

Creatures & Master

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plz dont get confused. the chapters that say "Creature Files" are basically outlining the backstory. all the others r present time.

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1 - Creature Files: Haru the Loser

Haru trained on his own, trying to ignore and avoid everyone else. That was very hard, considering the place he lived in was one of the most populated in all of the islands. No matter how hard he tried, he couldn't avoid anyone, but it was still worth trying.

"Look at the loser," whispered someone. "He looks so ridiculous. He's never going to be able to be as good as everyone else." They laughed.

Haru tried to ignore them. So what if he couldn't learn as easily as everyone else? That didn't mean that if he trained hard enough he wouldn't become just like all the others. But, Haru was sick and tired of everyone else making fun of him. They don't know anything; they shouldn't say anything. They got on his nerves too much. He was about to explode.

No matter how much he tried to ignore all of everyone's comments, he just seemed to absorb them like a sponge. It seemed impossible to ignore them, no matter how many times he was told to. None of any adults' tips worked to help him. He really wished that this wasn't true.

Still, Haru kept on training. Watch me, he thought. I'll be better than you in a few years. He kicked the tree he was using to practice with so hard that he made a big indent in it. I'm already getting better than you.

"Haru!" someone said, seeming happy to see him.

Haru turned around and saw his friend, Evena, running towards him. "Hi!" he said.

Evena hugged Haru. "I'm so happy to be back here! It was fun going from island to island, but I missed home so much! And I was hoping you would be okay with being on your own."

"They got on my nerves a lot, but I'm fine," Haru said.

"Come on, stop training and get something to eat with me. I'm starving."

"Okay," Haru said.

When they were eating, Evena seemed to be very quiet.

"What's wrong, Evena?" Haru said.

"Nothing's wrong. Everything's perfectly fine. "It's just..."

"What? You can tell me?"

"I'm just really worried about you. You've been getting made fun of ever since either of us can

remember. And, you've never taken it very well. I often worry about you because the way you react to what they do to you sometimes makes you seem you are going to completely give up on everything. And I don't want you to do that. You're my best friend and... It's just hard seeing you get hurt like that all the time.

Haru smiled. "Don't worry, Evena. I'll be fine. You don't need to worry about me."

"You've always said that. I know you don't like people worrying about you, but you need to be worried about. I don't need to worry about myself because I take all of that stuff just fine. But you don't, so of course I worry about you. I can't stand seeing you sad; it tears me up inside to see you like that..."

"Alright, you win. You have the right to worry about me. But don't go neglecting yourself over it. Just don't get as sad as I do just because that's how I am, okay? It's better if you just go on living your life as happily as you possibly can, just as I am trying to do. I'm not weak and I can take care of myself. You don't need to worry, but if you have to, please worry as least as you can."

"Okay..." Evena wanted to try to help Haru, but she had absolutely no idea how to. How do you help someone to become more confident and not be bothered by teasing? Haru has been told tons of advice for the situation, and he's tried all of it, yet, none of it has helped. So, what can she do? She didn't know, but she promised herself that she would try her best to figure something out.

2 - Joe's Troubles

Joe was doing another ridiculous chore, assigned by his father. These chores were very common for him to get, and most of the time, they were very tiring. He had been doing this chore for three hours at least, and he only had barely two rows done. "If I don't finish this before tomorrow," he quietly said to himself, "I am dead."

"You'll be dead by seven o'clock if you don't give yourself a break," Joe's friend, Shimaki, said.

"I can't take a break," Joe said, still paying attention to his chore, "If my dad sees me resting on the job with those hawk eyes of his, I will be done for earlier."

Joe felt a tap on his shoulder and dreaded the fact that his father might have heard him talking to someone nobody but him can see. When he turned around, he realized it was just his seven-year-old sister, Sarah.

"Do you think you can help me?" she asked. "I don't want to do this by myself..."

"I'm sorry, Sarah, I can't. We aren't supposed to help each other out." As Joe looked at the fresh bumps and bruises on Sarah's skin, he dreaded how she must be hurting just walking. Not to mention, they aren't allowed to help each other. It was pointless in the first place to do what they were doing, so of course their father has to be even more stupid to make them do something else pointless along with it. If they worked together, they could get more done.

They know their dad doesn't care a penny about them anyway, although they can't run away. They don't know anyone else because they have been blocked off from anyone outside of their house all of their lives.

"You know what," Joe said, "I'll help you out. Forget what he says."

As he started to help Sarah, their father appeared behind them.

"What are you two doing," he asked.

"I'm helping Sarah," Joe said.

"You're helping one another?" There was a hint of ferocity in his voice.

"Yes," Joe said calmly.

"You know you're not allowed to help one another. That is why you two are supposed to be separated!"

"Why aren't we?" Joe tried to hide the anger in his voice.

Shimaki was furious and wanted to jump at their father. He knew why. Their father wanted them to get hurt more than they would if they worked together. He wanted to see his children in pain.

Sarah moved over to Shimaki to calm him down. But this made matters worse. Her father moved toward her and kicked her hard in the back.

“Don’t you walk away from me when I’m speaking,” he said.

Joe’s ferocity grew. He didn’t care if his dad hurt him; he just didn’t want him to hurt Sarah. And since Joe had also known why they had to work separately, he was finally fed up with his father.

Joe went over to Sarah to help her up. Before his father was able to hit either of them, he blocked the attack. Joe picked Sarah up and took her away from their father. He knew that wouldn’t really do anything, though.

“Are you okay,” he asked.

“I’m fine,” Sarah said.

Their father hurried towards Joe. When he reached him, he turned Joe around and pulled him up by the collar of his shirt.

“What do you think you are doing,” he asked furiously.

“I don’t care what you do to me anymore,” Joe said. “I just won’t let you hurt Sarah.”

“I can’t believe you just had the courage to say that to your own father.”

“It doesn’t take courage to stand up for yourself, friends, or loved ones; it takes common sense. Besides, you are not much of a father. You keep us locked in our rooms when you can’t think of anything for us to do. If you do give us something to do, you tell us to finish it before the day is over. And if we don’t finish it before the day is over, you abuse us.” Joe pulled away from him.

“I will let you know that I loved your mother very much and I love you two very much.”

“Oh, yeah. That’s why you left her out in the rain to die and you abuse us.”

“I did not leave her out in the rain to die! She chose to go!”

“I was seven years old. Don’t think I don’t remember. You just used a kind woman who loved you, but you didn’t love back. You used her to make two child-slaves for yourself. Then you dumped her like yesterday’s dinner.”

“Where did you get smart and learn to block anyway?”

“If you would’ve paid attention, you would have known I was always smart. And a friend taught me to block.”

“But you don’t have any friends!”

“I have one.”

“You’ve never met anyone besides myself and your stupid, puny little sister.”

He moved his leg to kick Sarah. Sarah sat there with her eyes closed shut, not going to do anything. But Joe grabbed his leg while it was in mid-air.

“You want to fight,” Joe’s father said, “we’ll fight.”

“Joe!” Sarah wrapped her arms around his stomach. “Please don’t fight!”

“Don’t worry, I’m not,” Joe said, turning around to give Sarah a comforting hug.

“If you won’t,” Shimaki said, “I will!” He was the maddest he had ever been.

Joe let go of Sarah to whisper to Shimaki.

“Don’t,” he said. “You know he can’t see or hear you, and that would be weird and suspicious if nothing attacked him.”

Shimaki tried to settle down.

“You are just as you always were: a wimp,” their father said.

“I’m not going to fight,” Joe said, “because of Sarah.

Joe picked up Sarah and sat her down on the couch in the living room. He walked back over to his father until he was right next to him.

“But if you try to hit her again,” Joe said, “I will fight you when she is not around.”

“You wouldn’t have the ‘common sense’ to fight me,” Joe’s father said.

“Yes I definitely would,” Joe said, “James.”

He grabbed Joe by the collar of his shirt again.

“Don’t call me by my first name or you will be hurt so bad that you wouldn’t be able to do a single thing,” James said.

When he let go of Joe, Joe headed over to Sarah to talk to her.

I already am, Joe thought.

Joe quietly talked to Sarah.

“You and James aren’t going to fight,” Sarah said, cautiously, “are you?”

“I can’t promise you anything,” Joe said.

“I don’t want you to fight,” Sarah said with hints that tears were forming behind her eyes. “Why would you fight? You don’t need to protect me. You made it through this age, and so can I.”

“Sarah, when I was your age, I had extra help,” Joe said. “Mom was around and that was to my advantage. She didn’t know where my bumps and bruises came from, but she always cleaned them up. And with Mom around, James found much less time to torture me.”

“Why didn’t you tell Mom about James?”

“He had threatened me that he would do horrible things to both me and Mom if I told her. We wouldn’t be able to leave, so I couldn’t.”

“Why wouldn’t you be able to leave?”

“We ‘didn’t have enough money.’ The day you were born, James kicked Mom out. All of a sudden, all of this money pops up. James divorced Mom and left her out in the streets to die.

“You don’t have help, and James can torture you much more than he had tortured me. Since I was abused slowly, my body was able to get used to it and strengthen. There is already something wrong with your left leg. I’m afraid that if you get abused too quickly, your body will react in more negative ways.”

“What does that mean?”

“Don’t worry about it right now. But I am protecting you because I’m worried about what could happen to you. I can’t take care of your wounds because James has all the medicine and things locked up in his room, so you could get damaged easier.”

“At least our hair is dark brown so that if it gets dirty, no one can really tell.”

Joe smiled.

They silently finished their chore, this time not as close together as they were before James came over so that Sarah wouldn’t get in trouble.

When it turned dark, James called them in and gave them each a tiny, gross-looking dinner. Then he sent them off to bed with an unpleasant “good night.” Joe had only gotten five rows of bricks done, and Sarah barely had three rows done.

“Joe,” Shimaki whispered when Joe turned out the tiny light that illuminated his tiny room, “you don’t want to stay here, do you?”

“If I left, I wouldn’t leave without Sarah,” Joe said.

“I know, but I can get you out of this horrible disaster in a way that you won’t abandon Sarah,” Shimaki said.

“How’s that?” Joe was very curious of what Shimaki was talking about.

“I could take you to my homeland”—

“No way. I would be abandoning her that way.”

“No you wouldn’t. A friend of mine used a spell. Whenever we leave, time everywhere, except for The Creature Islands, will be stopped. It will be like you were never gone.”

“What if I stayed for twenty years?”

“You will not grow older.”

“I won’t unless there is a strange reason I am needed there.”

“There is, Joe! We need you down there. You are one of very few who can see us, and we need you to help us. We are in danger, and if it isn’t stopped before it destroys us, it will go on to the humans!”

“Seriously? I mean, you’re not joking, are you?”

“Of course not! But, I can’t tell you yet. You will find out soon.”

“When?”

“When we are there, of course!”

“Okay, I’ll go. But there’s just one problem. How are we going to get out of here?”

“You’ll see.” Shimaki transformed into a larger dog-like animal that barely fit in the tiny room so Joe could climb on him. The very second Joe did, time stopped. Only Shimaki and Joe were moving. Not even wind was blowing on the trees’ leaves.

Shimaki concentrated very hard on the wall in front of them. After a few seconds, it became transparent and Shimaki stepped through it with Joe on his back. After they finished passing through it, the wall became normal again.

They quickly started off, with Joe almost falling off of Shimaki. He couldn’t tell how fast they were going, but Shimaki was extremely fast.

3 - Creature Files: The Trouble Starts

After a lot of thought, Evena finally thought of something to help Haru. It was a very good way to help him and it wouldn't bother Evena, either.

"You should probably just give up, Evena," Haru said. "It's not worth it to make them stop making fun of me if they are making fun of you, now."

"Don't worry, Haru. I'm fine," Evena said. "I could care less what they say about me. As long as they stop making fun of you, then I'm happy."

"You are so sweet, Evena..." Haru said. "I don't know what I would do without you." He hugged her.

Evena hugged him back. "You know, I've been thinking a lot about what might be causing them to make fun of you. I think I know why. You're a shape-shifter. I'm a shape-shifter too, but you don't see many of us around. They used to make fun of me for it, but they saw none of it bothered me so they stopped. But I think they see the pain they cause you and keep making fun of you because they enjoy seeing you in pain. I don't know what they have against shape-shifters, I just know whatever it is, it is very stupid."

"It still doesn't help..." Haru said.

"I know. I'm trying to get them to stop."

Later, Haru was training by himself when he thought he had heard someone close by. He stopped and listened carefully to see if he could find out who was there. He sat down at a tree and closed his eyes. After a few seconds, he realized who it was.

"Quit messing around, Namini," Haru said. "I'm trying to train."

Haru's little sister came out from behind a bush she was hiding behind. "Oh, come on. Why can't I watch you train?"

"Because I'm not exactly the best and I could accidentally lose control and hit you. Now go back inside and play."

"But I need to tell you something," Namini said, anxiously.

"What is it?" Haru was annoyed.

"It's something about Evena."

Haru got interested and worried. He stood up and looked at his sister. "What about her?"

“I heard some of the people in your class say that they were going to beat her up today...”

“What?! Who said that?”

“Umm... It was a lizard-looking creature and a bird-like creature... Both boys.”

“You should have told me this sooner!”

“Sorry... I tried telling you but you weren’t paying attention to me.”

Haru rushed to try to get to Evena’s house as quickly as he could, hoping she was there and was okay.

But when he got there, he wasn’t very pleased with what he saw. Evena was all beaten up, and he saw none other than the two his little sister described: Furan and Saku.

Saku, the bird-like creature, chuckled. “About time you got here. You happy with our artwork?”

Haru was disgusted. “You two are horrible.”

Furan laughed. “Why? Because we beat up the only person in all the islands who gives a damn about you?”

Haru got angry. “Why did you do that?”

They just smiled and laughed their heads off and the next thing Haru remembers is that attacks were being thrown left and right.

4 - The Creature Islands

After about five minutes, Shimaki had suddenly stopped. Joe flew off of him and landed on something that made a small groan when he landed. When he turned around, he realized it was a girl who seemed about his age. She had astonishing green eyes and light brown hair that reached the middle of her back. It was perfectly wavy so it outlined her face just right.

"I am terribly sorry!" Joe blushed. He held out his hand.

"Don't worry about it," the girl said. She took Joe's hand and pulled herself up. "My name is Amy."

"I'm Joe. I am really sorry! I had flown off my creature. He was going so fast and suddenly stopped"—Joe said.

"Don't worry. Calm yourself down." Amy said. "Is that your creature over there?" She pointed to Shimaki.

"Yeah. His name's Shimaki."

"He is so adorable! Mine is right behind me. Her name is Sakra."

Joe looked past Amy and saw a cat-like creature that looked a little identical to Shimaki.

"It is very nice to meet you, Joe," Sakra said.

Joe nodded in agreement.

"It is very nice to meet you," Shimaki said, "'Princess Amelia Mnair."

"Princess?!" Joe said, surprised.

"Please don't bow," she said. "I hate to be known as a princess. I'm Amy, just Amy."

"Why is that?" Joe couldn't see why anybody wouldn't want to be royalty.

"I . . . I don't want to talk about it," Amy said. She looked away with a sad look on her face.

Joe was very curious, but if Amy didn't want to talk about it, he wasn't going to pressure the subject.

"Well," Shimaki said, "if I can't call you 'princess,' may i call you 'Miss Amy'?"

"Yeah, that's okay," Amy said. "Just as long as nobody calls me a princess."

"Hey, um, can we find out why we are here now?" Joe said to Shimaki and Sakra.

"I tried asking Sakra that before when she said we needed to come here," Amy said. "All she said was that we will find out in time, but she could tell me that there is trouble being caused that we need to help with. But, the person causing it isn't exactly themselves and we can't kill them, we can just get him back to normal and the havoc will stop."

"If they can't tell us what's going on, then how are we going to find out?"

"You'll find out all in time," Shimaki said.

"So what do we do now?" Joe asked.

"I guess we just sit here and wait," Amy said. "Sakra told me there were three others coming including you, so there are two more."

"Alright," Joe said and sat down on the grass, where Amy sat next to him.

They only waited a few minutes, when they heard a bird in the sky, which came down into the clearing and dropped off a little girl. She appeared to be around the same age as Sarah.

The girl hid behind the bird.

"Don't worry, Kristie, these people are okay," the bird, which sounded male, said. Then, he turned to Joe and Amy and said, "Sorry. Kristie is really shy. My name is Konso." He bowed his head. "Pleasure to meet you both. Please introduce yourselves to Kristie; she might be more willing to not hide."

Amy and Joe chuckled. They both introduced themselves as Amy walked toward the girl and held out her hand, as if to say, "It's okay to come out."

Kristie, still hiding behind Konso, reached a small hand out slowly. "I-I'm Kristie..." she said.

Amy smiled. "Yes, we know. Don't be scared. We won't hurt you. If anything, we'll help you.

There seemed to be something about Amy that made Kristie feel safe. Amy seemed very kind and welcoming, like she would never hurt even the tiniest insect.

Kristie inched out from behind Konso and Amy lead her out into the clearing. She was a cute little girl, with dirty blonde hair and brown eyes. She seemed to be using all her will power to not hide behind Konso again.

As Kristie was just starting to get comfortable around Joe and Amy, she heard something rustling in the bushes and hid behind Konso again. When they looked to see what it was, it turned out to be another creature with someone on its back.

The creature, which was lizard-like, stopped in the middle of the clearing and let the boy off of its back.

"Okay, now everyone is here," Sakra said. "I know this is going to sound very weird and kind of cheesy,

but let's all sit in a circle and just introduce ourselves so we know who everyone is and everyone can start to get comfortable around each other.

Amy and Joe had no problem with this, and sat down to start the circle, and the creatures all fit in, with Konso urging Kristie to sit down as well. But the other human, a boy that looked just a bit older than Joe and Amy, stood facing away from them.

The lizard-like creature said, "Tom, come and sit down. It's time to start letting go of your silly pride and stubbornness."

"Silly?" Tom said. "How is it so silly? I refuse to be any part of this and I refuse to 'get to know' these people and... things... that I only glanced at once."

Sakra became offended. "We are not 'things', but living creatures," she said.

"Do I look like I care?" Tom responded.

The lizard-like creature sighed. "Just leave him alone. He'll learn to lose the stubborn act soon. So let's start.

"But first," Konso said, "Let's go over how we introduce yourselves. Well, we can tell what gender humans are, but since you can't tell ours so easily, we will say our name, gender, and any abilities we have that are of importance. And for the humans, just say your name, age, and a fact you just feel like you want to share. Tom, you are included in this too, so whether you like it or not, you're going to have to participate."

"Okay, well, since none of you know me I will introduce myself first," the lizard-like animal said. "I am Pensa, and I am female. I am a shape-shifter creature, which means I can change into basically anything I want to, although I prefer this form, the form of a lizard. I don't have any important abilities, although my shape-shifting can help me in basically any situation."

Everyone took their turn talking. There was really nothing too interesting, although it turns out Sakra is the one able to control time however she wants and Konso is able to use magic. Of course, Joe already knew that Shimaki could turn himself and other things invisible. Amy turns out to be Joe's age, fourteen, just like he thought. Kristie is eight years old, just one year older than Sarah.

When everyone except for Tom had spoken, Tom was still facing away from them, with his arms crossed and refusing to talk at all.

"Since Tom is too stubborn and big-headed," Pensa said, "I will speak for him. Tom is fifteen years old. Although I'm not really sure if there's anything he wants to share since you already see he doesn't have that great of an attitude."

"How about how I really don't want to be here and would much rather be back home studying for that test I have in school this week?" Tom said.

"If Tom is done complaining," Sakra said, "I need to take all of you somewhere." She looked at

Shimaki, almost as if she was telling him something. He seemed to understand and left for something. "Please follow me. It will not take long to get there."

Tom was still in a bad mood, which created a very awkward silence. But, Amy noticed that Kristie was still being shy; she was hiding behind Konso. Amy walked over to her and grabbed her hand with a smile on her face. Kristie looked up at Amy and smiled back. "Don't be so shy," Amy said. "We won't bite."

Kristie giggled. "I'm just shy. I can't help it," she said.

Joe watched Amy and Kristie talking and couldn't help but smile. Amy seemed so nice. And she was pretty. Joe couldn't believe he was so lucky that the first person he actually really met was her.

Sakra was right, it didn't take very long to get to where she wanted to take them. When they got there, Shimaki and another creature were already there.

"Hello, Sakra," the other creature said. "It is good to finally see you again after so long. Did everything go as you planned?"

"Yes," Sakra said. "Time has been paused in the human lands and I have four humans with me."

The creature examined each of the four humans and pointed to Kristie. "How old is she?" he asked.

"She just turned eight recently," Sakra answered. "There was one human who could not come with us. She was not yet eight."

"Four is a perfectly fine number, especially since there are only four of you. This is fine. You can proceed with the job. But, please remember to proceed with caution." He turned to the humans and said "All of you."

"We will make sure everyone stays safe." Sakra bowed her head and she turned to everyone else to say "Let's go now. We have things to do."

Amy and Joe looked confused. What exactly were they needing to do? They walked into the forest nearby and stopped soon after coming to a darker part of the forest.

"We're stopping here for the day," Sakra said. "Tomorrow, I have a place to show you, somewhere important to show you what we are up against. But for now, just relax."

Tom was still acting like he was better than everyone and shouldn't be there, and he sat down as far away as possible from everyone else. Kristie, being urged by Amy to stop being so shy, walked slowly over to where Tom was sitting and nervously started to talk to him.

Tom shoed her away, and Kristie ran back over to Amy looking very sad.

"Are you okay?" Amy asked. "What did he say?"

"He called me a very mean name I am not allowed to repeat and he said 'Go away, you little twerp."

Nobody wants to talk to you.”

Amy hugged Kristie. “It's okay,” she kept repeating. “Don't cry. Don't listen to him. He's not worth your tears.”

5 - Creature Files: Haru's Revenge

Haru was pretty beaten up from the fight, but he didn't care how badly hurt he was as long as he could walk. When Furan and Saku finally decided they were bruised enough for their mothers to ground them for a year, he picked up Evena, who was unconscious, and carried her down to the medical center.

When he walked in, he didn't even have to say anything for anyone to give them attention. Someone immediately grabbed Evena out of Haru's arms and took her to a room, and tried to get him to get attention as well, but all he told them was "I'm fine. She's the one that really needs the attention," and they listened to him, at least for the time-being.

They were not too used to things like bad wounds from a fight. There wasn't very much violence that went on in the Creature Islands. Most people minded their own business and didn't get involved in things that would come out with a bad result.

Haru refused to let them give him any medical attention until Evena woke up. It took about fifteen minutes for her to wake up, and when she did, she looked directly over at Haru.

"Why did you fight them?" she asked.

"They had beaten you up! Why wouldn't I?" Haru responded.

"But it wasn't your fight."

"If I didn't fight them they probably would have kept beating you up until you would have died! I would never let that happen!"

No matter how much Haru felt like crying because of the current state Evena was in, he wouldn't let her see him cry.

"Now you have their attention back on you..." Evena said.

"I don't care anymore. I just want you to be okay," Haru said.

A few days later, Haru and Evena were mostly healed. Luckily, nothing was broken and nothing was damaged too badly.

They were walking down the street, just hanging out and enjoying each other's company, when Furan and Saku passed by.

"Well, well. Look who's not dead," Furan said.

"We thought we might have at least killed the girl," Saku said.

"She has a name, you know," Haru said. "And if you were aiming for killing her, you should have killed me first, then."

"Well," Saku said with a mischievous smirk, "we won't make that mistake next time."

Furan and Saku walked away laughing.

"Haru, I think we better run very, very far away..." Evena said.

A few days after that, Haru was supposed to meet Evena her house, but when he got there, her mother was the one who answered the door. Normally, Evena jumps out and hugs him as soon as he gets there.

"Hi," Haru said. "Is Evena home?"

"No, she isn't," her mother replied.

"Do you know where she is?"

"No, I don't. But two boys were here about an hour ago and she went somewhere with them."

"Thank you," Haru said, and immediately turned around and ran towards where he knew they were.

When he got there, he saw exactly what he expected: Furan and Saku beating up Evena. Of course by now, she was unconscious.

He snuck up behind both of them and punched them square in their backs.

"Don't you remember what I told you?" Haru said. "That you would have to kill me before you kill her?"

Furan laughed. "This is going to be a piece of cake!" he said as he turned around to try to punch Haru.

"I don't think so," Haru said. He felt extremely powerful, like he could do anything he wanted, and no matter what it was, it would be the easiest thing ever.

6 - Secrets, Wondering, and Worrying

Konso sighed. "Why couldn't Tom have been the young one and the other the older one?" he said.

Joe was puzzled. "What do you mean?"

"There would have been one more here with us," Shimaki explained. "But she was too young. We would have waited another year so she would be the age Kristie is now, but we couldn't wait any longer."

Joe thought for a little bit. Then, suddenly, what they were saying made sense. "My sister!" he exclaimed.

Shimaki smiled and nodded to let him know he was right.

"What about your sister?" Amy asked.

"I didn't realize it before," Joe said. "How stupid am I?! Only certain people can talk to and see the creatures, like us. And my sister tried to calm Shimaki down today when he got . . . wound up. That means she was able to see and hear him. I didn't notice. She is seven years old, and if she was a year older, she would be here too. But, I have to wonder, would there be another creature that would have been her own?"

"No, Joe," Pensa said. "You and Sarah would both have Shimaki. There is no one else willing to do what we are trying to do. Besides, we didn't want to drag more people than necessary into this mess."

"But," Joe said, "that means that there would only be four creatures to help five people."

"We know that," Sakra said. "But Shimaki is very strong. That is why we sent him to you. We know everything about each of you. And, yes, that means we also know about what happens to you at home, whether it is good or bad."

Kristie, Joe, and Amy looked sad at this.

"Nothing bad happens to me at home," Tom said. "Don't you even say that anything does."

"You would be surprised at the things that are right in front of you, Tom," Shimaki said. "You may not be able to see something that involves you until someone reminds you of what has happened. But enough of that. You all need to get some sleep. Don't worry about a thing. Just in case, the four of us will guard you to make sure nothing bad happens to you."

This would all be really easy for them, since creatures don't need sleep unless they are one of the creatures that are part human.

Amy didn't want anyone to get hurt, that was true. Her kind nature doesn't allow her to want anyone or

anything to get hurt. She is even a vegetarian and doesn't like things that pollute the environment. But, since she wasn't sure what she had to do yet and she was concerned it would involve violence, she wasn't sure if she could hurt anything in order to keep a whole race from becoming extinct.

Sure, they hadn't said anything about her hurting any creature. But what if the only way to get that creature back to normal was to hurt them? How could she do that? She didn't know what, how, or why, but something always stops her before she can do anything that involves harming anything else. Well, at least things that aren't absolutely necessary.

What am I going to do now? Amy asked herself. It's too late to turn back, so I need to go on. But I don't know if I will be able to help in the long run...

She lied down on her side so that nobody could see her face and started to cry.

I just don't know if I can do this.

She went to sleep with a very heavy mind and only got about half an hour of sleep until she woke up from a dream.

In her dream, she had met a version of what her mind had thought might be the creature they have to save, and it turned out that they have to fight them. At first, she hesitated and wasn't going to fight them at all. But, once she hit them, she couldn't stop. It was almost like she went mad. She kept hitting them and hitting them until they died. And she went around killing everyone in sight. She couldn't help it. She killed Kristie, Sakra, Tom (which she didn't really mind because she didn't particularly like his actions, but it still bothered her at least some), and even Joe.

She was really happy she woke up from her dream, but she wasn't able to get back to sleep afterwards. And there was at least six more hours before dawn. What was she supposed to do until then? If she couldn't get back to sleep before dawn, she would be slowing everyone down and she wouldn't be able to keep her eyes open.

So she tried very hard to get back to sleep, but she couldn't. If only her stupid mind would stop thinking about that nightmare, she would actually be able to sleep. Her mind is always doing that. It is always makes nightmares for her she isn't able to forget for about a day or two. Once, it created a nightmare she couldn't forget for weeks.

Then, she found something else to think about. But that didn't even let her fall asleep. It kept her awake for a long time, wondering. When Sakra had said about them knowing everything about the four humans, she wasn't the only one that looked sad. She saw that Joe and Kristie did too. So that meant that they had something wrong at home, just like her.

And Tom obviously had something wrong at home too, because of what Shimaki had said after Tom said that there was nothing wrong at his home. There must be something wrong if Shimaki lectured him about not noticing things that are right in front of you directly to him.

So something is wrong either with each of them, or something that concerns or involves them. That would just make the four creatures worry even more.

It must be really hard having four partners who have something wrong at home while helping them with a mission like this, Amy thought. I wish I could help. . .

She was trying to think of two things: one was what might be wrong with everyone else, which she couldn't think of any solutions. and the other was to find a way to help the creatures from worrying about the four of them. But she couldn't think of any solutions to that, either.

She spent about one hour trying to figure out solutions and the rest of the time trying to go to sleep. After about five hours of trying, Sakra nudged her.

"Come on, Amy," Sakra said. "Time for us to go."

Amy got up with her eyelids drooping down, trying to cover her eyes.

"Did you sleep well," Sakra asked.

"Um, yeah," Amy said. "I slept fine."

Okay, so she only had half an hour to sleep. But she didn't want to worry them even more. She just had to try to not be slow and keep her eyes open. That would work. That would keep them from worrying either way. She just hoped she'd be able to pull it off. If she wouldn't, everyone would have to stop and wait for her to try to get to sleep and that would just slow them down.

Amy stood up and waited for everyone else to wake up. It took about ten minutes. She would have never guessed it would take so long to wake a fifteen-year-old up. She stopped herself after that thought so she wouldn't go on to tease Tom. He didn't seem to be a very nice kid or a kid anyone would get along with, but maybe he would change over time.

"Okay, everybody," Pensa said. "Let's go. Konso, please travel by the sky."

Konso nodded and flew up into the sky.

Amy looked at Pensa and was amazed when she saw her leap into the water and turn into a dolphin.

Oh, yeah. She's a shape-shifter... Amy reminded herself

Sakra climbed up into a tree and explained that she would travel by jumping from tree to tree.

Very smart, Amy thought. One creature travels by sky, one by water, one inside thick trees and bushes, and one by normal land. That way, there would be the least amount of chance of anything sneaking up on them from anywhere, as long as somebody watches behind the whole group. And that somebody was Shimaki.

Amy didn't drag behind too far, but she was behind everybody else except for Shimaki so that there was less chance of anyone seeing her tired.

After a few minutes of walking, Joe started to walk a little slower until he ended up walking right beside Amy.

“You didn’t get much sleep last night,” he whispered. “You lied.” He wasn’t talking in a mean way. Actually, the way he was talking was kind of . . . sweet.

“Oh,” Amy said. “Um, I’m sorry. It’s not my fault. I had a lot on my mind.”

“I was able to sleep,” Joe said, “but I didn’t get very much. I was worried about everything, too. I was wondering what goes on at the three of your houses. Because of the way you guys responded and what Shimaki said to Tom I could tell that something is wrong at each of your homes. Don’t worry. It’s the same way for me.”

“I could tell. But that wasn’t the only thing on my mind,” Amy said. “I was wondering how I am going to do this whole thing. I was also worried about a nightmare I had in the half-hour-sleep I got last night. I was so. . . I don’t know. It was weird. I am nice, but in my dream, I was a monster that killed everyone that was in sight... It just. . . scared me.”

“You don’t think you’re going to attack everyone you see in real life, do you? I know you won’t. You are one of those people who won’t do that. You might change a little, though. You might be able to handle certain things better, but I know that you will not go on a killing spree because of that.” Joe smiled at Amy reassuringly.

Amy blushed. Nobody had ever been this nice to her before. At least, not a human. Only Sakra had been this nice to her, but now she knew she had a friend of her own species. But she didn’t know why she was blushing. Maybe she was just surprised. Yeah, that had to be it.

“I got a few hours of sleep,” Joe said. “I didn’t think you got such less sleep. I mean, when I was awake, so were you, but I thought that you had to get some sleep while I was sleeping. Maybe you should tell them.”

“No,” Amy said. “I don’t want them worrying. Why do you think I’m back here? I won’t tell them, and I won’t let them find out. Either way, they will worry, and I don’t want them worrying anymore than they have to.”

“If you don’t tell them, they will worry even more than if you do. So what if we’ll be held back a few hours so you can get some sleep? We can handle that.”

“It would take a few days before I’d be able to fall asleep. That’s why.”

“Oh, well, if you tell them what’s going on, I’m sure they can understand. Everybody needs sleep.”

“I’m sorry. I won’t.”

“Okay. I won’t make you. But if something happens to you, I am going to tell them. How long has it been since you have slept at all?”

“That half hour last night added to the past week makes four hours within the past week.”

“You really need some sleep. If you don’t get enough sleep, something can happen to you. And whatever it is won’t exactly be good. Not to mention, you do look a little pale and feverish.”

Joe felt Amy’s forehead.

“Yep, you definitely have a fever. I am going to tell them.”

“No, please don’t. I promise I’ll be fine.”

Joe looked at her face and couldn’t help but listen to her. He just couldn’t go against her wishes. She was worried about them worrying about her, which kind of makes no sense, but he just felt like he had to listen to her.

“Fine, I won’t,” Joe said. “But just know that even if they aren’t worrying about you, I am.”

Amy looked up at Joe’s serious face. She couldn’t make him worry about her like that. He was serious, so she just couldn’t.

“Okay. I don’t want you worrying about me so much,” Amy said, “and by the look on your face, you are telling me that something bad might happen to me soon, so, you can--”

She was late in agreeing to Joe telling them. She had fainted.

7 - Creature Files: Evena's Heartbreak

Furan and Saku looked at Haru in a way no one else looked at him before; they were very scared.

Haru took a lot of pleasure out of this. He didn't know why he felt so powerful, or why he had felt stronger at all. But even without knowing it, Haru had been starting to throw blows left and right at the two, until the both of them ran off.

Haru calmed down, feeling like he was normal again, and he immediately hurried to Evena to pick her up and take her to the medical center again.

The same thing that happened last time happened this time as well, except that Haru didn't have a single scratch on him.

When Evena woke up, which took much longer than it did last time, she had a very hard time keeping her eyes open. She was much more damaged than last time. Haru was scared she wouldn't be okay.

Evena was shocked to see Haru hadn't had a single scratch on him. "Did you even fight them? Or did you just grab me and take me here?" she asked.

"Of course I fought them," Haru answered. "It was the strangest thing. I felt like I was so powerful that I could do anything, no matter what it was. It felt really good."

"At least you're okay," Evena said.

It took a few days for Evena to be allowed to go home. By this time, Haru was furious that they had caused so much damage to her and wanted revenge on them for her.

It hadn't taken him long to find Furan and Saku, and when he found them, he didn't let his presence be known. He snuck up on them again, this time causing some real damage to Saku, grabbing him by the throat.

Furan was in shock when he saw Haru there. They both knew he would be furious, but they never thought he would be the type to want revenge.

It didn't take very long at all for a fight to begin. Although, it didn't seem very much like a fight, Haru being the only one hurting anyone.

Haru felt just like he had a few days previous, when he last fought them. He felt powerful and unstoppable.

It didn't take long for Haru to completely lose control; he wouldn't stop.

Even after Haru had defeated Furan and Saku, he still couldn't gain control back. Maybe somewhere inside he was trying to gain control, but he just couldn't take control of his body back. It was like something else was controlling it.

It didn't take long for everyone to get word around the island about Haru. Once the news reached Evena, she was terrified. It looks like she was right from the beginning to be scared about Haru maybe wanting to take revenge on Furan and Saku for what they did.

She only wished there was a way to stop it...

When Haru's mother found out about her son, she immediately went to Evena's house. She had to talk to her. There was no other choice; she had to resort to that...

Evena wasn't quite sure why it was so urgent to Haru's mother that they talked. But she was soon to find out why.

"I've always been scared something like this would happen," Haru's mother said. "So I had talked to a magic-gifted creature and they told me the solution if this ever happened.

"I was told that the one person who would be able to even remotely calm him down would be the one closest to him. That would be you. Although, just you trying to calm him down wouldn't be enough... He would start back up after a little bit and you would only be able to calm him for a little bit at a time.

"But no one except for you will be able to get close enough to him without being killed. Not even his own mother."

"What do you want me to do?" Evena asked, scared about what the answer would be.

"I am so very sorry to ask this of you, but it's the only way to stop him... Part of him has taken him over, and it's not his fault. This part of him resides in his soul, and the only way to get him to stop is to extract his soul, and implant it deep into the ground in the very center of the island so that it cannot affect anyone else. If it gets loose, anyone can become what Haru has. You are able to use magic, correct?"

"Yes, I am," Pensa said. "But, if I did that, wouldn't he..."

"I'm very sorry to ask you to do this, but if you don't he could completely wipe every one of us off of the face of this planet."

Evena was scared. Haru was her best friend. But if he was going to be the extinction of the creatures and she was the only one able to do anything about it, what else could she do?

She started to cry. She knew she had to, and she promised herself she would use all of her will power to force herself to do it, but she had no clue what would happen to her afterwards. After all, she would be losing her best friend, and basically her only friend.

After learning what she needed to, Evena set out to the location where Haru was last seen. It took a little

bit to find him, but luckily she could use the sky to her advantage with her shape-shifting.

Once she found him, she immediately stopped and braced herself for what she knew was about to happen.

When Haru saw her, he calmed down immediately. He almost seemed like he was back to normal. He looked so happy to see her, but all she could do was look at him with a very sad look on her face.

She hesitated only a little bit, then immediately started to chant the spell to extract his soul out of him. She wished that the routine didn't require her to keep eye contact with him. She felt like she could break down and cry at any moment, but she resisted the temptation.

The whole process took about 2 minutes, and as he took his last look at her for the few seconds he was normal before he died from the spell, he said "Thank you, Evena. This is the best thing you've ever done for me."

After she finished the job, she could do nothing but cry.

8 - Sick

Shimaki immediately ran toward Amy and Joe to help.

“Sakra, Pensa, Konso!” Shimaki yelled for his friends.

When Shimaki yelled their names, Pensa turned back into a lizard and came on land. Kristie and Tom also looked around. Kristie looked worried and ran towards everyone else when she saw Amy. Tom just looked over his shoulder and had a look on his face that was saying, “stop trying to bring so much attention to yourself.”

When Joe saw the look on Tom’s face, he was furious.

“Tom,” Joe said, “don’t look like that. She is not faking this. Trust me.”

“She told me she hadn’t gotten any more than four hours of sleep within the past week. Not to mention, she has a fever. That is why she fainted. She is sick.”

“Don’t worry, Joe,” Konso said. “We will find a place to take her. Just put her on Shimaki’s back then climb on yourself. Kristie and Tom, get on my back. Sakra and Pensa will keep on the look-out around us.”

Everyone did as they were told. And as soon as Joe carried Amy onto Shimaki’s back with Sakra’s help and climbed on himself, they were off.

It didn’t take too long before Shimaki and Konso found some shelter that they could use to take care of Amy.

“Do I really have to come here as well,” Tom asked, sounding annoyed. “I do not want to take care of a bratty, faking Princess. I’m going to go help Sakra and Pensa.”

“No, Tom,” Konso said. “It is dangerous to be out there on your own.”

Joe was really furious.

“She is not faking it!” Joe yelled so loud he was surprised the shelter didn’t collapse. “And she isn’t bratty! You’re the one who’s bratty!”

“Joe, please calm down,” Shimaki said. “Tom is the only one that thinks she is faking. The rest of us know she isn’t.”

Joe still didn’t want to take much nonsense from Tom. Why would he know if she was faking or not? Amy wouldn’t do that! Not at all! And the only way he could be absolutely sure anyway, is if he was stalking her or eavesdropping. Does Tom think he is the smartest kid in the world and is never wrong? If

he did, he better think again!

Joe tried really hard to contain himself. Why was he getting so angry over this? It should really bother him that Tom is saying something like that, but he was getting a little too angry. He felt like punching Tom, but he knew that he couldn't and he didn't want to. If he punched Tom, he would start acting a little like his father.

Joe finally calmed down some and started to focus on how to get Amy's fever down.

"How can we tell how high her fever is," Joe asked.

Shimaki felt her head with his paw.

"I would say it is about one-hundred-three degrees Fahrenheit," Shimaki said.

"We definitely need to bring it down before it gets any higher."

"And how do we do that?" Kristie asked.

"Ah, ignorance," Tom said. "I remember when I was like that. Oh, wait. I never was." Tom chuckled to himself. "We find a special herb, liquefy it, and give it to her, idiot."

Kristie became sad by Tom's rude words.

"Hey, Tom," Joe said, "lay off her will you? That is rude. Just because you are 'smart' doesn't give you the right to make fun of her. Especially since she is the youngest one here, no offense to you, Kristie."

Kristie looked surprised. "None taken," she said. No one had ever stuck up for her before. She was teased tons of times and no one ever even wanted to help her out. Now someone did. Had she made a friend besides Konso?

"And, Tom was right," Konso said. "I am going to search for the herb called Tivanthem. It will bring her fever down. And after she is no longer unconscious, we have to let her sleep. She definitely needs her rest. We should let her sleep for at least five hours."

Konso flew off and everything was quiet.

"And I definitely don't want to stay in here with a stupid eight-year-old, an unconscious 'princess', and her stupid servant," Tom said. "I have enough to worry about. Now I need to be the smart one for all three of you and make sure you do nothing else stupid."

"Tom," Shimaki said. "That's enough. I know I am not your parent, but you should stop before you get too cocky."

"Yeah," Joe said. "We all already know you are smart, so you don't need to keep up your bratty attitude. You insulted Kristie, are saying that Amy isn't a real princess and saying that I'm her stupid servant. One, Kristie is a nice girl who you shouldn't be making fun of because of her age. Two, Amy

doesn't lie, and three, I am smart and not her servant. I am her friend. I may not be extremely smart, but I am still smart enough to know a liar and a snotty, spoiled, bratty know-it-all when I see one.

"You may be intelligent, but you know nothing about manners and being polite. That is where you lack a lot of intelligence, so you are really not all that smart."

"Fine, whatever," Tom said. "Say what you will. It doesn't make it true. And, I might as well add this in while I can. If you are not Amy's servant, then you must have a crush on her. I mean, come on. Look at the way you got angry when I suggested anything against what she says."

Joe blushed. "No, I do not. I met her yesterday, so how can I have a crush on her already?"

"Things work in weird ways. And, if you met her yesterday, how could you be her friend already, anyway?"

"I am. Me and her talked enough to get along and become friends."

"Mmhm, sure."

Tom laughed.

"Why are you being friendly all of a sudden," Joe asked.

"I'm not. I'm making fun of you. Can't you tell the difference? If you can't tell the difference, then how do you know that girl is your friend?"

"Just the way you were talking seemed like you were being friendly."

"Wrong again."

Tom laughed again.

He must be a troubled child, Joe thought. That is probably the result of what happens at his house.

To Amy, it seemed like she came back to her senses right after she became unconscious. But it had actually been a few hours.

She looked around and saw first Joe, who was right beside her, then Shimaki, Kristie, Konso, then Tom in a dark corner of the shelter.

"Nice to have you back," Konso said. "Now, you should get sleep. You need it. We don't want the same thing happen to you twice."

"Where are Sakra and Pensa," Amy asked.

"They are just watching around outside," Shimaki said. "Don't worry. Just get your rest."

"But . . . hey, Joe? Did you tell them," Amy asked.

"Yes," Joe said. "I told you that if anything happened to you then I would tell them what was going on."

"No, not that. That I know you told them. Did you tell them about . . . my dream i had last night?" Amy asked, lowering her voice to a soft whisper so only Joe could hear."

"Oh, no. I didn't think you would want me to tell anybody that. Oh, and Tom kept going on and on about how he thought you were faking that whole thing, but after about an hour, I finally persuaded him that you were really unconscious. I just thought you might want to know that"

"It's all right," Amy said. "Anybody can believe whatever they want. It doesn't bother me."

"It seems like he has a crush on you, you know," Tom said to Amy. "The way he was sticking up for you. He really got in my face. It was really funny."

"It wasn't funny," Kristie said. "He made fun of all of us."

"Oh, is that so," Amy said. "Tom, you shouldn't make fun of people no matter who it is. It is wrong and I just despise how people make fun of other people. Will you please not do that from now on, Tom?"

"Whatever," Tom answered back.

"That means he didn't hear a word you said," Joe whispered in Amy's ear. "He may be smart, but he knows nothing about manners and being polite."

"I realized that," Amy whispered back.

Konso had heard Joe and Amy's conversation and told them, "He can be kind of rude, but please do not think low of him. Deep down, he is a really good person. Looking at Tom, you can see one of the worst results of someone who has been forced to do something he does not want to do but was lead to believe it was the best thing to do. Don't worry; I'm sure he'll turn around in time."

Konso gave Amy the liquefied herb he had made for her.

Amy slowly drifted off to sleep. Obviously the herb that she had been given also lets you fall asleep easily. She was very tired when she had become conscious again, so she was happy when she was able to fall asleep.

After a few hours, Amy woke up. Konso felt her head and told her that her fever was gone. Amy was very happy to hear that; now they won't have to worry so much about her anymore. She just hoped that she won't get sick again.

9 - Creature Files: Takuta's Accident

Being two of the best scientists on all of the Creature Islands, Sakra and Takuta try to find everything as they possibly could about the islands no one knows about. That day was the day they were going to a specific island, just to try to figure out just what was so strange about it, and why it was known as "Spirit Island."

Most thought it was called this because it might be where the spirits of all those who die in the Creature Islands go. The fact that there was something very strange about that island that anyone can sense as soon as they step on it is one of the things that lead creatures to believe this. Another reason is that a lot of strange goings-on happen there. But, as scientists, Sakra and Takuta don't like to jump to conclusions and prefer to examine things more closely.

As soon as they stepped onto the island, just like creatures say, they did feel something very odd about it. The further into the island they walked, the stranger the odd feeling felt.

There did seem to be a lot of strange things happening on the island as well, but only around where they were. It was almost like they were unwanted intruders on the island. Some of the things that happened could have even maybe been life-threatening, such as trees falling down and small earthquakes.

As they explored the island more, they realized that people used to reside there. There were villages with houses, stores, and everything. It all looked so abandoned. Most of one of the villages looked like it was completely destroyed by something very powerful.

No matter what they did, the two scientists found it very hard to find out exactly what had happened here, what kinds of creatures lived here, or why it was abandoned. At one point, it seemed, the best chance of them finding out was to go straight to the center of the island to where the odd feeling seemed to be coming from.

When they got there, they found nothing very interesting just from the looks of it, but it was the strongest they had felt that odd feeling yet.

They started to examine the area, and found that the feeling was even stronger when they lowered themselves more towards the ground. They used this strategy to find it, and once they found the spot where it was strongest, they started to examine it.

What they found was a force that seemed to be a spirit with evil intentions. It seemed to be full of revenge and hatred, and had been stuck in the ground probably for a few centuries. It seemed to have been deeper in the ground previously, but it had fought its way up to a higher elevation.

By the force of it, it seemed as if it would take over the first thing it could in order to do its evil intentions. For this reason, they had captured it and kept it in a safe place, where no one would be able to get harmed by it.

They took it back to their laboratory where they examined it to see exactly what had happened to it and

how it ended up that way.

Not long after they finished their examination on it and found out everything they could, there was an accident. Takuta had one of his many clumsy moments, which knocked the container the spirit was held in to the ground, and he thought it had been safe, that it hadn't been able to be let out, but he was wrong.

10 - Spirit Island

After Amy was fully recovered from being sick, they all continued to walk where Sakra wanted to take them to. Tom was still convinced Amy had faked it and that Joe had become her personal slave. Which, of course, neither thoughts were true.

Joe refused to let Amy out of his sight. He wanted to keep an eye on her, just in case she became really sick again. There was no reason to take a chance again. Kristie walked with them, as well, scared that Tom might hurt her feelings again. Joe and Amy couldn't help but feel bad for Kristie.

After a little while of walking, they entered a village. It seemed to be very old and appeared abandoned. Although it looked like such a pretty village. Why would it have been abandoned?

"This village," Sakra said, "Was once a very peaceful one. But that was a very long time ago. This is the only part of the village that is still standing. Let me show you the part with the most damage."

They walked just a little bit farther until they saw this. Everything seemed to be crumbled to pieces. There even were elevated patches in the ground that looked like graves for whoever was killed by whatever happened there.

"This area suffered the most damage out of the whole village. The damage was caused by something that could have been so easily avoided. But the cause was discovered only a few years ago by myself and my friend, Takuta. This destruction is a danger the Creature Islands can very easily face again today. Our job is to stop the danger."

"Why did you drag us into this?" Tom said. "Why should humans, who have absolutely nothing to do with the creatures, be dragged into a problem you have?"

"For one," Sakra said, "this could very well affect you as well. If the danger succeeds in destroying our islands, it can very well destroy your lands as well. And I also knew that humans would be able to help us in a way."

"Whatever," Tom said. "Why won't you just send me home?"

"You'll change your mind later," Sakra said.

Tom rolled his eyes.

"This could happen to all of the Creature Islands. But we would like your help. Believe it or not, you can help us a lot."

Amy smiled and said, "Anything I can do to help!"

Sakra wouldn't tell them exactly what happened, and they couldn't help but wonder. But, maybe they

would be told later.

“Now, it isn't safe to stay here for too long,” Sakra said. “The spirits of the dead villagers might be angry and try to force us out of here. We should go.”

Now that they thought about it, they did think they saw kind of ghostly figures around the area, but they didn't look like how most people thought of them to look. Some appeared as different colors, almost like they were all completely different. Although, they were extremely transparent and it was kind of hard to see them.

They started to head back to where they stayed over night. After a little bit of walking, Amy and Joe spotted a pair of eyes hidden in the trees and stopped walking. Shimaki stopped with them and jumped in to find out what was hiding. He came back out, unharmed, with the creature following behind him.

“It's only my brother, Shumeku,” Shimaki said. Then he whispered to Amy and Joe, “But you better still watch out because he isn't a very polite creature.”

Shumeku started to talk. “So, this is the team that is supposed to kill Takuta? What a pathetic team. There's a little girl, even! How do you think this team will be able to kill him?”

Sakra, Pensa, and Konso turned around and entered the conversation.

“Shumeku, it may not look like it, but these four will be able to help.” Sakra said. “We are not looking to kill him. He still has good in him; the evil just took him over.”

“Why did you let yourself believe that?” Shumeku said. “You've seen what he can do! How could there possibly be any good left in him?”

“The evil spirit took over his spirit,” Pensa said. “If we use the antidote, the evil spirit will leave him and the normal Takuta will come back.”

“I can't believe this. You need to kill him! There is no good left in him! Look at this team. They will not be able to kill him no matter how much they are trained.”

“I agree with Shumeku,” Tom said. “I mean, look at us. A puny eight-year-old, a bratty princess, and her servant. Me, I'm just smart. Maybe I'll be the most able to kill him, but I still won't be able to. I don't know why you chose this team. Maybe Amy and Joe will be able to help, but just look at Kristie!”

Kristie, who had been so confident up until now that she could help, ran off. Konso followed to make sure she wouldn't get hurt.

“I'm done here, now,” Shumeku said. “That one will explain to you how you will not be able to save our race.”

Amy was furious. “You know what, Tom? I'm already fed up with you! You only judge people by what they appear to be. You don't even get to know them before you decide what kind of a person they are! I don't know how you can even look yourself in a mirror. You are lucky that I believe that there is at least a little good in everyone no matter how bad they might seem or act. Otherwise I would completely shun

you. Most of the time, when someone acts the way you do, they are manipulated, so I ask you; who manipulated you? Who was cruel enough to turn a boy who must be so kind and generous into a snotty brat of a teenager?"

Tom looked surprised. When he thought about it, Amy was actually very accurate. He forgot how he used to be. . . He manipulated himself. . . His parents were so strict; they wanted him to be perfect. They wanted him to be the smartest person ever. And Tom wanted to live up to his parents expectations. So he manipulated himself. He studied everything so he was really smart and no longer needed to study at all. Then he led himself to believe he was always like that; that he was the smartest person in the world. And he became so full of himself he actually became a very rude person. . . What had he done?

Tom's eyes softened up. He ran to find Kristie without saying anything. Pensa knew he would find Kristie easily, so she didn't even follow him.

"I think you got to the real Tom, Amy. Good job," Pensa said.

Amy looked around. "I did? I was just angry. . ."

"But you were also extremely accurate," Sakra said. "Tom manipulated himself to be so smart to live up to his parents expectations. He forgot he was even another person. You made him realize the monster he has been."

Joe smiled. "You're really good at making people different," he said to Amy.

Amy looked over at Joe. "Thank you." She smiled back at Joe.

Sakra smiled, too. She climbed on a rock so she was up to Amy's ear and whispered to her. "Why won't you just kiss him?"

Amy couldn't believe Sakra just said that. "What?!"

"Oh, come on, Amy," Sakra whispered again. "You know you like him."

Amy blushed. "Not true!"

"What are you two talking about that's making Amy yell?" Joe asked.

Amy blushed worse. "Nothing," she said really quickly.

"And I know he likes you," Sakra continued. "If you saw the way he looks at you, you would too. Of course, you're already probably able to tell by how he can't stand to see you hurt or anything like that."

This time Amy whispered. "Sakra, I highly doubt he likes me! And I don't like him!"

Sakra spoke normally now. "Then why are you blushing so badly?"

Amy was silent for a few seconds. ". . . You love to torture me, don't you?"

“Actually it is kind of fun to mess around with you,” Sakra laughed.

“Oh, I get it,” Joe said. “You two are talking about girl stuff. Probably about boys. . .”

“You betcha,” Sakra said.

Amy couldn't believe Sakra was acting like this. Maybe it's just how she is when she wants to have fun.

“Sakra!” she said, even more astonished.

Sakra laughed harder.

Amy looked away, embarrassed. She saw Tom, Kristie, and Konso coming back and Kristie didn't look sad anymore, and, for the first time ever since they had met Tom, Tom was smiling. And it wasn't one of those evil-like smiles, either. It was a real smile.

11 - Creature Files: Sakra the Scientist

"There seems to be nothing here," Sakra said, confused. But, if there is nothing, then how is it there is this... strange feeling? There has to be a reason."

Let's do the most logical thing," Takuta said. Let's try going to the center of where this force seems to be coming from. There will most likely be something there."

"You call that logical?" Sakra said. "Whatever this is, I doubt it will be something good."

"You read too many stories," Takuta said, as he started to walk.

"Its just always helpful to be cautious," Sakra said, following him.

The island wasn't too big, and it didn't take long for them to get to the center, exactly where the weird "force" seemed to be coming from.

"I told you this wasn't a smart idea," Sakra said.

"You're just mad because I had to save your life every time something dangerous happened," Takuta said.

"You almost died, too!" Sakra said. "I really think this is something scientists shouldn't deal with. Whatever it is, it really does not like us. And this thing is strong. I am having a hard time just to stay conscious right now."

"If you can't handle it, you can go further out until it no longer bothers you. As for me, I am perfectly fine. I am going to find out what this is."

"I'm sorry. I just really can't handle it's power."

"Its understandable. Don't worry. I can do this by myself."

Sakra felt guilty about not being able to help Takuta, but there was really nothing she could do about it. But her guilt didn't last long because it didn't take very long for Takuta to finish what he was doing.

"I'm not sure what this is, but whatever it is, it really wanted out. It was hidden in the ground and appears to have been really deep in the ground in the past, but has been inching further to the surface. I put it in this container that will keep the majority of it's force inside, so you can help me. After all, you are better at the 'gathering unknown data' part of the job than me."

Sakra started to examine it as soon as they got back to their island.

"By the looks of this," Sakra said, "it appears to be a form of spirit. The 'force' seems to have been

created from intense emotional drama from whatever it had inhabited. It looks like it has enough power to destroy an entire island within just a few days. It must have driven the whole island away out of fear.”

“You can tell all that just from looking at it?” Takuta said, surprised. “That's amazing!”

“I was trained to know how to examine spirits. Out of the few creatures, like you and me, who are able to see spirits, not even half of us are taught how to read what they are, their intentions, abilities, and other things that can be very important to science and the survival of our species,” Sakra said.

“Wow,” Takuta was in even more shock now. “What else can you find out?”

“Give me a few minutes and I will let you know.”

Sakra closed her eyes and focused on the spirit for a while. After a few minutes, she opened her eyes and explained a story about two shape-shifters and how the boy had gotten enraged when the girl was getting hurt for defending him.

Although, there was much more detail. The story was pretty saddening.

Takuta picked up the container with the spirit in it and stared into it, straight into the center. He could kind of see the face of a creature, although he couldn't really make out what it looked like. He seemed to fall into a type of trance.

He couldn't think very well at the moment, and when Sakra said his name, he dropped the container. The next thing he knew, he wasn't himself.

Shimaki was surprised when Sakra came home earlier than normal. Once she walked in the door and saw him, she rushed over to him and pulled him into the basement, where no one would be able to eavesdrop on them. Even though she had to tell him something crucial for all of the Creature Islands to know, she didn't want to announce it to anyone yet. Pensa and Konso should be some of the first to know. She will have to tell them next.

“There is something extremely wrong with Takuta,” she said, somewhat in panic.

“What do you mean” Shimaki asked.

“We were experimenting on a discovery we made, a spirit. He had a clumsy accident, which opened the container it was in. When it was released, it found the closest thing it could possess, Takuta, and entered him.”

“So, it's just a spirit. What's so horrible about this?”

“It's very powerful. It has the ability, and intention, to kill everything it can.”

“So you think this spirit is just going to destroy everything?”

“I know it will. It is a very vengeful spirit. But I believe it is going to be cautious first. Last time, it was sealed into the ground. I don't think it is going to be so careless this time.”

“So, how are you planning to get rid of it? The same way they did last time?”

“Of course not,” Sakra said. “That would kill him. I had created an 'antidote,' I guess you could call it, while I was telling Takuta the spirit's story. It was a just-in-case thing. But it will be hard to be able to use on him.”

“Are you thinking what I think you're thinking?”

“If you're thinking I'm thinking about asking if we can get some humans to cooperate with us, then yes. Humans have some strengths that could help us. And besides, some of them need to help each other as well. We will only be returning the favor.”

12 - No Life's Perfect

Kristie ran up to Amy and Joe to tell them her good news.

“Tom changed. He said he was sorry for saying all those mean things to me and he wants to be my friend! He said that you helped, Amy! Thank you!” Kristie jumped up and hugged Amy.

Amy smiled. “You’re welcome. I didn’t even notice I helped anyone with anything. . . So it’s a surprise to me, too.”

“I still thank you very much!” Kristie looked up at Amy like she was a goddess. “I wish you were my big sister. You could have helped me all along.”

“Well, I have always wanted a little sister,” Amy said, putting on a larger smile.

Kristie's face completely lit up.

Tom said, “Okay, can we please continue? I'm not a big fan of mushy stuff.”

Amy knew he was just embarrassed about her proving him wrong, although he did somewhat have a point. They shouldn't just stand around right now, while they already had something they needed to do.

Kristie stayed by Amy while they were walking, holding onto her hand like she was her big sister. Joe, who was also walking beside Amy, found the scene beside him cute. Kristie hung onto Amy like her life depended on it. She also found it easy to open up to Joe. He was happy about that, mostly because he wanted to be protective of her since his sister was just a year younger than her.

He couldn't help but keep thinking about what she had said to Amy. It seemed like her being teased was a big issue she had back home. But, then, why wouldn't her parents have helped her out? That's the weird thing...

“Hey, Amy?” Kristie said.

“Yes, Kristie?” Amy responded.

“Do you think that maybe after we get to go back home...” she started to say, although she seemed kind of scared to say what she wanted to. “That I can go home with you? Or if not you, then could I go home with you, Joe? I don't want to have to go back...”

Amy and Joe both looked surprised at this.

“Kristie, I don't think it would be a very smart idea for you to come back home with me,” Amy said. “For

one, my parents would never let me bring a little girl home with me. Especially with their opinions... And also, wouldn't your parents be worried about you if you never went home?"

"I... I don't have any parents," Kristie said. "I live in the orphanage. I was dropped off their whenever I was just a baby. No one knows who my parents are."

This made Amy and Joe feel sad.

"I'm sorry, Kristie," Amy said. "My home isn't a good place for you to go to. In fact, it would be a horrible place to go."

"Mine is probably worse," Joe said. "So, I'm very sorry, but I can't help you either."

"But..." Kristie said. "Why?"

"My home," Joe said, "isn't something you would call a home. Me and my sister are literally personal slaves to my father. He makes us do work, and if we slack off the tiniest bit or do something in a way he doesn't like, we get severely punished. What we eat... I don't even know if it can go into a food category. Me and my sister have never been anywhere outside of our home, so there would be no explanation as to how I would have met you anyway."

Kristie's eyes became really big at this. "That's... That's horrible! You don't deserve that! And I'm sure your sister doesn't either!"

Amy was actually kind of shocked. "I would have never thought that happens to you..."

"I thought I've been hiding it pretty well," Joe said.

"What about you, Amy?" Kristie asked. "Why can't I go home with you?"

"I'm sorry, but... I don't really want to talk about it," Amy said. "It's one of those things that I can only tell someone that I absolutely know I can trust. No offense to either of you, but I think I need to get to know you both a little bit better before I can tell you."

13 - Creature Files: Sakra's Solution

“Sakra, come on! If we don't hurry, we're going to be late. And this was your idea in the first place,” Shimaki yelled up the stairs at his sister.

“I'm coming, I'm coming,” she answered, hurrying down the stairs. “I just wanted to finish making myself look presentable.”

“We are only going in front of the council,” Shimaki said with an air of ease in his voice.

“That's exactly the point! I can't look bad in front of them. I have to make a good first impression on them. And by looking unpresentable, that would not help me at all.”

Shimaki could never understand girls. He didn't know why they thought their appearance was so important. So what if they were going in front of the council to present important information, or that they were going to ask for permission for something they would normally never even think about saying 'yes' to? They know who Sakra is, and there would be really no point in looking good if she has a good record.

It was two days after Takuta's accident, and his state was not yet known to the other creatures. The only ones who knew about it were Sakra, Shimaki, Pensa, and Konso. It was a very good thing that Sakra and Takuta had their own island where they take their discoveries and perform their experiments and other things, because it would make a better outcome, especially for today.

The one thing Shimaki was scared about was running into Shumeku on the way to see the council. Shumeku never was exactly the best brother to Sakra. Shimaki was always the one helping her out. He could never figure out why Shumeku hated her so much. But, that's just Shumeku; he was simple-minded, one-opinionated, unchangeable, hypocritical, and not very much of a social butterfly. In a way, he was kind of stuck-up, although all the bragging rights in the family go to Sakra.

When they got to the council's meeting room, they were not surprised to see all of the council already there, even though they were quite early.

“Sakra the Scientist,” the head said, “it is very nice to meet you. Your work is very important to all of us here in the Creature Islands. Thank you for your help. Information tells me that you have something very important to present to us?”

“Yes, Sakra said. “It is very crucial this is presented to everyone as soon as possible, and in the best way possible.”

“Start talking, please,” the head said.

Sakra explained her story of Takuta.

“This is very serious,” the head said after she was done. “We will have to let everyone know right away. Do you have any idea of how to control him, or how to fix this problem?”

“I know someone who would be able to keep him inside the island he is on now, which no one inhabits. I have already asked him to do so, and he should have finished by now. I also have an 'antidote,' as you can call it. It will take the spirit out of Takuta, and it will kill the spirit, but not Takuta.”

“Very smart,” the head said. “You are smarter than they say you are.”

“Thank you,” Sakra said. “I would also like to ask your permission for something.”

“Ask away.”

“I would like to get the help of humans.”

“Why is this?” The head asked, looking a bit shocked.

“Humans have properties that will be able to help me and three others to get to Takuta. We will be able to protect them, and they will be able to help us.”

“You know humans aren't able to see or hear us.”

“There are a few who can. I have taken several journeys to human-inhabited lands, and there were a few people who were able to see me.”

“Are you sure you can use them to our advantage without messing with the order of their laws or beliefs?”

“Yes. I have the power to stop time. Although it does not work in the Creature Islands, it works everywhere else. Once we retrieve the humans, I will be able to pause time while they help us here. And once they are back to where they are supposed to be, I can play time back to the way it should be.”

“I also believe the humans can benefit out of this as well. I have seen that a lot of humans have personal problems that they have trouble going through alone. They might be able to help each other with their problems after meeting. If I remember correctly, a total of five humans have seen me. With me and the three others I have found who are willing to help me, it is about even between humans and creatures. In a way, we will be able to keep each other safe.”

“I will approve of this,” the head said, “on a few conditions. The first is that when you find these humans and bring them here, that you are to come to me and report their exact names, where they are from, and their ages. Also, I would like for none of these humans to be under the age of eight. This age is risky enough, but that is about when all the abilities we can use have finished developing.”

“I think a few of these humans who have seen me appear younger than eight years old. If need be, would we be allowed to stay with our designated humans until they are old enough?”

“This will be okay. Although, I don't want you waiting any longer than two years. We don't have all the time possible. Is this all you would like to present?”

“Yes.”

“You may leave now. Thank you for coming here to inform us of this very important matter and choosing the best way to present it.”

Sakra bowed, then left with Shimaki following her.

When they got outside of the council's meeting room, Sakra turned to Shimaki and asked, “Why do you insist on going with me everywhere you can?”

“I only don't want you to be out by yourself,” Shimaki said. “You're my sister and I don't want you to get hurt.”

“I can take care of myself just fine,” she answered.

“You know what I'm talking about...”

A few days after the meeting with the council, everyone had been informed several times of the danger, but assured that they will be safe. Although there was one creature who was particularly mad at Sakra, and he decided to pay her and Shimaki a visit.

When Shimaki heard a knock on the door, he looked out the door and groaned. What was he doing here? Didn't he say he wanted nothing to do with either of them anymore?

Shimaki answered the door and said, “What do you want, Shumeku?”

“I wanted to pick a bone with our 'beloved' sister,” he answered.

“Any bone you have to pick with her, you can pick with me.”

Sakra hurriedly came down the steps to see who it was at the door, but she slowed her pace to a crawl once she saw who it was. “Why are you here?” she asked.

“Just the person I wanted to talk to,” Shumeku said. “Do you mind if I talk to you outside for a few minutes?”

Shimaki turned around and gave Sakra a look that said “Say no. Please, say no!”

“You can say what you have to say right here,” Sakra said.

Shimaki's expression changed to “I guess that's okay.”

Shumeku cleared his throat. “All right.” He paused for a second, then said “Are you crazy? You waited to go to the council and inform them of the news of a danger before you told everyone else? You're

insane! Why didn't you tell everyone else first?"

"It was the best way," Sakra answered, calmly. "As I'm sure you have been informed, everyone will be safe. He is contained in an area where no creature lives, and will be taken care of within the next few years. The way I got it presented to the public was the way that would cause the least panic since it was presented by the council."

"You should have let it out sooner!" Shumeku persisted. "I don't care if you believe that idiot Pensa and retard Konso should know about it first. They shouldn't! Everyone should know at the same time."

"They deserved to know first because they were the ones closest to Takuta. And besides, I had already asked to be an audience to the council before I told them. I was simply telling them while waiting to see the council."

"And I also hear that you are going to get help from humans. Humans? That makes you completely insane!"

"They have powers that can help us. Something we don't have."

"Humans are weak! We should be taking over their land! But, no. The council has to be 'nice' and they have to 'abide by the human rules'."

"It is only the fair thing. If you came here just to argue with me about taking the best courses of action for our country, please leave."

"Leave, Shumeku," Shimaki said. "You've caused way too much trouble here already."

"This was my house once, too, you know. Why can't I stay here?" Shumeku said.

"You're the one who decided to leave," Shimaki said.

"I wouldn't have left if you hadn't nearly threatened to kill me if I hadn't."

"Oh, yeah, and I suppose that one little threat adds up to way more than you actually almost killing both me and our sister?"

"She would be the only one I almost killed if you hadn't started defending her."

"Almost killed? Almost killed! You would have killed her if I hadn't intervened! Leave now, or we will force you out."

"Fine, be that way," Shumeku said and left, enraged.

Shimaki slammed and locked the door. "I really hate him."

14 - Learning the Truth

"It's okay, Amy," Joe said. "You don't have to tell us if you don't want to." He smiled. "I will feel very honored when I'm trusted enough to be told your story."

Amy smiled back. Joe had a very nice smile. It made Amy feel warm and welcomed.

Kristie smiled as well, and said, "Me too!"

It didn't take very much longer to get back to the place they rested the night before. Once they got there, they all sat down to relax, and almost didn't notice when Konso started to talk.

"We won't leave today," he said, "but tomorrow, don't be surprised if we are leaving for another island once you wake up. I must tell you that the island we are going to is dangerous and you have to be very careful when we get there. No one is to go off on their own, and everyone is to be more careful than you ever were before."

"Why?" Kristie asked.

"We are going to the island the danger is contained on," Pensa said. "It will try to hurt anything that gets in its way. There is a part of the island that is blocked off from the danger, but anything else may be able to get there."

"What exactly is the danger?" Amy asked. All four of the humans had wanted to ask this question, but no one thought of actually asking it.

"It's a creature," Shimaki said. "The village you saw was destroyed because of the power in this creature."

"But that village was most definitely old," Tom said. "That couldn't have been anything within the past few human lifetimes. You guys don't live that long, do you?"

"No, we don't. Our average dying age is about the same as yours. He wasn't the one who caused the damage. I only said the power in that creature is what caused the damage."

"What do you mean?" Joe asked.

"A vengeful spirit resides in him," Sakra said. "It entered him after we finished researching it as a result of one of his clumsy accidents."

"This spirit was once actually inside a creature a few hundred years ago. Once this creature became severely emotionally damaged, it altered his spirit and made him an uncontrollable and extremely dangerous threat. I have no clue if it is even possible to get out of that state once you entered it. Once me and my partner made this discovery, it was the first any creature had heard of an incident like that."

"That is why it is crucial for no one to go off by themselves while we are on that island," Pensa said. "He has been there for about two years now, but Konso had put up a barrier that made him unable to leave so that no one would get hurt while we waited for Kristie to turn eight years old. And he was smart enough to even block off a section in the island itself where he couldn't enter so we would be safe there."

"But if we stay in that area, we should be safe, right?" Kristie asked.

"Not exactly," Konso said. "Only that creature is unable to go into that area. We don't know if he somehow got some creatures to go to the island he could use to hurt us. We know he knows that we are going to go on the island. The spirit is probably linked with his mind, which knows Sakra had made an antidote to get the spirit out of his body."

"You said it was your partner, right Sakra?" Amy asked. "The one you mentioned earlier who you called Takuta?"

"Yes, that is him," Sakra said. "He has always been clumsy. I just never thought it would cost him his spirit... But all of you do understand the importance of this, correct? If we don't get that out of him, then he will eventually be able to break the barrier and destroy all of our islands, and he will probably go onto the humans as well. And whatever you do, you must be as careful as possible."

"You kept saying about how we will be able to help," Joe said, "but I still haven't figured out how we will be able to help."

"For you to completely learn," Sakra said, "I'm going to have to give you a lesson on spirits, magic, and the Command Law."

"The command law?" Tom said, confused. "I've never heard of that."

"You actually admitted you didn't know something?" Pensa said. "That is the first I've ever heard you admit you didn't know something, Tom."

"Well, I don't know what it is," Tom answered.

"It's no wonder," Shimaki said. "It's a law that is only known to the creatures. Since most humans don't even want to think that we exist, they don't have any idea about this law."

"The Command Law," Sakra said, "is something I had discovered. I have taken several trips to human lands. And when a human had said a command and appeared to be looking at me, I found myself almost completely unable to not listen to them. This has happened several times. I even brought Shimaki, Pensa, Konso, and Takuta with me a few times to see if it was just me, or if this happened to every creature."

"In other words, the Command Law is the truth that creatures seem to almost have to listen to humans when told to do something. This is one reason why I believed it would have been hard to get the council to let me bring humans here. Once everyone learned of this, most got scared. If the humans had ever

found out that we were real and they knew about this law, they would most definitely take it to their advantage and take over our land' is what most believe.”

“This is the only thing that ever prevented me from practically killing Joe's father,” Shimaki said. “Because I have to listen to him. If I try to go against his commands, my body becomes practically unresponsive and I feel like I had been attacked by someone with the intent to kill, which makes me extremely weak. And it won't happen just with Joe. It would happen with any of you.”

“This is another reason I wanted to stay in the human lands so long,” Sakra said. “I wanted to make sure that the humans we were going to bring here could be trusted enough that we could tell you about this and you not take it to your advantage.”

“But why do we need to know about this?” Amy asked.

“It also depends on the person on how much it damages us to not listen,” Sakra said. “Someone with a very strong heart and spirit would be harder to disobey. We are afraid that Takuta might examine each of you and try to get rid of the one who would affect him most because of the Command Law. We want you to be aware of this so that you do not let him trick you into anything.”

“It's either that,” Shimaki said, “or he would try to pick off every single one of you so that none of you could have the Command Law over him.”

Kristie started to get scared. Amy had to hug her to try to calm her down. “Don't worry, Kristie,” Amy said. “I'm not going to let anyone hurt you.”

“All of us are going to do our best to protect everyone else,” Shimaki said.

“Now, to teach you about spirits,” Sakra said. “Most humans are able to see spirits. Although most of the time, they don't realize it. Most spirits appear as very faint images that are hard to see. Although, some are able to see them very clearly. I assume that none of you are one of these people, seeing as you only seemed to notice spirits were in the village we visited after I mentioned them.

“Spirits appear in different colors depending on the actions taken when they inhabited a living body, and also depending on their intentions as a spirit. If they intend to kill, but only one or a few specific living things, they will appear almost as a red-brown color. If they intend to kill ferociously, such as the spirit that possessed Takuta, it will appear as pure black. Kinder spirits will appear as lighter colors.

“There is a lot more to this, but I will not go into detail about anything else. This is the only thing you will need to know. Everything else is not necessary. Although if you ever wish to hear more later, you can just let me know and I can tell you. I am practically an expert at learning everything possible from spirits.”

“I don't think I'm going to teach them how to communicate with you,” Konso said.

“Do you not want them to ever talk to any of us again after they return home or something?” Sakra said.

“Not really, but I am only going to teach them necessary things that they will use within the next few

days," Konso answered.

"Don't you think it would be smart to teach them that as well?" Pensa asked. "That way if we do end up separating, they will be able to find out where we are."

"Fine, I'll show them," Konso said. He turned to Amy, Joe, Kristie, and Tom. "I'm going to show you basics of using magic."

Konso showed them a few very useful defensive spells and only one or two offensive spells. Since they weren't supposed to hurt Takuta, he didn't want to show them too many. He also showed them a spell they could use to communicate with any creature they want.

"This is cool!" Kristie said. "I would have never thought I would have been able to do anything like this!"

Amy, Joe, and Tom laughed.

"I don't think any of us did," Joe said.

"It is actually pretty cool, though," Amy said.

"You'll be able to protect you and your sister a lot easier, Joe!" Kristie said.

"I guess so," Joe said, smiling. He figured this out as soon as they were being taught the spells, and this made him very happy. If there was no way he could have gotten out of his situation, he would at least be able to protect Sarah a lot better.

"Is there something that could help you, Amy?" Kristie asked.

"I don't think so," Amy said. "I know exactly how to get out of my situation. There's just no way I can get out of it until I can find someone for myself."

"What do you mean by that?" Joe asked.

"I mean someone I want to marry. That's going to take forever, though. Because the only people my parents are going to allow me to marry are people who are royalty. There is no way I will marry a royal person. I have refused everyone they sent, and I will keep refusing them. I will only marry someone I truly love and want to marry. I am not going to accept someone just because they are royalty. I don't need any more of that in my life."

15 - Amy's Story

When everyone was getting ready to go to sleep for the night, Amy made a decision that she would tell Kristie and Joe about her story. And to her advantage, Tom was the first one asleep. She wouldn't have to pull them aside. She decided to just randomly start talking about it.

“My parents take everything over-the-top. They aren't exactly the best parents—or rulers for that matter,” Amy said. “I feel so bad for the servants and the people. My parents treat them pretty badly. It's just wrong.”

“My father isn't exactly a saint, either,” Joe said.

“I know. I'm just introducing my story.” Amy said.

Kristie and Joe looked at each other, kind of shocked Amy was starting to tell them about her life. But they both listened intently.

“My parents only care about themselves,” Amy continued. “They don't care how much they hurt anyone else, just as long as they get what they want, they stay rich, and they keep the throne.”

“Before me, they had no children. My mother is incapable of having children. They took me in when I was little. In a way, they saved my life because I was found, abandoned, on a street. The only reason they took me in was so it would make them look good. For a few years, they have been trying to force me to get engaged to someone royal. They normally have princes come and ask me to be 'betrothed' to them. I always reject them, and think of a creative... threat to send them back home.

“They have been getting increasingly angry at me over this, and they have treated me worse and worse about it. They have also found out that I have been helping people overcome what they have been doing to them, such as giving them some extra money, just so they can buy that night's dinner.

“You see, they have ridiculously high taxes to be paid to them each month. And when someone can't pay it, they get punished. Almost every year, they even raise the tax even higher. It's ridiculous! If anyone opposes them or tries to ask for a bit of leniency, they get punished. Sometimes, depending on how mad they are, they will kill them. So, I do what I can to make their lives better. They haven't killed anyone in a while. Everyone knows to come to their princess for help.

“But they have found out I helped some people. They only know of a few, though, and luckily they don't know who it was. Although they punish me by either locking me up in my room, or by treating me like a slave. Sounds a bit like a fairy tale, huh?” She chuckled. “Just waiting for my knight in shining armor now.”

“Your parents are so mean...” Kristie said. “How do you stay there?”

“I stay there to protect my people. And I will protect them until I die,” Amy said.

“Wow...” Joe said. You have quite a weight on your shoulders.”

“Yeah...” Amy said. “But I’m willing to keep that for the hope of my people. As of right now, I’m the only hope they have.”

16 - Takuta's Plan

Amy felt somewhat proud of herself that she let her insecurities go when it was okay to. She normally had a nasty habit of not trusting anyone with certain things because she was scared her parents would find out. But here, it was different. There was no way her parents could find out about what she said. Besides, she was going to be working on fixing her problem as soon as she got back home.

Amy wasn't tired yet, so she went off to the side of the clearing, so that she could be by herself and enjoy the scenery. This island was actually very beautiful and looked so peaceful. It was very hard to think there was something like what Takuta had become on that island.

While Amy was staring at the sky, she was surprised to feel herself being dragged off somewhere. Whatever it was that dragged her, its hand covering her mouth didn't look the least bit friendly. The other hand on her arm had started to dig into her skin. That is, until she heard a voice say, "Don't grip her so tight! We don't want to kill her."

She was released from the hands' grasp, and once she was, she immediately turned to see who it was that spoke. Evidentially, whoever it was, they had some business with her. But what could it be?

"It's nice to finally meet you, Amelia," the creature said. "Let me make things fair. My name is Takuta."

Once she heard the name, Amy tried to run back inside the barrier, which she couldn't notice she was outside of since it was night. But Takuta grabbed her arm to stop her as soon as she moved.

"I am not here to hurt you," he said, "but rather to make a proposition."

"What for?" Amy said, cautiously. "I am not going to help you so you might as well not even ask."

"I believe you will find that it will help you more than it will me," he answered.

Amy opened her ears. "What exactly do you mean?"

"All I ask is that you help me with a few day to day chores. And, in return, I will not hurt you or any of your little friends. In fact, I could even go as far as making sure they stay safe from anything."

Amy was surprised. Was Takuta, the one who is possessed by a spirit that that wants to kill everything in the Creature Islands, really offering her this? She wanted to do literally anything to help her friends. Even so, she was having a hard time thinking of how to answer to his offer.

"I also promise," Takuta continued, "that if you accept my offer, I will not go back on my word. If you do anything I ask, your friends will not be harmed."

Amy thought more about this offer. Takuta really seemed to be telling the truth. And, when she says she would do anything to help her friends and other people she cares about, she literally means anything.

Takuta seemed to have noticed she was having a hard time deciding on her answer because he said, "I'll give you the day to think it over and decide. I want an answer by tomorrow night," and then left.

Amy walked back towards the direction she was dragged from (it was easy to tell because at some point her feet dug into the ground). When she sat back down where she was before, she was practically attacked by Sakra.

"What were you doing?" Sakra asked. "I turned around and you weren't there."

"Did you go looking for me?" Amy asked, afraid that Sakra might have heard what Takuta offered her. She really didn't want any of them to know about that unless it was absolutely necessary.

"You came back right after I saw you were gone," Sakra replied.

Amy was relieved and quickly thought of a lie to say to Sakra. "I was just walking around a bit. But don't worry; I stayed inside the barrier." Well, at least she hadn't completely lied.

"Okay," Sakra said. "Well, you should get some sleep. We're going to be relaxing and trying to take a break before we actually go to find and restore Takuta, so just rest, okay? The more you rest, the better."

"Okay," Amy said and walked over to where Joe, Kristie, and Tom were sleeping. She lied down where she wanted to sleep, and closed her eyes.

But she wasn't able to sleep. She honestly did try for a while to sleep, but she couldn't stop thinking about what Takuta told her. She understood that he was supposed to be evil because of the spirit inside of him, but she thought he was being completely honest when he was talking to her.

Having this on her mind, she didn't sleep at all that night. But, since she honestly wanted to try to rest, she tried to sleep even after everyone else had woken up.

After she had been "asleep" for a while after everyone else was awake, Joe tried to wake her up, saying that she should have gotten plenty of rest and that she should wake up.

And since she didn't want them to know something was bugging her, she got up. So much for sleeping... she thought.

But, while everyone else was having a good time talking and getting along, she tended to stay off toward the side, looking sad and trying to figure out what she was going to do.

Not too long after she was doing this, Joe went over to where she was to try to figure out what was wrong. "Amy, are you okay?" he asked. "You're not feeling sick again, are you?"

"No, I'm not," Amy answered. "I'm fine. I'm just feeling really tired." Actually, this was completely true.

"You should get more sleep then, right?" Joe said.

“No. It might be that I had overslept some, so my body just feels tired, although I really shouldn't sleep more,” she lied.

“Okay, well, I'm going to go talk to Kristie for a little bit. Don't faint on me again,” Joe said with a smile.

Amy smiled back. “Don't worry, I won't.”

When Joe was walking back over to where Kristie was, he noticed something he had completely forgotten the whole time he had been in the Creature Islands. He had something in his pocket. And when he remembered what he had, he smiled and had an idea.

He pulled the object out of his pocket. It was a necklace, with a silver chain with a pretty charm on it.

It was his mother's, and she gave it to him and Sarah soon before she was kicked out of the house. She had thought something was wrong with Joe's father, and had a feeling she was going to be leaving soon. So, she had left a few things behind for Joe and Sarah so that she could, in a way, still kind of be with them.

But they had a few other things left from her at home, and Joe wanted to do something to tell Amy how much he appreciated her for standing up for Kristie, and how nice she was to him. What could be better than giving her something special to him? Besides, this necklace was probably only a little bit more special to him than Amy had become. But he didn't want to give her this necklace just yet. He would wait until tomorrow, when she should be rested enough.

While Amy was trying to sleep, she was still trying to figure out what her response to Takuta's request would be. By the time a few hours had passed, she figured out what she would say. But she didn't think she would need to talk to anyone else about it. She figured it would be fine.

When it finally became dark, Amy sat down where she sat the previous night and waited to feel those unfriendly hands on her shoulders. But when she didn't, she got up and walked around a bit. At first she walked within the barrier so Sakra and the others would think that was what she was doing while she would be gone for a bit. When she exited the barrier, she noticed Takuta was there, waiting for her.

“What is your decision?” Takuta asked.

At first, Amy stumbled on her words, not sure if she should change her mind. But then, her response she thought of earlier slipped from her mouth. “I'll go...” She paused, but only briefly. “But you absolutely promise they won't get hurt?”

“Of course. Didn't I say I promised they won't get hurt? I won't let anyone hurt them. I already promised you that,” Takuta said.

“But if you break your promise, the deal is broken and I will no longer stay with you,” Amy said.

“Of course,” Takuta said. “I'm just guessing, but you didn't say goodbye to anyone, did you?”

“Amy's expression changed from serious to sad. “No, I didn't...”

“Well, then I will bring you back in the morning to let you say goodbye. “For now, just please come with me.” He reached a hand out toward Amy.

Amy didn't grab his hand, but she started to walk towards him. He put his hand down and walked towards the direction of the place he was staying.

The place was actually not that far away, but it wasn't too easy to find. It was hidden in a place you would never think of looking. When they were inside, Takuta showed Amy a room that he said was going to be “her” room. It was actually a decent-looking room.

Amy was still having a hard time sleeping. She couldn't help but be scared that something might happen to her. But, she was a lot more comfortable than she had been, since she didn't have to sleep on the hard ground. She actually did get some sleep, even if it was only an hour or two.

When it started to get light, Takuta woke Amy up. “If you want to say goodbye, now is the time to do it,” he said.

Amy immediately got up. “I know the way. Would I be able to go without you taking me?” She really did know the way, too. She was very good at remembering directions.

“Verus will go with you. I don't want you breaking our deal already. Don't worry. He'll stay in the shadows where no one can see him. That's a specialty of his.”

At that time, a quite scary-looking creature came into view. When Amy saw his hands, she noticed that was the creature that grabbed her the other night.

“Just be careful,” Takuta said, “because I wouldn't want any casualties.”

Amy became a bit scared at this. Was he talking about her or her friends? Either way, she was worried.

But, while she was walking back towards the barrier, she actually felt safe. It took her less time to walk back to the barrier than it took them to walk last night. When she got there, she noticed everyone looking around, worried. She didn't even have to wonder why.

She wasn't going to make her presence completely known. She wanted to tell only one person, someone she knew wouldn't take it completely badly. She searched around for him, and when she found him, she noticed it wouldn't be very hard to get his attention without making a scene. He was standing right inside the area with trees.

She came up behind him, quietly, and said in his ear, “Don't tell anyone I'm here.”

Joe turned around and his face brightened up. “Amy!” he said, quietly, but very excited. “Why not?” He wasn't sure what she was talking about, but he hugged her, very happy to see her.

I have something I need to tell you," Amy said, "and I'm going to need you to tell everyone else."

"Why won't you just tell all of us now?" Joe asked, still with a big smile on his face.

"Come here," Amy said, taking his hand and pulling him further away from everyone else. "I have something really important to tell you."

Joe looked worried. "Is something wrong?"

"It depends on what way you look at it." Amy grabbed both of Joe's hands, and she noticed his face turning a little red. "I'm not gonna be here anymore."

Joe's expression completely changed to something Amy hoped to never see again. "What do you mean?"

Amy described the situation with Takuta, watching Joe's face become more and more concerned, sad, and a bit mad all at the same time. By the time she finished, he had let go of her hands.

"Why would you do that?" Joe asked. "I don't mean to offend you, but that is just plain stupid. He's possessed by an evil spirit. Didn't you think he might go back on his word?"

"I know there is a good possibility he will do that, it's just... I want to do anything I can to make sure none of you get hurt. And besides, if he does go back on his word, then we agreed the deal is broken and I will no longer have to stay with him."

"What if he does and doesn't let you know? What will you do then?"

"It should be fine..." Amy said.

"And what about the command law? Didn't you even think about that while you were contemplating your decision?"

Amy completely forgot about that. That could be a very good possibility why he wanted her to go with him... Amy looked sad. "Well, there's nothing I can do about it now. I can't just come back. He has this creature named Verus with me. And he told me to be careful because he wouldn't want any casualties. I don't know who he was talking about, and I wouldn't be able to forgive myself if any of you got hurt..."

Joe looked really sad. "Okay... I'll go tell them. You should probably go now... I don't want you to get into trouble." He started to walk back to where everyone else was.

"I'm sorry, Joe," Amy said. "I just tend to not think sometimes."

Joe didn't turn back around or stop. He didn't want Amy to see how hurt he was. He grabbed the necklace from his pocket and looked at it, sad. So much for giving her this, he thought. He squeezed the necklace in his hand and started to cry before he went to tell everyone what Amy told him.

17 - Verus

Amy watched Joe walk away with a very heavy heart. She knew he would not take it very well, even if it was Joe. But she had hoped he would at least take it better than that. She had this strange feeling that if she came back, Joe wouldn't be her friend anymore. It was a feeling she absolutely hated. But she had to get back, otherwise something bad might happen, so she left right away.

When she got back, Takuta asked her how it went. She just stared at him for a second and continued walking. That was actually a pretty stupid question. He should have known how it would have went without asking her.

Amy decided to walk around and familiarize herself with the area, and she also thought it might help her feel better. But, it didn't make her feel much better.

She was walking down a normal-looking hallway when she heard someone talking. She looked toward where it seemed to have come from to see a room with someone locked inside.

She stared at the creature for a few seconds, wondering why they were there. But instead of her asking, the creature did.

"Why are you here?" the asked. "Are you one of the humans who are supposed to be helping Sakra?"

Amy looked a bit surprised. "Do you know Sakra?" she asked.

"Not personally," the creature said, "but I admire her very much. I'm a scientist, like her. After she found out about the Command Law, I researched it a lot more thoroughly. If it wasn't for her, I wouldn't have nearly as much knowledge as I do."

Amy blinked. Another scientist? And they admired Sakra? Sakra must be literally one of the best scientists, then.

"Why are you here?" the creature asked again.

"Takuta gave me an offer I ended up accepting," she responded.

"What would that be?" the creature said. "Threatening that if you didn't come with him and obey him like a beaten wolf he would sick Verus on you?"

"No," Amy said. "He said if I came here he wouldn't hurt my friends."

The creature laughed. "You came here for no reason. Even if he would have promised, he's still going to hurt them. He'll probably end up just using you as bait or blackmail or something." They seemed to think for a few seconds. "What's your authority where you live?"

"What do you mean?"

“Are you a commoner, or a princess, or what?”

“I'm... a princess.”

“No wonder he wanted you to come...”

“What does that have anything to do with here?”

“First, let me introduce myself. My name is Bram, the scientist specialized in the Command Law. Takuta forced me to tell him everything I knew about the Command Law so he would know ways to get around it and who to focus on getting around when you humans came here. Then he locked me up in here so I couldn't warn anyone.”

“Well, then why would he focus on me? That is, if this has to do with the Command Law. Although Sakra did tell us that it has something to do with a strong will and heart...”

“It has everything to do with the Command Law. Although, it doesn't have anything to do with strong will or hearts. My research revealed that, depending on who someone is in their society, the Command Law varies in affect on us. If a human is just a poor peasant with no family and has no influence in their society, the Command Law will be least affective on us from that person. However, if someone is of a high authority, such as a royal family, the Command Law will be at its worst. So, he wanted to get to you so you would be out of the way where this is concerned.”

“How would I be out of the way if I'm right here?”

“The more a creature shows authority over a human, the less the Command Law will work. So, if he has you doing things for him all the time and he orders you around, the Command Law will not affect him so much where you are concerned.”

“I had no clue about that...” Amy said.

“Well, now you know. But I guess there is nothing you can do about it now.”

“I can only go back if he hurts my friends. If I disobey him, they will probably be in even more trouble than they are now.” Amy remembered something she's been wondering, and thought Bram might know, depending on how long he has been held prisoner here. “What exactly is Verus? I mean, how 'powerful' is he, I guess you could say.”

“Verus?” Bram said. “I've been threatened to be killed by him multiple times. Verus was originally a very peaceful creature. But he accidentally wandered onto this island, and Takuta mutated him. Verus is basically a walking virus, hence the name 'Verus.' If he scratches or bites someone hard enough to break the skin, they will become very sick. So sick that if it doesn't get cured, there is a very likely chance you will die. The only way to cure it is to drink fluid from the inside of a Healing Pond Flower Lily, found only at the Healing Pond which is on this island.”

Amy became scared. She better be really careful with what she does because if she doesn't, who knows

who Takuta will have Verus kill?

“If you do what you know is right,” Bram said, “I’m sure you and your friends will be fine.” It almost seemed like he was listening to her thoughts. “Now you’d better get going. You don’t want to get in trouble, do you?”

Amy was still trying to soak all of this information in. Takuta must be really good at lying and persuading, since Amy believed he really was telling the truth the other night.

Amy walked back to the room Takuta gave her to sleep in. When she was almost there, Takuta intercepted her to give her a list of things to do before she could go to sleep. The list contained pretty simple things, but a lot of them. And he expects her to wake up at dawn, too! Well, hopefully she will be able to find a way to safely get out of this.

While she was doing her tasks, she thought of something that could possibly get her out of this situation. Although, it was very risky. She had no idea how much these tasks would affect her role in the Command Law towards Takuta. If they affected her enough, she wouldn’t be able to do what she thought of. Well, at least she wouldn’t with it working in her favor. But, if she couldn’t find any other way to get out of this, she would have to try it.

One of her tasks had been to clean the room Bram was in. When she went in the room, he said, “I see he’s already trying to get rid of your affect on the Command Law.”

Amy ignored this comment and kept cleaning.

“So, that’s it?” Bram said. “You’re gonna give up? Not try to fight your way out of this?”

Amy put the cleaning utensils down and glared at Bram. “Give up?” Amy said, mad. “I don’t give up. I am just trying to figure out how to get out of this while staying out of trouble with Takuta.

Bram half-smiled. “Well, you should figure out soon how you are going to get out of it,” he said. “It actually doesn’t take very long for the affects to wear down, even if you are a princess.”

“I’m working on it,” Amy said.

They didn’t talk again until Amy was leaving, when Bram said “Oh, and by the way, I think you might end up finding it interesting to know that Verus is completely under Takuta’s control. He doesn’t do anything unless he is told to by Takuta.”

Amy nodded her head as a “thank you” remark to this information.

Amy was now done with her tasks for the day and headed to “her room”, which actually wasn’t too far from Bram’s room. Amy was very tired and tried to fall asleep as quickly as possible, despite her fear of what might happen to her while she was sleeping. From what Bram told her earlier, she believed there was a good chance she would be kept safe.

But she was woken up during the night by a lot of noise coming from the direction of Bram’s room. She

got up and went to his room. He had evidently made a lot of noise on purpose to wake her up. He said one word, "Verus," and she understood exactly what he meant.

She left immediately, knowing where Verus was going. She practically ran toward where the barrier was. She had no clue how fast Verus could move, so she tried to make it there as fast as possible.

It took her a very short time to get to the barrier, but she had still been beaten by Verus. As usual, the four creatures were all standing guard while the others slept. But, instead of sleeping, Joe was sitting at the side, just like how Amy had been several nights before. The only difference was that he was looking at the scenery because he was sad, not happy. He looked like he had spent a bit of time crying within the past day.

And sneaking up behind Joe was Verus, with his claws out. He was very good at hiding, so even if anyone were to look over at Joe from where they were, they wouldn't be able to see him; only the angle Amy was at could see Verus.

As soon as the information processed into Amy's mind that Verus was about to attack Joe, she yelled his name. Joe, along with anyone else that was awake, turned toward her. "Move, Joe! Look out behind you!"

But he didn't move fast enough. Verus scraped him right on his arm, and he cut through the skin.

18 - Amy's Mistake

Amy glared at Verus. Joe and Bram were right, it was useless to go with Takuta. He lied. He sent Verus to attack them. Amy was even more upset with herself than she had already been.

All four creatures ran over, and Verus ran away.

"Are you okay, Joe?" Pensa asked.

"Yeah, I'm fine," Joe said. "It's only a scratch."

"But, he broke through the skin!" Amy said.

"It'll stop. It's no big deal," Joe said.

"No," Amy said. "Verus cut through your skin. That means you're gonna get really sick and possibly die." Tears started to form in Amy's eyes. She turned to Sakra and said, "Where is the Healing Pond?"

"It's not very far from here," Sakra said, sounding kind of surprised that Amy knew about the Healing Pond. "But if what you said is true, then normal herbs should be able to cure it."

"Only liquid from the Healing Pond Flower Lily can heal it," Amy said. "Please trust me." She was very worried that they might not trust her because of her leaving.

"Don't worry, Amy," Konso said. "We trust you. I'll find a Flower Lily immediately." He flew off quickly, and it didn't take very long for him to come back. Even so, by the time he had come back, Joe had become unconscious.

It turned out that when Verus infects someone, it spreads very quickly. Joe already developed a pretty high fever and his breath was becoming very shallow.

Konso quickly made Joe drink some liquid from the flower lily. While Joe was unconscious, Amy stayed with him. She refused to leave him. After all, it could very well have been her fault he was like this.

At some point when Amy was keeping to very sharp eyes on Joe, Kristie woke up. When she saw Amy, she rushed over to her and hugged her tightly. "Amy!" she said. "I missed you! I'm happy you came back!"

Amy shushed Kristie. "Please don't talk so loud," she said. "I'm not sure how it will affect Joe with how he is right now. But thanks." She gave Kristie a brief, small smile.

"What's wrong with him?" Kristie asked.

"Nothing too serious," Amy said, noticing that she shouldn't worry Kristie about it. "He should be

perfectly fine when he wakes up."

It took Joe a few hours to wake up. And when he did, Amy was very happy. Her face lit up.

When Joe's eyes decided to let him see, and he saw Amy sitting next to him, he smiled and said, "Thank you."

"Why are you thinking me?" Amy said, shocked. "I did nothing worth thanking... All I did was betray you guys."

"That's not true," Joe said. "You saved my life. You were the only one who knew how to cure what Verus did."

"But he wouldn't have attacked you if I hadn't left," Amy argued.

"Why do you say that? Did you do something that could have made Takuta send Verus to attack me, or for Verus to just do it on his own?" When Amy shook her head "no", Joe said, "Then it can't be your fault. Besides you learned about Verus while you were with Takuta, right?" Amy nodded. "This would have most likely happened at some point anyway. If you hadn't left, you wouldn't have known about how to cure it. You probably saved more than just my life." He smiled a very heart-warming smile at Amy. "You have a bad habit of not looking at situations the right way."

Amy blushed a little. Joe was being so nice to her. Her fear of Joe not being her friend anymore completely disappeared. It made her very happy. Everything else he had said helped her to feel a lot better as well. She couldn't help smiling.

Joe looked like he suddenlyk remembered somethig, and he reached into his pocket. He pulled something out of it, and grabbed When he dropped it in her hand, Amy realized it was a neckalce, a silver chain with a pretty charm on it.

"It was my mother's," Joe explained. "I wanted to give it to you before you left to show you how special you are to me."

Amy realized only now that Joe wasn't having an easy time breathing and talking was taking a lot out of him. "Thank you." She smiled. "But you should stop talking. You should probably get some rest."

Joe smiled back at her and said, "Okay. But only if you promise you will be the first thing I see when I wake up." He blushed. He felt that if she was there when he woke up, it was like she was promising him she was never going to leave again.

"Okay," Amy said. She turned a little red herself. She put the necklace around her neck and admired it. It was a really pretty necklace. But she couldn't see why Joe would want to give her something that belonged to his mother. But she was still thankful for it. Joe said she was special to him and that made her very happy.

When she looked up from the necklace, she saw Sakra sitting there, smiling. "Awww," she said. "That's so cute and sweet!"

Amy was full-out blushing now. "I hate it when you tease me like that," she said.

"Oh, come on," Sakra said. "You can't deny you don't like him anymore because it's so obvious you do." She laughed.

"No, I don't," Amy said. "I think of him only as a friend. That doesn't mean he can't make me blush."

"Mhmm," Sakra said. "You go ahead and keep on believing that." Of course, she was being sarcastic.

If Amy actually thought about it, it kind of did seem like she liked Joe. She is always happy when she talks to him, and he has made her blush several times. Her mind also seems to randomly think of him. Not to mention, she was extremely concerned that Joe might hate her when she left. And now this situation. Okay, so it didn't "kind of" seem like she liked him; it really seemed like it.

While Joe was still asleep, Amy told Sakra everything that happened while she was with Takuta.

"So, I had it a bit wrong," Sakra said, talking about the Command Law. "No wonder he took you and not anyone else." She thought for a minute. "But, why would he keep Bram? If anything, he would have killed him."

"Maybe he's going to use him as blackmail or something," Amy suggested, "like he told me I was probably going to be used for."

"Yes, that makes sense," Sakra responded. "I guess being with the humans for two years made me really rusty in the common sense area." Sakra looked directly at Amy. "No offense, of course."

"None taken I figured you were talknig about my parents."

"I probalby was."

"Do you think some of this would be important to share with everyone?"

"No, I just think we need to be careful. Tell us when you see Verus. You're the only one that knows what he looks like. I don't think it would be smart to tell anyone else, especially Kristie, what he looks like. It could cause nightmares. We don't want anyone else to faint on us."

Amy laughed a little. "So, when are we going to cure Takuta?"

"We can't risk anything. We have to either wait until Joe is completely healed, or we leave leaving him, another human, and a creature behind. But I really do not want to have to do the second one because that is way too risky anyway."

Amy let out a sigh of relief.

"What?" Sakra said. "Do you really think I would take a risk that could be bad for any of you? None of us would."

Amy smiled and looked at Joe.

When Joe woke up, which was about a few hours after he fell asleep, he was happy to see that Amy was right next to him, just like she promised she would be. He became even happier to see that Amy was wearing his mother's necklace. He smiled.

Amy smiled back. "Hey," she said. "Are you feeling any better?"

"Yeah. I think my fever is gone. I don't feel hot anymore."

Amy felt his forehead. "Yeah, it's gone."

Joe suddenly looked worried. "I just thought of something. You're staying since he broke his end of the deal, right?" When Amy nodded, he said, "What if he tries to hurt you for leaving?"

"Don't worry," Amy said. "I'll be fine. Besides, the creatures aren't going to let anything hurt us. They are being extra careful to make sure we don't get hurt now."

"Okay. I just wanted to make sure you wouldn't get hurt."

Amy smiled. "Thanks. But don't worry about me. I'll be fine."

19 - Amy's Turn to Worry

About a week and a half passed, and Joe was still sick. Every time he seemed to be back to normal, he would get sick again. Amy was still sitting by Joe, almost as if she was guarding him. She was starting to get extremely worried. If he hadn't gotten better by now, who knows how long it will take for him to get better? Or worse, would he ever get better at all?

Amy wasn't sure what they could do for him. Konso got another flower lily for Joe every day, but it seemed to not be working. She was so scared that even the flower lilies would end up doing absolutely nothing for him in the end. She ended up on the verge of tears very often since Joe was attacked. She could tell the others were getting concerned about her as well by now. But she didn't care. All that mattered was Joe. Nothing else mattered at all. Only that Joe was going to get better, and very soon.

Sakra appeared next to Amy. "How is he doing?" she asked.

"I haven't seen him get any better yet," Amy replied. "And besides, if he got well again, chances are that he would just get sick again." She sighed very shakily.

"Don't worry," Sakra said, placing her paw on Amy's knee. "I'm sure he'll get better soon. He can't stay sick for too long."

"The same thing was probably said when cancer first found its way to people."

"Don't say that. He isn't gonna get better unless we believe he will. And I'm sure you are the last person he would want to think that."

"I know. Its just that he's been sick so long and he hasn't gotten the least bit better. It doesn't do my confidence very much good."

Konso flew into sight carrying a few flower lilies. He gestured for Sakra to come over to him and she gave Amy a cross between a smile and a sad expression, then walked toward Konso.

Amy sat with her arms crossed on her knees and partially hid her head behind her arms, with her eyes just above her arms so that she could keep her eyes on Joe. It hurt her so much to have to see him like this. It took so much will power just to keep herself from crying.

That was it. She could no longer hold in her pain. She had to cry. She reached out her hand to touch Joe's and started to cry. It amazed her that even though she went through a lot of emotional pain at home, she couldn't take this. She had hardly ever cried before in her entire life.

It seemed like she cried forever. She had no clue when, but sometime while she was crying, Joe woke up. She only noticed this when he had squeezed her hand when he noticed she was touching it. She looked up and was given no warning to Joe wrapping his arms around her. She hugged him back and kept crying.

"Why are you crying?" Joe asked, practically whispering in Amy's ear.

"You're still sick. Why are you still sick? Why did this happen to you? Why can't you just get better? It really hurts me. Of all people, it had to happen to you. What did you do to deserve this? Why? I don't understand. I feel like I feel whatever pain you are going through. Why--"

"Shh," Joe said, cutting her off. While Amy was talking, her voice was very broken and it seemed to have made her feel worse to say all of that. Not to mention, she was talking so fast, Joe could hardly keep up with what she was saying. "It's okay. Don't worry about it so much."

"I can't help it," Amy replied, talking slower. "I just... I don't know. I just can't help but worry so much." She blushed a little. The truth was that she really did know why she was worrying so much. She just couldn't tell him. She tightened her grip around him.

Joe started to run his fingers through her hair, which made her blush a little more. "Please calm down. I hate seeing you like this. It isn't fair to make me suffer the pain of seeing you so sad while I'm already so sick." He was still talking almost in a whisper.

Joe stayed there holding her for a while, trying to calm her down. When she finally did calm down, he let her go.

Amy quickly grabbed his hand and pulled him back into a hug. "I never want to let go," she whispered, blushing a lot.

Joe smiled and wrapped his arms back around her. Then, he seemed to think of something. "Do you have any idea if what I have is contagious?" he asked.

"Sakra found it wasn't," Amy replied. "The only way anyone can get it is by getting scratched or bitten by Verus. Why?"

Joe let go of Amy just a little and leaned toward her. Before she could figure out what he was doing, he kissed her. He kissed her. She felt like she would melt.

When Joe moved his face away, Amy was happy to see that he seemed to be blushing just about as much as she was.

There was a kind of awkward moment of silence. Joe broke it by saying, "I-I'm sorry. I've wanted to do that for a while now..."

"Don't be sorry," Amy said. "I'm happy you did it." She smiled, although it was kind of an awkward smile, since she was blushing so much and her face felt so hot.

Amy and Joe sat there for a while, just staring at each other.

Amy lost track of time and was reminded that there was such a thing as time when Kristie came over and asked them what they were doing.

"Nothing," Joe said, turning his face away from Amy's as if being released from some force that had made him stare at her the whole time. He decided to sit right next to Amy and he grabbed her hand, keeping their hands hidden from Kristie.

"You seemed like you were just staring at each other," Kristie said. "Why were you?"

"We weren't," Amy said. "We were talking."

"Oh, okay," Kristie said and sat in front of them.

"Oh yeah," Sakra said, seeming to pop out of nowhere, "they weren't just sitting there, staring dreamily into each other's eyes. Just like how they also didn't kiss right before that." She smiled a kind of evilish smile. She had said that loud enough for everyone to hear.

Amy's face burned up and she hid her face in her arms as she felt six pairs of eyes staring at her and Joe. She snuck a peek at Joe to see his face was turned away so she could barely see it. But the part she could see was really red.

"Seriously?" Kristie asked, noticing that Sakra had been sarcastic. "You did?!"

Amy kept her face hidden and made the sound she normally made when she was embarrassed, which sounded like a cross between a grunt and a whimper. She heard Joe say, "Ummm... Y-y-yeah." She imagined that he became even more red.

"Aw!" Kristie said. "That's so cute!"

Tom had made his way over to Amy and Joe. "I can't say I didn't expect that," he said. "I've been expecting that to happen ever since not very long after we arrived here."

Konso walked over with the flower lily liquid. "Sorry, Joe," he said. "I wanted to use more than one lily but Sakra said its not safe to use any more than one."

Joe sighed. "Its ok," he said. "I don't think it would have been good anyway. You don't know how just one of those things makes my stomach feel."

Joe swallowed the liquid and then lied down. He liked to try to go to sleep before the liquid started to hurt him. Amy was glad he did because he wasn't exactly the best at hiding physical pain.

And for the millionth time, Amy watched Joe as he drifted off to sleep. And despite what just happened, she still watched him sleep with a heavy mind, still wondering when he will finally get better.

20 - A Cure

Amy was still sitting next to Joe two days later, still waiting for Joe to get better. But, she acted a bit differently these past two days. She was thinking to herself of anything she could do to help him, and if there was something else they could give him that could help.

Joe spent a lot less time sleeping now. He liked to stay awake just to talk to Amy. About anything, really. He felt he could talk to her about anything, and that made Amy very happy.

Even though she was paying attention to what Joe was saying to her, her mind seemed to be somewhere else. She was thinking really hard. When, all of a sudden, she had an idea. Her face lit up.

"What is it?" Joe asked.

"I'll be right back," Amy said, hurrying to get up to talk to Sakra.

Sakra wasn't very far away, but she wanted to talk to her so that Joe wouldn't overhear, just in case her idea wouldn't work.

"Hey, Sakra?" Amy said when she was only a few steps away from her. "What exactly is the Healing Pond?"

"You can't tell by its name?" Sakra said, surprised. Amy normally had a lot of common sense.

"Its name tells me generally what it is, but I want to know exactly what it is," Amy said.

"Well, when you touch the water, it heals any physical wounds you may have," Sakra said. "That's about it."

"What do you mean by physical?"

"I mean that only wounds on your skin that are visible to the human eye. Things such as what Joe has wouldn't work by going in the pond."

"Can't you drink water from it?"

"No. Some people tried that in the past, but it was dangerous. It affected them in a bad way. I'm not exactly sure why."

Amy thought for a minute. "What if you mixed just a little tiny bit of the water with the liquid from the flower lily? Will that work?"

"I'm not sure," Sakra said. "That's a good idea, though. I can't believe I never thought of that... But before we can try it, I have to make sure it will be ok. I won't be hurting Joe by trying this. So even if it

works, we might have to wait a while to use it. Bear with me, okay?"

"Okay!" Amy hurried back over to Joe.

"What's up?" Joe asked, curiously.

"I think I might have found a way to get you back to normal," Amy said with a huge smile on her face.

the next day, Sakra called Amy over to her. "Come here. I want to show you something," she said.

Amy followed her into the trees, where there was a group of flowers on the ground. she pointed to two specific flowers in the bunch. One looked very dry and withered and the other looked completely healthy and sturdy.

"This type of plant," Sakra began to explain, "even though it is only a plant, is extremely similar to you and me. This type of plant gets a lot of different 'sicknesses', a large majority resembling those that creatures and humans both get. It is also extremely similar to us in many other ways. This type of plant is used by many creature scientists and doctors to see how creatures would react to medicines they have created. We always react the same exact way these plants do to what is given to it. No one has really figured out why, however.

"These two flowers both had something very similar to what Joe has. Although, it is a very common 'sickness' to these plants. I suspect Takuta used a plant infected with this to get Verus the way he is now. The rest of the plants around it are perfectly fine and are not sick at all. With the one that is withered, I gave exactly what Joe is taking. It had the same reaction as Joe; it, at first, reacted very well, then it became sick again.

"With this other one, the one that looks even healthier than the rest of them, I gave what you suggested, the flower lily liquid with a drop or two of the healing pond water. It became more healthy than any of the other flowers, it became healthier faster than the other one, and it stayed like that. There are absolutely no signs of sickness, and it is perfectly healthy. There is no way it can get the sickness again. Its completely gone."

Amy, even though she was really happy it worked, had a look of extreme concern that it might end up making it worse in the end.

"Trust me," Sakra said when she saw Amy's face. "We have much better technology than humans. If I find that it will stay healthy and won't get the sickness again, it won't." She smiled.

Amy smiled back and she practically ran back to Joe to tell him what Sakra found.

She waited until she was right next to him to tell him. "Guess what! It works! They are gonna try it and it will work!"

"Try what?" Joe asked.

"What I thought might get you back to normal. Sakra tried it and it works!"

"Are you sure?" He couldn't help but absolutely make sure that there was no mistaking what Amy was telling him.

"Yes, I'm sure!" She threw her arms around him. "You're not gonna be sick anymore!" She was so happy she felt like she would explode

Joe smiled. "I think this is the happiest I've seen you."

"I wouldn't doubt it." Amy laughed.

Sakra came over with the mixture in her hand. "It might still hurt, Joe," she said. "But it'll work a lot faster than what you took before. It'll probably take three hours at most."

Joe drank the liquid, and after getting an unexpected kiss and a "See you in a few hours" from Amy, went to sleep.

21 - The Spy

By the end of the very next day, Joe was walking around, feeling almost completely back to normal. He was already completely healthy by the second morning. Although, Sakra wanted to wait at least another day or two before they departed to do the job they had gone there to do, just in case.

It made Amy so happy that she had been able to do so much for Joe after he had tried to do what he could for her when she was sick, and also for forgiving her recently. Although, she still felt as though she would never be able to completely repay him for everything she feels he has already done for her.

Despite this, Amy has been distracted, even though Joe has been feeling so much better. She hasn't let her guard down much to let anyone see it, though. Joe has been the only one to see it, although completely on accident; she hasn't wanted anyone to see it.

While Joe and Amy were out of earshot of everyone else, he decided to take the opportunity to ask, "Amy, what's wrong?"

"What are you talking about?" Amy replied. "I'm fine."

"You still seem really distracted. I've seen short moments where you don't seem to focus on anything and just look scared."

"Oh," Amy said. She had been hoping he wouldn't have really noticed it. "Don't worry about it."

"You're telling me not to worry about it after what happened when you were sick? I don't think so."

When Amy looked at Joe's face, he looked completely serious, and she knew he wasn't going to let this slide; she had to tell him. She moved a bit closer to him so she could whisper, "Please don't tell anyone what I'm about to tell you, okay?"

Joe nodded in agreement.

Amy told Joe of a fear she had been having that started the night after she came back. When she finished, Joe's eyes widened.

"You have to tell at least Sakra about this," he said.

"I don't want to..." Amy replied.

"Amy, do you realize how serious this might be? You have to tell her!" Joe was holding onto Amy's hand tightly, staring worriedly into her eyes, and although he was quietly yelling, his voice sounded only like concern.

When Amy again looked into Joe's face, straight back into his eyes, she knew he had, for the second

time in not even ten minutes, once again had her in a corner. She knew she should tell Sakra, although she didn't want to, for some reason. Joe decided for her--she had to. She couldn't stand making him worried about her like that. "Okay..." she whispered.

Joe slowly lead her to where Sakra was standing, keeping an eye on Kristie and Tom. Sakra looked at them and said, "Hey, what's up?"

Amy just looked at the ground, still reluctant to tell Sakra what was going on, so Joe started for her.

"Is Takuta able to send images to people's minds?" Joe said.

After seeing Amy looking like she had something to tell, Sakra said, "Amy... What is it? Tell me. You know you should tell us everything that happens."

Amy hesitated, still thinking of how to put what she was going to say. "I... Ever since the night after I came back, I've been having nightmares. I ignored them at first, but... I've had at least one every night..."

"What are the nightmares?" Sakra said after Amy was quiet for a few minutes. "Tell me now."

Amy stumbled a bit again, but said, "It's hardly every the same exact one, but they all follow the same patten. The first ones were just threats. I would have dreams of Takuta threatening me that he would make me regret leaving to come back here, or sometimes threatening to hurt someone here, most of the time Joe. When the dreams started, I thought I was having the dream out of fear, so I didn't pay much attention to it. But they just kept coming, each night a different one. But then after about a week, I started getting somewhat different dreams. I started dreaming that Takuta would have me kidnapped and he would torture me, or sometimes kill me, and he would even sometimes have you guys watch it. Every night it would be different... I started to worry that he may have been sending me images to scare me or show me what he's planning to do or something..."

Sakra sighed heavily. "You should have told me before so that I might be able to tell you if he is sending you images... I don't know if he can do that." She looked at Joe and asked, "Have you been having any dreams similar to Amy's?"

Amy looked at Joe, hoping he hadn't. But, Joe said, "Acutally... kinda."

"Tell me," Sakra sad.

"They always occured when I was healthier or felt better, not just this time, but every time since Verus attacked me. I was having dreams of Verus taking me to Takuta, too. Verus would just scartch me again and leave me to die, with Takuta laughing and taunting and saying 'Where is your precious Amy now?'"

Amy had a look of concern for Joe. He looked sad from recalling the dreams, especially from quoting what Takuta would say to him. She squeezed his hand to try to comfort him in a way.

Sakra thought for a second, then asked, "What did Takuta look like in your dream, Joe?"

"It was always really dark so I couldn't see too specifically, but he looked like a black figure with bright,

shining yellow eyes, and I think a white spot around his one eye. He also had pointy ears and really sharp teeth always being bared from his snout. He reminded me of a wolf, although he looked larger than an average wolf."

"Has Amy ever described to you what he looked like?" Sakra looked kind of scared.

"No. I never really let her talk about him, and I try to keep her mind off of it," Joe responded. He squeezed Amy's hand and she smiled a bit.

Sakra's eyes looked very concerned. "What you described is Takuta. He is a wolf-type... Amy, do you remember what Takuta looked like in your dream you had soon after I brought you here? The one that kept you up all night."

Amy thought a bit. "Actually, now that I think about it, that Takuta did look a lot like the real Takuta..."

"He must have had Verus spying on us all this time... He probably gave you both all of those dreams to scare you. I can't tell you if he will harm either of you."

Amy dropped her head, staring at her feet. out of the corner of her eye, she could see Joe looking at her, concerned.

Sakra touched Amy's hand that wasn't being held by Joe's. "Don't worry. I have a plan."

Amy looked up again, kind of shocked. She knew Sakra was really smart, but she didn't think she would have been able to come up with a plan that fast.

"We will keep this just between us three. Me and Joe are just gonna have to make sure no one is gonna do anything over-the-top. Do both of you promise not to tell anyone?"

Amy and Joe both nodded, and Sakra motioned for them to sit down, and Joe said, "What about Amy?"

"I have a different job for her..."

22 - Untitled

"We are going to be leaving tomorrow," Sakra announced to everyone soon after she had discussed everything she had to with Amy and Joe. She came up with something really simple, but it was a plan that seemed to frighten Amy. Everything depended on things going exactly how they wanted them to; if anything went wrong, Joe didn't even want to think what would happen, especially to Amy.

For the rest of the day, Joe was practically glued to Amy, and luckily for him, she didn't seem to mind it. Whenever he looked at her (which was almost always) he couldn't help but feel sad and really concerned. She caught this look more than once.

"What's wrong, Joe?" Amy decided to ask at the end of the day when Tom and Kristie had already fallen asleep.

"I'm just worried..." he answered. "I really don't want anything to happen to you. I don't know what I'd do if--"

"Hey," Amy said, interrupting Joe. "I'm worried too. But I'm forcing myself to have confidence that I'll be fine and the plan will work. Just have confidence in me, okay?"

"But, I'm scared that something will go wrong and something bad will happen to you, and--"

"Listen to me," Amy said, cutting Joe off again. She placed her hands on either side of his face. "I will be fine, and I will not be too hurt. I promise."

"But how can you promise something like that? It wouldn't be in your control."

"I wouldn't let anyone do that to me because I don't even want to think of how you would react. I wouldn't do that to you."

Joe smiled a little, blushing. "Okay... You should get sleep. You probably need a lot."

Amy smiled, closed her eyes, and grabbed Joe's hand. He kissed her forehead.

Amy was quiet for a few minutes, then said, "I'm worried about what will happen after we are done here..."

"What do you mean?" Joe asked.

"What will happen after we leave here and go back home? None of us live near each other... And I can't help but want to help you and your sister and Kristie. I wish there was something I could do. I feel like I can't stand back and let these horrible situations keep happening to you when I know about them... It's like how I help the people who I'm gonna have to be queen for one day. I help them out as much as I can because my "parents" are so irresponsible to them... I'm the one who gives them hope. And I want

to help all of you as well..."

"We'll figure that out later, okay?" For now, you just need to sleep. Don't worry about things like that so much. I'm sure that even if we don't find out how to help each other, we will get out of our situations ourselves. Now go to sleep. You need it."

"Okay..." Amy closed her eyes again, although she still secretly wondered about what she could do to help them. She just couldn't not help...

They woke up early the next day to Sakra yelling, "Okay, get up! We gotta go! I don't wanna keep you here much longer!" They woke up so early that the sun had just risen.

Of course, Tom took an extra ten minutes to wake up. But once he was up, Sakra was practically pushing them to their destination.

"You have to lead the way, Amy," Sakra said. "He probably found some way to change the location from where it was before."

Amy shyly made her way to the front with Joe on her tail. Shimaki was up there as well, just to keep an eye on them. They didn't want anything bad to happen to any of them. Of course, Amy and Joe knew why Sakra wanted her to be in front. It wasn't to lead the way.

She walked slowly, mostly because she couldn't stop shaking. She knew what was going to happen soon. She could see that devil's poison-green eyes peering through the trees. She felt Joe put his hands on her shoulders, trying to get her to relax. Although, she could tell he was scared as well.

Sakra called Shimaki back to her and Joe slowly moved away from Amy, blending in with everyone else. She heard him talk to Kristie so it wouldn't look as planned. Now she was shaking more than ever, standing alone in front of everyone else, almost seeming like bait. It also didn't help that she heard that poison-colored eyed creature stirring, ready to pounce.

And then, Amy watched everyone else slowly fade from her vision as she was snatched and carried away at tremendous speed.