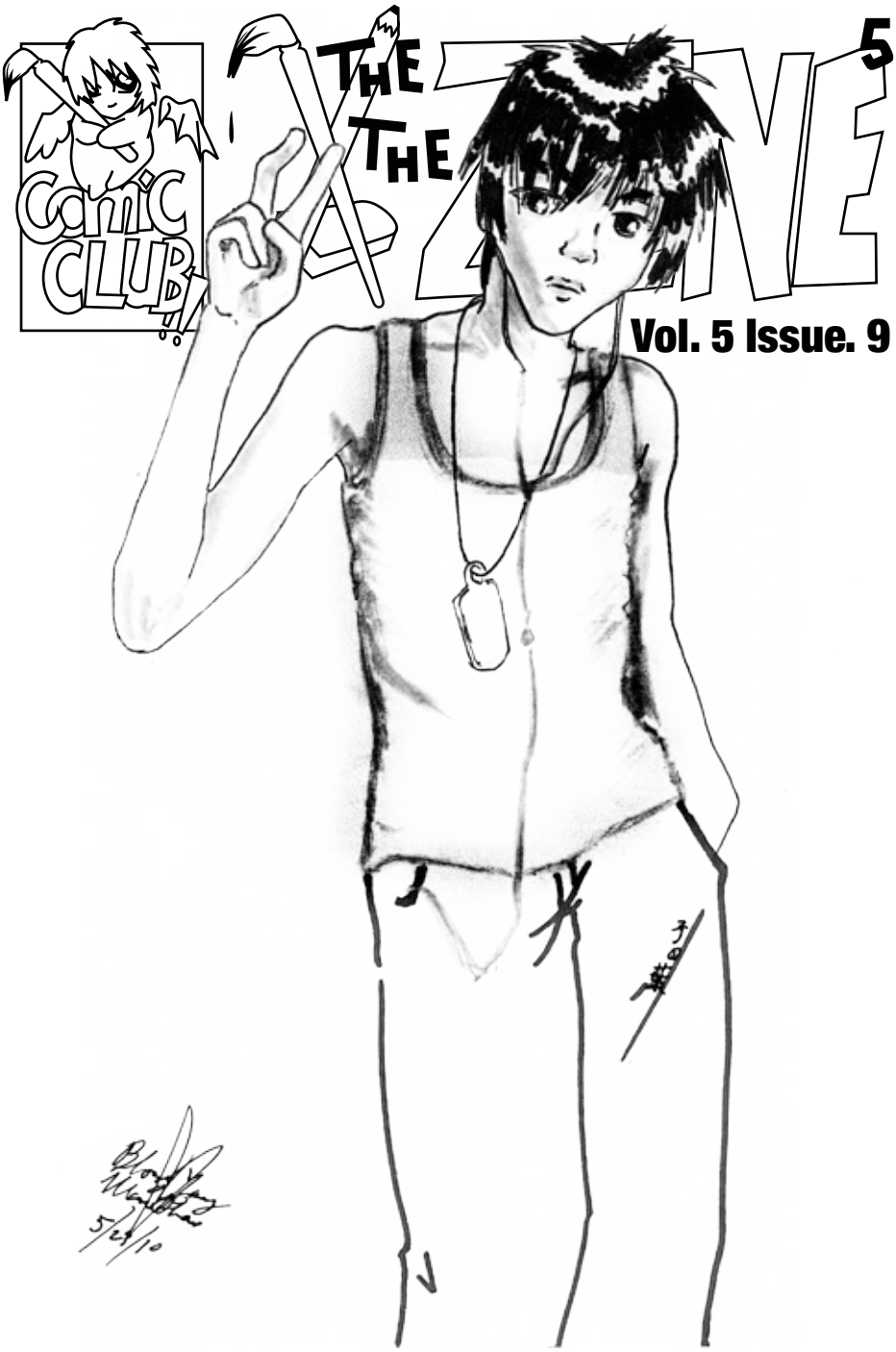

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Introduciton

Whew! We made it!

You are holding the last issue. It's hard to believe all the work that goes into every issue and we did it 9 times this year!

I'd like to give props to our five contributors for this final issue and we should all give some props to every person that has participated in the Harding School Comic Club this year. There was so much great work and I enjoyed reading all of it.

Now I'm sure you are all ready for a well diserved break... break? I don't even know what that word means. Now get back to work and I look forward to buying your book soon!

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Advisors:

Mr. Andy

Mr. Brandt

The The Zine is created by the Harding Comic Club of Harding High School. Meetings are 2:15-5:00pm every Monday in room 1440.

Everyone is welcome, please come!

By JIKAKU

Cold War

By: Mukey

Chapter 4

"Lord Koden, what do you expect this to mean?" Gaius asked as Koden shook his head.

"That can't be…nobody else must see this." Koden stated as Gaius turned to him.

"And why is that?"

"I'm just taking precautions."

"Precautions?" Gaius asks and Koden nodded.

"Let's go, I must deal with this later with the Vampire King," Koden stated before he went over to the tunnel and flew out. Gaius took one last look at the picture and followed Koden out.

"You what?!" Nyx questioned as Zero shrugged his shoulders.

"You heard what I said,"

"Why the hell would you…!" Nyx stopped as he place a hand on his face and sighed. "You kissed the so called sister of Haemon Akatsuki and told him to come to Nyx if he had any complaints?" questioned Aetius as Zero nodded.

"Yep, that's correct." Zero stated and Aetius sighed.

Zero just came back from his so call adventure and told the two what he saw or discovered.
"But why would they imprison her?" Aetius asked as Zero shrugged his shoulder again.

"I asked her how the werewolves viewed her; she said they viewed her as a monster." Zero said.

"Monster?" Nyx question as Zero nodded.

"Does she look like one?" question Aetius.

"She looked pretty hot to me," Zero stated as Aetius perked at this and Nyx shook his head.

"I don't think the werewolf leader would think kindly on your view of his sister," Nyx stated as Zero smirked.

"Doesn't matter,"

"Oh! I would like to see his sister!" Aetius said as Nyx glared at him. "What? He got me curious," Aetius stated as Nyx sighed once again.

"What the hell am I suppose to do with you two?"

Akatsuki roamed the halls of the vampire king's castle as he tried looking for the king himself. The servants hastily got out of his way, as they were surprise that he had only one guard with him. "I can feel your killer aura Kiba, control yourself," Akatsuki stated as Kiba crossed his arms.

"I won't forgive that anima for kissing lady Tsukiko!" he growled out as Akatsuki nodded his head.

"I know your feelings, however Tsukiko can take care of herself,"

"I know…but still…" Kiba muttered as Akatsuki smiled reassuringly at him.

"Aren't you getting married soon? You must forget about Tsukiko if you want your marriage to be happy," Akatsuki stated as Kiba grumbled.

Kiba was getting married to Akatsuki's younger cousin Hana, and Akatsuki knew that Kiba thought lowly of that idea. "I…"

"You still love her? Even after what she did?" questioned Akatsuki as Kiba sighed.

"I just don't know anymore, I mean…everybody hates her but she's still Tsukiko." Kiba replied as Akatsuki nodded.

"Very admirable," Akatsuki said before he stopped before a huge door. He heard voices and laughter before he knocked. The voices stopped and he took it as a signal to go in.

He opened the door and sure enough, he found the three, Nyx, Aetius, and Zero lounging by the table. Aetius and Zero seemed to have humor in their eyes as Nyx looked like he was ready to kill them both. "Ah, Akatsuki…I didn't expect you to come here," Nyx stated as Akatsuki smiled. Zero looked at them as well and smiled as Kiba growled at him.

"Oh what brings you here Lord Akatsuki?" Zero questioned as Akatsuki returned his smile. "I know you love being a troublemaker do you not?"

"Yes, it is an exciting job," Zero replied as Akatsuki nodded.

"Then can I make one request?" he asked his face turning serious and Zero returned that look.

"Sure, but I can't make any promises," Zero stated as Akatsuki nodded.

"Stay away from Tsukiko, and I'm not saying it because I'm her older brother, but as leader of the werewolf clan." At this, Zero narrows his eyes before he contemplated what he said.

"Wolf lady, told me that you guys view her as a monster, may I asks why?" Zero questioned cautiously as Akatsuki sigh.

"It is complicated and you are in no position to asks,"

"Then can I?" questioned Nyx as Akatsuki looked at him. "As king of this land, and since we made a peace treaty, I must know if there's any problem I can help with."

"We can deal with it on our own, we did it before," Kiba stated as Aetius crossed his arms.

"And how'd that go for ya?" Aetius questioned and Kiba glared at him.

"I admit our decision to isolate ourselves did nothing for us, I must say it made our situation worse. However with Tsukiko, if you get near her, it will only hurt her and yourself, the elders will not think kindly of somebody visiting her." Akatsuki explained before Zero tapped the table with his fingers.

"You know what's weird? You're her brother are you not? And yet you let her rot in there for eternity,"

"Lord Akatsuki had no choice! It was either that or she would have been executed!" Kiba yelled out in anger before Akatsuki placed his arm out to stop him.

"Executed? How interesting. Summing up what I know so far, I say she is a criminal, and whatever she did must have been huge." Zero stated. Kiba glared harder and even Akatsuki's eyes flashed for a second. Nyx saw the reaction they got when Zero stated his prediction and gave Zero a warning look. Zero saw it and shrugged his shoulders at it. Nyx glared harder before looking at Akatsuki.

"Don't push it Zero," Aetius whispered as Zero nodded.

"Don't worry, I know my limits." He whispered back before he stood up.

"I was just making a theory, but guessing on your reactions, I'm beginning to think it's true." Zero said placing a hand on his waist, as the rest of his body leaned on the table.

"You know nothing anima, so don't poke your feathery nose in this," Kiba growled out.

"I know that imprisoning her is a lot harsher then killing her."

"And how would you know?! You guys live freely in the skies doing whatever you like, it's not like you ever experienced what other races felt. The animas, a holy race where there are no imperfections at all!" Kiba yelled out as he rushed Zero, but Akatsuki held him back.

"Oh?" Zero question casually raising a brow. "Is that what they're saying about us? Then they are truly wrong," Zero stated before he cross his arms.

"I wonder if you guys ever asked her about her feelings, whatever she did probably cost her her life yet you guys didn't grant that, instead you imprisoned her and made her feel abandoned and left behind."

It was silent before Akatsuki lifted his head to Zero with a straight face and said "what do you mean Zero?"

"Let me ask you, how would you feel if everyone you knew and loved left you? Imprisoned in time as everyone else moved forward. For me, that would be a really sucky feeling that I would want to be dead instead." Zero stated as Akatsuki thought about what he said.

"You may be right," Akatsuki stated as everyone turned to him.

"You can't be serious Akatsuki!" Kiba stated but quickly realized his mistake and bowed his

head. “Sorry Lord Akatsuki,” Kiba said before Akatsuki turned to Zero.

“If you put it that way…I’ll make a deal with you Zero,”

Everyone look at him in surprise, Zero raised an eyebrow, and said a “Huh?” quite loudly his mouth kind of gaping. Nyx and Aetius look at him and realize that that was the first time ever they saw someone catch him by surprise. Though they only knew him for three days.

“A deal,” Akatsuki repeated. “A deal…alright then, what is it?”

“Become friends with Tsukiko~”

“Wait Lord~” Kiba interrupted but he stop when he saw Akatsuki’s glare.

“Her friend? Why?” Zero continued.

“If you don’t make her return the feelings she lost than I will set an execution by the end of this month.” Zero narrowed his eyes at him as Kiba stared at him in disbelief, feeling as if he was just betrayed.

“So you’re willing to kill her?” Zero questioned.

“It’s your suggestion,” Akatsuki stated shrugging his shoulder.

“Hmm, I guess…but what’s in it for me?” Zero questioned crossing his arms as Akatsuki tapped his chin.

“Hmm, I knew I will need it sooner or later…” Akatsuki muttered to himself before he reach inside his pocket and pulled out a box engrave with weird symbols.

“What is that?” questioned Aetius blinking at the box as Nyx narrow at the box feeling the strange energy wafted off it. He turned to Zero and figured that he can feel that strange energy as well.

“Lord Akatsuki, you can’t be serious! If the elders find out…”

“It’s alright Kiba, it’s useless to us anyways,” Akatsuki stated as Kiba blinked.

“It is?” Kiba questioned before Akatsuki slowly moved his hand over the box and the latch broke open.

“We found this at an abandoned city; I figured it was the anima’s city because of the signs.” Akatsuki slowly stated before opening the box. Light first shone brightly before it cleared and everyone saw a pure white feather. The energy that it wafted off suffocated Nyx as he moved back. Aetius stared at him in question as Nyx shook his head. Zero stared at the feather in shock as he stood on the balls of his feet. His eyes were wide and his entire body was shaking.

“Where…where did you get that?” he question as Akatsuki studied Zero’s reaction.

“From what your body says, you know what this is,” Akatsuki stated as Zero clench his fists harder.

“Answer my question,” Zero stated as Akatsuki sighed.

“We searched the castle and we smelled blood everywhere. The only place that didn’t smell

like blood was a room where we found this feather. It was untainted despite the blood around the room, and it floating shining like a beacon." Akatsuki explain.

"When..."

"300 years ago, right after the animas disappeared," Kiba explained this time as he stared at Zero measuring him up.

"6 months after..." Zero said to himself.

"You shouldn't have kept that," Zero stated as Akatsuki raised a brow.

"Oh? And why's that?"

"It's dangerous to have that in your possession; you have no idea what that is do you?"

"No we don't, would you like to explain it to us?" Akatsuki questioned as Zero hesitated. Aetius spoke up at this time and looked back and forth from Akatsuki and Zero.

"Better tell us what that is Zero, or Lord Akatsuki won't give it to you right?" Aetius stated looking at Akatsuki. Akatsuki seeing what he was doing nodded his head as Nyx spoke up as well.

"No more secrets Zero," Nyx stated crossing his arms as Zero glared at each of them.

"All I know is, that is a feather from an angel; and there are dangerous beings looking for it," Zero explained as he saw both Akatsuki and Kiba's eyes narrow.

"I see, then you can take it, it probably does belong to the animas in the first place." Akatsuki said as he placed it on the table as Zero stared at it.

"An angel...no wonder I can't stand it..." Nyx whispered harshly as he move back even more. Zero look at him before he nodded his head.

"I'm with you on that...I can't touch it," Zero stated as he kept his arms to his side.

"Aetius, check if my father is still in the castle, he can take it," Zero stated as Akatsuki closed it.

"Remember our deal Zero, become friends with Tsuki, if you don't, we'll be taking the feather back," as Zero nodded and Aetius closed his eyes. He opened them before nodding his head.

"He's near, I think he felt the feather's energy as well." Aetius stated and Zero nodded.

Just as Aetius predicted, Koden came through the door with almost a look of disbelief. "Zero, you..."

"The werewolf leader had one of the feathers..."

"One of them? There's more?" Nyx questioned as he raised a brow.

"Of course there's more," Zero stated crossing his arms before he stared at the box.

Koden nodded his head before he took a step forward and bowed his head to the werewolf leader. "Haemon Akatsuki right?"

"Yes, and Spiridon Koden I assume?"

"Yes...it's amazing that you found a Hikari feather."

"Hikari?"

"Yes,"

"Interesting..." Akatsuki muttered before he looked at the box. "It's completely useless to us, so I think it will assist you on whatever you two are looking for," Akatsuki stated before he bowed his head and turned around to leave. "I will take my leave King Nyx, Lord Koden, let us go Kiba."

"Yes," Kiba reply giving one last glare at Zero before following his leader out.

Koden carefully looked at the box before looking at Zero. "It's genuine?"

"Yea..." Zero stated as Koden nodded.

"Alright," Koden said before he wraped the box in a white cloth and carried it. "I'll go and put this in a safe place, and you don't cause any more trouble," Koden said as Zero smirked.

"You know I will," as Koden gave him a look and he left.

Gaius, who was by the doorway, followed him out after giving the three a bow.

"That was interesting," Aetius stated as he sat down. Zero followed suite with Nyx collapsing on the couch.

"I need blood," he muttered.

"That feather drained you didn't it?" Zero questioned staring at Nyx as he nodded. "Such a small thing has that much power,"

"Imagine a bunch of them," Zero said as Nyx groaned.

"I guess I'll have a servant get you some blood," Aetius stated as he stood up. He disappeared outside as Zero sighed.

"So...what kind of blood you drink?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, I heard of vampires drinking animal blood instead of human blood."

"Tch, you expect me to be one of them?"

"...Yes, kind of."

Nyx sighed, as he stood up straighter. "I do not give mercy to humans, so what do you think?"

"So you drink human blood huh?"

"Why resist?" Nyx questioned as Zero made a belching noise.

"I will," he said teasingly raising his hand as Nyx glared.

Aetius came back and slumped in a chair staring at the two as a servant came in. He was carrying a glass of fresh red blood and gave it to Nyx who gratefully took it. As the servant left, Nyx downed the glass as Zero stared in disgust. "You'll get use to it," Aetius replied seeing his look.

"I don't think I will ever," Zero stated as Nyx set down the glass.

"Anyways, what are you going to do about the werewolf situation?" Aetius questioned as Zero shruged his shoulders.

"Of course I will have to keep my end of the deal," Nyx raised a brow and pfft.

"You?"

"What? I may be a troublemaker, but I'm not a promise breaker,"

"Sure," Aetius said sarcastically as Zero glared at both of them.

Zero stood up and stretched before he looked outside the window. "Man, it's barely noon," he said as he started walking towards the door. "I might as well start now ne? I only have a month," he said before he waved his hand without looking back. "Ciao," he said before he fully disappeared.

Aetius Muttered "The animas, they really are a mystery,"

"Don't dwell on it too much, it will only hurt you," Nyx said to Aetius as he pouted.

"Whatever Nyx,"

"Anyways, I think it's time for me to make my move as well," Nyx said before he stood up.

Aetius grinned at this knowing full well what Nyx meant. "Finally, it's payback time,"

Tsukiko sat up awake once again as she looked up. Someone had disturbed the barrier and she knew exactly who it was. "Why are you back?" she question crossing her arms staring at the anima in front of her as he smiled and waved.

"Miss me?"

"Nope," she said with no hesitation at all, as she stood up. "You woke me up again,"

"So I woke you up before?"

"Yes,"

"You were sleeping in the lake? Weren't you afraid that someone could've seen you naked?" Zero questioned as Tsuki glared at him.

"If they were, I would have known," she stated as she turned her back to him.

"You must be one of those really sensitive types ne?"

"What is it to you?" Tsuki questioned glaring as Zero grinned.

"It's nothing really, I see you covered yourself more,"

"Yes, since I realize that there's a noisy jerk-ass bastard anima around."

"Can't be so carefree now since I'm around huh?"

"Bastard,"

"Love you too,"

"Ugh, why are you here again?"

"Because I'm bored,"

"Great, that's good to hear,"

"So what do you even do here anyways?"

"None of your business, so why don't you leave before the werewolves come back and really kill you this time?"

"Not happening anytime soon,"

"Oh and why's that?"

"Your brother should already know I won't do anything to you,"

"Like you can anyways,"

"Want to test that theory?"

"Don't push me," Zero smirked at this before he steped closer to Tsuki. Tsuki immediately got on the defensive as she put her arms up.

"What?" she asked hesitantly.

"Nothing," he said smirking. "Expecting me to kiss you again?"

"If you do, I will really carry out those threats I said to you last night,"

"I would like to see that," Zero stated as Tsuki glared.

"Come on; want to stand here arguing the whole night? Show me where you sleep,"

"Hell no stalker!"

"Stalker? Hmm, I wonder where you learn your language considering you're the werewolf leader's younger sister."

"I'm not a child,"

"You're pretty small to me," Zero stated and Tsuki swung a punch but missed as Zero dodged

and grabbed her arm. "Let's go, it's time for touring,"

"Oi!" Tsuki yelled out as Zero simply grinned back as he started to drag her.

Zero quickly ran through the woods to arrive at their first destination, Tsuki's flower field. "This is where you usually sing right?"

"...Yea,"

"What are these flowers anyways?"

"Moonflowers,"

"Moonflowers? Never heard of them,"

"Of course, not a lot of people do,"

"However, they are beautiful,"

Tsuki tched. She stared at Zero as he turned to give her a look. "What? How come everyone does that whenever I say something like that?"

"Something like what?" Tsuki asked as she walked towards him.

Zero shrugged his shoulders as he sighed. "Why don't people trust me when I say I can keep promises and believe me when I say the flowers are pretty"

"It's unbelievable because it's you, I only know you for a day and I can already figure out who you are," Tsuki lectured.

"Oh really?"

"Yea, you love to cause trouble, leaving a mess for others to clean up, you probably hate attention yet you crave for it and love challenging others who you know can be a challenge."

"Wow, I don't think a woman has ever said that to me,"

"I'm probably the first,"

"You're right about that,"

"Yet there is something off about you,"

"Off?" Zero question raising a brow.

"Yea, like you're hiding something that you won't let anyone find out, that you don't want to show them," Tsuki stated as Zero smiled softly.

"Maybe... well it's not like you do that too,"

"...whatever...are you done admiring the moonflowers?" she questioned as Zero stood up.

"When are they in full bloom?"

"During the full moon, they mostly get their energy from the moon."

"I see, I'll come back when the full moon is out and dancing,"

"Humph, we'll see about that," Tsukiko stated as Zero grinned at her before looking around. "Where to next? The only place I know of is that valley where we first met."

"That's too far," Tsukiko stated as Zero raised a brow.

"Or just too lazy?"

"...That too,"

"Right,"

"Come on lady Tsukiko, you know I'm not leaving until you actually do your job."

"What job?" Tsukiko stated crossing her arms as Zero smirk.

"Tour guide, what else?"

"I'm not a tour guide, I'm a resident,"

"Yea, the only one," Tsukiko glared before Zero once again grabbed her arm. "Come on, let's go somewhere," Tsukiko quickly pulled her arm back and sighed.

"Fine," she stated and started stalking off somewhere. Zero grinned to himself before following and they once again disappeared into the trees.

As hours pased, Tsukiko finally came to her last stop on top of her cave home. "So this is where you actually live,"

"...yea,"

"It's pretty huge,"

"I guess, I can take bathes in here because there's a waterfall and a small pool but~"

"You like the open night more," Tsukiko blinked before she slowly nodded and sat down looking up at the night sky. Zero followed suit and lay down beside her. "There isn't much to do here huh?"

"Of course, all I do is sleep, eat, sleep, and probably run around."

"Don't have friends huh?"

"No, nobody visits me besides Akatsuki, but he's too busy too."

"How about that younger sister of yours?"

"Hoshiko?"

"Yea,"

"She does not like me much,"

"I see...don't mind me saying this but why were you put in here?" Zero questioned as Tsukiko

tensed. She clenched her fists before putting her head on her knees.

"I would like very much if you don't ask me that," Zero paused as he stared at her before looking up at the sky.

"Agreeable," he stated before closing his eyes.

Tsukiko stayed quiet before looking at him. "Oi,"

"Yea?"

"You don't have much friends don't you?"

"No…my…father and I travel a lot. I barely have time for friends, I don't want any anyways."

"Oh, why's that?"

"Because they will only slow me down,"

"How about…those two who were flying with you before?"

"The watcher and the double P?" Tsukiko blinked at his terms for them but nodded her head anyways. "Hmm…acquaintances you can say."

"Acquaintances?"

"Yea, I can stand them because they're not as annoying as other people. The watcher does get on my nerves a bit though,"

"I can tell,"

"What's the deal with you and that one werewolf who growled at me?"

"Who?" Tsukiko blinked trying to recall. "I think I heard your brother called him Kiba,"

"Kiba?" Tsukiko questioned surprised as Zero nodded. "Well…we were childhood friends."

"There is much more than that,"

"Fine…we were engaged."

"You were engaged?"

"Yea, ever since…that day…the elders broke the engagement and rearranged him to marry my cousin,"

"Cousin?"

"Yea, Hana, she visits me as well. She does not think highly of arranged marriages but goes with it for her mother."

"Ugh, your race is as complicated as the watcher,"

"Complicated? Please, how about you huh? What's the deal with the animas?"

"Why must everyone ask about the animas all the time?" Tsukiko blinked at this before thinking it over and ohed.

"I'm just asking what the anima are like. You know, their ways. I don't want to hear about your problems, I rather stay out of it."

"I guess..." Zero said before a silence fell over them and Tsukiko patiently waited.

"Well...to start off...we were allowed to marry whomever we like as long as the elders agree on it. However, the elders do not think highly of marriage between a lower class person and an upper class. That was a huge problem before my father's time. However, ever since he took the throne, that change."

"Oh? How so?"

"He married a lower class person. Well...she wasn't really a lower class, more like lower middle class,"

"Is she your mother? You sound like she isn't close to you at all,"

"I guess..." Zero stated before he look at Tsukiko. "Shall I continue?"

"Oh sure."

"Anyways, only royalty can take the throne,"

"Like the vampires,"

"Yea, like the vampires, and we were a really carefree race. Though we are more spiritually sensitive than the other races, we use our spiritual energy the most."

"That's where the markings came from?"

"Yea, we get it when we are old enough to walk." Tsukiko thought about what he said as Zero stared up at the sky.

"Hmm...are...the markings spread throughout the entire body?" She questioned.

"...No, only to the parts we use most for fighting. Animas that have markings on their arms use their arms to focus their energy and cast spells. On their legs, increase their speed and kicking strength. Around their face helps their sight and can easily detect enemies."

"Is it weird for an anima to have markings covering their entire bodies?" Zero blinked at her question and nodded his head. "Then that being would not be an anima."

"Not? Than what?"

"An angel,"

"An angel?" questioned Tsukiko in surprise.

"Or a fallen one," Zero whispered and Tsukiko blinked before she ohed.

'Then that man...' she wondered before Zero sat up breaking her thoughts.

"It's getting late huh?" Zero stated and Tsukiko blinked before she also slowly got up. "Wow, the first time we haven't argued,"

Tsukiko glared crossing her arms. "Yet,"

Zero grinned as he stretches before staring at her. "What?" Tsukiko asked defensively.

"Oh nothing, I always thought werewolves were more savage like." Tsukiko tch staring back at him.

"We are more respectable than what people say."

"Yea, like a really modest race, though I'm not sure you are."

"You want to get slapped huh?"

"I dare you to try,"

"Don't test me,"

"I would love to," They stared at each other, Tsukiko glaring and Zero simply smiling.

"Shouldn't you leave?"

"Maybe, I can always sleep over,"

"Don't even try,"

"Aw, but don't you want to?"

"No, not in this lifetime,"

"That's a really long time,"

"Exactly,"

Zero simply smirked before he slowly lifted his hand to Tsukiko's face. Tsukiko flinched but stayed where she was and Zero's smirk got wider.

"You're really pretty you know that?" he said whispering as Tsukiko tensed up. "Despite what the werewolves say, you're not a monster," he dropped his hand. He stayed in close proximity and saw her eyes soften before her guard immediately went back up. He smiled before he stepped back and looked at the moon.

"Don't try to sweet talk me anima," Zero looked back at her and simply grinned before he released his wings. His wings spread out softly, blocking the moonlight that was shining on Tsukiko.

"I wasn't sweet talking you, I don't lie Tsukiko." He stated before he started to fly away. "Well, only when I need to!" he yelled out and Tsukiko could see the grin on his face.

"Bastard!" she yelled back.

"Good night sweetheart! Make sure I don't end up in your bed the next morning!" and he disappeared.

Tsukiko huffed in anger before she stared sadly at the night. She has to admit that ever since Zero came to visit her, it has become livelier. It was nice to have someone to talk to and argue with. However, she wondered how long it would last this time.

Shadows Within The Soul

Chapter six: A Beacon of Light From Within the Shadows

By: Larka

The Shadow Lurker morphed slowly into the room and dropped Ven onto the ground in front of a large cushion where Destin and Akura sat. Destin, after smirking fiendishly, kicked out suddenly at Ven's side and caused him to groan in pain then roll over. Just as the blonde opened his eyes a little another kick, this time from Akura, connected with his cheek and caused tears to well up in his eyes from the force.

"What the hell was that for?!" He screamed as he sat up forcefully wiped away the tears and spat blood out of his mouth right into Akura's face. Akura let out a surprised gasp, disgusted, and wiped the blood off her face, glaring at the brazen boy.

"I'll kill you for that, stupid child!"

She lifted up the sword she had laying next to the cushion and pointed it at Ven as she stood up, causing Ven to summon his own sword in return and challenged her, "So it's a sword fight you want? I'll gladly beat you and save Destin then return to my friends!" There was a fierce look of determination on Ven's face as his muscles tensed and he prepared to charge Akura until Destin stood up and shook his head.

"I'm afraid that won't be happening."

With a sudden swishing movement of his hand, he had the darkness constrict Ven tightly and attack the sword, which quickly faded and the darkness formed into chains around Ven's body, tightening considerably. With a low growl he fell to the ground into his former laying position and glared up at the two. He received another kick from Akura as she raised her sword above his body, about to deal the deathblow until Destin grabbed onto Akura's arm and shook his head. "He doesn't need to die. He'll prove useful to us."

He had the darkness close tighter around Ven's body and smirked at the rewarding scream that escaped from the boy's body. Ven's eyes widened in terror as he saw that the darkness had begun to sink into his body and when all of it fully disappeared into his body, he went limp. It almost seemed as if the darkness had proved too much for him since he remained silent for several tense moments but when he reopened his eyes they were blazing red. "Ven, kill them," Destin commanded curtly. That was when Ven summoned the sword with his now unrestrained powers and reached out with his left hand and created a portal made of the very darkness he now wielded before stepping into it and disappearing into the dark abyss, leaving behind the two triumphant looking tyrants to their own evil plotting.

Still in the entrance of Moonlight Manor was the trio in the same place except for the fact that the dragon had landed, now standing on the solid marble floor. Drake sat leaning against the dragon's neck with Masamune sitting next to him whilst he held Zen's sleeping figure close to keep him warm and hopefully calm as he slept on. Masamune looked over to Drake and let out a small sigh before saying, "Where should we go next?"

Drake looked back at the fox boy and remained silent but shrugged in response to his question. Masamune looked at the ground but then caught sight of something out of the corner of his eye and looked over to see a door that appeared to blend in to the wall.

He tugged on Drake's sleeve rapidly and pointed at the door, muttering, "We can go in there! Come on, let's go!"

Drake stared intently towards the wall and let out a gasp of surprise as he saw the door now too. "Masamune, you're awesome! I never would have seen that without you!" He pulled him close suddenly and began stroking his ears, which caused Masamune to let out a small noise that almost sounded like purring even though he was a fox and rubbed against Drake's hand, loving how good the petting felt. But then he snapped open his eyes as he realized what he was doing and backed away quickly.

He cleared his throat then whispered as he acted like nothing had happened, "Right…let's just go."

Drake couldn't help but laugh at Masamune's antics before whispering to the dragon, "Will you take us there?" The dragon stared at Drake intently for a few seconds, appearing unsure. It wouldn't take orders from anyone except Ven, but in these circumstances… Finally it relented with a nod and began to glide over there lazily. However, once it reached the doorway, its body flickered and it disappeared with a loud, agonized roar.

Drake fell to the ground and landed heavily on the ground with Masamune landing next to him, both of them landing in a sitting position, surprisingly. Drake held Zen close as he saw the boy beginning to stir and placed a hand on his hair. "Shh…" Drake whispered to Zen but blinked in surprise as he crawled away from him and approached the door, placing his hand right in the middle of the door and letting out a startled yelp as a flash of light came from under his. He could see the shape of a keyhole appear there and he looked to Drake in confusion.

"Do either of you have a key? I know I don't…" Zen tilted his head to the side, clearly confused about all of this. Drake opened his mouth to speak but a loud voice that wasn't Drake's suddenly echoed in Zen's head and Drake instantly closed his mouth just before everything seemed to freeze up.

The powerful voice suddenly said to him, "Young Zen, focus on the feelings inside you. They will unleash the power within you and open the door." Afterwards, the voice quickly faded away, leaving Zen back with the others where time had resumed and thoroughly confused to say the least.

To Drake and Masamune it appeared that nothing had happened and they were still sitting next to each other. Zen flashed a small smile at the two, since he wouldn't be happy for long, and began focusing on the rage and grief he was feeling due to the abduction of his brother. When his grief and rage suddenly spiked, he let out an angry scream and a sudden light filled the entire room. When the light finally returned to Zen's tired body, he now held a pure white key with wings sticking out of the handle.

Hesitantly Zen placed the tip of the key into the keyhole and tried to turn it to no avail, letting out a quiet grunt as he failed to unlock the door. He tried to turn the key again and let out a small snarl once he failed again. "Guys, get over here! I need help with this. The key won't turn!" The two, startled as to where Zen even got the key, darted over there and examined it curiously. It was like no key that would even exist here on earth but rather something in the Heavens. After examining it carefully, Drake grabbed onto Zen's hand and Masamune grabbed onto the key itself. They began trying to turn it in the lock at the same time and finally their efforts paid off as it started to finally turn. A sudden creaking could be heard as the turning grew easier and once it had turned fully in the lock, there was a rewarding click and the trio collapsed to the ground in a heap. When he had fallen, Zen had landed on top of Drake, pinning him to the ground and Masamune landed on top of them both, giving him a cushion instead of a hard landing like the other two experienced, especially Drake.

The three glanced around at each other, Zen having a grin plastered on his face and soon Zen and Drake took to laughing. Masamune was about to join in on the merry laughter until he realized they were wasting time here. He quickly slid off the top of the pile then stood up and brushed himself off as he looked down at the two. "Come on. Get off each other and let's move. We can't let anyone see us or else our rescue attempts will be in vain."

Afterwards, the collected fox walked through the now open doorway into the new room and looked around. It was made of white marble just like all the other rooms. No surprise there. However, it did almost appear as if someone had inhabited the room at one point because of the tall dresser, also white, that stood near the corner of the room. The one thing Masamune's keen eyes didn't catch was the person who sat on top of that dresser, watching everything he did.

"Rescue attempts?" The two remaining boys asked in unison as they looked at each other, seeming confused. They had never really agreed on rescue attempts as a group but apparently Masamune had taken over as temporary leader and decided for them. It just went to prove that he did care about Ven even though he tried to act aloof.

As soon as the two boys entered the room the person on top of the dresser suddenly spoke, "It's nice to see you guys here. I've come to give you a warm welcome." Upon hearing the familiar voice, even though it sounded different and more eerie, Zen's eyes widened in disbelief as he saw his brother jump off the dresser and land lightly on the ground without even the slightest sound. Ven summoned his blade, which appeared to look even darker, and approached Zen with a menacing look in his eyes and a demonic smirk on his face, revealing four sharp canines he had inherited as part of the darkness' influence.

Ven stopped in front of Zen who was shaking with grief and terror.

"Brother, why are you doing this?" He whispered, watching Ven intently just like Ven had been watching him.

Ven leaned in close to Zen and smirked, showing his four sharp canines again before whispering, "Because of lady Akura's orders. Now die!" He prepared to stab Zen straight through the heart until an arrow pierced straight through his own and he fell back onto the ground with a loud thud, the sword fading away. "NO!" Zen screamed sadly and turned around to see Drake standing with his bow in hand with it trained on the space where Ven had been standing previously.

Zen ran forward to go and hug Ven's lifeless body but once he reached him, he disappeared in a flash. With a cry of anguish Zen began to look around frantically for any sign of Ven but failed to find any. "Drake…you didn't have to kill him!"

The accused boy shook his head and whispered, "But then he would have killed you instead. Now come on, let's get out of here." Surprisingly he didn't even appear to feel the slightest bit of remorse even though he honestly didn't know. Something within wouldn't allow him to feel sad like Zen did.

Drake slung the bow on his back once more and grabbed onto Zen's wrist before beginning to pull him along even though he didn't resist. After only hearing his own footsteps and the dragging of Zen's feet along the ground, Drake stopped and looked back to see Masamune standing stock-still with his ears twitching rapidly. Then he heard it too-a loud thudding noise from above them. The three looked up, perplexed as to what the noise was.

The thudding grew louder and soon it changed to a sudden rumbling until the ceiling caved in, sending debris flying down towards the three. They quickly scattered in all different directions to avoid the debris and unintentionally avoided something else. A larger than life Shadow Lurker landed on its four massive legs and once they looked at it, it was revealed to be a saber tooth tiger.

Zen stood frozen in fear as he stared up at the supposed to be extinct beast. It bared its long fangs and took a few menacing steps forward, lowering its gaze and looking right at Zen before snapping at him. Just as its jaws were about to close around Zen's body, a large needle stabbed into the creature's face and caused it to roar. It turned to glare at Masamune who stood boldly with his left hand raised and a defiant smirk gracing his features. "Come get me you giant ugly brute!" He yelled, waving his tail tauntingly before running off. The Shadow Lurker took the bait and ran after him as quickly as it could with lumbering steps, thoroughly enraged.

"What are you doing?" Drake yelled, watching Masamune run by in a flash.

"I'm saving your butt!" Masamune yelled as he ran back to the area where they had first entered the castle and looked back over his shoulder to see Zen and Drake watching him intently. "I'll be okay! Just wait there!" He yelled then jumped up to avoid a slash from the creature, landing on its leg and leaped up, this time ending up on its head. He sat down and

dug his claws into its neck to cling whilst he tried to wrap his legs around its neck although its neck was too thick. He held his other hand to the side, creating a thick needle with a very sharp point. The creature began to thrash around in an attempt to get Masamune off its neck to no avail and the fox boy suddenly bit into the creature's neck and plunged the now extremely sharp needle into its neck at the same time.

A loud earsplitting screech came from the saber and its body began collapsing at that moment. Masamune leaped off it with a triumphant look on his face and in his eyes until an explosion occurred behind him and caused him to slam into the ground heavily. The two boys let out a startled yell and ran over to the fallen boy as quickly as they could.

They kneeled down next to Masamune and Drake began shaking him desperately. "Come on, wake up! You can't die!" He continued the shaking motion with extreme vigor until he heard a low groan from Masamune. "You're okay!" He yelled and hugged Masamune after he sat up.

"Of course I'm not dead. I haven't finished being a pain in your butt yet."

Masamune roughly pulled away from Drake's hug and stood up, the two standing up with him and together they went back into the room they were in before. Masamune looked up at the ceiling where the creature had come from then perked up and let his ears twitch as he swore he could hear voices up there. "Hey guys…help me out, would ya? I need to get up there." The two looked at Masamune oddly for a second and then at each other in confusion as to what they were supposed to do.

Zen was about to start pushing bits of rubble from the ceiling to form a sort of platform that could be stood on until Drake grabbed his arm to stop him. Drake then began to form a pillar with indents that served as footholds out of darkness. When it was fully formed it solidified and Drake smiled, "Alright. It's ready Masamune."

Masamune grabbed onto the pillar and clung onto one of the higher up footholds then began to climb up it by inserting his feet into the footholds and hauling himself up slowly. He continued up the pillar in this fashion until he reached the top then took a flying leap until he felt himself land on solid ground. Peering down at Zen and Drake he said, "Come on you guys, just climb up. It's easy!"

Zen took a deep breath then grabbed onto one of the footholds and began to haul himself up slowly, occasionally looking down even though he knew he shouldn't. He gasped once his grip slipped and he slid down a few feet as he clung tightly while closing his eyes. Ignoring the burns on his hands from the friction, he began to blindly make his way up and suddenly couldn't find any more footholds.

He opened his eyes slowly and blinked in surprise as he realized he was at the top. Masamune grabbed onto his hand and pulled him up with ease before calling down to Drake, "Come on! It's your turn!" Drake smiled up at him then began to climb slowly up the pillar yet almost expertly and with the same ease as Masamune. As soon as he was at the top, Masamune and Zen took a hand each and hauled him up as well.

Drake soon began to scan their surroundings, seeming confused, "I don't see anything. So why are we up here?"

Equally confused, Masamune looked around and murmured, "I thought I heard voices up here but I guess I didn't." He merely shrugged until a voice came out of nowhere from behind them and caused Masamune to freeze.

"You did hear voices. But that'll be the last thing you'll ever hear!"

Destin walked out from the shadows calmly, a mass of Shadow Lurkers following after him. A slight glow could be seen around his body and as a taunt, he let a few sparks dance across the ground and then fade. Zen stared in horror and his eyes widened, "You never had electricity...how..." His voice completely failed him and all he could do was gulp.

Upon noticing the Zen's shock, Destin laughed insanely and hissed out, "It's simple. I just absorbed the rest of Ven's soul that remained in his body and gained his powers." Upon hearing the devastating news, Zen gasped and nearly fell to his knees until Drake held him up by putting one arm around him and another under the boy's arm.

"Destin, how dare you!" Drake whispered in a low, angry voice and glared at him with a deep hatred.

Destin laughed at Drake's pathetic display and said, "Oh, how pathetic! Who cares about Ven? You know he hated you anyways." Drake, refusing to believe anything Destin said to him, growled then lunged forward and his fist connected with Destin's cheek. Destin appeared stunned once he tasted blood in his mouth then spat it out and began to laugh suddenly. With that a few stray sparks flew from his body and slammed into Drake's. Drake was sent flying backwards and landed with a thump on his back. Masamune's eyes widened in disbelief and he ran over to Drake, kneeling down next to him. He rested a hand on Drake's wrist then breathed a sigh of relief as he felt a strong pulse coming from him. Masamune stood up and was about to attack Destin until he saw that Zen had beaten him to it. He was sitting on Destin in order to pin him down with an arrow in his hand, stabbing him with everything he could, mainly his arms and legs though to disable any attacks and ways he could resist.

Destin started struggling but soon smirked and summoned the Shadow Lurkers in the room to his aid. They grabbed onto Zen's arms and legs then began to drag him off despite his wild struggling. They were about to begin attacking him until a blast of fire was shot towards them and exploded before hitting Zen, which caused them to scatter.

Drake had stood up, glaring at the Shadow Lurkers while Masamune still sat next to him on the ground. Destin looked towards Drake with a confident smirk on his face although he was angry and cursing himself inside, "You truly aren't going to give up, are you?"

Drake shook his head and said, "You're right. I'm not." He extended his arm, leaving his palm facing towards Destin and darkness shot out of it speeding towards Destin at an alarming rate.

Destin froze up as if he were going to accept the darkness, thinking he'd be immune to it but then realized that it wasn't to be accepted because of its intentions. He was about to run for his life until he felt he couldn't move more than two steps. He suddenly realized that he was imprisoned in a large cage made of light although he didn't know where it came from and seemed surprised as the darkness continued coming towards him, penetrating the light cage. As soon as the darkness was directly in front of him it took the shape of a human.

It reached into Destin's body slowly and searched around freely since the darkness within Destin refused to attack its own fellow member. Once it locked onto the desired target, it began to pull its hand out until it was completely visible, a familiar person in its grip. "Ven!" Zen suddenly yelled as he saw a light flow around his brother's soul and soon his body formed around him, hiding his soul from sight once again.

Ven felt a strange stirring within his body and he opened his eyes but all he could see was the darkness, which made him realize he was still basically dead. As he stared into the abyss, a circle of light hovered above him, looking inviting. His gaze locked onto it and stared up at it curiously until he snapped to attention upon hearing an unfamiliar voice speaking to him, "Go through this portal. Your friends await you out there."

Ven sat up from his laying position and then stood, finding himself just floating there in the realm of nothingness. He watched as the circle moved closer to him until it was no longer above him and instead in front of him. He took a few tentative steps forward and entered the portal. Light surrounded him entirely and he felt himself fall back into place in his body from that realm and truly opened his eyes.

Ven slowly stood up to everyone's surprise and instantly summoned his sword and commanded, "Zen, release him." Zen stared at Ven in amazement and let the slightly elevated cage fade, allowing Destin to fall into a sitting position on the ground. Only at that moment did Destin notice that Zen had been responsible for that cage and he scowled, about to charge at the other brother. But Ven approached Destin quickly and pointed the sword at his chest, looking hostile. Destin glared back at him angrily and stood still for a while, unmoving, until he thought of something and smirked.

Glaring at him defiantly, he pulled his own sword out of its sheath and pointed it at Ven. "If it's a fight you want, I'll give it to you and I won't show any mercy." Ven smirked and lunged forward, not scared at all as he met with Destin's sword. With extreme determination in their eyes the two began trying to push each other back in order to gain the upper hand. Destin's lips curled up into a fiendish smirk and he suddenly unleashed a powerful slash from his sword that sent Ven's flying across the room where it landed on the ground in the corner.

Destin swiftly kicked Ven in the knees, which caused him to collapse on the ground and Destin placed the tip of his sword against Ven's neck. He prepared to stab Ven straight through until the endangered boy summoned his sword to him from the corner of the room and struck Destin's sword away. "I'm not going to die because of you!" He quickly swung the sword at Destin who attempted to block it with his own sword.

Ven quickly moved the sword away from Destin's oncoming one and smacked it into Destin's legs, leaving a giant cut across both of them. Ven then swung the sword at Destin's chest, letting the blunt part hit him hard. He launched him back with a kick at that point and watched him land on the ground heavily, approaching his now limp body while watching him closely to make sure he didn't try any cheap moves.

Darkness could be seen seeping from Destin's body, which Ven watched intently as it reached a certain point in the air then began to fade. Soon every last tendril of darkness had escaped and Destin began to stir. Just as he opened his eyes, the sword faded completely and a small "huh?" came from him. He looked up at Ven and the others curiously before turning pale as all of his previous memories of the bad things he had done flooded into his mind.

He looked down at the ground and couldn't suppress his sniffles. "Guys…I'm really sorry for all the problems I caused you," Destin whimpered, his voice shaking uncontrollably.

Ven approached Destin slowly and kneeled down in front of him and smiled at him lightly, "Don't worry about it. We're still your friends and always will be."

In obvious shock, Destin looked up, surprised, and asked, "When did you get to be so nice?"

A small laugh came from Ven and he whispered back, "This is the true me, soul and all."

With a smile on his face Ven extended his hand out to Destin and Destin took it slowly using Ven's hand as leverage to pull himself into a standing position. "Guys, there's still something we need to do. Follow me," Destin murmured then took the lead, bringing them to a door on the other side of the room. He rested his hand on the doorknob and turned it slowly, peering in to see Akura sitting there on the cushion from before.

He adopted the evil tone of voice he had used when he was tainted by the darkness and closed his eyes so she wouldn't see how he lacked the red pigment in them. He then said roughly, "I've got them here, lady Akura." He grabbed Drake by his arm and flung him into the room although it was gentle.

He then flung the others in gently as well and could feel Akura staring at him intently. "Come here," she suddenly whispered, anger in her tone.

Destin approached Akura slowly and confidently, still refusing to look up or open his eyes. He stopped in front of her and stood still, awaiting an order. "Come closer," Akura suddenly whispered, reaching out towards him. He tensed up a little and took a few more tentative steps forward. He stopped as soon as he bumped into Akura's hand, feeling it resting on his stomach suggestively close to his waistline and refused to open his eyes. Akura quickly moved her hand from Destin's stomach and quickly gripped his neck tightly, pulling him close to her and whispered spitefully, "You're a good actor, and you know that. But you're not good enough to fool me. You made it far too obvious by refusing to open your eyes!"

Afterwards, she launched Destin to the side forcefully and watched him slam into the ground with a loud thud. She stared intently at Destin as he struggled to fully sit up and pulled the sword out of the sheath on her back. She launched the sword at him with alarming speed and looked satisfied as Destin fell back into the laying position he was in before, the sword protruding straight through his stomach, which actually pinned him to the ground.

A sudden scream came from Drake as the anger he'd been holding in all this time welled up within him. He leaped to his feet and glared at Akura murderously, removing the bow from his back and pulling an arrow out of his quiver. He trained the arrow on Akura and whispered murderously, "I'll kill you for hurting Destin!" He let the arrow fly quickly, awaiting the result as he shook with rage. His eyes widened in surprise, as he could no longer see Akura and the arrow thudded into the wall. He took a few steps forward to retrieve the arrow until he felt something constrict him tightly, forcing him to stop in the middle of his advance.

His eyes widened further and he suddenly activated the jewel on his forehead simply by willing it to work. He began trying to take over the darkness to get it to let go of him and seemed to be succeeding until a sudden surge of power came from Akura and the jewel stopped working and went dull again. The darkness began squeezing Drake tightly until a loud, pained scream came from him, as a few snaps could be heard, loud and clear.

The darkness let go of Drake and let him fall to the floor where he grabbed onto his left leg with his left hand. He let his right arm remain where it was, knowing it would be too painful to try and move it. Two broken bones at once...that's great, he thought to himself then looked at the remaining three. "Be careful you guys! I don't want any of you getting hurt too!"

He was satisfied as he saw the nods of approval come from the others as Ven and Zen summoned their weapons but were obviously confused as they all saw Masamune leap towards Drake. Masamune picked him up then moved away from that spot quickly as a sword buried its point into the floor where Drake had been before.

Masamune smirked at him and whispered, "Be careful. I don't want you getting hurt." Judging by his tone, he sounded playfully mocking of Drake. He placed the boy down next to Destin and murmured, "Take care of him while we fight." He leaped away to join the others then created a needle, which he pointed at Akura. She glared at them then ran over to Drake and Destin, about to slash at the two. A sudden growl came from Ven and the look on his face was extremely menacing.

"Don't even think about it!" Ven yelled as he leapt forward so he was positioned right in between Akura, Destin and Drake. He quickly swung the sword, which met with Akura's in the air and the two began a power struggle, trying to push each other back while holding their ground well.

Akura suddenly shoved her face into Ven's as she snarled, "You'll never beat me!" then quickly and cheaply kicked Ven in the shin then his ankle.

Ven snarled angrily as his leg collapsed under his weight and he was now kneeling in front of her, his sword still against hers. However, things looked bleak for him, especially since she could taste victory and shoved forward, knocking Ven into a sitting position. He still held his sword up, keeping Akura's sword away from reaching Destin and Drake even though that was difficult to do in this position. Akura broke the sword and instead slashed at him violently, hoping she'd caught him off guard.

She received a large slash on her arm but it was nothing like the wound Ven received. He had fallen back, laying flat on the ground and his sword disappeared. Instead his hand rested on his chest and he tried to stem the bleeding while breathing heavily. Akura took a few steps forward and whispered, "Say good bye!" She lifted her sword up above his heart and stabbed downward.

Ven closed his eyes tightly, preparing for the pain. A sudden roar ripped him out of his thoughts and he opened his eyes to see the large electric dragon hovering above him, gripping Akura's sword in its jaws. It lifted her up into the air and shook its head back and forth rapidly, causing Akura's grip on the sword to slip despite her determination to try and keep holding onto it. She eventually went flying and slammed into the far wall, sinking into a sitting position. She suddenly looked up dazedly as she heard footsteps and could see Zen and Masamune standing above her.

Masamune had a long, thick needle in his hands and Zen had an arrow trained on her. Surprisingly, Zen was ready to kill and he let out an angry snarl, "You'll never hurt another one of my friends or family again!" Akura looked up at the two in terror and tried to scramble to her feet but ended up being pinned against the wall by Masamune's foot.

"Don't kill me! It's not my fault! The darkness took over me and made me do all these horrible things!" She lied, trying her hardest to make her statements sound convincing.

Zen narrowed his eyes at the desperately pleading woman and said vehemently, "You can't fool me! I know you freely accepted that darkness of your own will!" He let the arrow fly just as Masamune threw the needle he previously held. Akura squirmed wildly as the two weapons stabbed into her heart. Instead of blood leaking from the wound, darkness began seeping out; fading instantly as it exited and soon Akura's body began to fade as well, since the source it thrived off of was dissipating.

The fatigued group watched in triumph, glad that they had finally gotten rid of the evil that was destined to grow and wreak havoc on the entire world. Ven looked over to Zen, a slight smirk on his face, "Way to go! You were really intimidating back there."

Ven even went as far as to jump up in the air as Zen scratched his head and blushed, modestly whispering, "Thanks."

He looked over to Masamune in an attempt to hide his embarrassment and couldn't help but gape. Masamune was close to Drake and allowing him to scratch him behind the ears while making a similar purring noise like he had made earlier. Ven started staring as well then looked at Zen who was staring back at him. "Drake, what the heck?" Ven suddenly asked and one of his eyebrows rose in confusion.

Drake let out a small laugh and murmured, “He just likes the petting is all.”

Once Masamune heard what he said, his eyes widened, his ears twitched rapidly and he looked indignant, claiming, “I do not!” He backed away then crossed his arms, refusing to admit what he knew was the truth. The rest of them started laughing at Masamune’s antics until the area around them began to fade, sending each person’s mind reeling with the possibilities of what was happening.

Shadows Within The Soul

Epilogue: A Brief Respite

By: Larka

The five suddenly felt solid ground underneath their feet and looked around as their surroundings became visible. Destin's eyes widened as he recognized the lively village from before he had left and began taking in the area, realizing it wasn't any different than before.

He turned back to the rest of the group, his eyes lighting up as he smiled widely, "It's good to be back home!" Drake smiled at him in return as Masamune came to his side, supporting him because of the injuries to his leg.

"It sure is. Now let's return to Ariana since I'm sure she's worried about us all." Drake turned around with some difficulty, having to hop, then jumped as he saw Ariana right there, who was staring at him and smiling. She threw her arms around him tightly while being careful of his arm.

"You guys came back…Destin?" She suddenly whispered, staring at her brother whom she hadn't seen in years. Upon hearing his sister's voice, Destin looked down at the ground. Feeling guilty, one of his arms covering his stomach, which was still bleeding. She hugged him tightly before she noticed his arm over his stomach then moved it with her free one. "Don't worry. If you did anything wrong, I can forgive you. We all can. These actions weren't of your own will."

Those words took a huge weight off Destin's shoulders and he smiled at Ariana gently then hugged her tightly in return, "Let's go home. Together."

He let go of her and then began to walk towards the house, surprised that he remembered where it was. He entered the house slowly and began to look around it in wonder, taking in the familiar setting and the familiar scent, with an adoring smile spreading over his face. He was suddenly wrenched back to reality as Ariana forced him into a sitting position on a nearby couch, then grabbed onto his shirt, which caused Destin to freak out, "What are you doing?"

Destin ripped his shirt out of her grasp and backed away quickly, holding onto his shirt tightly as he stated, blushing, "If you wanted me to take it off you could've asked." He eased it over his head then covered his chest with it while squirming uncomfortably. "Do what you need to do and quickly!" He said, his cheeks turning an even brighter red.

Ariana laughed quietly and said, "Silly. You shouldn't be so embarrassed! You're a guy after all. There's nothing to see." Masamune suddenly entered the room, still with Drake but instead he was now carrying him.

He also had a few sets of bandages and a container of hydrogen peroxide, which he set on a table next to the couch, then sat Drake on the couch gently and sat on the floor in front of the boy. Drake reached out and quickly scratched Masamune behind the ears then stopped quickly before Masamune noticed, satisfied with the single yip he received.

Ariana blinked as a sudden cloth hit her in the face, thrown at her playfully by Masamune. She grabbed onto it, flashed a playful look at Masamune, then the bottle of peroxide before taking off the cover. She placed the cloth over the top of the bottle and tipped it over. After tipping it back up, she placed it back on the table then began rubbing it into the wound on Destin's stomach then on his back, ignoring his frantic squirms from the pain.

She suddenly stopped, eying Destin oddly as she realized he had closed his eyes. "Okay Destin, I'm done." Destin opened his eyes slowly to see Ariana now wrapping bandages around his stomach.

She eventually finished then whispered, "You can put your shirt back on, girly boy." Destin glared indignantly at her for a few seconds then slipped his shirt back on gently, watching Ariana as she created a makeshift sling for Drake's arm. She then put the strap over his head and onto his left shoulder and helped him put his right arm into the sling.

She then grabbed onto the roll of bandages again and had Drake pull up his left pant leg, beginning to wrap the bandages around his entire leg until there were many layers that kept his leg firmly in place. He lowered his pant leg over his now bandaged leg with some difficulty and smiled. "Thank you sister," He whispered then hugged her gently before standing up experimentally, trying to balance on one leg as he swayed slightly but otherwise remained perfectly balanced.

Ariana looked over at the two brothers, watching them as they looked around curiously and began examining a few of the random things lying around on the ground and some on the tables and nightstands nearby. Once he felt the uncomfortable feeling of eyes on him, Ven looked up walked over to Ariana, leaving Zen to look around alone. "What is it?" He asked quietly, looking at her with the same curious look with which he had been examining the house.

Ariana pointed at Ven's torn shirt and said, "Your wound needs tending to."

Ven looked down at his chest then blinked and muttered, "You're right..." He had honestly forgoten about it, far too worried about everything else as he pulled his shirt over his head then placed it on the floor gently. He sat down on the couch next to Ariana, letting Ariana begin cleaning out the chest wound while occasionally flinching because of the peroxide. Once she had finished, relief showed in his eyes and his muscles relaxed.

He remained still as Ariana wrapped bandages tightly around his chest before smiling at her gratefully and pulling his shirt back over his head. After he finished putting it on, he felt a sudden tugging feeling within his body that seemed to draw him to the outdoors. Even though he was reluctant, he obeyed the feeling and went out there, looking towards the sky. He honestly thought he was alone until he heard a few soft footsteps from behind and looked back.

He saw Masamune, Zen, Drake and Destin there and asked, "You felt it too?" They nodded and began looking up at the sky with Ven and the sky suddenly turned really dark, many circular shapes appearing in the sky. They all stared at the sky curiously, wondering what those orbs were as they suddenly began falling and then randomly exploding, leaving little balls of light raining down gently.

The little balls of light eventually landed on the ground and some on their faces, heads and other parts of their bodies before disappearing. A sudden flash illuminated the sky for a second and a large creature in the shape of something similar to a dragon but smaller, skinnier and had four wings instead, descended down to the ground a distance away. Just before it landed, it morphed into the shape of a human while retaining the four wings and instantly began to run off just as its bare feet touched the ground.

With each step it took a clawed hand of a creature reached out of the dirt and pulled itself up onto solid ground, revealing their scrawny awkward bodies. Multiple others just like the first one tore out of the ground and skittered across the ground after the first dragon being with alarming speed. They were all different shades of colors, none being black like the one to descend from the sky.

The five watched the creatures curiously until they all looked at each other, a strange light coming into each of their eyes. A smirk spread across Ven's face and he whispered, "It looks like our adventure isn't over yet." The group exchanged looks of excitement yet worry at the thought of a new danger they'd have to face and the possibilities of just what could happen to them...

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