straight through Kyla, but something was wrong. It appeared as though he had attacked a hologram and now the image was fading. After image!? Felix recognized the move. He read about it but had never seen it; he should have known that the brat would know such a rare technique.

The real Kyla appeared behind her opponent. She quickly did a flip building up momentum in her heel as she brought it down hard on the man's shoulder. The man's shoulder cracked beneath the pressure very audibly, it was obvious she broke something in it. He was forced to his knees by the power of her blow as he groaned in pain. "You ready to give?" Kyla asked glaring at him. He chanced a glance back

at her and was mildly frightened by what he saw. The shadows of the buildings were thrown over her, her eyes glowing demonically in the darkness, her sharp fangs visible as she grinned. Is she a demon!? He questioned as he turned back forward glancing up at Felix. Felix had that smug look on his face as if pleased with the man's fear, defeat, and humiliation that were all wrapped up in one. "You son of a dog!" The man screamed angrily snatching a gun off the ground and raising it at Felix. "Idiot." Felix critiqued looking down upon the man, unfazed by the gun, he knew the kid wasn't done why not let him suffer some more defeat. Kyla swung her hand using her telekinetic powers to send a knife through the man's hand forcing him to drop the gun. She walked forward and pressed her foot into the nape of his neck. She applied light pressure at first but gradually pushed harder and harder forcing him to kowtow. "Are you a demon!?" He squealed trying to fight against her. "Yes... and I am simply one hell of a tutor." She replied bending down to where she could whisper it into his ear. He began to tremble due to the fact she admitted she wasn't human, he thought that her tail was just a decoration at first, but now he realized she was a survivor of the monkey-demon clan. "Now, how about you and your little gang run along? If you ever do anything else villainous, then next time I won't hold back." She threatened straightening her back and crossing her arms over her chest in a heroic pose. She let up on his back allowing him and his lackeys to scramble down the alley, some off the stumbling in their hurry to escape. "Did I overdo it?" Kyla squeaked prancing over to Felix with her hands clasped together. "In my opinion you should have done more..." He muttered. She smiled up at him and he looked down at her, but not in his cold, malicious way, but almost a friendly way as if amused by her childishness. There was a new understanding between them. But how? Sarah pondered wondering what had changed between the two. "Hey are you ok?" Kyla asked kneeling down at the red-haired girl.

Now that things had settled down they finally got a chance to actually examine her. She was a cute girl, 15 in age and 5'2" in height. She was sporting an orange jumpsuit with a white ruffled shirt and brown boots. Her fingernails were a bright green color that matched her eye color. As an accessory she had brown fingerless gloves that were carefully fitted with retractable claws, doubling it as a weapon. She had a white smile with cute tiny fangs that hadn't fully grown yet. Freckles were splattered across her face, but her most astonishing feature was her orange-red fox ears that peeked out of her hair and her matching tail.

"So you're the fox-girl everyone's been talking about?" Kyla said sounding disappointed. "I guess; you were expecting someone else?" The girl asked climbing to her feet and wrapping her arms around her back. "Yeah someone with black and pink hair with matching ears and a tail..." Felix replied. I think this is the most I have heard him talk in one setting. Sarah noted paying more attention to the changes in Felix rather than the conversation. A dark-look flashed across the girl's face for a split second, it was such a tiny spark that Kyla doubted anyone other than her noticed it. "What did this fox-demon do?" The girl asked appearing to be merely curious. "She Attacked Calm... breaking my arm in the process." Kyla sighed looking at her casted arm, her latest reminder of just how weak she was. "What were you to do if you found her?" The girl asked. "You know what... I don't even know... I haven't thought that far ahead... You don't need to worry about it... We probably should be going." Kyla said motioning for Sarah and Felix to follow her as she began to walk away. "Wait!" The girl called lunging forward and gripping Kyla's good hand. "What are your names?" She inquired looking Kyla in the eye. Kyla was thrown off guard, too shocked to answer. "That's Kyla, my name is Sarah, and this is Felix." Sarah answered for Kyla. "My name's Star... Please let me come with you." Star requested releasing Kyla's hand and bowing deeply. "Can we?" Sarah asked glancing over at Kyla pleadingly. Kyla turned to where her body was completely facing Star and placed her hand on Star's lowered head. She was questioning whether they could trust her but now she knew without a doubt, it was fine to bring her along. She nodded. "Thank you! Thank you!" Star squeaked throwing her arms around Sarah. "You are coming with us too right Felix?" Kyla asked looking up at him. "Why not..." He sighed. It had to be more entertaining than

hanging around Anvalia waiting for a new bounty. He was just wondering how he was going to be able to handle all the noise as their group seemed to constantly grow.

"We better hurry the others are probably wondering where we are..." Kyla sighed leading them into town. "Rain I'm telling you that I didn't do it on purpose!" Rikku screamed dashing in front of the group. Rain chased after him soaked head to toe. "And I say that there is no way in HELL that you can dump a whole bucket of water on someone 'accidentally'!" Rain retorted catching him by the throat and starting to slowly choke him. "You're really going to kill me this time!? If you do I have witnesses for my murder trial!" Rikku screeched pointing desperately towards Sarah and her entourage as it became more and more difficult to breathe. "Pointless..." Felix sighed walking ahead; he didn't see a point in listening to their asinine squabbling. "What was that!?" Rain hissed releasing Rikku and turning her rage over to Felix. Rikku quickly made his escape and ran over to his sister. "I thought she was actually going to kill me that time, did you see? I swear that girl is going to be the death of me one day." Rikku wheezed rubbing his neck. There were red marks there from where Rain's fingers were wrapped around it. "Shut up!" Rain growled snatching up a loose brick from the road and hurling it. It smashed against his head sending him to the ground. "See?" He choked out. "You hang out with her." Kyla sighed before breaking into laughter. He glared at her as she pulled him to his feet. "Come on we need to catch up with Felix." She told him running.

"So where is everyone?" Kyla asked. "Britt and Domon are at the weapon shop... we kinda left them there. And Ash and Matt should be around here somewhere." Rikku told her. "I'm going to go change clothes trusting this moron didn't get ALL of my stuff wet." Rain said with a harsh tone as she gripped the strap of her backpack and walked away on a safe place to change. "You mind explaining what you did to her?" Kyla asked quietly until Rain was out of sight. "We were just standing there I was helping a lady carry a bucket of water when this guy bumped into me knocking the water out of my hands and onto Rain. The thing was the guy seemed terrified and even more so after he ran into me." He explained. "Let me guess it was a large muscle bound guy with a bleeding hand, favoring a shoulder, and had about 6 other guys with him." Kyla said. "Yeah how did you know?" Rikku inquired. "Because that is the guy I just beat up." Kyla smirked. "I'm not even going to ask." Rikku frowned.

They pushed their way through town, their best bet would be to go to the weapon shop first, and they were bound to run into Ash and Matt on the way because it would be so convenient. "Ummm Kyla... Who is the fox chick that's following us?" Rikku asked whispering in Kyla's ear. "Oh that's Star, she's going to be traveling with us. Star this is my brother Rikku. The angry girl from before is our friend Rain." Kyla introduced. "It's nice to meet you." Star chirped. "Pleasure..." Rikku replied.

"Hey guys!" Ash and Matt yelled spotting Sarah and Felix's heads over the crowds and knowing that Kyla would be right there with them. Sarah paused and looked for who were calling out to them. "Hi!" She shouted waving as she saw the two boys forcing their way over to them. They were standing right outside of the weapon shop now, how convenient. "Hey Ash, hey Matt." Rain greeted as she rejoined the group in a fresh change of clothes. "Hey." "Yo." They greeted. "So we're finally ready to get outa here?" Matt asked excitedly. "Yeah we just have to pick up Britt and Domon then we can leave. We'll have to hurry if we want to reach the top of the mountain by nightfall, since we're having to go on foot." Kyla informed them. "What why!? Why can't we ride the horses!?" Rain groaned. "Ya'll are too pampered as it is; don't you think those horses deserve a break? Besides it will be too difficult to navigate them up some of the steep parts of the path." Kyla told them laughing as she led most of the group into the weapon store. "Hello there, who might you be?" Matt asked noticing Star. Only She, Matt, and Ash remained outside at this point. "My name is Star. I'm a fox." She introduced herself. "I'll say." Matt said smiling charmingly and giving a slight chuckle. Ash sighed as he hit his friend in the back of the head. Ow! Matt prevented himself from saying it out loud as he glared at Ash. "My name is Ash and my silver tongued friend here is Matt." Ash told her. "I am very pleased to meet you." Matt added

taking Star's hand and bowing to kiss it. "Hey Star come here real quick!" Kyla called coming to the door. "Coming." Star chirped pulling her hand away from Matt and joining Kyla in the store. "Damn cockblock..." Matt sighed. "Hahahaha as if you were getting anywhere. She looked like she was more attracted to that fly then she was to you." Ash criticized. "Oh yeah!? Is that a challenge!?" Matt questioned. "Who said anything about a challenge?" Ash pondered confused. "That sounds like a challenge. Let's see who will be the first to win over Lady Star's heart!" Matt ranted. "Whatever you say dude... I think you've finally lost it..." Ash sighed strolling inside. "You'll see! I'll beat you and make you eat your words!" Matt shouted chasing after Ash.

Everyone was now finally together inside the weapon shop. It was a large building with many sample weapons decorating the walls. The owner and blacksmith stood behind the counter surprised to see such a large group. On the counter in front of him was an adorable black and white kitten. Rikku walked up to the counter about to ask the man's price on a custom decorative shield. He opened his mouth to speak when he suddenly spotted the cat. He froze as fear began to grasp him and sweat began to roll down his face. Suddenly the creature meowed at him. Rikku let out a scream as he fell onto the floor. Everyone turned to look at him "I didn't do it!" Both Kyla and Rain shouted. They gave each other a confused look before Kyla ran to her brother's side. "Are you ok? What happened?" Sarah asked. "Yeah... I-i-i-it's n-nothing." He stuttered. His face was pure white as he glimpsed over at Rain who only appeared to be slightly worried. Great why did this have to happen now!? His mind squeaked. His attention was taken once more as the beast hopped off the counter and came closer to him, causing him to tremble. Kyla knew better then to believe nothing was wrong and looked in the direction he was looking. "Oh..." She sighed spotting what was terrorizing him, a cute little kitty-cat.

Rikku has always been terrified of cats ever since he was young. And for the most part no one can explain why, he has had no traumatic experience with them as far as he knew. This fear of cats has always made things difficult for him. For one it is not the manliest of fears and two ever where he turned there always seem to be a cat. At work his good friend who is also his supervisor and landlord has a large pet cat. Then there is Rain. Rain's associated animal is a cat which probably lends to why he is so terrified of her. But one of the most inconveniences is that he has to hide this fear from her. If she was to learned that Rikku was afraid of a "itty-bitty-kitty-cat" she would torture him for the rest of his life, refusing to let him live it down.

"Me and Rikku are going to step outside, try not to take too long." Kyla said pulling Rikku to his feet. His legs were wobbly making it difficult for him to walk. "Awww a Kitty!" Rain cooed picking up the kitten and cuddling it in her arms. A shiver shot up Rikku's spine as he quickly made his way out the door with Kyla, almost tumbling on the way out.

"Are you going to be ok? You look scared out of your wits." Kyla said worriedly as Rikku worked to catch his breath. "Yeah thanks for getting me out of there." He replied wiping the sweat from his face then glancing over at his sister. "Are you sure you never get even a tiny bit scared around cats?" He asked. "I've never been scared around a cat. I love cats, though I often have to resist the urge to chase them." She informed him, a grin stretching across her face. "That's kind of creepy..." He sighed. "I can't help it. Some of us are more like our spirit animal then others." She giggled. "But you got a cool one, a winged wolf while I got the lame rat. How does it even make sense for us to be twins and be so different!? Besides, why does there have to be so many cat variations: Rain is a regular cat, Britt a white tiger, and Domon a lion..." He groaned, he always seems to get the short side of the stick. "Awww don't feel bad, the spirit animal doesn't make the monkey-demon you know." She encouraged patting him on the shoulder that goofy grin of hers lighting up her face. He just sighed as he looked away from her. All monkey-demons have a spirit animal, something unique only to this species. A spirit animal is basically a monkey-demon's inner animal that often influences the demon's personality or other characteristics. Some are more influenced then others, such as Kyla who often runs around on all fours

like a wolf and has a canine's intense sense of smell, while Rikku's is limited to his wit and his fear of cats. There are other interesting attributes to having a spirit animal such as how they are influenced by the different colored moons.

"We're done here if you're about ready to start leaving." Britt informed Kyla as she led the parade outside. "Ok... I already have the supplies for our trip. We should get going... It's already noon." Kyla replied pulling a strange electronic device from her pocket in order to check the time. "Right... We will have to travel wisely. If we're lucky we'll get to the top at nightfall." Felix sighed. Everyone but Kyla, Sarah, and Star glanced at him in shock that he had said so much and with such an even tone. He disregarded everyone's looks as he turned on his heel and led the journey out of town.

It wasn't difficult for them to get out of town and find their way to the base of the mountain. Now the challenging part would begin. For the most part no one climbs the mountain anymore. If they wanted to cross they would take a hover-car, but the group was too large for this, and the only thing large enough to accommodate them, the hover-ship, was destroyed. There was no other choice for them but to make their way up the steep paths to the top. All of the demon characters had no problem transcending the rocky terrain. Felix also appeared to climb with ease. Even Matt and Ash managed to keep up, having a small race every now and again. But then there was Sarah who was proving to be the weakest link.

"Hey are you ok back there?" Kyla asked as she and everyone else stopped to look back at her.

"Y-y-yes... I am afraid I am not used to so much walking. I'm getting quite tired." Sarah panted as she slowly reached a small stretch of flattened land where everyone waited. "We're still pretty far from the top..." Kyla informed growing worried. She started back to leading everyone up the path as Sarah continued to struggle along behind them. Soon her legs began to wobble with each step she took and her vision started to blur due to the heat. She was trying hard to pull her own weight but due to her sheltered life she wasn't used to this, and finally everything clouded over and her legs gave in. She fell to the ground with a soft thud on the brink of unconsciousness. "Sarah!" Kyla shouted as she and everyone crowded around Sarah. She tried to make out their blurred shapes as even their words became inaudible as everything went black.

The sun was already starting to set when Sarah woke up to find she was still moving. She groggily lifted her head to be greeted by a mop of white hair. "Felix!" She squeaked blushing. "You shouldn't overwork yourself like that; you know... all you do is make the kid worried sick." Felix told her. He was carrying her on his back until they reached their destination. They needed to keep moving and though they wouldn't tell her they were moving faster now that he was carrying her. "I'm sorry to worry... I just wanted to do my part." She whimpered. She rested her head against Felix's back once more as her head began to ach. "But each of us has limitations... and you have to realize yours. You're not like the kid and them; they are used to strenuous activity. Even me, Ash, and Matt are more built for this. You grew up in the lap of luxury, you are not used to doing this, and you can't take it all on at once, it doesn't work that way." He lectured, and of course he was absolutely right. "You are more talkative." She noted out loud then added, "You seem less angry as well." "Let's just say that I have some inner demons that I am starting to work out." He told her with a sigh. He had come very far in a short amount of time but he knew he was still having problems letting everything go. He has lived so long with nothing but his anger and hate acting as though he didn't care about the world or if the world cared for him, what does he have left if he abandons all that. He decided not to think on it, it would only give him a headache. I'll just take things as they come... He told himself as he repositioned Sarah slightly.

"Are we there yet?" Matt groaned as night had gathered around them. "That makes 47 times you have asked that... You ask one more time and I WILL kick your @\$\$. " Felix scolded. "Scary." Ash and Matt squeaked. Kyla broke into laughter. They had made it up the very last hill. "Don't kill each other yet. We're here." She told them turning her eyes shining a bright blue in the dark. They had finally managed to make it to the top of the mountain without much more incident. There was a little cottage there nestled

between a few trees. "Does someone live here!?" Sarah asked amazed as Felix carefully set her on her feet. She glanced around at the star filled sky that surrounded them; she doesn't see views like this often. "Not anymore. The previous owners died, but the place is said to be haunted. I hope that doesn't scare you off though." Kyle replied with a small snicker as she walked inside.

The cottage appeared much larger on the inside then it did on the outside. It had a living area that was opened up to the conjoined dining room and kitchen. In the back there were about four rooms plus a bathroom. Kyla and Domon were working in the kitchen trying to get dinner ready as everyone else took the time to relax. Rikku, Rain, and Britt played card games on the floor. Britt appeared to be winning most of the time. Matt sat with star on the loveseat determined to learn more about her and try to warm his way into her heart. Felix did as he always did and sat there alone, in silence, reading his book. Lastly Sarah and Ash sat on the couch resting their feet. "Are you ok?" He asked as he took his shoes off. "Yeah... just tired and hungry." She replied pushing her hair behind her ear. "Don't worry dinner will be done soon!" Kyla yelled peeking through the kitchen archway. "Wow she has good hearing." Ash noted. Sarah just giggled as she looked over at Felix. I wonder what book he is reading. She pondered wishing she could glimpse the title but his hand was covering it. Felix glanced up at her. She quickly turned away as her face started turning red. Something about her reaction brought a smile to his face as he returned to his book.

"Food!" Kyla called. Everyone quickly piled into the dining room eager to eat after the long climb they had that day. "Wow this looks delicious, thank you!" Star chirped picking up her plate and piling some food on it. "Don't thank me; Domon did most of the cooking." Kyla replied with a smile. Domon blushed slightly as he gave a nervous smile. "A guy who can actually cook!? Are you sure this isn't poison?" Matt asked taking a spoon full of food and sniffing it. "Don't worry Domon is actually a good cook. He does all the cooking back home." Rain told them taking her seat with her plate. "Yeah because you want do it." Rikku criticized. "Like you should talk!" She hissed back. "Well at least I don't burn everything I touch." He shot back. Everyone else broke into laughter as the two continued to shoot insults back and forth.

After dinner Felix and Sarah washed the dishes as everyone else enjoyed their time together. "It's nice being together like this." Sarah said out loud not really expecting a response. "It is..." Felix breathed making her jump in shock. "Y-yeah. It is almost like we're one large family." She chirped handing Felix another plate to rinse. She always had a concept of a family always smiling and spending time together, like her friends were now, though her own family wasn't always like that. "A family... interesting thought..." He sighed rinsing the dish and adding it to the stack to dry. In a way she was right. This was the closest he had come to having a family in a long while, and though he would never admit it, he liked how it felt... but... "Don't get used to it... it won't always be like this. Things change." He added taking the last dish from her, rinsing it, and placing it gently with the others. He looked over at Sarah who had fallen silent after his last statement. He looked deep into her mismatch eyes. They gleamed with her innocence, how he wished he could have the same pureness. He had seen too much in his time to see the world the same way she did. She blushed as she gazed back into his eyes noticing how they no longer stabbed at her with coldness, but almost had warmth to them.

"Hey thank you for doing the dishes." Kyla said walking into the kitchen. Sarah quickly turned away from Felix, stuttering out a "you're welcome." "Did I interrupt something?" Kyla teased looking from Sarah to Felix and back again. "N-n-n-no of course not!" Sarah stammered her whole face going red. Felix gave her a smile amused by how she was acting. The sight of his smile made her begin to tremble. Why am I so nervous? She pondered hugging herself and rubbing her hands up and down her arms. "Is there something you need?" Felix inquired looking down at Kyla. "I was just going to suggest us going on to bed. They've all crashed already, plus we have a long day ahead of us tomorrow to get back down the mountain." Kyla informed them leading them into the living room. Star was asleep on the

loveseat, Ash on the couch and Matt on the floor between the two pieces of furniture. "Everyone else are in the back rooms there should be enough room left for the two of you." Kyla told them. "Where are you going to sleep?" Sarah asked. "In front of the door, I feel safer there." Kyla replied walking towards the door. "So you of all people are afraid of the dead?" Felix questioned giving a slight smirk. "It's not the dead I fear... it's the living. Good night." Kyla said waving them off. Both Felix and Sarah traveled to the back of the cottage, and picking separate rooms went to bed.

Kyla curled up in front of the door. If someone was to try and break in they would have to go through her. "But he was right... there is nothing you fear more than the spirits of the dead haunting you." A voice said sending a shiver up her spine. It was a male voice, one she didn't recognize. "Shut up." She commanded out loud wrapping her tail around her as she tried to curl up in the tiniest ball possible. She didn't have the time to feel guilty for what she has done, not now.

It was late at night when a loud bang and Kyla's growls rang through the house waking everyone. Those in the back rooms came rushing in. Felix had his sword drawn ready to strike though it was too dark to see. "Kyla are you alright!?" Sarah called worried due to being unable to find Kyla's glowing eyes. "Yeah they kicked dirt into my eyes. Don't worry I got this." Kyla replied. She thought about the layout of the room. She was around the middle of the room; their two visitors were right in front of her. Ash, Matt, and Star were gathered at the wall trying to grasp what was going on, everyone else in the hallway with Felix leading the group. It is time to put that technique to the test. She told herself. She had been experimenting with a new ability for the last couple of months but she hadn't had a chance to test it yet. "HOLY!" She started as she focused her energy. She crouched down with her right leg out. "Wait! Kyla!?" A voice shouted but it was too late. "CIRCLE!" She finished twirling clockwise making a complete circle with her sweeping leg. A light shot up around her from the circle she made. There was a thud as the attackers were sent flying to the floor temporarily paralyzed as the holy magic shot up through their bodies. The light rose up of the ground and dispersed, shooting around the room to all the candles and lanterns, lighting them.

Kyla sat on the ground rubbing her eyes. Everyone else closed in on the intruders now that they could see. In front of her laid two boys: one with long black hair and a red headband and twin swords on his back, the other with spiky blond hair. "Yup that's Kyla." The blond one said. Kyla sniffed the air. "Tie!? Vinny!?" She shouted excitedly as she recognized their scents. "Wow imagine running into you two here." Rikku greeted. "Us!? We've been here for two weeks. Imagine all of you here." The black haired one replied. "Two weeks?" Domon pondered. "Yeah Vinny wanted to do a training trip so we came up here." The blond, Tie, said sitting up now that the paralysis was wearing off. "What was with the sand?" Kyla asked managing to get to her feet and going to the sink to wash the dirt out of her eyes. Domon walked with her in order to help her. "Sorry. You kinda scared me when I opened the door and BAM you were there." Vinny, the brunet apologized with a slight giggle. "Yeah... as heartwarming as this little reunion is, we have a long trip tomorrow; I'm going back to bed." Britt yawned, trudging back to her room. "Well Hey to you to Britt." Vinny barked. She waved back at him.

"Britt's right. We should be going back to bed. We'll continue this in the morning." Kyla said walking back over her face wet but her eyes clear. "Right. I understand. We've been crashing here, if you don't mind sharing." Tie said climbing to his feet. "Sure. There should be enough room." Kyla replied curling back up in front of the door. Everyone else settled back into their sleeping arrangements as well. Now that everyone was comfortable Kyla used her magic to send a soft breeze around the room, stronger at the flames, blowing out all the candles.