

Virtual Revival

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Natalie just transferred to the Kadic Boarding School. Now she's found the factory. But is she a Fighter of Lyoko or a Monster of XANA?

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1 - Part 1--Meeting Natalie

The storm clouds started to build up just as class was about to begin at Kadic Boarding School. Yumi sat down in her usual spot for math class that morning. She stared out the window and watched as it started to drizzle. She saw that the top of the window was open and stood up to close it all the way. She locked the latch and sat back down, ready for another boring lecture on whatever her teacher felt like blabbing about. She sighed. She wished that one of her friends could be in the same class as she. She'd have much a better time if Jeremy, Odd, or Ulrich was able to join her. No. She had to put up with Sissy all day instead.

"What's the matter, Yumi?" Sissy asked in a soft voice from behind. "You look a little down in the dumps this morning. Is it the bad weather we've been having lately?"

"Mind your own business, Sissy," Yumi snapped back. "My mood doesn't affect your life. Just listen to the lecture, why don't you? You could use some extra notes anyway. I've seen your algebra grades."

"How dare you!?" Sissy quietly exploded. "How can you see my grades anyway?"

"You sit behind me in every class. The teachers always have to pass me to get to you. I always catch a glimpse of your work."

Sissy grabbed her pencil from the corner of her desk and snapped it in half. Yumi smirked and faced forward to hear what was going to be the topic today. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw the principal coming up to the classroom with another girl she had never seen before. The principal opened up the door to the room and walked inside. He wiped some of the raindrops off his face and whispered something to the teacher.

"Oh yes!" she agreed. "I will." She turned to the rest of the kids. "Class, we are very lucky to have a new student joining us today. She comes from the United States and just moved here last week." She turned to the girl. "Would you be so kind as to introduce yourself? Why don't you tell us a little about yourself, too?"

After a moment of hesitation, the girl finally said, "My name's Natalie. I used to live in America, but my father got a new job. Now, we live here. I've always wanted to go to boarding school, and, um, I'm very happy to be in your class."

"How sweet," the teacher commented. "Natalie, I think there's an empty seat next to Yumi. Is there one?"

"Yes, Ma'am!" Yumi replied. "Natalie can sit next to me if she wants."

"That's very nice of you," Natalie squeaked. "I'd love to join you." Natalie walked over with her books and sat in the desk next to Yumi's. She put her binder away and took out a pen.

"I hope you have a good time, Dear," the principal said. "If you need anything, you can come to my office."

"Thank you, Sir."

"Daddy!" Sissy called from her seat, raising her hand.

"Yes, what is it, Sissy?"

"Do you think I could give Natalie a tour of the school after class? It might help her if she knew more about where everything was."

"Good idea." He started walking towards the door and stopped to say to the teacher, "Sorry for the interruption. Carry on." He walked out the door and started running for his office. By now, the drizzle had turned into rain.

The teacher started going on with her lesson. Yumi turned to Natalie and said, "I'm Yumi. It's nice to

meet you."

"Same here," Natalie replied. "Do you know that girl that suggested I should take a tour with her?"

"That's Sissy," Yumi explained. "You probably want to avoid her. If you want, I'll introduce you to all my friends when we get out of class."

"Really? Thank you."

After class, the weather started to clear up. The rain stopped falling, and the sun was starting to break through the black clouds. Yumi guided Natalie out of the classroom and into the courtyard.

"So this is where the students hang out in between classes," she explained. "Either that or they go to their rooms. Mostly though, we stay out here since classes are usually right after one another with little time slots between them. Has anyone showed you your room?"

"The P.E. teacher took my stuff and put it in a room," Natalie explained. "I just don't know where my room is yet. The principal said that when I want to go to my room, I should let him know."

"Ah, so you got stuck with Jim, huh?" Yumi giggled, placing her hand in front of her mouth. "That's the name of the P.E. teacher."

"I guess I did. Why? Is that bad?"

"No, he's just crazy."

Yumi and Natalie laughed. They walked towards a dry bench underneath a tree and sat down. They didn't see the shadow coming up behind them.

"Good morning, Ladies!" Odd shouted. Natalie jumped and turned to see who had frightened her. Yumi just smiled. Odd gave his world famous grin and cast his glance on Natalie. "Who's she?"

"This is Natalie," Yumi explained. "She's in my class."

"Glad to meet you!" Odd cheered. "My name's Odd. Hey, do you know Jeremy and Ulrich yet?"

"No," Natalie replied.

"Then what are you waiting for? You have to meet them!"

Odd grabbed Natalie arm and dragged her to two boys standing next to the vending machines. Yumi just gave a short huff and followed them. She had no idea how something like Odd's personality was going to affect this girl.

"Natalie," Odd began, "this is Jeremy. This is Ulrich. They're both in my class. Say hi, Guys!"

"Hi, Guys," Jeremy replied. Natalie laughed and shook his hand.

"It's a pleasure to meet you," she announced. "You, too, Ulrich," She shook his hand. "How are you two today?"

"Aw, fine," Ulrich replied. "What class are you in?"

"I'm in the same grade as Yumi. We go to math together."

"You might be in our science class then," Jeremy commented. "Sometimes the school mixes grades for Mrs. Hertz and her class."

"Hey, Natalie," Odd interrupted, "did anyone offer to give you a tour of the school yet? Because I will!"

"There was this girl named Sissy that wanted to show me around," Natalie replied. "I don't think I like her though. I saw her constantly teasing the kids around her during math. She was being too nosy about my life, too."

"You made a good choice," Ulrich commented. "Nobody really likes Sissy that much. We don't need to start now."

Natalie giggled and said, "I'd like to take a tour of the school with you, Odd. Do you have some free time now? I think I do."

"I've got class in half-an-hour," Odd announced, looking at his watch. "I'll show you our rooms, and you can meet Kiwi! Kiwi's my dog."

"Well, well, well," Sissy said from behind. Natalie turned and frowned. "Are you ready to go on the tour of

a lifetime with me? Come on! We don't have all day. See, you don't want to be hanging out with cheap nobodies like these four. It's just a waste of time."

Natalie gave a stubborn look and said, "The only thing that's a waste of time around here is your life. I'll hang out with whomever I please, thank you. And speaking of cheap, why don't you and those cheap, out-of-date shoes of yours walk off to Daddy? I'm sure you can go crying to him about anything."

Sissy stood, petrified, her jaw hitting the ground. Yumi, Jeremy, Odd, and Ulrich stood with surprised faces. They had never heard anyone diss Sissy like that before.

"Well, if that's how you feel then fine!" Sissy shouted. "Let's see you make any real friends in this school!"

"She's already made four," Yumi countered. Sissy stood for another second and ran off towards the school. Ulrich gave Natalie a pat on the back.

"That was good," he rewarded. "You sure know how to call off the school bullies."

"I was known for it back in the States," Natalie replied. "People also thought that according to the way that I dress." Natalie was wearing a dark red t-shirt with a yellow skirt. She had yellow and black striped tights with dark brown ankle boots that buttoned at the sides. Her hair was the most interesting part. It was bright red with light brown tips.

"Let's start that tour now, huh?" Odd suggested. "Besides, it's almost time to feed Kiwi! He needs his mid-morning snack."

Sissy ran down the hallways of the boarding school sobbing. She rubbed her eyes and let out a few gasps.

"It's not fair that Natalie gets to spend time with them!" she told to no one. "I just wanted her to like me. Why doesn't anyone like me?"

Sissy sniffed up the last of her tears and headed for the teachers' lounge. She was determined to find her father, Jim, Mrs. Hertz, Dorothy, or anyone she could go to for advice.

Inside the teachers' lounge, an electrical wave started to emit from the plug in the electrical outlet. It traveled up the wire and found its way to the appliances. The stove started to spark. The coffee maker was overflowing. The microwave and toaster started to turn on and off without any warning. Sissy opened up the door and was attacked by crazed kitchen appliances.

2 - Part2-Found the Factory

Jeremy sat at his computer with his headphones on. Yumi sat on one side and Ulrich on the other. They waited until the screen lit up dull green. Jeremy perked up from a lazy trance and greeted his computer friend.

"Hi, Aelita!" he cheered. "How are things going in Lyoko?"

"Any activated towers?" Yumi added.

Aelita hesitated for a moment and said, "I'm in the Polar Region right now. There's nothing to be worried about here. However, I feel there might be something going on in another region."

"Did you feel pulsations or something?" Ulrich asked.

"No," Aelita replied, "but I saw a box monster in the Desert before. There was nothing I could do so I just ran to another tower! I'm so sorry. It was so irresponsible of me! I felt a sudden panic and just ran."

"It's not your fault, Aelita," Jeremy insisted. "We should have gotten in contact with you earlier. There was just a little bit of excitement going on this morning. There's a new girl in school. We were talking to her for a long time. Odd's taking her for a tour of the dorm rooms. She's probably in his room meeting Kiwi right now."

"We should head over to the Factory," Yumi announced. "Ulrich should go to his room and get Odd."

"But Natalie's there!" Jeremy reminded her. "If Ulrich bursts in and tells her that we need Odd, she'll start to get suspicious."

"Then the three of us will go to the Factory and contact Odd there. Ulrich and I can go into Lyoko by ourselves. We've done it before."

"I know but we don't even know what XANA's planning, or even if he's planning anything!"

Suddenly, Sissy burst into the room at lightning speed and tripped over the side of the bed. Jeremy quickly tore his headphones off and closed the communication software. Sissy fell over and landed on top of Ulrich. He pushed her off with an exasperated huff and straightened out his shirt and jacket.

"OH, MY GOSH!!! ULRICH, YOU'VE GOT TO HELP ME!!!" Sissy started screaming whatever thought rushed into her head at any moment. Ulrich looked at her, very annoyed, and slapped her across the cheek.

"Get a hold of yourself," he ordered. "Could you tell us what happened, maybe in English this time?"

"And it wasn't too polite of you to just barge in on us without knocking," Yumi added.

"Oh, Ulrich, it was horrible!" Sissy explained, completely ignoring Yumi's remark. "I was walking away from that horrible little girl Natalie and going for the teachers' lounge to talk to my dad. When I opened the door, I was attacked by a bunch of kitchen appliances!! I thought I was going to die!"

"Was your dad in there?" Jeremy questioned, thinking he knew where this was going.

"No, but I'm pretty sure we should tell him."

"Then go tell him. We'll go get some help. Maybe Jim can fix some of the machines in there. Or Herb. Either one."

Sissy nodded and ran out of the room. Once the three fighters were sure she had left, they started out of the room themselves, towards the Factory.

Ulrich and Yumi stayed inside the elevator and waited for the latch doors to close. Jeremy sat at the supercomputer and typed in a bunch of confusing calculations. He put the headphones on and contacted Aelita once again,

"Sorry about the little interruption before," he apologized. "Sissy came running into the room without a

warning. So, have you found anything out?"

"I'm back in the Desert Region," Aelita replied. "Right now, I'm hiding. There's a group of boxes guarding a passageway."

"Well, they have a good reason to do so. That's the passageway to get to the activated tower. It's just another twenty-five degrees ahead of it. Stay where you are, okay? Ulrich and Yumi are on their way."

"Okay, Jeremy. Please hurry! I think they're starting to sense me."

"No problem." Jeremy spoke into his microphone to the lower level of the Factory where the three scanners were located. "Get into the scanners, Guys." Ulrich and Yumi did as they were told. "Transfer: Ulrich. Transfer: Yumi." The two warriors started spinning in the scanners, their data being downloaded into the virtual world. "Scanner: Ulrich. Scanner: Yumi." The information in the computer reached its full point. "Virtualization!"

The virtualization wind blew Ulrich and Yumi into the strange world called Lyoko. They landed in the middle of the Desert and saw Aelita hiding behind a few small rocks.

"Ulrich! Yumi! Watch out!" Aelita cried, pointing. The two fighters turned and saw the boxes running towards them. Before they could do anything, both of them zapped Ulrich.

"You've lost twenty life points already!" Jeremy announced. "Be careful!"

Yumi took out a fan and tossed it at the monsters. One of them moved out of the way at the last moment, but the other one wasn't so lucky. The fan hit it with everything it had. The box hesitated for a moment and then exploded into a million pieces.

"One down," Yumi said, taking out another fan. By now, Ulrich was back on his feet with his Impact Sword ready to strike.

"Guys, watch out!" Jeremy shouted. "There's four more monsters coming up behind Aelita! Aelita, run!!"

Aelita did as she was told and ran between Ulrich and Yumi. Another two boxes came up to help the lone one. The three virtual humans watched in fear as all seven started up their lasers. Two of them hit Yumi, one hit Aelita, and one hit Ulrich. He took his sword and charged towards one.

"IMPACT!!" he shouted, thrusting the sword into the XANA symbol. Even though he destroyed one monster, it cost him his virtual life. The other three monsters sent their beams flying. Yumi hit one in the back, destroying it, but it was too late to help her fellow fighter. Ulrich started to disappear until he was completely materialized back on Earth.

Jeremy switched to a news channel just as Ulrich came back into the main room. The reporter had a serious expression and was standing in one of the streets of the nearby city.

"It has been reported all over the world today that household appliances have gone haywire today," she explained. "They have seriously burned and maimed several people all over the globe. So far, no leads have been found to say what caused the horrible mishaps. However, we have reason to believe that these appliances might be searching for someone. They all seem to be going bizarre in the same direction: towards Kadic Boarding School."

"Yumi's still in Lyoko, so it couldn't be after her," Jeremy muttered to himself. "Ulrich just got back, and XANA couldn't possibly figure that out this quickly. Unless..."

"What's the story, Jeremy?" Ulrich walked over to the supercomputer and watched the screen. "Have you figured out anything?"

"It's the kitchen appliances!" he replied. "Those ones that attacked Sissy are after Odd! We've got to warn him."

"We should get him down here, too," Ulrich added. "Yumi and Aelita need help."

Odd and Natalie walked around the front yard of the campus of Kadic Boarding School. They walked in silence for a little while before Natalie spoke up.

"Kiwi's so cute!" she cheered. "I wish he was my dog!"

"Yeah, Kiwi's great," Odd agreed. "You have to promise to keep him a secret though. Pets aren't allowed here. It's amazing he got past Jim and the principal when I first got here. That wasn't too long ago, so I kinda know what it's like to be new."

"I'm glad I met you," Natalie commented, "and I'm very glad that you took me for a tour instead of Sissy. Still, I can't help but feel a little guilty for being so mean to her."

Suddenly, Odd's cell phone rang. He picked it up out of his pocket and brought it to his ear.

"Yeah? Uh-huh. Yup. Okay! I will. Bye, Ulrich."

"What did Ulrich want?"

"I have to go, okay? The group needs me."

"For what? Or is it something personal?" Natalie blushed a little from her nosy question. Odd saw this and held onto her hand.

"It's okay! We'll hang out later, alright?"

"Agreed."

Odd ran towards the trees and waved. Natalie smiled and waved back. Odd ran into the forest and found the cover to the secret passageway in the sewer. He lifted it up and slowly crawled his way down the ladder.

The only problem was that he forgot to put the cover back on the opening.

Odd made his way to the Factory and watched the screen on the computer. Yumi was fighting with all she had. Odd bit his lip and watched her life points go down at a fast rate.

"Are you ready?" Jeremy asked. Odd nodded and headed back into the elevator. Once down at the lower level, he hopped into the scanner. The doors closed just as Jeremy began, "Transfer: Odd.

Scanner: Odd. Virtualization!"

The wind blast up the tube and downloaded Odd's information into Lyoko. He landed in the middle of the battle between Yumi and the boxes. The monsters sensed his presence and turned to go after him. One hit him on the spot.

"Odd!" Aelita cried. Yumi perked up and threw another fan at it. Another one noticed right away and hit her. The fan destroyed the target, but Yumi was now materialized. Odd was on his own. He fired three more arrows at the enemies. One blew up. The other two just evaded and shot their own beams. Both hit Odd right in the stomach.

"Odd, those two shots cost you thirty life points!" Jeremy shouted as Yumi walked into the main room. He turned to the losers. "We need a plan. We need some help!"

"The appliances are still acting up, aren't they?" Ulrich asked. Jeremy nodded. "Then maybe they're not after Odd. Don't you think they would have temporarily stopped if they were after him now that he's in Lyoko?"

"They would!" Yumi agreed. "But if they're not after him, who are they after? Sissy? Jim? The principal?"

"I'm starting to think that there's something hidden in this computer," Jeremy announced randomly.

"There's this firewall I haven't been able to crack."

Natalie ambled around the forest for a little while staring up at some of the scenery of the school. She wasn't looking where she was going and tripped on something. She fell over with a quick splat and slowly lifted her head to see what happened.

"A sewer cover?" she asked no one. "Are the people here doing work on the school?" She stopped and scooted over to the edge. She let her legs dangle. "Hey! Didn't Odd come this way? Oh well. I'm going to check this out."

Natalie walked down the ladder and landed with a soft clack in the sewer. She walked along the path and climbed up the ladder at the other end. She picked her head up in front of the Factory. She dragged

the rest of herself out and ran towards the entrance.

Odd was having a tough time in Lyoko. The boxes just kept coming with no end in sight. He was down to his last arrows and life points. Aelita tried to run for the tower, but whenever she did, the monsters surrounded her.

"LASER ARROW!!!" Odd yelled, shooting two more arrows. Two boxes blew up, but that was the end of the stream of arrows. Aelita stood in a circle of boxes, scared to her virtual death.

Without a warning, Odd had a flash of his power. He saw Natalie running for the factory and then a girl shooting bullets from two guns. We woke up from the trance with a start and said, "Jeremy, I just saw Natalie coming towards the Factory! She must have followed me."

"This isn't good!" Jeremy announced. "She'll blow the whole secret!"

Making perfect time, the elevator doors flew open. Ulrich, Yumi, and Jeremy gasped as Natalie walked over to the supercomputer. Jeremy started to sweat just as Yumi's breathing became uneven and panicked. Ulrich watched with horrified eyes as the new girl walked over and observed the map of Lyoko in the middle of the room.

"WOW!!!" she cried. "This is amazing! Oh, my gosh. Look at that! How does this work? Oh man, is that breakable? Oh, uh, yup. This is soooo cool! How long have you guys known about this place? Does Odd know??"

"AELITA'S GONNA DIE!!" Jeremy screamed, pulling his hair. "Oh, I knew it was a bad idea to accept her into the group! She's going to tell everyone about Lyoko and Aelita and XANA and everything!!"

Natalie's eyes darted to the computer screen. She saw the minimized file of the firewall. Her eyes turned stone cold as she made a zombified walk to it. Her fingers clicked many different buttons. Jeremy watched in awe as she typed in code after code after code.

"What's she doing?" Yumi whispered. She and Ulrich observed Natalie's hands. Jeremy's jaw dropped when he saw what happened next.

"She got past that impossible firewall!!!"

"I'm getting in the scanner," Natalie announced, her voice monotone. "When you send me to Lyoko, click on this file. It's mine." She walked towards the elevator and rode it down. Jeremy watched with a confused look plastered on his face before agreeing to the task.

"Transfer: Natalie. Scanner: Natalie. Virtualization!"

The wind blew up the tube. Natalie was in Lyoko as a Gunner. She held weapons at her side and watched Odd fight. She held up both guns, aimed, and shouted, "BULLET HAPPY!!!" She fired rapid missiles at the boxes. Two of them blew up in an instant. Odd watched, horrified. Aelita looked surprised.

"Welcome back," she murmured under her breath.

Natalie aimed again and fired at another box. Another powered up a laser and hit her with everything it had. Natalie cringed back at the pain. She destroyed one box just as Odd was materialized from another's shot.

"She's alone now," Yumi mumbled. "I only hope she can get Aelita to the tower."

Natalie and Aelita ran as fast as they could to get away from the two remaining monsters. Natalie shot another bullet and hit one. It exploded.

"There's the tower!" Aelita announced. She ran faster and made her way inside. She floated up to the top level and placed her hand on the screen. It blinked to greet her and flashed for the code. She typed in "Lyoko" and time reversed.

"RETURN TO THE PAST, NOW!!!"

Natalie, Odd, Ulrich, Yumi, and Jeremy stood together in the campus yard. Sissy came up behind

Natalie and tapped her shoulder.

"Are you ready for a great tour?" she asked.

"Actually, Sissy," Natalie began, "Odd came to me before you suggested it to your father and offered to take me. But you could show me something else if you want. I haven't seen much of town yet."

"I'll take you on a tour of the mall then!" Sissy cheered. "How's tomorrow at two?"

"Fine by me. I'll see you then."

Sissy waved and turned. She walked back over to Nicholas and Herb. Natalie turned back to the gang and winked.

"So, when's the next XANA attack?"

3 - Part 3-The Second Attack

Natalie and Yumi sat together in science class on a sunny Tuesday afternoon writing notes down in their books. Natalie was hard at work trying to get down every piece of information that Mrs. Hertz blurted out at any given moment. Yumi was listening as well, but she was feeling less stressed and sketched a random doodle of a box or hornet monster whenever she felt bored. Natalie looked over at her notes and stared at her innocently.

"Why aren't you taking any good notes?" she whispered. "This lesson is downright hard!"

"The gang and I heard this lesson once before you came," Yumi replied. "We fought XANA and then went to the past. I know just about everything she's going to say."

"Then will you help me later? I'm not good at science."

"Neither is Ulrich. I've got to go home later. Remember, I'm not a boarder here. Odd can teach you."

"But he's not in the same class as I am."

"He's excellent in science."

"YUMI!!! NATALIE!!!" Mrs. Hertz shouted. "Do I need to separate you two? I just don't see what's so important that you must talk about it in the middle of this lesson. Especially you, Natalie, since you're new here and need to catch up with the rest of the class."

"Yes, Ma'am!" Natalie replied. "I'm sorry. I was just asking Yumi about one part of the lesson."

"Then ask me about it. I'm the teacher after all."

Natalie giggled and said, "Yes, Ma'am. I was wondering if you could tell me about the part of this physics lesson with the simple machines."

"There's six," Mrs. Hertz replied. "Did you do any of your studying last night?"

"Yes, I did," Natalie confirmed. "I'm sorry, Ma'am, but science is not my strongest point."

With those words, the bell rang. The students got up from their seats and walked out of the classroom with the relief that another class was over. Yumi stayed behind and waited for Natalie to finish gathering up her belongings. Sissy waited as well to observe what the two would talk about.

"Pretty tough lesson today, huh?" she asked to Natalie. Natalie ignored her and placed her books on top of one another to leave the room. Sissy gave her a stubborn look and followed her, slamming the door behind her. That cut off Yumi's exit. She opened up the door and charged down the hallway towards the exit of the school.

"Now that was mean!" Natalie told Sissy. "Why did you cut Yumi off like that? She never did anything to you."

"Oh, you don't know half of it," Sissy replied, walking ahead. "Yumi and I have been going at it since the school year started. If you wonder why, it's a secret. I'll let you figure it out on your own."

"It wouldn't happen to be about the fight over Ulrich, would it?"

Sissy froze in her tracks. She turned her head to the side and watched Natalie's innocent face turn into a sweet smile. Her eyes widened at the perfect guess. She was expecting Natalie to sit there guessing all day so she could laugh at her all she wanted.

"My friends told me all about it," Natalie explained. "To be honest, I really think you should give up on him. No offense or anything, but he's too in love with Yumi to even pay attention to you."

Sissy's jaw dropped. Natalie smiled, gave the peace sign, and ran off to meet the rest of her friends in the campus courtyard.

Odd, Jeremy, and Ulrich stood together at the vending machines trying to get them to work. Natalie ran

over to them waving and stood in front of the soup machine.

"Hi, Guys!" she greeted. "What's going on?"

"These machines are at it again," Ulrich replied. "They're so annoying. Whenever you put the right amount of change in, it doesn't work. Then, even if you put the exact change in it again, it goes crazy on you and gives you exactly what you didn't ask for."

Natalie laughed and watched Jeremy press a button on the soda machine. Nothing happened. He pounded on it, but nothing came out.

"Can I try?" Natalie asked.

"Go ahead," Jeremy offered, "but I don't think you can get the right soda to come out."

"You put exact change in, right?"

"Yeah."

"Stand back."

The boys did as they were told and watched Natalie press her palms together out in front of her. She hummed a strange tune to herself and jabbed her fist into the machine. The boys heard a clack, and the correct soda came flying down to the receiving point! They stared in awe and watched as Jeremy picked it up and examined it closely.

"That's amazing!" he cried. "How did you get it to do that??"

"And what's with those cool moves?" Odd added. "You looked like a blackbelt karate master!"

"And how did you know where to hit it?" Ulrich chimed in. "You've been here for a few days, and you already know how to manipulate snack machines!"

"It was a lucky guess!" Natalie replied, waving her arms back and forth in front of herself. "I've moved around a lot. Vending machines are the same wherever you go."

"Were they like that in the states?" Odd asked.

"Worse! Sometimes it took two punches to get a snack down from them. Half of the time, it wasn't even the right one! I'm glad I moved here. Kadic Junior High is way better than my old school. Oh yeah! Odd, I was wondering if you could help me with something."

"What?"

"Could you give me some tutoring on physics? Yumi said you were a good science student."

"She's not lying," Jeremy interrupted. "I'd help out, too, but I'm going to talk with Aelita for a little while. Feel like coming, Ulrich?"

"Why not," he said. The two boys started heading off for Jeremy's room. They waved good-bye to their friends and ran inside one of the buildings. Odd and Natalie waved back and started walking towards the exit of the school grounds.

"Why don't I take you to the ice cream parlor?" Odd suggested. "I'll tutor you there, and we can enjoy some sweets at the same time!"

"I'd love to!" Natalie cheered. "Unfortunately, my wallet is up in my room."

"I'll treat you," Odd offered. "I've got plenty of money."

"Oh, my gosh! Are you sure?"

"Of course I am! Nothing's too much for a pretty girl like you."

Natalie giggled as Odd took her vacant hand. The other one still had all her science books in it. The two walked off the school grounds and into town.

In Lyoko, a simple tower created a red aura.

"Okay, so did Mrs. Hertz tell you anything you needed to know?" Odd asked, placing some money on the counter. The employee took it and started up a sundae in the back room.

"No," Natalie replied, "the bell rang just before she was going to tell me about the six simple machines."

"That's easy!"

"Maybe for you,"

The employee brought back a giant hot fudge sundae and placed it on the top counter. Odd took it and walked over to a two-seater table. Natalie hugged her books and followed him. She sat down on the opposite side from him and hung her head. Something shiny came up to her eyes. She looked up to see Odd offering her a spoon.

"You need one of these," he told her. "Unless, of course, you'd rather eat some hot fudge with your hands!"

"Hey," Natalie said back, "don't compare me to Nicholas!"

The two laughed it up and started digging into their ice cream. Odd took a huge scoop of vanilla and shoved it into his mouth all at once. Natalie placed a tiny scoop of strawberry into her mouth and opened a textbook.

"So that formula is speed divided by--"

"ARRRGGGGGGG!!!!!!!!!!!"

Natalie looked up with a shock and saw Odd hold his head in pain. Her eyes grew wide as he stood up. For all she knew, XANA could be attacking him head-on! She stood up out of her seat, dropping her textbooks on the floor, and ran to Odd.

"Brain freeze!!" he shouted. "VERY BAD BRAIN FREEZE!!!"

Natalie started cracking up and hugged Odd from behind. He clenched his teeth and squeezed his eyelids together to stop the cold from taking over his head. He shook his head and let out a long sigh.

"That's better," he huffed, relieved. "Thanks for the hug!"

"You're welcome!" Natalie replied, letting go of him. "Now since I helped you get rid of the brain freeze, will you help me understand physics?"

"Of course. Now, you wanted to know the six simple machines, right?" Odd sat back down. Natalie followed and picked her books up from the floor.

"Yes, what are they?"

"Write this down. There's the pulley, lever, wheel, axle, wedge, and screw."

"What about the gear?"

"That's more of a complex one."

Natalie finished scribbling down the notes and scooped another load of strawberry ice cream and hot fudge into her mouth. After swallowing it, she turned the page in her book and studied the first few lines. After licking her spoon twice, she looked at some more notes. Odd just watched her and twirled his spoon in the vanilla.

"So, you done?" he asked.

"I think I've almost got everything from your notes," Natalie returned. "There's just this formula and...got it! Yes! Okay, I'm pretty sure I can get a good grade on the next quiz. Yumi told me that there's going to be one in the morning class today."

"With my notes, there's no way you can fail!" Odd reassured, standing up and taking the empty bowl.

"Are you ready to head back to school? We need to be in bed before Jim comes looking for us."

"Oh yeah! Let's go!"

Natalie gathered her books and headed for the door. Odd placed the bowl back on the counter and followed her into the city back towards school.

Back at Kadic Junior High, Odd walked Natalie back to her room. She put her hand on the doorknob and stopped to say good-night. She smiled at him and gave the peace sign.

"Thanks for the ice cream," she said. "I had a really great time."

"So," Odd began, "when can I take you out again? How are you doing in biology? I can tutor you on

those subjects."

"Actually, Odd..." Natalie trailed, frowning, "I don't think it would be a good idea."

"Why not?"

"Well, I heard somewhere that you kissed this girl named Samantha once. I don't want anyone to think you were two-timing, so maybe you should stay away from me. I'm just doing it for your own good."

"Oh," Odd softly gasped, "I see."

"Good night. I'll see you tomorrow."

Natalie closed the door behind her just as Odd started to walk away. She tossed her books on the floor and stretched her arms. After taking her boots off, she flopped onto her bed. She blinked for a little while before finally closing her eyes and falling asleep.

The vent above her started to emit a strange black ooze. It fell down on top of Natalie and entered her body from wherever it could. The last of it drooled itself into her ears. Within her mind, a small, mechanical voice came to her and said:

"You and I are one again."

4 - Part 4-Natalie Deactivates a Tower

Natalie woke up the next morning to the sound of a strange buzzing within her head. She gently picked it up off the pillow and felt a pain surge up her spine right to the center of her brain. She fell back down and held her head in pain like Odd had done the day before when he had brain freeze. She gritted her teeth and tried to suck in air; however, the attempt was futile.

"You can't escape," the voice said. "You are mine! You always were! Don't think you can escape just because you've been materialized."

"I don't...know what...you're talking...about!" Natalie shouted to herself. "I don't know who you are...or why you're in my...head...but I want you out...NOW!!!" Natalie thrashed her head back and forth in her pillow to escape the monster in her mind. No matter how hard she shook, the voice just grew stronger.

"So, you've become something more of a fighter, eh?" the voice continued. "Well, that won't be enough to stop me. You could barely save your sister! Now look at the condition she's in. She's still trapped."

"I don't have...a sister!" Natalie replied, her fingers spreading out in her hair. She held on tighter until her body finally gave out and she crashed in a simple sleeping position. Her mind literally crashed. It stopped working and she stopped breathing for a minute. Her heart wasn't beating, and if you didn't know better, you'd say she was dead.

Someone knocked on Natalie's door.

"Natalie!" Ulrich called. "Are you awake? Come on. Let's go to the cafeteria before all the good pastries are taken."

"Not that there are any good pastries," Jeremy corrected, "but there are some that don't taste like rubber unlike the other ones they serve during the second half of breakfast. You have to be an early bird if you want the decent ones."

"Come on, the scones aren't that bad," Ulrich argued, knocking on the door again. "Are you ready to go yet? Natalie, this is serious. Why aren't you answering?"

"Maybe she's still asleep."

"I thought Natalie was a light sleeper."

"She could have been studying with Odd all night."

"But Odd's already in the cafeteria and probably eating my scone! Let's go, Natalie!! Time to come back from Dream Land!!"

Natalie opened up the door with a sudden whoosh. Ulrich and Jeremy watched her step out into the hallway. Her eyes looked tired, and her hair was trashed. The boys grew confused and concerned.

"You woke me," she muttered. "I was sleeping peacefully before you two came along."

"Sorry," Jeremy replied. "It's just that we were a little worried. You didn't answer no matter how hard we pounded."

"And it's breakfast time," Ulrich added. "Odd's already at the cafeteria. Yumi should be here any minute. We wanted you to come with us to eat."

"How thoughtful of you," Natalie rewarded. "I'd love to join you for a little morning snack."

"You might want to brush your hair first," Ulrich suggested. "You've got a serious case of bed-head."

Natalie ran back into her room and looked in the mirror. She laughed at her reflection. "Yeah, I suppose. Okay, I'll fix myself up, and you two can head down to the cafeteria. Is that okay with you guys?"

"Are you sure you're okay?" Jeremy asked. "To be honest, I'm worried about you. I mean, being a Fighter of Lyoko when you just moved here...is it all kinda overwhelming? I can understand if you want to take it easy next time he attacks. You don't have to go into Lyoko or have your mobile on if you don't

want to."

Natalie hesitated as her face turned sour. She gave Jeremy a death stare and stomped off into her room and slammed the door behind her. Jeremy and Ulrich stood in slight shock for a moment and then turned to each other. They didn't need to ask what the other one was thinking--it was too obvious.

"I think XANA's up to something," Jeremy announced. "You should stop Odd from eating your scone. I'll deal with this myself. Aelita may not have seen anything when we contacted her yesterday, but that doesn't mean that something could come up today. Do you mind saving me a breakfast bar though?"

"That's not a problem," Ulrich returned. "You're one of the only people I know that actually enjoys the breakfast bars."

Jeremy laughed and smiled. Ulrich gave a thumbs-up, and the two ran off in different directions.

Inside the cafeteria, Odd sat at a table across from Yumi gently picking at some scrambled eggs sitting on his plate. Yumi swallowed the last of her milk and cocked an eyebrow at his behavior. Odd looked up for a second but didn't mind Yumi staring down at him. He just shook his head and started rolling a half-eaten sausage from one end of the plate to another. Now Yumi was afraid. This was not Odd's typical behavior. Usually, he'd be cracking jokes at Sissy or complaining about how the snack machines would always take his money. No, this was a serious issue that Yumi needed to address.

"Odd, you don't seem like yourself," she told him up front. "What's wrong? You look like you've been hit by a bus. You didn't even take Ulrich's scone at the line for breakfast! Can you tell me what happened?"

"I dunno," Odd mumbled. "I guess if I can tell anyone, I can tell you. After all, you had some of the same issues with Ulrich for some time."

"Is it about a girl you like? Maybe Samantha?"

"I'm over Samantha. It's another girl."

"Then id it Natalie?"

Odd shuffled in his spot when Yumi hit the nail on the head. He slumped over and found himself staring at a very interesting table. He let out a sigh and did his best to look up at his friend.

"It's just that she turned me down for studying time," he confessed.

"But I thought you guys went out to do that."

"We did! But then I offered to help her with her other science work, and she told me she didn't think it was a great idea to see me. She said she found out I once almost went out with Samantha. She didn't want people to think I was two-timing. So, I guess she was just trying to protect me."

"She could have been nicer though. After all, I was the one to suggest to her that she should study with you."

Odd's face turned pale pink. He rubbed his temples and looked up to see Ulrich walking towards their table. He couldn't manage a smile to greet his friend. Instead, he looked to the other side and stabbed some more eggs.

"It looks like you didn't take my scone," Ulrich said to Odd, sitting down. "At least I'll have breakfast. So what's the matter with you?"

"Natalie told him she didn't want his studying help," Yumi replied for Odd. "She was trying to keep it so people wouldn't think he was two-timing with her against Samantha."

"Where'd she hear about Samantha?"

"Who knows? I don't think any of us told her. Oh well. The point is that Odd feels as though she dumped him."

"She DID dump me," Odd muttered. "There's no doubt about that."

The three of them sat together at the table caught in a moment of silence. It was broken by Ulrich's cell phone. He picked it up and looked to see who was calling. He then turned it on.

"Jeremy!" he said. "Is something going on?"

"A tower has been activated," Jeremy told him. "Are Odd and Yumi with you?"

"Yes."

"I need all of you to come to the Factory right away. Aelita's waiting for you, and she needs your help."

"Okay, Jeremy. We'll be right there." Ulrich turned off his cell phone and put it back in his pocket.

"Jeremy needs us to go to Lyoko. A tower's been activated."

"I'm coming with you," Odd announced, standing up. "The food stinks today anyway. If I were you, Ulrich, I'd skip the scone. It probably tastes like rubber anyway."

"That's what Jeremy said!"

"Well, it's true."

"Enough about breakfast pastries, Guys," Yumi interrupted. "Jeremy called us and that means we need to leave now. Let's go before the bell rings. Jim should still be on his morning break."

Sure enough, the three of them were able to make it past Jim and the principal without a problem (They were still eating breakfast.) and got to the Factory. Jeremy turned and greeted his friends with a concerned face.

"The activated tower is in the Mountain Region," he announced. "Aelita's on her way. She was able to feel pulsations all the way from the Forest Region! That's practically on the other side of Lyoko. I think this is an incredibly extreme attack."

"But we haven't seen anything strange at all," Ulrich argued. "Nothing weird was going on at breakfast. Well, aside from Odd not taking my scone at least."

"Did anything happen last night while you and Natalie were out, Odd?" Yumi asked. "I hate to bring up that issue, but was anything happening in town? I didn't see anything at my parents' this morning."

"Nothing happened at the ice cream parlor," Odd replied. "I just gave Natalie my notes for physics, we ate ice cream, I got brain freeze, nothing out of the ordinary."

"I don't know what XANA thinks he's doing," Jeremy began, "but you three might as well go into Lyoko. Since Natalie's still at school, we can contact her for back-up. I think she wants to help. Maybe that's why she was offended by my remark this morning. Anyway, the three of you should head for the scanners. I'll begin the data transfer."

They agreed and hopped back into the elevator. It took them down to the lower level and let them off at the scanners. However, something very strange was waiting for them.

"There's a fourth scanner!!" Yumi shouted. "What's it doing here??"

"I didn't install it!" Jeremy defended. "I never knew a fourth one was there."

"There's only supposed to be three."

Aelita popped up on the supercomputer's screen and said, "I put it there. I figured since we have four fighters now, there should be four scanners in case they all have to go."

"Good idea, Aelita," Jeremy rewarded. "Get ready. Help is on the way. Transfer: Odd. Transfer: Yumi. Transfer: Ulrich." The three of them stepped into the machines and let the downloading wind consume them. "Scanner: Odd. Scanner: Yumi. Scanner: Ulrich." They spun in the devices. "Virtualization!"

The three warriors made their way into the virtual world. Each landed on his or her feet and stood in the Mountain Region. They scanned the area and saw Aelita running at them from behind a passageway.

"Thank goodness you're here!" she cried. "There's a big bunch of crabs following me from that direction. That's where the tower is located. I need your help."

"That's what we're here for," Odd reminded her. "Exactly how many crabs though?"

"I couldn't count them all."

"Jeremy, we might need Natalie."

"There's no time to wait for her," Ulrich snapped. "We need to fight now. Let's go!" He grasped his sword and ran for the tower followed by Yumi, then Odd, then Aelita. It wasn't long before some crabs caught

them from behind. Everyone looked to see five following them. Before they could even think to evade, Odd and Ulrich were both hit.

"Watch it!" Jeremy called. "Those lasers are serious. It's twenty points per impact!"

"You could have told us that BEFORE we got hit," Odd mumbled, standing up from his fall. "You know, there's not really a doctor in this house! LASER ARROW!!!" Odd hit one right on the spot. Yumi followed up with a fan and hit another. Unfortunately, she was hit by another right when she threw the fan.

"Ack! Yumi!" Ulrich shouted. He started running to the three remaining crabs. "TRIPLICATE!!!" He split into three and continued to run. One of them was hit right away while the real one and another fake got incredibly close. The real one jumped up and smacked his sword right into the monster. "IMPACT!!!" The crab stumbled and blew up just as another hit him and the fake.

"Ulrich, that's only sixty life points left," Jeremy reminded him. "Be careful. I don't know if I should call Natalie or not."

"Too late. I'm here."

Jeremy perked up from the computer screen and saw Natalie standing in the elevator doorway. She looked tense and her eyes had a strange type of eeriness to them. They frightened Jeremy somewhat, and he was nervous to let her enter a scanner.

"Are you in any condition to fight?" he asked.

"Whether I am or not," Natalie began, "I'm going in that scanner! Send me now!" With those words, she pressed the button on the elevator and went down to the lower level. Jeremy shrugged and started downloading her.

"Transfer: Natalie. Scanner: Natalie. Virtualization!" Natalie entered Lyoko without a problem. However, the transfer screen reported serious activity going on inside her. "Natalie? Are you okay?"

She didn't reply. Instead, she fell to the ground with a hard smack.

"NATALIE!!" Jeremy cried. "Oh no...Yumi! You're closest to Natalie. Please go get her. She's not that far away."

"You got it!" Yumi replied, running from the crabs. She ran down the passageway and gently rubbed Natalie's back. "Are you okay? C'mon!"

Natalie woke up with a start and sprang to her feet. At first, Yumi was happy to see she was alright, but she started to feel suspicious and scared. Without a warning, she pushed Yumi to the ground, took out her guns, and said the two words that would decide Yumi's fate.

"Bullet happy."

"THAT'S IT!!!" Jeremy shouted. "XANA INFECTED NATALIE WITH A VIRUS WHILE WE WERE SLEEPING!!! SHE'S GOING TO TRY TO KILL EVERYONE!!!"

Meanwhile, Ulrich, Odd, and Aelita heard everything that was said. Ulrich and Odd continued to fight as Aelita watched two more crabs come out in front of them. She couldn't say anything. She was petrified. She looked out beyond the passageway and saw Yumi run from Natalie's attacks. Suddenly, Aelita and Jeremy knew why there were so many. The crabs formed something of a wall around the three fighters. Natalie stood across from them and smirked.

"Why did you betray us??" Odd cried. "I thought we were friends!"

"Do your work," Natalie said to the crabs. They fired all at once, materializing everyone except Natalie and Aelita.

Jeremy watched in horror as the three of them came up to the supercomputer. Everyone was scared stiff at what this evil Natalie would do to Aelita. They watched the crabs move out of the way so Natalie could pass. She walked the path to the tower and entered it.

"We're going to die," Jeremy mumbled between tears. "I can't believe we didn't see it before. It was so obvious that Natalie was infected by XANA."

Natalie floated up to the top level and placed her hand on a screen. It read, "Welcome back, Natalie." It then asked for the code.

The crabs outside cornered Aelita and got ready to fire.

L-Y-O-K-O

With a big sigh of relief, Jeremy pressed the return button. "Return to the past...now?" He wasn't sure what changed Natalie's mind at the last second.

Natalie stood with Odd in front of her door.

"I don't need any help," she told him. "What about you?"

"I could use some English tutoring," Odd replied. "Uh, want to go to my room?"

"Sure."

5 - Part 5-Similar DNA

Odd, Ulrich, and Natalie ran around the Polar Region at top speed trying to fend off all of the Wasp Monsters blocking the tower. Aelita hid behind a glacier and watched as each of the fighters did his or her best. Jeremy sat in the Factory with Yumi at his side. (She had lost in Lyoko.) Yumi made fists and started shouting at the computer when everyone was losing life points.

“Ulrich!” she cried. “That poison is killing you!”

“It’s not Ulrich we have to worry about,” Jeremy reminded her. “He still has eighty life points. Natalie only has forty. Odd is down to his last ten.”

“LASER ARROW!!!” Odd shouted, shooting his last ammo at a wasp flying for him. The wasp hit him just as the arrow shot its XANA symbol.

“Odd!” Natalie called, in denial that he had lost. She turned to a wasp flying for Aelita and aimed. “BULLET HAPPY!!!” She shot a few bullets at that wasp and a second one. Both exploded on the spot.

“Nice shot, Natalie,” Ulrich rewarded. “Now watch this one! TRIANGULATE!!!” He ran around the last wasp at full speed in a triangular form. Confused, the wasp shot its poison at a fake one. The real Ulrich ran up to the monster with his sword held high. “IMPACT!!!”

Aelita let out a sigh of relief when she saw the last monster was gone. She ran across an icy ledge and melted into the tower. Once inside, she floated up to the top level and gave the screen the code.

“RETURN TO THE PAST, NOW!!!”

Sissy, Herb, and Nicholas walked over to Jeremy, Odd, Ulrich, Yumi, and Natalie. Flipping her hair behind her shoulder, Sissy grabbed onto Natalie's shoulder.

“Would you like to-“

“Sit with you at lunch?” Natalie finished. “No. And another thing: I’m no good at Physics. Maybe you should ask Odd to help you study.”

“ODD??” Sissy exploded, turning to Natalie's friend. Odd smiled his big, goofy smile and gave the peace sign. Sissy gave a sour face and stomped off to get away from the strange boy. Herb and Nicholas followed just as the others started to laugh.

“I did that to Sissy once,” Ulrich told Natalie. “It was pretty funny to see the look of shock on her face when she thought I read her mind.”

“Oh yeah!” Jeremy remembered. “I told Aelita that she should come for a visit today. Let's go to the Factory and see if we can start up the materialization program for her.” Jeremy turned and walked off towards the lab. His friends followed him, but Yumi stopped short when she realized something was not right. She watched Natalie walk ahead with the rest of the boys. For a split-second, Yumi could have sworn that she saw something on Natalie's forehead. It reminded her of the time when the gang had to fight her clone. Still suspicious and not satisfied, she reluctantly agreed to herself to keep moving with the rest of her friends.

“Are you okay, Yumi?” Natalie asked, seeing the look on her face.

“It's nothing.”

“Are you sure?”

“It's nothing!”

Natalie jumped back from the snappy remark and joined up with Odd, Ulrich, and Jeremy. Looking behind herself, she saw the look of anger and betrayal in Yumi's eyes. They scared her. She bit her lip and refused to look any longer.

In the Factory, the gang stood around a single scanner waiting for their virtual friend to arrive. The scanner doors opened with a whoosh, and Aelita lay in a pile on the floor of the machine. She looked up and smiled at the gang as Jeremy held out his hand. She took it and stood to her feet.

“It feels good to be on Earth again,” she told them. “Besides, I wanted to interact with the Human form of Natalie.”

“Hey! Look at this thing!” Natalie cheered, walking next to the materialized Aelita. “Is it a prize for winning in Lyoko??”

Aelita cocked an eyebrow when Natalie started to poke her in the arm. She seemed amused. Yumi, feeling some annoyance growing, grabbed Natalie's arm and stopped her poking torture.

“That's enough, okay?” she asked. “Do be so silly. That's Aelita...!” Yumi stopped and stared at the two girls standing next to each other. She let go of Natalie's arm and stepped back in shock. She covered her mouth and mumbled, “Same...faces...”

“What?” Ulrich asked. “Are you okay, Yumi?”

“Don't you see?” she shouted, indicating Natalie and Aelita. “They have the same faces! They look almost exactly alike!”

The boys jerked their heads to the two girls and tried to observe them. Yumi had a point. Both Natalie and Aelita had similar face shapes as well as the same eyes. Their ears were the same shape, and their

mouths looked alike in form. The thing most different about the girls was their hair. Aelita's was the pink color; Natalie's was bright red with brown tips.

Curious, Jeremy decided to investigate. Thinking fast, he told the group, "I'm going to work on the Anti-Virus for Aelita. Why don't the rest of you go to class? I have all the information in the computer I need. Besides, the four of you missed the last lesson because of the squabble in Lyoko."

"Yeah, I guess we should go," Odd agreed. "Mrs. Hertz is giving a lecture on mass today! It'll be a perfect opportunity for me to brush up on some drawing skills!"

"And I need to study," Ulrich chimed in. "Are you coming, Natalie? You missed the notes from your last math class."

"Let me come, too!" Aelita begged. "I'd like to see how the science here works."

"I'll show you all my notes after class."

"Oh, right, time was reversed. I can't go back to school."

"Why not go to the ice cream parlor?" Ulrich pulled a five-dollar bill out of his pocket. "Go ahead. It's my treat. You must be hungry."

"I am."

Ulrich, Natalie, Odd, and Aelita walked towards the elevator and pressed the button to go down. Once the doors closed, Yumi turned to Jeremy with serious eyes.

"I'm not going," she announced. "I'm getting a little suspicious about our friend Natalie. She just appeared one day and suddenly was able to go into Lyoko. How can we be so sure she's not a spy for XANA?"

"She was able to break past that impossible firewall," Jeremy remembered, scratching his chin. "I wasn't even able to decode it. How come a new student that just appeared could get past it? She doesn't even know anything about computers!"

"You can say that again," Yumi agreed. "She barely knows anything in any of our classes. I have English, math, science, and history with her. I've never seen her in French, P.E., art, or computers...wait! I did see her in computers once. I was walking by to get back to my class when I passed by the classroom she was in. I stopped to wave to her, but I didn't at the last second. She seemed to be talking to the rest of the class a lot, and I heard her recite some of the most complicated calculations I ever heard! It was as if she was..."

"Aelita?" Jeremy finished. "There's no way she could have anything to do with Aelita! Natalie just moved to this town a few-"

"If she and her family moved to this town, how come she doesn't live at home like I do? She should be living with her parents. The only reason you guys have rooms here is because your families live in

different towns, states, or countries.”

“You're right. You're absolutely right! Why didn't I see it before? We must have been blinded by the joy of Natalie being here.”

“Let's go to the super computer. I have a hunch we've got a XANA monster here.”

Jeremy nodded and the two of them ran into the elevator. Jeremy pressed the button, and they came to the upper level. As soon as the doors opened, Jeremy ran to the computer and typed in whatever he could.

“I'm bringing up the data on both Natalie and Aelita,” he explained as their information came up. “If Natalie does have something to do with Aelita or Lyoko, we could find it out here.”

“Don't get me wrong,” Yumi begged. “I like Natalie. I think she's a great friend. I'm only concerned for everyone else's sake. What if she is a XANA spy? She could be gathering so much data and use it to find out our weaknesses and destroy us all!”

“Don't even talk like that, Yumi!” Jeremy shouted. “How dare you think a person that has been fighting for us this whole time could be a Monster of XANA?!” Jeremy continued to type and brought up the information screen for Natalie. He looked at some of her information and realized a lot of it was unknown. Things like her birthday, her age, her parents, her siblings, and other personal information did not have a definite answer.

“Does she have a birth certificate?” Yumi asked. “That would explain a lot.”

“I'll check.” Jeremy clicked for the other information to come up. He searched through the entire data bank, but the findings for a birth certificate, a birth date, a time of birth, and a birthplace were unfruitful. Scratching his head, Jeremy went back to the main screen for the two girls. He sat back in his chair and looked at the main information. “Both of them have the same factors unknown,” he announced. “We know that Aelita does not have any personal information, but Natalie has the same information missing! Now that's weird.”

“A coincidence or a clue?”

“I don't know.” Jeremy looked over the same data again and again. His brain started to buzz with confusion and frustration. He leaned over the keyboard and held his face in his hands with his elbows down on the table. He studied the computer screen with his glasses sliding down to the tip of his nose.

“Aelita, Natalie,” Yumi murmured, “Aelita, Natalie...”

Jeremy perked up just as Yumi said that single chant. His eyes grew wide, and his hands started to shake. Yumi cocked her head and watched Jeremy's nimble fingers go to work. She saw him go to a typing screen.

“This is it!” he announced, unable to hold his excitement. “Why didn't we see this before? It's so obvious! Their names are the connection!” He typed in “Natalie” on the blank screen. Yumi watched

with increasing curiosity. Jeremy continued, "Look at Natalie's name. It's a seven-letter word, right? Well, look what happens when you take the `N' away. Now we have six letters. That's the same amount as the number of letters in `Aelita'. You might think it's just a coincidence, but look at what happens when you mix up the letters. If you scramble the letters in `Natalie' without the `N', you get..."

"Aelita..." Yumi whispered, seeing Jeremy move the letters around. She gritted her teeth and pushed some hair behind her ears. "What else is there?" she finally managed to ask. "Does the bank have anymore valuable data?"

"I'm checking." Jeremy clicked on the DNA sample and brought both strings at a close-up on the screen. He smirked and showed them to Yumi. "That explains a lot. When materialized, they have exact same DNA! That can't be a coincidence."

"Natalie came from Lyoko..." Yumi mumbled. "She was once an inhabitant. I don't...believe it."

"It's shocking," Jeremy agreed. "I don't know how hard that will be for everyone else to accept."

"How do we get her to admit it?"

"I'm just worried about how Odd will feel."

"That's another primal concern."

"There's no need to worry."

Jeremy and Yumi jerked their heads up towards the elevator and saw Natalie walking towards them. She had a stern and serious expression on her face as she turned to face the computer. Jeremy looked up at her with upset eyes and frowned. Natalie's gaze didn't move from the screen.

"I think it's time I should tell you about my past."

6 - Part 6-Happiness

Natalie set her palms down on the desk surrounding the keyboard. Yumi and Jeremy watched as she let out a sigh and clicked to her profile of personal information. She then clicked on Aelita's profile and brought the two next to one another. There were shadows covering her eyes, and her pale lips moved mysteriously.

"It all started back before you guys came to Kadic Junior High," she explained. At that moment, the elevator opened to reveal Odd, Ulrich, and Aelita.

"What gives, Natalie?" Odd asked. "You were about to head back to school, and then you go and walk back to the Factory! Are you just asking for a detention?"

"Quiet!" Yumi ordered. "She's telling us something."

"All of a sudden," Natalie continued, "my eyes just opened. I had no idea where I was or who I was. I was alone in a strange world. That is, until I voice started ringing in my head. It told me to stand; I did. My legs were surprisingly strong, and I could walk on my own. Then it told me to walk to the center of the platform. As soon as I did, a screen came up with a long list. The voice told me to pick a name from the list. That name would be my name. I scrolled down and chose one. That is who you know me as today."

"So you named yourself?" Ulrich tried to understand. Natalie didn't reply. She continued to speak:

"And then the voice told me to call it something. It wanted me to call it XANA. I was eager to please, and I called him by his request. XANA later told me that he was a he. He then told me that I was a she. He taught me so much. He taught me to speak. He taught me everything he knew about Lyoko, computers, virtualization, materialization, and everything else within the computer worlds. My knowledge and memory was infinite. I could remember so many things, and I was able to understand everything quickly. I learned at an alarming rate, and I soon became smarter than XANA himself."

"Your knowledge surpasses XANA??" Jeremy exploded. "That's impossible! Aelita, does your knowledge surpass his?"

"No," Aelita replied, holding fists at her heart, "my knowledge is actually less than XANA. Natalie knows far more than I do."

"So you knew about her all along?" Yumi asked through gasps. "Why didn't you say anything?? We could have known about Natalie all along and stopped all these crazy XANA attacks!"

"Natalie didn't want me to say anything," Aelita mumbled. "She made me promise that she'd never be known again."

A silence became over everyone. The frustration and betrayal that the fighters felt was overwhelming to the point of tears. The Lyoko natives felt guilt rising in their now-Human souls. Aelita turned away and mumbled something inaudible. Natalie kept a straight face and continued:

"When XANA realized that my knowledge surpassed his own, he started to panic. He also knew that I was created a fighter. I could defend myself against his monsters. I had those two guns and my Bullet Happy attack. So desperate to remain the ruler of Lyoko, he called me to a tower in the Forest Region. It was the Materialization Tower. I entered it and floated up to the next level. When I got there, I got the biggest surprise. There was another girl sitting on the other side of the platform. XANA told me that this was my sister, and he told me to name her. I thought for a moment and said, 'Aelita'. She then opened her eyes, smiled at me, and called me 'Sister'."

"From then on out, we were together all the time," Aelita picked up. "Natalie taught me everything. I learned quickly. But more, XANA's plan was working. XANA was trying to distract Natalie with a sister

so she would not be able to gain any more knowledge. He figured that he would forever remain the most intelligent A.I. in the universe as long as my sister was busy with me. One day, we found that out.”

“XANA must have not liked that move,” Odd commented, placing a hand on his hip. “He must have been really ticked off.”

“He was,” Aelita confirmed. “That was when he told us to come back to the Materialization Tower. We obeyed and found ourselves struck with an offer. XANA would materialize one of us if we both promised to never tell anyone about Lyoko and if we refused to gain more knowledge of computers. Well, it was quite an offer to us! However, we didn’t have much of a choice. I turned to Natalie and told her that she should be the one. She had been the Protector of Lyoko for too long. I also whispered to her that I had felt something new that day.”

“Pulsations, right?” Jeremy questioned. Aelita nodded and said:

“That’s when I knew our ‘father’ had become infected with that evil virus. Natalie turned away and softly nodded her head. She walked to the middle of the platform and turned back to me. Before XANA could do anything, I ran up to her and pressed my fingers against her forehead. I told her, ‘When you become materialized, wait until midnight in the Real World. When that happens, wake up and walk off these school grounds. The super computer and scanners are located in a place called Kadic Junior High. Sneak off the grounds and walk down six blocks. There’s an orphanage at the corner. Fall asleep on the stoop. When you awake, you will be taken care of.’ With those final words, XANA snatched Natalie away from me and sent her to your world.”

Yumi bit her lip and said, “Then Natalie is connected to XANA as well. You still have the virus inside you, but does Natalie have that same virus?”

“I’m afraid so,” Aelita confirmed. “You guys saw when Natalie was acting strange in Lyoko. That was the day she deactivated the tower. Well, when time was reversed, it was the same predicament. XANA’s virus dwells within both of us.”

Ulrich shook his head. He turned to the computer screen, where Natalie’s gaze had not left. He looked at the stats of the Lyoko inhabitants. “If the two of them have the same virus, why not transfer the virus to just one of them?” he suggested. “That way, one can stay in the Real World, and we can work on the anti-virus for the other.”

“I’ll send you all to Lyoko now!” Jeremy agreed. “Natalie, Aelita, the two of you will have to share a scanner.”

“Let’s go,” Yumi said, determined to fix the mess. “We don’t have much time!”

Odd pulled Natalie away from the computer screen, and the five of them ran inside the elevator. Ulrich pressed the button, and they traveled down to the scanners. Natalie and Aelita squeezed together in one while the other three each stepped inside his or her own.

“I’ll send you to the Forest Region,” Jeremy told them. “Get to the Materialization Tower as soon as you can, but you should watch out. There might be a few monsters. XANA might have gotten the message, okay? Get ready. Transfer: Ulrich. Transfer: Natalie and Aelita. Transfer: Odd. Transfer: Yumi.” The five of them spun together and let the wind consume them. “Scanner: Ulrich. Scanner: Natalie and Aelita. Scanner: Odd. Scanner: Yumi.” They took the final spin. “Virtualization!”

The five fighters landed in Lyoko all safe and sound. They started running together at top speed towards the tower. Out of the corner of her eye, Yumi spotted a Mega-tank.

“Go ahead,” she told the team. “I’ll handle him.”

“You’ll need backup,” Ulrich insisted. He turned to Odd. “Take these two to the tower, all right?”

Odd nodded and began running with the girls straight ahead. Seeing that there were no other Mega-tanks, Yumi pulled out a fan.

“I’ve got an idea,” she told her fellow fighter. “Follow my lead and make sure he doesn’t go after Odd and the other girls.” Ulrich nodded and started to run towards the monster. Yumi then ran behind a tree

to take cover and pressed her fingers to her temples. Her body started to develop a red aura. "Telekinesis," she murmured. She grabbed a boulder near her and slowly brought it up to the sky. The Mega-tank tried to aim and hit Ulrich, and Yumi knew it could not see above it as long as its shield was covering it. At the last second, the monster opened to hit Ulrich; but Yumi's boulder made it all the way to him and smashed the monster with a single hit. Yumi fell, exhausted and weak. Ulrich ran over to her and let her lean on his shoulder.

"That was a great plan," he whispered. "Hang on, okay? I'm going to bring you to the tower."

"Just leave me here."

"No way! What if another Mega-tank comes?"

"We only need to protect Natalie and Aelita."

"I'm bringing you anyway."

Ulrich started to walk ahead as fast as he could while still keeping Yumi standing. She moaned something and caused a smile to form on Ulrich's face. There was no denying it: he was in love.

Odd, Natalie, and Aelita finally made their way to the Materialization Tower. Aelita smiled up at it and turned to her sister.

"This is it!" she cried. "Now all we need to do is decide who will stay in Lyoko."

"Make your choice quickly," Odd told them. "There's another Mega-tank coming. I can hear the rolling all the way here."

"Can you take it on your own?"

"No problem! Go on in."

Odd smiled his world famous smile and charged towards the enemy. While he was running, he gasped as the visions came. He saw a quick flash of Aelita and Natalie hugging, then Aelita floating up the tower, and then Natalie closing her eyes. He snapped back to reality in an instant and looked behind himself to see that the two of them had melted into the tower.

"I really hope we can materialize them both," he mumbled to himself. "Aelita's our best friend, and Natalie is the girl I think I love."

He shook his head and continued running with his arrows ready.

Natalie and Aelita stood together in the tower and faced each other. Both wanted to be materialized, but both also wanted to bring the other one with her. Natalie crossed her arms and gave a sour face.

"You go," she ordered. "I'm paying you back for letting me be materialized before."

"Thank you, Sister," Aelita replied. She and Natalie held hands and floated up to the top level. Aelita then looked up to talk to Jeremy. "We decided that I'll be the one," she announced. "What should we do?"

"You two have to hug each other in order for me to transfer the whole virus to Natalie," Jeremy replied.

"After that, I'll materialize you."

Aelita nodded and turned to her sister. Natalie held onto her hands and suddenly embraced Aelita with a soft squeeze. Aelita returned the hug, and Jeremy went to work. He started typing in a few calculations and pressed the enter button.

"You should be feeling slight pain," he told them. The girls moaned in reply, signaling that this was occurring. Jeremy hated the fact that they were hurt, but he continued until there was shock between the girls. They broke away with a sudden jolt and were sent crashing to the floor. "Hurry, Aelita!" Jeremy called. "I've got to materialize you before XANA can do anything!"

Aelita nodded and ran to the center of the platform. Natalie watched in awe as her sister floated gently to the top of the tower. With tears in his eyes, Jeremy pressed the enter button once again and said,

"Code: Earth."

Aelita disappeared in a split-second and reappeared in a scanner. Once she was conscious, she stood up and ran for the elevator. She pressed the button and went up to the top level. There, she didn't only find Jeremy, but the rest of the fighters, too.

"We all defeated the Mega-tanks but lost our life points in the process," Yumi told her. "Don't worry though. They're all gone."

"Thank you," Aelita mumbled. "I'm sure my sister is happy."

"Maybe she can tell you herself," Jeremy announced, smirking. "Natalie got past an impossible firewall with her use of extreme knowledge. Her Lyoko file was there. Maybe the key to getting rid of the virus is there, too!"

"XANA created that firewall to keep the existence of Natalie unknown!" Aelita cried. "That section contains all of the answers. I don't have as much knowledge as my sister, but I will try my best!" She ran over to the computer and access the section past the firewall. Looking at all the information, her eyes widened when she came upon one section. She smiled big and let tiny tears of joy fall.

"That's it, isn't it?" Jeremy asked, smiling along with her. Aelita nodded and clicked on the picture of Natalie.

"Do the same thing as you did to me," she said, "but press this button instead." She pointed to the Home button in the section with the six keys together in a rectangle. Covering her mouth to keep from screaming in joy, she backed away from the computer and let Jeremy go to work.

"So, you figured it out, huh?"

The team perked up from their celebration party as Jeremy brought the communication screen up. There was Natalie talking in XANA's voice. "I see you figured out how to heal any of my viruses. Lot of work that will do. I infected Natalie because I wanted my daughter back. I wanted her to remember who she was and hopefully to join with me again. It looks like that failed. You got my virus out of my second daughter. You're going to get my first daughter. I can't change that, but I can reboot myself to another super computer. I guess all that's left to say is good job, Jeremy. You defeated me this time, but let's see if anyone else can."

"There will always be someone that can defeat you, XANA!" Jeremy shouted.

"Sounds like a challenge," XANA replied. "Oh well. Once again, good job, and please take care of my daughters."

The screen disappeared and Jeremy went straight to work. He pressed all the buttons and finished up with the Home button.

"I hope this works," he said. "Code: Earth. Virtual Revival!"

Dear Journal,

We learned something today. Along with the return of our two Lyoko friends came a lesson in friendship. Who would have thought it took an A.I., a XANA creation, and an evil virus to make us realize this? I guess all that matters out of all this is that we have two new friends here with us. These two, we met because of XANA. He created both of them. Aelita is sleeping at Yumi's right now, and Natalie is across the hall from Odd and me. Jeremy and Odd are the happiest people alive right now. Their girlfriends from Lyoko are on Earth. Yes, I said girlfriends! The look in Odd's eyes was so sweet; it almost brought me to tears. Jeremy was overflowed with joy when it came to Aelita being virus-free. Those sisters are now complete Humans. I just hope that no agents come and inspect them, because they still have the exact same DNA! (laughs) Well, enough of that. We shut down Lyoko today, and I don't think XANA was fast enough to make it to another computer. Hopefully, he was destroyed along with Lyoko. However, that's only a hope. But that hope has something much more important than XANA's destruction. Hope today taught us about love. We now know more than ever that it doesn't matter

whether someone was born on Earth, born in Lyoko, or born from XANA. That person can still be happy. In this case, I'm happy with my Earth girl. That's right. Yumi is my girl now. I'd like to see Sissy bother me anymore! (laughs again) Well, all is right with us now. The boys and I are happy. The girls are happy. XANA is most likely gone. We look forward to a happy future.

-Ulrich

THE END