

# Tenshi

Von aprileagle

## Kapitel 12: The Moon And The Stars (Part 1)

And I will bare my soul in time,  
When I'm kneeling at your feet.

### Chapter 7 : The Moon And The Stars

Complete darkness surrounded her, but Haruka didn't feel afraid. A little bit uneasy, perhaps, but not afraid. Her fears had always been concentrated on other people; on her brother and during the last months on Yaten; on other people but not on herself.

"How did you do that?"

The blonde turned her head as she heard her voice no longer in her head, but actually with her ears. The red haired woman sat next to her and she seemed to be the only thing she could see in the darkness; maybe she was even the only thing that existed here. Her body was surrounded by a red light that shimmered silver at its ends.

"Did what?" Haruka frowned and looked around, trying to find a way out. However, there seemed to be none.

"Come into this world." The young woman stared at Haruka's hand still holding her tight, not wanting to let go. "Sailor Galactica said that no one would be able to get here, to actually touch me..."

"Sailor Galactica?" Haruka didn't like the sound of that name, not at all. She had thought that she had left these kind of people behind when she turned around almost six years ago.

"Hai. She's our worst enemy. First, she invaded our solar system and then she attacked yours, but you don't know that, do you?"

"No." Haruka shook her head and rose, pulling her with her. The blonde almost disappeared into the darkness with her black clothes, but the young woman could be seen quite clearly in her colourful dress.

"But you are one of them."

Haruka, who had just taken two steps forward into the darkness, froze when she heard those words.

One of them?

"No, I'm not." She sighed and tried to make something out in front of her. Hadn't there been a movement?

"But I can see the sign on your forehead and..."

"I guess it's futile to talk about me when you're the damsel in distress." Haruka grinned sheepishly and looked again into blue eyes. "Who are you and where is this?" Automatically, the both of them started slowly to walk, although there seemed to be

no particular direction to go to or any goal to arrive at.

"I'm Kakyuu." Introduced the red haired woman herself to the blonde. "Every solar system has a Sailor Princess and I'm the one of my solar system. You could say I'm a little bit like your Sailor Moon, only that I'm not as strong as she is when I'm not in my own kingdom."

Haruka nodded in silence. Those words sounded strange in her head, but then again, she had heard stranger things before; nothing could surprise her any more.

"Sailor Galactica attacked my kingdom six years ago. I was sixteen then and wasn't able to stop her. Everything happened so quickly and so I decided to escape with my Sailor Senshi and to lure Sailor Galactica away from my people and to search for help somewhere else." Kakyuu wiped away some tears from her eyes and tried to smile bravely. "We weren't able to defeat her at that time. I mean, Yaten was only fourteen and could hardly control his powers; Sailor Galactica would have killed us."

Sailor Galactica?

Sailor Senshi?

Yaten?

"Therefore, we left our home planets and fled to your solar system. Sailor Galactica followed us, of course, and there was a fight during which she could capture me while my Senshi got free."

Your Senshi?

"Sailor Galactica locked me up in this place and even though I'm able to run away from time to time, I'm not able to fully escape this place and to reach my boys."

That can't be true...

"Your Sailor Senshi? Don't tell me that..."

"Hai." Kakyuu nodded when she saw the surprised expression on the blonde's face.

"The Three Lights are Sailor Senshi, as well."

"But you said that they're your family." Haruka had never considered the Sailor team her family, especially not when her own family had struggled for sanity and survival. She had never allowed the other Senshi to become her family. She hadn't even allowed them to become her friends, because she knew that she wouldn't be able to stay long enough to really be part of their strange fights, their belief in the stars and their funny little world with an always clumsy princess and a too serious partner. No, she never wanted to belong to them, because she had known that she'd go back to America soon, although, then she had thought that they'd return to live there and to listen to her father's performances. No one had thought that they'd spend the next months more in a hospital than on a stage.

"They're my Senshi, that's right, Haruka-san." Kakyuu stumbled, but the blonde held her tight. She had decided to take her back to the Three Lights, even though she didn't know how to do that. However, she sensed that it was essential to not let her go again. "But they're also my real family. Tahiki is my fiancé, which would make Sejya and little Yaten my brothers-in-law."

"Your fiancé?" Haruka felt dizzy because of all that unexpected information. "But he never said anything about you."

"You were new, Haruka-san, and it hurts too much to talk about his failure."

"His failure?"

"Hai. My boys started this entire Three Light business to search for me. They hoped to reach me with their songs, but even though I could hear them all the time, I wasn't able to make them see me." Kakyuu took a shaky breath to steady her soft voice again. "They've been searching for me for almost six years now, Haruka-san, without

ever seeing me or having a proof that I'm still alive. That feels very much like a failure."

"But you are here, Kakyuu-san."

"Nevertheless, they can't see me. It's a brutal curse Sailor Galactica put upon me. Sometimes I'm able to see my boys, but they're never able to see me."

Haruka raised one eyebrow and tried to understand all the strange things she had heard during the past minutes. Not all of them made sense and she could definitely not imagine Yaten fighting as a Sailor Senshi, nor did she dare to picture Sejya in her mind, wearing one of those stupid outfits the Inner and Outer Senshi of this solar system always had to wear during their battles against whoever.

However, there were two things she had understood quite clearly: Kakyuu belonged to the Three Lights, and there was an evil force called Sailor Galactica that wouldn't let her be reunited with her family. Therefore, Sailor Galactica had to be defeated, no matter how.

"So, when I'll kick this Sailor Galactica's ass, you'll be able to return to them."

A weak smile appeared on Kakyuu's face when she heard the blonde's simple expression.

"Hai, but it's not easy to defeat her. If she were, I'd have long be able to escape on my own."

"Then, I'll have to try my best."

"You're an optimist, Haruka-san."

"No, only crazy." Haruka grinned, but sobered up when she saw the suddenly frightened expression on the other woman's pale face. Kakyuu looked around and held Haruka's hand stronger as she suddenly started to run.

"What's... what's up?" gasped the blonde surprised and almost stumbled over her own feet, because she still wore the hospital's shoes and they were very slippery.

"We need a plan first before we'll face her." Kakyuu glanced back over her shoulders and Haruka believed to now see something definitely moving in the darkness behind them as she followed the princess' frightened look.

"Don't you think..."

"No! Not now."

Kakyuu's anxious voice convinced Haruka and she followed the princess into the impenetrable darkness.

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Tahiki knew that something was wrong when Michiru entered the ward and came over to them. It was after noon, maybe two or three in the afternoon. The oldest brother didn't know. His wrist watch was still in the concert hall's changing room and he'd lost track of time in this hospital, anyway. The night seemed to have been endless and he didn't even notice that it got light outside. Only when that friendly smiling nurse asked them if they wanted to have some breakfast did Tahiki see that the sun had already risen.

Tahiki glanced at his younger brothers while Michiru covered her normal clothes, short blue jeans and an orange top, with the yellow plastic stuff the doctors called sterile. Yaten was still unconscious and the tube in his throat still frightened Tahiki out of his wits whenever he saw it, but his fever went down a little bit and Dr. Jones was satisfied with the improvement the young pianist had shown during the past ten hours. Yaten was still very ill and his temperature was still very high, but he was

already on the way to recovery.

Why didn't we notice how poor he was feeling?

Tahiki had asked himself that question all through the night, but he knew that he wouldn't get an answer before Yaten wouldn't wake up. However, deep in his heart he already knew the answer.

Because we didn't pay him enough attention.

Tahiki sighed and let his gaze wander over to his other brother. Sejya refused to go back to the hotel with Michiru. However, some when during the night sleep had overcome him. Right now, he slept in one of those white chairs and it looked very uncomfortable. His red suit was crumbled and his black hair looked messed. Tahiki hoped that none of those stupid journalists camping outside the hospital's front door would ever make it upstairs. The photos they could take would be much too private to be shown in any paper.

"Haruka's gone." Those were Michiru's greeting words when she grabbed an empty chair near the bed and sat down next to Tahiki. The young man could smell her shampoo and was glad that at least one of them had taken a shower and got more than just two hours' sleep, no matter how restless it might have been.

"What do you mean?" He rubbed his tired eyes and opened some buttons of his shirt. His red suit's jacket hang over the back of his own chair.

"She's left." Michiru's voice was an urgent whisper as she pushed a small notebook in his hands. He needed some moments to understand that he had to open it and to read the few sentences written down in a handwriting he had seen a lot during the past months. It was very neat, although the Kanji had always looked a little bit strange, probably due to Haruka's second native language, English. He read the message and had to reread it to understand the words and to get their meaning.

Dear Michiru,

There's something I need to do. Don't wait for me. It might take some time. Take care of Yaten.

Love,  
Haruka

"Something she needs to do?" Tahiki glanced again at his sick brother, remembered the blonde's existed words on the stage, her determined behaviour in the hospital. Right then, there would have been no doctor and surely no nurse to hold her back from Yaten's side. And now she simply went away, only leaving such a small, such a cryptic message? After she had been there for over six months, never having taken a day off, hardly ever having abandoned her duties, even if it was in the middle of the night or at six o'clock in the morning?

"Do I have to understand this?" Tahiki yawned and rubbed his tired eyes again after he had handed back the notebook to Michiru.

"I'm also at a lost." The young violinist looked crestfallen. "I mean... her family lives here in America, right? Maybe she went to visit them, but..." Michiru stared at the notebook in her shaking hands. "I'd wanted to go with her to see her parents." Her voice was nothing but a whisper, but it was very silent in the ward except for the machines' peeping noises, therefore Tahiki understood her. He raised his eyebrows in surprise.

Are they so close that she wants to meet her family?

However, a movement at the corner of his eyes distracted his thoughts. He turned his

head and his jaw dropped when he looked directly into light green eyes blinking tiredly up at him, sleepy, confused. Even the black eye was opened and Yaten seemed to be able to see with it, too. Tahiki had wondered briefly about it when he saw Yaten for the first time in the white bed, but dismissed his questions. He would ask him later how on earth he'd managed to hurt himself so badly. Probably, it had something to do with his illness.

"Yaten-chan..." Tahiki leaned forward and carefully took a small, sweaty hand into his big one, held it softly tight. The young man blinked again and seemed to have difficulties to focus on him. He tried to speak, but couldn't, because the tube in his throat wouldn't let him even utter the tiniest word. Light green eyes grew wide in panic and the young man tried to grab for the tube, but Tahiki held him back.

"It's okay, little one. It helps you breathe." Tahiki stroked comfortingly over warm skin and his youngest brother seemed to calm down.

"I'll call Dr. Jones." Michiru abandoned the mysterious notebook at the very instant and slit out of the wards in the frantic search for Yaten's doctor or at least the friendly nurse they had talked to yesterday.

Yaten watched her leave before he glanced again at his oldest brother, frowning slightly. Tahiki could see the silent questions in the young man's look.

Where am I?

"You're in a hospital and to be honest, you gave us quite a fright, little one." Tahiki leaned forward and stroked some silver strands out of a still very warm face, caressed gently over from the fever reddened cheeks.

In a hospital?

"You collapsed on the stage."

Collapsed? The concert!

"Don't worry, little one, Dr. Jones took very good care of you and you'll be fine again soon." Tahiki smiled, although he felt more like crying. It was his fault that all of this had happened, after all. He was the oldest brother, he was responsible for his family. Hadn't he promised their parents to always take care of them? Yaten's fragile form in the white bed, connected to different drips and strange machines, told him that he had failed. As he had failed his Kakyuu all those years.

Dr. Jones?

Yaten closed his burning eyes for a moment. His head hurt and his throat felt as if thousands of little needles were piercing him. He could move his arms, but it was too exhausting to do so. Tahiki's strong hand on his fingers felt good and comforting. As if the oldest member of the Three Lights weren't angry with him for ruining yet another of their important concerts. As if he'd still belong to them. As a little brother.

I really did it this time, huh?

Yaten gulped, although it was a strange feeling with the tube in his mouth. At least, he could breathe freely and didn't feel so dizzy any longer which probably resulted from his lying position. Who knew if the world started to spin around again once he'd try to sit or even stand up.

"The doctor's already on his way."

Yaten nodded and it took all his powers to roll his head to the other side.

Nani?

His eyes grew wide when he saw Sejya slumped in a white plastic chair. He still wore his concert clothes and was fast asleep, although his position couldn't be comfortable. He'd have a sore back when he'd wake up again.

He's here?

Yaten blinked, but the vision before his eyes didn't change. There was still his Seiya who had told him that he had never wanted him as his brother, who had yelled at him when he told him that he was gay, who had hit him in anger and hate. And now he was sitting at his bedside, obviously waiting for him to wake up.

He was concerned about me?

Yaten blinked again, but this time his vision wasn't blurred because of his weakness, but because of the tears running over his cheeks.

"It's okay, little one." He felt soft fingers brushing over his skin, wiping the salty wet away. The young man turned his head with the hand and stared into Tahiki's sad face.

"Everything's gonna be alright."

You're also concerned, Tahiki-niichan? Concerned about someone like me?

"From now on I'll take better care of you, little one."

Suddenly, Yaten knew that Tahiki would have embraced him if there hadn't been the tubes, the drips and the machines connected to his frail arms. Just like he had done so often during their childhood when Yaten had been sick, afraid or simply sad. To comfort him. To show him that everything would be alright again. To tell him with this simple gesture that he belonged to him. That he was his brother, no matter what.

Yaten gulped, again feeling the strange sensation of the tube in his throat. He didn't know why Seiya was here. To scream at him? To tell him that he had messed up again? To stare at him in rage? However, he knew that Tahiki still saw in him the little brother he had so desperately tried to be those past twelve years. Even if his Seiya didn't want him any longer, he still belonged to Tahiki. He wasn't alone.

Arigatou.

More and more tears ran over his cheeks and he was so thankful when Tahiki leaned forward and hesitatingly wrapped his warm arms around Yaten's fragile body, all the while trying not to touch the tubes and drips. Not to touch the injections in white arms.

"I'm sorry that I forced you to do all to this stupid stuff, Yaten-chan." Whispered Tahiki and Yaten calmed down slightly when he felt the comfort he had always felt in his brother's arms. The love. Just like whenever he had been with Lord and Lay Kou, his new parents.

Arigatou.

"That has to stop now, Yaten-chan. Seiya and you, you're more important to me than anything else."

His soft words were so loving and although Yaten had always doubted his new family's intentions and the truth behind their vows, he suddenly was able to believe the young man holding him like he was someone special, someone precious. Someone he had never been in his true parents' eyes, when he was little.

Arigatou, Tahiki-niichan.

They needed some moments to realize that Michiru had returned with a man in his fifties. Although it was essential for the doctor to check on his finally awoken patient, he waited for them to separate on their own. Bill had seen other siblings in the same position. Here, in this ward, over a year ago.

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"A light?"

Haruka didn't know how long they've run through the darkness when she suddenly saw something like a portal opening in front of them. It was illuminated by what

seemed to be bright sunlight, although there was no sun to be seen. Hell, she couldn't even distinguish between day and night here, lest alone see if there was a sky above and some earth beneath their hurried steps.

"Hai." Kakyuu nodded and rushed over to it. "It's safe, trust me." She cried when she felt Haruka's hesitation and the shadow behind them drawing nearer. The blonde took a deep breath, then she nodded and together they jumped into the light...

... only to stumble and to fall down in a room filled with a warm twilight. However, it was very bright for them after the long darkness.

What?

Haruka came to her feet and helped Kakyuu to stand up, too. Then, she looked around and her dark green eyes grew wide when she recognized the intensive care unit, the machines and the drip. The fragile person lying under a white blanket.

"Yaten-chan?"

"Hai." Kakyuu sat down on the mattress without touching it. Haruka kept standing next to her, although she suddenly knew that she wouldn't be able to leave any traces on the blanket, either. Right now, she belonged to the princess' world whereas Yaten was in his own. The young man looked a little bit better. At least, the tube had disappeared from his throat, was replaced by a mask that provided him with fresh oxygen to help him breathe. Obviously, the young man had woken up during the time Haruka and Kakyuu had run through the shadow land, as the blonde secretly called the strange place of darkness, and Bill had decided that it was safe enough to take away the tube.

"That's what you mean when you said that you're watching over them."

"Hai." Kakyuu sighed deeply and they both turned their heads when the door was silently opened. Haruka stiffened when she saw Sejya sneaking through the room and sitting down in a white plastic chair that still stood next to the young patient's bed.

"They can't see us, can they?"

"No, they cannot." Even though Kakyuu knew that she couldn't touch her little Yaten, she stretched her free hand nonetheless and stroked ghostly over his cheek. He hadn't felt her, but he certainly had heard Sejya pushing the chair closer to the bed. No matter how much he tried to be quiet, the chair still made a squealing noise on the floor. "That's ironic, isn't it, Haruka-san? They're looking for me, although I'm right here. Yet, I can't tell them, can't show them that I'm still with them, that I'm still alive." Yaten opened his eyes and seemed to look directly at her for a moment, but Haruka could see that he only tried to remember where he was. His eyes were full with sleep and needed some time to focus on something behind them.

-Oh, did I wake you up? Gomen.- Sejya leaned forward and corrected the blanket, even though it wasn't out of place.

It was a strange sensation to suddenly hear their voices only in her mind, just the way she had heard Kakyuu's voice before she had taken her hand and entered the shadow land. The two men were still there, right in front of her, but at the same time they seemed to be far away, unreachable. As if she saw a mirror's reflection but not reality.

"Is it always this way?"

"Hai."

"And how often do you see them like this?"

"Maybe once, maybe twice a day. It depends on how quickly she finds me slipping from my prison." Kakyuu stroked over a slim arm and tried to take a white hand. She tried it several times, although she knew too well that it was in vain.

"And they've never seen you?"

"No, not once."

Haruka frowned when she saw the shy smile on Yaten's still feverish reddened face when Sejya took the washcloth from the table near the bed, wetting it with cool water and gently washing away the sweat from the young pianist's forehead and cheeks.

"Why did I see you?"

Kakyuu quickly glanced at Haruka before she concentrated again on her boys.

"That's a very good question, Haruka-san, and there's no answer I can offer you." She shook her head and finally covered Yaten's hand with her own, not caring that he couldn't feel her, that his knuckles shimmered through the back of her hand. "Sailor Galactica put me into that dark prison and cursed me. She told me that I'd be able to see my Senshi from time to time, but that they'd never be able to see or even reach me." She squeezed Haruka's hand as if to test that she was indeed there. "I have no idea how you managed to not only see me, repeatedly, but also to take my hand." The princess shrugged her shoulders. "It can't be because you're one of them. Not even Sailor Moon has been able to see me, no matter how loud I screamed at her or at the other Senshi."

I'm not one of them!

Haruka wanted to correct her, but gave up with a silent sigh. Right now, they had other problems to face.

-How late is it?- Yaten's voice sounded far away, but Haruka heard its hoarseness and the tiredness in it, nonetheless.

-Almost midnight. You've slept most of the day.- Sejya put the washcloth away and felt for Yaten's temperature. The younger man closed his eyes when he felt the cool hand on his burning forehead. When he felt gentle fingers brushing some sweaty strands out of his warm face.

Almost midnight?

"Did we run all day through that darkness?"

"Hai." Kakyuu shrugged her shoulders, never taking her eyes off her boys. "Time's different in Sailor Galactica's world. Sometimes, a minute there is a day here and the other way round."

Yaten winced when Sejya touched his still black eye. The lead singer withdrew his hand quickly and leaned back in his white chair.

-Why did you tell Tahiki-niisan that you stumbled and got the door knob into your face, because you felt so dizzy with your fever?-

Yaten opened his eyes, happy to be able to see with his black one again.

-Because it sounded plausible.- The young pianist had put his oxygen mask aside when he started to speak to his older brother, but now he pulled it over his mouth again to take two deep breaths.

-But it's not true, Yaten-chan.- There was no anger in Sejya's look, only exhaustion and resignation. -I hit you.-

-It wouldn't have improved my situation...- Yaten took another deep breath from the oxygen mask and made a pained face when the needles in his throat hurt even more.

... when Tahiki-niichan had been angry with you, too.-

Sejya rubbed his aching temples and closed his eyes for a moment.

-I haven't been angry with you, little one. I've been angry with me and took it out on you.- Sejya opened his eyes again when he felt warm fingers on his arm. Michiru made them go back to their suite during the afternoon to take a shower and to eat something. Afterwards, they fought for ten minutes who would take a nap and who



would return to the hospital. Strange enough, Sejya did win and went back, trying to avoid the journalists at the hotel's and the hospital's front doors. Therefore, he was dressed in jeans and a plain, white t-shirt, trying not to draw too much attention. Tahiki would come to the hospital as soon as he woke up and Michiru was looking for some coffee right now, feeding her inner monkey with caffeine.

-I sometimes do such stupid things.-

Yaten smiled a weak smile when he heard the lead singer's soft words.

-But now you're here.- The young pianist coughed and pressed his eyes together when the pain seared through his body. He frantically shook his head when Sejya wanted to get up and call for the doctor or at least a nurse.

-I'm fine, Sej.- he panted between two coughing fits and pulled the oxygen mask over his mouth again to gasp hard for pure, fresh breath. Sejya hesitated and finally sat down again when Yaten's breathing normalized and his body slowly relaxed. Quickly, he looked around and found the old book on the table, right next to the small bowl and the washcloth. He picked it up and opened it at the bookmark, seeing Yaten's favourite poem before him.

-Shall I read it out to you?-

Yaten yawned and nodded slightly. Sejya pulled his chair closer to the bed to put the book open on the mattress. Softly, he started to read and didn't look up when his hand that didn't turn over the pages gently took Yaten's and held it tight, not seeing the happy smile on Yaten's face and, of course, not seeing the third hand covering both their fingers invisibly.

Who is this? And what is here?  
And in the lighted palace near  
Died the sound of royal cheer;  
And they crossed themselves for fear,  
All the Knights at Camelot;

"Has that just been an apology?"

Haruka shook her head in disbelief. Too well she remembered Yaten's desperate face in the changing room and saw now the tired smile instead.

"Hai."

"That's the strangest apology I've ever witnessed."

"It's normal, Haruka-san. Trust me, I've grown up with those two guys." Kakyuu listened to Sejya's even voice for another stanza. "Sejya-chan's been scared when he saw Yaten-chan so sick in this bed."

Sejya-chan.

It sounded so wrong in Haruka's ears. Even though the young man often behaved very childishly, she couldn't imagine him as a little boy, especially when he smoked his cigarettes and tried to piss off everyone with his bad mood.

"Still, he hurt him. Yaten-chan shouldn't forgive him so easily." Haruka made it clear that she wouldn't forgive Sejya for something like that, ever, and even if she'd have to accept such a stupid apology, she'd make sure that he'd suffer a lot for his unwise actions.

"That's the way it's always been." Kakyuu rose slowly from the bed. "That's how they've always been, Haruka-san. Together they went to hell and back. They need each other and they know that."

"Does he know about this baka's feeling?" Haruka nodded at Yaten who was already

fast asleep. He didn't even hear the end of his most beloved poem. Sejya noticed, but he didn't stop. Patiently, he turned the page with his free hand and started to read another sad love poem from a far away country, from a time long gone.

"No, my little Yaten has no idea." Kakyuu glanced over her shoulder and sighed deeply when the shadow grew nearer. The red light that surrounded her got stronger and the silver edges were almost extinguished. "A lot would be easier if he did."

"What?" Haruka stared at the sleeping form in disbelief, but was already pulled away from the bed as Kakyuu escaped again from whatever it was that made her so frightened. "Do you mean...?" Her voice was swallowed by the rising darkness.

Sejya frowned and looked up. Hadn't he just heard something? However, he was alone in the room. Neither Michiru nor Tahiki had returned. Well, probably some doctors had passed the door, talking to each other. The young man squeezed the warm hand under his fingers softly, then he concentrated again on the poem before him.

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Michiru walked through the hospital. She held a fax tightly in her trembling hands. It was written in Setsuna's handwriting that was only readable for close friends who had known her for many years. Some pictures were added and although they were in black and white, Michiru could imagine the green trees of Usagi's garden immediately. The young woman sat under one of them, showing her grown belly proudly into the camera. Of course, there were some pictures of her other friends, as well: Makoto in the kitchen, Minako und Ami singing karaoke in the living room, Mamoru and Rei taking care of the grill on the terrace and finally a family photo of Setsuna, Elza and little Hotaru on a blanket. It looked like little Hotaru slowly started to walk, at least she stood between her proud parents, holding their thumbs in her little fists.

We miss you so much.

Michiru crumbled the fax even more. She didn't have to read the invitation again; she already knew the words by heart.

Come back as soon as Yaten feels better.

The fax was signed with all their names and some clumsy drawn cartoons grinning widely all over their misshapen faces. Obviously, they wanted them back after their long American tour to spend some quality time with them. Yaten, whose recovery made good progress, also wanted to go back to Japan. He didn't like the hospital and felt alone in the small room he got when he was allowed to leave the intensive care unit three days after his admission. Now, he had been in this hospital for almost two weeks and the prospect of sitting on Usagi's balcony instead, overlooking the green garden and to talk to the other Senshi again was a lot more tempting than lying in this stupid small room all the time. Yes, he wasn't completely recovered yet, but if they'd take good care of him and if he'd take his medicine regularly and visited a doctor in Japan, nothing could go wrong. Surely, Makoto's meals would help a great deal more than the hospital's food he had to endure every day.

I need to talk to Dr. Jones before we'll make such a decision.

Michiru straightened her shoulders before she knocked softly on the door that had his name written on a golden plate.

Ruka hasn't returned yet.

All this time, there had been no sign of the blonde, no phone call, no letter, not even a postcard from Texas or Ohio or wherever her family lived, because Michiru was convinced that this was where Haruka was. Now, she wanted to ask Dr. Jones who

seemed to know Haruka quite well where her family lived, and intended to visit her there. The young violinist couldn't simply go back to Japan like that. What if Haruka returned and found their suite empty? Would she see that as a sign that she was indeed fired? Would she decide to stay in America, then, and not to return to Japan, return to her? Would she have enough money to book another flight?

I could kill Sejya!

The young lead singer had behaved in an exemplary manner during the past two weeks, however, he had completely misbehaved the days before. Michiru wanted to scream at him after she realized that he had, indeed, fired the young woman on the stage when all Haruka had wanted to do was to take Yaten to a hospital as soon as possible. However, she didn't shout of him, because Tahiki's upset face whenever the blonde and her disappearance was mentioned was enough punishment for the guilty feeling young man. Although the oldest brother quickly dismissed the idea that Haruka had left because of Sejya's angry reaction, Michiru wasn't so sure. Surely, the contract had been made first between Hashitzou and Haruka and later on altered by Tahiki and only they could actually fire her and only with a letter and not simply with a couple of furious words, as was written in the contract, but what if Haruka had never really read the small print? What if she took Sejya's spoken words seriously and left, because she thought that she wasn't needed any longer?

Maybe that baka doesn't need her, but I do!

No one opened and Michiru knocked again, this time a little bit louder.

"Do you want to see Dr. Jones?"

Michiru turned around and looked into the smiling face of that nurse whose name she now knew as Carol. It was still a strange concept for her to call a stranger by her first name, however, it was normal in America and since the doctors and nurses were all very friendly, Michiru pushed her discomfort aside and called them by their names as she allowed them to simply call her >Michiru<, since she had spent most of the last two weeks in this hospital, although Tahiki continued to rent the hotel's suite and forced them from time to time to return and take a nap. In the beginning they didn't want to listen to him, but as Yaten's condition got better, they were thankful that this refuge was still there for them. Sometimes, they simply had enough from the hospital, the sick people and its scent of disinfectant. No wonder that Yaten begged the doctor to release him, promising that he'd be very careful.

"Yes, Carol." Her English still sounded broken and she would always have problems pronouncing the r, however, the nurse understood her. She smiled friendly and nodded, speaking slower than normal to make sure that the Japanese woman wouldn't miss a word she spoke to her.

"Just go inside, Michiru. Dr. Jones is still on his lunch break, but he should be back in about five minutes." She opened the door for her before she continued on her way.

"I'll tell him that you wait for him."

"Thank you." Michiru resisted the urge to bow and stepped hesitatingly into the doctor's office. Although the nurse had invited her in, she still felt like a burglar. She left the door ajar, feeling slightly better by doing so. Michiru glanced around the office and had to admit that he had a nice one. There were big windows behind a big desk overloaded with papers and folders. Bright sunlight shone through the blinds that were not closed completely. Michiru caught a glimpse of Chicago's skyline.

I'll just sit down and wait.

Michiru wanted to cross the room when she saw the big chart on the wall. It used to have shown a bird's-eye view of Chicago, however, now it was covered with dozens,

maybe even hundreds of photos. The young woman stepped closer and knew instantly that they showed the patients he'd treated in his career, or at least some of them. Michiru saw little girls and boys, but also teenagers and grown-ups smiling happily in the camera. Some of them were at home, playing football or baseball, some of them were still in hospital, wearing the white nightie that Yaten didn't like at all, looking brave and full of hope. They were of different gender, age and race, but they had one thing in common: All of them were bald or had extremely short hair.

Nani?

One photo caught Michiru's eye. It hung in the upper left-hand corner and was a little bit bigger than the other pictures. Like other photos, it showed more than one person, probably the patient's family. On some, Michiru could see parents and grandparents, on this she could see a young mother. Or a sister.

Nani...

Michiru stretched her hand and didn't notice that the pin fell loudly on the ground when she got it down to have a closer look at it. The centre of the picture was a little boy. Michiru didn't have any siblings nor were her friends' children old enough for her to have a lot of experience with toddlers, but this boy seemed to be four, maybe five years old. His hair was also extremely short and Michiru needed some moments to realize that it was silver, a very rare colour in Japan and probably in America, too. His light green eyes shone happily as he laughed into the camera. He wore a dark blue pantsuit and waved at the person behind the camera, probably Dr. Jones himself.

What baffled Michiru most, however, was the young woman kneeling behind the little boy. She had wrapped her arms around his small shoulders and smiled tiredly and exhausted. Her face was ashen and stood in a sharp contrast to her black jeans and the dark sweatshirt she wore beneath the hospital's yellow plastic uniform. Although her blond hair was shorter and her body slimmer, almost gaunt, Michiru recognized her instantly.

Ruka?

There was no mistake. The young woman embracing the little boy so tenderly was no one else but Haruka, unless she had a look-alike.

"That picture was taken last summer."

Michiru jumped when she heard the deep voice next to her. She whirled around and faced Dr. Jones' sad smiling face.

"I didn't mean to snoop around, Dr. Jones, gomen nasai." She stuttered, trying her best to pronounce the foreign language so that he would understand her. He seemed or at least her guilty face let him know what she was thinking.

"Don't worry, Miss Kaioh." He was one of the few people who didn't insist on calling her by her first name and she was thankful for that. It made her feel more relaxed in his presence. "My patients or visitors always look at my Wall of Help." He glanced at the other pictures and sighed worn-out. "Although I wasn't not able to help all of them."

"Is that Haruka?" Michiru studied the picture again in her hand. He followed her look, then he sighed again and went over to his desk to sit down on the edge.

"Yes, that's her last year."

"And the boy?" Although Michiru already knew the answer; the resemblance between the two was striking. His hair was lighter than Haruka's, but they had the same face and the same smile.

"That's James, her little brother. His Japanese name's Akito or Aki-chan, as she always called him."

Her little brother was ill? He was in this hospital?

"That's why I want to talk to you, Dr. Jones, or rather, about." Michiru turned the picture and saw the date on the back, August 20th. "Haruka disappeared two weeks ago and I can't find her." She sighed deeply. "She had a fight with Sejya-kun and he fired her, although he wasn't even allowed to do so, especially not without our consent. I don't know if she really took that baka's words seriously, but I want to find her and tell her that she's still part of our team." Michiru shrugged helplessly her shoulders. "I think that she's visiting her parents right now and wanted to ask you if you could give me their address so that I can go there and tell Haruka that this baka only told her nonsense." She glanced up and frowned when she saw that he stared at her with a strange expression on his suddenly pale face. A haunted look was in his blue eyes.

"What did Haruka tell you about her family?"

"Well... when she came in our team, she told us that she has a baby brother. She took care of my best friend's baby girl then and we were quite surprised that she was able to change Hime-chan's nappies. But I didn't know that her little brother's already this big." Michiru studied the picture in her hands again. "Furthermore, she told us that her parents were still in America and that she came to Japan to see her mother's birthplace and to see the world. I guess that's one of the reasons why she decided to take the job, even though it was never easy with us crazy musicians."

"Did she really say that her parents were here?"

His question sounded strange and Michiru looked up, sensing that something was wrong, utterly wrong judging by the way he was playing with the stethoscope around his neck. Michiru frowned and tried to remember the conversation they had had over six months ago.

"Well... she said that her parents were home or something like that. We thought that she'd meant America."

Dr. Jones nodded and finally pointed at the chair before the desk.

"Please sit down, Miss Kaioh, because it'll be a long story."

Michiru frowned even more, but did as she was told. She didn't let go of the photo and the doctor didn't seem to mind.

"You all mean a lot to her, otherwise she wouldn't have called me when Yaten Kou got ill. Maybe she wanted to tell you everything, but probably she's not able to, because it hurts too much. Either way, I guess you have a right to know the story, especially now that she's disappeared again." Bill sighed, still playing with the medical instrument.

"Francis needs friends like you who understand her."

"Francis?"

"That's her American name, Miss Kaioh. Her father's an American..."

"... and her mother's Japanese." Nodded Michiru, not wanting to interrupt him, however, she needed to show him that Haruka had told them something, at least.

"Right." Agreed Bill. "Therefore, both of the children have an American name, as well as a Japanese. They both have a dual nationality, as I understand, although they spent most of their time here in America and only visited Japan during the holidays." Bill shrugged his shoulders in an apologizing manner. "I can hardly tell you anything about her parents, because I only had the chance to know them for a couple of weeks. As far as I know the story, Francis' brother got ill when he was still a baby. Their parents were in Japan when he was born and came back to America as soon as possible to get him treated by doctors they knew and trusted. Dr. Ross treated him in the beginning, but he left and I came back from a study trip in London and took over." Bill forgot the

medical instrument around his neck, but he still didn't look up from his slender fingers.

"What's the little boy's name?" asked Michiru when Bill stayed silent for a couple of minutes, not daring to interrupt his thoughts, but being too curious to not question him about the smiling child on the photo.

"His name's James Akito Miller, but Francis only called him Akito or Aki-chan, so that even Jerry could pronounce his name correctly after a while."

"But you still call her Francis, although she told us that her name's Haruka."

"I guess she thought it would be easier with the administrative body if she appeared to be a true American. Francis Miller sounds a lot more convincing for a court than a name no one's able to pronounce. At least no person from the western world."

"A court?" Michiru searched her memory for the right translation and raised her eyebrows in surprise when she understood his words. "Did she or her parents have problems?"

"Well, she applied for the guardianship over her little brother after her parents died in a tragic accident."

"Nani?" Michiru felt a shiver running down her spine. Hadn't Haruka told her so much about her mother, grinning proudly all the while? About the kimono, about the Cherry Blossom Festival, about the food she liked and didn't?

But she only talked about her childhood.

Michiru gulped and the photo in her hands started slightly to tremble.

Just like you only talked about your early childhood before your parents died...

"Little Akito was only one year old when a truck with broken brakes crashed into their car. Mrs. Miller was dead immediately and Mr. Miller died in this hospital's emergency room the same day." Bill rubbed his tired eyes, but Michiru didn't interrupt him this time. She sat in her chair, not knowing what to think, not knowing what to feel, all the while remembering the moment when her grandmother had to tell her the bad news about the plane crash. She had been quite young then, however, it didn't matter how old you were. It always was a catastrophe that could destroy your life, as well.

"Little Akito was treated with his first therapy that time. I can remember that for two days they didn't come to the hospital and I already wanted to send someone to see after them, but right after the funeral she returned with the toddler in her arms and dedicated her life to him." Bill shook his head. "Dedicated..." he whispered, repeatedly, before he continued in his story. "That's what you can call it. She was eighteen and I know that she had been accepted to Chicago's university to study music. At least that's what her mother told me shortly before her death. She's been so proud, then."

That's why she plays the piano so well.

Michiru knew how hard it was to get into a music university, even though she was her grandmother's granddaughter and very talented. She got a place at Tokyo University and it was only due to her grandmother's connections that she didn't lose it again when she decided to go on tour with the Three Lights only two semesters later. Right now, she was officially an undergraduate and could return whenever she wanted to. But Haruka obviously hadn't had that connection. She got into the university because of her talents and her talents alone.

And she called it tinkling on the piano!

"Francis didn't go to her seminars when the new semester started and when I asked her a couple of weeks later, she told me that her little brother needed her and that she'd turned down the offered place at university to have more time for him."

"But she had surely worked very hard for it!"

"Do you have any brothers or sisters, Miss Kaioh?" It didn't sound accusing, only interested and exhausted.

"No." Michiru shook her head, stared again at the happy laughing boy in his sister's loving embrace. "My parents died when I was very young, therefore I only have my grandmother."

"What would you do if your grandmother's doctor would call you and tell you that she's very sick, and when I say very sick I mean that she's fighting against an illness that could kill her."

"I'd take the next flight back, of course." Said Michiru immediately and understood.

"Little Akito was very ill and even though he was only one year old, he felt the loss of his parents and missed them. He was also Francis' last living relative. To make it brief, he was more important to her than anything else."

"And what happened afterwards?" asked Michiru, even though she had a bad feeling of foreboding.

"Francis literally moved into the hospital during the next four years. We tried a lot and poor little Akito had to endure three therapies. During that time I offered Francis to undergo a training as a nurse so that she'll have at least some kind of education after she had decided to quit university. For one year, she went to the nurse school in the evening and did her practical lessons here in this hospital while her little brother was only a room or a floor away so that she could be with him whenever he needed her."

That's why she always knew what to do when we managed to hurt ourselves.

"That picture was taken last year in August, Miss Kaioh. Akito was five years, then, and had finished his last therapy. This time, we really thought that we had defeated his illness and that he could leave the hospital for good." Bill laughed softly. It sounded incredibly sad. "He was so happy that day, because Francis had promised him to visit Disneyland in Florida. They actually went there and at home I have a photo showing the both of them wearing those crazy Mickey Mouse caps you can buy there. You know, the ones with the big black ears that make you look so silly." The doctor looked at the smiling boy on the picture and was silent for another couple of minutes. Michiru didn't dare to interrupt him, wasn't sure if she really wanted to hear the end of the story, because it didn't sound like it would be a happy end fresh from a Hollywood movie.

"I will never forget that sunny day last October. It was three in the afternoon and an ambulance came in. First, I thought that it was a terrible joke when I saw her sitting in it, holding his small hand, but it wasn't a joke, nor was it a nightmare, at least not one from which I could wake up." Bill clasped his hands as if he were praying. "It was a major setback and even before I checked on little Akito I knew that his illness was back, that it was even worse than before." The doctor didn't seem to be able to sit still any longer. He slipped from the desk and went over to the window, peering through the blinds into a bright world that wasn't much different from that day, and yet it had changed completely.

"In the end, it wasn't his illness he had to suffer from the most, but a pneumonia against which his weak immune system couldn't fight any longer. I guess her face will always haunt me in my sleepless nights. I would have understood if she'd cried or screamed at me or broke some of this furniture here, but she only sat there where you're sitting now, Miss Kaioh, and stared at me calmly when I had to tell her that we couldn't do anything for little Akito." Bill laughed again. This time, it sounded almost like a sob. "She even thanked me for everything I had done, even though I had failed

her! I couldn't save him, not with all my medical knowledge and all my modern equipment."

Michiru's vision blurred slightly as she studied the little boy's laughing face again.

"He died?" It was a stupid question for the answer was obvious.

"Yes, he died the following night. Francis called me at nine in the morning to confirm his death, but he must have died hours before. I guess she needed that time to say goodbye." Bill let go of the blend and the twilight returned into his office. "At least he was allowed to die at home and not in this hospital, connected to machines and scared out of his mind. He was only five, then."

My goodness...

"I've seen her a couple of times afterwards: At the funeral and when she came to take her stuff from the hospital. She disappeared after New Year and I feared that I would never see her again. That's why I was relieved when she called me two weeks ago to tell me that she needed me in the emergency room."

Michiru nodded and brushed the tears from her cheeks with her right hand while her left was still holding the picture.

"He looks a little bit like Yaten-chan, doesn't he?"

"Little Akito?" The doctor turned around and went back to the desk to lean over her shoulder. "Yes. Maybe that's the first reason why she accepted to work for you guys. But that could have only been her first notion, because she would have never stayed if she hadn't seen more in him than a substitute for her dead brother."

"She's our friend."

And maybe, hopefully my girlfriend.

"That's good."

"And where's she now? She's been gone for two weeks and Yaten-chan wants to leave the hospital and return to Japan."

Just like Sets and the others want to see me again.

"I guess she simply needs some time on her own now. Yaten Kou caught pneumonia and she'd been really scared that he'd have to die, too." Bill shrugged his shoulders to indicate that he didn't have the slightest idea where to search for her. "I know that she's visited her brother's grave when you came to Chicago, maybe she wants to visit her parents' graves. They weren't buried here but in her father's birthplace in Texas, as was written in his will."

Was that the reason why she cried that night?

Was that the reason why she looked so sad, so lonely?

Michiru stroked some curly strands behind her ears and wiped again over her wet cheeks.

And I thought that she'd missed her family.

The young violinist only realized now how right she had been and how wrong at the same time.

"So I can't search for her, can I?"

"She'll return on her own, just as she wrote you in her little letter." Dr. Jone knew about the message in the notebook; Michiru had shown it to him earlier, because she felt that she could trust him.

"But we'll go back to Japan as soon as you release Yaten-chan."

"Then she'll follow you to Japan. Have a little faith in her, Miss Kaioh. Francis obviously cares for you, for all of you."

Michiru nodded thoughtfully, again looking at the picture, seeing the happy little boy and his still concerned older sister, rightly.



"Since Yaten Kou can be released soon on the condition that he takes care of himself and regularly sees a doctor in Japan, I'll be on my Europe vacation starting next Monday. I'll give you my cell phone's number if you need me."

"That's very nice of you." Michiru still didn't look up from the exhausted Francis on the photo. She was so different from the laughing Haruka she got to know, who had become her close friend and something more during the past six months.

"You can keep it, if you want." Bill pointed at the picture. Michiru nodded.

She looks so different from all the other pictures I've taken during our sightseeing trips through America.

"Arigatou."

I don't want her to ever look so sad again.

dbdbdb

Thank you all for your nice, encouraging comments (I'll try to answer your next comments, okay?)d and for your understanding. I guess, to enrol for all those examinations ins part of the whole process of graduating, because it seems more confusing and harder for me than the exams in the end \*drop\*.

However, I have a goal and I will defeat those stupid rules \*muahahahahaha\*.

This is the first part of Chapter 7 "The Moon And The Stars". It'll be subdivided into 4 parts again, because it's again over 70 pages. It's the last chapter (there's only an epilogue to follow and the disclaimer) and maybe one day I'll rewrite it again. Or maybe not. I'm pretty happy with the way it turned out. It's just that I only have time right now to correct spelling and grammar mistakes (if they catch my eye while rereading the story again), whereas I've changed whole passages while doing so with the previous chapters.

Whatever. Read and enjoy ^-^.

April