

Based on characters and situations established within the Shin-Tenchi-Muyo Television series.



Tenchi In Tokyo

-Rebirth-

A Fan-Fiction Special Edition Novel

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Prologue

Washu Hakubi, the most infamously renowned and unparalleled super-genius of the entire universe, sits casually at her laboratory desk, performing ultra complex scientific research on her portable laptop computer. Her lab is currently based inside a small broom-closet underneath the main stairwell in the residence of the Masaki household. Literally however, her deeply expansive and ultra-complex research laboratory encompasses several planets linked together by natural and artificially created wormholes interconnected by her, utilizing technologies borrowed from extraterrestrial sources that stagger the mind, and appear to defy physics and the known sciences as well. This makes her laboratory, her sanctuary place of research, in a word; *awe-inspiring*.

Today much like previous days of the past week, she is intently working on several important personal scientific projects, all of which deeply involve the young girl who was once known as Yugi, the ultra-powerful Juraian mutant child that was placed in semi-permanent stasis, in order for her abilities to be given a chance to fully mature under controlled conditions as she slowly ages over time.

Washu stops typing away frantically on her laptop computer to casually glance over at

the hibernation tube still containing the young girl's body and notices that one of the alarm-lights has begun to flicker furiously.

"Hmmm...now *that's* odd" she says to herself as she calmly gets up from her hovering office-chair and slowly walks over to the tube to examine it. After reaching the tube, Washu pushes several holographically projected buttons located directly on the control panel of the stasis chamber. "Now why would the *duration-completion* alarm suddenly start-up all on its own?" she says to herself again as she ponders the serious implications.

Examining the test's readings carefully, Washu's eyes immediately bulge as she reads the hard-copy results of the stasis-chamber's self-diagnostic. "This can't be..." she adds as she hastily runs back to her computer to perform a more detailed analysis in order to confirm the unpleasant findings "If what I'm seeing is correct, then Yugi's hibernation has just been prematurely concluded. But *why*, she's only been dormant for a little over 11 months?" She pauses for a moment more then concludes "I gotta go tell Tenchi and the others...The genie is about to *finally* be let out of her bottle! This could prove to be *really bad*."

CHAPTER 1

Reawakening

Tenchi and the girls are all currently located in the living room of the Masaki homestead trying to enjoy a nice Friday afternoon together as a happily united family. At this time Tenchi has just completed his carrot farming duties outside in the pasture and is retiring for the afternoon to take care of the balance of his indoor chores before it becomes too late in the evening to complete them before dinner.

Not surprisingly, Ryoko and Ayeka have taken to engaging in more of their usually friendly but endlessly competitive bickering tirades as they try to decide which one of them should be the one to perform the sweeping duties on the patio-deck outside at the rear of the house.

"Uh-uh...I'm *not* doing it!" Ryoko says as she crosses her arms defiantly. "I swept the deck the *last* time!"

"You call *that* sweeping...you didn't even *do* anything! You just flew off drinking *tea* and *I* had to send my guardians in to do the job *for* you!" Ayeka accuses.

"It got *done* didn't it? And besides, what are *you* so worked up about? It's not like *you* got up off your *lazy* butt to do any of the sweeping work *yourself*!"

"*Lazy butt*? How *dare* you!" Ayeka replies with an angry tone to her voice. "How dare you speak to me like that? I'm *royalty*, you uncivilized peasant."

Knowing that she must've hit her hot-button, Ryoko with a devious smile, taunts her even further. "You *never* do anything around here. You always send Azaka and Kamidake out to do all your chores for you. Are you even good for *anything*? At least your little sister Sasami can *cook*. What can *you* do besides *nag*? Anyway, why would Tenchi *ever* want to be with someone as lazy as you? You *never* lift a finger...?"

"Oh, and I suppose that *you* conning Mihoshi into doing your chores for you, is an excellent example of somebody doing a *fine* job working themselves?" Ayeka retorts.

Smiling with her hands now clasped behind her head as she leans against the wall, Ryoko replies "Ayeka...I know what your problem is, and it doesn't have *anything* to do with how I do my chores. You're just jealous of me. I can't help it if Tenchi likes me more. After all he did almost kiss me up in the tree after he came back from Tokyo. Can you blame him? Listen, don't hate the player...hate the *game*." She ends it off by letting out one of her especially taunting laughs.

Seething with anger, Ayeka immediately faces off with the formerly villainous yet playfully impish space-pirate Ryoko. "Tenchi does *not* like you more than he does me...!"

Without missing a beat, Tenchi quickly places himself between the two fighting young women. "C'mon you guys...we're supposed to be a *family*. Isn't it time you all started acting like one?"

Ayeka quickly discontinues her intended attack on Ryoko, but clearly still wants to wallop her.

"Ryoko can be so *infuriating* at times..." Ayeka points out. Ryoko tauntingly crosses her arms and sticks her tongue out at her, as if teasing an older sister.

"Ryoko...lighten up on Ayeka, willya?" Tenchi playfully interjects trying to swiftly defuse the rapidly escalating confrontation. "You're not helping the situation out any. Besides, I did *not* almost kiss you in that tree. You tried to kiss *me* remember?"

"Huh...? You're taking *her* side? But Tenchi...I thought we..." Ryoko begins to say but never complete her sentence.

Without further warning, the room is suddenly overrun by the disquieting sound of; *Whoosh...!*

Everybody turns toward the sound to find that Washu is suddenly standing there next to one of her trans-dimensional worm-holes. She has an extremely uneasy look on her face, one she hasn't worn since the last time the earth was threatened with extinction nearly 1 year ago by Yugi herself.

"Washu..." Tenchi says playfully as he sees the young woman entering into the room "I certainly never expected to see *you* so soon today. I thought you were out working on an

important experiment in your lab."

"Actually...that's *exactly* the reason why I'm here." She somberly replies to him "You guys are *never* going to believe this. It's about Yugi, follow me to my lab."

Without missing a beat, she immediately disappears back through the worm-hole, with Ayeka, Ryo-Ohki, Tenchi, Ryoko, and Sasami close in tow. Once back inside the lab, they are instructed to draw their attention toward the stasis tube containing Yugi's cryogenically frozen body.

"What's going on here?" Sasami pleads. "Is Yugi going to be OK?" she asks in a near frenzied state of panic. "I haven't gotten to talk to her for a while...I don't want my last words with her to be from 6 months ago."

"To be perfectly honest with you Sasami...I just don't know. It's too early to tell what her physical state and well-being will prove to be." Washu uneasily replies to her.

"Washu..." Tenchi speaks up "When did you move Yugi's tube from the cave in the back to your lab? You told us six months ago not to enter into the cave so that you could perform some extensive tests. Yet you somehow failed to mention that she was now being held *here*?"

"I didn't tell anyone because I wasn't entirely certain what readings I was getting from her. And until I had something definitive to report, theory or otherwise, I thought it best to keep her presence down here in my lab a closely guarded secret. Only Mihoshi knew, and that was only because she somehow stumbled into my laboratory late one night.

But you all are entitled to know the whole story, so here goes; several months ago while I was performing one of my routine tests, I noticed an unusual energy fluctuation coming from the stasis tube. When I visually inspected it, something very peculiar happened. The high-pressure glass viewing window designed to allow for quick visual testing, suddenly formed an opaque film over it that was impossible to see through. At that time it appeared as though the tube simply sprung a pressurized sealant leak, and the glass window that had since become particularly obscured simply frosted up as a result. It didn't appear to be anything serious, but I moved it here anyway so that I could use my most sensitive lab equipment to study it more closely. I was forced to rely heavily on my instrumentation to relay her vital stats back to me, as opposed to simply looking through the glass, and they looked fine. All in all, she seemed OK."

Suddenly the tube begins to hiss wildly as the interlocks disengage.

"Uhhh...Washu...what is going on?" Ayeka insists "why is Yugi's tube making all that horrible noise?"

"Well everyone...that plays into the reason *why* I've called you all into here. For reasons yet unknown to me, Yugi's stasis tube is now acting as if it just fully completed its

hibernation cycle. What I mean is; It's about to open."

"Wait a second Washu..." Ryoko interjects into the conversation "That thing wasn't supposed to open until *after* Yugi grows up. You told us that when you *first* put her in that stupid thing. She's only been asleep for about a *year*. Why is it opening *now*?"

"The only answer I can give you is; for some unknown reason, the stasis tube she was placed in is now thoroughly convinced that her maturation-cycle is somehow complete. Unfortunately that thing was built using Juraian technology, so regrettably due to my limited resources here on earth I can't be completely certain what this new finding may implicate."

At that, they all turn uneasily toward the slowly opening stasis chamber, and stare at it nervously. Ayeka begins to bite her bottom lip in anticipation, while Ryoko silently takes a deep swallow. Sasami anxiously holds her breath while clutching mercilessly onto Tenchi as he himself also tries to hold back his own escalating anxiety.

As the main compression seal finally disengages, the entire area of the tube is completely engulfed in the suddenly released cooling mist that once completely filled the tiny chamber. The fog hangs there for a few moments before it slowly begins to dissipate into the atmosphere. Everyone stands there transfixed, holding their breath, awaiting its final outcome.

Suddenly a female hand slowly rises from the densely concealing fog and tightly grasps the edge of the cryo-tube. Tenchi and the group all collectively inhale while anxiously staring at the young girl finally reawakening from her nearly year long listless slumber. A second hand slowly emerges from the tube grabbing the opposite edge of the chamber. By now Tenchi is beginning to look less at the tube with a fearful eye, and more with a curious one, much like Washu.

Before long, the young Juraian mutant raises the rest of her body out of the concealing fog of the hibernation chamber. Much to everyone's amazement, besides the fact that the color of her long beautiful tresses of blond hair, have turned black, the young mutant girl Yugi, now looks unmistakably like; *Sakuya Kumashiro*.

CHAPTER 2

Transitions

Tenchi and the others all gaze at the newly reawakened Yugi as she slowly climbs out of the stasis tube that has literally entombed her for so many months.

"Sakuya...?" Tenchi lets out as he almost gives way to tears.

Completely speechless, both Ayeka and Ryoko can do nothing but continue to stare out at

the recently transformed Juraian mutant with their mouths wide open.

She finally speaks. "W...why is everyone staring at me like that?"

Sasami immediately rushes over to her and gives her a gigantic hug. "Yugi...you're *alive*...It's so nice to be able to talk to you again..." Sasami extols.

"Sasami...My friend...it's *wonderful* to see you once again. You..." she adds as she releases her from the warm embrace. She then gives Sasami a peculiar glance and wrinkles up her nose in confusion. "You seem a lot *shorter* than I last remember." She lets out as she begins to worry once more. After gazing briefly at the stunned crowd, Yugi takes a slight step backward. She repeats her unanswered question "Why is everyone staring at me like that?"

Saying nothing, Washu quickly hands her a small highly reflective piece of metal lying on a workbench next to her. Quickly accepting the object, Yugi immediately gazes into the makeshift mirror and gasps as she sees her new reflection in it. In shock she starts hyperventilating. Before anyone can come to her aid, she quickly loses unconsciousness again and lifelessly collapses onto the cold metallic floor of Washu's personal lab, right at Sasami's feet. Her body convulses in near epileptic seizures a few times before completely falling still. Everyone present is agasp at the jaw-dropping spectacle.

Several hours have passed since Yugi passed-out from severe shock upon seeing her permanently altered physical features. She is now slowly reawakening in Tenchi's bedroom, to the pleasant smell of a nice home-cooked dinner awaiting downstairs. Washu is in the room with her, keeping a constant vigil with various wires and electrodes connected to her forehead and exposed chest, monitoring her vital statistics.

"Looks like you're finally back in the realm of the living. How ya doing kiddo?" Washu kindly asks her while quickly tending to the slight bruising that has occurred on the right side of her forehead where her head hit the ground.

"I...what's *happened* to me?" she asks as she grabs her head fighting off a severe headache.

"You mean besides the slight concussion you're recovering from...?" Washu spouts back sounding nearly sarcastic in her recent tone of voice.

"No...Not that." Replying quickly "I...I feel really *weird*. Earlier when I spoke I noticed that my voice has completely changed. It sounds exactly like Sakuya's did."

"That's understandable. You have physically manifested her appearance in every way. Even your fingerprints are the same as hers now."

Yugi pauses then adds "Is it possible to change me back? I don't wanna look like this the rest of my life. When I created this form, I never intended for it to take control of me like

this. I mean...she's just my shadow, isn't she?" Yugi pleads. She pauses again before adding "Don't get me wrong, it's not like I'm saying she's ugly or anything, but this appearance isn't mine and I'm anxious to get back to looking normal again."

Suddenly Yugi grabs her head with both hands and falls to her knees. It's not long before she's lying on the floor in fetal position writhing in excruciating pain.

The electrodes attached to her body send bioelectrical messages to Washu's laptop which immediately records her levels of pain and discomfort. After inputting these findings into her massive computer database she immediately rushes over to provide her aid.

"Yugi...are you ok...?" she asks as she gingerly assists her back to her feet. Still recovering from her painful episode Yugi only nods to respond to the scientist's question. Once on her feet she straightens up once more and begins rubbing both sides of her forehead in order to try and soothe them. She finally verbally responds.

"Thank you for your help. You wanna hear something weird Washu? I...I'm really not sure how to explain it. I feel really weird again...but this time...it's different. It's like I'm standing outside my body somehow...like I'm not Yugi anymore. It almost feels like I have two different voices inside my head now...like Sakuya is also somewhere deep inside me...and Yugi too...screaming to be heard. It hurts so badly when I try to focus on it. And my stomach feels like I wanna throw-up. I'm scared Washu; I don't know what to do." She candidly admits to her.

"Sorry kiddo...I wish I knew exactly what was going on. Unfortunately it's a learning experience for me to." Washu replies to her. "I've been taking cranial spectral analysis readings directly from electrodes I've placed on your head to monitor your brainwave activity, and it looks to me like your speculation about the two voices in your head could very well be right on the money.

I don't know why, but for reasons unknown to me, your body has somehow taken the Sakuya personality from deep within your subconscious, and adjusted your physical features to coincide with that mental self-image. However, your Yugi persona is also still there, and it too is fighting to reassert itself to become a *core* personality once more. In essence they're both fighting for supremacy over your mind and body."

"Core personality...supremacy? What are you talking about? You mean I'm *not* Yugi anymore?"

"Actually based on my current findings, you aren't either of them. You appear to be somewhere in between, kinda like you're *both* Sakuya *and* Yugi. An amalgam, if you will. It's pretty amazing really. What you're currently experiencing regarding the Sakuya personality is what's called *residual mental self-image*. Yugi has been the dominant mental core-image in that body for so many years...now that her personality has been more-or-less purged of its absolute control; it's the *Yugi* mental image that is still imprinted in your brain, much like a burned-in image on a CRT."

"What'll I do?"

"I imagine that you'll adapt...memories from both girls will gradually come back to you with greater frequency until you eventually start to feel more comfortable with the person that you have become *now*. I won't pretend to know much about the new personality that you will eventually build, but I *do* know both of the people that *comprise* the new you; and both of them were *survivors*."

Yugi steps away briefly and stares off into space to regain her thoughts.

Yugi peers across the room and spots a mirror leaning up against the wall. Glancing briefly at her reflection in it she adds "How could I have physically changed so much in so little time? You said I was only sleeping for a little over 11 and a half months, I'd understand it if it had been *years*, but as it is...it wasn't even *I* complete year. That was some transformation."

"The closest thing I could come up with as a theory is the *caterpillar* concept. Admittedly we don't know very much about your physiology. The problem is, you're not just a normal Juraian...you're also a *mutant*, which pretty much means that you're *different* from any of the others that I've ever examined.

What might be going on is; just like a caterpillar, while you were in stasis, your body went through a stage very similar to that of a chrysalis. I assumed that you were frozen in the tube when the viewing window mysteriously fogged up and grew an opaque film over it, but to me it appeared as if condensation were leaking out. But your body was actually emitting a sustained cocoon field that adaptively utilized the stasis tube to function as its pupa, closely resembling that of crystallized H₂O."

Yugi silently walks over to the window. Staring outside she replies "So, what do I call myself? Yugi...Sakuya...or something entirely different? I don't feel comfortable calling myself Sakuya. It doesn't even entirely feel like *me* anymore...and Yugi..." She signs deeply before she can complete her sentence.

Washu pauses to think for a moment "Yeah, I suppose it would be hard for you to decide what you would want to go by...to be honest I don't have an answer for you. That's something I'm afraid you'll have to figure out on your own."

She slowly nods her head as she takes in more of Washu's profound words. "You wanna know something Washu? I never *truly* understood how much pain I must've caused the both of them when I was toying with their lives all those months ago...until now."

"I'm sure you'll find out a *lot* of things that you didn't know about either of them individually. I kinda envy you, in a way. Nobody else has the type of unique opportunity to see things from two different perspectives like you do. Simply fascinating..." Washu muses.

She forces up a warm smile as she considers Washu's pensive words.

"I..." she starts before trailing off into deep thought "I have always liked the name Trina." she admits to the brilliant young scientist Washu "I suppose that would be a good name to go by. It's neutral, and should give everybody less confusion."

Washu nods her head as she gives her silent approval.

"Good...it's settled then. *Trina*, it is." Washu next quickly pulls out a small bottle of medication from the folds of her outfit and tosses it over to the young woman who promptly catches it. She gives Washu a confused look. "By the way kiddo...I thought you should know...While you were still hibernating in that stasis-tube, I took the liberty of studying your DNA. I was able to effectively isolate and identify the specific genome sequences responsible for your unique abilities. I used those findings to successfully synthesize an antigen to counteract those abilities."

Trina stares at her with an extremely confused expression on her face. Washu continues "Basically that means I created a medication that will allow you to completely suppress your previously uncontrollable powers. I already injected a small dosage of it directly into your blood-stream right before you reawakened earlier to ease you into the transition. I wanted to give you the opportunity to choose whether or not you still wanted to continue using it."

"Wasn't that a little presumptuous of you giving it to me without my consent? Suppose I wanted to continue using my abilities, and you just eliminated them." she pipes in.

"Yeah, I suppose it was...but you must understand. There's only so much a scientist can accomplish during an experiment that doesn't involve an actual test subject. Eventually I was going to need to test it out on the intended subject for real, and this just provided for me the perfect opportunity to do so. Besides, with as powerful and uncontrollable Yugi's powers were...you can't blame me for being a little cautious..."

"Is it permanent?" Trina asks her.

"Not at all. In fact, you'd have to continue taking one of those pills everyday in order to ensure that you had enough *Grandulamine* in your system to prevent your powers from trying to somehow reemerge. Think of it as taking a daily multiple-vitamin or supplement. Kinda like a *Vitamin-X*."

"Are there any harmful or negative side effects to taking this *Vitamin-X*?"

"Virtually none, though I can't be *completely* certain of that until I've had a chance to extensively test it out. Unfortunately in this case I'd have to admit that you're playing the part of my guinea-pig, and I apologize for that."

"...and you've *already* injected some of this stuff into me earlier?" she asks as she continues to ponder.

"Yup...and you've no doubt probably already noticed that you haven't been able to use any of your powers since you awoke..."

"Yeah...I noticed. I just assumed it was a side-effect of my hibernation sickness. I never knew it was because somebody was tampering with me genetically."

"...Look, I can't *make* you take the pills...but based on your own reservations about your inability to adequately control your powers last year, I figured that you probably wouldn't have much of a problem with it." Washu replies.

"You're right Washu. Those powers were *too* unpredictable. They caused me all sorts of trouble, and no end to pain. *No* one should have such power. Thank you for all your hard work in trying to help me..." she looks at the medication bottle once more then slowly lets out "I'll take them."

Trina slowly gives Washu a piercing glance that cuts right through her.

"Anything wrong?" Washu inquires of her once more.

"I was just thinking about Tenchi...I feel so *sorry* for him. The way he feels for Sakuya. I could see it in his eyes when he looked at me earlier. He must have loved her *very* much." She glances back in the mirror. "I can't help it, but the Sakuya side of me is also still drawn to Tenchi. I don't know what to do about it. I don't want to hurt him again like I did last time."

"Don't worry...he's a survivor. He'll be fine."

The pensive girl flashes Washu a warm smile then concludes

"I'm *starving*. Can we get something to eat now? I feel like I haven't eaten in ages...and that food smells *really* good."

"11 months, 2 weeks, 3 days, 13 hours, 23 minutes, and 42 seconds...since you've last ate." Washu playfully asserts "...but who's counting?" she adds with a wink.

CHAPTER 3

Guess Who's coming to Dinner

Tenchi and the others are all quietly seated at the dinner table downstairs trying to enjoy their dinner together as a family one last time before the young woman now known as

Trina arrives to join them. Even Nobuyuki, who has just recently returned home from his long day at work, is sitting there, trying to remain as calm, and as contemplative as is humanly possible.

However the silence is almost deafening as nobody wants to be the first one to bring up the issue of Sakuya Kumashiro's apparent return. Unable to stand the maddening silence anymore, Ryoko quickly stands up attempting to liven up the proceedings.

"C'mon everybody...why so glum? So that interfering little *tramp* Sakuya has returned...**big deal!** That doesn't mean that we have to stop being who we were. Besides, she isn't even Sakuya...its only Yugi. We *like* Yugi, **right?**" She tries to reason.

"I suppose your right...though if you were, it would be the **first** time in our acquaintance." Ayeka replies to her, under her breath. At hearing the mild insult, Ryoko flashes a quick sneer back at the young Juraian princess.

"I for one am **thrilled**..." Tenchi's father states to the others. "Young miss Shirokuma definitely brings to this household something *missing*..."

With that, Ayeka and Ryoko both stare back at each other with burning eyes of fury. In no time at all, the hard-working business-man is sent flying headlong outside the house into the nearby lake. Afterward Ryoko and Ayeka shake the excess dust from their hands.

"*There*...now that the *riff-raff* has been taken care of...what do we do about Sakuya? We *can't* just allow her to march back here into our lives..." Ryoko extols.

Grandfather Katsuhito immediately begins to speak up "...And why not? As I recall...Yugi is a member of the Juraian heritage...*and*...She has nowhere else to go. We can't very well send her out into the cold. We are honor-bound to ask her to stay."

"Well, **I** for one *want* her to stay..." Sasami blurts out "Yugi is my *friend*...even if she does look like Sakuya now."

Nobody refutes the statement. Tenchi still silently ponders all the events that have just recently transpired, quietly stands up and excuses himself from the fully stocked dinner-table. He walks over to the nearby sliding-glass door. Once there, he contemplatively stares out into the darkened sky outside. Ryo-Ohki attempts to comfort the young planet guardian by jumping up onto his awaiting shoulder and purring wildly.

"Tenchi...are you alright?" Katsuhito asks him warmly.

"I...I dunno. I thought I was *over* all that Sakuya business. I thought I had moved on...that I learned to deal with her loss...that this stuff was all happily behind me. I guess the wound that she left in me ran deeper than I thought. It really *hurts* when I think about losing her grandpa." He replies back to him in a solemn stupor. "I loved her. When she ceased to be...a part of me died with her. Maybe I'll *never* truly be over her."

Katsuhito carefully approaches him from behind and says "If there is *anything* that you need to talk about...or if you just need a listening ear...I will always be here for you."

"Thank you grandpa..." Tenchi summarily replies back to him "I'll be ok. It's just...seeing Sakuya again...even if it *is* only Yugi...has brought back a flood of feelings and emotions that I thought were long since dead and buried. I just hope that it isn't going to be too much for me to handle right now...Sakuya was the first girl I ever loved, the first one to completely win my heart...and no matter how many years seem to pass she'll always be a part of my life no matter how much I try to fight it."

Then suddenly before Katsuhito can get an opportunity to reply to the statement, Trina and Washu emerge from upstairs.

"Hey guys..." Washu says as she heads down the stairway "...sorry we're late. Guess who just decided to finally wake up...?" she adds playfully.

"Hi everyone..." Trina timidly says to the group with an uncomfortable wave of her left hand almost shrinking back behind Washu.

With that, Tenchi immediately turns around and gazes intensely into her deep emerald-green eyes. For him time almost literally seems to stand-still as he stares intently at her. It's as if the two of them are the only two people left in the world. He happily allows himself to get lost in fond memories that they both shared together. Visions of the happy couple walking peacefully down a beautiful sun drenched beach in the Bahaman's vividly run through his mind. Oddly enough, Trina too has established eye contact with him, and is also engaging in a gaze of sorts that is so uncomfortably intense, that everyone within the house makes notice of it and turns to silently observe.

Tenchi is the first to break the uncomfortable silence. He steps forward and heads directly toward her. "Hi..." he asks her, never letting his eyes leave hers.

"Hi..." she replies back, as transfixed as Tenchi is.

"How're you feeling?" he asks her.

"I'm ok..." she replies "...just feeling a little...out-of-touch, is all..."

"Is there anything that I can do for you?" he asks her.

"Time...I just need a little more time to adjust...that's all."

"Oh *brother*..." Ryoko lets out as she tries to break up the spectacle "Can't we all just *try* to enjoy our dinner together without being *nauseated* to death...?" she adds with a bored look on her face. "Anyway...the issue of who Tenchi picks to be with has already been *settled*. Tenchi has decided to pick *me*."

"He's *what*?" Ayeka nearly chokes out. She begins to laugh uncontrollably while adding her response "I don't recall that subject *ever* being broached...Tenchi would *never* choose to be with a ruffian like *you*...him and *I* are destined to be together...not him and some common *hoodlum*."

By now Nobuyuki has returned from his exhilarating evening dip in the lake, and manages to intone another unwelcome comment of his own. "I'm sorry to inform the both of you that my boy has *already* chosen to be with Ms Shirokuma." He says with a proud smile on his face. "But I'm sure that you both will receive *nice* invitations to their wedding." he adds with a sly grin.

Trina blushes and turns beet-red with embarrassment over the comment. Again with annoyance, both Ayeka and Ryoko give each other a conjoined stare in response to Nobuyuki's unsolicited comment. Moments later, Nobuyuki is again sent flying out of the house into the nearby lake.

Katsuhito speaks up to the young woman to try and make her feel more comfortable. "I cannot begin to imagine what all of this must be like for you Ms. Kumashiro...

...not remembering who you are...

...waking up and looking completely different...

...having to contend with two vastly different identities that are both validly your own yet diametrically opposed...

...I just wanted to let you know that it is a *pleasure* to finally get to see you again despite the unfortunate circumstances." He pauses for a moment, and then adds "Tenchi and I have been discussing at length what we are going to do about your lodging situation. We have concluded that since you are our guest, you can have Nobuyuki's room until further notice."

"*What*?" Nobuyuki exclaims as he hears his room being offered up without him even being notified about it. "But where am *I* going to stay?"

Katsuhito quickly pulls him aside by the ear and tells him "You will stay with me at *my* place...there is *plenty* of room, and lots of chores for you to do to keep you out of trouble."

Looking severely disappointed he sighs loudly "Ahhh man...I don't wanna do chores..."

Trina gives Katsuhito a courteous bow "Thank you for your generous hospitality Katsuhito-san"

"Neechan..." Sasami quickly says to Trina as she gives her a warm hug. "I made you a

plate next to mine." Smiling warmly she promptly sits down at the table next to Sasami who has a piping hot meal ready for her to eat. Once seated they both immediately begin playing with each other with their food as young friends often do.

Everybody turns to eye Trina performing such juvenile behavior with Sasami and gives her a look indicative of their displeasure over her acting so immaturely.

Ryoko speaks up trying to uncomfortably interrupt her in an embarrassing manner. "Ahem..." She lets out as loudly and as obnoxiously as humanly possible. She quickly leans toward the playing duo and repeats the phony throat clearing sound more loudly than ever. "Ahem...!"

Quickly noticing the scene she is unwittingly causing, Trina immediately sits straight with her cheeks beaming red with embarrassment. She tries to act as if she were never caught participating in this humiliating act with her young best-friend.

"...Uhhhh...pass the salt please." She lets out trying to quickly change the mood and atmosphere of the room.

"I was thinking...Sakuya and I could head down to Tokyo tomorrow. The familiar surroundings could help her to transition a little better." Tenchi says as he sits back down at his place-setting at the table trying his best to ease the young woman's discomfort.

"Actually...I've kinda decided to go by the name of Trina." She announces to all. "But I do like the idea of hanging out in Tokyo for a little while tomorrow."

"Trina...?" both Ayeka and Ryoko chorus in unison regarding her name change.

"What's the deal with the crazy name change?" Ryoko adds as she casually rests her left elbow on the dinner table.

"It's a long story..." she replies bashfully "I'll explain everything to you after dinner."

"Good idea." Washu replies happily. "Anyway...if going to the big city doesn't help to jog her memory, I don't know *what* will. I'll get right to work on my dimensional tunnel. I'll set it up to drop you both off somewhere near your old school." She immediately snaps her fingers and a glowing star-shaped aperture opens up right next to her. Washu grabs her plate of food then promptly disappears through the closing aperture.

Ryoko suddenly disappears from the dinner table as well, reappearing only long enough to grab Ayeka and disappear off quickly again with her in tow. Moments later, they are both standing safely upstairs in Ryoko's room.

"Unhand me you *ruffian*...just what do you think you're doing?" Ayeka demands as she recoils from her touch slapping her hands off of her.

"Listen...we gotta do something about that *Sakuya*..." Ryoko quickly replies to her.

"But *what*? If we try anything, Lord Tenchi will be *very* cross with us."

"Yeah, I know...that's why we'll have to be *extra* sneaky about it. I'll think of something. But I gotta know right now...if I come up with a plan, are you gonna back me up on it...?"

Ayeka ponders the proposal for a moment then replies "Fine...I'm in."

"*Great*...meet me *here* after dinner. We'll teach that little *home-wrecker* a thing or two." She says deviously "C'mon...the others are probably getting suspicious by now...Its time to finish our dinner like a *good little family*."

CHAPTER 4

Nightmares

It is now late in the evening and most of the Masaki extended family has already fallen fast asleep. By now Ayeka and Ryoko have both already plotted their unspeakable revenge on their young unsuspecting family guest, Trina has already made a formal announcement to the family about the reasoning regarding her preference in name change, and Katsuhito with Nobuyuki have both retired for the evening to the aged shrine-keeper's neighboring homestead. As for Trina, she finds that having a decent night's slumber is extremely problematic considering all that's happened today.

Sweat beads on her forehead as she tosses and turns uncomfortably on her temporary bed located inside Nobuyuki's old bedroom. Within her dream world, she is reliving the time that she spent with Tenchi as Sakuya at a local amusement-park, Yomiuriland in Tokyo.

As the roller-coaster quickly whizzes around the rails of the coaster-track, Sakuya screams with elation in the exhilarating rush of its sudden dips and turns. She looks over at Tenchi who is nervously seated at her left, and notices that he is tightly gripping the shoulder harnesses of his seat-restraints. Though obviously not having as much fun as her on the rollercoaster, he attempts to enjoy it right alongside her without making a single complaint about the bumpiness of the nausea inducing rollercoaster ride.

After the ride has ended, Sakuya immediately grabs Tenchi by the hand and rushes him off toward the photo-booths to take pictures together. At first he resists, but ultimately the thrill of the day and the ecstasy of being with the young woman with whom he has fallen in love, is more than enough incentive to convince him to give up his resistance, and happily go along with her.

They take several photographs together, some of them serious, some playful, and still others downright jocular by nature. For the first time ever, Sakuya is having the time of her life, even going so far as making funny faces into the camera itself. All in all, once

they both relaxed and put their proverbial hair down, they have begun to have an exceptionally fun-filled day. It is truly one of the happiest times of Sakuya's young and tragic life.

Oddly enough, Sakuya looks down on the ground and spots a very pretty black cat that's been obnoxiously brushing up against her right leg. She quickly bends down to pick it up. Once in her hands however the cat starts acting frenzied, hissing and growling uncontrollably like a feral beast.

Before Sakuya can respond by setting it down, the cat immediately takes a swat at her face narrowly missing her eyes in its attack. Instinctively Sakuya drops the agitated animal onto the hard black pavement below. Once it touches the ground it immediately transforms before her very eyes. After a matter of seconds it has totally transmogrified itself into her most fearsome of adversaries; Matori.

"Hello *shadow* girl...ya miss me...?" Matori says snidely as she approaches her threateningly.

Sakuya jumps back with her mouth wide open. "But...I...*Yugi*...destroyed you..." she barely lets out.

"As you can see...the reports of my demise have been *greatly* exaggerated...but I assure you, the reports of yours will *not* be..." she laughs at Sakuya once more, but this time she quickly reaches and grabs her by the neck strangling her. Trina struggles to breathe while the once loyal minion of Yugi literally squeezes the life right from of her body. The young woman feverously yet futilely attempts to break Matori's steely grip.

Suddenly Trina wakes from her disturbing nightmare, her pillow drenched with sweat streaming from her forehead, and her covers all draped onto the floor in a crumpled heap.

"It was just a *dream*...?" she says to herself breathing very deeply as she grabs for her throat, apparently checking to see if Matori's hands are still firmly clutched there. "...but it felt so *real*."

She quickly turns toward the open window and spots sudden movement in the nearby tree. After hastily making her way to the window, she spots a stray cat perched atop one of the tree branches next to the window. With the way its eyes are reflecting the light from her bedroom lamp, they seem to glow in exactly the same manner as Matori's were in her nightmare mere moments ago.

Relieved, she lets out a deep sigh "It was probably just that ridiculous cat outside...I'm getting *really* jumpy. There's no way that Matori can still be alive." She says to herself as she looks back over at her bed and notices that her relatively small medication bottle has been turned over on its side with several of the pills spilled out onto the floor.

"Sakuya...I mean *Trina*, is everything ok?" Tenchi asks as he hurriedly makes his way

into the small bedroom, clutching her warmly in his arms.

Burying herself deeply into his strong warm masculine chest and quickly losing herself in the comfortable feeling of safety he has just unwittingly given her, she lets out another deeply exhilarated sigh of relief.

"I'm ok...it was just a stupid nightmare about a creepy black cat. But the strange thing is; after I awoke I saw a cat outside my bedroom window that looked exactly like it. The sight of it right after awakening from my nightmare...well...scared me a little." She humbly admits to him.

Tenchi immediately rushes to the window to try and get a good look at the feline she just described, but sees nothing. The cat that was once perched atop one of the branches has mysteriously disappeared without a trace.

"I didn't see a cat out there. Are you *sure* you didn't just *dream* you woke up and saw that cat?" Tenchi asks.

"I'm *positive* Tenchi. I'm not stupid, I can tell the difference between a dream and real life...the cat *was* there. It was staring back at me like it was watching me, studying my every move."

"I didn't mean to imply that you were stupid...it's just...well, whatever it was you saw...it's long gone now. Are you gonna be ok?"

"I...I dunno. In my nightmare I was reliving one of the events we had when Sakuya lived in Tokyo...only...it was *different*...Twisted somehow. Matori was there, and she was trying to *kill* me."

"*Matori?* Wasn't she...?"

"*Destroyed*...? Yes." She replies while interrupting him gently "Well...at least I *thought* so. But she was *there*, unmistakably. And it all felt so *real*...like she was *really* choking the life out of me...like I was dying." She says as her heart continues to race. She grabs her neck once again to confirm that Matori's life-threatening hands are not still firmly positioned there.

"Well if you need me to, I could pull up a sleeping-bag and camp out on the floor next to you."

Calming down significantly she gives him a warm smile with a hug. "Thank you Tenchi...but that won't be necessary. You're probably right about that just being a harmless dream." She pauses for another moment "...And *dreams* can't harm you, right? I should be ok for the rest of the night."

Tenchi tenderly kisses the young woman on her forehead to reaffirm to her his stand to

always be available to protect her. Giving her an affable smile he quickly takes his leave and heads back to his room to sleep the rest of the night.

Unfortunately for Trina she was only bluffing. She is still very much disturbed over her dream, and uncomfortable about staying in her bedroom all alone. Grabbing a pillow and a couple of blankets, she quickly heads to Sasami's room. After waking her and explaining the situation, Sasami allows her best-friend to sleep with her in her bedroom.

CHAPTER 5

Self-doubts

Morning falls and Tenchi has risen bright and early to have a concerned discussion about Trina downstairs in the front-room with his impartial friend Washu.

"...Washu, all I'm saying is that Sakuya is acting *really* strangely all of a sudden. I went into her room early this morning to check up on her and found that she wasn't there. Apparently she spent the rest of the night sleeping in Sasami's room. Do you think that she could be having some type of violent reaction to those pills you've given her?"

"First of all Tenchi, you keep referring to our new houseguest as Sakuya, when she's made it painfully clear that she wants to be known as Trina...and now you're suggesting that the meds I've been prescribing her could be giving her a slight case of schizophrenia...? I have to say Tenchi...that scenario is highly improbable. When I initially tested out those meds on the specimen lab-rats they exhibited no signs of dementia or any type of advanced psychosis. Personally, I don't see what's so strange about her sleeping in her best friend's room." Washu replies as she ponders Tenchi's serious inference. "If you recall Tenchi, Trina and Sasami have *always* been really close."

Tenchi hangs his head in desperation "Yeah...I know...but I'm *worried* about her. I don't know what else to do. Last night her vitamin-X bottle was turned over and her pills were scattered out all over the floor."

"Hmmm...Interesting. Y'know...normally I would *never* consider humoring such a paranoid request...but for *you* Tenchi...I'll do it. I trust your opinion. I'll check into it and update you with my findings..."

"Thank you Washu..." Tenchi says as he gives the super-genius a quick friendly hug.

Meanwhile in Sasami's room, Trina is just waking up from her extremely troubled slumber. Rubbing the sleep from her eyes she quickly notices that she is alone in the bedroom. "Sasami must be downstairs in the kitchen preparing breakfast. I'll go check up on her as soon as I finish my shower." She says to herself aloud as she quickly hurries into the room temporarily designated as hers. "...have to be clean for my field-trip into Tokyo today." she adds.

Once inside her room, she quickly notices her medication bottle lying on the floor next to her nightstand. As she slowly steps over to the tablets she mentally takes note of how cool and slick the hard wooden floor of Nobuyuki's room is to her bare feet. She temporarily allows herself to enjoy the comfortable sensation. She immediately bends over to pick up the vitamin-X pills and places some of them back into the bottle. As she looks at them intently she takes notice of the subtle differences in the handful of pills that she now has clutched in her hands. She counts them. Half of the pills are white and orange, while the other half white and red. "I can't believe I didn't notice that before" she says aloud to herself. "I thought they were all white and red." she stares at them for a few moments more before promptly placing one of them on the nightstand next to the alarm-clock. "I'm still not so sure I want to start taking these..." she says to herself as she grabs the clothes that have been loaned to her until she can purchase some of her own.

"Ummm...Its *you*...Sakuya...I mean Yugi...I mean Trina...I mean, *whoever* you are...I still can't believe that you're back after all this time..." Mihoshi lets out as she peeks her head into the room from behind the corner of the doorway.

"*Mihoshi*, good morning..." Trina cheerfully extols as she quickly notices her. "I didn't know that you and Kione were back. We missed you yesterday. When did you get in?" She admits to her.

"We just got back early this morning from our deep-space mission. Washu told us all about your arrival yesterday...weird, huh?" Mihoshi asks as she quickly jumps into the room giving her a crushing hug.

"Yeah...but unfortunately whether I like it or not, this is my life now." She says as she successfully breaks away from her vise-like clutches.

"Whoever you are...don't worry...we're going to have all *kinds* of fun." She joyously proclaims. "...come to think of it, this kinda reminds me of an episode of Space-Police Policemen...where Trigon was accidentally reawaked from his deep-space hibernation sleep..."

"Oh *brother*..." Kione interrupts as she pokes her head into the room from the hallway "Mihoshi, *nobody* wants to hear about that *stupid* TV show..." She walks into the room and gives Trina a warm hug also. "Trina, it's good to have you back."

"Thanks..." she adds with a playful giggle "It's nice to be back."

"Y'know..." Kione adds "...it just hasn't been the same here after you died..."

Trina's head hangs extremely low and her countenance suddenly drops.

"I mean...you couldn't have died, because...*here* you are." She lets out nervously backpedaling attempting to correct herself before Trina notices. She is unsuccessful in the attempt.

Giving up Kione lets out a conceding sigh. "Me and my big mouth...sorry about that. What I mean is; everything changed once you were gone. For a while it seemed as though Tenchi almost gave up his will to live. It was like he was just *existing* and not really *living*. He lost his sense of humor for a while and locked himself up in his room for nearly two months. It was a real drag here during that time...I honestly believe that Tenchi was much happier when you and him were together." Kione reveals to her.

Trina immediately responds by silently walking off into the bathroom with her head drooped toward the ground, and shutting the door closed behind her once she makes it completely in the restroom. It appears as if she is crying.

"*Huh*, was it something I said?" Kione asks rhetorically to Mihoshi as she and her partner both look on in total confusion. "There is something *seriously* wrong with that girl."

In the bathroom, Trina lowers the toilet-seat cover and sits on top of it, using it as a stool. Quietly burying her face into her left-palm, she begins to weep bitterly. "What is *wrong* with me? Why am I this emotional over Tenchi all of a sudden? It's like I can't control my feelings whenever I think of him. I can't go on like this." After a few moments she lifts her head up and places the vitamin-X pill on the counter that she still had clutched firmly in her right hand. She stares at it then promptly picks it back up and swallows it down. Quickly filling up a glass that she left in there from the previous night with water, she guzzles it down to help her digest the pill. Closing her eyes, she immediately loses herself in deeply concerted thought.

"Boo!" a voice suddenly whispers out. Trina nearly jumps out of her skin as she looks up and sees Matori now standing there in the bathroom right in front of her. "I hope I didn't scare you *too* much...wouldn't want you accidentally dying from a heart-attack just yet." Matori adds "but I'm sure you already know that."

Trina slowly nods her head in reciprocation.

"That's right...**Revenge!** I *will* make you *pay* for what you and that little *pipsqueak* did to me...You can't imagine how much pain I suffered when that runt destroyed me with that power-blast. And *why*, I ask you...? ...All for that *other* little pipsqueak Sasami who she was trying to convince to be her friend. **Pathetic!** I want you dead but only on my own terms. I want you to *suffer* first."

"I'm really sorry for what I've done...I... "

"Spare me your empty words of pity they mean *nothing* to me..." Matori angrily spits back as she sticks her face within an inch of hers facing off with her. "...I'm going to wipe *you*, your *pathetic* boyfriend, and anyone else who attempts to stand in my way, off the face of this earth! Mark my words missy, you are **dead** already!"

Matori suddenly lunges at her to try and attack. Reflexively Trina recoils in fear, placing

her arms and hands over her head in such a way as to try and protect her face from harm. She closes her eyes in her haste also. She screams at the top of her lungs as she feels the cold malevolent hands of Matori finally reach her and diverge toward her neck.

"Sakuya...? What's the matter...it's only *me*?" Ryoko's voice calls out. Trina opens her eyes to find that Matori is now gone, eerily mirroring the events that occurred to her since her nightmare last night.

"Did you see her?" Trina gasps as she jumps out of the bathroom clearly terrified beyond words.

"Did I see *who*?" Ryoko replies as if to answer a riddle.

"*Matori*...! She was just here in the bathroom with me. She said she was going to destroy us *all*. She said she wanted revenge! You didn't *see* her?"

By now a small crowd has converged within the house in the hallway in front of the bathroom with Tenchi, Ryo-Ohki, Sasami, Ayeka, Washu, Ryoko, and the two Space-police officers, Mihoshi and Kione, all staring blankly at her. In the next instant everyone looks at one another as if they are beginning to suspect that she imagined the whole ordeal, as she has been unable to provide any proof of Matori's life-threatening presence whatsoever. Tenchi is the first to approach her.

"Saku...*Trina*...Nobody left the bathroom but you..." Tenchi replies.

"Yeah, and we were standing just outside the bathroom door in the hallway..." Kione adds "We didn't see anybody enter *or* leave either."

"But...I *know* what I saw..." she replies as she begins to foster some self-doubt also "You mean to tell me that *nobody* heard what she was telling me in there...she was practically *shouting*?" she exclaims with a very frustrated glare on her face.

"You mean like *you*...?" Ryoko repeats in a sarcastic taunt then snickers lightly.

"That's *not* funny!" she snaps back "I saw what I saw." She frantically eyes everyone in a back-and-forth motion almost accusatorially. "Nobody saw or *heard* anything...?"

Wordlessly they all shake their heads no in answer to her question. "Matori *was* here..." she pauses as she awaits any further response from the others "Nobody believes me?" she asks beseechingly changing her tone dramatically to convey her utter confusion over the intolerable situation that she has unwittingly become a spectacle of. Confused, she falls to her knees in utter disarray staring off into nothingness as though she were catatonic. She looks a total wreck.

Washu quickly yet quietly pulls Tenchi aside and whispers to him "I see now what you meant earlier...she's acting *really* strangely. Not only is she displaying bouts of a short

temper, but she's also exhibiting signs of acute dementia. I had *no* idea my medication would affect her *this* adversely."

Ryoko suddenly disappears from in front of Trina, and then reappears next to Ayeka. Ayeka quickly whispers to her "Ryoko...whatever you did to make her look *this* crazy is certainly *working*...what did you do, secretly change her medication?"

With a confused expression on her face Ryoko replies "That's what I wanted to talk to *you* about. I had my fake stash of vitamin-x pills all set aside in my room to mix in with hers today when she wasn't looking, but I never got the chance..."

...so...did *you* do it? If so then I gotta admit...I've got newfound respect for you girl. There just might be some hope for you yet." Ryoko exclaims proudly while patting her on the back. Ayeka shakes her head to confirm that she isn't the one responsible either.

"If *you* didn't..." Ayeka pauses sympathetically "...and *I* didn't...Is Sakuya really...?"

Quietly interrupting Ayeka, Ryoko calmly places her hand over her own mouth and simulates a fake cough while saying in a low tone "...she's *crazy*..."

"Yes...it certainly is beginning to look so." Ayeka responds. "At this rate, we won't *have* to carry out that idea of yours. I dunno Ryoko" Ayeka says in contemplative reply. "We may have taken this little prank *too* far...I don't want her getting *hurt*, I just wanna make sure that she isn't with *Tenchi*, that's all."

"You're not getting *soft* on me, are you Ayeka...? We *both* agreed to pursue this to the *end*...if you can't *stomach* it then..."

"...I know..." she says interrupting her "I'm just beginning to think that it might not've been such a great idea after all."

"...Yeah...I suppose it's for the better anyway...it won't be as much fun if she's *really* going crazy. Plus, if Tenchi finds out about us he might blame *us* for the whole thing. We'll have to sit back and watch. I'm curious as to how this will all turn out anyway. There's *no* way Tenchi would hook-up with her in *this* condition." She says with another slight chuckle. "She's a train-wreck waiting to happen."

CHAPTER 6

Mind Trip

After the very eventful morning so far, Tenchi thought it best to hurry and push forward his plans to take Trina into Tokyo several hours ahead of schedule to try and help ease

her distressed mind and calm her troubled spirit. While Washu completes a few minor modifications to the wormhole generator that she is preparing for Tenchi and Trina to use to take with them into Tokyo, Tenchi has taken the liberty of escorting her out by the nearby lake to talk privately.

"Saku...I mean *Trina*...Even though your hair has grown longer, I'll *never* get used to calling you that, you know. I hope you don't mind, but I took the liberty of planning a couple of surprises for you once we get into Tokyo. One of them you'll get once we arrive, and the other when we're alone on the rooftop where we shared our first kiss. I thought that such a momentous occasion as this deserved the special significant scenic backdrop." He reveals with a smile as he tosses off one of the rocks into the water that he had picked up from the ground earlier, to skip.

"Won't you tell me what they are?" she asks playfully as she stands there looking as excited as she has ever been in his company.

Smiling Tenchi replies "It's a secret...but I'm pretty sure that you'll like it...at least I know the *Sakuya* part of you will."

She smiles back.

"Tenchi?"

"Yes?"

"May I ask you a question?"

"Sure, but I'm afraid you already did..." he says jokingly to her to try and lighten the moment "...you'll have to ask me a *second* question..." he chuckles.

She smiles warmly at him once more "Silly...I wanna ask you something...Something's been bothering me ever since I found out that you were in love with Sakuya back when I used to be Yugi. It's been bothering me worse lately since I've been reawakened.

What was it that made you fall in love with her? When I created her I never intentioned for her to fall in love with you like she eventually did. She was only supposed to drive you and the girls further apart through her presence in your life...like Hotsuma did with Ryoko. He never loved her but he pretended to, to get close to her."

"Wow..." he says, taken aback "I certainly never expected for you to ask me anything like *that*." He pauses "I dunno...*everything* I guess." he lets out another moment of silence to ponder further. "It was her compassion more than anything else that attracted me to her."

She smiles.

"Any particular events come to mind, if you don't mind my asking?"

He chuckles at her innocent curiosity as he fondly recalls various memories that he has of her. "Well...I can definitely recall the events that happened at the school's fair." He sits down and leans back against a nearby tree. Trina follows suit by sitting down next to him Indian-style. "I know Ayeka and the others didn't mean for things to turn out the way that they did...but when they showed up...all *hell* broke loose. Anyway, Washu wound up creating a modified mechanical rat that wrecked all the booths at the fair, including the crepe stand we all helped to build for you. Imagine my frustration when I found out that that ridiculous thing was barreling down upon you, and there was nothing that I could do to save you from it. I was really scared that you might get hurt...or worse."

"Me...?" she asks as she scoots up closer to him without even realizing it.

"...Uh, I mean Sakuya...sorry, force of habit."

Trina smiles for a moment, then chuckles. "Yeah, I remember that...that was *some* day, wasn't it?" She adds as she begins to recall the events fondly herself.

"Yeah, it was. I was really upset with the girls over that. When I went to apologize to Sakuya about it, I was amazed at how calm she remained about the whole thing. It was very encouraging. She actually managed to calm *me* down. I didn't think that was possible...I was pretty darned upset." He chuckles slightly "She said she wanted to thank them for saving her life..." he says as he gazes dreamily into Trina's deep green eyes, quickly losing himself in his thoughts. He adds "...as if they weren't the ones responsible for the whole thing in the first place..."

"Yeah...I could see that they meant no harm. They were only trying to protect you...even if they were being a little smothering. There was no need for me to get angry at them." She replies. "Truthfully...I kinda envied them. I wished that I were a part of your life like they were...it was times like that that served to remind me of how much a part of your life I *wasn't*...I felt alone..."

Yet, I never felt more alone and left out than the time I went to your house during your family Anniversary day." She recalls pensively. "I *still* wanna cry when I think of it sometimes." She admits to him. "It was easily one of the worst days of my life." She adds with a sniffle indicating that she is still pretty emotionally affected by that incident.

"...But you were *never* alone..." he replies to her gazing at her more deeply "I loved you even then. I cared for you *very* deeply. It didn't mean anything to me or matter whether you were the most *popular* girl at school, or the *least*...I loved you for *you*. I couldn't ask for a better friend...or *girlfriend*...you were perfect to me..."

"I'm just now starting to see how much I meant to you and how much *you* mean to Me." she replies without even considering how awkward that statement must have sounded to anyone listening nearby. Trina reciprocates his actions by staring longingly back at him losing herself in the moment as well. Tenchi gently raises his left hand and gingerly

places it on the right cheek of her face, caressing it softly. He begins to draw closer to her to initiate a kiss.

For a moment she allows him to do so, choosing to instead follow her heart rather than that of her rational thought. Closing her eyes and losing herself in a moment of pure ecstasy, she allows him to run his hand and fingers through her long silky-black hair.

She exhales softly at his pleasingly delicate masculine touch. It's one of the warmest, most secure feelings she has ever experienced in her relatively short life, and she yearns for the pleasantness of it. She wants to bask in this euphoric state for as long as she can before finally letting it go. The closer they draw in to each other the more natural their nearness begins to feel. She can barely overcome the pleasantly dizzying, yet exhilarating tingle of her rising adrenaline as it very quickly threatens to overtake her sense of reason. Despite her best efforts to break away she cannot force herself to do so. Their lips almost meet. She can feel the warm air from their excited breaths intermingling softly and caressing her flushed face. Finally letting her mind lead her back to rational thought, and setting aside her innermost feelings, she tenderly pulls back from him to try to avoid the inevitable "...Tenchi...I...I know I want to...but...I just can't. I don't know why." she lets out softly. She quickly fans her flustered face with her left hand, giving her more air. "I...*wow*...is it *me* or is it getting *hot* out here?" She muses. "I'm so sorry...I don't know what came over me."

Suddenly Washu pops up through one of her worm-hole portals, interrupting them. "Hiya guys...I hope I didn't interrupt anything."

They quickly pull apart much further pretending that nothing had happened.

"Uh, no Washu...what's going on?" Tenchi asks abashedly.

"I just finished modifying the worm-hole generator I'm loaning you guys. This one is simply *amazing*, if I do say so myself..." she says as she proudly tosses it to Tenchi. "All you have to do is toss it onto the ground and it'll activate. The correct coordinates have already been preprogrammed. It should drop you off a few blocks from your old school Tenmangu-High, so there should be no need for any confusion."

"Thanks Washu..." Tenchi replies.

"Good luck with your field-trip. I hope the both of you find what you're looking for."

With a wink, Washu ducks back into the worm-hole. Before she completely disappears she adds teasingly. "By the way...I never saw the both of you almost kiss just now."

Tenchi turns toward Trina and gives her a very embarrassed smile. "Sorry. I couldn't help myself there for a moment."

"No harm done." She replies as she stares back out at the lake. "For a moment there, I

almost lost myself in the moment to. It looks like we're both having difficulty reconciling our feelings for one another."

They both share a light-hearted chuckle together.

"Well, looks like this is it...are you ready?" Tenchi says to her.

She nods her head yes.

"Great. I have a feeling that this trip will change the course of our lives, *forever...*" Smiling, he quickly tosses the small star-shaped device onto the ground. Instantly the device activates and generates a sustained stabilized worm-hole field. Grabbing his young companion by the hand, he gives her a warm smile then jumps in.

CHAPTER 7

Tokyo or Bust

It's hard to imagine what it feels like to have ones molecules completely taken apart one-by-one, then transmitted several miles away via airborne particles and finally reassembled together again in less than a fraction of a second. But in reality that's exactly what both Tenchi and Trina had to go through as they voluntarily underwent the transfer process to transport them from Tenchi's hometown of Okayama to the bustling metropolis known as Tokyo Japan.

Tenchi and Trina appear at the other end of the portal in Tokyo nearly instantaneously. Quickly looking around, Trina immediately recognizes the place that they were sent. It's the outer courtyard in front of the Tsuchida shrine.

"Tenchi...I *remember* this place." She extols as she playfully twirls herself around. "You used to train here...Its weird but...I remember bringing you breakfast here on occasion before we went to school."

Tenchi gives her a comforting smile before he adds "Yeah...that was one of the high points of our relationship..."

Trina chuckles for a moment then adds "You were such a good sport to. I know my breakfasts weren't that good. At that time I still couldn't cook very well. But you went on ahead and ate them anyway. You always were such a sweetheart." she muses.

He chuckles at her playful yet brutally honest self-examination.

"Yeah...but it was the thought that counted." He points out.

"Maybe...but you gotta admit, at least you didn't have to suffer for *too* long. After I

started taking gourmet-cuisine classes the quality of my culinary work improved dramatically."

"I'll say...I didn't have to hold my breath at every bite anymore..." he jokes. They both happily kick their heads back and enjoy a moment of pure joviality together, in a way that they haven't done in a very long time. The day is finally beginning to turn around for the better, for young Juraian mutant as she begins to relax and allow herself to enjoy her time with Tenchi alone. It has dramatically changed from a day of dread, to a day that she will cherish as a member of her fondest memories.

"Hey Tenchi..."

"Yes Sakuya...?"

"Remember that crazy afternoon where pseudo-dad kidnapped me and ran all over town shouting..."

"Love...love...love...love...love." they both chorus together in congenial laughter.

Tenchi then spouts back in a monotone fashion imitating the once threatening creation of Matori in jest "...I want you...to be *mine*..." at this Trina laughs even harder. By now her side is beginning to ache and her eyes tear.

Taking a moment to comment on that day, Tenchi adds a more serious statement "...I think that was the day I *really* began to realize how much you meant to me."

"Really?"

"Well, yeah...we were having difficulties staying apart from one another, remember? Once my dad found you and brought you back to my place...I was happier than I'd been for days. He really helped me to put things into perspective by that visit. When you finally ran out I *had* to stop you. I wanted you to stay there with me but I didn't know how to voice it."

"You *did*...? You never mentioned..."

"I know..." he says interrupting her "I was having a difficult time coming to grips with my feelings for you then."

"...my...how things have *changed*. You have *no* problem admitting your feelings for me now...I mean to Sakuya...especially after our time together in the dream-world."

"Yeah...I guess I don't." He says softly. Once more they have positioned themselves in such a way as to initiate a kiss. This time however Trina is unable to pull herself away from it in time.

They kiss for what seems like hours, until...

Realizing what they are doing they both quickly pull away from each other with embarrassed looks on their faces. He lightly grabs her hand and begins holding it softly as he stares into her deep-green eyes longingly once more.

In a happy moment, Trina looks over to her left and sees silhouettes of three young women and two young men standing under a nearby tree. She briefly squints her eyes to make out who they are. Stepping out of the heavily shadowed area into the light she finally sees who they truly are; it's Sakuya's friends from school Sugano, Yoshinaga, Matsuno, Amagasaki, and Tsuchida Umanosuke.

Overjoyed, Trina's eyes widen happily as she smiles from ear to ear.

"*Surprise!*" Tenchi calls out as he slightly gestures toward the small group for her to join. She quickly runs over to them to reunite with her old friends, giving them all warm hugs.

"Sakuya...is that *you*?" Matsuno says as she gives her another gigantic hug. "...Oh my goodness...It's so good to see you again..."

"I've missed you *all*..." Trina tells them.

"Yeah, we missed you to Sakuya...it just hasn't been the same here after you and Tenchi left." Yoshinaga chimes in.

"I'll say..." Tsuchida replies as he quickly grabs Tenchi by the neck and forcibly inflicts a playful noogie on him. Amagasaki swiftly joins in on the antics.

"C'mon guys...cut it out. Be *cool*." Tenchi pleads while desperately trying to compose himself in front of the giddy girls.

Sugano interrupts by playfully grabbing some of Trina's extremely long hair saying "Wow...your hair *grew*...Its *beautiful*. It's longer than both *mine* and Yoshinaga's. How'd you get it to grow so *long* so *quickly*?"

Jokingly Trina replies by cheerfully shrugging her shoulders. "It must've been a growth-spurt, I guess."

They all look at each other and playfully laugh as they say out in unison "...hair weave..." Trina joins them in their laughter as she cheerfully acknowledges the good-natured insult.

Yoshinaga lightheartedly jabs Trina with her elbow in her right side. "So...I see you and Tenchi *finally* hooked up."

"Yeah...it certainly took you two long enough..." Amagasaki adds in.

Trina's cheeks suddenly turn beet-red. "Tenchi and me...*together*...?" she adds as she playfully grabs him by the arm and gives him a side hug mischievously showing off to her friends. "I guess a lot *has* happened to Tenchi and me since I last saw all of you together."

"As I recall..." Tenchi exhales out politely correcting his friends "...Sakuya and I *dated* while we were still attending school in Tenmangu. It should be as no surprise. I can't believe that you don't remember it."

"Well, *yeah*...duh..." Amagasaki adds in being playfully sarcastic. "How could I *forget* you going out with such a *babe* as Sakuya...But you guys seem *different* somehow? More like a couple now."

"We *do*?" Trina asks as she quizzically looks herself up and down. "That's *good*, right?"

"Of *course* it's good...How *else* would we have meant it?" Her friend Sugano adds in.

"So, uh...wudda you all wanna do?" Tenchi asks as he nervously shoves his left hand into his pocket "Saku...I mean Trina and I have all evening to hang out."

They all stop dead in their tracks and question them about the change in first names.

"*Trina*, where in the hell did *that* come from?" Amagasaki asks outright while scratching his head.

"Yeah Sakuya...wuts up with that?" Matsuno interjects. "Is that some sort of cute pet name or something...?"

Exhaling in exasperation over the subject Trina replies wearily "Long story...I'll have to tell it to you all sometime."

"Yeah...but in the meantime, let's figure out where exactly we all want to go." Yoshinaga suggests.

"Let's go to the Hachiko statue." Sugano proposes.

"I have a *better* idea...let's go to Yomiuriland. We haven't been there together in *ages*." Matsuno interjects.

"Great idea..." Umanosuke concludes. "We're gonna have a *great* time there."

As the small intrepid group of friends depart to the local amusement park, both Tenchi and Trina turn to stare at one another with trepidation on their faces; Tenchi because he doesn't particularly enjoy nausea inducing amusement-park thrill rides, and Trina because of the disturbing nightmare that she just experienced the previous night, that coincidentally took place in the very same amusement park that they are headed toward today.

CHAPTER 8

Boiling Point

After the small group happily arrives at the bustling amusement park, Tenchi instinctively grabs Trina's hand and squeezes tightly as soon as he spots one of the park's most dangerous looking rollercoaster. He quickly swallows down hard as he slowly allows his eyes to follow the entire length of the foreboding looking ride.

"...The *Widowmaker*..." he lets out in a hushed whispery tone appearing as nervous as he could possibly be, though unintentional.

"Tenchi...are you ok?" Trina quickly asks him as she notices the change in pressure that he's applying to her hand.

"I uh...you know me...I'm doing fine." He lets out, trying to put up a false front to the rest of the group. Trina giggles playfully as she spots him twitching his nose like he always does when he's not being particularly truthful.

"Its ok..." she whispers to him in jest "We'll try to take it easy on you. I know how you feel about rollercoaster's." She quickly ends her statement by giving him a quick peck on his cheek to help him take his mind off the whole scenario.

The others giggle gleefully as they witness the young couple interacting with each other so amorously.

"Awww..." Yoshinaga lets out "...aren't they cute together...? Tenchi and Sakuya are absolutely adorable..." she adds.

"So you two...how serious is the relationship...?" Umanosuke just blurts out in front of the others.

Sugano adds in with her comment "Yeah...both of you just up and disappeared at the same time for nearly a year...you didn't go elope, have children, or do anything crazy like that, did ya?"

Trina's face turns beet-red again as she attempts to answer her friend's many questions.

"Have kids? Of *course* not. We...uh..." she stumbles as she tries to fumble for the correct response to give them.

"Guys...You know us better than *that*..." Tenchi jumps in to let Trina off the hook. "If we had gotten married or anything...you all would've been the *first* ones to get the invitations. It was just a coincidence that we both disappeared at the same time." He tells

them.

"Uh huh...I'm sure it was..." Yoshinaga replies sarcastically in a playful yet prodding tone "And I suppose the same coincidence is involved with the both of you showing up again at the same time, huh?" she adds while playfully jabbing Tenchi in his right-side.

Trina quizzically looks over her shoulder from the corner of her eye and spots a cat rounding a nearby corner. She stops immediately to catch a better glimpse of it.

"Sakuya...is everything ok?" Sugano asks her. "...You looking for someone?"

"No...I just thought I saw a cat. It was identical to one I saw last night..." she tells them. "For a second it appeared as though it were following us."

"Following us...? Why would a cat be following *us*?" Yoshinaga lets out. "Boy Sakuya...you'll do *anything* to get out of talking about Tenchi and you...will you?"

Not paying too much attention to the pending conversation Trina immediately excuses herself from the group and heads toward the area that she spotted the cat. Turning to her left, she spots it again rounding an isolated corner. At this point she is starting to run full-fledge toward the area that she spotted the retreating feline.

As she nears the corner she spots Tenchi from the corner of her eye chasing after her.

Much to her confusion, as she rounds the corner she notices that the area is empty. There isn't a cat anywhere to be seen. And with the way the area is situated, there is nowhere that the cat could have run off to either. It appears to have completely disappeared without a trace.

"What? Where did the cat go?" she says to herself as Tenchi finally reaches her. "Tenchi...I know this is going to sound *crazy*...but the cat I saw last night on my windowsill just ducked into this alleyway. I think it's been following us."

He briefly glances down the alleyway and sees nothing but the emptiness of it lay out before them.

"I know what you're thinking Tenchi, but you're *wrong*...that cat *was* here." She insists as she sternly asserts her statement.

Tenchi gives her a peculiar expression as he tries to come up with an adequate explanation for the missing feline.

"Maybe the cat was some sort of hallucination...I read somewhere that people can start seeing things if they don't get enough food to eat when they take certain types of medication...perhaps your vitamin-X pills require you to eat a little bit more during your meals..."

Not accepting his explanation, she quickly snaps back "I *know* what I saw...I just wish that everyone else would stop treating me like I'm crazy and *believe* me for once." She makes one last conspicuous glance down both sides of the alleyway to make sure that it is empty before making her next frustrated reply. "Sometimes I wish I could just *give* away these *stupid* powers...they've given me *nothing* but grief...*Dammit...!*

Back on Jurai they caused me...

...*Yugi*...

...*whoever* the *hell* I am...

...*nothing* but endless trouble! And even then, *nobody* gave a damn about my personal welfare! Just because they didn't understand anything about me I was presumed dangerous. They labeled me a monster and sent me away to be exiled in a tiny hibernation chamber set adrift in deep space for all eternity! My problems have *always* been about these *stupid* powers, and I'm *sick* of it!" she says with such unbridled frustration that she nearly succumbs to tears.

"Saku...*Trina*...calm down. Please...nobody is accusing you of anything..." Tenchi says as he tries to place his hand on her shoulder to comfort her.

She angrily shrugs his hand away. "Damn you...! *Stop* it...don't *patronize* me...If you think I'm *crazy* then *say* so...otherwise...don't..." she begins to say, but never finishes. She quickly calms down and apologizes to him. "I...I'm sorry." she tells him "I've just been under a lot of stress lately is all..." she reveals to him "I didn't mean to snap at you..."

"Don't worry about it." He calmly replies to her "I guess we've all had our lives turned upside down lately. And poor you...you've had to go through *so* much during your lifetime. I apologize for making you think that I thought of you as being crazy..."

She forces up a warm smile as she stares familiarly into his eyes. She quickly steps over to him grabbing his arm and resting her head gently on his right shoulder. "Let's forget about all the *craziness* that just happened. I wanna just enjoy the rest of this day." She says to him. "Can we...?"

"Deal..." he replies warmly to her "C'mon, lets head back to the others. I'm sure they're all worried about us by now."

"Hey, I've got an idea...how 'bout we take pictures together at that booth I saw at the entrance of the park...?" she suggests happily.

"Ok...sounds like fun." Tenchi replies clutching her even tighter as they bask in the glow of each others welcoming touch. They both happily head back to rejoin the others arm-in-arm, determined to enjoy the rest of the day as much as humanly possibly.

Meanwhile several meters away, the cat that Trina had just recently described was witnessing the entire spectacle on bated breath. Unknown to both Trina and Tenchi the cat is totally invisible, a fact that has kept it from being seen up until now. After Tenchi and Trina are well out of visual range, the cat quickly becomes visible again, and physically transforms its shape to that of Matori.

"Hmmm...Now *that* was informative. This day just keeps getting better and better." Matori says to herself with a devilish smile as she quickly formulates a change of plan "...so, the little *pipsqueak* wants to do away her powers. I could use this information to my advantage...this gives me a brilliant idea. Why settle for petty revenge? If I play my cards right I might just be able to *take* those powers from her." She pauses for a moment then happily adds "With *Yugi's* abilities as my own, *nobody* could stand in my way..."

...and the beauty of it is, with her taking those *stupid* vitamin-X pills inhibiting her ability to use her powers against me...taking them away from her would be like shooting fish in a barrel." Matori laughs maniacally as she concocts her newest nefarious plan. Snapping her finger she disappears from sight ready to set into motion the events that will get her newest plan to come to fruition.

CHAPTER 9

Hostile Takeover

As Trina and Tenchi slowly make their way back to the awaiting group, she quickly decides to make a side trip to a nearby restroom to sprinkle a little water onto her face, in order to keep refreshed and to help her remain focused during the rest of the day. She also plans to take another dose of the vitamin-X pills that Washu gave her earlier so that she can further stave off the effects of her out-of-control superpowers.

Oblivious to the future danger that awaits her within, Trina blissfully walks into the ladies restroom, to take her short sabbatical.

"Hello pipsqueak...ya miss me?" Matori casually quips as she swiftly accosts the unprepared young woman. With her left hand around Trina's neck quickly discouraging her from trying to squirm loose; she uses her right hand to power up an energy charge that she immediately unleashes directly into Trina's forehead. "Don't mind me...I'm just collecting a little something that rightfully should've been *mine*."

Reflexively recoiling in terror, Trina inadvertently releases an extremely powerful energy blast of her own, that sends her former creation reeling through two bathroom stalls and into an opposing wall nearly knocking her senseless. Stunned, Matori remains there against the wall for a few moments attempting to regain her bearings. She slowly places her debris covered hand over her scalp seemingly relieving an awful headache. She moves a tuft of her raven-colored hair from before her face so that she can see Trina more clearly without having to look through it. She fumes with anger.

"Why you *little*..." Matori begins angrily, yet never completes her sentence. "You must still somehow have a residual link to your powers. No matter...just a little while longer, and you'll be totally defenseless."

"Leave me *alone*..." Trina replies courageously, as she boldly stands up to her like a true warrior. "I don't want to hurt you, but I *will* defend myself if I have to."

Never uttering a single word in reply, Matori cracks a silently sly grin then summarily snaps her fingers and disappears off from the scene.

Immediately after, Tenchi and the others quickly make their way into the restroom to investigate. The haze of debris from the damaged bathroom wall Matori nearly came crashing through still hangs wispily in the air like a thick fog.

Elsewhere Matori has already rematerialized, and is now pondering her current state of affairs. She is not happy about the outcome of her confrontation at all.

"There *must* be a way to take those powers from that little *runt* without her being able to physically fight me off." She ponders. She crosses her arms once more and comfortably leans against a tree to concentrate much harder "If only she had a weakness..."

She briefly conjures a holographic image of the entire Masaki household from her left hand. Glancing at it intently her eyes quickly fixate on Ayeka and her two guardians; Azaka and Kamidake.

"...That's *it*!" Matori muses. "Trina is *Juraian*. I'll bet there's an archive or something in that hibernation chamber she got sent to earth in..." She enjoys a brief moment of maniacal laughter, then quickly spirits away.

For both Tenchi and Trina, thankfully the rest of the afternoon has remained blissfully uneventful. Their friends have all parted ways with them for nightfall, and the lonesome couple is now left, wondering what to do with the remainder of the evening.

Trina stands at the railing on the roof of one of the buildings from Tenmangu the high-school they once attended, and looks out over the large campus. The moon beautifully reflects a warm defused glow from her flawlessly sculpted face. For a moment she's transfixed, unable to move a muscle as she stares out over the scenic backdrop. Her long black hair billows softly in the breeze.

Without even looking she quickly shoves her left hand into her jacket pocket and pulls out the photographs that she and Tenchi had took together earlier that day in one of the many picture booths featured at the fair-grounds.

"I *love* these pictures." She chimes off as she quickly flips through them. "They make you look so *handsome*. I can't *wait* to set them up on my nightstand." She reveals to him.

He chuckles "Only if you let *me* pick the one *I* wanna hang *first*..." Tenchi exhales as he mischievously grabs the pile from her hands and teasingly fishes through them. Purposely pulling out the most unflattering picture that he can find in the bunch he holds it up and impishly tells her "I want *this* one..." He then laughs harder as he gets the physical reaction from her face that he was looking for.

Trina gasps in horror. "Hey...*gimme* that." She says playfully pouting. "I don't want that *ugly* thing being put on display for the whole world to see. It's positively *dreadful*." She moves to quickly take it back from him but he's too fast for her and snatches it out of her reach before she can touch it. Playfully jumping into his arms she futilely tries once more to wrestle it from his outstretched fingertips.

"Eh...eh...eh..." Tenchi says jokingly "Its *mine* now. You'll have to get your *own*." He says while sticking his tongue out at her.

She makes one last-ditch effort to grab the photo back from him but before long she finds herself unable to continue the playful façade, and as a result both end up engaging each other in another impassioned kiss similar to the one they shared in front of the Tsuchida shrine before meeting up with their friends.

After they finally pull themselves away from each other they happily share a good-natured laugh together.

"Tenchi..."

"Yes?"

"Thank you for today. Thank you for everything. Arranging for me to see my friends...taking me out to the park...and even leading me up here to the spot where we first kissed. You don't know how much this day has meant to me..."

Tenchi slowly wraps his arm around her shoulder. For an instant time seems to stand still and Trina recalls with perfect clarity the memory of when Sakuya and Tenchi last shared a moment together on this same roof-top alone many months ago.

"Sakuya...I mean, Trina..." Tenchi tenderly lets out while shaking his head in disbelief over his inability to break the habit of referring to her by the name of his first true love.

She looks over into his eyes and tells him softly "It's ok...I know how hard you've tried. You can call me Sakuya if you like...It really doesn't matter to me anymore. I'm no longer confused over who I am. Today has shown me a lot of things...not the least of which is; even if Yugi is still a part of me, I now identify with being Sakuya Kumashiro."

At this he gives her a warm smile then continues his prior statement. "Sakuya, do you remember the last time we were up here together?" he asks gently.

She slowly nods her head.

"I remember it." Tenchi reveals. "It was the first time in my life that things seemed...so *right*. I actually allowed myself for the first time, for one instant...to forget all about my family problems and just follow my heart."

A tiny tear trickles down Sakuya's left cheek as she listens intently to him revealing to her his innermost thoughts and feelings, and she begins to finally pour her heart out to him as well.

"Tenchi...I'm so sorry about all that stuff I did to you as Yugi...I had *no* idea what I was truly doing to you...to *us*."

"It's ok." He says in interruption. "You were just confused. It could've happened to anybody. I don't blame you...none of the other girls do either."

"Thank you for defending me, but that's no excuse. What I've done to you is inexcusable. You shouldn't let me off the hook that easily. If the tables were turned and I was in your position...I don't know if I'd be capable of that level of forgiveness..."

"Well...thank goodness the tables aren't turned..." he replies slyly nearly winking at her.

"Tenchi, you've always been really sweet to me...even when I didn't deserve it. I know now that I'm finally ready to be with you...to give myself over to you...heart and soul. But to do that I want to make sure that I'm completely honest with you. I don't want to rekindle our relationship based on lies. I want this to be grounded in honesty and trust. You deserve that. And so...I've a confession to make. Please don't hate me when you hear the truth."

"How could you say that? *Nothing* could make me hate you, Sakuya."

"I sure hope that's true." She takes a deep breath before commencing in an attempt to mentally brace herself for the possible repercussion that may occur because of her sincere revelation.

"Can it wait...?" he asks her "I had something that I wanted to give you...it was kinda important."

"I only wish that it could." She reveals to him trembling under the sheer weight of her own nervousness.

"Ok then...you first." Tenchi lets out with a warm smile. "I'm sure that it can't be all *that* bad..."

"Here's hoping..." She takes a deep breath then exhales.

"I'm not really sure *how* to tell you all this, so I'll just go out and say it bluntly. Back when I was Yugi I led you to believe that I broke you two up because it was a necessary part to my plans. But that's not true at all. I admit that it was a *small* part...but certainly not the *whole* reason behind my actions. Truthfully I broke you two up and tried to kill you just for spite because I was jealous and wanted revenge.

And also, a small part of me felt sorry for her in the way that you treated her at first.

She poured her *heart* out to you, but you *strung* her along for *months* not telling her the truth about how you *really* felt, when it was *obvious* that you cared deeply about her. I *saw* what happened in Station Park that night between you, Sakuya, and Ryoko. I was *there*. I was also there for your *Tenchi Anniversary*...I watched you let the girls insult, threaten, demean, and blame poor Sakuya, while you just stood there and did *nothing*. It tore me apart.

And when you *finally* decided to be with her, I *hated* the fact that you and she were so happy together after all you've done to her while at the same time I was left to be so miserable and alone.

In my frustration I lashed out. I wanted to make somebody pay...to hurt like I did...so I elected you to be the person to do so. I'm truly sorry...

Don't get me wrong Tenchi I'm not saying that I *still* blame you for all those things, or that I have any hard feelings over it...I only wanted to explain to you how those instances made me feel at the time, and what I did about them. How they alienated me...They affected me profoundly...but I'm over it all now."

Saying nothing in reply Tenchi's face tenses up as he listens to her heartfelt confession. He steps back from her and looks out over the school campus lost in contemplative thought.

"Tenchi...aren't you going to say anything?" She asks as she goes to grab his right shoulder. He gruffly shrugs off her touch.

"What do you want me to say? That I'm upset...? *Fine*...! I'm upset. Y'know...I've heard some pretty rotten things in my life, but to hear that you *purposely* tried to hurt and kill me just cause you were *jealous*...and because you blamed *me* for hurting her feelings...that's...unbelievable.

I can't believe you...What did I ever do to deserve you attempting to *kill* me?"

"I..." she lets out as she tries to explain, but is cut off before she can finish.

"No...*you* listen to me *Yugi*...I welcomed you into my home with open arms. I called you my friend. I even considered making you part of my family."

Pausing only briefly to compose himself he adds "Did you know that I contacted Washu earlier this morning to have her separate my *personal* gem into 2 different parts so that I could give you *half* of it?"

"...You *did*?" she replies in shock.

"Yeah...I *did*, *against* everyone's wishes I might add. I wanted to make you feel a part of my family like all the others. Because I *thought* you were somebody that could be *trusted*, someone that we could count on. But honestly...you don't have any loyalty to *anyone*, do you? Everyone's just a pawn...somebody to use up so that you can get what you want."

Letting her tears flow she replies to him. "I deserved that...look, I won't even try to give you any excuses for what I did. All I can give you is my apology and hope that you can forgive me for my past actions."

"I...I don't know if I ever can..." He replies to her solemnly as he begins to walk away heading toward the protective railing at the edge of the rooftop. "You wanna know what the funniest thing about all this craziness is?" he lets out in frustration "I'm having an argument with you, but I don't truly know *who* I'm having the argument with. Is it with Trina, Yugi, Sakuya...who?"

Not attempting to stop him from leaving she speaks once again.

"Y'know...for the longest time I felt sorry for myself because I didn't have a *real* past, family, or even friends to fall back on. I only saw myself as a projected self-image of a tormented little girl that was only seeking to acquire *real* friends of her own. But I had to grow up; I had to come to grips with the harsh reality of my existence. Unlike anybody else I've ever known here on the earth, I *am* different. I'm the result; like it or not...good or bad, of a mishap that happened out on an alien planet that I know *nothing* about. And y'know...rotten luck or not, it's just my lot in life. I've got to learn to live with it. And I will.

Please Tenchi...you must realize...no matter what happened in the past with me as Yugi doesn't change the fact that I still love you today as Sakuya. Please don't shut me out. You meant the world to *her*...and you also mean the world to *me*..."

He pauses for a moment to listen to her words then adds "I don't know *what* to think of all this. I don't know whether to think of you as Trina, Sakuya, Yugi, *both*...or none of the above. You're right, I really don't know *who* you are...and that scares me because I've already developed deep feelings for you as Sakuya, but I also don't know if I can trust you anymore. I mean...good grief...you just openly admitted to willingly wanting to kill me as Yugi. Before it was just a matter of her carrying out her plans...and I accepted that. It was hard for me...but I adapted. But you've suddenly made it all personal. And the worst part of it is...she's still alive within you. How can I ever relax knowing that a part of

you probably still wants to see me dead?"

She looks away for a moment then replies. "First of all Tenchi, I know what you're doing...stop distancing yourself from me by calling me Yugi. Don't you see; I can understand what you mean...perhaps more so than anyone else can?" A tear rolls down her cheek. "I'm sure it must be really hard for you seeing me as anything other than Yugi...that blond-haired little girl in the red overcoat that used to be best-friends with Sasami. That evil little mutant child that wanted nothing more than to strike out at the world...but I'm *not* her anymore. Hell, I'm starting to doubt if I ever *was*...I've evolved...*grown*."

"Damn it Yugi...!"

"The name is *Sakuya*...!" she forces out in correction of him.

"That's *not* fair. How did you expect me to react? Its not that I *don't* want to be with you...its not that I don't *love* you...I really *do*...but I wanna make sure that the woman I settle down with, be it you or somebody else, is somebody that I really know. With you, I feel that I'm only with you because of the person you *used* to be, not because of who you are right now. And honestly I'm not entirely certain that I can even trust you anymore...I don't think it's fair to you, or either of us." Tenchi tells her.

"What are you trying to say Tenchi?"

"I guess what I'm trying to tell you is...until we can resolve all these issues, I think we should just be friends."

"*Friends*...? Are you kidding me Tenchi? So...you're dumping me, huh? Just like *that*?" she lets out in shock but remains eerily calm. She briefly allows her eyes to drift over at his nose so that she can check to see if he's not being completely truthful to her. Unfortunately no such confirmation occurs. He is telling her the truth.

Tenchi says nothing but nods in reciprocation.

Nodding her head trying to remain as composed as humanly possible, while at the same time give the appearance that she's disaffected by the decision, she jokingly replies "Hey...I guess that means I'll be vying for your affections now just like Ayeka, Ryoko, and the others."

"Yeah...I suppose it does..." he replies while trying to force up an uncomfortable smile.

"I guess I kinda expected you to shrug it all off like you always do..." she quietly yet numbly reveals to him "But you surprised me...you *didn't* this time."

"Well, I'm sorry..."

"Don't be...I'll be ok. I'm a survivor. I'm used to being alone." she says with a smile slyly trying to give Tenchi a guilt-trip in order to subconsciously force him to reconsider. After composing herself once more she says "And besides...I may not be able to fly, create energy fields, or shoot laser beams from my hands like any of the other girls, but what I lack in superpowers, I'll make *sure* to make up for in the other departments. I promise you Tenchi, I *will* win your heart and your trust back...fair and square. I did it once, I can do it again."

"I just need a little more time to get comfortable with everything that just happened. I have to get used to the fact that you aren't Yugi anymore, and that it's ok for me to be in love with you."

She smiles. "I understand...and I really appreciate how honest and upfront with me you've been about the whole thing..."

"No...Thank *you*." He quickly throws his arm around her shoulder, but this time in a purely platonic fashion. His sudden change in demeanor nearly forces her to lose her composure and cry. She is clearly hurt and numbed by the ordeal. "C'mon, let's go home." He tells her.

Tenchi immediately looks down and notices that the crystal that normally hangs safely around his neck has begun to glow brilliantly.

Suddenly a voice out of nowhere calls out from behind them.

CHAPTER 10

Phantasm Revealed

Tenchi quickly turns around to see Matori silently hovering several meters over the ground.

"Ahhhhhhhh...ain't that touching. It's positively heart-wrenching...the little pip-squeek and her boyfriend have just broken up..." she lets out condescendingly with mock sympathy and enthusiasm in her voice "Well, it looks like I've come at just the right time. With what I've in store for the two of you, you won't live long enough to have to suffer through the agonizing pain of the break up anyway." she says as her eyes begin to glow intensely.

She silently disappears from sight and in an instant reappears right in front of Sakuya. "I'm not going to kill you here..." whispering in her ear she adds "I have something more interesting planned for the both of you." She says as she briskly grabs the frightened young woman and immediately spirits away from the rooftop.

Seeing them both vanish into thin air right before his eyes, Tenchi quickly takes a defensive stance and looks around to see if she might've rematerialized anywhere behind him in order to take advantage of a brief moment of disorientation to lash out with a surprise offensive strike to his rear. Unfortunately, neither his ex-girlfriend nor her abductor is anywhere to be seen.

Much to his surprise, in the distance he suddenly hears an explosion sound off. Looking up over his left shoulder, he spots a thickly billowing smoke-cloud of dust and debris erupting from a nearby campus classroom building.

"That's the *chemistry*-lab building...!" Tenchi quickly lets out without even thinking "*Oh no!*"

Seconds later before he can react, the top floor of that same building spontaneously bursts into flames. In horror Tenchi hurriedly scurries down the building stairwell over to the structure he just saw catch ablaze in an attempt to rescue his kidnapped ex-girlfriend.

"*Hold on Sakuya...I'm coming for you!*" he yells aloud as he sprints toward the burning building hurtling a small lunch-table set directly along his path.

As he nears it, several bits of falling debris still cascade downward from the upper floors above. One of the smoldering pieces of metal from the blast hits him on his right arm and quickly tears a small hole through his coat sleeve. This alerts him to further danger up ahead. Now mentally prepared for dangerous falling objects, he quickly avoids being hit by a large burning furnace that had blown its way from the penthouse of the structure and landing mere inches in front of him. By swiftly performing one of the useful dodging techniques that he had learned while studying under Master Tsuchida while he apprenticed at his shrine in Tokyo, he is able to easily avoid even more untimely brushes with sudden death.

Finally reaching the front-door to the campus building he lets out a deep sigh of frustration because he quickly realizes that he cannot enter through this route because the front door is sturdily padlocked shut. Tenchi yanks at it for a few moments to no avail. He must find another way inside. He quickly encircles the large school building, searching for any opening large enough to accommodate him entering into the burning structure.

"I can't believe this...Matori *is* still alive." He says to himself as he makes his way to the rear of the building climbing shrubbery in an attempt to climb up to a nearby windowsill. "Sakuya was right all along. She isn't O.D.-ing or going crazy after all." He says to himself as he tries valiantly to physically push open the rear window. "If she was right about *this*...maybe she was also right about all that *other* stuff to. Maybe I *can* trust her...ahhh man...!" he exhales to himself in frustration "...I overreacted. One thing's for sure, if we get out of this alive, I promise to *never* doubt her word again..." he makes the personal resolution.

Meanwhile in the building, Matori and Sakuya are located on the top floor in one of the rooms that has up until now, remained relatively untouched by the ensuing inferno. With the way the flames are quickly inching its way around the floor, it's only a matter of time before the fire eventually reaches them.

...This however is something that Matori is ardently counting on.

"Please...don't do this, I *beg* of you. I'm *sorry*...what more do you want from me?" Sakuya pleads.

Matori cackles maniacally in her face as she reveals her true intentions to her. "Forgive me for not making myself crystal *clear* to you earlier..." Matori lets out mockingly "...this situation hasn't been about revenge since I overheard you saying you didn't want to have your powers anymore. I'm *much* more interested in taking them away from you and keeping them for myself."

"What?" Sakuya lets out in shock and disbelief "And how're you supposed to do *that Einstein*? With me taking those pills, I don't even have those abilities anymore! You're wasting your time." she retorts.

Matori laughs aloud as she quickly slaps her across the face, knocking her down stomach-first to the floor. "You *idiot*! I'm *not* stupid! You know as well as I do that those powers are still a part of you. You've just been taking those pills to *inhibit* your ability to use them. For somebody who's supposed to be so scholastically *intelligent*, you sure aren't too bright. Get this through your thick overcrowded skull; Yugi's powers are *still* there...and soon will *all* be mine."

Sakuya pauses to ponder those particularly biting words.

"How do you plan on taking them from me?" Sakuya asks as she quickly tries to formulate a viable plan rubbing her sore left-cheek. "I would *never* willingly give them to a monster like *you*! I'd rather *die* first. And now that I know your waiting for the effects of the vitamin-x pills to dull my defenses against you...I'll *never* start taking them again."

"Oh *please*, don't make me laugh..." she replies smugly "...I don't require your cooperation at all to pull off my plan. For your information, for the past few hours I've been studying you...doing research on Yugi's body from the Juraian historical archives left behind in Okutama." She smiles even more smugly at her, "That's right...I know *all* about Yugi. From her history on Jurai as the planet's most dangerous mutant, and ultimate battle against queen Hinase, to the date she was released from her original stasis chamber here on earth. I even know what nucleotides the scientists that created her used to make her body. In short...I know *everything*."

...and now that I do...I know *exactly* how to take your powers...all I have to do is take control of *your* body. It's as simple as that.

Thanks to your little friend *Yugi* blasting me a year ago eliminating my physical corporal form, I now have an astral-body similar to that of a ghost, capable of *possessing* anyone I choose. And the beauty of it all is; if Tenchi or any of those other *meddling fools* even attempt to stop me...they'll have to destroy *your* body to do it." Matori next flies in really close to within an inch of Sakuya's face in order to personally gloat to her "And here's the *clincher*...even if they *do* manage to stomach killing your body just to get at me...I can always just leave it again at a seconds notice, *with* your powers. So you see...whatever happens...*I* win." She begins to cackle maniacally once more. Quickly composing herself, she concludes "...enough of this ridiculous exposition. Its now time to claim what's rightfully *mine*."

Matori immediately lunges toward the frightened Sakuya. With Matori quickly becoming intangible, Sakuya can raise no adequate defense against her powerful attacker's ghostly astral form. She swiftly integrates herself into Sakuya's body in order to take absolute control over her. As she does so Sakuya suddenly falls lifelessly to the floor in a catatonic state.

Meanwhile, Tenchi has fortunately been able to make his way inside the burning building by wrapping his coat around his fist and using it as a boxing-glove to knock in the second-story window. Quickly learning that he can use his powerful crystal necklace as a homing device to locate Matori, he is easily able to circumnavigate the debris and smoky corridors, to find his ex-girlfriend who is being held against her will, somewhere on the top floor of the large burning five-story building.

Tenchi hastily heads up the long series of winding stairs. All around him the fire is growing hotter and more out of control. He must find her quickly if he plans on getting them both out of the building alive before it completely burns to the ground trapping them both inside.

"*Sakuya!*" he calls out as he fearlessly leaps several steps at a time in order to quickly speed his ascent toward the top-floor "*please...don't do this to me again. I can't lose you a second time. Not when I just got you back into my life! Ah man...what I wouldn't give to have Ryoko or Ayeka here right about now...*" he says to himself aloud.

His crystal immediately begins to pulsate as he nears the top of the stairwell. Suddenly a portion of the ceiling with its adjoining light fixtures separates from the building and comes crashing down through the steps of the floor right in front of him. He is barely able to dodge it in time. The large chunks of metal and concrete quickly separate him imposingly from the remainder of the steps above. With unshakable determination he briefly glances upward toward the doorway leading to the top floor. Knowing that he must somehow make it across the huge gap that now lies between him and the rest of the steps, he quickly throws all his apprehension aside, and hurtles the large hole. Now safely on the other side, he continues his frantic dash toward the door leading to the young woman that he has come so far to rescue.

CHAPTER 11

Dreamscape

Unbeknownst to Tenchi, Sakuya is already embroiled in a fight of her own which takes place within her own psyche. Though not physical in nature, the outcome of this battle will ultimately determine the fate of all mankind. Matori has successfully managed to force her way into Sakuya's body causing it to fall into a state of catatonic shock, and is now fighting with her physically personified subconscious to gain ultimate control over it.

Unknowingly Yugi's unfathomable power has somehow been subliminally tapped, her psyche split into her two dominant separate personalities of Yugi and Sakuya, and a dreamlike war-world has been created as a result that Yugi, Matori, and Sakuya can all face off with each other in.

Sakuya and Yugi immediately materialize onto this war-world and find themselves located onto terra-firma inside the strange looking dreamscape. Slightly disoriented through the dizzying experience, Yugi is the first to speak out as she gently tugs at Sakuya's familiar brown-knit sweater. "Where *are* we?"

"I...I don't know." She replies as she quickly looks around to gain her bearings. "Call me crazy...but if I didn't know any better I'd say that we were located inside your subconscious somehow."

"You mean we're somehow in my *mind*?" Yugi responds as she twists her nose up in confusion. "Figures...Somehow I always expected for it to be *brighter* in here..." she lets out disillusioned with what she sees around her "By the way Sakuya...I'm *really* sorry about what happened between you and Tenchi earlier...I feel responsible for the whole thing."

"If it's all the same, I'd rather not talk about it right now." She snaps back as she slowly wipes a growing tear from her left eye. "My *personal* love-life isn't important at this moment. We have to focus on finding Matori and stopping her."

"Fair enough..." Yugi replies to her morosely as she temporarily drops the subject.

Sakuya looks up and notices a huge spire that closely resembles that of a castle-tower not too far away. She marvels at how easily it reaches up into the sky as though attempting to stretch into infinity. At the very top she spots a large glowing pulsating orb that perpetually encircles its peak endlessly.

Off in the distance she spots Matori running toward a structure much like a castle gatehouse connected to the spire. A series of circular-shaped stone-steps located inside lead to the orb up above. "**Look**...over *there*." Sakuya immediately yells out. "If I'm not mistaken, that orb at the top must be the physical representation of your powers..."

"Then we don't have a moment to lose. Matori has a small lead on us already and its growing. We can **not** allow her to make it to the top before **us**." Yugi replies to her.

"C'mon..." Sakuya exclaims as she takes off after Matori. "She's not *too* far. If we hurry we can still catch her."

"I'm with you, Sakuya..." Yugi replies as she too begins to run feverously toward the spire as fast as her little legs can carry her.

Quickly turning around and noticing that she has pursuers, Matori stops cold to confront her advancing adversaries. "So, I see you little runts have *somehow* managed to follow me in here. No matter...in here my powers are at least equal to yours. You don't stand a chance against me." She taunts as she unleashes an energy wave at them that they barely avoid in time. It leaves a huge smoldering crater in the ground, up heaving enormous mounds of dirt and grass in the process.

"I'm going to give you one more chance to stop this madness before I'm forced to destroy you once-and-for-all." Yugi says daringly as she concentrates her power and refocuses its energy to recall her highly protective body-armor.

She immediately begins to glow then becomes engulfed in the same self-generating light. In no time at all she is fully transformed and now decked-out in the power-armor she once wore in Tokyo. Her hair is even arranged as it was with the red and black striped head-band.

She quickly forms a relatively small energy sphere in her right hand. After allowing the sphere to stabilize, she quickly throws it toward Matori. Barely missing her, the energy globe whizzes just past her head and into a nearby wall of the spire. The concussive force of the blast is powerful enough to send Matori flying backward into the adjoining hedge nearly knocking her out and temporarily halting her ascent.

"Good job..." Sakuya says to Yugi giving her a high-five as she attempts to form an energy globe of her own. However with her inexperience, the energy globe that she creates quickly fizzles and dissipates harmlessly from her hand into a quick sounding puff of smoke altogether. "**Damnit**...I'll **never** get the hang of this!" she angrily yells as she stomps her left foot in frustration.

Suddenly the unexpected occurs; Sakuya begins inexplicably coughing uncontrollably. With the sound of the dry-horse cough she's releasing it sounds exactly like she's suffering from smoke inhalation.

"Are you ok?" Yugi asks her hastily as she grabs her by the shoulder to assist her if necessary

"I...I dunno..." she lets out while briefly clearing her horse throat "It's getting harder and

harder for me to breathe. It feels like I'm breathing in smoke." She replies.

"We better hurry then, I don't know what's happening to my body in the *real* world. I just hope that the fire hasn't reached us yet." Yugi adds "But what I don't understand is why the smoke isn't affecting *me*...its not like we're not sharing the same body...if *you* breathe in smoke, *I* breathe in smoke." Yugi tells her resolutely. "First things first however, we have to **stop** Matori. Since you lack the experience in using my superpowers **I'll** have to be the one to face-off with her. But don't worry, I created this **monster**...and **I'll** be the one to destroy it, this time *once-and-for-all!*"

Sakuya coughs as she nods her head in silent approval.

"Fat chance...! You little pests are *persistent*. Let's see how well you do against my little **friends**...

Once I make it to that orb, you won't be able to stop me...and nobody in the *real* world will be able to do so either." Matori taunts as she raises her hands into the air as if to conjure something from the ether. Immediately after making this gesture several small powerful looking creatures suddenly emerge from tiny pot-holes they create in the ground. With eyes glowing, they all menacingly focus their undivided attention toward the young ill fated duo. "In order to get to me...you two have to defeat my little *friends* here first. Good luck." She adds sarcastically. She continues her jaunt once again toward the lonely spiral staircase.

As the little monsters slowly edge closer toward the duo, both Sakuya and Yugi turn toward each other with worried concern in their eyes. "Goblins..." Yugi lets out in a near panicked whisper as she recoils in fear "...These things are resistant to my powers...This isn't going to be as easy as I first thought."

Meanwhile back in the real world, Tenchi has finally reached the top-floor of the building and is trying his best to locate the room that still houses both his ex-girlfriend Sakuya and Matori inside. This is problematic because a thickly billowing curtain of smoke completely obscures his sight, making it virtually impossible to see clearly from more than a couple of feet away. If that weren't bad enough, debris, and the unrelentingly sweltering heat generated by the nearby fire crackles deafeningly all around, making this a trek of pure perseverance.

Relying completely on his crystal to help him circumnavigate the hazy floor in the right direction, he takes a leap of faith into a smoke-filled hallway, praying that a roaring fire is not located on the other side of the smoky wall.

"Sakuya...If you're ok...*please* answer me...!" he calls out frantically. No answer comes. Undaunted he pursues on. With the way the smoke is thickening, it's getting harder and harder for him to comfortably breathe, let alone hear beyond the deafening roar of the blazing fire all around. Like Sakuya in Yugi's dreamscape Tenchi begins to succumb to smoke-inhalation and starts coughing uncontrollably also. "Sakuya...I will **not** leave you

here to burn...if it's my turn to go...it will be by your side."

Tenchi makes his way to the center room of the floor. Oddly enough, it's the only room that has remained relatively untouched by the surrounding fire. He moves to open the door but quickly realizes that it's locked tight from the inside. Keeping a level-head he swiftly grabs a nearby fire extinguisher and uses it as a battering ram. After a few sharp jabs at the knob the door suddenly gives way and swings widely open.

He glances in and sees his prize. Sakuya is in the middle of the smoky room, but she's clearly unconscious and her body is disturbingly limp and lifeless. Tenchi rushes into the room to quickly retrieve her. As he grabs her he immediately places his ear up to her chest to check for a faint heartbeat.

"Don't worry Sakuya..." he whispers to her gently between coughs "I'm here now..." Just then the wall to their left gives way and crumbles to the floor. The fire that had been previously held at bay by the wall-barricade suddenly and violently erupts into the room. In a matter of seconds the young couple is now completely surrounded by an impenetrable wall of fire. Tenchi quickly looks around for an alternate route of escape but sees none. Frantic, anxious, and a little panicked, he nervously places his left hand in his pocket and miraculously runs his finger run across the star-shaped transport device that Washu had loaned them earlier. Without stopping to think he swiftly pulls out the tiny piece of electronic equipment.

"I still have Washu's transporter" he happily exclaims to himself in relief. "I'll get you out of here to safety. We're going home." He tells Sakuya's lifeless body. He quickly tosses the star onto the floor. It instantaneously activates and creates a bridge between Shibuya and Okayama. Quickly lifting Sakuya's body up and jumping into the open portal, the room suddenly collapses in upon itself. They escaped just in the nick-of-time.

After Tenchi and the unconscious young woman safely emerge from the worm-hole, he quickly jumps out of the way with Sakuya clutched firmly in his arms. As he does so, flames immediately erupt from the portal from the burning building on the other side, barely missing them. He exhales in relief only stopping long enough to briefly catch his breath before swiftly picking Sakuya back up and heading toward Washu's private laboratory.

Back in the dream world created by Sakuya, she and Yugi are up to their necks in attacking monsters. This does not bode well for them, as Matori is quickly running up the stairwell with a nice enough head-start on them to gain possession of the mystic orb; the physical manifestation of Yugi's unfathomable powers.

"We've *got* to get past these *stupid* things." Yugi proclaims as she fires off several high-powered energy blasts that seem to harmlessly bounce from their leathery hides. "We can't allow Matori to gain control of my powers. If she does the entire *universe* will suffer." Yugi exclaims with foreboding dread in her voice.

The monsters are relentless. In no time at all they have completely surrounding the young duo, and are closing in rapidly. Because Sakuya has been unable to successfully harness the internal power that resides within her, she has been forced to hastily locate an alternate means of self-defense. Luckily she has been able to utilize a nearby fallen tree branch as an effective bludgeoning weapon against Matori's aggressive demon-like horde. Due to the sheer multitude of the number of monsters, Yugi and Sakuya find that they must put their backs toward one another just so that they can fend off the impending attacks without being taken off-guard from behind.

"Sakuya..." Yugi tells her in angst "...we don't have much time left. Leave me here."

Sakuya shakes her head in protest. "No way...I'm *not* abandoning you like that...we stay together. There's strength in numbers. We can take her down if we work *together*."

"Don't argue with me Sakuya...we *don't* have the time. I'm the *only* one that can stop these things. It'll buy you the opportunity to catch up with Matori. You're a *much* faster runner. You stand a *better* chance of reaching her in time, than I do...and since I can't fly in here...it's up to *you* now."

"I've made up my mind...I'm *not* going." Sakuya resolutely replies with a hint of deviance.

"You *have* to leave me here." The young girl begs. "Matori *must* be stopped and we are losing what little opportunity we have left to catch up with her.

Go! *Now!* Once I fight these things off I can catch up with you."

"I *won't* leave you..." Sakuya tells her soundly "You're as good as *dead* if I do...there's just too many of them...I would be condemning you to death."

Refusing to take no for an answer, and realizing that she doesn't have the time to argue, Yugi immediately uses her power to telekinetically lift Sakuya up from the ground, and place her several yards away from the crowd of monsters, right next to the entryway of the stairwell that Matori had just ran through.

Sakuya attempts to resist, but is ultimately unable to shake Yugi's supernatural might.

"*Go!* There's *no* way that you can reach me in time now...Find Matori...*stop* her. We are all counting on you." Yugi lets out one final time before she is quickly overrun by the flooding creatures. As the squirming and biting mass of enemy minions begin attacking her en throng she can do nothing but scream as the pain being inflicted upon her by their clawing and biting fangs is just too great to resist. Her cries are loud enough to be heard clear to the spire. Hearing them, Matori allows herself a tiny satisfied grin.

"*Noooooo!!!!*" Sakuya screams aloud as she witnesses the horrifying spectacle. With new resolve she determines to avenge her young companion "I will honor your sacrifice

Yugi...I will stop Matori, no matter *what* the cost."

Sakuya heads up the stairs determined to let nothing stand in her way. Though exhausting, she undauntedly continues her rapid ascent up the flight of stairs without letup. Before long she eventually spots Matori as she rapidly climbs the grueling array of steps laid out before her with no seeming regard as to her own growing fatigue.

"I see you've managed to *ditch* the little *runt*...the worthless *instigator*!" Matori tells her tauntingly while looking back briefly to address her pursuer.

"You won't get away with this you *monster*." Sakuya replies to her as she begins to gain on her rapidly. "Yugi sacrificed herself to make sure that I could take you *down*. And that's *exactly* what I'm going to do."

"Oh *please*...you can't tell me that you aren't just a *little* bit relieved to be free from that anchoring leg-weight brat Yugi." Matori taunts with a slight chuckle.

"I will make you *regret* those words Matori...just you wait..."

"Don't make me laugh Mary Sue! You're *more* a worthless waif of time than that ridiculous runt friend of yours I just took care of." She swiftly makes it to a doorway at the top of the stairwell and heads through it. "As you see...victory is *already* mine." Once outside and onto the large balcony, Matori spots the glowing orb representative of Yugi's powers quickly encircling the entire spire like the moon of a small planet. She immediately heads toward it.

Refusing to allow Matori to win, Sakuya makes one last concerted effort to reach her before she can grab the energy sphere. Sakuya dives toward Matori, tackling her quickly to the ground preventing her from reaching the orb on its current revolution. Matori however is much too powerful to be taken down in such an inane manner, and speedily uses an energy flash to summarily repel her away. The energy flash sends Sakuya flying backwards swiftly into a nearby wall, nearly knocking her out upon impact.

Only turning around momentarily to gloat over her devilish handiwork, Matori quickly resumes her quest for the orb. She outstretches her hands so that the energy globe will fly effortlessly into it once it makes its return revolution around the spire. Sakuya right away gets up again and runs back toward Matori, hoping to stop her before it's too late. With her left hand still outstretched toward the advancing orb, she uses her right to quickly grab Sakuya by her neck, choking the life right out of her.

"Sakuya...you will *never* get the better of me. Do you hear me, *never*!" Suddenly the energy orb spins back around and quickly makes contact with Matori's extended hand, swiftly absorbing itself into her body. Her body immediately undergoes a complete physical transformation as powerful energy globules begin to encircle her like several orbital protons, electrons, and neutrons, around an atomic nucleus. She literally crackles with raw energy.

As she witnesses this unfortunate spectacle, poor Sakuya swallows down hard as she truly realizes that her time of reckoning has finally arrived.

CHAPTER 12

The Turning Tides

Matori begins to laugh hysterically as she feels the raw power of the inestimable energy once belonging to Yugi course through her veins. She tosses Sakuya to the ground easily as she revels in her newfound muscle. As the defeated young woman smashes into the ground, various pieces of mortar and brick become dislodged under the force of her crashing impact once more. "I am to you as a star to a candlestick, a universe to a grain of sand..."

"No! You...you *can't*..." Sakuya lets out as she quickly realizes that she's failed in her vain attempt to stop her. "It's not supposed to end this way..." she lets out in total disbelief.

Matori right away stops laughing. She places her hand in a position to suggest that she's powering up a very destructive energy wave. As she does so, Sakuya begins to slowly inch her way backward, cowering like a beaten lamb.

Without even blinking, Matori forms a spear out of pure energy.

"Oh...I'm *really* gonna enjoy *this*..." she lets out gloating "Vengeance is *mine!*"

She tosses the powerful energy spear directly at Sakuya. It immediately pierces intangibly through her, and at first glance appears to have little effect on the cowering young victim of the attack. However even though the energy spear isn't ethereal, Sakuya's clothing and skin immediately turn ashen gray as it makes physical contact with her, absorbing all the ambient color from both her clothes, and her delicate porcelain skin. Sakuya quickly falls lifelessly to the ground, much like her physical body did earlier in the *real* world. A mist-like glowing blue vapor slowly inches its way off her lifeless chest, like the smoke from a recently discharged gun-barrel. At seeing her adversary apparently die quickly and with little effort by her own hand, Matori laughs maniacally. This is the happiest day of her life. Now...*no* one can stand in her way.

Back at the Masaki household in the *real* world, Tenchi has immediately taken the body of Sakuya directly to Washu's laboratory, and is hoping that she can find a way to revive her. Much to Tenchi's dismay, Sakuya's skin color begins to dim as it grows extremely pale. "Washu...is she *ok*?" Tenchi asks. "Why is she turning color like that?"

"I honestly don't know." She replies as she quickly attaches several small electrodes to her body "Her vital signs are still going strong, but her cranial activity is beginning to fluctuate wildly. It's changing somehow. If I didn't know any better, I'd have to speculate

that Sakuya's become brain *dead*. What happened to you two out there in Tokyo today? When the both of you left Trina was *fine*, now she's brain-*dead*."

"It was Matori..." Tenchi lets out as he angrily grits his teeth "Sakuya was telling us the *truth* about her the whole time. She wasn't crazy after all. She appeared out of nowhere and attacked us while we were talking at the school campus." Tenchi clutches Sakuya tightly. He then tells her "Listen...we're not going to lose you today. I don't know what Matori has done to you...but you *must* pull through." Her body seems to grow more and more flaccid as he holds her. Turning toward Washu who is busily tending to various instruments that are measuring her bio-sign readings, he suddenly looks over and sees the oscilloscope-like device that is monitoring her brain-wave activity. It quickly becomes a singular flat-line. Believing that she has finally died, he begins to weep. A single tear that trickles slowly down his cheek falls to Sakuya, landing softly on her face.

Washu pauses in order to give Sakuya an honorable moment of silence.

Suddenly much to their surprise, Tenchi and Washu's crystals begin to glow brightly. So much so, that Tenchi and Washu are forced to look away from them just to keep its brilliance from blinding their eyes. Before long Ryoko, Ayeka, Sasami, Mihoshi, and Kione, all return to Washu's lab to inquire as to why their gems are reacting so unusually as well.

When all the members of the household that posses a special gem of Tenchi's are present and in close proximity, the gems all begin to fluctuate wildly as they effortlessly break away from any restraining bracelets or necklaces worn by the assembled crew, and float up toward the ceiling on their own. In a matter of seconds, they all quickly converge to become Tenchi's ultra-powerful crystalline sword once again.

Everyone looks upon the spectacle in total awe, as they realize that it was not Tenchi who has summoned the power of the crystal sword. All their questions are quickly allayed when the sword gently floats down toward Sakuya's body and hangs there suspended in mid-air over her chest for a moment. It immediately begins to emit a radiant light upon her body that fills her with renewed vigor, and then inexplicably disappears. Her skin regains its natural color, and she begins to glow as radiantly as the sword once did.

Meanwhile in her dreamscape, things are about to take a dramatic change for the recently victorious ex-creation of Yugi, for the worse. The body of Sakuya begins to shine as her color slowly reverts back to normal. Now fully restored, she glows in her dreamscape persona with a brilliance that forces Matori to turn around to take notice. Matori suddenly realizes that despite her best efforts to kill her off, Sakuya is miraculously still alive. "*What?*" she exclaims in absolute disbelief "You're supposed to be *dead!*" Matori says as she energizes a force sphere and tosses it over at Sakuya.

Much to Matori's surprise, Sakuya suddenly extends her hands in a fashion indicative to her holding up a sword, and Tenchi's crystallized-sword immediately materializes into her awaiting hands.

The sword swiftly diverts Matori's energy blast harmlessly away. "*Impossible, I defeated you!*" Matori exclaims with more frustration than with fear.

Quickly realizing that her once assured victory is rapidly becoming a pitiful defeat, Matori makes one final effort to destroy the wielder of the mystical power-sword. She quickly begins charging up her hands with energy that crackles with raw power. This will be a power-blast unlike any other, as Matori pours more energy into its creation that would not be humanly possible to withstand under normal circumstances. An energy sphere such as this would be powerful enough if created within the real-world, to destroy several city blocks in a single blast.

"Matori...you must be stopped. Your evil must *not* be allowed to continue to threaten the universe..." She calmly tells her. Immediately after Sakuya speaks the sword begins to react as though it has a mind of its own. It suddenly flies toward Matori at blinding speed. It is all the young brown-sweater clad woman can do to remain firmly clutched to its hilt. The slash that it makes toward Matori is so quick and effortless that Matori stands there for a moment trying to determine whether or not the blade actually made any physical contact with her.

"*Ha...you missed!*" Matori proclaims as she regains her confidence once more. "You truly are *pathetic...*" she adds as she whips her head quickly to the left moving the straying strands of her luxuriously captivating hair from her sculpted face. Suddenly a thin stream of light formulates down the entire length of her body. Surprised, she quizzically peers down at it to see what it is. She slowly looks back up at Sakuya in a dazed state "I can't believe it...you actually *got* me..." but before she can reply any further, her ethereal-form is instantly dissipated into nothingness. She doesn't even have enough time to scream. Matori has finally been defeated.

Once the threat is over the ultra-powerful crystalline sword immediately disappears from Sakuya's hands, returning to the nothingness from whence it came.

CHAPTER 13

Farewell to a Friend

Elated that she was able to finally defeat her greatest enemy, Sakuya immediately falls to her knees, utterly exhausted. Before celebrating however, she walks toward to the ledge of the roof terrace to bask in her moment of glory as she stares out over the deadened expanse stretched out before her. An aurora borealis-type display suddenly fills the darkened sky as far as her eyes can see. It looks nothing less than magnificent against the backdrop of the blackened atmosphere. She sighs dreamily as she contentedly gazes out at its awesome beauty.

Suddenly, she recalls with horror that she left Yugi down ground-level in the middle of a sea of attacking goblin-like monsters. She glances down over the edge and sees a gigantic mound of monsters' bodies below nearly eight meters high. She prays that Yugi is still

not located beneath that merciless pile of death at the base of the tower.

"Oh no..." she gasps as she heads back down the long spiral stairwell skipping every third step. "I hope I'm not too late." She exclaims as she quickly descends the flights of stairs. Once at the bottom, she immediately heads toward the gigantic pile of lifeless carcasses. Pausing for a moment, she starts digging through them searching for her missing friend.

Suddenly, a massive repelling energy-wave cascades from underneath the swarm of bodies that sends them all flying into every conceivable direction. Sakuya too is sent reeling from the wave. In the center of the small crater that once held the malevolent beings, lays the weakened and now frail body of Yugi. She is able to send off one final power-blast to free herself from the crushing weight of the attacking monsters. Once the energy is released however, she is totally spent and unable to maintain her ultra-form any longer, and quickly reverts back to normal once again.

Badly bruised, cut, exhausted, and beaten, she briefly attempts to pull herself up to her feet but is unable. She quickly falls to the ground in a crumpled heap of misery and pain. Blood slowly inches its way out from her open mouth. Her eyes look extremely flaccid. Sakuya rushes to her aid.

She is horrified to witness all the sustained injuries on her young friend's body. It is all she can do to keep from crying at her feet.

"...did...we...win?" Yugi barely lets out between difficult breaths spitting out the blood that has since collected there. She is only able to open one of her eyes, but it's evident that she cannot see too clearly through it from all the swelling that has developed there.

"Yeah...Matori has been...*eliminated*."

Yugi smiles at the young woman's response.

"Good...I *knew* you had what it takes to get it done. Now Sasami, Tenchi...and the others...are safe..."

"Yugi...you don't sound too good. Are you alright?"

"I...I am now..." she weakly replies to her once again "I'm so sorry about all I put you and Tenchi through...about breaking you up earlier." She tells her. "Please tell Tenchi that." She weakly forces out. "Tell my friend Sasami that I will always love her..."

"Don't talk like this...You are *not* going to die." She says as if in command of life itself. "Besides, you don't have to apologize to me. I understand everything. Tenchi will be fine...he's just venting right now."

Jokingly she adds "Look on the bright side...at least you finally get to have this body...all to yourself...and I get to finally have peace..."

"No Yugi, *stop* that...you'll be *fine*. You'll see."

Yugi forces up another weak smile. Her teeth drenched in the blood continuing to flow from her massive internal injuries. Her once white blouse stained with the crimson fluid gushing from her mortal wounds "Liar...you forget...you're a part of me...you can't fool me...I can see right through it."

Sakuya breaks down and begins to cry. "Don't die. I was just getting used to you being a part of me."

Smiling once more she grabs Sakuya tightly and adds "Please...please take good care...of my friend Sasami, would you...?"

Grief-stricken, Sakuya can only nod her head in silent response to her.

"...and never forget...I've...always been...proud of...you..." she lets out in short pants.

As she nears death her eyes dilate and she begins to speak wildly delirious. Staring out into space she lets out her final words while clutching Sakuya tightly. In her fevered mind, she sees Sakuya as though she were her mother. "...I'm so cold...so cold...mommy...please...warm...me...uuuuuup..." she trails off.

Yugi's body falls deathly limp as she attempts to finish her last words. Sakuya clutches her tightly and begins to weep bitterly.

"I *will* always remember you. You gave me life...made me who I am. You are a part of me and I'm proud of that. If I could I would announce from the heavens what a hero you are to me and to this world. The only thing I can give back to you is my solemn promise, my *oath*. From now on I will be known as Sakuya Yugi Kumashiro. Let the world know...And I will *honor* that name...your name."

CHAPTER 14

The Heart-to-Heart

Everyone inside Washu's personal laboratory stares at the body of Sakuya Kumashiro as they eagerly anticipate her reawakening. Tenchi's powerful crystal gems have all returned to their previous respective owners and things appear to have returned for the most part back to normal.

Sakuya finally regains consciousness and thrusts herself into Tenchi's unsuspecting arms. With her eyes filled with tears she deeply buries her face into his chest, sobbing bitterly.

"Is everything ok?" Tenchi asks as he awaits her response.

"Yeah...we were all worried that you wouldn't make it." Washu adds. "For a moment there your cranial activity had indicated that you were *dead*. What happened, some really weird things were going on while you were unconscious? One of your brain patterns disappeared a few moments ago...and Tenchi's power-sword even formed by *itself* vanishing as soon as it hovered over your body."

Sakuya slowly releases herself from the tightly wound grip that she has on Tenchi and weakly replies as if still in a trance "Yugi's *dead*...I tried to save her...but I just wasn't strong enough..."

Everyone looks at one another with puzzled expressions on their faces. After a long moment of pause Sasami's eyes immediately begin to water. She rushes over to Sakuya and gives her a needy embrace.

"My friend Yugi...is *gone*?" Sasami asks with an innocence of youth that nearly forces everyone else in the room to also cry themselves. "*How*?"

"...Sorry..." Sakuya replies giving her a warm hug to try and comfort her while at the same time grieving with her. "I...I did everything that I could, but in the end...my best just wasn't good enough."

Kione steps forward "So Sakuya...what *happened*? You mentioned that Yugi's dead, but you never told us *how*, she only existed as a splintered personality within your brain?"

"I...I don't know what to say..." she replies to her still clearly in shock. She steps toward Tenchi once more then silently pulls him aside to speak freely with him alone.

"Sakuya...I...I'm sorry. We're all sorry. You were telling us all the truth all along and none of us believed you."

Listening to him intently yet still lost in thought, she slowly hangs her head.

"I've got something else I wanted to say to you..." he begins to expound "I know my reaction to what you said earlier was a bit excessive and extreme. I just wanted you to know that I'm sorry and that I've changed my mind, I would very much enjoy being with you again like we used to be back in Tokyo."

He smiles briefly at her as he gently grabs her left hand and places a portion of the powerful gem that he had Washu cut for her from a segment of his own personal shard. It shines and glistens beautifully in her open palm.

"I had Washu attach it to the necklace my mom gave me before she died. It's very special to me...and so are you. With this...you are officially a part of this family. Whenever you need our help...it will be by your side...*guiding* you...alerting us...keeping us together.

We are now forever linked..."

In disbelief she lets out a slightly crazed chuckle. "I can't believe this. I don't know whether to cry or to throw up. I don't know what's worse. The fact that you broke my heart earlier over something so trivial as what Yugi said *before* she reformed and turned her life around, or the fact that you still expect me to come *throwing* myself at you blindly after all you put me through because of it. I love you, there's no denying that...but I'm not going to just naively pretend that nothing happened."

"But Sakuya, I..." he tries to get in edgewise.

"Listen...Yugi may have been a lot of things...but at least she had an excuse. She was young, immature, inexperienced, lonely, and *scared*. And before you can say anything else negative about her...I just wanted to add that she knew who her true friends were...she stuck by them...to the *end*. Was she perfect...? No...But she showed more heart than you did to me earlier. She was a hero."

Overhearing the rapidly escalating conversation, Ryoko steps in. "Now you hear this missy...don't you *dare* talk to Tenchi like...or I'll...!"

"I'm **not** finished...!" Sakuya angrily snaps back at the reformed space pirate, interrupting her. Her assertive demeanor and unusually daring attitude toward Tenchi, and the obviously more powerful Ryoko, takes her by surprise and momentarily intimidates her enough to get her to step back in confusion. "If you wanna beat me up just because I'm speaking my mind...so be it...I can't stop you. But at least let me finish what I have to say first."

I've just spent what seems like an *eternity* trapped in a dream-like *hell* created by Matori just so she could try and steal Yugi's powers. That little girl gave her life defending me...defending all of you. I was there when those horrid little creatures started attacking and tearing her apart. When I tried to rescue her she stopped me...her only concern was that of saving the lives of everyone on this earth...including the ones who are members of this household who she *knew* didn't trust her. I don't ask for much...but all I ask is that you pay her a little respect. She died for *all* of you."

After this the room grows eerily silent as nobody knows what exactly it is that they would say in retort to Sakuya's heated argument. She next directly addresses Tenchi "Honestly...I don't know if I'm even inclined to *want* to be with you romantically anymore. You've *hurt* me Tenchi, profoundly. After the wonderful day we've had together I would've thought that our relationship meant *more* to you than that...I guess I was *wrong*. Maybe you *don't* love me as much as I had *hoped* you had. But since *I* do still love *you*, I have resigned to take this all one day at a time. Perhaps we can start over. Who knows, maybe in a month or so things will be different. But not at this moment."

At hearing this Ryoko and Ayeka are absolutely floored by these announcements. On the one hand, her breaking up with Tenchi is the welcome news they've been waiting to hear ever since they first met her, but on the other hand they are effectively watching

somebody dump Tenchi. It's almost too much for them to bear all in one eventful day.

After calming down, Sakuya adds "Look...don't get me wrong, I love it here and I love all of you. I'd be *stupid* to disregard all the generosity you've shown me these past two days. I'm just a little emotional right now over the death of a part of me...and of a friend.

Please allow me the time to try and recover...the dignity to try and grieve for my deceased friend. Please understand that I in no way mean to demean any of you...I'm just venting my feelings. You say that we are now family...If I can't speak candidly with my friends...my *family*...them to whom can I?" she asks rhetorically. At this she swiftly turns around and heads out the door of Washu's personal lab to go to her temporarily assigned bedroom once belonging to Tenchi's father Nobuyuki. Once upstairs and safely in her room, she promptly shuts the door and there she remains for the rest of the evening.

Back in Washu's lab, everyone is simply mystified about Sakuya's unusually assertive behavior, and begin discussing it at length. Washu herself is the only one who appears to be mostly unaffected by her recent conduct, even going so far as to chuckle slightly about it.

"Can you believe that...?" Ryoko asks Ayeka as she gives her a slight nudge. "That girl has *some* nerve. I can't *believe* she just yelled at Tenchi and all of us like that. Come to think of it...I can't believe that I just sat there and did *nothing*. I must be getting soft. Back in my old days, there would've been *hell* to pay."

"I'm sorry everyone..." Kione lets in edgewise "As much as I *hate* to be the one bringing up bad news...she's *right*. *None* of us did anything for her because we were too stuck on the fact that she could be going crazy. *I* for one thought it. We didn't trust her. That's all she was saying." Kione reveals. "I feel really bad."

"I...I just don't know *what* to say..." Ayeka lets in. "What she said was positively *rude*...but parts of it *did* have a ring of truth, I guess. Tenchi...were we treating her *that* badly..." she asks as she turns toward him, asking the question in a beseeching manner.

"I don't know...apparently *she* thought so..." Tenchi responds while never looking directly up at her. "I guess that's what's important..."

Confused, Sasami tugs on her older sister's sleeve. "I don't understand...why did Sakuya treat us like that?"

Exhaling a brief sigh of self-contempt mixed with a touch of humility, she responds. "Not at *you* Sasami...that wasn't directed toward you at all...just us older ones. We treated her like an *outsider*...like she wasn't truly welcome. And for the most part she was *right*..."

"So that's *it*...?" Ryoko asks in confusion "...We just let her get away with saying all that mean stuff to us?" Ryoko implores of the assembled group.

"Give it a rest Ryoko..." Tenchi impatiently replies. "This has been a *horrible* night. Lets just all get to bed and try to forget this day ever happened. I guess I'll see you all in the morning."

Washu pensively stares over at Tenchi and replies.

"For whatever it's worth, Tenchi...just remember that she's grieving right now. She'll be okay after a while and most likely revert back to her usually hyperactive and bubbly self again. You'll see."

Tenchi nods his head in reciprocation then quietly dismisses himself from the room. Ryoko and the others quickly follow suit.

After a few moments Washu's lab has been totally cleared of straggling family members as everyone headed out to bed to try and forget about the events of this tumultuous day.

Undaunted, Washu pulls down a pair of goggles that she has sitting across her forehead, back over her eyes and continues on in her usual ceaseless scientific studies. This will be a night that she will not soon forget. Grabbing a makeshift soldering iron she forces up a tiny grin. "I *knew* that my meds *weren't* to blame for her unusual behavior..." she exhales lightly "Whew...what a relief..."

CHAPTER 15

New beginnings

Several days have passed since the climactic ordeal involving Sakuya, Tenchi, Yugi, and her evil creation Matori, and thankfully everything has blissfully returned back to relative normalcy. Ryoko, Ayeka, and the other girls have all adjusted nicely to having Sakuya staying at the Masaki residence with them; And Sakuya's visions of Matori have fortunately ceased altogether. All in all, everything in Tenchi's life seems to have taken a positive spiral for a change, and returned back to normal.

However true to Sakuya's word she has kept up with her resolve to not pursue a romantic relationship with Tenchi. At this moment in time she is keeping her relative distance from him emotionally, and is busily tending to familiar chores that need personal attention from within the household to keep her mind off her recently declared resolution.

It's now early in the morning and everyone is just about to split up to get an adequate head-start on their daily assigned chores for the day. Ayeka is finishing up on one of her soap-operas, Kione is out taking care of the laundry, and Mihoshi is blissfully sound asleep on the rear patio-deck of the house, while Washu is busily at work within her lab performing more of her ultra-complex scientific experiments. Sasami is also busy cleaning up the kitchen from breakfast, and preparing meals for lunch that will arrive sooner for everyone than expected. Sakuya is dressed for housework as well and is

preparing to step outside to tend to her assigned duties. As she does so Ryoko immediately appears from out of nowhere, trying to get out of doing her share of the work.

"Sakuya...I know that Tenchi placed you in charge of organizing the *household-work duty schedule*; but do you think that you could assign *Ayeka* the sweeping duty outside instead of *me*...? I'm *tired* of doing it."

"*Tired*...?" Sakuya gasps with confusion "...you haven't even started the work yet today."

"Yeah, I know...but *Ayeka* does a much *better* job at doing it than I do..." she adds with a touch of conniving.

"Well, I suppose I *could* do that..." Sakuya replies confidently to her "...but if I *did* I'd have to assign you to *her* chores, and if I'm not mistaken I think she's assigned to clean out the toilets today."

"Eeee-yuck..." Ryoko replies as she wrinkles up her nose in disgust "...On second thought...sweeping the back patio doesn't seem quite so bad." She adds with a smile as she suddenly takes to flight, disappearing in midair.

Ayeka approaches Sakuya and tells her "I know what you've just done...and *thanks*..." she adds "...having you around isn't quite so bad after all. It's actually kind of nice. And I must admit it also helps to keep that insufferable *Ryoko* in line."

"No problem..." she adds with a wink "You all have treated me like family since I've moved here, and it's been *great*. I'm just having the time of my life..."

Tenchi chuckles as he approaches the both of them. "That was nice what you just did for *Ayeka*...especially since she doesn't even have toilet duty today. If I'm not mistaken, that chore was *your* responsibility this week."

"Yeah...I don't mind doing the grunt work for now. All in an honest days work. Besides, if I'm to live here I have to pull my own weight like all the others."

Tenchi smiles as they all begin laughing together in unison.

Ryoko teleports back into the room as she spots everyone laughing and having a good time without her.

"Hey...what's going on in here?" she asks.

"Nothing..." Sakuya chuckles as she replies. "We were just laughing about the chores."

Suddenly the phone rings. Not long after the first few rings the answering machine picks up the call.

Tenchi...this is Anzai Fumiaki, priest of the Anzai shrine. You don't know me, but I'm an old friend of your family. I recently saw your grandfather Katsuhito the other day. Anyway, we spoke and he mentioned that you still needed to train under someone to become a master priest since you discontinued your training at the Tsuchida shrine in Tokyo. As fate would have it, my son Hiroji just moved away last week and I'm stuck with a position of apprenticeship that needs filling.

I also understand that you are a few credits shy of getting your degree...there's a college campus down the road from the shrine...I think that you would fit in there very nicely. Let me know if you're interested. My niece Nozomi is in town for a few days to help me out until I can find a replacement apprentice for the shrine. She could show you around if you decided to stay. I think she may even be around your age..." he adds in as if trying to play matchmaker over the phone, obviously unaware of the already plentiful females that now dwell in Tenchi's homestead with him. "...Anyway, your grandfather will know how to reach me. I look forward to hearing from you Tenchi.

The message ends.

Tenchi immediately heads toward the phone with a sly grin on his face. Like vultures, the girls all quickly converge and surround him to stop him from making the call. "Don't even *think* about heading back into Tokyo again, Tenchi..." Ryoko exclaims as she quickly faces off with him.

"*Indeed...the last time you headed off to that dreaded city...we were stuck with all kinds of trouble.*" Ayeka adds in as both she and Ryoko quickly turn around to glare at Sakuya.

Tenchi tries to charm his way out of it by letting out a small chuckle. "C'mon guys...that was almost two *years* ago. The stuff that happened the *last* time would *never* happen again...what are the odds...? There couldn't be *that* many mutants from Jurai that we don't know about could there?" he tries to jokingly reason with them, but they remain unconvinced. "Hey, here's an idea...I could train at the shrine, go to school...and *this* time just use Washu's dimensional tunnel to travel back and forth from home to Tokyo. I would *never* have to stay there."

At that Sakuya, Ryoko, and Ayeka all give each other a conjoining stare. Then they all turn to look at Tenchi, who by now is trying to sneakily make it out of the room unnoticed. He gives them a really wide nervous smile, as if his hand were just caught dipping into the cookie jar.

"I uh...was just *kidding*...it was just a harmless joke..." He lets out trying to convince them to forget about his attempt to slyly sneak away and make it to a phone in another room, but failing miserably.

A few moments later the answering machine and the phone are both hurled unerringly into the nearby lake.

Back in the house, Tenchi is now completely tied up and his mouth gagged. He is totally immobile and unable to make it to a phone of any kind. The girls all promptly clap the dust from their hands and recline back onto the couch to watchdog Tenchi for a few moments more before heading back out to work "**Whew**...that was a *close* one..." Sakuya lets out as she wipes the sweat from her brow.

"Yeah..." Ryoko agrees "...Master Anzai mentioned something about having a *niece*...it would be just our *dumb* luck If Tenchi had gotten out there into Tokyo, and fallen in love with this *new* girl. That's a chance we *can't* afford to take."

Ayeka says "Sorry lord Tenchi...but this is for your *own* good.

Azaka...Kamidake!" she calls out casually.

"Yes ma'am?" they both drone off in chorus as they quickly arrive on the scene in response to the young Juraian princess's voice command.

"Keep an eye on Lord Tenchi for me, will you? Make sure that he stays put. We can't have him sneaking away making private phone calls."

"Yes ma'am!" they immediately reply.

"As for *us*..." Ayeka concludes "...we've got *chores* to tend to. C'mon girls..." She says to both Sakuya and Ryoko with a friendly wave. They all nod happily as they leave the room like a bunch of giddy old school buddies.

-The End-