

Glacies arrived at Radiant Garden and walked through the gate to enter the town. As she walked, she had Christmas on her mind and thought, *'I still need to find some gifts for Chase and Juliet. I just found out today that Chase was from a noble family, so he's probably bound to like really fancy stuff like golden items adorned with gems, a shiny beautiful shield, or a Mona Lisa. Hmm, I don't really know what people like him like. I wonder if mom or Master Leohart can help me out on this one.'* She went through the streets on her way to Leohart's castle. She did not get too far as the cold crisp air and movements she made irritated her burns, making her wince often. The travel back to her world from the Lanes Between have also been like that for her. Having to walk for long to the castle like this was going to be a problem. Glacies felt she needed to take care of that soon. When she found the nearest pharmacy on her path, the girl went inside and purchased a potion with the very little money she had. She applied the contents to her burns and healed most of them up. She was going to have to bear with the few remaining wounds she had for the time being until someone healed her. At least she could walk better than she did. After a while, the girl finally reached the castle and went inside through the double doors. She went looking for her keyblade master until she finally found him in his office. She greeted, "Hi, Master Leohart! Sorry, Zephyr, Hitomi, and I didn't get to do our lessons today. We just had another LimeX problem."

Master Leohart looked up at her, "That is all right, LimeX was doing harm to the worlds out there."

"Anyway, we saw you with the crowd this morning and overheard them talking about having keyblades banned in Radiant Garden. What's going on? What's everybody's problems with keyblades?"

"Ah, yes... The rebellion. People are enraged about what happened at the Keyblade Sanctuary and how so many people died. And also right after that, LimeX almost destroyed the town using her keyblade. It would make sense for the people to start hating keyblades and think they only cause pain, but they're overlooking the good in keyblades."

Glacies asked, "Yes, keyblades have been used as weapons for a very long time. But they also have some good traits to them as well like healing magic and opening up doors. So how are they going to live without keyblades if they're banned?"

Leohart answered, "That I do not know. But as the generations go on, it will just get easier and easier for them to shun keyblade users."

The girl frowned, "Well that's not good! If the next generation of apprentices are going to be shunned, how are they supposed to protect the balance of light and darkness without being persecuted? We have to try and do something about this!" Suddenly, a portal appeared behind her and Zephyr came bursting out from it. Hitomi followed out after then. Glacies said their names, "Zephyr! Hitomi!"

Chase and Kumo came out shortly after. Then came Sakura, Zero, Juliet and finally, LimeX in her new clothes. Chase said, "Glacies, you're alright!" Then he looked at the burns on her and asked, "What happened to you? Did Diablos do this to you?"

The bluenette answered, "No, we were fighting each other when suddenly a beam of light came at us. I was unconscious for a while until I found myself at the Lanes Between and walked back here to my home world."

Zephyr asked, "A beam of light..? Was that strange girl there? Kumo and Hitomi said she was filled with light."

Glacies answered, "I don't know. I don't think either of us saw her."

"What girl?" Leohart asked them.

Glacies used the memories she recalled of the woman and answered, "She had long bluish-green hair with eyes matching the same color and she was wearing white clothes. I think she said her name was Light."

Zephyr added, "Yeah, but right after she said her name was Light, she said right after that it wasn't Light."

Leohart asked in wonder, "I have never come across someone like you have described... Would she be one of the 7 princesses that were formed?"

"No," Hitomi stated. "The 7 Princesses of Heart have hearts of pure light, but this girl seems possessed by it."

Glacies was perplexed at what she heard. "Light possessing a person? I've never heard of such a thing like that."

Chase said, "Neither have I, but light isn't always good as it usually is. Sometimes it may have malevolent purposes. But that girl we're talking about, we're not sure what kind of goals the light within her wants or if it's good or evil."

"I know what kind of light it is," Kumo said as he spoke like a kid raising his hand in class and blurting out the answer to the question. Everybody turned their heads to look at him and he answered, "It's a bad one!"

"How bad is it?" the silverette asked the question to not just his apprentice, whom he was looking at, but also to Hitomi.

After a bit of thought and careful wording, Hitomi said, "Well... It really depends on what her motives are. And that's something we can't tell merely by sensing, but it is indeed a bad light..." It sounded as if she did not completely agree with her statement.

Glacies brought her curved finger to her lip and started pondering her thoughts about this. "I wonder what her motives could be."

Chase looked at Hitomi and said, "Sounds like you're not so sure yourself. I guess this must be a new thing for you."

The little girl explained, trying to put two and two together, "Well...she emits light into all the worlds she goes to just by standing there... Light is emanating off of her and seeping into the worlds she goes to... So... Even if she's not doing anything wrong in a world and stays there for an hour, even that could potentially upset the balance..."

Chase said, "So the longer she stays in a world, the more unbalanced the world will be." Then a realization hit him and he said, "Wait, we all saw her at the that world where we fought the heartless, didn't we? If she was there longer than we were, then that means the world could be in danger." Then he created a portal and told everyone, "I'm going to a short investigation there. I'll be back." Then he went into the portal to check that world to see what kind of damage had been done.

After the portal closed itself, Hitomi asked, "Maybe I should have said the balance would be too subtle to tell right now?"

Ilem raised a brow at her and asked, "What the heck?" How did someone so young know this much about the light?

Hitomi continued, "The balance might have been disrupted but... It didn't seem like it was a significant enough of a change when we left..."

Zephyr asked, "So... He just went off for nothing basically?" The little girl nodded to answer his question.

"So then that world is still safe then," Glacies said. Then she looked to Hitomi and asked, "So what do you think we should do with her? You know? That 'Light' girl?"

Kumo responded urgently, "We have to stop her, she's disrupting the balance of light and darkness!"

The bluenette asked, "Okay, but where are we going to find her? She could be anywhere."

Chase appeared at the same place where his team fought LimeX, Diablos and the Heartless. He went around to check for any damages done to this world. It looks like everything seems to be fine within the few minutes he came here. He thought, *'This part of town seems to be fine. I do feel a little bit of light, but no damage done here. I wonder if the rest of this world is doing okay, too.'* After checking up on some more of the world, Chase saw that everything was still okay as it normally was. *'Looks like she*

didn't do too much damage for now. Time to get back to the others.' Then he went through the created portal back into Radiant Garden.

"That...is the challenge of this..." Hitomi said. "One cannot grow if they do not overcome challenges."

Glacies asked, "So you're saying that this is another step to becoming a keyblade master?"

The child replied, "It might not necessarily be a step in becoming a keyblade master; but even if it isn't, your experience may help you."

"Okay, I understand," Glacies said.

Then suddenly, a portal appeared in Leohart's room and out came Chase. He said, "I'm back, guys. It looks like that world is still safe for now."

"Well that's good," Ilem said. "Because that place was never in any danger in the first place, you worrywart."

Chase looked at her bewildered and asked, "What do you mean?" Did Hitomi not say that the longer Light stayed in a world, the more disrupted it would be?

Glacies answered for him, "Well Hitomi said that the balance in that world was too subtle to tell right now, so we all assumed that it's still fine."

The silverette frowned, "That still doesn't sound like the world is safe. It might become a big problem later."

Sakura smiled cheering, "Maybe so, but we have all the time to check back on it. So let's just listen to what Hitomi is saying, so that we get ready for this later."

Zephyr asked, "So what are we going to do to try and stop her then? You saw what happened last time we met her; she kept disappearing in those Corridors of Light!" He wondered what they were going to do to stop Light. "What if she also has reinforcements or back up that are helping her?"

Chase agreed, "Right, we can't try to chase her down like tried with LimeX. We'll just end up exhausting ourselves and she'll keep getting away." The only reason LimeX's destructive activities stopped was because she sacrificed herself for Ilem, not by trying to catch her.

Glacies asked, "So how do we stop her then? Any good ideas?"

Chase answered, "I don't know, but I'm thinking about setting up a trap so that we could catch her off guard before she escapes. As for any possible reinforcements, I'll be trying to come up with ideas on how to deal with them. I may need some time to think. So for now, you all can just take a break and have fun, while Ilem and I go back to the Land of Departure and start plotting up some plans. Kumo, you can stay here with the others and play with them if you want."

"Ilem?" asked Glacies, wondering who that was.

"That's me," Ilem said, pointing a thumb at herself.

Zephyr explained to his confused friend, "That's not LimeX, Glace. She's another person."

At the same time, the little neko child looked up at his mentor with eyes wide with excitement and asked, "Really? I can hang out?"

His mentor smiled, "Of course, I'm giving you a break. Children like you need to have a lot of fun and be kids, not spend all their time working or fighting. It's bad for the developing mind. I'll be picking you up at Leohart's castle at nine." He looked to the older man asked, "You don't mind that, right Master Leohart?"

"Not at all," Leohart replied. "You'll need somewhere familiar to meet him at."

"Thanks," the silverette appreciated. To his apprentice, he said, "Have fun while we're gone, okay?" Then he created a portal to the Land of Departure and went there with Ilem.

Glacies looked at everyone and said, "So does anybody want to go Christmas shopping or what?"

"I do!" Kumo said with enthusiasm. He was going to see what was in stores and write a Christmas list to Santa telling him what he wanted.

"Me too," Sakura beamed eagerly.

"Sure! Let's go!" Zephyr said, also excited. He still did not start his Christmas shopping at all, but he did not really have much to buy. Something for Glacies, Kumo, Hitomi, Leohart and maybe Sakura, too. Hitomi did not reply, but she looked ready to go to out somewhere.

Glacies looked to Juliet and asked, "What about you, Juliet? Want to come with us?"

The blonde girl scowled at them, "No thanks, I don't hang out with lightbladers. Go buy a dumb teddy bear and leave me alone." She walked off and left the group for parts unknown, not caring what they had to say to her attitude.

Everyone was taken aback by Juliet's hostility. Sakura narrowed her eyes at her, "Geez, who put a stick up her butt?" Juliet's outburst was quite unexpected.

The bluenette human said, "I don't know." They put the rude girl off their minds and left the castle to go out into the square.

Chase and Ilem walked out the portal and entered the throne room of the Land of Departure's castle. The woman looked around at the unfamiliar surroundings, taking in the gold, teal and white colors of the walls and archs of this place. As the portal closed itself, Chase turned to her and said, "Welcome to the Land of Departure, Ilem. This is our new home from now on."

Ilem turned to him in confusion and asked, "New home? What do you mean? Our place is at the Keyblade Temple."

"Yeah, about that," the man started to say. "We don't have a temple to guard anymore."

"What?!" cried the surprised woman. "What do you mean?" Just what the heck happened while she was dead?

Chase kept silent for a moment as he braced himself, knowing what he was about to say would upset his lover. Once he was ready for whatever happened, he started to explain, "Etutu went there in the form of a man and tried to take the scroll." He summarized how he was fighting alone at that time and that the fight ended in the dark god's favor. It then led to Etutu manipulating the whole planet into fighting a Keyblade War. Chase and LimeX had to team up with some allies, which were most of whom Ilem just saw today, against Etutu. At the end, Bihai and Konan perished, but not without telling them of their new job. The worlds have been separated so that there would be no more Keyblade Wars.

Ilem listened to all that as she was shocked by some of the events mentioned. After the man was done speaking, she quickly became angry as her clenched fist shook. Immediately, her open hand flew into his face with the speed of a horsefly. The impact hurt Chase's cheek like the crack of a whip and he let out a pained cry in response. The woman chided him, "Chase, you idiot! You should've called LimeX for help! Then we wouldn't be in this mess."

The man rubbed his burning cheek as he felt he deserved that for his carelessness. He winced and blamed himself, "I know; I got too cocky for my own good." It was one of his flaws he never fully got over. Despite having been taught by Master Bihai to never underestimate the opponent, his confidence would at certain times rear its head into the fight. Chase continued, "Anyway, I did try to do that, but Etutu stopped me. I'm sorry, Ilem; I screwed up big time."

The woman responded, "Damn right, you did! And now we have more than one place to protect: the

WHOLE universe!" Her arms were stretched out wide for emphasis. She questioned sternly, "Do you think two people can handle this mess, Chase?"

"No," Chase replied certainly. "Which is why we'll be training some apprentices in our lifetimes to get more help in watching over the Realm In Between. I've already started with Kumo, Master Bihai's reincarnation."

Ilem raised an eyebrow like it was a strange thing she heard. "Reincarnation?"

"It's a long story." It was something Chase would tell her about later when he gets the chance. "Anyway, Hitomi, Konan's reincarnation, is being trained by Zephyr & Glacies's master. They'll be helping us out with our duties, too. And LimeX was training Juliet, but it looks like you'll will have to teach her instead." Someone had to; after all, he was not sure how much Juliet was taught.

The woman sighed at the thought of their dead friend, "Yeah, I will." She looked off to the side in melancholy and said, "I'm going to miss her, Chase. I just wished she didn't have to throw away her life for me."

The man shared her sentiment, knowing how this affected them both. He murmured, "We're all going to miss her, Ilem. We're all are." His lover began to cry and sob as she hugged onto him. Chase also shed tears of his own, thinking, *'This is not how I wanted you to go out, LimeX. You should be here with us, helping me get Ilem up to date and discussing our plans to stop that light woman.'*

A girl had been sleeping for some time until her consciousness started to kick in. All she could see right now was darkness that was quickly illuminated by a bit of light that managed to get through her eyelids. The girl felt the urge to wake up and open her eyes, but her body decided it was better to wait a few more minutes to rest before she was ready. Once that time came, she opened her eyes to a place that was different from the last one she was in before she had met her end. *'Where am I?'* she wondered. Her mind took its time to process the place she was seeing as she recognized the familiar debris of the ruins belonging to a certain temple she knew. She thought, *'This is...the Keyblade Temple.'* The girl was surprised when she found out where she was. She was also surprised by how seemingly real her perception was. Was this just a dream? A memory? Heaven? She wondered if it was possible that she was still alive. From what she recalled before her apparent death, Shade pierced her chest to release Ilem's heart. The killing should have erased her from existence back then, but it looks like it did not. Maybe Shade lied to psyche her out? No, that couldn't be it. He seemed to believe his own words, unless he was a good liar. Whatever the case, LimeX decided to deem herself as still alive in the flesh for now. She could rejoin Chase now and see if Ilem had returned like she was promised. But when she got there, would her friend be very welcoming? Ilem must have heard about the sacrifices LimeX did for her. But still, she had to be sure that the brunette was alive. LimeX created a portal to wherever her brother is and went in through it.

After their shared brief moment of grief, Chase decided it was time to get back to the business at hand. He said, "Anyway, we need to start focusing on our plan to deal with Light and whatever allies she has, if she has any."

Ilem replied surely, "I don't think we need any plan for that. We can just catch her friends the same way we do her."

Chase agreed with a slight nod, "That could work. We just need to defeat the ones that haven't been trapped quickly before they can their pals can escape. I can even throw in a Sleep spell to prevent them from escaping through their portals and Corridors." He held onto his chin in thought and continued, "But there is always a chance they could have protective wear to prevent magical inflictions. We just need to figure out how to get around that." A Magnera could probably suffice and induce dizziness if the enemy was too weak to stand being flung around. But if they could handle that, then spells and shotlocks should be used as long as they were airborne under the spell's control.

Suddenly, they heard a girl's voice saying, "Cooking up a scheme without me, guys? You could use another brain in this."

The pair were taken by surprised at the familiarity of the voice. Ilem let out a gasp as the man cried, "Wait! It can't be..."

They saw a portal in front of them and saw a certain someone, who was thought dead, coming out of it. But this time, she looked different aside from the clothes she wore. LimeX was in her original and true form consisting of silver hair, green eyes, and white skin, all of which were the trait of Chase's family. "Oh, but it is," she replied. Smiling at them, she greeted, "Hello again, guys."

"LimeX!" Chase exclaimed as he and his lover were both overjoyed at his sister's revival.

Ilem rushed over to her friend and gave her a warm hug. She beamed, "Oh LimeX, I'm super-duper happy to have you back, girl! Don't you ever throw your life away for me again!"

The girl let out a small laugh and responded, "No promises."

The woman let of her, looked her in the eyes and demanded, "You better! You had no idea how much you made us sad like that."

"I'm sorry," LimeX replied, understanding what her death had put them through. She also looked down in shame, expecting a rant next about all the crimes she's committed for her friend's sake.

Ilem took notice of the sad look and asked, "LimeX? Is something wrong?"

The girl looked up at her in confusion, asking, "You don't know? Did Chase ever tell you?" She thought he might have done so by now.

Ilem replies, "Tell me what?" She turned her head to Chase and asked him, "Chase, what is she trying to tell me?"

The man was hesitant to answer her, knowing she would be angry if she found out that LimeX did terrible things in order to get her back. He did not need a thorn in their cooperation right as they needed to be close together to work and take down the enemy. He asked his sister, "LimeX, should I tell her?"

The sister shook her head, declining, "No, I'll do it." She looked at Ilem right in the brown eyes and braced herself for her outrage. Confronting someone with this dark truth was going to put a stain on their friendship and that was something LimeX was going to have to brave through. She proceeded to tell her friend the truth about how she had to make a deal with a replica named Shade. She had to turn people into heartless to get their nobodies to be used for a ritual to turn himself into a real person. To do that, she had to burn down a lot of buildings to get lots of people to run out, so that she could unlock their hearts and transform them.

Naturally as predicted, Ilem was horrified after hearing all that. This was what it took to bring her back? Turning to her love, she asked, "Chase, is she serious?!"

Chase hated to admit it, knowing this would cause trouble, but... "It's true," he confirmed regretfully. "She even killed a lot of people at Dusk Meadow, too. I just don't know why though." That part was counterproductive to what Shade had wanted LimeX to do; not to mention, it was uncharacteristic of his sister to murder innocents.

LimeX corrected him, "That wasn't me; it was Shade. He destroyed that place so that he would motivate you into going after me, which would be a test to see if you would learn the truth of all this when I said you would." Chase was relieved to learn that his sister was not a mass murderer. That eased his mind a bit, but he was still worried about the outrage from Ilem, which started now.

The appalled woman yelled, "I... I can't believe all that, LimeX. Did you even try to find another way besides working for some shady, worthless loser?"

The girl had flinched under her friend's anger before explaining, "I was about to, but Shade told me that this was the only way. He was the one who held all of Chase's and my memories of you and us. If he were to vanish, then we would lose those memories forever."

Ilem yelled, "So you didn't know anything about me and yet you worked with him? That was horrible,

LimeX! I'd rather be dead and forgotten than to have all these things done for me." She shook her head in disbelief and continued, "You know what? I can't even stand to look at you right now. Just get out of my sight!"

LimeX looked down sadly, quietly accepting the blame and said, "Very well; I'll go now." She turned and created a portal to whatever random world it would take her to.

Chase tried to stop her as he took a step with his arm reaching out to her. "LimeX, wait!" he called. She just got here and said that she would help them out with strategy. He did not want to see her go so soon after she got back from the dead.

The girl shook her head, "No, Chase. Ilem's right; I don't deserve to be around her after everything I did. Please leave me be." Then she left through the portal and went out of their sight.

"LimeX..." Chase murmured his sister's name as he was sad to see her leave. No one could blame Ilem's backlash to LimeX's actions, but he wished the discovery would happen at a better time.

Ilem huffed, "Forget about her, Chase. Let's get back to what we should do about Light, okay?"

The man turned back to her and replied, "Yeah, let's." He still felt pity for his sister, whom they could talk about later. The strategy discussion would take their minds off the tension and hopefully, heal their emotional wounds with time.

Zephyr and his friends looked at the many shops in town. There were beauty shops, clothing stores, retail, book stores, and candy stores. Glacies asked, "So where do you guys want to head to?" she asked.

Kumo excitedly said, "I want to go over to the toy store over there!" He pointed to the toy shop, 'All for Fun and Fun for All'.

Glacies reminded him, "Now Kumo, we're here to buy things for others, not for ourselves. But I guess we'll go there anyway." Then she thought, *'Since Zephyr, Sakura, Hitomi, and you might buy some things for each other.'* She did not say it aloud, because if she did, then Kumo may bug poor the poor teens into buying something he wanted, even if it was something Glacies already got him. Christmas was usually supposed to give surprise gifts to beloved people and she did not want to spoil surprises for the neko boy.

They went into the toy store and Kumo went over to the action figure section where he found a wooden alligator warrior toy that was colored by paint. He pointed to it and said, "Ooh, I want that one!"

The human teen placed her hands at her hips and told him sternly, "Kumo!"

Remembering what Glacies had said about not buying gifts for themselves and only for others, the neko turned away from the anthro toy and said, "Sorry."

As Zero curiously looked at the various toys, Sakura suggested to the boy with a friendly smile, "Why don't you look for something for Hitomi here? I bet she'll like what you get for her."

"Yes Sakura," Kumo replied before he ran off to the toys for girls' section. Zephyr wandered off on his own deeper into the store, looking at all of the different toys they had. He was trying to think of something that he could get for Kumo, but also something that would make the little boy share it with other people. He was not looking for a stick horse or some puppet. He looked at the shelves and eventually reached an aisle that was loaded with jigsaw puzzles. He looked at the variety they had, eventually picking out one that had a family of polar bears on it.

Hitomi decided to stick with Glacies and Sakura. She was not really able to see any of the toys. If she were to just wander off on her own, she would just get lost. Thus, she decided to stay with the older girls. Glacies looked at Hitomi and said, "Come on, Hitomi. Let's see if we can help you find something for Kumo." Then she took the little girl's hand and walked with her to the boys' section. She looked at the alligator warrior toy that the neko had seen and asked, "Hey, how about that alligator toy that Kumo tried to get? Do you want to buy that for him?"

Facing the shelf, Hitomi answered, "Yeah, we can get that for him."

Sakura picked up a painted wooden boat toy and smiled at it, saying, "I bet Kumo's going to like this one." Zero stared at the toy with fondness.

"I'm sure he will," Glacies replied confidently. This could certainly complement the toy train she would give to the boy. "By the way, my mom makes these."

The demon looked at her with an amazed expression. "Wow! Really? That's so cool! Is she a toy maker?"

The human teen nodded, confirming, "Yes she is, and she owns this very shop."

"Amazing!" Sakura beamed. "I bet if Sandy Claws was hiring right now, he'd take her."

Glacies giggled, feeling flattered. "Not sure if my mom can handle working all day long for Christmas. But hey, it'd be pretty awesome if she did."

Sakura nodded, "It would be. You'd be known as that girl who has a mom working for Santa and kids would be running up to her, bugging her about what they want for Christmas." She imitated a variety of children's voices, "Hey lady, can you make me teddy bear for Christmas? I want a dolly for Christmas. Hi miss, for Christmas I want a yo-yo."

The other girl smiled in humor, "Oh boy, sounds like she's gonna have to keep a low profile during the holidays."

"Yep!" the demon replied certainly. The teens laughed together at the thought of Amelia trying to avoid getting bombarded by the desires and wishes of wanting children.

Meanwhile, Kumo was looking at the female dolls that had various clothes on them. Some of them wear in fashionable outfits, fairy clothes, princess dresses, maid outfits and chef clothes. There were doll houses as well along with clothes for the dolls, ponies, stuff animals, and... Kumo noticed a toy tea set in a box and went over to it. The box contained cups, plates and pot were all white with pink butterfly patterns on them. The tops and interiors were also pink. The boy was now confident on his choice on what to get Hitomi for Christmas. He took the box with the tea set in it and left the girls section as he went to look for Glacies. He called, "Glacies, I found something for Hitomi!"

The girls went out of the boys' section and the human teen asked, "What is it, Kumo?"

The neko went to her and showed the box. He said, "I'm getting this for Hitomi. It's a tea set for her so that she can have tea parties!"

Glacies looked to the blind girl and asked, "So what do you think, Hitomi? Do you want the tea set?" Not every toy in this shop were made by the Gallimores. Her mother had also ordered some from craftsmen and toy factories to add to her stock.

The little girl decided, "It seems nice." She was able to tell what it was what through touch.

Zephyr bought the puzzle from Amelia, who he greeted at the cashier counter, before he regrouped with everyone, not wanting Kumo to see it. He went back to where everyone was standing. Holding up the bag, he told the group, "Got a present for Kumo!" The neko boy turned around with an excited smile. "But no peeking!"

"Aww," Kumo sighed.

An amused Sakura grinned, "You have to wait until Christmas, Kumo. It wouldn't really be a surprise if you knew what it is now, would it?"

"I guess not," replied the neko.

Glacies asked the demon, "So Sakura, any idea on what you're getting Hitomi?"

Sakura responded, "I'll just give her something from my world. She does seem to have my tastes after all."

"Good idea," Glacies commented. "Come on, let's go see my mom and pay for these. Kumo, Hitomi, you both wait here. We'll be back soon."

"Okay!" said the neko, while Hitomi silently gave a nod.

Then the teens and the ghost dog went to the cash registry to pay for the toys. As they walked, Sakura asked the blonde, "So what did you get Kumo, Zephyr? I don't worry, I won't tell."

The boy took the box out of the bag to show them. He said, "I got him this."

Everyone smiled at it as Glacies commented, "Nice jigsaw puzzles you picked up, Zephyr. I'm sure Kumo would love it. It looks beautiful!" She admired the wonderfully painted picture of the polar bears with their furs looking realistic and sleek clashing against the star-spotted dark blue sky gradually turning black as her eyes looked up.

Zephyr explained his reason for this, "I got it for him since it will be a good lesson for him on sharing and getting help. It's a bit too difficult for a kid his age to do on their own; but with help, he can contribute still sufficiently."

Glacies admired his brilliant idea, "Aw, how smart and thoughtful of you. I'm sure this would strengthen the bond between him and Chase. Maybe even Ilem would help, too." She could see it, the two or three of them enjoying putting pieces of jigsaw puzzles together. Kumo would ask one of the former temple guards if they had a puzzle piece to fit and they would put it in for him.

The blonde said, "Yeah, that's why it's the perfect gift for him."

Then Sakura thought about Hitomi, the one she had yet to hear Zephyr get a gift for. She asked him, "I think that's great, too. Now what about Hitomi? You can't have forgotten to get her something, right?" The young child was one of their friends and fellow apprentices; surely the boy bought a gift for her as well.

Zephyr answered, "I didn't get anything for Hitomi yet.... I think I want to get her a pocket mirror for her to keep with her... She can't see, but mirrors see the eyes and some say the eyes are windows to the soul. She sees the levels of light and darkness in peoples' hearts, which is basically the same thing."

Glacies was a bit surprised to hear that her friend knows about Hitomi's blindness as well. She had not told him about it yet, but he seemed to have figured this out on his own for some time. She said, "I guess that might come in handy someday. We can go get it at a fashion store later." They reached the cashier counter and saw Amelia coming back from the storage room just in time to see her customers. "Hi mom!" the human girl greeted her mother.

The light-blue-haired woman looked at the group, whom she was surprised and delighted to see, and greeted, "Glacies, you're here, too!" Then she noticed the ghost dog floating by them. She frowned unhappily, "Is that a dog? Glacies, you know we don't allow pets in here."

Sakura rest assured her, "Don't worry, lady. Zero's a ghost; he won't be leaving any kind of messes in this store."

The woman relaxed, "Well that's a relief, I suppose." Then she smiled at the demon, asking, "So, are you Glacies's new friend?"

Sakura grinned with a toothy smile, confirming, "Yep, you bet I am! I'm Sakura! It's nice to meet you, Miss uh..."

Amelia finished for her, "Mrs. Gallimore, that's my name." She stared at the demon's dagger-like canines and commented, "My, your teeth look sharp. What are you?"

Sakura happily answered with a hand over her heart and her other arm held out straight to the side, "Why I'm a demon, Mrs. Gallimore." The moment the woman's eyes went wide in shock as she stepped back, the demon quickly assured, "Don't worry, I'm one of the good ones. I don't eat souls or any crazy stuff like that."

Amelia placed a hand over her chest and breathed out a sigh of relief. "Well, that's a relief. I almost nearly hit you with my keyblade."

Sakura was astonished with eyes going wide as mandarins. She gasped, "Woo, yikes! Thanks for not doing that, miss." She did not want to get whacked on the head by someone else.

"You're welcome," the woman replied friendly. "Sorry for scaring you like that."

The demon forgave, "No, no, it's alright. I get that sometimes when I'm not in Halloween Town. It's no big deal." The frightened reactions she would sometimes receive were quite understandable as some demons have been very malevolent to the other mortal races they preyed upon. Such demons gave their race were what gave their race a bad name. Having grown quite used to people's initial fears, they did not bother her at all.

"Well okay then," Amelia said. Looking at the goods they have, she asked, "So do you all have everything you want to buy?"

Zephyr confirmed, "Of course we do, Mrs. Gallimore. I already bought the puzzle, so I'll just pay for the other stuff." The girls put their carried toys on the counter.

"Okey-dokey!" Amelia wrote down the calculations of the toys on a small notepad and told them, "And

your total will be 300 munny." Zephyr took out his cash and gave it to the woman.

Glacies told her, "Put them in different bags, mom. They're Christmas gifts by different people."

"Okay," her mother complied. She put each other in separate bags, so that Glacies will give two of them to the children. Sakura took the bag with the toy boat.

The daughter told her mother, "By the way, I have another friend here I would like you to meet. I'll bring him over here." Now that the surprise gifts were hidden, it was safe to bring the children over here.

Amelia looked on in interest, "Ooh, I wonder who it could be."

Glacies went on back to her youngest friends and told them, "Hitomi, Kumo, we're going to see my mom now. Be sure to say 'hi' to her when we get there."

"Okay, Glacies," said Kumo.

Then they walked on back to the counter, where Amelia saw the little girl, "Oh, it looks like Hitomi's here, too. Hello Hitomi!"

"Hello," the little girl simply replied.

Turning her head to the neko, the woman asked, "And who's this little one here? He looks cute!"

Glacies smiled and answered, "That's exactly what I thought when I first saw him. This is our friend, Kumo."

Kumo waved at the mother with a big grin on his face as he greeted, "Hi!"

The woman greeted him with a friendly smile, beaming, "Why hello, Kumo, it's so nice to meet you." She said to her daughter, "I take it you're babysitting for someone?"

"Sort of," Glacies answered. "We're actually just doing a bit of Christmas shopping. Thought we'd get that out of the way, so that we don't forget to give each other gifts later."

Amelia smiled, "How thoughtful of you, kids. I hope you all like the gifts you get for each other."

"I'm sure we will," Zephyr said surely. "Even if it's not something I wanted, I'll appreciate the thought anyway."

"Me too," Sakura spoke. "Because love is the best gift of all!" She did not really need gifts anyway. Just being around friends or knowing they cared for her was enough for her.

"I agree!" Amelia concurred. "It's not a real holiday if it was only there for commercialism. That's why we have friendship and family as another part of Christmas, too. Bonds are way more important than any toy in the world you can give."

The demon beamed, "That's why I'll be spending lots of time with Jack and all my friends in my world." She looked at the apprentices and told them, "You guys can hang out with us too, if you want."

"Cool!" Kumo shouted eagerly.

Zephyr promised, "I'll keep that in mind." This was a nice offer in case his parents somehow did not come home for the holidays. At least he would have someone else to spend Christmas with, besides Glacies and Hitomi.

Glacies smiled, "I bet we'll have lots of fun." She wondered what Halloween Town's version of Christmas would be like. It was probably dead Christmas trees and wreaths with creepy-sounding bells, spooky snowmen and other stuff like that. Hopefully, it would be nothing too unnerving.

Amelia said to her daughter, "Speaking of which; Glacies, we're going to be visiting your grandparents and then we'll be seeing your Uncle Hank and Aunt Jodie." The grandparents were Amelia's parents, they were a kindly old couple whom Glacies was fond of. Uncle Hank, Joseph's brother, and Aunt Jodie along with two of their children were also fine people, but the other child was someone the bluenette girl did not like.

Glacies frowned, "Aw, but that means I'll be visiting Polly, too."

The mother cooed understandably, "I know you don't like your cousin, Glacies. But she is still family, so please try to get along with her, alright?"

The daughter sighed, "I'll see if I can." It was easier said than done, considering Polly's antagonist nature towards her.

"I hope you will," the mother said. Then a man and his son came with a toy to purchase. They stood behind the friends and waited for them to leave, so that they can buy the toy. Amelia noticed the pair and said, "Oh, it looks like I got a customer to take care of." The group glanced behind to see the family. As they moved out of the man's way, the mother said to them, "Anyway, I hope you all have a wonderful day and that you get everything you need for Christmas."

"We will, mom!" Glacies replied.

Zephyr said, "Take care, Mrs. Gallimore!" After everyone shared farewells with the woman, they exited the toy store and went to look for another shop to see if they can find gifts for the rest of their friends.

A hole opened in the middle of a courtyard. That hole emanated darkness. Out stepped Valer, an 18-year-old man with short, spiky black hair and emerald green eyes. He wore a black garb with a red cape. His left arm was covered in light metal armor, and his right shoulder was covered by a more significant metal plate. Valer waved behind him and the door to the dark Corridor closed. Where was his master? How long had he trained within the Corridor and honed his inner darkness to the point where only one tiny spot of light remained in his heart? He had pondered on a way to continue to live in pure darkness. Radiant Garden had changed since he had last been there. Was his master even there?

Juliet sat alone on top of one of the roofs in town, lamenting over the deaths of LimeX and Thage. One of the reasons she pushed the lightbladers away was because she wanted some time to herself to grieve the loss of her friends. She let out a heavy sigh as she could not believe that LimeX left her so soon. The keyblade master had taken her out of that one dump one would call 'a home' and taught her how to survive with fighting moves and tricks. LimeX was the only friend Juliet ever had. That was until Thage came into the picture. Even though the blonde had not known the woman long, the kindness the latter showed to the former was very much appreciated. If only Thage had lasted longer, then she, Juliet would have another pal to call her own. But now she was all alone again with no one to mingle with. *'This sucks!'* the blonde teen thought as she looked down at the street below. Soon, she sensed a portal opening up next to her and looked to see who has come. It was a silver-haired girl with green eyes and she was wearing the exact same clothes as Juliet's. Juliet looked in surprise as she could not believe who she was seeing. Cautious of her own hope, the blonde asked, "Wait, is that who I think it is? Are you LimeX?"

The silverette confirmed with a smile, "Yes I am and this is what I really look like."

Juliet was overwhelmed with joy at seeing her mentor and friend alive here in the flesh. It was indeed a miracle. She beamed, "Oh LimeX, you're back! But how?"

LimeX was just as confused as she was, answering, "That's what I'm wondering. I have no idea how or why I was brought back to life. All I know is that I'm still kicking."

Juliet replied, "Ah whatever, I'm just glad that you're back with me again. Now we can go back to you teaching me some new moves and stuff." It was nice to see that Shade was wrong about her master dying from the ritual.

"Yes, we can." But LimeX suggested instead, "But how about we take a break and enjoy ourselves. We've gone through too much and we ought to take a rest."

"I agree," the apprentice replied, appreciating the chance for some R & R. "This whole thing wasn't fun for me, you know. All that death, destruction and fighting you. That Shade is one sick son of a bitch! I hope he gets thrown down a volcano with his keyblade stuck far up with his ass."

The keyblade master laughed sadistically, "I'd love to see that." The silverette felt glad that at least she has a friend she can still go back to after that disastrous reunion with Ilem.

Valer walked through the streets of Radiant Garden, taking the familiar route to his master's home. As he came closer to his destination, he began to hear sounds of fighting in the form of yells, keyblades clashing and powers being used. Most notably, the man could sense a heavy presence of light somewhere up ahead. *'What's this?'* Valer wondered. He walked on towards the source to check it out since it was on the path of his mentor's place. Going towards the T-shaped intersection, he could hear a pained scream that sounded like it belonged to a certain someone he knew. This alarmed Valer that he ran around the left corner to see what happened. He found a bunch of strange white creatures, some of which had on them a golden heart-shaped symbol with wings, a halo, and a tiny star inside. They gathered around a purple-haired girl wearing a white & silver mask who had her keyblade aimed at the chest of Valer's master, who appeared weakened and beat, and was now kneeling on the ground. She charged from the tip of her keyblade a thin beam of light that fired into his chest. The older man's eyes shot wide open in shock as his heart was being purified. Valer became angry at the girl for harming his teacher and he summoned his keyblade, which was ebony black with a guard that is made of sharp metal that is shaped like a crescent moon. The segment leading to the edge and tip was sharp like a knife. The tip of each segment of the E-shaped teeth shined with a sharp black gleam. "Master!" he shouted for his mentor as he charged into the fray to attack the assailant. The girl and the monsters turned their heads to their new enemy as her keyblade ended the purification of the mentor, whose eyes were now blank.

LimeX and Juliet were going across roof, chatting with another when they began to hear a fight nearby. They stopped to look and see a man garbed in black fighting some white monsters and a masked girl. Juliet looked at the creatures and asked, "What the heck?! What are these things?"

"Don't know," the silverette answered. Then she suggested, "Let's watch and see what's going on." Juliet decided to go with that. Perhaps watching this fight and seeing the opponents beating each other black & blue could be entertaining.

The faceless, small white creatures known as the 'Shines', with pointy ears and an antenna with a yellow glowing ball at the tip, ran up to Valer to attack him. But the man swung his keyblade at each one that came at him, swatting them away. The two of the taller creatures known as the 'Purities', with their golden limbs, curled ears and two light ball-tipped antennae, went to attack Valer from behind, but he

quickly turned and swung at them, knocking them back against the wall of a building as they grunted in pain, "Ow!"

The man raised his keyblade and cast, "Gather!" He summoned a Magnet spell and drew in the Shines and Purities to the floating, metallic orb. They were swung around as the ball's magic energy harmed them. Then Valer cast another spell in the form of, "Darkness!" The Darkga spell took the form of a giant gassy cloud of darkness around the Magnet orb. The screams of the creatures were heard as the Darkga obliterated them inside. A few seconds later, the dark cloud dispersed and the orb was no longer within sight as it had disappeared inside at the end of its time.

One of the Shines standing next to the masked girl said, "He's strong, just like his master." The girl summoned more Shines and Purities into the fray and they went to fight Valer. She went with them as well, so that she can aid them with her spells.

Valer electrified his keyblade and threw it spinning at the line of Shines in front of him, hitting and zapping them all. Then the Purities came to him. The man hit one and then turned to attack the next. But the Purity put up a light shield to block his weapon. Another one got a hit on the back of Valer's head with a punch thrown. "Gah!" he cried as he hunched over before he turned and rose back up to counter. Then he hopped to the side to avoid the second Purity's kick before he thrust at its abdomen and swung a couple of times at it.

The masked girl raised her keyblade and cast, "Cura!" Her monsters were all healed and they went surround the man to attack him from all sides. But Valer was quick to hit them all, striking and turning fast before any of them could get a hit on them. The girl charged at him from the rear to which he turned and blocked her. She told him, "It's useless to resist... Your purification will be imminent...and your heart will be dark no longer."

Valer just glared and bared his teeth at her in response. *'I'd like to see you try,'* he challenged silently. Their keyblades clashed with each other's as they each dueled to get a hit on their foe. A Purity attempted a roundhouse kick at the man's back to which he hopped to the side to avoid it. But this led him to getting ambushed by another Purity punching him in the lower part of his spine. The masked girl saw that he was now open to being attacked and instantly took this chance to perform a Rising Strike at him. Valer was knocked up into the air and then the girl jumped high to swing down and knocked him to the ground flat on his back. The Shines all piled up on him as they held down his limbs to prevent his movements. The black keyblade disappeared as it was no longer in use for the time being. He struggled to free himself as he growled and grunted, wishing these things would let him go. The masked girl walked over to him as she infused light into her keyblade, getting ready to purify him.

The darkblader girls knew that the young man was in big trouble now. If the masked girl intended to cleanse someone's heart of all darkness, that means she was in cahoots with Light. LimeX told her apprentice, "Juliet, let's go!"

"Right," the blonde agreed. The master and apprentice jumped down from the house and went for the masked girl.

The purplette held her keyblade over Valer's heart and was about to infuse light into it when she heard one of her monsters alarmed, "Look out behind you!" She quickly turned and blocked LimeX's Pathfinder, which had been swung down at her. Valer yelled as he unleashed a dark aura around himself that blew away the monsters. He re-summoned his keyblade as the aura disappeared and he swatted at the Shines, destroying each one. Juliet, who had been about to rescue the man, just cast Fire at a group of Shines instead. They caught fire and they screamed and ran around with arms flailing. The blonde attacked and destroyed the burning Shines with her new keyblade before she avoided getting kicked by a Purity. She felt the presence of another Purity behind her and swung around to strike, but only to be met by its light shield. Valer cast his Fire spell at the first Purity and destroyed it.

LimeX and the masked girl fought each other as the latter kept swinging at the former, who dodged every hit. Then the silverette struck back with a thrust before she did an Aerial Sweep, which knocked up the girl and the surrounding monsters that came into the air. The enemies fell and hit the ground. LimeX followed up her attack with a Thundera spell, which zapped her enemies and destroyed the weaker of the monsters. Valer swatted at the monsters, destroying some of them and parrying their attacks. Juliet destroyed some of her enemies with a Maelstrom attack. "Yeah, take that!" she exclaimed triumphantly.

LimeX repeatedly beat down at the masked girl, trying to knock her out to unconsciousness, so that Chase can have someone to interrogate when his sister brings her over to him. The bruised girl shielded her own head with her arms as she continued to get battered on. This left her abdomen to get struck by the darkblader. As the assault went on, LimeX started to see light emanating out of the purplette's body. Something was about to happen. The darkblader jumped far back as a huge beam of light rose beneath the masked girl and dispersed out into many thinner columns of light with a right of light expanding around them. After all the lights vanished, masked girl rose up with her injuries healed. '*Salvation*,' thought LimeX who knew the name of the spell.

Then the masked girl summoned some new type of white creatures to the field to replace the Shines and Purities lost. They took the form of genies with purple turbans and eastern dragons. They all had the same emblem marked on them like the Purities did. Juliet grimaced at this and complained, "Ugh! There's more of them?! Fine, I'll just wipe the floor with them, too." She cast Fire at one of the dragons, but it easily maneuvered out of the way with its flexible, long body. The fireball flew through the hoop its body curved and formed.

Valer leapt at one of the Djinns, the white genie creatures, and swung a few times at it. But then the Djinn turned invisible and the next swung cut through the air as the creature's laughter was heard. One of the Long Dragons rushed at him, but Valer was quick to get out of the way. Another Djinn grabbed him from behind in a tight hug and flew up to the air with him as he struggled to break free. The Djinn then turned upside down and dove fast towards the ground. Valer's eyes widened as he knew the

creature intended to slam his skull on the stamped concrete ground. Djinn did exactly that as it let go and dropped the man on his head upon reaching a few feet distance between them and the ground. It hovered over him to see the damage it did. Valer suffered a horrible headache as he saw stars. He groaned out in pain as he clutched his head. His pain did not end there when he felt a hot scalding water sprayed at him, burning and wetting him as he screamed. Once the Long Dragon was done spraying its hot water breath at him, the man healed himself, "Cure!" He recovered from the pain and damages done to him.

Juliet jumped up and struck at a Djinn, but then a Long Dragon wrapped itself around her, trapping her arms close to her body. As she squirmed around in the monster's tight grip, she yelled, "Hey, let me go!" The Long Dragon scratched her with its claws, drawing blood and making her shriek.

LimeX parried the masked girl's attack before she swatted at her hard, knocking her back. Then she struck at the two Djinns who came at her from both sides. When the Shines approached, the silverette spun around and jumped with an electrified keyblade, striking the foes around her with a Spark Sweep. But then another Djinn zapped her back with a magic beam. Then a Purity came in quickly from the side with a punch to her face. Immediately, a Shine came to her in the form of a small light ball before it materialized itself and punched her in the gut. Valer came to the girl's aid with a Fire spell cast at the Purity before he went and struck down the Shine. LimeX raised her keyblade and cast, "Slow!" Most of the monsters' movements were now slowed down, but the masked girl and her Djinns were unaffected. That was okay though, because at least it would infliction on some enemies would make this easier.

Unfortunately, that was sabotaged when the masked girl cast, "Esuna..." The white creatures were now back to their normal speed. To make things worse, the Djinns cast Haste on their comrades to boost their speeds. The monsters all came at the darkbladers fast as the Shines and Purities went to punch and kick at LimeX. The girl could barely block and evade them as a couple of them managed to get a few hits on her. Valer was also on the edge as he hastily tried to avoid every attack that came at him. One of the dragons flew swiftly by and swiped a claw to the side of his torso. Then a Djinn threw a magic ball at his back, hurting him.

Juliet was still captive in her dragon foe's snare as two other Long Dragons flew by and sprayed scalding water at her face. She screamed before she shouted, "Somebody help!" LimeX went to answer her call as she Shadow Dashed through the enemies to hurt them and reach her apprentice fast. Once she got to the dragon, she jumped at it and swiped horizontally at its head. It recoiled in pain as it unwrapped itself from the blonde, dropping her on her feet. Juliet wiped the water from her face and he let out a heavy huff. Then LimeX yelped as she was pelted with hot water balls thrown by the Long Dragons.

Valer aimed his keyblade at the monsters and cast, "Magnet!" The magic orb pulled in the monsters closest to it to hurt them as the rest continued to fight.

The masked girl cast a spell, "Bright Firaga..." The light-powered fireball flew fast at Juliet and hit her hard in the stomach, knocking her down across the ground. The Long Dragons jetted by the other

darkbladers as they slashed them in a hit-and-fly style. A trio of Djinns came together and combined their power to unleash a triangular beam that dealt a world of hurt to LimeX and Valer. They two were flung across the ground and they fell behind Juliet.

Juliet grimaced, "These guys are too strong. What do we do?"

LimeX knew the situation was grim; they were outmatched in speed right now and they were outnumbered. And no matter how many monsters they slew, the masked girl would just respawn them at any time. They were going to need some backup for this. She cast Cure on herself and the others to heal their wounds and give them stamina. She got up quickly and suggested, "Let's go find Chase's friends." The other darkbladers got up and followed her. Valer, in his case, cast Darkga at the enemies, hurting lots of them and obliterating some, before he went along with the girls.

The masked girl ordered her monsters, "After them..." The creatures ran and flew after them.