

Everyone was surprised to see the two young children in black coats as Glacies said, "Hitomi? Kumo?" Zero barked happily at the children as if he was pleased to see them come to save them. Sakura did not pay much attention to them as she kept her game against her female enemy.

Chase asked his apprentice frantically. "Kumo, Hitomi, what are you two doing here?" How could his own apprentice disobey him like that? How could any of them bring themselves into danger like this? The man hoped that their action would not result in them getting hurt or worse.

The neko answered, "Hitomi and I wanted to help you find Etutu. So we wore these black coats to protect us from the Corridor of Darkness."

"Yeah!" Hitomi said. "I remembered that we had these coats in the Land of Departure and also that they protected the wearer from darkness."

"That's really nice of you two, but--" Glacies said before she got hit by some of Sakura's fireballs reflected by Thage during their ongoing fight. The armored girl cried out in pain and fell face down onto the ground. Zephyr cast Cure to heal her up.

As much as Chase did not want the children here, he might as well use their support in battle to make things easier since they were here now. He turned to Thage and said to the others, "Kumo, you and Hitomi will be under Glacies's protection again. Be ready for when that guy recovers from Bind." He pointed to Diablos. "Zephyr, let's you and me help Sakura and go after Thage."

"Right!" the boy obeyed. Then the two males ran at the woman.

Thage saw the boys trying to attack her. Like they could do anything. "Fira!" she cast at the demon girl, trying to aim it correctly. She then flipped backwards as silverette tried to swing his keyblade at her and Zephyr swiping upwards; the lightbladers missed. The woman liked for the fight to have a challenge and she smiled at the thought. Sakura used the blade of the Shadow Heart keyblade to block the fiery spell.

The armored girl pushed herself up off the ground as Kumo looked at her and asked, "Are you okay?"

"Yeah, I'm fine," Glacies replied as she got back on her feet.

Diablos hissed at the girl and younger kids as he said, "So a pair of shrimps decided to throw themselves into the ring, huh? Just wait until I'm free again. I'll show them what fighting's really all about! It ain't fun and games; it's bruises and broken bones! I'll be glad to inflict that on them." He grinned sadistically at the end.

Glacies could tell that the boy was very serious in what he was saying. *'Hurry it up, guys!'* she prayed for Chase, Zephyr and Sakura to finish their fight fast with Thage as she hated for what would happen to Hitomi and Kumo, if she couldn't save them from Diablos.

Zephyr quickly calculated the distance between him & Thage and decided that it was worth it. He dashed forward using Fire Surge to go right through whatever Fire spells Thage sent towards him. His own fire protected him and he hoped there was enough distance between him and the woman for him to reach her before his Fire Surge ended. Chase went ahead and jumped midway before coming down at Thage with a fiery vertical spin as he tried to Heat Storm her. In a frenzy, she rolled out of its trajectory. She also saw the armored boy coming at her, and because she avoided the Heat Storm, it was too late to avoid this. Instead, she turned towards the attack to block the brunt of it head-on. Her arms were then burnt, but that was trivial right now. She could fix them later; right now, she should be focusing on the fight at hand.

The Bind effects wore off and Diablos became mobile again. Glacies tried to cast Fira at him, but the purplette ran out of the way and barely missed getting burned. Then he cast "Zero Gravity!"

Glacies, Kumo and Hitomi all started floating off the ground in an outer space-like way. The neko cried, "Waah, I can't move!"

"Me too," said the armored girl. Hitomi seemed in a much calmer state than the others were.

Diablos leapt at Kumo and smacked him hard on his head with the keyblade. "Oww!" Kumo cried out in pain. Then the ruffian moved onto Glacies and hit her on the stomach, knocking the wind out of her breath and upsetting her stomach. She squeezed her eyes shut and moaned in pain. Diablos went to Hitomi next and tried to hit her, but she did a spin in the air, something that looked like it could be done by a figure skater to dodge the attack.

"Magnera!" Thage cast a few feet behind Zephyr. "This'll keep you busy!" She did not know whether it actually would, but for the sake of those lightbladers, it really needs to. She needed to go back and support LimeX. This fight needs to end soon. Chase and Sakura got drawn into the Magnera spell as well and they started flying around the orb fast. The sight of seeing the dark world around fly really fast would make anyone dizzy, but they tried to keep their focus and be prepared for any attack by Thage or Diablos

Diablos landed away from Hitomi. He turned around threw his Freeze Raid attack at her. Glacies, still recovering from the attack on her abdomen, saw the freezing keyblade coming at her friend and cast, "Reflect!" A beehive-like shield appeared in front of Hitomi and rebound the Freeze Raid attack back at the ruffian. The purplette boy jumped back away from his own keyblade that was flying right towards him before it hit the ground and stayed there like a sword stuck in the dirt. Diablos pulled his keyblade out of the ground and decided to go after the armored girl. He was originally going to attack Hitomi again, but due to the Reflect spell cast by the older apprentice for protection against projectile attacks and her Esuna spell for healing any poisons cast by him, he decided that Glacies was the bigger threat that needed to be taken out first. So Diablos leapt at Glacies and tackled her out of the air onto the ground. The two rolled on the ground for a bit before the boy lift his enemy up on her knees and

attempted to whack her.

But Kumo made his rescue attempt by casting, "Aero!" The winds blew the ruffian off the armored girl and sent him flying past Juliet and into the darkness. The Zero Gravity effect wore off and the children were back on the ground.

Glacies grinned at the small boy as she said, "Thanks, Kumo!"

"You're welcome!" Kumo grinned.

From the obscure shadows of the Realm of Darkness, Diablos leaped out like a panther and grabbed Kumo. The neko screamed and struggled as he tried to get out of the darkblader's clutches. "Kumo!" Glacies cried out.

She was about to cast Thunder at the purplette, but the teenage ruffian threatened, "Don't even try anything or I'll make this a lot worse for the little twerp here!" Diablos was trying to twist Kumo's head around in an attempt to kill him.

"Waah! Let go of me!" Kumo screamed as he tried to turn his head the other way around to resist Diablos's attempt at murder.

Glacies told him, "Leave him alone, he's just a little boy!"

Diablos replied, "Who cares? I can kill whoever I want! And that includes that half-cat freak here!" He did not have any regards for who he kills nor did he have any regrets in doing it.

"Noo!" the armored girl cried out in horror.

Zephyr, Chase and Sakura heard and saw that the youngest apprentice was in danger. Sakura gasped, "We have to save him!" Zero growled and barked angrily at the purplette. He flew down to attack the ruffian and bit down on his arm.

Diablos cried out in pain as his bitten arm let go of the neko. As he tried to shake his arm free, he yelled, "Get off me, mutt!"

The man's protective instincts kicked in and he tried to get to Kumo and Diablos quickly by casting, "Magnera!" The magnetic orb pulled Chase away from Thage's and spun the caster over to direction of his apprentice before Chase dispelled it and kicked away through the air. He smacked his keyblade at Diablos and knocked him off Kumo. "Don't you ever land a hand on Kumo again!" Chase yelled at ruffian angrily. After Zero let go of him, Diablos groaned in pain as he sat on the ground and rubbed the bleeding wound on his head. The man looked at his apprentice in deep concern and asked, "Kumo, are you okay? He didn't hurt you too bad, did he?"

The ghost dog gave comforting licks to Kumo, who answered, "Nope, I'm alright. Thanks for saving me, Master Chase." Though he was a bit shaken from getting attacked. He petted the dog, "You too, Zero."

Glacies went over to them and apologized, "I'm sorry, Chase. I should've done my job better, then he wouldn't almost get killed by that heartless jerk."

The man forgave, "It's alright, Glacies. Just try to keep him near you at all times." Then he looked at Thage, who was attacking the still flying Zephyr and Sakura, and started to charge up his focus energy to get ready to use Meteor Shower on her. It took some seconds to build up until he had enough power to unleash his attack. "Meteor Shower!" Chase cried as he sent out a volley of flying light balls at her. After the disappeared Magnera dropped the bruised teens, the man's spell bombarded Thage, who let out a pained cry and fell to the ground badly hurt. Her skin burned where the magic meteors hit her.

Diablos got up on his feet as his vision was dazed from Chase's powerful attack on his head. Glacies glared at him and murmured, "I'll make sure you pay for threatening Kumo's life. Blizzara!"

The ice spell hit the boy and left some frost on his torso as he cried in pain, "Ack!"

Then Glacies made the next move, "Fira!"

The fireball flew fast at Diablos and burned him in the chest, "Yowch!" The frost that was warmed by the fire spell turned into water and wet his clothes.

For the finishing move of her personal combo, Elemental Trinity, the girl yelled, "Thundera!" The lightning bolt came crashing down on her foe and electrocuted him. The damage was even greater with having wet clothes on him.

Diablos collapsed from the shock that exhausted his body. He whispered, "Damn..."

"Cure," came LimeX's voice as she appeared from the darkness, the spell aimed for her cohorts. Their wounds vanished and they pushed themselves up back up on their feet.

Glacies and Kumo were shocked. The former cried, "LimeX!" Zero growled and barked at her.

The brunette paused and glanced to the children in cloaks for a moment before turning to look at her allies, saying, "We're done here. Our..." She paused and glanced toward Chase before turning back and continuing, "Our employer is aware of the situation and has put a barrier up. No one beside me and you two can get through. We're done here." She opened a Corridor behind both of them. "I am sending you to separate planets this time. Cause trouble and round up as many people as you can. And try not to kill too many. I will go with Diablos to teach him how to make a Corridor of Darkness."

"Sweet!" the purplette said with slanted brows and a grin.

LimeX nodded and continued, "And good job with the fight. We're almost done and then...we'll be finished."

Juliet paused and said, "LimeX... You mean Shade is almost done?"

LimeX turned and glanced to Juliet as her eyes turned into an angry glare, "And what right do you have to say his name?" The blonde apprentice, realizing her mistake, all too late pulled her keyblade out to defend against the Thunder attack as it was about to strike her. She cried out, knowing she would not make it in time and closed her eyes.

Glacies gasped as she feared for the blonde girl while Sakura gritted her teeth and Chase shouted, "Juliet!"

Juliet heard the lightning strike and opened her eyes in surprise as it landed directly next to her, which surprised everyone. She turned her eyes to her mentor, whose eyes were hard and cold. "The more you open your mouth, the more disappointed I am in you, Juliet." She turned back to Thage & Diablos and motioned for them to go. As soon as they were gone, she made her Corridor out and took a step toward it.

As Diablos went to his Corridor, he looked back at Glacies and warned threateningly, "I'll remember this, bitch! I'll make sure you and your gay friends get what they deserve." He clearly was not too happy about the Elemental Trinity done on him.

Thage looked at Juliet with a sad look in her eyes. Apprenticeship was a difficult period of time for anyone; and as such, it comes with a sense of naïveté. She sighed and said, "Juliet, I apologize for what you are going through. Though I may not agree with the course of your actions, it IS your life. Here." She pilfered through her pockets. Soon she found an old keychain. She then walked over to the blonde girl and said, "You remind me of me before I served the Darkness." She handed her the keychain, which was a solid gold with a heart as the pendant. It smelled of fresh air. "This is one of the last remaining pieces of my past. You may use it, if you wish." She then stood. "Take care, Juliet." Thage then went into the dark portal, tears falling from her face as memories flooding back from the old days.

Juliet looked down at the keychain before saying a simple "Thank you." She put it on her keyblade, which changed form to that of a golden color with rubies and diamonds on it. She glanced to the group and made the portal back.

With the darkbladers gone, Chase said, "So Etutu wasn't behind what LimeX was doing. But I still like to find out about her heartless power, because I think it affects me, too."

Sakura looked at him and asked, "What do you mean?"

The silverette explained, "Well when LimeX and I were fused by the X-blade and Etutu injected his darkness into us, he might have given both of us that power to turn people into heartless. I'm not sure, but I want to talk to him and see if my theory is right."

Glacies asked severely, "We're not going to go try and find him now, are we? In case you didn't hear, LimeX and her lackeys are out killing more people. Do we really have to waste time finding Etutu when there are people who need our help? What if my mom's about to be one of the victims?" She took the threat of the darkbladers' massacre attacks seriously.

"I know that," Chase replied. "I meant I was going to find out from him later once we put a stop to them. And we're going after them now. Hitomi, Juliet, one of you create a Corridor of Darkness and take us back to the Realm In-Between." Juliet glanced to the group and made the dark portal back.

Everyone followed the blonde girl into the Corridor and appeared at the world of La Cité des Cloches. The group was standing in front of the Notre Dame Cathedral in a Renaissance French-like town. Glacies gazed around at the whole place with curiosity and asked, "What is this place?"

Kumo answered, "It's the City of Bells, Master Chase's home world!"

Zephyr looked around at the world as he asked Chase, "So this is where you came from?"

"Yes," Chase replied to him. "I come from a noble family here in this world."

Glacies looked at him in surprise, "A nobleman! So that explains the clothes you're wearing right now. I always thought you from a world that's like Radiant Garden because of those other clothes you usually wear, but a nobleman from a renaissance world?! I never knew that!"

Chase grinned in amusement and said, "Sorry for surprising you like that, everyone. But that's the truth; I'm one of the two sons of the duke who resides in this world." He thought of his deceased father and thought glumly, *'Well used to anyway.'*

Sakura was amazed, "Wow, so you much be a future duke then! That's so cool! When are you going to inherit the title?"

The man answered, "Never; my older brother's taking it. Well he's the duke now anyway. Me? I'm just going to live my life as a keyblade master and carry out my important duties."

"Oh, okay," the demon girl replied.

Zephyr thought about the strange creature that LimeX had with her earlier and asked, "Hey uh, this is off topic, but what was that silver thing LimeX had with her?"

Kumo answered, "Ooh, ooh, I know! That was a nobody!"

Glacies misunderstood what neko was trying to say and did not take him seriously as she replied, "Uh-huh! Seriously Kumo, what is it?"

"It's a nobody!" he answered again.

"He's right! It is a nobody!" Hitomi said, her first time speaking in this world. She explained as though it was common knowledge, "When someone with a strong heart gets their heart turned into a heartless, a nobody is formed from the body left over. They technically are not supposed to be."

Zephyr asked the children, "Whoa...sounds...weird. Why aren't nobodies supposed to exist though?" With the description Hitomi just gave them, it did not seem like they were making it up.

Juliet sighed, "Because they lack hearts and aren't of the light, dark or both. Thus, both elements shun them. No matter how real they can seem, they cannot hide the fact that they need something. Something that was taken away from them when the heart became a heartless." She closed her eyes and sighed, "They thirst to be whole...and this drives some of them to do bad deeds. They may think like mortals, but some...are smarter than us all combined..."

Glacies asked, "So what is this something they need?"

"A heart," Kumo answered. "Nobodies are born without hearts. Without them, they can't feel happy or sad or angry."

Sakura voiced her opinion, "That's a pity. I don't get why anyone wants to feel sad or mad, but I guess you can't be happy if you don't have these feelings to go with it."

Chase crossed his arms and looked down as he started to wonder, *'Why do I feel like this is all connected to LimeX?'*

LimeX sneezed and went to check on Thage before checking in on Diablos. The woman was in her mind, trying to sort out the events after the battle. Shortly after she left the Realm of Darkness, she teleported to a different part of the realm. It was a perpetually moonlit beach. She sat down on a rock and thought, *'Roxanne, why did I remember your experiences? I thought we had an agreement.'*

'We do, Thage,' Roxanne replied. *'You chose to give Juliet the keychain of your own will. I had no part in it.'*

'Really. Then why did I start to cry and I'm still crying?'

'Because you saw what I went through. Having a whole life's experiences in just five minutes is a powerful thing; not many people can handle that as well as you did. I congratulate you. Now I expect your boss might want to regroup and see what course of action you all will take next.'

'Right.' Thage opened a Corridor for LimeX to come to her so that they might converse.

The girl walked over to the woman and sat down next to her. For a few moments, she said nothing and just simply looked at the ocean. Opening her mouth, LimeX simply said, "The ending of your adventure with me ends here. You can either join Juliet and her group, or find your own path. But you are not to come with me anymore."

Thage tried to process what the girl was saying. LimeX did not want her anymore? Ridiculous. She had been a help to her, right? The woman sighed; obviously, the girl was wrong. "This is because of the keychain, isn't it? Are we enemies now, then?"

LimeX shook her head. "No. We will never be enemies. But...I cannot have people on my side which I do not want hurt. You are one, Juliet is one...and Chase." She turned her eyes back to the ocean. "This mission...is a suicide one."

"That's what I am here for, LimeX. Diablos and myself; we are expendable. It is what is required. That is what I gave up when I joined the Darkness. My free will." Thage then smiled at her.

LimeX stood and made a Corridor. "Then I am giving you a mission, watch Juliet for me."

'If that's what you want...' Silently, Thage walked over to the Corridor and went into it. LimeX watched her go and then headed to Diablos to see how his work was going.

A mysterious girl walked through the Realm of Light. She looked to be of age 18 and had a worn cloak on that covered her whole body except for her head as she did not have the hood on. Her turquoise eyes had a blank expression on them as she walked. Her long hair was of the same color as her eyes. She stopped suddenly, going through the ground to appear in some Renaissance-like world at the top of what could easily be assumed to be a famous building. Her Corridor of Light appeared right above where she had ended up, making it seem like she melted away from the Realm of Light into this world. The mysterious girl looked down, seeing a group of 7 people below, talking about something. She was not able to hear as she was too high, but it seemed like an important conversation. She started looking around at the people who were passing by, wearing an older style of clothing. It was easy to see that with her plain ragged look she would stand out easily if next to the others. But most of the group of 7 that she saw looked out of this world, too....

Kumo explained, "They can pretend to show their feelings, but they really don't have feelings, because they don't have hearts like we do."

"That's kind of sad," Glacies commented, feeling pity for the Nobodies.

"Yep," Kumo agreed. As Chase listened to the conversation without saying a word, he saw a strange woman on top of the cathedral. But he was not really interested in her, because he just assumed that either she was just an ordinary visitor who just came from another world, or she got stuck here at the wrong time after the Keyblade War ended.

Thage appeared on top of another building, seeing Chase's team. There was also a girl in a cloak that was on Notre Dame. It set something off inside the blonde that she could not quite place. She did not know what she would do now that LimeX had sent her away. She sighed again; she could see LimeX's point of view, but she could not quite understand. In time she might, but not now. Anyway, she had to keep Juliet from harm; her mission from LimeX. She looked at her like a shadow, who was not to be seen, always making sure that the apprentice would never come into harm. *'Pfffffft. A darkblader protecting the light.'* The woman sighed, resigned to her lonely task.

Juliet blinked and her eyes trained directly on the point where Thage was. She frowned in confusion and formed her newest keyblade, glancing at the keychain on it. Her keyblade vanished and she turned to the group. "So where are we heading?"

Chase answered, "I'm going to create a portal to LimeX to see where she's at." Using his heart's desire to find the rogue girl, he created a portal to her.

After all that practicing in one of the Realm In-Between's many worlds, Diablos was finally able to create a Corridor of Darkness. He said to himself, "Yes! I got it now! Heh heh, wait until LimeX sees this." He was proud of his accomplishment.

LimeX appeared near him and asked, "So how many people have you rounded up?"

Diablos looked at the scared and confused people he floated up with the Zero Gravity spell, smirking, "Twenty-five!"

The girl nodded and smiled before she leapt to each person and stabbed their chests to transform them into Heartless. She frowned when none of them produced a Nobody. She turned to the boy and asked, "Now how much do you know about portals? Show me what you can do."

Diablos created a Corridor of Darkness in front of them and answered, "Everything I know."

LimeX gazed at the corridor and mused for a moment. "For one thing, you're forcing your power into it, lower the flow and use the bare minimum, but keep it steady and consistent." She paused and made her own, "And try and keep it from wavering, only make it as bit as you need it." She motioned for him to try again.

"Fine, here," said the boy, frowning that he did not succeed in creating a perfect Corridor the first time. He did as he was instructed and did it right this time.

The girl nodded, satisfied with how the dark portal looked. She then told him, "Find a hiding spot, I've got an ambush to do."

"Sure whatever," said Diablos before he went to hide at the side of a house.

LimeX's eyes fell upon the Heartless and she ordered, "You too as well." The Neoshadows, Earth Cores and the couple of Invisibles all went into their own places to take cover. Then she saw a portal suddenly appearing in front of her with an image of Chase at the City of Bells. Having been found again, she looked at the man for a bit before she turned and headed away.

Chase's portal showed LimeX standing in front of it with her front side up close. Glacies pointed out, "Look! There she is!" Zero barked at the image of the brunette.

The man wondered curiously, *'That's her alright! I've finally found LimeX, but... Why does she look guilty?'* Putting the question aside for now, he told the others, "Come on, guys. Let's go."

Sakura eagerly cried, "Alright, it's time to kick some butt!" Then everybody went through the portal as Chase dashed towards LimeX, swinging his keyblade at her in an attempt to stop her and capture her. But the attack missed as the brunette vanished into another portal. He cursed, "Drat! I almost had her."

LimeX appeared next to Diablos and said, "Attack..."

Diablos looked to where the Heartless were and said, "Alright, you freaks, let's get them!" Then they jumped out of hiding and dashed at the team to attack.

The team summoned their keyblades and got ready to fight their surrounding enemies. Chase said with bared teeth, "Ah crap, they've made more Heartless!"

"I hate them," Sakura murmured bitterly. Zero yipped and whined, floating up high into the air as he was afraid of the black monsters.

Glacies said worriedly, "Ahh, there's so many of them and they all look so strong." She wondered how they were going to take them all on at once.

Kumo asked frantically, "Master Chase, what do we do?!"

Chase thought up a strategy and said, "Let's all stay close to each other, back-to-back. Kumo, Hitomi, Bind and Slow as many of them as you can. Glacies, use Reflect whenever we have a spell coming at us. And we'll keep attacking whenever they get too close to us." He left Juliet out of his list of commands due to her having not being helpful in their previous battles. In fact, she had not attempted to fight their enemies at all since the battle back at Dusk Meadow. She must have been way too hesitant to attack her mentor. The man had no time to think about this as he needed to focus on the fight immediately. When Diablos and the Heartless were near them, the man said, "Get ready!" The Heartless and the ruffian started to attack. LimeX stood on the roof, watching it impassively. If she got them to retreat, then maybe she could finish her job. She pulled out her keyblade and gazed at it. Raising it upward in her typical position of calling lightning, she paused and gazed at it. This move would decide her position, her choice and her side. But what should she do? She stood there in deep thought amidst the chaos of battle.