

# Tenshi

Von aprileagle

## Kapitel 3: Little One

I've seen you cry, I've seen you smile.  
I've watched you sleeping for a while.

### Chapter 3: Little One

"I feel really bad."

Setsuna's words were spoken by a sincere voice, however, the gusto with which she ate her late breakfast betrayed her. She had had a great evening and simply felt too good to be absolutely shattered, although she had to admit that she felt a little bit sorry for Michiru whom she had dumped on such short notice when Elza had called her from the airport, wanting to see her lover and their daughter.

"Don't worry, Sets. I've had a fantastic time out." Michiru sat opposite to her best friend and stirred her coffee. It was already noon and the three brothers had left the suite hours ago. Michiru had actually heard them, had heard Sejya and Yaten argue with each other, but she had felt too tired to stand up or even to open her tired eyes. She hadn't looked at the clock when she returned, but it had been after three in the morning and after she had taken a quick shower she crept under her blankets which she didn't want to leave at dawn. Not even when the Three Lights left to visit Yaten's doctor. Probably she should have gone with them, Yaten's health was important to her, as well. She decided to make it up to them once she had eaten some breakfast which she promptly shared with Elza and Setsuna who didn't look any more awake. The only one who seemed to have had her full share of sleep seemed to be Hotaru who laid in Elza's arms and gurgled happily while hugging her right foot.

"Really? All alone?"

"I wasn't alone." Michiru smiled as Setsuna choked on her roll and looked sharply up to her. Then realization dawned.

"You've kidnapped one of Hashitzou's crewmembers again?"

"I've only done it once. Don't make me sound like a dangerous criminal. Besides, Suzanna-san had wanted to watch that movie, as well, so it was a lucky coincidence that we've met at the entrance."

Suddenly, Michiru was able to remember the red haired girl's name. Only days before it simply wouldn't come to her mind and now she remembered it from one moment to the other. Strange. Maybe she should always go to bed late and oversleep, it seemed to have helped her memory a great deal, even though this practice would probably drive Tahiki mad.

"You've watched that movie about those two cowboys, then, haven't you?"

"They were both quite cute."

"To hear that from your mouth makes me cry."

"They were also in love with each other."

"Okay, but still not enough sexy women in there for me."

"That's why I went there with Suzanna-san and not with you!"

"It would have been a lot funnier with me."

"That I can vividly imagine."

"There you are!"

Elza rolled her eyes and ignored their infamous bantering. They didn't mean it as the wide grins on their faces showed and they were immensely enjoying it. Elza knew that they could tease each other for hours, however, she was really interested in Michiru's evening and wanted to hear how she'd spent it, especially after she had abducted her best friend on such short notice yesterday.

"Who was your victim, then?" She boldly interrupted them, leaned forward and pushed a chocolate cookie in her girlfriend's gesturing hands. For a moment Setsuna looked confused, but then she understood and stopped to speak. The cookie looked truly delicious and she indeed wanted to hear Michiru's story, as well. Therefore, she bit into it and decided to listen instead. She could still tease her later on. Maybe she could even tease her better the more she knew about Michiru's so called fantastic time out.

"It wasn't Suzanna-san. I've thought of her, but then dismissed it." Michiru shrugged and drank a gulp of her nicely hot and strong coffee. "It was her time off, so I figured she's probably been away with Sanji, anyway."

"The guy she has a crush on?" Setsuna simply couldn't stop her outburst and helped herself to another cookie as she saw her love's warning look. Michiru only admired Setsuna for her knowledge that included not even the Three Lights' most horrible secrets, but also so many information about a constantly changing crew.

"Exactly, the one. I hope she'll be soon able to tell him that she likes him. I guess she has to return soon to her studies or something like that." The young violinist decided to try one of those chocolate cookies, as well. They were really delicious. And she loved to see the curious, impatient looks on the other women's faces.

"So I grabbed the first person I could find. I don't think you've met her yet, because she's new."

"New?" Now there was concern in Setsuna's voice.

"Don't worry, Sets, I've seen her working with Suzanna-san before and besides, she had a valid ID. You know Hashitzou and his paranoia; he changes the IDs in irregular intervals and always uses a different colour so that it's quite hard to fake one."

"So you've went out with a total stranger last night, sweetheart." Setsuna briefly argued with her conscience and took a third and last cookie. "And you actually had fun?"

"It was great!" confirmed Michiru and leaned back in her chair to look out of the window. The sun was shining and it all was a little bit too bright for her still tired eyes, but the view was fantastic. No wonder that the Three Lights were said to be one of the most successful boy groups of Japan. Otherwise they wouldn't have been able always get these kind of suites normally reserved for high politicians or nobility.

"What did you do?" This time Elza only nodded at Setsuna's questions being as curious as her beloved girlfriend.

"At first, we walked around and had a look at Kyoto." Michiru shrugged for it was obvious that she thought of Tokyo where she was born as one of the most beautiful

cities in the world. "Then we went into a small restaurant where I ate sushi." Now the young violinist had to giggle softly, still staring out of the window. "I've never seen someone eating such a big okonomiyaki, but she managed it, together with a huge ice cream." For a moment Michiru was lost in her thoughts and Setsuna and Elza both bowed automatically forward, both representing female curiosity in its most common form.

"And then?" They both mouthed in unison.

"Well, we've spent there a couple of hours talking about everything and anything."

"Everything?"

Michiru turned her eyes towards Setsuna who suddenly looked very serious.

"No, of course not. We even didn't even talk about my work. That's really something new. Do you remember that strange guy who won that competition of that crazy youth magazine and I had to go eat dinner with him? He only talked about my music and how much he adored it; it had been the most boring hour in my life. If it hadn't been for the children I wouldn't have..."

"What did you talk about?" asked Elza, not really wanting to hear the old story again. Maybe another time, but not now.

"Mostly about our childhoods. It was amazing."

Setsuna's eyebrows raised sceptically, but she decided not to comment on it. There had been moments in Michiru's childhood which she wouldn't call amazing, but obviously they had found something to talk about that hadn't hurt the young violinist. Probably Michi made it sound like her parents were still alive...

"So you've spent all night in a restaurant, eating delicious food and talking about your memories." Concluded Elza and was astonished how much Michiru's evening sounded like their own one. Only that she certainly didn't have to change nappies. Twice.

"Take care of your body, it would be a pity if you wouldn't fit into your nice dresses any longer."

"Likewise."

"I'm only a plain writer. I only sit behind my computer screen and write."

"Still, people want to hear your lectures and want an autograph from you."

"Damn."

"Exactly."

Setsuna and Michiru grinned at each other and both leaned forward at exactly the same moment to take another chocolate cookie. Elza only watched them and rolled her eyes. Then she looked at her daughter, wondering if Hotaru knew just how crazy her mother and her godmother were – and if she'd be just like them when she grew up. Elza counted on it.

"You haven't been home when we returned, quite a long dinner." Elza had decided to study sport a long time ago, but she would have been a great policewoman, as well. At least she knew how to interrogate someone and to find the main evidence.

"Afterwards we danced DDR."

Setsuna who had decided to gulp down her cookie with a nice hot chocolate swallowed the wrong way and started to cough devotedly.

"Nani?" she croaked when she caught her breath again. "You did what?"

"We went into a pashinko hall and danced DDR for the next hours. It was great."

"You actually convinced someone to play this stupid game with you?"

"Hai, and it's not so stupid."

"Well, it's not exactly my cup of tea."

"But she liked it. We even won something." Michiru briefly wondered where their

cuddly prize had gone, but decided to wake up a little bit more before starting a big quest to search for it. Did Haruka still have it? Or did they leave it somewhere unintentionally? Maybe while they watched the stars?

"To sum it up... you had a romantic candle light dinner with that woman, walked around Kyoto like two tourists and ended up dancing DDR the rest of the night?" enumerated Elza and grinned as she shared a glance with her girlfriend. It surely was good to hear that Michiru seemed to have finally met someone nice. They couldn't say if it was going to become something more serious, but it was a beginning, especially after the drama five years ago when Michiru's supposed soul mate turned around and walked away from her. It had broken Michiru's heart even though she had never admitted it, not to the other Senshi and friends and in the least not to herself. The Senshi of the Sea kept fighting against Sailor Galactica as if nothing had happened, but Setsuna and Elza, who was no Senshi but knew everything that was going on, was informed by her girlfriend and saw just how hurt she had been. How devastated.

"You have to introduce her to us."

Setsuna's words sounded like an order and maybe they were. She wanted to see this woman with her own eyes and convince herself that she was as great as Michiru's sparkling eyes told her. She didn't want her best friend being so sad again.

This woman better had to be good!

"Of course." Michiru smiled and leaned again back in her seat. "But do me one favour, okay?"

"Whatever you want, darling." Deadpanned Setsuna, but had to giggle as she heard her love's sigh beside her.

"I wish she'd say that to me, especially in the middle of the night when Hime-chan cries."

"Don't play amor, Sets, Elz, okay?"

"Amor? Did I grow wings over night?"

"Please be serious, I mean it." Michiru crossed her arms before her chest and looked pleadingly at her best friend.

"Is it because of that bitch?"

That bitch had quickly become a synonym Setsuna used for Sailor Uranus. At first, Sailor Moon and the Inner Senshi had tried to stop her, but they soon gave up and not even Michiru flinched any longer when Setsuna laid all her disdain, all her hate in her voice when talking about the one who had left them, who had walked away. Who had betrayed them.

"No..." Michiru sighed softly and looked again out of the window. Suddenly the view wasn't so appealing any longer. "Maybe. I don't know." Helplessly, she shrugged her shoulders. It wasn't easy to get over a partner destined by the stars. Michiru had over five years to forget her and the longer it took to ignore the pain in her heart, the more she asked herself frightenedly if she'd ever be able to go on or if there'd always be a shadow haunting her.

"Right now I just want a friend."

"You have us."

"I know." Michiru looked back and smiled at Setsuna's well practiced pout. "And I love you dearly, you know, but I guess I want to talk to someone who isn't neither a Senshi nor a fan. I don't want to talk about Sailor Galactica nor about my music any more."

"We can talk about the coming Cherry Blossom Festival in Tokyo if you want."

"You know what I mean, Sets."

Setsuna studied her for a moment in silence. Then she nodded, her eyes never leaving

Michiru's deep blue ones.

"Hai, I know, darling."

That's why I love Elza even more.

"Besides, I don't want her to be embarrassed on her first meeting with you guys."

"Hai, Sejya-kun will be embarrassment enough."

Both, Setsuna and Michiru, turned to Elza and all of them burst out into peals of laughter. Hotaru blinked sleepily at the funny noise and yawned, slowly waking up. It was time for her own meal. Setsuna looked at her wristwatch before she scooped her daughter gently into her arms.

"Maybe you can invite her for dinner tomorrow evening, Michi. Tonight's our big night, but tomorrow we're free and you guys also don't have a concert." She said and went into their room to first nurse her little princess and then change her nappies. Elza watched her thoughtfully, then she turned to Michiru.

"It's okay for you to baby sit her today, isn't it? I mean, it was kind of a short notice yesterday and if..."

"Don't worry, Elz." Michiru smiled and let her legs dangle over the chair's armrest, now holding an apple in her delicate violin hands. "We all love Hime-chan and we're more than happy to take care of her. You go out and have a great anniversary, okay?"

"Thanks, Michi, you're the best."

Michiru smiled as Elza got to her feet and followed her little family. Her smile faltered a little bit as she her thoughts lead her back to the day five years ago. The moment that determined her fate forever.

I quit.

She would never forget these words. Always they were around, like a never ending echo following her wherever she went.

Forget it. Think of yesterday instead.

The door closed behind Elza and Michiru bit into the sweet fruit. Without her friends she would have been lost then. They were her anchor in a sea too stormy to weather. They were more than friends to her; they had become her family.

"You're most welcome, Elz. Most welcome."

dbdbdb

"I'm taking a bath now."

Yaten already wore his white bathrobe that made him look so much like a small child as he walked through the suite's common room. Normally, he wouldn't have made such a big deal out of his evening's habit, but he had been ill and his brothers wanted to know when he took a bath in order to have a look after him every five minutes to make sure that he hadn't fainted or, worse, wouldn't drown in the warm water.

"Okay." Sejya briefly looked up from the mute TV set. He wasn't really interested in it, but there was nothing else to kill time with. Hotaru slept deep and tight in her cradle next to the couch and Michiru was down in the hotel's pool, swimming her daily lanes as she always did whenever they had enough leisure time that allowed her to do so. Sejya glanced at the clock and knew that she would be back in around ten minutes or so. Tahiki, on the other hand, went out to get their dinner. Yes, they lived in one of the most expensive and most exclusive hotels in Kyoto, however, their big brother was determined to eat a speciality of this city and didn't want to have it ruined by the hotel's haut cuisine. Neither Yaten nor Sejya wanted to argue with him and simply let

him be. Tahiki had taken Hashitzou with him, so at least the crew wouldn't go hungry and the oldest brother of the Three Lights wouldn't have to carry all food on his own. "Don't turn up your radio too loudly."

Sejya pointed at Hotaru being fast asleep and Yaten shook his head in understanding. "I won't," he promised and disappeared into his room. Two minutes later Sejya could hear water and about five minutes later he made out an Italian opera sung softly by a pop star. It was Yaten's most favourite music and Sejya didn't mind. It could have been worse, much worse for the lead singer had heard other earthly music without music, without rhythm and with a lot of bad language. Sejya knew that many people didn't like the music he sang, but at least he could follow a melody and his fans had something to sing along.

And I hope to find a princess while doing so.

Sejya crossed his legs on the couch and let himself fall on his side. A pillow engulfed his head and he had to see that the Earth's TV didn't get better just because you've changed your point of perspective. Some sheets of music laid next to the couch on the ground, but he felt too lazy to actually look at them. The Three Lights had spent the afternoon in the big concert hall, rehearsing together with Michiru. It had sounded wonderful and they all were sure to give a worthy performance in two days' time. Therefore, Sejya didn't feel the need to look at his lyric again. At least not today. He felt that he had done enough for today, but he didn't know what else to do. At least not as long as Michiru and Tahiki were still out and Yaten played Captain Nemo in his own private submarine. Besides, he became slowly hungry and wondered what his big brother would buy. It better had to be something awfully delicious, or he had to rob the hotel's kitchen, after all.

Right at that moment Hotaru started to wail. It wasn't just a confused whimper or a sad cry, no, it was a fully-grown wail that reminded Sejya for a second of a siren. A fire siren. The lead singer wrenched his head around to have a look at the small cradle, but he couldn't see any flames or any other reason at all which could have caused little Hotaru to scream blue murder.

"Nani?" he frowned and landed with a loud crash on the carpet as he lost his balance. "What's up, Hime-chan?" He whispered, but wasn't sure that the wailing baby had heard him, and therefore repeated his question a little bit louder. "What's wrong, little princess?"

Hotaru's face was redden in an unhealthy way and thick crocodile's tears were running down her cheeks. Her tiny fists were clenched and her still toothless mouth looked like an abyss to Sejya.

What's wrong?

Helplessly, Sejya looked around in the common room. Setsuna and Elza had left on their date about thirty minutes ago. Before they went they had bathed the little girl, changed her nappies and fed her. There were various baby bottles filled with Setsuna's mother milk in the fridge, and clearly marked so that no one of them would accidentally put it into their teas or coffees, but Sejya doubted that Hotaru was hungry. Neither could her nappy be full. Awkwardly, the lead singer pulled the little siren in his arms and sniffed hesitatingly at her baby pyjamas, but they were clean, as he had expected them to be.

"So what's up with you?" he asked and looked into purple eyes, although Hotaru wasn't looking back at him, probably couldn't see anything because of all her tears. Did babies her age see anything at all? At least more than shapes? Sejya didn't know. To be honest, he hadn't really cared. Of course he liked little Hotaru and she and her

parents were always welcome, but Hotaru was a three months old baby. That was a irrefutable fact. As well as it was clear that Sejya had no idea what to do with a baby, lest alone a wailing one. He had never taken care of such a small being before and normally Setsuna or Elza were around. Even if the little siren's parents were out, like today, it had always been Michiru's or Tahiki's job to take care of Hotaru. Or at least to take care of her that went beyond watching her or rocking her cradle or reading her a crazy poem from Yaten's old book.

Shit! Where are they?

Desperately, Sejya turned to his smaller brother's door, but decided against it. Yaten wouldn't know what to do, either, and he didn't want the smallest singer to run around the suite with wet hair or, worse, with only a towel around his still wet body, probably slipping, falling down and breaking his leg. It sounded unlikely, but at the same time it sounded just like something that would definitely happen to them, as it always had been their luck to slid into strange situations out of which their oldest brother always had to save them.

Oldest brother.

Where's Tahiki-niisan?

He should have been back by now. He only wanted to buy some food, right? He didn't went out on a quest to feed the entire world nor did he want to buy a restaurant. Or did they first have to slaughter whatever animal his brother wanted to eat? Then that would take some considerable time, surely. Time Sejya didn't want to spend with a still wailing Hotaru whose screams sounded higher and unhealthier the longer she protested, against which deed Sejya truly didn't know.

Where's Michiru-san?

The young violinist only wanted to swim her lanes and then come up for dinner. Normally, it only took her an hour to do her exercise and that hour was long over. She should have returned by now.

Sejya already considered taking the phone and calling the reception to ask someone to get Michiru, but he didn't know if the guy at the reception would have understood him if a baby was wailing through the line along with him.

Stop or I'm going to wail, as well.

Sejya gulped and froze as someone knocked on the door.

Michiru-san!

Probably, she had forgotten her ID card and couldn't get in. No surprise there; it had happened to her before, because there were no pockets in her swimsuit and surely none in her big bath towel.

Tahiki-niisan!

Probably he couldn't reach his ID card, because his arms were full with hot, delicious smelling and tasting food.

Whoever it was, whatever the reason, it was alike to Sejya. Out there was help, and he was determined to get it.

"Finally..." Sejya lost his speech for a moment as he opened the door and stared in confusion at the person standing outside, holding a huge cuddly toy in her arms, which seemed to be a dog or a puppy or something like that. The lead singer had no time to inspect it carefully. "You?" was all he managed to coax, although it was probably unheard over Hotaru's still angry screams.

What she's doing here? In Kyoto?!

"Seems like..." Haruka started to speak, but was interrupted when Hotaru's protesting wails reached a new level in loudness. The blonde forgot her original

concern and instinct took over. She stepped into the suite and set the plush doggy on the ground. Then she reached out for Hotaru and took the baby in her arms. Arms that knew how to hold a child, to comfort it, to make it all better. Or at least to try to...

Haruka didn't think of what she was doing; she simply did it. It all felt so familiar like an old memory she had almost forgotten. Little Hotaru let herself being hugged in a warm embrace that resemble so much her mother's. She didn't know the person who was holding her, didn't know her scent, didn't know her voice; but she knew the soft voice humming a sweet melody. It was a song all babies knew for it told them that they were safe, cared for, loved. Deeply loved.

Nani?

Sejya couldn't react. He stepped automatically back into the common room and let the stranger take Hotaru from his awkward arms. Although he was Star Fighter and knew how to defend himself and the little baby entrusted to him by her mothers, he didn't attack Haruka or even tried to get their little princess back. He was too stunned. Sejya stood right next to the blonde and openly stared at her. Heard the soft melody, probably an earth lullaby he didn't, couldn't know. Watched in total amazement how his little siren calmed down and actually started to fall asleep on a woman she had never met before. Normally, Hotaru didn't trust strangers so quickly, at least not when her mothers weren't around. But right now the little girl yawned and her little fist clutched weakly the thumb of the blonde's right hand. Then Hotaru actually closed her eyes, red from the recent crying, and fell fast asleep.

"That's much better, isn't it, little one?" whispered Haruka, not even noticing that her body rocked in a slow motion. Her eyes were focused on the tiny being in her arms, leaning against her upper part of the body so trustingly, sleeping as if she would know that nothing could do her harm while this person was near.

I'll always protect you.

Haruka gulped, because she had made that promise before, a long time ago. Hard she had struggled and fought long days and endless nights, only to have to break it in the end. The baby in her arms had fluffy dark hair and she had seen her purple eyes; and it was a beautiful little girl. However, she reminded her so much of him that it hurt. Hurt almost physically. Opened a wound deep in her heart, deep in her soul.

But at the same time she knew that she wanted to hold this baby a little bit longer. Only just a little bit longer. So that she could sleep. At least until her parents returned, wherever there were. Whoever they were. It didn't matter. All that mattered now was that this little girl could sleep safely in her arms.

Sleep tight, little one.

Although she didn't know whom she had addressed by this.

"How... how did you do that?" finally, Sejya was able to find his voice back again. Still feeling utterly confused he went over to the couch and sat down. Then he mentioned her to follow him, to sit next to him. There was no way he would let her go right now. Hotaru had finally stopped crying and he wouldn't let this opportunity pass to have an unexpected baby sitter for her until either Michiru or Tahiki returned.

"You were holding her incorrectly." Whispered the blonde who obviously didn't want to wake up the small being sleeping in her arms.

"But she started to cry before I took her out of the cradle." Protested Sejya softly and sighed deeply. He had always told Tahiki that he wasn't good with small children, but his older brother had never believed him. Now Sejya had proven him wrong.

"Probably she had a nightmare or something else frightened her. Your uncomfortable hold only strengthened these feelings." The blonde shortly looked up to him, then she



watched again little Hotaru sleep. "Are you her father?"

This question took him totally by surprise.

"Nani?" he choked and shook vehemently his head, again convinced that she had no idea who they were. If he'd managed to father a child, the newspaper would have gloated about it and written it in big ugly letters.

"No? Who is she?"

"Hotaru's my niece." Well, she wasn't biologically related to him, but all of the Sailor team technically became aunts and uncles of the little girl. Seiya made no exception.

"Little glow worm." The blonde smiled and suddenly Seiya wondered how he could have ever thought of her as a boy. Well, she wasn't attractive in the classical sense. For a Japanese woman she was too tall and too thin, and he really couldn't imagine her in a kimono, either, but she had a special aura which could have made her pretty if she had been his type.

"Where are her parents?"

"It's their anniversary today, so they went out and we've decided to baby sit." Seiya wondered briefly why he let himself being interrogated this way and why the hell he even replied so kindly, but then again little Hotaru was sleeping so peacefully that he would have done anything to not hear her wail so angrily again.

"Doesn't look to me like you have any idea how to handle a small child."

But she did. It was plain obvious.

"It's Michiru-san's or Tahiki-niisan's job. They went out for a couple of minutes and should return any time soon." Defended Seiya automatically his friend and his brother, and then himself. "Hime-chan was fast asleep and I thought I could handle the situation."

Clearly he couldn't.

"Maybe you should let them show you how to hold her properly. She's your niece, after all." Suggested the blonde and all Seiya could do was nod. On any other day he would have screamed at her and told her to mind her own business, but right now it was so great to see little Hotaru sleep so peacefully that he passed over her remark and agreed without protest.

For a moment they sat in silence that surprisingly wasn't uncomfortable. Haruka still rocked the little girl while Seiya stared at the TV screen without seeing the show on it. Both were lost deep in thought.

"I don't really know what you're doing here... your name's Haruka, right?"

"Yes." Now it was her turn to be startled.

"I mean, first you rescue my brother in Tokyo and now you suddenly blow in at our suite and baby sit little Hotaru, Haruka-san."

The blonde didn't know if she should hit him for using her first name like that, without invitation, without even the slightest hesitation. But then she concentrated again on Hotaru. Maybe it was simple the way famous people were: Speaking without thinking. She wouldn't call him Seiya-kun, that's for sure!

I'm not his friend.

But she became Michiru's friend, although she still didn't know how that had happened. She had never wanted to have another friend again in her life. Ever. However, as the young violinist simply kidnapped her, everything changed. The plush doggy was a silent proof. Haruka thought all day, fought with herself. Then she decided to go to Michiru. Of course she wanted to give her the prize she had forgotten the night before, but deep in her heart she knew that the puppy was only a lame excuse. Actually, she wanted to see the other woman again.

I want her to be my friend.

It was as simple as that and at the same time as complicate.

"Did I miss something that you appear whenever something happens around here?"

Sejya turned to her and knew that he had watched too many earthly TV soaps when he asked her his next question that sounded extremely stupid, even in his own disbelieving ears. "Are you some kind of a guardian angel?"

A guardian angel?

Haruka stiffed and Hotaru made a disturbed face in her sleep as her pillow lost its comfortable softness for a moment.

A guardian angel?

She turned her head and her green eyes grew wide as she stared at him, not sure if she should laugh or start to wail, just like Hotaru had done only minutes before.

I wish I could have been...

Now she thinks I'm nuts.

Sejya gulped and backed away from her, suddenly longing for a cigarette.

Maybe I am.

Now the silence between them was uncomfortable. It was broken by the opening of the suite's front door.

"Hello, I'm back from..." Michiru's voice died as she turned around. She still wore her swimsuit and her hair fell wetly over her shoulders. She had wrapped herself into one of the hotel's white towels and left puddles in her wake. For a second she stared at Haruka in surprise and then the most beautiful smile bloomed on her face. It was more intense than every smile Sejya had seen before on stage when the young violinist bowed before the audience or got a bouquet of flowers or even an award for her music.

This smile is pure happiness.

"Haruka-san, that's great! I've been looking for you." She smiled. That explained Sejya why she was extremely late. However, it didn't explain why she had apparently walked through the hotel only in her swimsuit. Her wet swimsuit.

Maybe we're all nuts.

Sejya shrugged, not really caring. Other questions were more urgent.

"You knew that she's here?" he asked Michiru and rose; but he didn't go away from the couch, because the blonde was still holding little Hotaru and even though he didn't think that she'd kidnap the baby, he still wanted to be sure.

"Why, yes. She's a member of our crew. We had dinner together yesterday."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"You were at a rehearsal with your brothers and besides, since when are you interested with whom I eat dinner." Michiru wasn't angry, she simply wasn't getting Sejya's point.

"She..." he pointed at Haruka accusingly. "... she's Yaten's saviour."

"She's the Haruka?"

"Hai."

"How should I have known that? She doesn't look like a boy to me!"

"Still you could have said something."

"I did."

"When?"

"At breakfast, to Sets and Elz."

"Not every hard working musician around here is allowed to sleep until noon."

"So she's the Haruka?"

"Hai, she is."

Haruka had watched them for some minutes, slowly raising both her eyebrows while still rocking little Hotaru.

"I'm still in this room, you know." She deadpanned, but had to chuckle as two stunned pairs of eyes turned to her.

"Why didn't you tell me?" Michiru held her slipping bath towel tighter and the carpet now showed a big ugly spot where she stood.

Because I'm not a bloody hero!

"Because it wasn't important. He's better, isn't he?"

"Well... right..." Michiru shook her head. "Still, you could have asked for a compensation. I mean, they only gave you a single ticket for our performance. Guess you didn't even manage to come."

Not wanting to be reminded of that day, Haruka lowered her head and watched little Hotaru sleep instead.

"I didn't help because of money."

No, she didn't need money; she had enough of that golden stuff. Wealth that hadn't been able to help him. In her eyes it was as worthless as this damn fucking medicine. As all their stupid modern machines. As herself.

"Then they should at least treat you to dinner." Michiru turned to Sejya, again grabbing for her slipping towel. "Tahiki-kun's out to get some special Kyoto food, isn't he?"

"Hai."

"Then let's eat together and these bakas can thank you in person, the way they should have done earlier."

"We are no bakas." Pouted Sejya, but he was promptly ignored. Michiru had taken over control and there was no way he could contradict this woman. At least not when she was cleaning the mess he and his brothers had produced.

"Then let's wait for Tahiki-san. By the way..." Michiru turned her head and some drops sparkled in her sea green hair like little jewels. "... where's Yaten-chan?"

"In the bath." Which reminded Sejya that he hadn't looked after his brother the way he had promised. Suddenly he felt guilty. Again.

"Go call him. I'll get something to dress and then we'll have a nice dinner together. Do you agree, Haruka-san, Sejya-kun?"

Both of them looked into Michiru's grinning face and gulped.

"Hai."

"Yes."

They nodded obediently.

dbdbdb

Haruka watched two doors close and rocked little Hotaru in her arms silently, feeling the familiar weight on her body. The little girl yawned and tiredly opened her eyes. She didn't start to cry, at least not immediately, but Haruka sensed that something was wrong. Because there had been times when he hadn't been able to express his feelings and thoughts through words, she had learned the hard way to notice little reactions, small body signs.

Hotaru wasn't in pain, but she was really feeling uncomfortable.

"What's up, little one?"

Haruka frowned deeply, but didn't have to ask for another time as she smelled the

unequivocal scent. She didn't pull a face, instead she looked up and searched the room with her eyes, but all she could find was a white cradle standing next to the couch. For a moment she considered going after Sejya or Michiru, but since their destinations were bathrooms and wardrobes she figured it wouldn't be a good idea to simply walk into their private matters so boldly.

What should I do?

Haruka couldn't imagine that Hotaru's parents had went to their rendezvous without having left some nappies behind. She didn't care to knock at the door next to Michiru's and simply opened it. Her mood was lifted when she saw that she was lucky: There was a carrycot standing on the bed and on the table next to it laid a soft planking and a pack of fresh nappies.

"Let's get you clean so that you can sleep on, little one."

Haruka didn't hesitate. Again she let instinct and experience take over. Carefully, she laid Hotaru on the table and gently undressed her. The little girl watched her curiously and started to giggle when the blonde couldn't resist and started to tickle her.

"Where's my little one? Where is she?"

Haruka didn't even notice that she started to speak to her in baby talk, but Hotaru's high laughter was reward enough. Purple eyes sparkled and little hands tried to grab her own.

Just like his laughter...

Three minutes later the baby was cleaned and had a new nappy.

"You know how to change nappies?"

Michiru, who had been looking for Haruka, was surprised to find her together with her laughing goddaughter in Setsuna's room. She was even more surprised when she discovered that Haruka had managed to change the baby's nappies without getting them killed, something she had always to protect Tahiki from doing, no matter how often she showed him how to do it. However, the oldest member of the Three Lights was at least able to hold Hotaru comfortably, something his younger brother had yet to learn.

"I'm an older sister, you must know." Said Haruka as if it explained everything. And maybe for Michiru it did, although she had never had any siblings and although Tahiki and Sejya were older brothers, as well, they hadn't held a baby in their arms for such a long time that they seemed to have forgotten how to do it.

At least I used to be.

Haruka gulped and finished to dress Hotaru. She gently pulled the little baby into her arms again and turned to Michiru.

"You're full of surprises, Haruka-san."

You have no idea.

"Not really. I just didn't want her to cry again."

"Again?"

Haruka, who didn't want to discuss Sejya's greeting half an hour ago, ignored her question and went back into the common room. Michiru followed her. She wore a jeans skirt and a white t-shirt. Her hair was still damp, but she had gathered it to a loose ponytail. She wouldn't catch a cold, even though it was only early spring outside, because inside the hotel's central heating was making sure that the suite was nicely warm.

"I've brought your prize." Haruka sat down again on the couch and nodded over to the big doggy lying abandoned on the soft ground.

"Arigatou." Michiru picked up the loyal puppy and took a seat next to the blonde.

First, she looked at the young woman and then at Hotaru in her arms. She had never seen her goddaughter trusting a total stranger so easily. But then, Haruka wasn't really a stranger any more. Maybe Hotaru had felt it. Somehow through the bond that connected them all. All Sailor Senshi.

She's a friend now.

"It's also been your prize, Haruka-san."

"You've danced better than I."

"Maybe..." Michiru smiled at her and Haruka couldn't help but return it gently. Then the violinist leaned slowly forward and placed the cuddly toy next to the blonde, so that its soft nose almost touched Hotaru's head.

"I'd like to give it to Hime-chan. What do you think?"

Haruka nodded, wondering why she felt so comfortable with a little girl in her arms and a much older one sitting so close to her. But somehow she did and she really didn't want to think why. At least not right now.

I haven't felt this way for years.

Like this was the place where she belonged to.

"Great idea, Michiru-san."

And the young woman next to her nodded in content and gave her one of her bright smiles.

dbdbdb

Yaten was still lying in the big tub when Sejya entered his bathroom. It wasn't in every hotel that each of them had their own bathroom, therefore Yaten used his change to sit in the warm water as long as possible, even though his stomach had started to rumble at least ten minutes ago. As long as Tahiki wouldn't be back with their dinner it had no use to get out of his nice bath, anyway, so he stayed where he was, listened to soft music that came from the small CD player standing on the toilet's lit, and stared at the white ceiling, thinking of nothing in particular and everything in general. "Nii-chan's back?" he asked and slowly sat up in the water. The surface was still covered with foam, looking a little bit like whipped cream, although the small singer would have never tried to taste it.

"Nope, but he should be by any minute, so hurry and get out." Sejya looked around and grabbed a big towel which he handed to Yaten without glancing at him. Instead he seemed to be more interested at the small paintings on the wall, showing a small fisher boat chasing a big whale right into the door. He heard a splash and knew that Yaten finally left his own ocean.

"Get some nice clothes to wear."

"What's so wrong with my pyjamas? It's not like I'd want to go out." Yaten had wrapped the towel around his body and pushed himself past his older brother who still stared at the little paintings, briefly wondering if he had the same in his bathroom, too. He hadn't paid any attention before, although he couldn't tell why he did now.

"We've got a surprise guest outside, even though she has seen you in a worse condition than your nightclothes, come to think of that." Sejya turned and followed the young pianist who stood before his wardrobe and looked critically at all the different suits. The lead singer could clearly read in Yaten's face: He didn't want to wear one of his formal Three Lights outfits today, not when all he wanted was to have a nice evening with his family, eating whatever stuff Tahiki had thought worthy for

them.

"A surprise guest? A girl?"

A sudden thought crossed his mind and his face fell.

"Don't tell me it's a fan who won a dinner with us."

At that Sejya had to laugh.

"As tempting as that may sound for many of our female fans, I doubt Tahiki-niisan would allow any magazine to put that as a prize on their cover."

"Then, who is she?"

"Your saviour's sitting outside on our very couch."

"That Haruka? You're kidding!" Yaten turned around and his wide eyes studied his brother, not knowing if he could trust him or if Sejya was only pulling his leg. There had been a time when he had been able to distinguish between a simple joke and seriousness; now Sejya's blue eyes were unreadable, at least to him.

When did this happen? When did we get so estranged?

"The very one." Sejya sat down on Yaten's bed and watched the younger singer staring at his wardrobe in blind panic. He definitely didn't want to wear any of those stupid suits, but he also didn't want to make a fool of himself in front of the woman who had saved him not even two weeks ago.

Maybe a fan would've been the better option, after all.

"What she's doing here?"

"Dunno. She brought a cuddly toy for Michiru-san."

"She did... a what?" Again Yaten spun around, a totally stunned expression on his face. The towel slipped and Yaten grabbed it just in time to not stumble over it during his turn back to the wardrobe. Unconsciously, he pulled it tighter around his waist and glanced again helplessly at his clothes.

"It was a big dog or something like that; it had big ears." Sejya shrugged his shoulders and cleared his throat. "Don't ask me, I can't make head or tail of it. But obviously Michiru-san was very pleased."

"I'd be pleased, as well, if someone gave me a cuddly toy."

"You get them from your fans all the time."

"That's something different and you know it."

"Maybe she's a fan, too."

"Then she would've treated me differently. She didn't even know my name, remember?"

"Hm..."

What's so special about such a stupid toy?

Now he thinks I'm still a child.

Sejya grabbed the smaller towel that was folded next to him on Yaten's bed and patted the mattress beneath it. It only took him a moment's hesitation to make up his mind.

"Come over, Yaten. I'll dry your hair." He said and surprised both himself and his smaller brother by his offer. The young man wheeled again around and again almost lost his towel why doing so.

"Or do you want to look like an exploded poodle?"

"I never look like a pet."

Yaten crossed his arms before his bare chest and pouted.

You have no idea.

"You can do it by yourself if you're so keen on it. I only wanted to help." Sejya was about to rise as Yaten practically ran over to the bed and slumped into the mattress

with a shy smile on his face.

"No, it's okay. Arigatou."

Sejya only nodded and started to gently rub Yaten's silver hair dry, just like he had done so often in the past, in their childhood, when they had still been living in their parents' castle. When everything had still been alright.

I miss them so much...

Yaten was two years younger than Sejya and because Tahiki was the heir and often busy with his duties as the oldest Kyou son, it had been Sejya's task to take care of their youngest brother, especially when Lady Kou accompanied her husband and her oldest son on one of their numerous travels. Then Sejya had been the one responsible of his little brother and because Yaten's hair had already been very long back then, he had helped him to dry it so that he would be able to comb it afterwards without too much pain.

"What are we going to do with her?"

"Who?"

Sejya blinked as he was brought back from his memories. His hands had automatically worked on soft strands while his mind had been far away.

"That Haruka, you nitwit."

"Baka."

He couldn't see Yaten sticking out his tongue, but he knew that this was the way his brother reacted, nevertheless. Sejya couldn't suppress an amused smile.

"What are we going to do with her?" There was the hint of impatience in Yaten's voice as he repeated his question.

"Dunno. Michiru-san wanted to invite her for dinner. She seems to know her pretty well, although she had no idea that she had been your saviour."

"Would be great for Neechan to finally find someone."

"I don't think that this is the reason for her being here."

"Maybe..."

Yaten shrugged his shoulders and leaned into Sejya's gentle touch. Forgotten were their arguments and his older brother's strangely threatening words only days before. The young singer felt much better. His fever was long gone and their rehearsal had been refreshing. He didn't miss one single note and his brothers had been very satisfied with their programme. Tahiki even started to joke, even though he was a bad comedian. They had laughed, nonetheless, and Yaten had felt great for the first time in days, maybe even weeks.

He felt Sejya leaning backwards and then brushing carefully through his hair. Yaten didn't mind, although his hair was now dry enough to stand up and find an answer to the nagging question of which clothes to wear. It was nice that Sejya plaited his hair right away, so he didn't have to bother with it. To be honest, Yaten hadn't been in the mood to deal with it, anyway.

That feels so good.

It felt much better than when they were arguing or even screaming at each other as they had done so many times the last months. Too often. Right now they seemed to understand each other again. To be friends again. To be the close brothers they used to be when they had been little. Or at least when he had been a little child.

Little kitten.

Sejya couldn't resist but ruffled gently through Yaten's hair, trying not to undo the plait he had just done. On one of these occasions Yaten had actually started to purr and Sejya had used every chance afterwards to tease him about that. Sejya hadn't

used that nickname in a long time and wondered why he remembered it right now. Softly, he laid the plait over Yaten's right shoulder and could see the naked back. A small back. A scarred back if you knew where to look. Sejya knew.

Yaten immediately stiffed under Sejya's cold fingers' touch and suddenly struggled to get away. He didn't care if he'd lose his towel or that it only was his older brother sitting next to him on the bed. His sudden panic only allowed one clear thought in his clouded mind: To run away.

"Oi, Yaten!" Sejya's reaction was faster. He wrapped his arms around the smaller man, holding his trembling figure tight. "Gomen, little one." He whispered and meant it. It weren't some carelessly dropped words, but a sincere apology.

Yaten only shook his head, his eyes tightly closed. A small whimper escaped his lips which he firmly pressed together in a thin line.

"It's only me, little one, your stupid older brother." Joked Sejya silently, although his voice lacked all mirth. "You're safe here."

Slowly, reluctantly, Yaten relaxed in his embrace, but still he didn't open his eyes, probably looked at desperately ignored memories, at a past long ago, but still not too long enough.

"Everything's alright." Soothed Sejya and sighed softly. Then he seized the blanket and gently covered the smaller singer with it. To warm him and to give him something to hide, just as he had done numerous times before. As he hadn't had to do during the past years.

You complete asshole!

Silently, Sejya cursed himself and hesitantly rose from the bed. Yaten didn't move nor did he open his eyes. He sat on the spot like a statue.

"Tahiki-niisan'll be back any moment."

"Hai..."

Sejya remained at the door, clenched and opened his fists several times, not knowing what to do nor what to say. As always he had messed it up, although he couldn't quite name what exactly.

"I'll be right there."

Yaten's voice was nothing more than a whisper and he didn't move to stand or even go back to his still opened wardrobe.

"Hai..." Sejya's hand hovered over the doorknob and he turned back to the silent figure on the bed.

You can hardly see them.

I could only see them, because I know you so well.

You're still beautiful, little one.

"Take one of your white tracksuits, Yaten. I'm sure Haruka-san won't mind." He murmured instead, knowing that he would never be able to give voice to his thoughts.

"Hai..."

Yaten's silent words hurt more than all of their recent arguments.

dbdbdb

To say that Tahiki had been surprised by the blonde's presence in their suite was an understatement. He almost let go of the boxes he was holding in his hands and it was due to Sejya that they didn't have to go to bed hungry that evening. He jumped bravely forward and saved their precious dinner which turned out to be okonomiyaki. Hashitzou had convinced Tahiki that it was very delicious food, indeed, so the oldest



member of the Three Lights decided for a nice restaurant and ordered five okonomiyakis. He always bought one meal more than necessary, mostly for Setsuna or any other friend of Michiru. There was always someone from the Sailor team around, so that he got used to always add one person to their group.

Now he was extremely glad about his strange habit as he saw Haruka sitting on their couch. The Haruka who had saved their Yaten and only got a single ticket for their concert that was about to begin as thank-you. At least now he could thank her properly with a nice meal or whatever else she wanted to have. Now that he had finally found her.

"You're a member of Hashitzou's crew?"

Nice introduction, Tahiki, really smart!

But it had been the first thought that came to his mind when Sejya and Michiru had finished their story on how Haruka had ended up in their suite. He even used Hashitzou's term, because crew was normally used to describe the members on a ship. Probably, the strong man saw them all on a big battle ship, sailing through the seas of music. The way Sejya was grinning right now at the delicious smelling boxes, it looked more like they were on a pirate ship and Tahiki wasn't sure if he really was their captain.

"Hai."

"Why didn't you come to us any earlier?"

"I didn't see a reason."

"But you've helped our brother a big deal."

"And I got a ticket as a thank-you."

"Then why do you work in our crew?"

"Because I needed a job?"

Haruka didn't really mind his interrogation, although she started to turn her answers into questions. Michiru wanted to protest, but Tahiki already continued in his interview. Somehow Haruka found it funny. Probably, she would've reacted in the same way if she'd been in Tahiki's place.

"Why are you holding Hime-chan?"

"Because she cried?"

"And why didn't take Sejya or Michiru-san care of her?"

"Because they were dripping wet?"

"Why were they dripping wet?"

"How should I know?"

"I came from the pool." Finally interrupted Michiru Tahiki's interview and now had to giggle as she saw Haruka's smile. Tahiki was a great singer and manager of the Three Lights, but he would also have made a good police man. "And now stop it, Tahiki-kun. Let's eat instead."

The tall man glanced at Haruka, then at Hotaru and back into the blonde's face. Finally, he nodded and seemingly gave up to understand the situation.

"Okay, let's eat."

Sejya's rumbling stomach agreed loudly.

dbdbdb

"You actually went to the concert?"

Michiru helped herself to another slice of those delicious okonomiyakis. They had been good yesterday, but now they were simply outstanding, even though they were

slightly cold. They had put them all on a big plate in the middle, together with a big knife, and decided to share them, so that everyone was able to have a taste of every flavour.

"I got a ticket, didn't I?" Haruka still had a slice on her plate and was right now occupied with her glass of soda. They had put a sleeping Hotaru back into her cradle and now sat all around the common room's small table, Haruka and Michiru on the ground, Sejya and Tahiki on the soft carpet and Yaten in an armchair between them. The lead singer noticed that his smaller brother was still pale, but he thanked Haruka with a firm voice and already ate his second slice of fish okonomiyaki. Hopefully, he felt better, so that maybe Sejya could start to feel better, too.

"Did you like it?"

There was no vanity in Tahiki's question, only honest curiosity and professional interest.

"Hai." Haruka put the glass back on the table and took her plate instead. "I've seen an advert in the next day's paper and decided to ask for the job."

"You really had no clue who we were?" It was out before Sejya could hold himself back. He didn't want to sound like an arrogant rock star, believing that everyone must have heard of him and his music.

"I'm not much into music these days and I have to give in that I haven't been to Japan the last years, so that I hadn't got the chance to follow the top ten."

"Where've you been?"

They had talked about a lot the last evening, but somehow they hadn't managed to get beyond their kindergarten time, at least not in their memories.

"In America."

"Wow." Yaten's eyes sparkled and finally he smiled again. "I'd like to go there."

"We've been there last year, you remember?" reminded him Sejya, but there was no scorn in his voice; he didn't want to upset his smaller brother again.

"But only for two concerts and during the Music Awards." Pouted the smallest brother and helped himself to another slice covered with tuna.

"I've been asked by some people; maybe we'll have a tour to America this very year." Said Tahiki and for him it seemed a topic as normal as other people discussed their vacation plans. Probably it was.

"That would be great!"

"Don't forget to include a visit to Disneyland California or Florida." Sejya only rolled his eyes as Yaten's smile grew even brighter.

"I won't."

For the next moments they all ate in thoughtful silence until Hotaru opened her eyes and started silently, but unhappily to whimper. Soon her cries got louder as no one seemed to answer to her distress. Haruka who sat right next to the cradle turned to her and bowed over the little baby.

"What's up, little one?" she whispered and stretched her arms to embrace the little girl before Tahiki could rise or Yaten come to aid. Carefully, the blonde placed the baby in her right arm and rocked her gently.

"It's time for her bottle." Michiru glanced at the clock and stood up to go into Setsuna's room to get one of the prepared bottle from the mini bar.

"It's kinda mean, we're all eating and you have to go hungry." Haruka's voice was very soft and Hotaru seemed to listen intently to her. At least she had stopped to cry and waited curiously of what was happening now and if it, hopefully, included a bottle of her beloved milk.

"You know how to handle a little child?" wondered Tahiki aloud, although he was more astonished about Michiru's and Sejya's reaction. As if they had seen her comfort little Hotaru before. True, Haruka had held the little girl when the oldest brother returned with their dinner, but he had thought that it had only been some kind of showing off little Hotaru to Michiru's new friend; a reaction everyone had to the little girl: To hold and to cuddle her. However, normally those people couldn't feed her, as well.

Haruka could.

Soon Hotaru, still lying comfortably in strong arms, smacked happily as she drank her milk.

"I'm an older sister."

Haruka didn't look up, instead watched intently little Hotaru drink.

"I'm those bakas older brother, too, but I can't remember any of that stuff after all those years."

"You didn't feed me." Sejya looked terrified as Tahiki nodded, grinning. "And I survived? Astonishing!"

"Baka."

"I'm not a baka."

"Sure you are."

Yaten giggled silently as they stared at each other indignantly for a moment, before they decided that their okonomiyaki was more important and got themselves second helpings.

"My parents decided to have another child when I was seventeen." Haruka held the bottle a little bit tighter, not really knowing why she gave them an explanation when she didn't owe them one. "So it's not that long ago."

"Where are your parents and your brother now?"

"Home."

Together. Hopefully.

"Here in Japan?"

"No, in that other land." Haruka held the bottle higher and put a small towel Michiru offered her over her left shoulder. Then she helped Hotaru do her burp.

"That's a good girl."

They all assumed that her family was still in America, probably emigrants, because Haruka's Japanese was perfect and she looked too much like a Japanese, although she was a little bit too tall and her hair was too bright. To be able to speak Japanese on this level she had to be born in Japan or at least to be raised by native speakers.

"Why are you in Japan, then?"

Yaten glanced at the boxes, but suddenly his appetite was gone. What would he have done to be with his parents again, at least for one single day. To know that they were okay, that Sailor Galactica didn't hurt them, that they survived, like their sons did.

I miss you so much.

"To travel the world and to see my mother's country again." Haruka gave Michiru the towel back and cradled Hotaru gently who fell fast asleep again.

"And that includes working for a boy group?"

"That sounds like we're the Mafia, Tahiki-kun." Laughed Michiru and closed the door behind herself. Then she came over and sat back next to Haruka.

"Well, what should I say?" Haruka stroked through fluffly dark hair. "The people are nice, the money's good and I've already seen Tokyo and yesterday a lot of Kyoto."

"Right." Michiru blushed slightly and seemed to be happy with her explanation, as

happy as the Three Lights.

So they moved on to lighter themes, since none of them was too keen to talk about their families they had lost or left behind in a war against Sailor Galactica. They talked about their concerts, about Kyoto, about their planned tour through Japan and about Hashitzou's crazy idea to hire new bodyguards.

Through all of this they didn't even notice that time was flying by. Not until the entrance door opened and two women entered. They were holding hands and had kissed each other passionately when the door swung open. Startled, they separated as they saw the musicians all gathered in the common room and blushed slightly, but only slightly. They had been a couple for years and parents for over three months, after all.

"You're still up?" It was Setsuna who first found her voice back. Elza only squinted at the clock and giggled even more, although she didn't know why twelve o'clock sounded so damn funny in her mind. Maybe it had something to do with the champagne she had drunken all evening. Or the wine? Or the sake? She really didn't know.

"Didn't you want to stay in another hotel? I believe to recall something about a big bathtub." Michiru raised a suggestive eyebrow and enjoyed to see her best friend blush even deeper.

"We already had our tub." Giggled Elza and pulled the door close behind her. Still holding her partner's hand, she came over to them and sat ungracefully down on the white carpet, right next to Yaten whom she greeted with a shake of her hand. Automatically, he waved back at her.

Haruka only looked at them, wide eyed.

What?

"But we've wanted to be with our Hime-chan, then."

The Three Lights and Michiru smiled knowingly.

Young parents.

It was their anniversary and they knew that their daughter was in good hands; still they didn't want to spend all night out while they could cuddle Hime-chan instead. The others understood them.

"Well, we've found an adequate baby sitter in the meantime." Michiru pointed at Haruka who was still holding little Hotaru. The blonde indicated a small bow, not wanting to disturb a peacefully sleeping baby.

"Who's that?" Elza was too tipsy to get up and take her daughter away from the stranger; but on the other hand neither did Hotaru scream terrified nor did the others seem to mind, not even Setsuna, who was normally very protective about her small child.

"You're Haruka-san, aren't you?"

Again Setsuna proved that she indeed was Michiru's best friend. Either that or she miraculously developed clairvoyant abilities.

Haruka only nodded, a clear question mark in her confused look.

Who are they?

Haruka had been part of Hashitzou's crew for almost two weeks, but she had never seen those two women before. Women who obviously were deep in love with each; and no one seemed to mind. Memories of screaming classmates, pointing an accusing finger at her, flashed through the blonde's mind. Did Japan change so much while she had been away? Somehow Haruka couldn't imagine people changing so quickly; humanity simply didn't abandon thousand year old ideas, no matter how stupid. Either

something had indeed happened while she had been away or she was lucky and the Three Lights were very tolerant people. Maybe their business had taught them to not judge before having a good look at what they were about to damn; for they were quite often the journalists' targets.

She's pretty. No wonder Michiru talked so excitedly about her.

Setsuna ignored her drunken inner voice and grinned in amusement.

"I'm Meioh Setsuna, Michi-chan's bestest friend." Introduced the Senshi of Time herself. "And the helplessly giggling beauty over there is my girlfriend and the love of my life." Setsuna bowed, but was met by an outstretched hand. She frowned, but then remembered that it was a tradition in other countries to shake hands. So she took the blonde's hand that didn't hold her daughter gently and shook it tightly.

"Pleased to meet you."

"Pleased to meet you."

Nani?

Setsuna couldn't define it, but there was something about the blonde, some kind of aura. She had never seen her before, however, she felt familiar. As if they actually had met before; in a different life, maybe in a different time. Setsuna knew a lot about time and she knew that all Sailor Senshi were born again; Hotaru was the living example. But then she couldn't find anything that felt similar to a Senshi aura on the tall woman. Only some kind of a strange déjà vu, which she simply couldn't assign.

Maybe it's because she's Michiru's friend.

Outer Senshi were closer to each other; just as the Inner Senshi and the Star Lights knew each other better than the other fighters in the bigger Sailor Team. Probably, Setsuna was simply feeling Michiru's excitement and familiarity with the blonde and automatically interpreted her best friend's subliminal feelings as her own.

What?

Haruka saw Setsuna's dark eyes bore into her body, her soul. She didn't know why the other woman studied her so intently and didn't like it at all. Was she checking if she was worth to be in her bestest friends company? Or didn't she trust her to hold little Hotaru? So why didn't she take the baby away, then?

No, there was no hospitality in the older woman's look, but something else. Something completely different Haruka couldn't put a name to.

"Is she always so kitschy?"

Sejya's laughing voice brought Setsuna and Haruka back into reality. The Time Senshi let go of Haruka's hand and shook her head to clear her thoughts. Then she grinned at the lead singer, ignoring the blonde's confused expression.

"Only when it's our anniversary." Groaned Elza, but had to giggle again.

"Oh, right."

"But that doesn't explain why she knows her name." Put Yaten their most important question in a nutshell.

"Michi-chan told me everything about her last evening. Together with Haruka-san over there" Setsuna answered and pointed over to Haruka who blushed slightly as the Three Lights suddenly listened very closely. There hadn't been enough time for them to discuss Michiru's evening before. First, Michiru slept until noon and then they had a long rehearsal during which they had talked about their new programme but not about their private adventures. Tahiki was smart enough not to argue with Sejya about his sudden disappearance last night, especially not when he was singing so well and not complaining at all when Tahiki wanted their special song repeated for the third time in a row.

"Last evening?"

Three brothers, three similar thoughts and three identical questions.

"Hai." Michiru leaned back and sipped on her soda. "We danced DDR."

"We even won a cuddly toy for Hotaru." Said Haruka, because she wanted to add something, too. As Setsuna stretched her hands towards the baby, she handed little Hotaru slightly reluctantly over. The green haired woman seemed to be the little girl's mother. Or one of her aunties. The blonde couldn't really tell, because she didn't quite see through this strange patchwork family. But she felt that Hotaru belonged to this woman. This was the place where she ought to be.

As he belonged once in my arms...

"A cuddly toy? Great!" Elza clapped in her hands and giggled even more as she saw the big puppy sitting next to the now empty cradle.

"DDR dancing? You, Michiru-san?"

"Without us, oneechan?"

"Hopefully no fan saw you."

Suddenly Michiru and Haruka were faced by three very curious boys and together with Setsuna's memories from her talk to her best friend over breakfast and Elza's happy giggles, they told them all they could remember about their evening out in Kyoto.

dbdbdb

"What do you think, Kaki-chan?"

Tahiki turned and looked through the open balcony door back at the photo, smiling silently at him. As always, no one answered. He sighed deeply, leaned against the balustrade and glanced up to the sky where millions of stars and planets sparkled down at him. Somewhere there was even his galaxy, so far, far away.

It was well past three in the morning when they had finally decided to go to bed. Elza had been fast asleep for the past two hours and Yaten yawned widely, almost cracking his jaw while doing so. They had one last big rehearsal tomorrow and in the evening an important interview with a music magazine before their first concert in Kyoto would take place. They needed their sleep and Tahiki sent them all to bed. Astonishingly, none of them protested; probably they had all been too tired to care.

"What should I do, Kaki-chan?"

Only after a few minutes, the blonde hadn't felt like a crew member at all, but more like a good friend. Michiru had smiled all evening as much as Tahiki had never seen her smile before. In fact, he couldn't recall the last time he had seen the young violinist so happy. Yes, he had often seen her smile and even laugh, especially when Setsuna or the other Senshi were around, but he had never seen her so truly happy before. Yaten was thankful and seemed to trust her, not only because she had saved him, but also, because she was a pleasant person to talk to, although Tahiki knew how difficult it was for his youngest brother to trust total strangers. He had needed a long time to have faith in Sailor Moon and the other Senshi. Michiru had been the only exception. Well, she and Setsuna. But it was very hard to be shy or even frightened of someone after you have seen this person drunk and later, well advanced in pregnancy, waddling around and cursing fate for being a woman. Sejya instantly got well along with Haruka, because he immediately started to banter, and Haruka deadpanned and teased him mercilessly in return.

It was perfect.

As it is mad!

Tahiki had seen Haruka's room back in Tokyo. It had been a mess; and that was a nice paraphrase. Still, she couldn't be so messy in her crew rooms, otherwise Hashitzou would have made her get a move on. During their conversation Haruka had confessed that she couldn't cook. But that wasn't really a problem, was it? They couldn't cook, as well, at least not his brothers and he; and Michiru had no time for something like that. That was one of the advantages of living from hotel room to hotel room; they could always order something from the kitchen or buy some takeaway, as they had done today. No, he wouldn't expect her to cook. No, he wasn't looking for a chef, but more of a baby sitter, not only for Hotaru, although she had proven that she was indeed able to handle the little girl. No, he wanted her to take care of his brothers, as crazy as it sounded.

Would she agree?

Will she laugh?

Tahiki felt that he should discuss this matter with his brothers, first, but then decided against it. They wouldn't understand. They were only the smaller brothers. It was him who had taken the responsibility when Sailor Galactica attacked their galaxy. It was him who had promised their parents to take care of them when they had to flee from their planet. And it was him who slowly but definitely couldn't handle the situation any longer. Not when they both grew up. Not when he had to search for Kakyuu in addition to that. Not when he was so damn alone in his task.

"Should I ask her, Kaki-chan?"

Although the picture still didn't answer, Tahiki had a feeling that his princess would have agreed, with a smile on her beautiful face not much different from the one on the photo.

dbdbdb

It was almost four in the morning when Tahiki walked through the hotel's silent corridors. He didn't know exactly in which room Haruka slept nor did he really know why he couldn't wait until tomorrow. Surely, the blonde was already fast asleep and he wouldn't only wake her, but also the crew members she shared her room with.

Michiru-san kills me when she finds out.

Just like his brothers would kill him when he'd tell them that he was looking for a baby sitter. They were already twenty and twenty two, for Christ's sake. But on the other hand they were only twenty and twenty two and at least Yaten needed someone to look after him; that he wore his thick jacket; that he didn't forget his scarf; that he didn't lose his cap or if he did that he'd get a new one soon. And Sejya? Maybe he simply needed someone else he could talk to or could even scream at so that he'd stop arguing with Yaten at every possibility given. That he would stop to make a mountain out of every molehill. That he would stop to hurt his little brother, even though he probably didn't want to, certainly wasn't aware of that he did so.

What am I doing here?

Tahiki sighed deeply and stopped near a big window. He leaned his forehead against the cold glass and looked up to the blinking stars, hoping that Kakyuu would see them, too. Somehow. Somewhere. Hopefully...

„Tahiki-san?"

He winced as he heard the soft voice behind him. He dropped his gaze and saw Haruka's face in the glass' reflection.

"Gomen, did I wake you up?" His words made no sense, because he hadn't knocked on

her door, still didn't know which one hid her room. But either Haruka didn't notice or she didn't mind.

"I'm not much of a sleeper." She admitted and leaned her back against the pane, crossing her arms before her chest while doing so. "Did you forget something or did I do something wrong?"

Tahiki frowned, but then it dawned on him that she no longer talked to him as a friend but as an employee. He sighed again and rubbed his tired eyes with the palms of his hands. Suddenly, he felt very exhausted.

"No, Haruka-san. Actually, I've wanted to ask you a favour."

"A favour?" Haruka raised one eyebrow, but he couldn't see it, because he was staring at the floor as if he hadn't seen anything more interesting before in his young life.

"I..." He took a deep breath. „To make it plain: I'd like to hire you as a watchdog for my brothers."

Watchdog sounded completely wrong in his ears.

As it did in Haruka's.

"You mean, as a spy?" Her warm voice dropped some degrees, became unmistakably colder, more distanced.

"No!" Tahiki shook his head, trying desperately to clear his thoughts. "No, more as a nanny or a baby sitter."

Those words sounded even more wrong to him.

However, they sounded quite natural to Haruka.

"What do you mean by that, Tahiki-san?"

Her voice was warmer now, friendlier and it surprised the oldest member of the Three Lights that she hadn't called him an idiot and gone straight into her room. Yes, he was her boss and yes, her job depended on him, but she surely knew that he would never dare to fire her, because if he did she could go to any magazine and make an extremely embarrassing story out of their conversation, which was already embarrassing enough.

"I know that Sejya and Yaten are both adults by their age, I'm not blind, Haruka-san, but still they're not real adults to me. Guess for me they'll always be little boys." Tahiki laughed silently; it sounded sad, exhausted. "Yaten, for example, is extremely clumsy. He always forgets his jacket or loses his gloves and his scarf, although he knows that he catches a cold or a flu quite quickly. And when he feels under the weather, he doesn't tell anyone and instead of taking it easy, he pushes himself further until he has a high fever and almost breaks down. Only then we're able to notice and mostly then he's suffered unnecessarily for hours, maybe even days. Sejya, on the other hand, never knows when to shut his big mouth and hardly ever looks at his watch, although he has five, I've given him all of those during his past birthdays, as well as the past Christmas and even Easter holidays. Therefore, he's mostly too late for rehearsals and sometimes has to really hurry up to make it to our concerts."

Tahiki shook his head and kneaded his suddenly ice cold hands.

"I used to take care of them, Haruka-san. I'm their older brother and it's my task to make sure that nothing happens to them, that they're always safe."

It was the promise he'd made to their parents when Sailor Galactica attacked and they had to flee to save their lives.

Sometimes, the tall man believed to have failed them.

"But this whole Three Light business is getting bigger and I can't always be there for them, no matter how much I try. Michiru-san isn't any better, at least not much. I can't ask her to have an eye on them for me. She's enough work on her shoulders with our



concerts and her violin play. Besides, she's the one who runs around the hotel in the middle of the night, only dressed in a wet bathsuite and a towel, because she wanted to swim some lanes in the pool and forgot her bathrobe."

Helplessly, he shrugged his shoulder.

"You'd get a room in or near our suite and you'll get enough money, that's not the problem, Haruka-san. It's just that they seem to like or at least to tolerate you. I can't get a bodyguard to do that job, because they would detest him or her. They don't want to be protected. You don't have to protect them, Haruka-san, only to take some care of them, simple care which they often forget, especially during a stressful week between concerts."

Tahiki didn't know what else to say to make her understand. Maybe there wasn't anything; maybe she would never understand.

"I guess I'm too overprotective, but I suppose I have to be as an older brother. You see, Haruka-san, they're my only family. I'd do anything for them, but right now I have the feeling that I can't do anything at all."

Again she didn't answer and he ran a trembling hand through his long, brown hair.

Only family.

Brother.

Do anything.

Haruka's head was in a whirl. Words were tumbling around and she felt suddenly extremely dizzy.

Overprotective.

To protect.

She felt cold and slightly sick. The world seem to spin around her and all thoughts disappeared from her aching head until only one remained. Unshakably.

To take care of them.

Wasn't that her vocation? Hasn't it been her destiny all along? To take care of others? To make sure that they were alright? To fight for them, even if the battle was in vain? Wasn't this the reason for her being in this world? To take care of others? Of little brothers? No matter if they were her real siblings or not? They needed someone to take care of them and she needed someone to be taken care of. Wasn't it that simple? Wasn't it that damn complicate?

Wasn't this the reason why she hadn't gone home two weeks ago, but returned to the opera hall instead, and asked for a job to be near Michiru's music and to see if the small man, still a boy in her eyes, was alright? Wasn't this the reason why she had helped him in the first place and didn't let him sit and maybe even die on the cold bench in an even colder night in the coldest snow storm? Wasn't this the reason why he looked so strikingly like him; the same eyes and the same hair colour?

Or was it simply a coincidence?

Or was she slowly going mad?

Hadn't she already gone totally nuts?

She didn't know; she couldn't have cared less.

To take care of them.

"I'm sorry to have bothered you." Tahiki slowly broke away from the pane and turned around to go back to his suite. However, he didn't feel too disappointed or even ashamed; suddenly he simply felt tired, incredibly tired of it all: The war against Sailor Galactica, their search for Princess Kakyuu and their constant fear that they would never ever see their parents and their home planet again.

To take care of them.

"I'll do it."

Haruka's voice was steady, but Tahiki couldn't see her face as he glanced back over his shoulder, surprised. The blonde stood in the night's deep shadows. She, too, had left the window and she seemed to be strangely determined.

"It's really not much that I ask of you, only to make sure that they don't forget their stuff or the time."

No, it wasn't very much he asked of her.

They both knew that.

At the same time it was much too much.

Only she knew that.

To take care of two little brothers, even if they weren't hers, even if they didn't really belong to her, it sounded so tempting. It was an offer Haruka couldn't refuse; for that she wasn't strong enough.

"I'll write it down into your new contract." Tahiki's words were business-like; his voice, however, wasn't. Far from it.

"I don't need that."

"Pardon?"

"I'm an older sister; I know what to do."

"Oh... okay."

To take care of somebody.

Haruka had never wanted to be responsible for somebody else again. Ever. But at the same time it sounded too much like a second chance. Like a chance to prove that she was worthy.

Look, Haru-nee-chan! Look at the dragon I've drawn!

"Arigatou, Haruka-san."

The blonde nodded. Then she turned around and walked quietly into the night's darkness.

It's a red dragon and I like it a lot.

This time, she swore to herself, she wouldn't fail.

But ya know what? I like ya even more, Haru-nee-chan!

dbdbdb

The first concert in Kyoto was a great success. Finally, Yaten was able to stand on the stage again, to play his grand piano and to sing together with his brothers. Michiru's soft violin accompanied them and their fans, and even their critics only found laudable words about their performance.

They all enjoyed the almost three hours on the stage and hoped to be a step closer to Kakyuu and in finishing their mission. To be one step closer to defeating Sailor Galactica. To be one step closer to a life in peace and happiness.

As always, Haruka stood behind the curtain and watched them play. She still wore the dark t-shirt and the black cap with the white letters crew written on them. But for the first time, she didn't have to carry any boxes or rolled up cable around, as Hashitzou had often told her to do. Instead she held a bottle of water in her right and four plastic cups in her left hand, just in case the Three Lights or Michiru got thirsty.

dbdbdb

I hope you liked it. Did some more things become clear? I hope so. If not, just feel free

to ask :).

Right now I'm a little bit busy, but expect the first part of chapter 4 "Snow" (it has almost 40 pages, therefore I'll divide it) next Monday. I'll try to answer every comment and email, but please be kind when it takes some days for me to do so.

Thanks you all for your great reviews :).

April