

# Sailor Moon P

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*There is a new Sailor Soldier in town, and a new plot to steal the energy of the Earth. The first chapter is short and kinda sucks because I wrote it ages ago, but starting chapter 2 it gains real credibility and depth unfolding an epic story about*

Provided by Fanart Central.

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# 1 - Episode 0: Introduction

Sailor Moon P  
Introduction:

This series is like...the Sailor Moon movies. They take place within the borders of a given series but you're never quite sure where. This one takes place over the course of one week between Venus's arrival and Zoicite's confrontation with Tuxedo Mask.

So, in short, we have five sailors, Moon, Mercury, Mars, Jupiter, and Venus who don't know their pasts, one Tuxedo Mask who is desperately gathering Rainbow Crystals in order to return the Imperium Silver Crystal to his dream princess, and Evil Queen Beryl who's only remaining Generals, Malachite and Zoicite, are trying to collect the Rainbow Crystals for their queen so that she can release the Negaforce on the earth.

I have considered all series into this novel, and have applied some ideas of my own. If you are not familiar with the show, the original Sailor Moon series in specific, you will be lost on some of the loose ends, and you will also find the finale to be quite a confusing mess. I suggest that you take a quick recap of what happened during the first season of Sailor Moon and report back here when you know what is going on.

If you are brave please continue. I have several invented characters, with various relationships, attitudes, and ways of affecting the world of Sailor Moon. It is my hope that you find these characters to be entertaining and fun. I hope you fall in love with them as I have.

As for names and powers...I'm a fan of the Japanese Sailor Moon, but since I have not seen the original series in Japanese, I don't know many of the Japanese names and un 'DiC'ed attitudes of the characters. So in short, Zoicite is a girl, Malachite is straight, and poor Tuxedo Mask goes by Darien, not Mamoru. But for the record, I much prefer the Japanese names at any cost, so if you want to, every time a character says Darien's name, be thinking Mamoru in your head. Powers, I've kept Japanese...Moon Tiara Action, Bubble Spray, Fire Soul, Supreme Thunder, and Crescent Beam. I unfortunately don't know the direct translation of Moon Healing Activation, but I'd rather stick with just that than having Mercury running around shouting Mercury Bubbles Blast everywhere.

Now that you have a lowdown, I hope you enjoy my fanfic. It is a pleasant splash of action, adventure, mystery, comedy, and a little bit of romance on a teen crush perspective. Have fun! North Star Power...NOW!

~Jameson~

## 2 - Episode 1: Sailor Polaris

Sailor Moon P

Episode 1 : Sailor Polaris

Night had fallen on the Moon Kingdom of the Silver Millennium. Queen Serenity, her silver hair falling around her, watched as her daughter was taken and killed before her eyes. All around her, her kingdom was crumbling. Her people were dying, and her culture was vanishing. The Negaverse, a power-hungry race of world domineers, were spreading through her satellite. She saw the earth on the horizon, darkened by the presence of overpowering negative energy. The whole of the Zodiac system was under their power, now. Her peers were dead; her loved ones were dead; and most importantly, the next generation were all destroyed. There was nothing left. The beautiful era she'd been raised in was over. The queen, tears in her eyes, fell to her knees in defeat. She could hear the malicious laughter of Beryl, Queen of the Negaverse as it echoed around the ruins of her palace. She glanced to where the body of her young, blonde, 14-year-old heir was hanging suspended in the air near her dead fiancé from Earth. They were going to inherit the throne, and unite the Earth and Moon in a bond of eternal harmony. But, the evil queen would rule her kingdom now, and turn her peaceful land into a pit of villainy. She looked down to the wand she held in her hand, and the glittering orb-like crystal resting in the curve of the crescent. She heard a voice nearby. "Your Majesty!!!"

The two magic cats Luna and Artemis were standing at her feet. She held up the Crescent Moon Wand. "There is only one hope..."

"No! Your Highness! Not the Imperium Silver Crystal!" Luna begged.

"I have no choice." She removed the treasure of the moon kingdom from its place and held it before her. "I will send everyone to the future where they may live happily forever."

"Queen Serenity-!?" Artemis said, disbelieving.

"They will live in peace on Earth." She said, tears still flowing. "I will use the last of my energy to make sure that everyone will be happy."

"But Serenity! If you do that..." Artemis was too frightened to finish, but his monarch knew what he was trying to say.

"I know, but if the Negaverse wins, then no one will live." Serenity said, woefully.

"It is the greatest sacrifice." Luna said. "But your kingdom will live on."

"No..." New tears came as her heart broke. "They will have no memory of this place, or our lives here. They will not remember me." The crystal floated and left her hand. "In case the Negaverse attacks again, the Sailor Soldiers will be available to combat them. It will be your mission to find them."

The cats gasped.

"Now go...and find the Moon Princess, so that our kingdom and my beloved daughter will not truly die. The Negaverse will not win as long as Princess Serenity lives."

"YOUR MAJESTY!?" But in a flash, they were encapsulated and sent away. All over the solar system, members of the royal families were disappearing and phasing into the future. The columns fell around her as the bubbles of their energy trailed away. She lay against one, her energy nearly spent, and watched as the last of them vanished. Now, with her entire world broken and crashing down around her, she was completely alone. She sobbed for her herself, her kingdom, and her child. Even though she loved it all so much, she would be forgotten, and unable to join them in the kingdom of the future. It broke her heart.

Then a voice, and a turquoise cat appeared from behind one of the fallen columns, her great brown eyes opened widely. "Queen Serenity?" The queen looked up and cast her forlorn silver-blue eyes to her.

The cat stepped tentatively forward. "What is happening?"

"It's over." Serenity sighed, drops of sadness splashing on her empty wand. "I am left alone and unremembered, and will die."

"You are not alone, my queen." The cat said. "I am here."

She looked to the cat. "Yes."

"And we will all die." She added.

The queen realized that this young soul and many like her would not survive the fall of her kingdom either. It was terrible.

The young feline walked up and sat down beside her. "And... I haven't forgotten you."

Serenity gazed down, somehow, this little person had touched her heart. It was because, even though it seemed that she had failed, Queen Serenity was still loved by her people. It seemed that this young feline didn't mind perishing with her. She smiled weakly. "What is your name?"

"Niobe, your highness."

"Were you a member of the court?"

"No, your highness." She answered. "But I frequented your palace. My mother, in life, was an important name in our society."

"Niobe," Serenity's smile warmed. "You are noble and compassionate to think of me in the midst of all of this turmoil. Even Luna and Artemis will not remember me in the future; they will remember only the mission I have given them. You..." She reached her hand out, "you will be the keeper of my memory. You alone will recall still the ways and people of the Silver Millennium. When you arrive in the future; find the others. They are looking for the Moon Princess and the Sailor Soldiers. With a memory, you will help them greatly. I will make it so that you can show them the past and help them in the future." Her body began to shimmer and dissipate as she reached out and touched the cat. Placing her finger in the crescent moon shape on Niobe's forehead, it began to glitter gold, the cat's eyes deepened in swirling blackness. "Go, my messenger."

Niobe gasped. Before her eyes, a sparkling, colorful vortex swirled. She was sucked into the blackness, twisting around and around through the cloudlike spots of brilliant color and the pinpoints of imaginary stars. Her mind was sealed in this way, and her body encapsulated like the others. She too, vanished into the future.

"You have eased my heart...give my Serenity my love..."

\* \* \*

A Sunday afternoon sun was shining bright in the window of 11-year-old Olivia Miles's bedroom. She had been trying to nap, but as she tossed and turned, she couldn't get to sleep. Her stuffed orangutan, Schweethart was squished under her weight. She got his furry paw in her face and sneezed. Her blue-hazel eyes opened groggily. Spitting a wad of her golden-blonde hair out of her mouth, she surrendered to consciousness and pried herself from her bed.

She headed downstairs where her older sister was watching TV. Brown hair and hazel-green eyes, Jennifer Miles met her with an untimely "Good morning."

"Hey." Olivia stopped and looked at what her sister was watching on television.

"MST3K from yesterday." Jennifer said, simply. "Wanna watch it with me?"

Typically, she would have loved to, but this wasn't an episode Olivia had liked the first seven or eight times she'd seen it and declined. "Nah, I'm going out for a walk. Maybe it'll wake me up." Her two big dogs, a black and white mutt named Gabriel and a brindle greyhound named Angel sprang to their feet.

“You said the ‘W’ word.” Jennifer observed.

“Aww.” Olivia looked to her pets. “No! Not with you. I’m going on my own ‘pedestrian excursion’, you’ll just have to stay behind.” She looked up at Jennifer again. “Tell Mom I’m gone.”

“K”

Walking up the street from her house, Olivia blew aside her bushy bangs. “Man, I really gotta grow these out, they tick me off.” It wasn’t a long trek, but at the top of the hill and across the street was a Quik Trip. Sugar sounded good to her then, and she got the inspiration to go buy some candy. She stopped and waited at the crosswalk.

In the middle of the street she noticed something out of place. A ball of turquoise fur was huddled tightly. Trucks and cars zoomed by over it’s head, and the animal was petrified. Olivia caught a glimpse of a pair of wide, horrified amber eyes.

“Hold it – is that a cat?” She started into the traffic, but pulled back as a pickup truck rushed by. She glanced anxiously to the stoplight. It seemed like forever, but the signal turned and the girl rushed into the street. She glanced down at the shivering creature. “Oh my gosh! You poor little cat!” The 11-year-old glanced both directions to see if anyone was around to claim it. She was alone, so she scooped the cat off the road and headed back to the sidewalk. “Don’t worry, kitty, you can come home with me.” With a new spring in her step, Olivia headed back to her house, and the cat bounced along in her arms. “You know, if I’m lucky, maybe Mom will let me keep you. I’ve always wanted a cat.” Back down the street and to the Miles residence they went. Olivia hopped up onto the porch of her house, but stopped herself when she reached for the doorknob. “Hold it...I’ve got two huge dogs. Maybe I shouldn’t take you in the front door.” She checked to make sure that the dogs were in the house before heading around back and down to the basement door.

The basement of the house was carpeted and nicely finished. Olivia shut the sliding door and left the cat on the carpet just inside. “You stay here, I’m going to go ask mom if I can keep you or not.” The girl rushed away, her great bush of blonde hair streaming behind her.

Once alone, the cat took a moment to regain her bearings. Unlike most cats, this one was very intelligent and thought through her mind, tracking what had happened. ‘How did I get here? The last thing I remember...I was...where? I was on the moon! Queen Serenity...is this what she meant by the future? And I suppose that the kingdom fell after all.’ She was sad for a moment, but recalled her mission. ‘For her sake, I must find Luna and Artemis. I have to give them the message that she told me to deliver. And help find the Moon Princess and the Sailor Soldiers, too. If I’m here, I might as well help.’ She listened to her savior traipse around above her head. ‘Who is this little girl who’s found me? She has golden hair, and bluish eyes. There is a possibility that she is the moon princess... I should lie low...I’m sure if she is the princess, she will reveal it herself somehow. She should have a crescent moon on her forehead.’

The ceiling muffled the conversation above, but the cat could hear Olivia pleading with her mother.

“Please, Mom! I’ve always wanted a cat!”

“No, Olivia, a cat wouldn’t survive five minutes in this house!”

“But it’s in the basement.”

“It’s WHAT!?!” Her mother cried. “You brought it home!?! Did you think that it might have rabies or something!?!”

“It seems okay.” Olivia assured. “I think it got hit by a car.”

“Okay, just let me wash my hands and we’ll take it to the pound. There they can take care of it and find it a home where it will live more than a day.”

In a second, Olivia had sulked back downstairs. “This bites.” She looked to the cat. “I can’t keep you, and we’re going to have to take you to the pound in a minute.” She sat down next to her on the floor.

“Oh well, if I can’t keep you forever, I should at least give you a name. I mean, it would be kinda rude

for you to be known as 'the Funny Colored Cat' in the pound. So, hmm..." She put her hand on her chin and had her bangs fall in her eyes again. She brushed them out of the way. "For crying out loud!!!" The cat on the floor watched intently as he brushed across her forehead. Something was special about her. More than just having saved her from the street, the cat felt that she'd at least seen this girl before, and her memory of this time was limited to say the least. She realized what was going on when she spotted an ice blue, eight pointed star shimmer faintly as Olivia became frustrated with her hair.

The cat gasped. 'POLARIS!!'

"Names, names, um, I could call you Aqua." Olivia had no idea that anything was going on and the symbol faded as she clamed back down and focused on naming the cat. "You're so interesting looking, there's got to be something I can name you that'd be clever or whatever." She looked again at the cat and spotted the crescent moon spot above her eyes. "A moon? That's interesting...I guess I should call you something like Moon... Mooney! I like Mooney, you're Mooney now!"

The newly christened Mooney was not interested in what her name would be. She hadn't been in the future for more than a day and she had already found a Sailor Soldier. She broke her silence and spoke. "Olivia..."

"Yeeah!!!" The girl jumped backward. "You talked!!!"

"Yes, I talked." Mooney answered. "I'm not your ordinary stray cat."

"Uh, duh... How can you talk?" Olivia asked.

"I come from the past...or...I guess that the story would be kind of confusing since Queen Serenity said that you wouldn't remember anything. I came to give you something. Hovering above them in the air, a gold-plated, light blue wand materialized. It fell and Olivia caught it in both hands.

"Wow, Mooney, it's pretty." She turned it over. "It looks like a pen."

"It's a special wand." Mooney told her. The light of the overhead lamp caught the planet-shaped decoration on the golden cap, making the light blue star in the center glitter. "It will let you turn into a Sailor Soldier."

"A Sailor – " Olivia was no stranger to who the Sailor Soldiers were. There were five in Tokyo already, but she never imagined that SHE would be one of them. "I'm a Sailor Soldier? Like Sailor Moon?"

"That's right." Mooney said, and then thought; 'I suppose Luna and Artemis have already been at work'.

"So who am I? Sailor Saturn, or Neptune or Pluto...or what was that last one?" She thought a second.

"No, you're none of them. You are Sailor Polaris. If you hold the pen in the air, you will be able to transform and turn into her right here." Mooney instructed.

"Sweet!" Olivia hopped up and threw the pen into the air. The action seemed to trigger something in the back of her mind and she cried out the magic words as if she'd been saying them for years and years.

"POLARIS POWER!!!"

Her hair and skin faded to a light, sparkling blue against a background of pink, blue and white crystal. She put one hand to her hip, and held the pen up in the other. From the symbol swirled long currents of liquid. They stretched like sparkling tongues down around her and gathered at her feet, where they condensed into a tightly swirling whirlpool. She spun, her long hair became the same color as her flesh, but her eyes still glowed their lively bright hazel-blue. She turned her back, and the whirlpool shot up from below, freezing her inside a concave column of ice. Her hair stood out about her hips, forming a solid veil that hid her body from view. Then a crack, and a sudden explosion as the ice broke into fragments, revealing Sailor Polaris dressed in the familiar light blue. Her boots reached up to her knees and ended in a white lined-point. Her hair lifted off her back as she slowly spun majestically around. Her short blue skirt twirled out from a white leotard, and the matching collar ended with a pink bow on her chest. She did not have the familiar bow at her lower back, it was instead replaced by a blue one clipped

in her hair. With tiara, and choker, she posed and surfaced back in her own house.

“Wow!” She looked herself over from her boots to her hair bow. “That was such a rush!”

“I remember you now.” Mooney smiled. “Sailor Polaris, soldier of the North Star and the ice of the North. You were quite the hero back where I come from.”

“Okay, cool I guess.” Sailor Polaris said, still amazed at what had happened. “I like how small my bow is. Did you say that I was the soldier of ice? Does that mean I freeze stuff?”

“That’s right.” Mooney assured. “Would you like to go try it out?”

“Sounds fun! Maybe we can run into Sailor Moon and beat up bad guys together.” Polaris grinned.

“Let’s go!” She opened up the sliding door and headed out of her backyard and out toward downtown Tenth Street.

\* \* \*

“There is another Rainbow Crystal!?” Queen Beryl, still the queen of the Negaverse, was sitting on her throne. Behind her, a shape lurked in the shadows and a woman’s voice ventured out in a bland but young monotone.

“Yes, your majesty.”

“An eighth rainbow crystal...But there were only seven dark warriors...how could their be an eighth?” the Queen demanded.

“It is the final piece of the Imperium Silver Crystal .” The voice assured. Without it, the other crystals would be unable to fuse into the all powerful jewel that we seek for the Negaforce.”

“This is important.” Beryl said. “It was good of you to return with this information. I don’t think even Tuxedo Mask or the Sailor Soldiers know about an eighth crystal! We have a head start. And by your report, without this final piece, the crystals are near useless. I will send a general to find it.” The shape disappeared back into the dark of her throne and vanished. Beryl raised her hands to her crystal energy ball and light returned to her great hall. Before her, there were legions of willing servants...members of the Negaversian army. They were all ready to serve her at her slightest command. Her voice turned cold, and she called out over the heads. “General Malachite!”

The man who bore the name, the tall, mysterious head of her army, appeared from the crowd. He saluted her with his hand to his chest and bowed, his long silver hair and billowing cape falling across his back. “Yes my queen.”

“You will handle this.” Queen Beryl said. “Go down and find the carrier of the final Rainbow Crystal. Return with it and you will be rewarded handsomely.”

“Your majesty...” Malachite began, his cold blue eyes shut. “Excuse me, but am I correct in saying that this is General Zoicite’s position. She is conditioned and equipped for this job...”

“Are you saying that you are unable to complete this task?” Beryl asked with a hint of contempt. “Are you saying that you are useless? If that is what you are saying, then resign and you will never have to deal with jobs that are too difficult for you again.”

Malachite smirked to himself with this new development. He couldn’t pass the bill now. “I am fully capable to complete this, my queen, I will go to grant your wishes.” With that, he vanished, zapping himself through the dimensional rift and to earth.

“Arrogant fool...” Beryl huffed. Amused, her insult was followed by a loud cackle.

\* \* \*

The five Sailor Soldiers, Sailors Moon, Mars, Mercury, Venus, and Jupiter were spending their Sunday

afternoon shopping. There was a strip mall on the outskirts of the Tenth Street Shopping complex that they hadn't hit yet. Luna and Artemis were sitting on the curb while the girls were inside. "I'm getting a strange vibration." The black cat announced.

"I am too, Luna." The white one agreed. "I feel like there is a lot of activity going on, both positive and negative energy is fluctuating."

"Perhaps we should have the girls transform and check it out." Luna suggested.

"That would be a good idea, except that we are dealing with Serena, Raye, Amy, Lita, and Mina. We will never be able to get them out of this mall to do something serious."

Luna sighed. Serena, the pig-tailed blue-eyed blonde who was also known as Sailor Moon came wandering up with a big bag of doughnuts. She was sucking the jelly filling out of a long john as she spoke. "You guys don't know how to have fun. Are you talking about work still?"

"It wouldn't hurt you to be serious for a change, Serena." Luna challenged. "And you should stop eating those doughnuts, too many sweets is bad for your health."

"Whatever, Luna." Serena bade.

Raye and Amy walked out of the store and into the fall air. Raye shut her violet eyes, her long raven hair cascading down her back. "There is nothing in there that will ever look good on me. I know now why we haven't shopped here in a while."

"I think it has just been a long day." Amy offered, combing through her short blue hair. "Perhaps we should call it quits for now."

"Quits? Are you kidding!?" Raye cried. "I'm not stopping until I find something I want!!! What's the point of going shopping and not getting anything?"

"It has been fun." Amy answered. "You don't have to spend money to have fun shopping."

Just then, Mooney and Sailor Polaris went running down the other side of the street. The two cats and the available girls watched them go. Serena was too busy in her doughnuts to care. Luna rose to her feet. "I knew I felt something strange! That looks like a Sailor Soldier!"

"But I thought we'd found all the Sailor Soldiers." Raye recalled.

"We had." Artemis assured.

"This must be the Negaverse!" Luna resolved. She turned over her shoulder. "You girls transform and follow that imposter soldier!"

"Right!" Raye agreed.

Serena grabbed out another long john. "Do I have to? I paid a lot for these."

"SERENA!!!" Luna snarled.

"Okay okay!!!" Serena submitted. She grabbed out her transformation brooch. "Moon Prism POWER!!!"

Raye and Amy took out their magic pens.

"Mars POWER!!!"

"Mercury POWER!!!"

A swirl of magic expanded around each girl. Sailor Moon was assembled under a dome of sparkling pink, red, blue, and yellow. Mars was drawn from Raye in a storm of red energy and fire. Amy became Mercury in a swirl of blue and a ribbon of water. In seconds, three Sailor Soldiers were ready to pursue their target.

Sailor Mars closed her eyes. "Yes, I'm getting some really negative vibes from somewhere in the direction she was headed." She turned her raven head to the cats. "Should we wait for Lita and Mina?"

"You three go ahead!" Artemis urged. "I'll tell them to follow when they come out."

"If you say so, Artemis." Sailor Mercury agreed. She bent down and picked Luna up on her arm.



"Lets go!" The four of them took off after Mooney and Polaris, who were already very far ahead and had disappeared around a corner.

\* \* \*

'Hmm...' Malachite stood atop a building in the heart of Tenth Street. 'A carrier of a rainbow crystal with the power to unite all the other crystals into one... what kind of person would that be?' He scanned the people below. 'All the others had shadow warriors concealed inside them to indicate their presence. Perhaps this type of person would distribute the same trait.' He vanished from the roof and reappeared beside a building on the ground. 'They would have to be a really great person, and have a truly unique energy. —'

As he watched, a girl wandered by. She was dirty looking, like she had no home, but there was something in her violet eye that caught him. She had a very vivid aura. The dark skinned girl walked off down the street in her frayed sweater and old jeans. Malachite pursued her secretly to see where she would go. The young teen wandered up the street. She neared the door to a restaurant and was shoved down by one of the greeters. "Get out of here, street kid!"

She looked to him, her eyes softening and hardening at the same time. She looked like she was studying him. "You have a good heart, but tainted mind. Go adopt a pet, it will probably make you more caring to your fellow man."

"Who do you think you are?" The man fumed.

"My name is Cristie." She answered. "And I can just sense things. I sense that you are lonely. Trust me, a nice Labrador puppy would make you feel so much better."

"Well..." he eased up. "I did have a lab when I was little. His name was Roger. He was like a brother to me."

"See..." She smiled at him, but quickly saddened and walked away.

'Truly remarkable aura.' Malachite resolved. 'I must have found the right person.' He followed her still until she came to a stop at an old Victorian house. It was just outside the city limits in a bad part of town. The house was old and vacant, and as she entered, she was greeted by nearly a dozen other drifters.

"Hey, CristieChick!" One called. "What you been doin', staying away for so long?"

"I've been avoiding you." She answered. "You need a hobby, why don't you start a collection, Craig?" She asked. "It would be something to keep you occupied so you wouldn't have to bate women for entertainment."

"This is my hobby!" Craig answered. "Why don't you come over later and we can make out or something."

"That isn't what you really want, Craig." She answered, that same look in her eyes. "You would much rather be on a beach somewhere in the sun." She headed up the stairs and into the heart of the house, leaving Craig perplexed and forlorn. Malachite reappeared in the living room of the house. Cristie looked up as she entered. "Oh? Who are you?"

"You tell me." He said. "You can read minds, right?"

"No." She answered. "I sense things. And I sense that you are not a good person." She backed toward the door. "What are you doing here?"

"I'm looking for something." He said, stepping forward. She backed against the door, the noise of the people on the deck audible through it. "I'm looking for a gem. I think that you have it."

"I don't have anything." Cristie insisted. "I have never met you." She set her eyes on him. "You are not looking for a jewel. You are looking for something else. You don't want to be here, I can sense it. You aren't as bad as first sense implies."

"Quiet, I don't need you analyzing me." Malachite growled. "Now give me your Rainbow Crystal!" He

raised his hand and a rush of power and wind shot toward her. The room shook. A candle on a rickety table nearby fell to the carpet. The dry curtains went straight up in flames, the room being lit by the flickering heat. Cristie's analytic eyes were not sensing anything, she was frightened as she watched the fire spread quickly around her.

She turned and pounded on the door. "Help! Help! Fire!!!"

Malachite appeared beside her, grabbing her shoulders. "The crystal! Give it to me!"

"AAAAAAHHHHHH!!!!!"

\* \* \*

Down the road, smoke could be seen filtering up through the buildings from the house. Mooney stopped. Sailor Polaris took a couple steps and turned back. "What's up?"

"See that smoke?" Mooney asked, jerking her head toward the pillar that was rising into the air.

"Yeah," Polaris answered, stepping over. "What do you think it means?"

"It's probably a fire." Mooney said. She looked at it and then brightened. "That'd be perfect!?"

"What's so perfect about a fire?" Polaris asked.

"Your element is ice." Mooney informed her. "You can help the firemen. It will be good practice for you. Your ice powers will do well against a burning building." They altered course and headed toward the target.

When they arrived, they found all the tenants, homeless men, women, and children, fleeing from the scene as the flames destroyed the two story Victorian house. The firemen had yet to arrive, and they could hear people still screaming from inside.

Mooney turned to the young soldier again. "Go! Polaris, there are people in there!"

"PEOPLE!?!?" Polaris cried. "We should call the fire department!"

"This is serious." Mooney stated. "We don't have time to wait around for the fire department, you need to go in there now and get those people out!"

"But..." She glanced, unsure to the building, "but...I'm scared, I don't want to do it."

"It'll be okay." Mooney assured. "I'll be right with you. Now, lets go." The two of them rushed up the front stair and burst through the door. Malachite took one look at them and let Cristie go.

"Drat. The Sailor Soldiers are here already!"

Sailor Polaris turned and saw him. "Hey!!! You! Did you do this!?"

Malachite whipped his cape around him and vanished into the smoke. Polaris took a double take.

"Whoa...where'd he go?"

"Nevermind!" Mooney called. She was near the girl. Polaris kneeled down to the dark-skinned young woman.

"Hey, you okay?"

Cristie looked up. "Sailor Moon?"

"No, Sailor Polaris, but don't worry, we're on the same team." Polaris answered. She grabbed the girl's arm with her gloved hand and got her up. Cristie looked into her eyes.

"You are good. I can see it."

"Yeah," Polaris was a little perplexed but shoved the girl toward the door. "Now, get out of here. This whole building is probably going to come down!"

Cristie headed out but turned back. "The others!!! There are people upstairs still!"

"Don't worry, I'll get them." Sailor Polaris assured. "Now go!"

Cristie nodded and ran off. Mooney stared after her. "That girl had a very unique aura to her...I wonder if she is the moon princess..."

"Mooney!!!" Polaris cried. "We've got to get upstairs now!" She headed into the foyer off the living room to find the already rickety stairs blazing in flame. "Oh no way!"

“Calm down, Polaris, you’ve already saved one person.” Mooney assured. “This is just an obstacle. You are a Sailor Soldier after all.”

“What can I do to keep myself from getting roasted trying to get up these stairs?” Polaris asked. “I can’t fly can I?”

“No...but you might try freezing them.”

“Oh yeah, the element of influence thing.” Polaris recalled. “Would freezing them really do anything? I mean, how much harder would it be to walk up burning steps as opposed to ice steps.”

“If you want to just go for it, go ahead.” Mooney said.

“Okay, how do I freeze them?” Polaris asked.

“Raise your hands above your head and call out ‘North Star Power Now!’” Mooney instructed.

“North Star Power Now?” Polaris asked. “That’s really lame, Mooney. Couldn’t I say something a little snappier?”

“These are ancient words passed down by the Sailor Polarises of the past.” Mooney said, impatiently.

“Live with them.”

“Okay, okay.” She raised both hands above her head. “Alright, if it’ll save those people up there, it’s worth a shot.”

Ice crystals danced about, tinted blue and pink. Polaris was surrounded by them. She turned and brushed her long blonde hair out of her way. “North Star! Power!-” She began. Bent down, her arms straightened behind her, she slowly brought them up and straightened her posture as well. A gentle tinkling could be heard as all the crystals gathered above her head. Her hands reached for the sky, and the crystals turned into a liquid ball between them. “Now!” She thrust the orb forward, and the wind shaped it into a spinning icicle as it flew.

When it hit the stairs, they exploded in sparkling crystal dust. A cloud of it hung in the air around the steps, chilling it, and when it gently settled, the stairs were incased in ice. Polaris stared at her gloved hands. “Wow! That was so cool!”

“Let’s go!” Mooney said, leading. The two of them struggled up the solid block of ice, and found the top floor filled with smoke from the fires below.

Mooney hacked horribly as her lungs rejected the thickened air. “Let’s split up! Look around for anyone left up here!”

Polaris covered her mouth to keep out the smoke and gasped between coughs. “Right!”

\* \* \*

The three Sailor Soldiers and Luna had arrived at the scene of the fires. Mars closed her eyes. “She’s in there!”

Sailor Moon glanced from her to the house. “There!? Are you sure?”

“I’m positive.” Sailor Mars announced. “Her aura is really really strong.”

“Do you think she went in intending to put it out?” Mercury asked.

“Either that or she set it.” Sailor Mars huffed. “If she’s from the Negaverse, I’d guess that she’s out looking for trouble.”

Mercury took out her visor and began to analyze the condition of the house on her handheld computer.

“The fire is relatively fresh, but the house is so old and dried out, it’s spread very quickly. We need to get the fire department here before it collapses.”

“I’ll get on that.” Sailor Mars said.

“No,” Luna corrected. “You’d better stay here and help. You can build up a firewall to contain the blaze. There are a lot of other buildings around that could go up, and thankfully there’s enough lawn left

to actually make a blockade. Moon should go get the fire department because her tiara is not going to help us much.”

Sailor Moon sighed with relief on having been excused from entering the house. “Whew! Thanks, Luna!”

“Wait!” Sailor Mercury interrupted. “I’m picking up life-forms inside. There are several on the top floor.”

“You mean more than just that little fake soldier?” Sailor Mars asked.

“Oh yes, I read at least five.” Mercury confirmed. “They aren’t moving, and the building is horribly unstable. We have to get them out!”

“And if the soldier is in there too...” Sailor Mars began, realizing the gravity of what was going on.

“She’s probably going to hurt them somehow!”

“Change of plans, girls!” Luna cried. “Sailor Moon goes in and rescues the people on the top floor from the strange Sailor Soldier. Mars works on containing the fire. Mercury, go find a phone and call the fire department! We need to work quickly if people are in danger!”

“Right!” Mars and Mercury took off, but Moon tarried.

“What’s wrong, Serena?” Luna interrogated, impatiently.

“I don’t want to go into a rickety old building that’s going up in flames!” She wailed. “What if it falls on me!?”

“Pull yourself together, Sailor Moon!” Luna commanded. “Remember, it is your job to protect those innocent people in there. They are counting on you!”

Serena turned the situation over in her head and shifted into hero mode. “You’re right, Luna! I’m going in!” She turned and dashed into the building. Some of the people who’d hung around to watch the blaze cheered as they saw her run past. She leapt up the stairs and crashed through the door. The living room was ablaze, and she shielded herself from the heat. “This is crazy!? Why did that little girl come in here?” She heard stomping upstairs, and headed for the foyer. There she stopped dead, staring confused at the frozen stairs. The case of ice was melting next to the flames. “The whole building’s up in flames, and the stairs are solid ice!” She glanced around at the rest of the house. “That soldier must have special powers. No normal person could have done that!” Sailor Moon began slipping and sliding her way up the stairs. The going was difficult, her feet kept faltering on the wet ice and he had to grab onto slick banister for safety. “How’d that little kid get up these!?!?” She asked herself, panting. After much toil she made it to the top step, but just when she thought she had made it to safety, she lost balance and fell all the way back down. Landing with a crash, the soldier shoved herself back up. “Just wait until I get my hands on that kid! That really hurt!”

\* \* \*

“Olivia!!!” Mooney cried, choking from a bedroom doorway. “There looks like a Woman and an...” she took time out to cough “infant in here!”

Olivia stumbled through the smoke out of an adjacent room. “I don’t see anyone in here!”

“Check around the corner!”

Polaris hacked a couple times and missed Mooney’s command. “What was that!?”

“The bathroom!” Mooney clarified.

She coughed before choking out. “right.”

Mooney trudged back into the bedroom. A mother and child were unconscious on the floor. Thankfully, they were below the smoke line, but even down there it was hard for Mooney to breathe. She wandered to a window and took a breath through the broken glass. There, her ears perked up. The sound of sirens came filtering over the crackling of flame. She turned back to the door. “Polaris!” She ran out across the hall, but couldn’t seem to find the bathroom in the thickening blackness. She coughed as she called out

to her partner. "The firemen are here! Come get these people and take them to the front of the building! That way the firemen can get to them easier!"

Polaris heard her cat's voice and wandered out into the hall. "Okay!" She hacked as she got a lungful of smog. "Moo – " she heaved, "Mooney!? Where are you?"

At just that time, Sailor Moon crawled over the top step and collapsed on the creaking floor, panting. "I made it!" but her panting drew in a great breath of smoke and she joined the coughing. "Ack! Let's hurry this up and get out." She stumbled blindly down the hallway, passing Mooney by completely and running into Polaris, who was trying to find the cat. They collided and took a second to figure out what had happened. Moon reacted first. "Hey! Little girl!" She reached out and grabbed Polaris's sailor collar with both fists and shook her back and forth, screaming and coughing. "What do you think you are doing!?! 'You nuts? You drinking under aged!?! You are going to kill yourself!"

"I-I-I'm just trying to help!" Polaris argued, struggling. "There are still people in here! Let me go!" Sailor Moon obeyed and loosened her grip on the girl's uniform. Polaris shoved past. "You're Sailor Moon, aren't you?" The other soldier nodded. Polaris began to issue orders. "Go into that room there and help Mooney with the lady and the baby. I'll head to the front room and open a window."

Moon nodded and took off, shooing away smoke. She ran through the doorway and found the woman with the child on the floor. Kicking soot, she made her way across the ground and bent down to them. "They're out cold. I guess I have to carry them." She took the mother up as best she could, but she was heavy and the fourteen-year-old sagged under her weight. Sailor Moon stared down at the baby on the floor, knowing that there would be no way to carry them both. Then she remembered what Polaris had said. "Where's that Mooney person? I could really use some help over here!"

Mooney crawled out of a corner, coughing and covered in soot. "Huh....?"

Sailor Moon noticed her as she coughed out more smoke. "Who's there? A cat?" Mooney stumbled around, trying to shake the ashes out of her eyes it had been kicked up, and she had a face full of it, disabling her from speaking or seeing. Moon didn't know anything was wrong. "Poor kitty." She said. "I wish I could grab you, but I've got my hands full." She shifted the mother onto her shoulder, swaying dangerously under the weight. Teetering over, she bent and took the infant in her newly free arm. She turned to the cat. "Follow me, kitty, we have to get out of here."

"I- " She tried to speak, but every time she tried, the smoke filled her lungs. "I –" Then she realized that she was covered in blackening soot. Sailor Moon couldn't see her color, or more importantly, the yellow crescent moon that was on her forehead. To the Soldier, Mooney was just an ordinary housecat, and she couldn't say anything to prove that she wasn't. Feebly, she tried again. "I- " Another cough. "I'm not - "

Sailor Moon worked as best she could to get the two victims out of the bedroom. The smoke was nearly blinding and she couldn't breathe at all when she was straightened up. She nearly lost both of them when a cough shook her. The Soldier decided to run as fast as she could to the front of the house. She ran into Sailor Polaris again, who was coming out of the front room. They knocked each other down. Polaris looked up to find the mother lashed across her stomach and Sailor Moon stuck awkwardly out where she'd caught the infant on the fly.

"Is that everyone?" Polaris asked.

"Yeah, but I didn't find whoever you called Mooney." Sailor Moon replied. "Whoever she is, she wasn't in there."

"Mooney!?" Sailor Polaris drug the body of the woman to the open window where smoke was pouring out. Outside, Sailor Mercury was directing the ladder of the fire truck up to it. Moon did the same as Polaris rushed back out into the hall. The second story was nearly completely veiled in smoke now, and she was getting lightheaded from breathing the fumes. Still, she was determined to find the cat.

"Mooney! Mooney!"

“Hey!” Sailor Moon rushed out after her and launched into a spontaneous coughing fit. “We gotta....” She held her hand over her mouth as she breathed more smoke. “We gotta get out of here!” “Not...” Polaris was suffering the same affects and coughed mid sentence. “...until we find Mooney!” “I don’t think there is anyone else up here.” Sailor Moon shook her head. “She must have found her own way out! No matter what, we can’t stay up here; its getting harder and harder to breathe and we can’t see a thing!”

“But-!”

“We can’t stay here!” Sailor Moon insisted. “Let’s get down and help Sailor Mars with the firebreaks.” Polaris coughed and squinted through the smoke. Moon was right. “I sure hope Mooney is okay.” Then turned to the fellow soldier. “Alright, lets go.” The two of them made their way quickly to the stairs. The ice casing had melted and put out the fires around the foyer. It wasn’t nearly as cloudy below and Moon started down in haste. Unfortunately, the torched and soggy stairs had lost their stability and the soldier fell straight through with a cry. Polaris leapt forward and grabbed her hand. “Sailor Moon!”

“Aahh! Help!” Sailor Moon kicked her legs in the cavity under the stairs as the boards under Polaris sagged dangerously.

“Wait!” Polaris said. “I’ve got an idea!”

“An idea is good!” Sailor Moon said. “Just get me up!”

“Is the floor down there!?” Polaris asked.

It seemed like a silly question, but Serena checked. “Yeah...”

“I’m gonna let you down, we’re too heavy.” Polaris answered.

“What!?! Don’t drop me!” Sailor Moon cried, but Polaris lowered her slowly so that she only had a foot to fall before landing in a heap on the wet, sloppy, sooty floor. She sat in the grime until a door opened beside her and Polaris reappeared.

“That wasn’t so bad, was it?”

“Hmph...” Sailor Moon huffed. “You still shouldn’t have dropped me.” She stomped past, her butt covered in wet filth, and headed toward the living room where the firemen had put out the flames. It was just then, however, that Polaris caught something moving out of the corner of her eye. It was the shape of a figure. She was sure that it had dashed out the back door.

“Wait! I thought I saw something!”

“Saw something...what?”

She didn’t wait to explain, and dashed down the hall to follow the shadow out the back and across the lawn, “this way!”

“Hold on!” Sailor Moon cried. “What did you see!?!”

\* \* \*

Just outside, Mercury had arrived with the firemen. She was helping Mars put out the flames around the yard, when Polaris dashed out after a cloaked figure. Mercury’s head shot up, her blue-black hair bouncing with the sharp motion. “Mars! Look!”

“It’s that other Soldier!” Sailor Mars cried, she caught sight of Sailor Moon’s long blonde locks chasing the two into the woods. “Moon’s after her! Let’s go.”

“Wait!” Luna interrupted, turning the two soldiers’ attention back to the ground. “If this is a full-blown Sailor Soldier, then you’ll need backup! I’ll call Artemis and he’ll get the other two soldiers on their way! Be expecting them to show up!”

“Right!” The three took off in different directions, two soldiers into the alleys, and one black cat toward the road.

Polaris was gaining on the man now. She could see his pale gray mop of hair flying out behind him along with his long navy-blue cape. The man was swift on his long legs, and seemed to be moving away from her twice as fast as she was running after him. He dashed sharply around a corner ahead. She set her sights, focusing on picking up speed. She took the corner quick and tumbled down into a hole in the sidewalk. "Ahh!!" Malachite peered down at her. "That's what you get you little brat. Think of this as a taste of what you get when you mess with the Negaverse." Olivia got up and tried to jump for him, but the hole was too deep. When she landed back down, she stomped on a pipe and one of the rings came loose, spitting water all over her. He sniggered. "And I hope you drown in there."

"Let her go, Malachite!!!"

His head snapped up. "You!"

"That's right! Me!" Sailor Moon cried. "I stand for love and justice! A pretty Soldier in a Sailor Suit! I am Sailor Moon!" She pointed one gloved finger at him. "And in the name of the Moon, consider yourself punished!!!"

Sailor Mars and Mercury appeared behind him. "And that goes for us too!"

"You think you have me so easily!" Malachite said. "But your wrong!" He bounded into the air and shot negative energy bolts to the girls below. They shielded, but there was nothing that could stop the power from penetrating them. With a wail, they sank down to their knees and winced.

"Guys!?" Sailor Polaris couldn't see what was going on. The water was filling quickly around her and she could see Malachite standing on a ledge above, very pleased with himself. "What happened!? What did you do!?"

"There is no convincing you girls!" He said. "You are nothing next to the power of the Negaverse!"

"That's enough from you, Malachite."

Polaris glanced around for the source of the voice, but could see nothing outside the walls of her prison. Suddenly a flash of black and red came down over her and a man grabbed her around the waste. Before she knew what had happened, they'd leapt out of the watery grave and were back on the street. He set her down, his long cape swaying out behind him.

Sailor Moon looked up. "Tuxedo Mask!"

"Tuxedo Mask!?" Polaris looked up to her rescuer, a tremor in her heart. His hat and mask hid his face, but his voice rang straight to her.

"Don't deal out threats when you are outnumbered!" He challenged the man above them. "You will find yourself stuck in your false words and your ego sore."

"Philosophical, Tuxedo Mask." Malachite replied. "But your words are more empty than mine!" He leapt up off the ledge and materialized a sword out of negative energy. Tuxedo flung one sharpened red rose up and caught the man in the shoulder. He pulled back, but turned ever more forcefully to the man on the ground. Tuxedo Mask quickly shoved Polaris aside and whipped out his cane to strain against the blade. Malachite pressed with fury on his staff, petals falling off the rose in his flesh.

"We're here!" Sailors Jupiter and Venus appeared running with Artemis up the street. Malachite gave them a glance and Tuxedo Mask threw him off. The general turned and hacked with the saber, barely missing the caped man. Sailor Polaris stood, wishing she could do something. Tuxedo Mask darted aside and bashed the man's hand with his cane. The sword swiped above his head, he ducked and tackled. Malachite found himself on the ground, the hand with the sword flattened along the wrist to the ground by the cane. Tuxedo Mask stared down through the lenses of his mask, putting his weight on the cane.

"Give up! You've had it!"

"Not so soon!" Malachite powered up his fist and shoved it into Tuxedo Mask's chest. The power exploded and threw him off, leaving the cane behind and Malachite free.

Sailor Polaris screamed. "Tuxedo Mask!"

But Sailor Jupiter's voice came next. "Supreme...!"

Malachite realized what was coming. Sailor Jupiter had her lightning rod raised and electrical energy condensing around her, ready to strike. He'd used up much of his energy stores and threw up his cape. "This isn't finished!!!"

"Thunder!!!" Electricity shot out, but he vanished just in time to miss it, returning to the Negaverse in a portal of black. The electricity scattered, hitting concrete. Jupiter snapped. "Dangit!"

Sailors Moon, Mars, and Mercury rose and walked over. "It was about time you guys got here."

"What was Malachite doing here?" Venus asked.

"I don't know...I think he set the house on fire." Sailor Moon replied.

Polaris interrupted their conversation. "Where'd Tuxedo Mask go?"

Jupiter gave her a look. "Who the heck are you?"

But Polaris's mind was stuck. She looked frantically around for the caped man. She caught sight of red and black over the edge of a building and took off. With a skill she didn't know she had, she bounded up the building and appeared on the roof. He was walking off slowly, holding his left arm just below the shoulder. His white gloves were stained against a cut. She called out to him, afraid he'd leave without seeing her. "Wait!" He turned back to look at her, dropping his hand and trying to act as if there was nothing wrong. His strength made her heart beat in her throat. "What's that? Did you get cut?"

"Its nothing you need to be concerned about." He said simply.

She dashed up beside him. "What do you mean by that!? You saved me!" She took his arm and put her hands over the scrape. "Good, its not all that bad." She looked up in relief and found him looking down at her. She froze up. "I, I wanted to thank you for helping me out. And.." She stopped a second, then continued. "I wanted to ask you. Everyone else seemed to think that I was some kid in a suit. You didn't even question whether I was real or not. Did you believe in me, or was it just because I was in trouble?" She looked up. She could see his blue eyes looking back through the lenses of his mask, and turned away, blushing. "You don't have to answer that if you don't want to."

"No." His voice was soft, and somehow familiar. "I'll answer. It's simple." He had to bend down to look her in the face. He used one hand to raise her chin so that their eyes met before he continued.

"The others may not see it, but there is something special about you. Something genuine. You glow with it, Polaris. I can see it." Her eyes wavered, and he straightened up again, and removed her hands from his arm. "Thanks." With a smile, and a swirl of his cape, he left, and she stood watching him until he vanished completely.

She put a hand to where his had been touching her chin before. What was this feeling? "Who? Who are you?"

"Hey!" She turned and saw Sailor Moon and the others running up. "Kid! Wait!" The others stood around her and Sailor Moon smiled. "It's Sailor Polaris, right?" Olivia nodded. "Well, we explained everything, and I guess there is nothing left to say but 'welcome to the club'."

The eleven year old smiled widely.

"I think you've earned you place." Luna smiled.

The other Soldiers circled in to congratulate her, and she accepted their invitation with open arms. The Soldiers led her out of the woods and back towards town. "How about heading to the fruit parlor for a good long chat?" They asked.

"That'd be the best!"

\* \* \*

As the sun set a single creature walked alone down the road. Ashen and exhausted, she moved off to nowhere. She had people to find and messages to send, but didn't know where to start. All she knew



was that she hadn't found anything where she was. Turning around to look back one last time over the city, she whispered.

"Goodbye, Olivia, good luck."

Then, the dusty turquoise cat disappeared over the horizon.

~Fin~

### 3 - Episode 2: A New Evil

Sailor Moon P

Episode 2: A New Evil

Olivia sat on the stairs outside Canon Elementary, waiting for the activity bus she would have to ride home to roll up to the curb. She was bent over a notebook where she was drawing a picture with a dull pencil. She threw her long golden hair out of the way of her sketch, and reached back to make sure her hair-bow was still straight. Her pencil, the wood scraping the paper as it moved, scratched out the shape of the head and upper body of a person. She creased her brow and focused her blue-hazel eyes on her work. Black hair emerged on the head and a diamond-shaped mask was drawn over the eyes. Olivia drew the arms and legs, which were a little stringy for a young man, but the best she could do. She colored black pants and a jacket on him, and drew a square cape down his back. All that was left was to put on the hat.

She balled herself up tighter, and her hair fell like a veil around her lap. The hat was a very delicate part of the drawing. She had to get it just right or else it would look stupid. She carefully scratched a line across the forehead, then extended another line to make the side of the top hat. Height was important as well. Too short would look dinky. Too tall would look awkward. She had to get it just right. As she carefully lengthened the line a little bit at a time, another girl walked up behind her.

“Hey, Olivia!”

“Ahh!” Olivia jumped and the pencil shot up and off the page. “Jessi! Look what you made me do!”

“Sorry.” Jessi said, sitting down next to her. Jessi’s hair was equally as long as Olivia’s, but thinner and reddish in color. The both of them had stayed after for art club. Jessi leaned over to see what Olivia had in her lap. “What’re you drawing?”

Olivia quickly and defensively pressed the drawing to her chest. “You can’t see it!”

“Oh, come on!” Jessi reached up to try to get the notebook away from her friend so that she could see.

“You told me to ‘look what I made you do’, now what did I make you do!?!”

“No! It’s private!” Olivia cried, turning away to make grabbing more difficult for the other girl.

“What’s so private?! Is it your boooooooyfriend?”

“No it’s not!” Olivia answered, growing red from embarrassment.

“Ooooooh! Yes it is! You’re blushing!” Jessi teased. She made on lunge and got the notebook away from the blonde.

“No!” Olivia fretted, “Give it back!”

“What the heck is this?” Jessi asked, crinkling her nose. “The phantom of the opera?”

Olivia’s eyebrows leveled to form a critical, slightly offended expression. It was quickly replaced by cunning. “Yes. Now give it back.”

As Olivia took back and folded close the notebook, Jessi pointed past her toward the parking lot. “Hey, isn’t that your mom’s van?”

Olivia looked up and saw the slick, shiny, beige-colored minivan pull up in the parking lot. She recognized it immediately as her mother’s. “Yeah! It is!” She turned her blue eyes to look at Jessi.

“D’you wanna ride?”

Jessi shrugged. “Sure, why not?” The two girls got up and trotted over to the tan-looking vehicle.

Olivia’s older sister Jennifer was in the front seat doing her homework.

Olivia leaned in Jennifer’s window to talk to her mom, but she couldn’t see because of her sister’s

brunette head. The blonde reached into the window and shoved the elder back into the seat by her forehead. "Move your head."

"Tch, don't ask me!" Jennifer said, but she obeyed anyway and worked her calculator at arm's length. Olivia leaned into the window and called across to her mother.. "Hey, mom!?! Can we give Jessi a ride home?"

"I suppose, jump in."

Olivia yanked open the sliding door and stepped aside so that Jessi could climb through, then piled in herself. Jennifer returned to being bent over her homework, trying hard to concentrate on math and sing along to the song on the radio at the same time.. Her mother looked at the two girls in the back in the rear-view mirror. "So, Olivia, how was art club?"

"It was okay." The blonde answered, buckling her seatbelt. "We made Dalmatians out of clothespins."

"That's good. You had fun too, Jessi?"

"Yeah," Jessi admitted. "Except my Dalmatian had too many spots, so now it's a Zebra."

"Hah!" Jennifer laughed. "How'd you manage that!?"

The van pulled out of the parking lot and took off down the road away from Canon Elementary school. Turning off onto a larger street, the car made a series of turns until they were waving their way through their own neighborhood. Olivia's mother pulled up in front of Jessi's house. The redhead drew open the door and hopped out "Thanks for the ride, Mrs. Miles."

"Oh, it was no problem, Jessi." The driver assured.

Jessi turned back to Olivia. "Hey, see you at the Strings concert tonight."

"We have a concert!?!?" Olivia cried, slapping her forehead. "Oh man! I completely forgot!"

"Don't worry, I didn't." Her mother called back. It didn't help Olivia's mood.

"Well, seeya, thanks again." Jessi said, shutting the door and excusing herself from the awkward situation.

Olivia sat, her hand still on her forehead. "A concert!?! Is my bass still at school!? No, it's at home! Good! Bad? What was I going to do tonight!? SCIENCE PROJECT! Ungh! How am I going to get it all done!?"

"Well, you are going to have to, somehow." Her mother said.

"Duh! But how!?" Olivia spat.

"Jennifer shook her head. "You sound pretty doomed, Olivia."

"Grrr." Olivia stared, menacingly at her older sister, but the brunette didn't return the stare. The van headed around a couple more corners and down a street before arriving at their house. As soon as the parking break was on, Olivia's bounded out of the car and was through the door into the house. She was confronted by her two large dogs who had been anticipating the family's arrival from school. Gabe, the larger dog, a stringy, black and white greyhound mix, jumped up to get at Olivia's face while the other, a brindle greyhound named Angel was pushed out of the way. Olivia shoved the younger dog away. "Out of my way Gabe, I got a lot to do!" She threw her sketching notebook on the kitchen counter and dropped her backpack on the parquet floor.

Jennifer and her mother came in with grocery bags and placed them on the counter. Olivia raced out of the room and down the hall. Jennifer cocked an eyebrow. "What's with her?"

The fifth-grader ran back into the kitchen with a large piece of poster-board. She slammed it on the kitchen table and threw open the school closet in the wall behind her. "Mom!? Do we have any construction paper!?"

"I don't think so." Her mom answered. "Check downstairs."

Olivia raced around the corner and down to the basement. "Please have some! Please!"

"I guess she's got a lot to work on." Jennifer observed with a shrug. She crashed on the couch and turned on the TV. "Too, bad, stinks to be her."

Olivia rushed back up the stairs, her long hair flying out behind her. "There wasn't any!! What am I going to do!?"

"Does this have to be done tomorrow?" Mrs. Miles asked while un-bagging groceries.

"No, Friday." Olivia answered, panting. "But I have to write a paper tomorrow!"

"Now, don't make yourself frustrated." Her mother warned. "Just do what you can for now. Your concert isn't until seven, you can get a lot done by then."

"Oh, okay," she said, unsure. "Is anyone using the computer? Can I type stuff?"

"Sure, go ahead." Her mother said. Olivia rushed back to the computer room at the back of the house. As soon as she had disappeared, the telephone rang. Unfortunately Mrs. Miles's hands were covered in raw chicken juice. "Jennifer? Can you get that?"

"Sure, Mom." Jennifer got up off the couch and grabbed the phone. A young girl was on the other end.

"Hello, is this Olivia?"

"No, it's Jennifer."

"Oh! Hi Jennifer! It's Raye!"

"Oh! Hi Raye! What's up?"

"Nothing much. I was just calling to see if Olivia was coming over to my house tonight."

Jennifer shook her head. "No, I don't think she can tonight She's got a Strings concert at seven."

"A what?"

"A Strings concert. You know, like violins and cellos and stuff?"

"Oh! Orchestra? Does Olivia play?"

"Yeah, the bass."

"Really? Cool. Well, it's too bad she can't come. Tell her 'hi' for me."

"Okay, Raye, see you tomorrow at Sports Club."

"Bye"

"Bye." Jennifer docked the phone.

Her mom turned, "Who was it?"

"Raye, she's one of the girls from that Sports Club we went to last night, she was calling for Olivia."

Jennifer headed out of the room. "I'm gonna go give her the message." The brunette walked down the hall, her hazel-ish eyes on the floor. She turned the corner to find Olivia on the floor in front of the computer, jabbing madly at the start button.

"Work! You STUPID MACHINE!!!"

"Olivia!" Jennifer cried. "Don't kill it!"

"But it won't come on!" Olivia whined.

Jennifer leaned on the doorframe.. "Is the red light on down there?"

"Of course it's on! It's always on!" Olivia cried, but she bent her neck down to look anyway. "It's not on."

Jennifer smiled. "Hmph"

Olivia flipped the switch and the computer came to life. She shoved herself off the floor. "I would have figured it out sooner or later."

"Later most likely." Jennifer said, jesting-ly. "Anyway, that was Raye, you know, from Sports Club? Well, she wanted to know if you were coming over to her house today."

Olivia smacked her face again. "DRAT! I was supposed to do that too! Man!"

"She seems to have really taken a shine to you. She didn't invite me to her house." Jennifer said, and then with a roll of her greenish eyes, she added, "of course, no one invites me anywhere."

Olivia looked up at her sister, who was rather depressed at the idea of her little sister being liked more than she was. Olivia let out a sigh. If only she could tell Jennifer why she wasn't invited. Raye was more than just an ordinary schoolgirl; she was the heroine for justice Sailor Mars. And Olivia was one of her

crime-fighting fellows, Sailor Polaris. They were going to meet up with the other four Sailor Soldiers to talk about important Sailor Soldier Stuff. Jennifer couldn't be included in a meeting like that, it would blow their secret! Olivia stood up, her spirits a little darkened as well. "Do you think I can still go?" "Mom would never let you. Not with all the work you're complaining about." "Aw!" Olivia slumped into the chair in front of the computer that was still booting up. She looked at the screen, then threw her pencil at it. "Stupid Science Project." "Plus I've already told her that you couldn't go." Jennifer said and excused herself. "Sorry." Olivia fumed.

\* \* \*

Malachite, the silver haired general of Evil Queen Beryl's Negaversian Army, stood in the grand hall of his mistress's palace. He was in front of her throne, awaiting instruction, or punishment, whatever the case may be. He had a feeling that he was leaning more toward punishment on this occasion because he happened to have failed his last mission. As the case was, he not only had picked the wrong target for the last rainbow crystal carrier, he'd also burned down a house and driven out another Sailor Soldier. Yes, he was in for more than just a spanking.

"Malachite!"

"Yes, my queen!" He was nearly surprised at how quickly he'd responded to her voice, perhaps he was more nervous than he thought.

"Malachite," Beryl said again, her deep voice was terse, and annoyed. "You are aware that you have failed me again."

"Yes, my queen."

"Are you aware that now, because of you, that Tuxedo Mask knows that there is one more Rainbow Crystal? Before this incident, he thought that between us, we had found them all. It was merely by chance that we found that there was an eight. Now our head start has been thwarted!" Her voice rose with aggression and her long auburn hair trembled as she moved her head and shoulders.

Malachite braced himself for the worst. The last time she had been this angry at a general, she'd killed him on the spot. Things were not looking good on his horizon. But Queen Beryl calmed herself down, which took a great deal of trouble. After a few minutes, she'd reached the level where she could just speak without screaming.

"We...will...try...a...new...approach." Beryl panted. She cleared her throat. Malachite sighed silently, he was apparently off the hook for now. Beryl's hand gestured in the darkness of her throne. It directed down beside her. "These are my heirs." She announced. The two people on the floor stood. She directed the room to the young woman on her right. "This is my daughter, Chrysoberyl."

Chrysoberyl stepped forward. She had auburn hair as well, but hers was long and straight. She wore a floor-length white-velvet gown, that changed to a gray-blue in the shadows. It was sleeveless, and low cut, with a choker made from the same material around her neck. Her eyes were dark and shallow. They were also hard, and the deepest of forest-greens. Although she was very beautiful, an evil way about her. She had, apparently, been well taught by her mother.

"You will know her as Pulsar. As in SAILOR Pulsar." Beryl said. The crowd in the great hall clouded over in disbelief. "You all heard me right! She's a Sailor Soldier, just like those Sailor Brats on Earth. And my daughter can do more damage to any of you than you can imagine by just saying two words! She will be your Queen someday!"

Pulsar made no motion apart from further slitting her shallow eyes. Beryl directed the attention to the man at her left. "This is Kyanite. Revere him. Obey him. He is in charge of my armed forces. He will lead our invasion of Earth as soon as we have all the Rainbow Crystals."

Malachite took a start. That was to be his position! How could she strip him of his title!? Especially in favor of this Kyanite.

The man on Beryl's left was of average height, and tan with combed back brownish hair. He wore a sleeveless navy-blue v-neck smock that flared up slightly at the shoulders. He had tight black pants that were tucked into his gray, deep-tread boots. Despite these features, however, was the fact that Kyanite had muscles bulging out from under his shirt and through his tight pants. In addition, his right eye was glazed over in blindness. This was the result of whatever had sliced the long, thin scar down his face. The scar started on his forehead, just below his hairline, traveled through the center of his blind eye and down onto his cheek, ending just an inch above the mouth.

All right, so perhaps he looked tough, but Malachite was seasoned! He'd been at the head of the army when the Negaverse conquered the moon! It was his rightful place! He decided to speak. "Queen Beryl! You said I was the one to lead your army!"

"If you recall, Malachite," Beryl snapped, "you FAILED!" Malachite stepped back in disbelief. Beryl continued. "Kyanite will lead the army. He will be known as Captain Quasar. His is my son-in-law, and, not to mention, more qualified than you!"

Malachite hung his head, fuming in defeat.

Beryl spoke again. "Pulsar and Quasar have come up with a new plan. You are to have a new partner, Malachite, one that will make sure you get your work done." She threw out her hand as if to brush him aside. "Begone."

"yes...my queen." Malachite bowed obediently, his eyebrow twitching in anger. He excused himself and fumed off to his quarters.

\* \* \*

Olivia bustled down the hallway from the computer room, her humongous bass violin in arm. The instrument was so large, she had to press it against her body and support it with one leg to keep it from dragging the ground. The motion resulting from this position fit neatly into the definition of a hobble.

Jennifer looked up from where she was stretched out on the couch. "D'you need some help, there?"

"Yeah!" Olivia called. "Could you open the garage door for me!?"

"Sure." Jennifer jumped up and clogged her way to the laundry room to let Olivia out. The blond wobbled out into the garage and slid the bass into the van through the tailgate. She shut the hatch, and got in the back seat through the side door. Jennifer went back inside and passed her mother, who was on her way out to the car.

Mrs. Miles looked up and saw Olivia sitting, anxiously in the back. "Olivia!? Do you have everything you need?"

"Yes, Mom!"

"Have you eaten anything?"

"No, Mom, I don't have time to eat!"

Her mother turned and headed back inside. "I'll get something for you to eat on the way." On her way in, she bumped into Jennifer, who was on her way back out with a notebook and her math homework. Jennifer jumped in the car and took her normal seat. "So, are you nervous?"

"Yeah," Olivia answered. "I barely practiced at all."

"Maybe you should fix that for next time." Jennifer suggested.

"Hah! Yeah right!" Olivia scoffed. Mrs. Miles came out of the house and climbed into the driver's seat again. She tossed Olivia some cheese and a Jell-O-container with a spoon. Olivia caught the cheese and the spoon, but dropped the Jell-O. She laughed a little to herself, then reached down to get the fruit cup. "Thanks, Mom!"

The van pulled out of the driveway and was on the road again on its way to Canon. Down the road and through the system of turns and curves, the car went until it had pulled up at the front doors of the school. Olivia jumped out of the vehicle, ran around the back, retrieved the bass and prepared to hobble inside, but was intercepted by her mother. "Calm down, Olivia, you've got plenty of time." She took the instrument from the eleven-year-old. "Let me take it in for you."

Olivia set the bass down. "Thanks Mom."

The family made their way inside. They were early enough not to have to worry about much of a crowd beside the players and their parents. They ran into Jessi and her mother just outside the cafeteria.

"Hi, Olivia!" Jessi called, running over. Her violin case beat off her thighs as she trotted along.

Olivia smiled. "Hi, Jessi, what's new?"

"Nothing," Jessi answered. "Have you been to the strings room yet?"

"No, Mom has my bass, we were on our way there." Olivia answered.

"Do you wanna walk together?" Jessi asked. "I mean, without the adults."

"Sure." Olivia agreed. She walked back to where Jennifer and her mother stood. "Hey, Mom, you can go in, I can take care of it."

"Are you sure?" Her mother asked.

"Yeah, I'll be fine. Go on into the gym and save a place for Dad." Olivia took up her bass and the other two left. Meanwhile, Jessi was having the same conversation with her mother.

"Just go in the gym and sit down, Mom, I'm gonna hang out with Olivia."

"But Jezebel." Her mother persisted, "what if you get lost?"

"Mom! It's my SCHOOL! There are only, like, three hundred students that could fit in this place! I won't get lost!"

"But, Jezebel, what if you are kidnapped?"

"Mother!" Jessi was growing impatient. "It's right down the hall! I got there every Tuesday and Thursday! I'll be fine! I'll be with Olivia!"

"Well, alright, as long as you two stay together."

"We will, Mom." Jessi repeated, "Now go!"

Her mother took off in the direction Olivia's had and Jessi became less annoyed. Olivia walked up behind the redhead. "Man, your Mom's a little over-protective, isn't she?"

Jessi flipped aside one of her long, straight bangs. "She doesn't trust me with anything! She thinks that if she leaves me alone for two minutes, I'll find some way to kill myself!" Jessi's explanation left Olivia confused. Jessi summed it up by simply saying. "She's paranoid."

"Really." Olivia said in mock skepticism. The two girls made it up the stairs and down the hall to the Strings room, Olivia hobbling the entire way. Once inside, they had to split up and join the rest of the fifth-grade Strings students tuning up. Jessi headed over to the other violins and Olivia set up by the cellos. The girl closest to her was a cello-player from a different class, but Olivia recognized her. Her name was Lynn, she was a quiet, self-contained girl with dirty-looking short brown hair and brown eyes. She was trying to tune her cello on her own. She'd pluck a string, adjust the peg at the top of her instrument, and then pluck it again. As Olivia listened to her efforts, she could tell that she was only making it worse.

"Why can't I do it!?!?" Lynn said, sounding near tears.

"Why don't you just wait for the teacher to help you tune it?" The boy next to her suggested, but Lynn ignored his advice.

"It's hopeless! Why can't I do anything right!?!?"

'She needs a vacation.' Olivia thought.

Lynn crossed her arms and pouted, her lower lip quivering. "I'm useless! Why am I even here? All I want is to be good at something for once."

Olivia rolled her eyes. 'She needs a loooooong vacation.'

\* \* \*

Malachite stormed into his quarters. The iron-rod bay doors slammed open and slammed closed behind him as soon as he was through. One of the irregularly shaped colored glass panes shattered on impact. His girlfriend, who was waiting for him, jumped at the sound. "Ah! Malachite? What is it?" He wasn't paying attention, but answered her question in one rage-fueled scream. "Argh! How DARE she!?!"

"Malachite?" The other general, with long wavy orange hair stepped forward. "What did Beryl do?" "The heathen witch! She's disgraced me!" He pounded his fist on the table. The woman put her hands on his shoulders. Malachite was breathing hard and a vein was sticking out of his pale forehead.

"What did she do to you?"

"She's destroyed me." Malachite said, calmer. "Zoicite, she's demoted me! I no longer lead her army! I'm no longer important! I'm dispensable!"

"Malachite," Zoicite repeated, "if you are thinking what I think you are, it won't happen." Malachite avoided her gaze and bent over the table, one fist clenched. His navy cape hung irregularly down to one side. She leaned her face closer. "She can't get rid of you! She just gave you this new job!" Zoicite turned her eyes down. Her heart was beating fast. She was scared that he was right, and dreaded the thought of losing him.

"She's taken the first step, Zoicite," Malachite announced, straightening up. Her hands fell from his shoulders. "If I screw up one more time, I'm finished."

"No!" She stepped forward as if to throw her arms around him. "Malachite!"

He threw up a hand and kept her back. Her hands dropped to the sides of her navy and green general's uniform. "I'm not down yet, Zoicite. Queen Beryl, in all her mercy," his voice lacked gratitude and possessed a great deal of sarcasm, "has given me another chance."

Zoicite brought her hands back up to clasp in front of her chest. Hope had emerged in her eyes.

Malachite was not hopeful at all. "She's assigned me a new partner she says will make sure I do my job. I've become a nuisance to her. I was once a Great General! ARGH!" He'd driven himself back into rage.

Then, the door to his chambers opened. The iron hinges creaked.

Malachite heard it and snapped his head to side. "Who's there!?"

"General Malachite?" A deep voice asked. The voice was full of confidence and cunning. It sounded as if there was nothing that could intimidate it. "I believe you were assigned to me."

Malachite didn't like the sound of that last remark at all. He whirled around. "I am assigned to no one! Show yourself!"

To the two generals' surprise, the man who slinked around the corner on all fours was a cat. The cat had glowing yellow eyes that were slitted menacingly at it stared with utter supremacy around the room. It was deep navy blue; a much bluer navy than the grayish color of the generals' uniforms. It sat down just inside the door and straightened up, displaying every muscle that rippled beneath its silk-like fine fur coat. On its forehead was a crescent moon that was deep burnt orange and inverted so that the points pointed toward his eyes. He twitched his tail and grinned at Malachite and Zoicite.

Malachite couldn't believe his disgrace. "A CAT!?! Have I been reduced to this!?"

"Reduced is hardly the word you should be using." The cat said, licking his paw and using it to slick back the fur on his flattened ears. "It should be an honor for you to be shadowing me. I am Garth the Midnight Cat, I was the magical feline who gave Captain Quasar his Sailor Powers."

"Wait." Zoicite interrupted. "Captain Quasar is a Sailor Soldier? I thought only women could..."

"You would." Garth accused as he continued to groom. "you are all such simple-minded maggots."



“How do you get away with such a bloated ego!?” Zoicite demanded.

“You are in no authority to be asking me that.” Garth said, he stood up and headed back out the door.

“Come, maggot, we have work to do.”

Malachite knew that he was the ‘maggot’ the cat was referring to. He snarled and pulled his cape up over his shoulder. “If this is what I’ve become, then I truly am a maggot.”

\* \* \*

Olivia and her Strings group had moved out onto the stage in the Canon Elementary gymnasium. She stood, in her white Canon Strings shirt and black pants, bow in hand. Her music was open in front of her on the stand she was sharing with the only other bass player in her group. She could see Jessi down with the violins and violas. Olivia looked out into the audience and saw her mother and sister sitting next to an open seat saved for her father. People were steadily trickling in through the door while the instructor/conductor was busy getting organized. Olivia looked over to the door to see if her father was coming in.

She saw, instead five girls entering. They were all middle-school aged and dressed in sailor-type uniforms. In the lead was a girl with long, black hair and violet-colored eyes. Olivia recognized her as Raye.

‘Raye!?! What is she doing here?’ Olivia thought. She ran her eye to the girls who were with her. They were exactly who she thought they’d be. There was blue-black haired, intelligent blue-eyed Amy. Then Lita came with green eyes and a brown ponytail. Then, last were the two blue-eyed blondes Mina and Serena. Mina had her long blonde hair pulled up in a big red bow. Serena’s was pulled up in two pigtail-like buns. It was Serena’s quick eye that spotted Olivia up on stage. She smiled and waved, frantically.

Olivia giggled and waved back.

Just then, Mrs. Wills, the Strings instructor, stood up and signaled that it was time for the program to start. Raye and her party, being the tail end of the guests, had to grab a seat in the back. Amy took up the program that was on her chair before sitting down and began to page through it. Mina plopped down next to her and folded her hands under her chin. “Aw! Isn’t it sweet? Out little baby Sailor Soldier playing her violin at her first recital!” She wiped her eyes. “Oh! I might cry!”

“I got news for you, Mina.” Lita said, across Amy. “First off, she’s not a baby, second, I doubt that this is her fist recital, and third, that’s one haunkin’ violin!”

“Well, maybe it’s not as sweet as it was at fist glance,” Mina admitted, returning to her motherly mood, “but she’s still our baby heroine for justice!”

Lita got motherly as well and sighed. “Aw, your right.”

Amy spoke. “This looks like it’s going to be a very entertaining performance.”

“What makes you say that?” Raye asked.

“Ew, it’s none of that boring Beethoven and Bach stuff is it!?” Serena asked with a whine.

“No, I don’t think that this orchestra is advanced enough for that.” Amy admitted. “But it does look like they will be playing some old favorites, ‘The Star Spangles Banner’, ‘When the Saints Come Marching in’, and ‘Turkey in the Straw’ just to name a few.”

“Well, you can’t beat ‘Turkey in the Straw’.” Lita joked.

The concert broke into its first piece. Olivia stood at the back of the stage playing the same three notes over and over.

...squeak, shriek, strum...squeak, shriek, strum...

‘This is boring,’ she thought. She took her eyes off the music, knowing that she had until the end of the page before her part changed. She saw Jessi struggling with the difficult violin music and decided that

she was better off in bass clef than treble. Over in the corner, surrounded by cellos, the bass clef was mostly all she heard. The cellos' part was a little more difficult than the bass, but not that much more. Above the sea of repetitive notes, Olivia could hear someone playing off-key.

Just as she suspected, it was Lynn, who couldn't quite seem to get her notes right. She had her brow deeply furrowed and her teeth set in frustration, but she couldn't get her instrument and her hands to cooperate. "Arg!"

'Poor kid that must be hard to stand.' Olivia thought as she repeated her same three notes. When the page ended, Olivia faced her own musical difficulties when she had to add an extra four notes to her routine, but that only lasted for two measures and then she was back to the same three notes again. ...squeak, shriek, strum...squeak, shriek, strum...

From within the column of cellos, Lynn made herself known with a misplaced flat and then a bow fumble that resulted in a deafening shriek. The sound caused a couple of the other instrument groups to cringe and miss notes. The result was a melee of sour notes and bad timing. Mrs. Wills attempted to regain composure and, after a few minutes, the piece finished up nicely.

That last screw up was apparently more than Lynn could handle. She threw down her bow and dropped her cello with a bang. Everyone in the bass section cringed, knowing the damage that could be done by throwing a large instrument down like that. Lynn didn't care. She covered her face, ran off stage and out the side doors of the gymnasium. The audience was abuzz, but none got up. Mrs. Wills signaled for her assistant to go check on the troubled musician and continued with the program. Olivia shook her head, 'She doesn't need a vacation, she needs some emotional therapy.' While Mrs. Wills was addressing the audience, Olivia turned the page of her music and prepared to perform her next set of three notes to accompany "When the Saints Come Marching In."

The audience forgot about Lynn and returned to watching the concert.

\* \* \*

Malachite and Garth left the realms of the negaverse through a black-hole-like portal. The general had no idea where the cat was leading him, but followed obediently, if not enthusiastically, anyway. The portal emptied them out on the cement of a crowded parking lot. It was late, and the clouds were covering the sky so that only a ghost of the moon was visible above them. Malachite looked around the sea of cars. There were trees and houses to his left. To the right was what looked like a soccer field and a swing set. Garth was headed forward toward a squat building with randomly placed, narrow windows. Malachite's face creased with displeasure. "Cat! What are you doing!? You have brought us to a Children's School!"

"I am aware of where we are, General." Garth answered with a swish of his tail. His sleek fur was barely visible in the dark. "This is exactly where we are going to find the holder of the Crystal Fracture!"

"Crystal Fracture!?" Malachite cried. "We are in search of the Rainbow Crystals! Don't waste my time on some scavenger hunt for broken crystals! This is not what I've been assigned!"

"I don't care what you were assigned." Garth hissed, turning his surprisingly luminous yellow eyes toward his silver-haired accomplice. "I don't take my orders from that witch Beryl. I have higher powers to serve."

"What are you saying!?" Malachite fumed. He was furious at this animal that thought that he was better than both he and his queen. How was this defect supposed to make him do his job when he was neglecting his orders and leading him off on wild tangents. "Is this some elaborate plot to get me fired! We are supposed to be in search of the Rainbow Crystals!"

"Would you SHUT UP!?" Garth roared. "I know what I am doing! I am the leader, you are the follower! Now stop questioning my actions and pay attention! If you have half a brain you might learn something!"

The cat slit his eyes further and continued in the direction of the school, he snuffed. "maggots..." Malachite pouted and followed. All he'd learned so far was that he was in very hot water. His life was at stake, and this pig-headed rat of a feline was keeping him from his duty, and most assuredly signing his death warrant. Oh, if Beryl were watching now, she'd be sharpening the sword that would pierce his heart the minute he found himself back in her great hall. This was rich.

\* \* \*

"When the Saints Come Marching In" finished up without a hitch. It didn't lack anything, even though it was missing a cello. Mrs. Wills turned to look at the gymnasium door that Lynn had disappeared through. Her assistant was trying to push it open, but apparently couldn't. Mrs. Wills shook her head and took the microphone. "Next we are going to play an old favorite, "Turkey in the Straw" It is a tradition that we play this at the fall concert."

"Hey, "Turkey in the Straw"!" Lita smiled, elbowing Raye in the side.

Raye looked from Mrs. Wills to the brunette's face and rolled her eyes. "Lita, you're an idiot."

"What!?" Lita protested, but Raye was listening to the conductor.

"It is also a tradition for people to come up and dance during this song if they want to, so when we start up, feel free to jump up and do-si-do if you feel the urge."

Jennifer leaned over to her mother. "Hah, yeah right."

Lita's eyes widened in delight. She turned back to Raye. "C'mon Raye! Lets go up and dance!"

"No!" Raye cried, her violet eyes springing open wider. "I'm not going to make a fool of myself in front of all these people!"

"Oh, Come ON! It's gonna be fun!" Lita persisted, a childish grin on her face.

"I'll do it, Lita!" Serena called across Mina and Amy.

"Me too!" Mina nodded.

"Okay, guys, let's go do-si-do!" Lita cried, jumping up. She walked past Raye and bopped her in the head. "You're gonna miss all the fun, you party pooper."

"I'm not a party pooper!" Raye insisted. "I just don't like to square-dance with the whole room watching me!"

Lita, Serena, and Mina made their way up front and the music started. Olivia's face contorted in amusement. The three of them were the only people brave enough to actually get up and dance. Lita and Serena were partners, with big, strong, Lita as the leader. Mina contented herself with Irish-jigging and twirling fast enough to make her long blonde hair fly about behind her. Olivia shook her head, and turned her attention back to the music where her rarely varying notes were plotted for her to follow. She was so distracted by the three square dancers that she'd lost her place.

\* \* \*

Garth passed up the front doors and headed around the back of the building. The lights in the classrooms were out, and being hidden from the house lights by the road made the night seem darker. Ahead, however, Malachite saw a door slam open. Light forced its way across the lawn after a young girl. She was apparently crying and slumped down against the door in a ball as soon as it was closed. Garth looked back over his shoulder at Malachite. "Wait here. Watch closely."

Malachite crossed his arms and leaned one shoulder against the wall, smirking.

Garth approached the girl who was shaking with sobs and purred. The girl looked up, her dirty brown bangs wet from tears and her brown eyes red around the edges. Her lower lip quivered. "Wh-who is it!?"

"Prrrrrrr..." Garth stepped his long lean body close enough to Lynn so that she could see him. She brightened just fractionally. Seeing the cat had replaced her sobs with interest. "Kitty? What are you doing here, kitty?"

"Purr..." Garth rubbed the length of his body down her balled up leg and Lynn stroked him. Deeply and a bit airily he spoke to her. "...I'm here to help you, my child."

"Y-you speak!" Lynn removed her hand, scared, her lip quivering again.

"Yes, I am here to help you with your problem..." Garth mewed. "...You feel broken? Incomplete? Do you feel like there is something missing in your life?"

"Um.." Lynn was still unsure about this talking cat, and her eyes stared, unblinking as it continued to rub up and down her leg.

"Tell me, child," Garth said, with a purr, "what is the one thing you want in your life? What would make you whole?"

"Um.." Lynn bit her knuckle to stop her mouth from trembling. "I-I want to..."

"Yes?" Garth egged. "What would make you perfect?"

"I-" Her mind was still soaked with the memory of her experience on the stage. She was a failure at music. All she wanted was to play something right. All she wanted was to be good at playing. That was what would make her whole. "I just want to do good at playing music. I want to be a part of an orchestra and play with a bunch of other people! I want to be good! I want to be the best! That's what'd make me a perfect person! That's what I need to make me whole!"

"Very well..." Garth said, a slight hint of cunning to his deep voice. "...then I am going to help you be the best."

Malachite raised his eyebrows. 'What is he doing?'

"You will!?" Lynn cried. "Really!?"

"Yes," Garth said. He ceased his rubbing and stepped back to meet her eyes. "Stand up."

"What will you do, talking kitty?" Lynn asked, obeying. "How can a little cat make me the best at playing music?"

"This is how..." Garth started, he reached behind him into his sub-space pocket and produced a small black-velvet sack. The sack was tall enough to touch his chin and was tied with a brown piece of braided twine. Both Lynn and Malachite leaned forward to see as Garth undid the string and reached into the bag. He emerged with a short, dark blue wand in his teeth. The onlookers' eyes widened. The bag vanished as Garth stepped forward and placed the wand at Lynn's feet. The cat looked up at her.

"Take this pen. It will solve all your problems."

Lynn reached down and took the wand, which did resemble a pen with a dark blue body and black cap. On the top of the cap was an oval-shaped decoration. It had on it, a treble clef with a double-X running through it. The arms of another X protruded out the sides of the decoration. Lynn inspected it carefully.

"What does it..." But then she stopped. Black fumes were coming out of the top of the pen. They surrounded her head and leaked inside through her eyes, nose, mouth and ears. Immediately she had the answer to her question, and to Garth's satisfaction and Malachite's surprise, she cried out.

"DARK PORRIMA!"

Lynn was consumed inside a black hemisphere of dark magic. From the walls of the sphere, ribbon-like tendrils shot and wrapped themselves around her. Her clothing vanished, and the ribbons covered her body in a rippling dark-blue coating. Lightning flashed briefly inside the dome, severing the ends of the ribbons from the walls. The mummy-like coating covered every inch of her, even her face and her mop of dirty-brown hair. Her eyes were invisible until lightning flashed again and electricity followed the moisture of her open eyes into their sockets. Her eyes were lit with white light from within. The electricity continued throughout her body and caused the ribbons to explode into frayed pieces from her. She was

left in the uniform of a Sailor Soldier. Her skirt, collar, and choker were the same dark-blue as the ribbons, and even though her leotard and gloves were white, they had a tint of gray to them. The bows on her chest and at her back were both black. As soon as her transformation was complete, she opened her mouth and began a thunderous monologue. "I am dark Sailor Porrima! I am the product of lust! And desire! I will conquer, and emerge victorious! I will serve the ones who sent me and become the best in the process! I AM WHOLE!" At the last words, lighting shattered the dome, it broke open and released Sailor Porrima back into the real world, vanishing in the process.

Malachite's jaw dropped. "What is this power you have, cat!?"

Garth ignored him as Sailor Porrima smiled down at him. He twitched his tail. "Very good. You have become whole with the help of my power. You now have the one thing you wanted, that you said would complete you. Now go in there and show them what you can do."

"Right." Porrima agreed. Her voice sounded like Lynn's but the extra part that Garth had given her had affected her mind. She was hungry to prove herself. Porrima turned and headed inside the gymnasium again. Malachite dashed over.

"What was that!?" He demanded.

"Shush." Garth warned him. "I didn't tell you that you could speak." Malachite looked indecent. Garth explained. "I told you that I was the one that gave Quasar his powers. That was how I did it. Except he was true. This girl is a mock soldier. I am using a combined excess of Quasar and Pulsar's powers to fuel this transformation. It will not last long, only long enough to force out the Crystal Fracture."

"What is this Fracture!?" Malachite demanded, blocking Garth's path into the building. "Tell Me!"

"The fracture is why she's not whole." Garth explained, aggravated. "When I use my power to fill in that missing part, there is no room for the fracture within her anymore." He tried to get around Malachite's legs and into the door. "It takes a little while, but not long. Now get out of my way so that we don't miss it!"

Malachite stepped inside, himself and Garth sprinted in after him. The audience had gotten to its feet at the sight of Porrima, they were confused and all speaking at once. The music stopped. Lita stopped in the middle of a promenade with Serena, and the blonde fell onto her face. Porrima grinned. "Oh, thank you for the standing ovation!" She reached out her hand and a violin appeared in it. The violin had the same symbol of a treble clef with a double X running through it carved into its surface.

Raye caught sight of Malachite entering with Garth and gasped. "Ahh! It's the Negaverse! Everyone get out of here, now!"

The crowd didn't need to be told twice. Immediately the throng took off toward the door, toppling chairs and shoving each other. Porrima put her instrument under her chin and set the bow. "No, you are not going anywhere! You need to stay and hear me play!" She strung the bow across the strings and began to play a fast tune with a skillful hand. Music wasn't the only thing to come out of the violin, however. Once she began to play, a long, stringy, black treble staff rippled off the bridge and flew out to bind the audience in a tight lasso of dark magic. She sneered. "Hm, a captive audience, what I've always wanted."

Mrs. Wills looked frantically to the students and waved them offstage. "Run, hurry!"

The Strings class dropped their instruments and ran out the stage entrance. Olivia was one of them. Lita, Serena, and Mina were lucky enough to escape the lasso by being close to the stage. They jumped up and followed the students and Mrs. Wills out of the gym. They saw Olivia's thick blonde hair among the students up ahead of them. Another girl, with long red hair had sought her out, and they stepped apart from the running kids. Jessi grabbed Olivia's arm. "Come on! We have to get out of here!"

"No! I've got to-" Olivia tried to think of an excuse to get away and transform.

"There's no time! We have to get out of here!" Jessi pleaded.

“Y-You go on! I’ll catch up!” Olivia finally said.

Jessi hesitated, but finally took off. “Okay, if you say so.”

Serena and the other two girls ran up and stopped beside Olivia. Olivia waved a hand and beckoned them up a short flight of stairs to the left. “Follow me!” Once up the stairs and around the corner, Olivia decided that it was safe to transform. “POLARIS POWER!”

Olivia’s transformation pen appeared in her hand. The eight-pointed star that was her symbol rose off the headpiece and spun through the air. A light blue power dome rose about her. Once inside, her hair and skin faded to a light, sparkling blue and the interior walls of the dome became background of pink, blue and white crystal. She put one hand to her hip, and held the pen up in the other. From the symbol swirled long currents of liquid. They stretched like sparkling tongues down around her and gathered at her feet, where they condensed into a tightly swirling whirlpool. She spun, her long hair the same color as her flesh, but her eyes still glowing their lively bright blue. She turned her back, and the whirlpool shot up from below like a gaping mouth, freezing her inside a concave column of ice. Her hair stood out about her hips, forming a solid veil that hid her body from view. Then a crack ripped across the smooth icy surface, and a sudden explosion blew the ice into fragments. Olivia was left as Sailor Polaris, dressed in cool light blue. Her boots reached up to her knees and ended in a white lined-point with a white diamond-shape at the top. She tossed her hair off her back and shards of splintered ice flew out of it. She turned and swished a frilly blue skirt that was attached to a white leotard, the skirt had a matching sailor’s collar that ended with a pink bow on her chest. She did not have a bow at her lower back, but had, instead, a blue bow clipped in her hair. With tiara, and choker, she posed with one leg up and a hand on her knee. The pose ended her transformation and the dome opened to release her into the real world again.

Mina, and Lita did the same, each brandishing their own wands with their own symbols on them. They chorused.

“VENUS POWER!”

“JUPITER POWER!”

Two more domes appeared around each girl. Lita’s was green and inside raged a fierce lightning storm. She twirled, her skin a collage of green, yellow and white, and her green eyes staring. Turning her back, the lightning condensed on her and filled the dome with white light. When the light faded, she was Sailor Jupiter, wearing green lace-up boots, a green skirt, collar and choker. Her bows, one on her chest and the other at her lower back, were both pink. She struck a pose, ended her transformation, and joined Polaris in the hallway.

Mina was encased in a dome of yellow. Her skin was orange and yellow, her blue eyes stood out like a banner in the swirl of magic. Her pen became the baton at the end of a starred ribbon. She twirled it a bit, but when she stopped, it twirled by itself, tracing a circle around her body. The stars on the ribbon exploded out and forced her hair up off her back. When they had vanished, she was dressed as Sailor Venus. Her outfit was no different than the others’ except that it was orange with a yellow bow on her chest and a blue one at her back. She posed and also emerged for the battle.

Serena looked around at the other soldiers and threw her hand out to the side. “Moon Prism...” She threw the same hand into the air “POWER!”

Sailor Moon’s dome was pink, and her transformation involved her magical brooch that she wore on her

collar bow. Pink ribbons came from the brooch and tightened themselves around her. One by one, the elements of her uniform appeared from the ribbon; her white gloves, her red boots, her white leotard, with blue collar, and skirt. Her uniform also included a red choker and two red bows on her leotard. Once finished, she also broke free of her hemisphere.

“Well, that took forever.” Olivia snorted. “I mean, I know I’m new at this, but is there an easier way for us to transform without it taking so long?”

“Er...” Sailor Moon didn’t have an answer, and just stood with a clueless look on her face. “Um, let’s just get to work, okay?” The four Sailor Soldiers raced back into the gymnasium, where Sailor Porrima was busy “entertaining” her audience.

It was true that the Dark power had made her much better at playing. She was a musical genius. She attacked the violin with a complex symphony that required more skill and talent than the people had ever seen performed. As she played, large musical notes and symbols floated out of the violin and began to dance around the room. Malachite and Garth waited patiently by the door. “At the end of this piece.” Garth said. “Her power will be maximum at the end of the piece, and then we will have our Crystal Fragment.”

“You had better be right about this, cat.” Malachite muttered, under his breath.

“Oh, I’m right,” Garth snarled. “I know what I’m doing.”

“And Now!” Porrima announced. “The Final Movement!”

“STOP!”

Porrima paused, her bow still on the strings, and the music notes frozen in mid-air. “Who is it?! Who do you think you are? You are interrupting the greatest musician in the world!”

“I’ll tell you who I am!” Serena stepped onto the stage and pointed an accusing finger at Porrima. “I am a heroine for love and justice! A pretty Sailor! A Sailor Soldier! I am SAILOR MOON! And in the name of the moon....I am going to punish you!”

“Yeah!” Polaris added. “You must be a real jerk to mess up a kid’s concert! We don’t even play that good!”

“We are going to stop you from destroying the dreams and the beautiful music of these children!”

Jupiter announced. “We are the Sailor Soldiers!”

“Hah!” Porrima laughed. “Beautiful music? Do you think that they can play better than me!?” Sailor Porrima threw herself into the last movement of her symphony, and music notes flew through the air, toward the four soldiers on the stage. Venus jumped aside.

“Crescent, BEAM!” She cried. She pointed a finger at the violin and a long orange laser shot out toward it. Porrima easily dodged it, and sent a whole note right at Venus. The blonde jumped it, but tripped over a music stand and landed on her face. “Ow.”

“Take this!” Porrima continued to play and sent a pair of eighth notes toward Venus. The two notes used their combined flag and bound her to the floor.

“Hey! No Fair!”

Amy screamed from in the crowd. “Sailor Venus!”

“I’ll take you!” Sailor Jupiter cried, she stepped up and a long metal rod grew out of her tiara.

“Supreme...”

Porrima conjured up another treble staff and sent it Jupiter’s direction.

“THUNDER!” Lightning stretched out from Jupiter’s forehead and toward Porrima. It was caught, however, by the staff, that in turn, wrapped itself tightly around her arms. The staff was still charged by the lightning and electrocuted Jupiter on impact, forcing her out of the battle.

It was only Sailors Moon and Polaris left. Olivia looked over to the other soldier. “We’re dropping like flies, what do we do!?”

"Lets...um..." Moon thought quickly, "lets both attack her at the same time! We'll see if that works."

"Okay!" Polaris nodded. She stepped forward and threw her hands in the air. "North Star Power...NOW!"

"Moon Tiara ACTION!" Sailor Moon hurled a magical tiara/frisbee at Porrima, and Polaris let loose a spiraling blue icicle. Porrima's music was starting to slow down as she approached the end of the song, but that didn't stop her from conjuring up two quarter notes to bat the attacks out of the way. Moon had to dodge her own frisbee and Polaris slipped and fell as the ground beneath her became a slippery frozen slate.

"Aha! The big finale!" Porrima cried. She began to pelt the two Soldiers with projectile music notes as the finale ensued. Moon and Polaris had to cover their faces to shield from the bombardment. There was a roar of notes and a fantastic blast of music as the symphony wound down.

"This is it!" Garth yelled, excited. "This is it! The Crystal Fracture!"

Three notes and she had finished the piece. Several people in the crowd applauded as she bowed before them. Suddenly, however, her body froze. Her gloved hand dropped the violin and it clattered on the floor. She began to twitch and sweat, and her throat tightened. Unable to move a muscle, she wheezed and shook, her eyes bulging. There was a sound like ripping, and color began to drain from her face. Her dirty brown hair became dead and white. Her eyes drained as well. At the same time, there was a growing light underneath her choker. Her breathing became more and more forced and frightened. There was a disturbance in the air around her, and a rumbling noise that burst the light bulbs in the overhead lights. Polaris and Moon stood and stared, horrified.

"It's happening! Her body is rejecting her Crystal Fracture! It is going to be ours!" Garth crowed, triumphantly. Malachite stood behind him, just as scared as the others in the room. His face bleached to a color near his hair.

Suddenly, Porrima's throat developed a welt, and her body threw her head back for her, so that she stood frozen in place, staring at the ceiling. If she could have, she would have screamed, but breathing was such a forced labor that she couldn't spare the breath. Suddenly, the light exploded out of her, emptying all of her color into the room along with white light. What didn't come, however, was a crystal. "So-so where is it?" Malachite asked, shakily as the light finished emptying out of Porrima's body. The girl was plaster-stiff, frighteningly pale, and sick looking.

Garth stuttered. "It-its not there! What! How could it not be! She was broken!" Garth's ears and Malachite's cape ruffled widely as the white light and swirl of color dashed around the room like a hurricane-force wind.

"Well, now what do we do!?" Malachite demanded, holding his head to keep his long hair from flying in his face.

"Kill her!" Garth cried. "Kill her and let's get out of here!"

"Right!" Malachite made a fist and pale blue energy grew around it. He wound up and prepared to launch it at the remains of Porrima. When a sharp red rose went whizzing by his head. "Wh-What was that!?"

From over by the main entrance, a tall man in a black tuxedo stood with another red rose at the ready. His long, billowing black and red cape was caught in Porrima's draft and whipped around behind him.

"What kind of an operation do you run, Malachite!? You give a girl everything she wants and then rob her of her life! And what is the purpose? Is there another Rainbow Crystal you're after?"

"It's you!" Malachite growled.

Moon's eyes bulged and a giant, love-struck smile stretched across her face. "TUXEDO MASK!"

Polaris stared, trembling at the man with the black hair, diamond-shaped white mask, and top hat that was not too tall, and not too short...he was perfect. Her eyes swelled and became watery. "Tuxedo Mask..."



“Leave her alone, Malachite!” Tuxedo Mask ordered. “Or you are going to have to answer to me!”  
“Like I’m afraid of you!?” Malachite yelled across the room. “You’re a wuss! And you can have this corpse of a girl! I’d like to see you fix her! And while you do that, I’ll be off looking for the last Rainbow Crystal! HA!” With a laugh, he and Garth bolted.

White light and color whooshed past and Tuxedo Mask reached up to keep his hat on. Sailor Moon called over. “What should we do!?”

“Use your Moon Wand! The Healing power!” Tuxedo Mask called over the queue. “Let’s hope it works.”

“Right!” Sailor Moon took the Crescent Moon Wand out of her subspace pocket and held it over her head. “Moon Healing, ACTIVATION!”

The lights on the wand sparkled and sent a flash of pure white healing magic across the room and into Porrima. It blew off her Dark Sailor Soldier uniform and knocked her to the floor. When the magic disappeared, a wind started up and the circling mass of light and color was sucked into her like a whirlpool. The strewn musical notes, and the staves holding Jupiter and the other people in the audience were sucked in as well. Pieces of glass from the shattered light bulbs and the paper programs that littered the floor were picked up and swirled around. Porrima’s body was refilled with her own essence and the whirlpool stopped. The sudden end to the swirling winds made Polaris, Moon, and Tuxedo Mask fall backwards. The strewn glass flew up and re-set itself in the hanging lights. The bulbs came back on. Everyone that was trapped together in the audience stood around, confused. Lynn lay unconscious on the floor of the gymnasium.

Sailor Polaris shook herself off and stood up, brushing a couple programs off her lap. She glanced around. Everyone seemed to be okay, Venus and Jupiter were up again, and Moon was making sure they were alright. Jennifer and her Mom were safe, she could see them in the audience. And the other two girls, Amy and Raye, were running up to see if everyone was alright. Who she didn’t see, however, was Tuxedo Mask. ‘Wh-where is he! I’ve got to find him!’ She shoved herself up and jumped off the stage, heading toward the exit. When she had burst through the doors and stood in the commons, she saw a black cape leave through the main door. She sprinted and caught up to him, smashing herself into the double-doors to open them. Impact threw her to the ground outside.

Tuxedo Mask turned. “Whoa! What?”

Polaris grinned a little stupidly and waved the tips of her fingers at him from the ground.

He shook his head, a smile on his face. A smooth, warm, smile. “Heh, heh, somehow I knew that it was you.” He walked over and helped her up off the concrete. “You okay?”

“Uh...uh..uh..yeah.” Polaris stammered, her face reddening.

“I’m glad.”

“You are?” She looked up into his face, which was a foot and a half from hers.

“Of course.” He grinned.

“Um..” She didn’t know why she felt like asking her next question, come to that, she didn’t even know why she was talking to him at all. “why?”

“Why?” Tuxedo Mask was a little startled. His eyebrows shot up. Somehow, the action was familiar to Polaris as she watched it. Tuxedo Mask rubbed the back of his neck with one gloved hand. “Uh, well, I don’t want you to be hurt.”

“Why?” Why was she asking him these stupid questions?

“Because you are special.”

“Why?” It was his eyes, it was something about his eyes.

His blue eyes could be seen through the lenses of his mask. They didn’t waver as he answered; “I don’t know why. You, you just are special to me for some reason.”

Those eyes were warm, inviting, familiar... “r-really?”

He nodded, then turned to leave. "Look after yourself, Polaris. You are the only Sailor Soldier who ever runs after me when I leave. I want to keep meeting like this for a long time."

"O-Okay." Polaris stammered. Tuxedo Mask tipped his hat and in a moment, he'd disappeared into the night. She stared after him, her mind racing, but her body too stunned to move. 'Don't let him leave! Make him stay. I want to stare into his eyes some more! I want to watch him smile...I want to see how he moves his hands when he talks, and how he stands while he listens. I want to see how he reacts to my questions. I have to make him come back! Ask 'why' again! That at least worked for a little while. Why do I feel this way?' She blinked and realized that she couldn't see him anymore. Tears welled up in her eyes. "Come back? Tuxedo Mask? Who are you? Why do I feel like we've met somewhere before?" "HEY!" Polaris whirled around to face Sailor Moon, who'd arrived with the other four girls. Moon was looking particularly angry, her hair arching up from her head and her nostrils flaring. "What do you think you're doing!?"

"I-I was-I was just talking to--"

"You were talking to Tuxedo Mask!" Sailor Moon roared. "Don't you know that He's MINE!"

"Hey, he doesn't have your name on him!" Polaris cried.

"I called dibs!" Moon shot back.

"That doesn't count!" Polaris insisted. "I can talk to him if I want!"

Venus folded her hands under her chin again. "Aww, isn't sweet? Our little baby Sailor Soldier has her first crush!"

Jupiter's eyes got misty as she did the same. "Yeah."

"It's not my fault if he's a cool guy!"

"He's MINE I tell you! MINE! MINE! MINE!"

"Oh, whatever," Polaris shook her head, then looked dreamily up at the cloud-covered sky. "You think what you want, Serena. He told me he thought I was special."

"He did WHAT!"

She brought her hands up to her heart. "He told me he wants to see me again and again!"

"He did not!"

"He did to." She sighed. "I have a feeling we were meant to be."

"You lie!" Sailor Moon broke into tears. "Why can't I be special!?!"

Everyone laughed at poor Sailor Moon, then Polaris put an arm around her back, and they both walked back into the school.

~To Be Continued~

## 4 - Episode 3: Bring on the Pain

SAILOR MOON P

Episode 3: Bring on the Pain

“JENNIFER!” Olivia cried from the bottom of the stairs. “Hurry Up! We’re gonna be LATE!”

“I’m hurrying! I’m sorry!” Her sister, Jennifer answered as she barreled down the stairs, duffel bag in hand. The hazel-eyed brunette jumped the last three steps and crashed into her younger sibling. They both ended up on the floor, Jennifer on top, and Olivia underneath, her long blonde hair spread out under her like a shag carpet.

Their father, Mr. Miles walked into the room and a look of amusement struck his face. “Well, this is new.” The two girls looked up from the floor. “Is this what you two consider hurrying?”

The two of them made no reply. Their large black and white dog, Gabriel, came over and started licking Olivia in the face, his tail wagging. “Ugh! Jennifer! Get off! The dog is attacking me!”

Jennifer shoved herself up and Olivia did the same, struggling to keep the dog at bay. Their mother called impatiently from the kitchen, dressed in exercise clothes. “Come on, girls! Hurry it up! You’re going to be late and I want to work out.”

“I’m coming already, I’m sorry.” Jennifer huffed. She passed up her mother and headed into the garage. Olivia followed and Mrs. Miles came last, closing the door behind her. The three of them got in their beige-colored van. The garage door opened and the vehicle pulled out and took off down the street. Mrs. Miles looked in the rear-view mirror at Olivia as they drove. “Do you have all the homework you need done taken care of?”

“Yes, Mom.” Olivia answered.

“What about that science project you were working so hard on last night?”

“Mrs. House extended the due-date to Monday,” The blonde answered, “I’ll do it on Sunday.”

“Okay,” her mother said, skeptically, “what about that paper you had to write tonight?”

“Mrs. House let us work on them in class and I got most of it done. I can finish it when we get home after Sports Club.” Olivia answered.

To this, her mother raised her eyebrows again. “If you say so. I mean, you’ve said that before and then worked all night trying to get it done.”

“No, this time I’m sure.” Olivia said, rolling her eyes. “I only have one more paragraph to write! I can do it in thirty minutes, maybe.”

“Whatever you say.” She looked to her other daughter. “What about you, Jennifer? Any homework?”

“Nope,” she answered, “it was test day in math. That’s the only class I ever have homework in.”

Jennifer opened a notebook on her lap and started writing. Olivia had brought a book to read, but she wasn’t in the mood, so she stared out the window and listened to the radio. The news was on, and a man was speaking.

“Police are still trying to figure out what happened at the Canon Elementary School on the southern edge of Tenth Street last night. It appears that a foreign threat invaded and held captive up to one hundred civilians during a children’s music recital. Witnesses report that the legendary Sailor Soldiers rescued the hostages and subdued the villain. The minds behind this puzzling crime, however, are still at large. Police encourage Tenth Street residents to be on the lookout for a tall, dark male with long light-colored hair, dressed in black.”

“Hey, we were there!” Jennifer said. “That was sure weird, wasn’t it.”

"I don't know what that was." Her mother admitted. "I'm just glad no one got hurt. I hope they find that caped man soon before he attacks again."

Olivia looked at her family. They had been captives in the crowd when Malachite and his evil Sailor Soldier Porrima had captured them. Olivia, in the form of Sailor Polaris and the other Sailor Soldiers had managed to solve the crisis before there was any real damage done, but somehow she knew that it was not enough. 'They won't find Malachite.' She thought. 'He's going to attack again, and he's going to keep attacking until he finds what he's looking for.' She remembered what she'd learned from the other Soldiers last night after the battle. Malachite worked for the Negaverse, which was a power-hungry negative universe that wanted to take over the world. It seemed sort of literary to her. Nearly every evil villain in every cartoon or book wanted to take over the world. The only thing about the Negaverse was that they were for real, and that she and her friends were the only force that could stand up against them. She stared as the cars zoomed by her window. 'Malachite's going to attack sometime. The question is when and where. Man, I thought homework was a problem, but now the fate of the world rests on my shoulders! Geez.'

\* \* \*

Malachite threw the radio against the brick wall. The mechanism broke into several pieces when it hit, and the voice of the newscaster stopped speaking. Garth stared, indifferently at the remains of the machine as it hit the concrete floor. "GAA!" Malachite raged and turned to the navy-blue cat sitting in the alley with him. "Look what you've done now, cat! Now the whole city's looking for us!"

"Please, please," Garth said as he began to groom himself, "General, don't blow things out of proportion."

"Out of proportion!?! Are you INSANE!?" Malachite cried, glaring at the cat. "This mission was my last chance! Now I'm partnered with a stupid cat who disobeys orders and goes off looking for these Crystal Fractures while we're supposed to be looking for rainbow crystals! Queen Beryl will not approve of this hogwash, I'm finished for sure if she ever finds out. Now, the whole blasted city is looking for me!

There's no blowing this out of proportion, this is a monstrous problem already! Ugh, I wish Zoicite was assigned this job instead of me! She was in charge of all the other rainbow crystals, why not this one!?"

"Shut up, would you, maggot?" Garth hissed. "I have a handle on this. You are driving yourself crazy over nothing! Now stop calling attention to yourself and listen to what I have to say."

Malachite had a vein protruding from his forehead, but obeyed anyway. This cat was supposed to be teaching him how to do his job. The disgrace was nearly too much for him to bear. "grrr... So what do we do next."

"What do you think we are going to do, General? You are supposed to be learning from me during this ordeal, we should start now."

"We can't go back to the Negaverse...Beryl will kill me for sure." Malachite said, a bad taste growing in his mouth.

"Correct enough." Garth said, his glowing yellow eyes glistened. "We will stay on Earth, and we will attack again. We need to find the three crystal fractures, and we will keep looking until we do. Follow." Garth headed around the corner of the brick building and out onto the sidewalk.

"Wha? Wait! Now there are three of them?!" Malachite gawked. Quickly he gained his composure and followed the cat out into the sunlight. "What aren't you telling me, cat!? I deserve to know what you have up your sleeve."

"Watch and learn." Garth said. "Isn't that what you're supposed to be doing, General?" A portal of black emptiness opened before them and Garth stepped through. "Come, we will attack again as soon as possible." Malachite hung his head, his silvery-white hair falling over his long face. His eyes were

steely. Without a word, he followed the cat through the portal and it sealed behind them, leaving the sidewalk deserted.

\* \* \*

The van pulled into one of the parking spaces at the Tenth Street Recreation Complex, nicknamed the 'Rec Center'. The building was large and came equipped with a weight room, a basketball court, a track, two pools, one indoor and one outdoor, a game room and meeting rooms. The Mileses climbed out of the car, grabbed their duffels, and headed up the walk. Climbing the stairs and entering the building, they found themselves in a tall-ceilinged hallway. The walls were painted white, and the tiles on the floor had random black or blue spots in them. There were benches and plants along the wall to their left, and several meeting rooms along the wall to the right. The air was heavy with the smell of chlorine from the pool, and the radio was playing on speakers overhead. After a short time of walking, they neared the front desk. It was 3 o'clock, and the shift was changing as they approached. A young woman opened a small door, stepped out from behind the desk, and passed them as they approached. The new person behind the desk was a tall man of 20, with short black hair, and blue eyes. He was busy getting himself situated at the computer when Mrs. Miles approached.

"Oh, I'm sorry," he said, when he realized that they were waiting on him. He rubbed the back of his neck and grinned. Olivia and Jennifer's eyes widened. "I just got here, uh, okay." He made sure the computer was set and then turned his full attention to the trio. "Ahem, can I help you?"

"Yeah," Mrs. Miles took out the three membership cards belonging to each member of their party and gave them to the young man to scan. Her daughters watched dreamily as he scanned them into the computer and gave them back. Olivia looked and saw that the name on his ID tag was Darien Chiba. Darien smiled. "Have a nice time."

"Thank you." Mrs. Miles nodded and the pack headed down the main stairwell next to the cylindrical elevator shaft. Olivia and Jennifer stole glimpses over their shoulders to look at Darien. Their mother spoke again, "well, he certainly was a pleasant young man. That's the kind of boy you girls should date when you get old enough."

"Let's start now." Jennifer sighed. "He was fine."

"Did you see that his name was Darien!?" Olivia added. "Man, he was cute!"

"I'll say!"

When they got to the bottom of the stairs, they were in a sitting room. The room was really the hallway leading from the basketball court on the left, to the pool on the right. There was another set of stairs leading up to the weight room and track, and a hallway that stretched back around the corner of the stairs that lead to the locker rooms. Jennifer and Olivia stayed down at the base of the stairs and their mother headed up to the weight room. "I'll be back for you two in a couple hours, okay?"

"Okay, Mom."

"Have fun." With that, she disappeared up the stairs. Jennifer and Olivia sat on one of the bright red couches in the sitting room and waited for the rest of the Sports Club to show up. As they were sitting, a girl with red hair that went down to the center of her back, sharp brown eyes and a mean look on her face came out of the basketball court doors with what looked like her coach, who had a basketball under his arm.

"Come on, Pam, you can't work yourself so hard." Her coach was saying. Pam, her mangled red hair flying, turned on him and started poking him in the chest.

"I'll work until I'm good! I'm not good enough for the finals yet and I'm not going to stop working until I am!"

"But Pam! The finals aren't for months!" The man cried.

“All the more reason for me to work hard now!” Pam insisted, storming off toward the locker rooms. Her coach was persistent. “But you’ve already been here five hours! The team hasn’t even gotten to state yet!”

“Ten Minute break and then back to the court!” She cried from around the corner. They heard the girl’s locker room door slam and the coach hung his head.

The two girls could hear him muttering to himself as he headed down the hall. “She works too hard, she’ll never be good enough in her eyes.” He sighed, “we’ll be here all day.”

“Well,” Olivia said, trying to start conversation. “She seemed stubborn.”

“Yeah,” Jennifer agreed. “I wonder if she plays well.”

“Wonder!?” Olivia said, disbelieving that Jennifer thought for even a minute that that Pam girl was bad at basketball.

“Heh, I suppose you’re right,” Jennifer nodded, “she wouldn’t be so dedicated to the sport if she wasn’t any good at it.”

Just then, the body of the Sports Club came down the stairs. Mina, an excitable blue-eyed blonde with a big red bow in her hair ran down first. “Olivia! Jennifer!” She stopped in front of them, her large eyes sparkling. “Did you see that super-hot guy behind that desk!? OH my GOSH! He was HOT!”

“Yeah, yeah! Wasn’t he!?” The two of them agreed.

“Who? Darien?” Serena asked, coming up behind Mina with an especially sour look on her face. “That bully!? No way.”

“Bully?” Olivia asked, disbelieving.

“Oh, Serena doesn’t like him just because he teases her hair.” Raye said, narrowing her violet eyes and elbowing the blonde in the ribs. Olivia giggled as Serena turned on Raye like an angry dog. She could see how her hair was a target for ridicule. She wore it up in two buns on top of her head with long pigtails coming out the back of them.

Once Olivia thought about it, it didn’t surprise her that Darien was a teaser. It was very easy to imagine him, six feet tall, his blue eyes tearing from laughter as he poked fun at her. She could nearly hear his voice. “Why don’t you try a stepstool, munchkin!?” Suddenly, her imagination had gone too far. She stopped to think. How was she imagining all these details about a guy she just met? They were more than just imagination, they were too vivid. Could they be something like memories? And where’d the munchkin crack come from? There was also a weird feeling. It was a warm, trembling feeling, like the feeling she got when Tuxedo Mask had touched her cheek and she had looked into his blue eyes for the first time. Blue eyes?

The girls were laughing and she came back to reality, but the warm feeling remained as a reminder of the voyage she had just taken to the back of her mind. Lita and Amy had just run up and joined the conversation. Lita, her long brown ponytail whipping about behind her, was looking very much like Mina did when she’d come down the stairs. The first thing out of the brunette’s mouth was; “Whoa! Did you see that hunk of a man working behind that desk!?” She grinned and closed her green eyes dreamily. “Oh! He looked just like that upper classman from my old school! Oh boy!”

Amy, an intellectual with both blue eyes and hair, analyzed the situation and asked. “Wasn’t that Darien? The guy who intercepts and bugs Serena everyday on the way home from school?”

“AMY!” Serena turned and snapped. “I just got us off that subject!”

Then, breaking up any impending conflict, the last member of the Sports Club raced down the stairs.

She was of average height with green eyes and a great mass of dark black-brown hair. She had it pulled into a loose braid, which swung back and forth as she approached. “Jenn! Guys!”

“Courtney!” Jennifer sighed. “You’re late again!”

“I know, I’m sorry, my grandma had to bring me from my mom’s.” Courtney explained, dropping her duffel. “But hey, I made it didn’t I?”

“True enough.” Olivia admitted. The eight of them stood there for a second until Olivia spoke again.

“So, what do we do first?”

“Um, I donno.” Raye said with a shrug. “What’d we do last time?”

“Volleyball!” Mina said with a grin. Mina Aino was the master of volleyball.

“I think we should go swimming!” Serena cried.

The others’ eyes brightened. “That’s a great idea!” They all took up their stuff and raced for the girls’ locker room to change. The hall leading to the locker rooms extended past the room doors and down to a dining area with tables and chairs. The snack bar was just out of view around the corner. Serena nearly headed down this hall by mistake, but Raye caught her by the collar and yanked her back.

“Come on, dufus, don’t you know where the bathrooms are!?”

“But I’m hungry!” Serena whined.

“You shouldn’t eat until thirty minutes after you get in the pool.” Mina said, smartly.

“Actually, it’s the other way around.” Amy corrected. “You shouldn’t get in the pool until thirty minutes after you’ve eaten.”

“Well, whatever.” Mina said, then resumed her reprimanding tone with Serena. “If you do, your arms and legs will tie in knots!”

Amy had to correct her a second time. “Actually the worst you’d get is a cramp. Having your limbs tie into knots is a physical impossibility.”

“Come on, let’s just change and get in that pool!” Lita interrupted. “I’ve heard the pool here is really great with lots of stuff to do!” Having said that, the mass of chattering girls moved into the bathroom. Once inside, their laughter echoed loudly off the metal lockers and tile floor, causing the noise to multiply in volume.

Unfortunately, they were not the only ones in the room. The tough basketball player Jennifer and Olivia had seen earlier was staring at herself in the large mirror where girls would normally do their hair. Pam looked even worse once the Sports Club had entered, her red hair was fraying in strange places, and her brown eyes were sparking furiously. Less than a second passed before she reacted. “Would you all SHUT UP!?”

They throng was suddenly silent, frozen in various positions in front of their lockers. They stood staring, perplexed, at the athlete. Pam wasn’t any kinder when she spoke again, which would be better defined as a roar. “I’m trying to CONCENTRATE here! Can’t you see that I need to stay focused!?! I want the lot of you to stay QUIET!!!” She stomped around the mirror-island and into one of the bathroom stalls on the other side of the room, slamming the door.

“Whoa,” Lita gawked, still standing with her shirt half over her head. “Let’s not mess with her.”

“Fine by me.” Courtney agreed.

“Let’s just change clothes and leave her alone. Serena said, glancing with her big blue eyes at the stalls where Pam still was fuming. “We’d better let her concentrate. Whatever she’s worried about, it must be important.”

“Yeah, better safe than sorry.” Raye added. “She might charge if provoked.” They changed as quickly as possible into their swimsuits and moved out the back of the locker room, past the showers. At the end of the row of shower stalls, there was a door leading directly to the indoor pool, and once through that door, talking began again. The focus of conversation was mainly all the perks laid before them as part of this pool;

“Wow!” Mina ooo-ed. “Look at that slide!”

“Hey!” Raye ahh-ed. “There’s a hot tub!”

Suddenly all eyes fell on the feature at the center of the room and all the voices joined together in a chorus of “LAZY RIVER!” The eight of them stormed into the water and waded as fast as they could to the snake-like waterway. Raye and Serena were fighting for the lead. Serena grabbed a chunk of

Raye's black hair, and pulled her under the water. Coming up again, Raye tackled Serena around the waist and dunked her as well. In all the melee, Olivia and Courtney squeezed by and took the lead. "Wahoo!" The two girls cried. They dove face-first into the current and rode, toppling over each other down the path. Raye and Serena watched them go, dumbfounded.

"This should be a lesson to you two." Amy said, passing them in her light-blue one piece. "It is best not to fight, or you both might end up losing."

"Amy, don't start." Raye warned, leaping into the river.

"Raye! No fair!" Serena cried. Lita, Mina, and Jennifer waded past, running in slow motion and splashing aside the waist-high water. Serena realized that she was the only one left, and bounded in after them. "Guys! Wait for me!"

The river took a short horseshoe bend and spit Olivia and Courtney out just as Serena was heading in, they followed the current back around the corner and headed into the entrance again for another go-around. "Hey Serena! Took you long enough!"

Serena fumed as they lapped her. "You guys think you're so funny!"

The lazy river was relatively short and rather weak. The eight girls soon grew tired of the whole thing after about five times around. Soon they were all standing together in the water. "So where next?"

"I wanna go down that slide!" Courtney cried, jumping up and down and splashing in the process.

"I'll come!" Jennifer agreed.

Raye looked, knowingly to Olivia, Amy, Mina, and Lita. "I want to relax a little, why don't we all go sit in the hot tub?"

"But I want to go down the slide!" Serena whined.

Mina grabbed her ear and began to tow her toward the steps. "We can do that after we get in the hot tub!"

"Oh! Okay okay! Let go!"

"You guys go ahead down the slide!" Olivia told Courtney and Jennifer. "You can join us in the hot tub when you get back, and then we'll all go down."

"Okay." Courtney agreed. She and Jennifer bounded off.

The remaining six climbed into the hot tub and began to talk. This was a good time for them to discuss serious Sailor Soldier matters, because the only two non-soldier members of the club had gone. They all moved to a corner of the tub and began a quick meeting. Raye asked first. "So what happened last night?"

"Yes, who was that girl with the violin?" Amy added.

Raye and Amy had been stuck with the rest of the crowd when the Negaverse had attacked Olivia's Strings Concert the night before. Sailors Moon, Venus, and Jupiter, along with herself were left to try and finish off the monster, which was a girl Olivia knew from class who had been turned into a Dark Sailor Soldier. Olivia was the one who answered Amy's question. "Her name is Lynn. I know her from school."

"And what does she have to do with the Negaverse?" Lita asked.

"Nothing." Olivia answered, shaking her blonde head, which was now sopping wet and a dark yellow-bronzeish color. "She's just a normal kid from my grade. I've seen her in the halls before. She's quiet."

"Did you see her before the concert?" Raye asked.

"Yeah, she's a cello, so she sat over by me when we were tuning up." Olivia answered. "She seemed to be having trouble playing her instrument."

"What kind of trouble?" Serena asked, out of pure curiosity.

"You know, she couldn't get her notes right, she kept dropping her bow, stuff like that." Olivia explained. "Normal stuff, you guys all heard her playing at the concert."



“Oh, was she the one who hit that really sour note that screwed everyone up?” Mina asked.

Olivia nodded.

Lita looked serious and asked. “Did she say anything strange when you were around her?”

“Hmm.” Olivia thought a second, trying to remember the details of the night before. She had been setting up her bass, and Lynn was in front of her trying to self-tune her cello. She wasn’t able to do it, and got aggravated. Then she said something that Olivia had thought was sort of unusual. What was it? “It was something like ‘Why can’t I ever get it right?’ or ‘I’m not any good at this’ or something like that.” Olivia answered. “She was putting herself down somehow.”

“Hmm, that seems pretty normal.” Raye said, thinking. “I can’t think of anything evil about her. Why would she be a target for Malachite?”

“Do you remember what Tuxedo Mask said?” Serena added. “He said that Malachite was looking for more Rainbow Crystals.”

“Rainbow Crystals?” Olivia asked. “Wait, I missed something.”

“You missed a big something.” Lita proceeded to explain. “Zoicite, another general, was looking for the Rainbow Crystals before. Both she and Tuxedo Mask were trying to find them, and so we were trying too. We managed to get a couple, but Tuxedo Mask and the Negaverse stole them, and to make a long story short, they found seven Rainbow Crystals that supposedly contained seven evil Dark Warriors or something. That’s why the Negaverse wants the crystals so badly, and that’s why they are looking for this last one.”

“I wonder if there is more to it.” Amy said, staring at the foam on the water. “I mean, there are only seven colors in the rainbow; red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. I can’t imagine what color crystal is missing.”

Lita looked up and then quickly waved for everyone’s attention. “Whoa, break up! The other two are coming!”

Jennifer and Courtney walked over, laughing. Jennifer climbed into the hot tub with the six others.

“Wow! That was great! You’ve all got to try that!”

“Yeah!” Courtney agreed, grinning. “Hey, guys, guess what happened to me at school today!?”

\* \* \*

Another black-hole portal opened and let Garth and Malachite out by an empty outdoor swimming pool. Malachite looked cynically around. “First a grade school, now a kiddie pool. Somehow I’m not surprised.”

“Silence!” Garth hissed, menacingly. “I am growing tired of your repugnance. You seem to forget that I know what I am doing. This place reeks with emptiness. There is a good target here.”

“You can smell emptiness?” Malachite asked. “I wasn’t aware that emptiness emitted an odor.”

“I’m the Midnight Cat.” Garth said, obviously. “My senses are fine-tuned to certain things. Emptiness being one of them. You will just have to trust me, because you cannot sense the smell of self-doubt and loathing like I can. Now keep close. It’s near by.” Garth padded up to a door, which would lead inside a tall brick building. He sniffed the threshold then turned to Malachite and said. “Open it.”

Malachite slitted his eyes, but obeyed. “What? Now I’m your butler? My disgrace it nearly total.”

“What? Do you expect me to pity you?” Garth asked. He made his way through the open door and slinked into the building. Malachite followed without much enthusiasm. They passed an unmanned snack bar and a row of tables before turning the corner. Down the hall, they saw the cylindrical elevator shaft with the stairwell wrapped around it, and the doors to the basketball court. The deep navy blue cat padded down this hallway and arrived at the door to the girls’ locker room. “In here.”

“There?” Malachite asked, reading the sign. “Are you positive, cat? If someone sees me in there, I’ll be

caught straight off.”

“Stop being a wuss and open the door for me.” Garth snapped. Malachite looked both ways and they entered the bathroom. As they walked around the ‘s’ curve, Garth said over his shoulder. “You have enough hair, if any women come in, just turn your back and they’ll never tell that you are a man.”

“I don’t know whether to be reassured, or insulted.” Malachite replied.

There was one lady at the far end of the lockers hanging up her coat. Malachite quickly turned the corner into the bathrooms before she could see him. The area around the stalls was deserted, but he could see straight down the shower hallway to the pool-exit. Cautiously, he moved down the line after Garth, who kept sniffing and looking under the doors. Suddenly the cat stopped, and Malachite had to step over him in order to avoid squashing him.

“This stall.”

“What, now are you going to walk in on a girl while she’s on the throne!?” Malachite cried in a hoarse whisper. “I can’t believe you, you perverted cat.”

“Hush! She’s not using the ‘throne’ as you call it for its true purpose.” Garth said, trying to avoid the blunt and rather vulgar terminology. “She’s thinking. The emptiness is definitely coming from her.”

“If you say so.” Malachite said, sardonically.

Garth made no reply and proceeded to enter the stall under the door. Malachite stood outside, feeling awkward. Inside the stall, Pam was sitting on the lid of the john with her head in her hands and her mangled red hair sticking through her fingers. She saw the cat wander in under the door and jumped.

“AHH! What the!?”

Garth mewed to try and calm her.

“A cat!? Who let a cat in here?! Security!!” It appeared that the woman hanging her coat had left, because there was no sound from the other side of the room. Garth decided that the gentle approach was not going to work with this one and spoke straight out.

“Quiet you snit!”

“What! I’m hearing things now!?”

“I’m not your normal cat! I’m a special cat that can talk, and if you don’t shut up I’ll call on my special cat army to smite you!”

“I-“ Pam didn’t know what to think. “I-I must be dreaming! I need to wake up! I can’t be asleep, I’ve got work to do.” She stormed out of the stall, smacking Malachite in the face with the door as she made her way to the sink. Apparently not hearing the ‘ow’ and the curses that were coming from the stall behind her, the redhead proceeded in turning on one of the sink faucets and splashing her face with cold water. Garth jumped up on the sink beside her and hissed as water splashed on his silky fur.

Pam looked up, the water dripping from face and hair. “Ack! You’re still here!”

“This isn’t a dream, snit, and I’m not going away.” Garth said, stubbornly. Then he put his plan into action and launched into his routine. “You have called for me and I’ve come to help you.”

“How’d I call for a talking cat!? I don’t need any help.”

“You called me with your heart and mind.” Garth explained, the distaste still on his tongue. “You are feeling incomplete. You are feeling empty, and are not satisfied with yourself. That is why you need my help.”

“I don’t need help from anyone!” Pam shouted. “I can do it myself.”

“It doesn’t sound like your senses worked, cat.” Malachite said, rubbing his nose. “You’ve found the wrong girl.”

“I have not!” Garth cried, then turned to Pam again, “you are just saying that to mask your shallow self-esteem. Deep inside you know that you aren’t good enough.”

“I-I-“ Garth seemed to have cut Pam to the bone, her quick wit had failed her.

Garth sneered, satisfied with the injury. “I thought so. You know that you are not good enough. You

know that you will never be good enough. Not without my help.”

“Wha-What can you do to help me!?” Pam said, defensively. “What can a puny cat do to improve my game.”

“First you have to tell me what you want.” Garth said. “Tell me exactly what you want. You are broken, incomplete, empty, tell me, what would make you whole. What would make you ‘good enough’? What do you want more than anything else in the world?”

“That’s easy!” Pam said. “I want to be the best at basketball! I want to out run, out jump, out hoop, out play, anyone and anything that can come up to me! I want to take out entire NBA teams by myself. I want to be that good!” Pam’s look of desire faded when she took a second thought and added; “but that’s impossible. No one person can be that fast.”

“That’s what you think, child.” Garth said, licking his muzzle with contempt. “That’s all you know isn’t it? Well, child, I will show you how it is done.”

\* \* \*

An hour had passed. The clubbers had gotten out of the tub, gone down the slide a couple times, taken one last lap around the lazy river, and soon were bored. “Wow.” Mina said, ringing out her red ribbon. “With all the stuff there is to do here, you certainly can get bored fast.”

“Let’s get out.” Serena suggested. “My skin is pruning. We can find something else to do when we’re dry.”

“Okay.” The group made their way out of the pool and back into the locker rooms.

Inside, Garth had heard them approaching and had hurried Pam and Malachite into the shower stalls. All the girls saw as they entered was a flash of Malachite’s cape as he hid himself from view. Garth and Pam were in the shower across from him. Serena and the others didn’t think much of it, dismissing it as a towel or something belonging to whoever was going to use the shower. They walked, chatting past the stalls and to their lockers to change. Malachite held his breath as the passed. ‘Why is it that teenage girls always roam in packs?’

It seemed to take the Sports Club forever to get dressed and dry their hair, but in twenty minutes, everyone was packed and ready to go find other means of entertainment. “Let’s go play basketball.” Jennifer suggested with a flip of her shoulder-length brown hair. “I mean, if that mean girl isn’t there.”

“I could take her!” Lita announced, displaying her muscles. “She’s nothing.”

“Don’t get us thrown out Lita.” Mina joked. “Two wrongs don’t win a fight, you know.”

Amy’s voice; “It’s two wrongs don’t make a right, actually.”

“Yeah whatever.” Mina shrugged. There was a lot of laughing and they moved out of the room. “Let’s play basketball anyway. That means we’d have to go up to the main desk and ask that hottie for a ball!”

“Mina! Come on!” Serena whined, as the closing door muffled their laughter. Malachite let out a sigh of relief. The locker room was quiet again, but he wasn’t sure whether it was empty or not. He decided to stay in his own stall and not re-enter the hallway. That last call was a close one.

In a separate stall, Garth was trapped with Pam, separated from the rest of the room by a curtain adorned with tropical fish. “So how’re you gonna help me, cat?”

“I am going to give you that thing you want.” Garth answered. He reached into his sub-space storage pocket and produced his black-velvet bag. Undoing the knot at the top, he took out one of the transformation pens he kept inside it. He dropped it on the shower floor, then put the bag back into Z-storage.

Pam looked down at what was happening. “This’s gotta be a dream.”

“No dream.” Garth repeated. “Take this wand and it will make you everything you just told me that you wanted.”

“Since I have to be asleep,” Pam insisted, bending down and taking the pen in hand, “I’ll do what you say. I mean, cats can’t talk and pull little bags out of no where and give me pe-” The wand she held in her hand started to emit a black mist-like cloud from its oval-shaped headpiece. The symbol that glowed white on the black metal of the pen cap was of a basketball with a double-X running through it. Her hand loosened around the dark yellow-bronze handle, the color looked very much like Olivia’s golden hair when she had it wet. The smoke swirled into the girl’s head through every external opening. From across the hall, Malachite heard her cry. “DARK PHEKDA!”

Around Pam a bubble of bronze-yellow energy expanded. She found herself free-floating within a hemisphere of dancing black and bronze. Her clothing vanished from her body and both her skin and hair became the bizarre color that shone around her. Her eyes were closed and face expressionless as a powerful rushing wind blew her around inside the dome. Bronze-yellow ribbons of smoke shot from the walls and wrapped themselves around her body. More sprouted from the skin of the dome and seemed to nearly mummify her in tightly wrapped bronze layers. Suddenly there was a flash of golden lightning that broke the binding ribbons so that the frayed ends whipped around madly in the super strong currents. Another bolt of lightning flashed and entered her eyes, making them glow unnaturally with a bright yellow gleam. The lightning bolt raced down her limbs and blew her wrappings to pieces with the force of a small bomb. What was left on her body was the outfit of a Sailor Soldier, bronze gold on the skirt, collar, choker, and elbows, with tough boots of the same hue that buttoned with large fastens at the sides. The bows on her chest and back were black. Her chest bow was tied on by her collar and the tails of the knot hung down over her dim off-white leotard. Fully transformed, she gave a power-inspired speech in an unnaturally booming voice. “I am Sailor Phekda! I am no longer the product of effort and drive. I have the talent and ability to achieve my loftiest goals! I will use that power to aid those who gave it to me. I am devoted! I am unbeatable! I am WHOLE!”

At the last word, the dome swelled and vanished, leaving her fully transformed in the shower stall. Garth twitched his tail. “Excellent. Now, Sailor Phekda, lets show the world what you have in you...like your crystal fragment.”

\* \* \*

Meanwhile, the Sports Club was trying to muster up enough courage to ask Darien at the front desk for a basketball. The balls that the rec center had for playing games were kept in a cabinet behind the counter. They were stored there so that they wouldn’t get stolen. A person wanting to use basketballs, volleyballs, soccer balls, or any balls for the game room would have to ask the person on hand. Amy, Lita, Jennifer, Courtney, and Raye poked their heads out of the curving stairwell to spy on the young employee as he went innocently about his work.

“How are we supposed to get a ball if he’s there?” Jennifer asked, staring with her hazel-green eyes.

“Just go up and ask him!” Raye answered, remaining partly hidden behind the elevator shaft.

“What!?! I’m not going up there!” Jennifer cried in a hoarse whisper.

“You know I’d go...but...” Courtney said, her straight forwardness failing her.

“I’m not going to talk to him!” Ray said. “My hair is all chlorine-y! I could never speak to him again if he saw me like this!”

“It’s awful childish for us to be afraid.” Amy said.

“Then you go ask him.” Lita snapped.

“What!?! Me!?”

Just then, the elevator doors opened next to the five girl’s heads and three blondes came rushing out.

Mina was hurriedly pulling Serena and Olivia along by the wrists. Serena was looking mulish and Olivia was looking horrified. Mina was in an image of star-struck determination. She wheeled the other two up to the counter and stopped them right in front of Darien. Olivia looked pathetically over her shoulder, Mina still attached to her wrist.

Darien saw Mina, who'd dried her big red bow in the hand-dryer and now wore it, slightly wrinkled in her hair. "Hi, can I help you?"

"Um, yeah!" Mina answered. "We are three vibrant young women looking for romance!" Serena let her head fall into the palm of her free hand. Mina continued without hesitation. "And we would like a basketball!"

"Um, okay," Darien said, apparently amused by these three girls, "is that true, Dumpling-head?"

"Shut up! Darien!" Serena cried. "My hair does not look like dumplings!"

Darien's dark eyebrows shot up. Olivia took a second look, finding the action oddly familiar. The man let out a sardonic laugh that sounded remarkably the same as Olivia's imagination had thought it would.

"What? Do you prefer meatballs?"

Raye sniggered next to Jennifer's ear.

Serena cast a steel glance over to stairs. "Just give us the basketball already."

"Alright, whatever you say, Dumpling." Darien complied. He reached under the desk and brought out the ball. Serena reached for it, but he tossed it to his other hand and she missed. He gave the ball to quiet little Olivia on the other side of Mina. "There you go."

Olivia's cheeks reddened. Mina seemed a little cross that he hadn't noticed her and yanked the two of them away again. "Thanks." The blondes met up with the other girls by the stairs and they headed down to the basketball courts.

Darien called after them as they disappeared. "Have fun, girls! Find Romance!"

"Yeah, right." Mina sighed. The other girls laughed and punched her in the shoulders.

"Mina! You're amazing!" Jennifer cried. "How'd you do that!?"

Lita gave Mina a sidewinder hug. "Mina knows no fear."

"That's me!" Mina chirped, happy with the attention. "Mina Aino! Warrior Princess for Love and Justice!"

They all rounded the corner of the stairs and walked through the doors. The basketball court was deserted and they decided to start a half-court game on the hoop nearest the door.

"Okay, whose teams?" Jennifer asked.

"What!?" Amy asked, amazed at the grammar.

"I'm captain!" Raye cried.

"Me too!" Serena said, anxious for her fair share of the glory.

"Serena, who'd want to be on your team?" Raye asked, cynically.

Serena looked indignant. "What do you know, Raye? People will be fighting to be on my team because I'm cooler, nicer, and prettier than you, so blah!"

"Oh yeah!?"

"Heh heh! Guys, let's just play already!" Lita interrupted. Soon the teams were chosen. It was Lita, Courtney, and Jennifer with Raye (who'd insisted on picking first) and Mina, Amy, and Olivia with Serena. The game began. Lita, who was by far the best player on the team being tall, strong, and fast, had the ball first. She weaved between Serena and Mina and passed the ball to Raye who shot and missed. Amy had the ball. She had a hard time dribbling at first, so she passed it to Olivia who took a pot shot at the basket. The ball rounded the rim then shot out and across the room. Jennifer and Courtney both ran for it.

"Guys!" Olivia called after them. "What're you doing!? You're both on the same team!"

Suddenly, the doors down on the other side of the courts where Jennifer and Courtney were fighting

over the basketball, flew open and slammed against the wall. In the doorway stood a Sailor Soldier with scraggly red hair, and a basketball in hand. Everyone froze, stunned. Courtney dropped their basketball, with Jennifer's arm still reaching around her back. Sailor Phekda, for that was who she was, began to pound her ball onto the hardwood floor and said. "Who thinks they can take me?"

"The Negaverse!" Amy gasped. Olivia's eyes shot over to the two brunettes across the room. The six of them couldn't let the two non-soldiers see them transform. A deep navy blue cat with a bright orange inverted moon on his forehead slinked into the room, his eyes glowing.

"Phekda! Go on and show them how good your game is."

"Another- I mean a talking cat!" Serena gawked. "Can that be!?"

"He doesn't look like a good friend of Luna's." Raye said, referring to the talking cat that Serena owned. "Is he the reason that there are these Sailor Soldiers appearing?"

Sailor Phekda began to run across the court, dribbling her ball. The evil power that had filled the empty spot in her mind was telling her that these girls wanted to play a game. "Come on! Bring it on! Bring on the Pain!"

"Run!" Lita cried. Everyone took off in the direction of the doors. Jennifer and Courtney made their way through the doors at their end. With the two innocents sufficiently separated from the soldiers, Serena, Mina, Amy, Lita, Raye, and Olivia were safe to transform.

"MARS POWER!"

"MERCURY POWER!"

"JUPITER POWER!"

"VENUS POWER!"

"POLARIS POWER!"

"MOON PRISM POWER!"

With the girls each saying their own magic words with their own magic wands in hand triggered a huge explosion of magic. Each girl entered her own magic transformation domes. Mars's was red with a wildfire raging inside. Her violet eyes stood strong in the wave of red that overtook her skin. Fire swirled in tightly and she was dressed in her Sailor uniform. Her skirt was red, along with her collar and choker. Her bow on her chest was purple like her eyes, and the bow on her skirt was red to match the rest of her outfit. She wore red high-heels, and with one last swirl of her bushy black hair, she posed.

Amy was surrounded with a bubble of blue. Water came out of her pen cap and she painted it all over her body. When the currents inside the dome swelled, the bubbles left her with a blue outfit adorned with light blue bows on her chest and back. She wore knee-high blue boots with a light blue stripe at the top. Knees together, she posed.

Lita danced inside a green hemisphere wherein she was the center of a lightning storm. Streaks of electricity bent and ran around her and her skin melted into the background of green. The electricity stood out in rings, then collapsed, causing a green Sailor Suit to appear. Both bows were pink, and her boots laced up with green laces. Another flash of lightning and she posed.

Mina was in a sea of orange. The golden, star covered magic banner that swirled around her made her hair move as if a great wind had rushed up her legs. When the stars broke from the ribbon and condensed, she was left wearing her soldier's uniform of orange with a blue bow in front, a yellow bow in back, and a red one in her hair. She turned and swirled, her great mass of blonde hair billowing out behind her, and posed as well.

Polaris was in an icy pale blue hemisphere. Ice crystals flew about her and near-freezing water came down around her. They turned and twisted around her ankles, forming a whirlpool that slowly worked its way up her legs. Suddenly, In one great gush, the water shot up and froze her with her back turned in a glass-like column. The ice cracked and shattered leaving her dressed for the crisis in a pale-blue

uniform. She had a pink bow on her chest and a blue one in her hair, but no bow on her back. Her boots were blue like her outfit, with a white diamond shape at the point under her knee. Hair behind her and one leg held up, she posed.

Serena was within her pink bubble. Ribbons came from her magic brooch and covered her where her suit would be. In a second, it was there. The ribbons turned into the elements of her uniform. Her blue skirt and collar, also her red boots, bow and choker. She posed and came out of her transformation as well.

With their poses, the soldiers had ended their transformations and stood ready for the fight. They were all waiting for Sailor Moon, who took the longest. When she was done, they stood for a second, making sure they were ready to go. Sailor Polaris, who was Olivia spoke. "Hey, that was better, we had all of us here, and we all got done almost at the same time. Sailor Moon needs a little work, but before we know it, this will be an instant thing."

"Don't mess with things you don't understand," Sailor Venus said, patting Polaris on the head. The youngest soldier pouted. Venus threw her fist into the air. "Now lets go kick some Negaverse Butt!" Using that as a battle cry, the whole mass of Sailor Soldiers stormed back into the basketball court. Phekda was waiting for them.

"Are you ready for the game of your lives?"

"We aren't here to play games!" Sailor Moon announced. "We are here to right wrongs and triumph over evil! We are fighters for love and justice! Pretty Sailor Soldiers in – "

" – in a Sailor Suit blahdy blahdy blah." Malachite finished from where he stood, leaning against the wall. "We know."

"What are you doing here, Malachite!?" Sailor Mars challenged.

"Don't talk to me." Malachite said, indifferently. "It's his plan, I'm just here to displace air." Garth turned to him and scowled.

"What?" Sailor Moon was confused.

Garth crouched and twitched his tail again. "Fine, if it's up to me, then I'll do the talking." Malachite blew some of his white hair out of his face. "I am Garth, the Midnight Cat! And the only way that you can save this girl is to play her game until her body rejects her power."

"Why are you doing this?" Sailor Jupiter demanded

"Yeah," Polaris added, less formally, "what's the point?"

"Silence!" Garth hissed. "Humans are maggots! They know nothing!"

Polaris took his remark offensively "Hey!"

"Stop this stalling!" Sailor Phekda ordered, dribbling through her legs. "Let's play some basketball!" She took off toward the net, dribbling and running inconceivably fast.

"Stop her!" Sailor Mercury cried, "if we hold her down, then Sailor Moon can use Moon Healing on her."

"On it!" Jupiter and Mars said. They ran to intercept Phekda as she ran. The dark soldier, however, weaved between them with relative ease. She dribbled and dodged, then jumped as high as the backboard and dunked the ball in with her whole arms. The enchanted basketball that was her tool bounced off the floor and clubbed Mercury in the back of the head, knocking her over. Sailor Venus ran over to her as the ball flew across the room to club Sailor Moon. After getting her in the stomach and flooring her, the ball went to Sailors Mars, Jupiter, and Polaris and did the same thing. When it flew back to Venus, she sent it up into the air with her best set.

"You are playing the wrong game." Phekda said, landing.

Venus retaliated with her Sailor Power. "Crescent, BEAM!" Pointing her finger at Phekda, she shot a laser aimed at her heart. It didn't take much for the super-human reflexes of the Dark Soldier to dodge

it. The basketball came down from the rafters and hit Venus square in the head. She fell to the side, clutching her skull. Phekda began to laugh evilly.

“You all are nothing!”

“Do you call that good sportsmanship!?”

Malachite looked up and his face became laden with even more disgust. “Great, it’s that Tuxedo Mask.”

Tuxedo Mask had appeared on the track, which entered the room from the weight room and followed the court wall all the way back to the weight room on the other side. He stood on the metal railing made to keep people from falling off. “What kind of an athlete wins by taking out all the players on the other team? You are a disgrace to your sport. I don’t see why you were ever targeted for having a Rainbow Crystal.”

“What, now do you want to play too?” Sailor Phekda asked, slightly peeved at Tuxedo Mask’s attack on her sportsmanship. She hurled her evil basketball in his direction. It flew super fast right at his face, and in an effort to avoid having his nose smashed in, he fell from the banister.

“Shoot!” He grabbed the bottom of the railing with one hand, his hat floating to the floor and revealing his short cut black hair. “What was that?”

“It doesn’t look like you’re good enough to challenge me.” Phekda said, satisfied with his inferiority.

Her basketball bounced down from the track and smashed his hat in before rolling back to her.

Polaris sat up, rubbing her head. She saw Tuxedo Mask’s shined black shoes hit the wooden floor and her eyes opened wide. Tuxedo Mask glanced over at the remains of his top hat and rubbed the back of his neck, an action she’d seen made just recently. “You play dirty, but if you insist, I’ll try to keep you occupied.” He stepped forward and she passed him the ball. The pass was a little too hard, and it got him in the gut. Polaris began to shove herself up when she saw him recoil on impact. He fought to regain his composure. “Hm...was...never any good at basketball.”

“Get it on!” Phekda ordered. She took off for the basket, whizzing past him at an insane speed. He launched sideways, but she was gone before he could tackle her and he ended up laid out on the floor. He looked up in time to see her dunk it again. “How’d she get so fast?”

Polaris got to her feet. Seeing that Phekda was distracted with her dunking, she cried. “North Star Power NOW!” A spiraling icicle shot from her hands and hit Phekda in the back. She was incased in a thick belt of ice and fell. It stayed in place for a second, but it broke when she hit the ground.

Tuxedo Mask looked over. “Sailor Polaris?”

“I’ve got you covered!” Polaris said.

Sailor Phekda got up and turned on her. “How dare you! I was winning!”

Malachite sighed from across the room. “Cat, how long do we have to wait here?”

“Not long.” Garth answered shortly. “She needs to make another basket for her power to be at max. The rejection should have started a while ago, but she’s been giving too many speeches and not playing enough basketball.”

Malachite turned back to the game, where one by one, the Sailor Soldiers were getting back to their feet.

“That figures.”

“Play a game with her.” Tuxedo Mask directed to the other soldiers. “If you do that, you can heal her.”

“How do we know that you are telling the truth!?” Jupiter demanded. “We don’t even know if you are an enemy or an ally.”

“Would you just do it!?” Polaris demanded. “Geez, for crying out loud, we’re losing here!”

“You’re right, I’d hate to lose to a lousy basketball player.” Jupiter admitted. “Okay, guys, everyone circle in! Moon, stand off to the side and get ready to heal her as soon as we have her down!”

“Right!” Sailor Moon nodded.

“Bring it on!” Sailor Phekda said again. She started to dribble around again, weaving and dodging.



Mercury jumped in her way and she stepped to the side. She kept her eyes on the basket as she avoided the Sailor Soldiers. Jupiter tried to trip her, but her enhanced reflexes narrowly escaped. Polaris grabbed one end of Tuxedo Mask's cape, he had the other, and the two of them rushed forward as Phekda took a shot. As soon as the ball left her hands, she was smothered by the cape and pinned to the floor as Venus, and Mars rushed to step on the two empty corners. The basketball hit off the backboard and bounced into the net with a swoosh.

At that moment, the room went deafeningly quiet. There was a deep throbbing sound, and the overhead lights above them shattered. Glass shards rained down on their heads, and a spot on the black cape began to glow. The glow grew brighter as the color drained from every part of Phekda's body. When the spot at her throat was bright enough, the light forced itself through the cape, tearing a gaping hole in it. Garth and Malachite held their breath as the light and color escaped from Phekda's body. It was like a ghost as it rose off the floor. In the swirls of the white light had mixed with them the dusty red from Pam's hair, and the brown color from her eyes. Underneath the covering, she was like a wax sculpture that had not been painted. As all the color that was within her exited, there was still something missing. "Where is it?" Malachite asked.

"I don't understand! It's not there! But her scent was so strong!" Garth cried.

"Cat! This is enough! How many times are we going to do this!?" Malachite demanded. "This is a complete waste!"

"Silence maggot! We will find the three fragments! We will not return to the Prince and Princess until we do!"

"And you do not even mention the Queen!" Malachite cried. "What am I working with!? A defective cat!?"

"Remain silent!" Garth hissed. "Let's get out of here! This is of no use to us." With that, the two departed and left the Sailor Soldiers there watching Pam's consciousness whoosh around the gymnasium.

"Sailor Moon!" Tuxedo Mask said, impatiently. "What are you waiting for!?"

Sailor Moon was frozen, clutching her Moon wand and staring blankly at the swirling mass of light and color that seemed to be otherworldly. "What is that!?" Her eyes stared unblinking. "Her spirit?"

"Her essence." Mercury corrected.

"Sailor Moon! Get it together!" Sailor Mars cried. Sailor Moon forced herself to take her eyes off the ghost and held out her Moon Wand.

"Moon Healing ACTIVATION!" The magic that came from the wand when she spoke those words flew through the air and entered the hole in the cape. Once the Moon Magic had entered, it was as if it had reversed a vacuum. The color and light that was roaming freely in the rafters was sucked down and back into Phekda's body. When all the essence had vanished from the air, the glass that had fallen from the lights flew up and took its place in the bulbs. The room became bright again. Even the hole in Tuxedo Mask's cape had mended itself. When the cover was removed, Pam was left unconscious on the gym floor.

"Amazing." Mercury gawked.

Tuxedo Mask took up his ruined hat and leapt back up onto the track, preparing to once again leave without a word. Polaris caught him, however before that could happen. "Hey! Wait!"

The man looked down at her through the lenses in his mask.

Polaris gulped. The room had gone quiet again, and everyone was staring at her. "Um...why do you have to leave? Why can't you stay here, and we'll get to know each other better? Then the other Sailors will know if you are an enemy or not."

"Do you think that I'm an enemy, Sailor Polaris?" Tuxedo Mask asked.

She thought a second. She could feel the eyes of the others all boring into her. "Well, in my opinion, if

two people fight the same enemy, then they are allies, right?"

Tuxedo Mask smiled. "You are a wise one, Polaris. You will always glow with that shine I see on you now. The day you don't, will be the day I'll have no reason to smile." With that, he vanished.

Polaris's heart was beating fast. Sailor Moon stared after Tuxedo Mask and whistled. "Whoa! He does think you're special, Olivia."

After de-transforming, Olivia, Serena, Raye, Mina, Lita, and Amy decided to go looking for Jennifer and Courtney. They found them huddled behind the snack bar, each sipping a frozen coke.

"Where've you guys been!? We've been looking all over for you!" Serena asked, leaning over the counter top.

"we were scared so we hid." Jennifer answered.

Courtney took the straw out of her mouth and added, "we were just lucky that they had frozen cokes back here! And for only 99 cents!"

After making sure to leave a dollar each behind the counter, and going into the locker room to get their stuff, the Sports Club decided to adjourn. Raye pulled Olivia over while Jennifer was upstairs getting their mother from the weight room. "Hey, Olivia, can you come to the temple tomorrow night?"

"I think so." Olivia answered. "Tomorrow's Friday so Mom should let me out of the house."

"Great!" Raye said. "We need to have a meeting. The Negaverse has totally changed strategy on us. We need to sit down and discuss everything with Luna and Artemis."

"Right." Olivia agreed. "I'll ride there on my bike."

"Olivia! Are you ready to go?" Her mother was coming down the stairs with Jennifer.

"Yeah, lets go." Olivia agreed. She and her sister waved goodbye to the rest of the girls and headed up the stairs and out of the building. As they passed the main desk, Darien, his short black hair and blue eyes hitting Olivia with a new wave of strange warm tingling, called to her.

"Hey! Did you find your romance?"

Olivia blushed. "Yes I did!"

\* \* \*

Queen Beryl was alone in her chamber with her daughter Chrysoberyl. The young heir was seated on the floor, and her royal mother was brushing her hair. As the brush moved down her daughter's back, Beryl said, "Chrysoberyl, what is your plan you have brewing?"

"I have no plans that you do not know, mother."

"I have been watching that cat your husband sent with Malachite to Earth." Beryl told her. "It doesn't seem to be following my specifications. I assumed that you and Kyanite had given it other orders."

"I would not lie to you, mother." Chrysoberyl said, mechanically, her shallow eyes showing no emotion.

"Of course you wouldn't, but you do realize that I am your superior as long as I am alive." Beryl said.

"Of course, mother" Chrysoberyl stared blankly ahead, but behind her seemingly empty deep-green eyes, her mind was a blur of evil thoughts and intentions. Yes, her mother had taught her well. She could lie better than anyone, and knew that she couldn't tell her mother what she was planning. She would gain that power that she wanted. She would become greater than her mother long before Beryl thought that she would. She knew what she needed, and she had minions that she could trust. Beryl had never used trust among her inferiors. The generals were always cursing her, and some even plotted against her. Chrysoberyl knew that the Midnight Cat would not let her down, and that he would find what she and her husband so desired. 'I will be Queen Pulsar.' She thought. 'Mother, you have no idea of my potential. You will see yourself bow at my feet.'

"It was good of you to tell us about that last Rainbow Crystal. You are always honest to me, aren't you my daughter."

“Yes mother.” Chrysoberyl lied. “Always, Mother.”

~To Be Continued~

## 5 - Episode 4: Obsession

Sailor Moon P

Episode 4: Obsession

Clouds were blanketing the sky as Olivia pedaled her bicycle across town. The tires ran through the standing puddles left over from the last night's rain. It was a Friday afternoon, and she was making her way to the Hino Shrine where Raye lived with her grandfather. Raye was having a meeting of the Sailor Soldiers. She'd had meetings like this before, but this was the first one Olivia had been to. The last one that she'd had on Wednesday of that week, Olivia didn't go to because she had a Strings concert scheduled. It was a concert that ended up being very important to her life as a Sailor Soldier. But that was what they were going to discuss at the Shrine meeting, the recent turn of events brought on by the Negaverse and its new strategy. The bicycle bounced along the uneven sidewalk as she passed Tenth Street Memorial Park. The park was practically deserted in light of the approaching rain. Still, there were kids playing soccer or baseball under the trees whose leaves were turning gold on the edges in the early October air.

Leaving the park behind, she turned down a couple more streets until she had pulled up in front of Cherry Grove Temple. Amy was just arriving off the city bus when Olivia pulled up. "Oh, Olivia, I'm glad you were able to make it this time." She said, combing a piece of her short blue hair behind her ear. "I was afraid that you weren't going to be able to come."

"No, I'm here." Olivia said, dismounting. "Only because it's Friday, though. Mom wouldn't have let me come with all the homework I've got for this weekend if it wasn't." She carried her bike up the stairs and leaned it against a tree once inside the walls of the shrine. From there, she and Amy stepped up onto a wooden porch and then into Raye's room through the sliding door.

Everyone was already inside waiting for them. Raye sat at the end of the table in a red sweatshirt and jeans, her long black hair hitting the floor behind her as she sat, kneeling. The other girls were still in their Tenth Street Junior High School uniforms. Serena, her long blonde hair pulled up into two buns on her head, was happily eating the cookies Raye's grandfather had brought as study snacks. For all he knew, the girls were there to study, and not holding a meeting of six heroines for justice and two talking cats, concerning the fate of the world. Mina was sitting across from Serena, her long blonde hair pulled back in a huge red bow. She also was happily munching the cookies. Lita was writing in a notebook with an open textbook in front of her. She was apparently having a hard time because she was chewing on the end of her pencil and her green eyes were set in frustration. They all looked up when Amy and Olivia took off their wet shoes and sat down.

"It's about time!" Raye cried. "We've been waiting here forever!"

"Sorry! My school gets out later than yours!" Olivia defended, taking a cookie. "Plus I had to bike over here!" Kneeling on a cushion, her long golden-blond hair narrowly missed brushing the floor.

"Come on girls, let's start this meeting." Artemis, a magic white cat with a yellow crescent moon on his forehead, jumped up on the table next to Lita.

Luna, a similar cat with black fur sat across from him, next to Amy who'd just sat down. "This is a very important meeting! We need to figure out what the Negaverse is trying to achieve by creating these evil Sailor Soldiers."

"Tuxedo Mask said that they were looking for an eighth Rainbow Crystal." Lita said, "but I don't know if I trust him. Plus Malachite and his cat said something about Crystal Fractures."

“Tuxedo Mask is another mystery we need to assess.” Luna said.

“Why don’t we just ask Olivia?” Serena suggested, shooting a jealous blue eye to the youngest member of the group.

Olivia’s face flushed, surprised at having all eyes turned to her. Luna and Artemis were staring with particular interest. “What do you know about Tuxedo Mask?”

The paleness of her face turned pink. “Nothing, really.”

“Oh, come on!” Serena persisted. “He thinks your special, now what’s the scoop?”

“Nothing! Really.” Olivia said, growing redder, “I just met him last weekend!” Then she assumed a stupid sort of grin. “Plus he’s really kinda cute.”

Luna chuckled and shook her head.

Artemis, however, remained serious and moved on with business. “You mentioned Malachite’s cat, what about that?”

“Yeah, he had a cat with him.” Mina said, her mouth full of cookie, “it talked, too”

“A talking cat!?!” Artemis cried, standing. “This could be serious!”

Luna was feeling the anxiety as well. “What else did you observe about this talking cat?”

“He was really close to black.” Serena said. “He looked kinda blue, even.”

“I remember that it always had its ears back.” Amy added.

“As I recall, its eyes were yellow, and...” Raye took a second to think a little harder, “...and it also had a moon on its forehead. An orange one that was upside down.”

“And he told us his name the last time we saw him!” Olivia realized. “But I don’t remember what it was.”

“It was something sinister.” Amy said.

“Sinister?” Serena asked. “What do you mean?”

“You know, like ‘The wrath of Khan’ or Darth Vader.” Lita explained.

“Oh, I get it.”

“Darth Vader, hmm...” Olivia closed her blue-hazel eyes and ran through the events of the day before. They had been playing basketball, and then Sailor Phekda came in, then Malachite, and the cat had been with him...Darth? Did that sound right? Barth, Carth? Farth? Garth? Garth! “That’s it!”

“What’s it?” Mina asked.

“Garth! Garth was his name! It remember it now.” Olivia finished. “Garth the Midnight Cat.”

“Doesn’t sound familiar.” Artemis admitted. “We should be on alert for him.”

“What about these evil Sailor Soldiers you’ve told us about?” Luna asked. “Who are they?”

“They’ve always been normal people.” Olivia answered. “The first one, Porrima I think, was a girl my age that was part of our Strings class. The one from yesterday, Phekda, Jennifer and I had seen her earlier when we were waiting for you guys to show up.”

“And Jennifer is-?” Artemis asked warily.

“She’s my big sister.” Olivia replied. “Don’t worry, she doesn’t know my secret.”

“Good.” Artemis looked relieved.

Luna, however, had been thinking. “Olivia, you seem to know a lot about these soldiers when they were just normal girls. Was there anything these two had in common?” When Olivia looked confused, Luna added. “Was there anything that would identify them as targets for the Negaverse?”

“Well,” Olivia had to think, again. Mina crunched another cookie while they waited for her answer. Olivia tried to compare the two victims. She didn’t know that much about either of them. They were both girls for one, young girls, but Lynn, who was Porrima, had been in 5th grade. Olivia didn’t know how old Pam, the basketball player had been, but she was definitely older than that. Pam was tall and Lynn was short. Pam had red hair and Lynn had dusty brown. Pam played basketball and Lynn played cello. Come to think of it, they both didn’t seem content with how they performed in certain areas. Two remarks

came to mind. Lynn, when Olivia was behind her in the Strings room before the concert had said; "This is hopeless. All I want is to do something right for once." And when Olivia was waiting outside the basketball courts, she'd heard Pam say to her coach; "I'll keep working 'til I'm good. I'm not good enough yet and I'm going to keep working until I am!" Both girls' self-confidence was low. Olivia explained this to the others.

"Low self-confidence, huh?" Lita said, closing her textbook. "I don't see why they were. I mean, Sailor Porrima played that violin better than I'd ever seen anyone do, and that Sailor Phekda, boy! She played basketball better than the NBA."

"But that wasn't natural!" Raye said. "Sailor Phekda reacted faster, jumped higher, and moved quicker than is humanly possible. And didn't that Lynn girl play the cello?"

Olivia nodded.

Amy put a hand to her chin. "I wonder...both girls felt like they were bad at a certain skill, and both girls, when they were Sailor Soldiers, were masters of the same skill..."

Raye nodded her raven-black head. "Good point."

"Interesting." Luna said. "And how did you beat these soldiers?"

"Actually," Serena answered, tapping another cookie off her lower lip, "they kind of beat themselves."

"How does that work?" Artemis asked.

"I dunno." Serena continued. "When they got to a certain point, they just kinda self-destructed, you know?"

"Serena! They didn't blow up!" Raye corrected, "what happened was that all the color drained off them and came out their throat." She used her own neck as a model, placing her hand at the base of it. "You know, right here where your collarbones meet."

"The color left their body?" Luna looked puzzled. "How so?"

Mina jumped in and took up the story for Raye. "It was like a ghost came out! It was white, with colors mixed into it. And without it, they looked like they were dead."

"You mean like their spirit?" Artemis asked.

"No," Amy corrected. "Their essence."

"How can you tell the difference?" Lita asked.

"From what I've read, when a person's spirit leaves their body, the person dies. Dies normally that is, going pale, their body systems shutting down, all of that. But with these Soldiers, all color, even their hair was drained. This, leaving them like a wax figure, or the leftover exoskeleton of an insect, pasty and inanimate. That's not the traits of a spirit. All I can figure is it's the essence."

"You're so smart, Amy." Serena grinned, biting her cookie.

"Sailor Moon cures the girls with Moon Healing, but by that time Garth and Malachite are gone." Amy finished.

"Interesting." Luna seemed to be in deep concentration. "And that's all you can tell us about the evil Soldiers? Do they have special powers?"

"No, but they do have a magic thing." Mina said.

Artemis looked perplexed. "A what?"

"A magic thing that they use." Mina tried to clarify. "Like the last girl had this basketball, but it, like, had a mind of its own! It would fly around in curves, hitting people and roll back to her when she wanted it."

"An item to assist them..." Luna pondered. "And this item also related to the skill they were concerned with. Did Sailor Porrima have one too?"

"Yeah, a violin." Lita answered.

"The real question is, what does the Negaverse hope to gain?" Artemis asked "Have they done this just to pester us? You said you heard something about Crystal Fractures, but by the time their pawns have self-destructed, the general is gone." He closed his eyes and sighed. "It makes very little sense. All we

can do is watch and see what ends up.”

“At least we know what the Negaverse is looking for.” Luna concluded, then her head snapped up.

“Girls! Keep a lookout for anyone who could be a potential target. If we can get to the victims before Malachite, then we can keep them safe.”

“But Luna,” Raye interrupted. “Everyone is discontent with themselves in one way or another!”

“We will just have to be alert.” Luna said. “That’s all we can do. We’ll meet like this again later. For now, this meeting’s adjourned.”

\* \* \*

Garth, the Midnight Cat, and General Malachite sat perched atop the Tenth Street Department Store in the heart of the district. Garth was, once again, grooming himself as he surveyed all of the people walking beneath them. “Oh, all you little people,” he said to himself, “you all walk the streets of your handmade cities, going about your petty lives. A place like this reeks with self-doubt. You all think your problems are so big. None of you know the suffering other races have faced at your hands. Humans populate the entire universe, and yet you feel like you have to improve yourselves. You feel you must crush all opposition. You destroy planets, snuffing out the cultures and peoples living on them. You destroy planets like mine, Chatla, and yet you still feel like you are powerless. How many will it take, then? How many more races are to be destroyed in your quest for superiority? You cannot say can you? Of course not. You with your petty minds and insignificant problems...”

“What are you mumbling, cat?” Malachite asked, disdainfully.

“It’s not in any way part of your concern!” Garth snapped, harshly. “You wretched, small-minded human.” A gust of wind blew Malachite’s silver hair off his neck, and caused his navy-gray cape to bow and flutter. Garth hopped off the lip of the roof wall and padded across to the general. “We need to be on the lookout for the next target.”

“I am starting to lose what little confidence I had in you, cat.” Malachite announced. “We have been without food or sleep for three days and we don’t even have one of these three fractures you are looking for. Not to mention the Rainbow Crystal I’m in charge of finding.”

Garth was feeling particularly peeved at the human race, and turned on Malachite with a snarl. “What level of imbecile are you!?”

“What do you mean by that!?” Malachite demanded.

“You have the IQ of a dead rat and observation skills to match! Do you still honestly think that there is an eighth Rainbow Crystal!? The Rainbow Crystals were all gathered ages ago. Pulsar and Quasar saying that they found an eighth was just an excuse to look for the Crystal Fractures on Earth! That is our prime objective; to find the pieces of the Twilight Crystal and rejoin them! That is why this mission is so important, and why your mockery is not acceptable.”

Malachite was infuriated at first when Garth had insulted his intelligence, but once he had heard this new piece of information, his fury turned to rage. “Are you saying that you have kept me wandering this wretched planet for three days and there isn’t even a Rainbow Crystal!? When Beryl hears she’ll-“ “She’ll kill you for neglecting your duties.” Garth said with subtle content. “She doesn’t know. The whole deception was Kyanite’s plot to get Pulsar into power. Both of them have been trying to take control for years. Pulsar found the concept of the Twilight Crystal and its power, and Kyanite seized the opportunity. The reform of the Negaverse is at hand.”

“So now I’m not only dealing with a defect, I’m dealing with a REVOLUTIONARY!?!” Malachite cried. He put one hand to his head. “This is too much. My mind is going to explode.” He let his rage die down in his confusion. “So Beryl’s daughter has been plotting against her this entire time? And she and her husband are going to take over – but what is this you keep going on about? The Twilight Crystal?”

Garth was pleased with Malachite's need to ask. Superiority was a satisfying thing. Think of it, him, a Chatlan, superior to a human. It was nearly too sweet. "The Twilight Crystal was the family treasure of the royalty of the Earth. The kings and queens of the planet passed it down for centuries, prizing it for the tremendous power it contained. But during the Negaverse-Universe war, it was shattered into three pieces and sent to Earth. The pieces embedded themselves in the minds of three human youths. Those pieces are the crystal fractures. And the hosts are who we're trying to find."

"We find them so that you can reconstruct this powerful crystal and overthrow the matriarchal rule of the Negaverse." Malachite concluded. "I – I can't stand for this! I am to sit idly by and watch you destroy the system I've fought my way to the top of and replace it with one you like better! I'm the head General! And the irony is that even though I know so much, I cannot go back and tell Queen Beryl lest she kill me for not completing my assignment." He let out his frustration in a sigh and cast his steely eyes downward. "I am an insignificant fool."

"That's the idea." Garth hissed. He swished his tail. "Now follow, you have little choice but to comply with my mission. Beryl's watching, you know, watching only you. If you want to save your worthless life, then I suggest you become loyal to the reformation, and if you do well, maybe you will be appointed as head general of the new order." He swished his tail and headed across the rooftops.

Malachite ran a hand through his silvery hair and followed. "Is it worth the trouble I'm going through now? My position or my life? I am beginning to think not."

\* \* \*

After about an hour at Raye's, Olivia had decided that it was time to head home for dinner. With a quick goodbye she'd mounted her bike and headed off. Now, with storm clouds densely gathering, she was riding as fast as she could in the direction of home. The trip seemed longer now that the wind had picked up, and it was harder to keep balance as she steered through the gusts. Around the corners and down the streets she'd covered earlier the girl went. It was starting to drizzle. "Oh, great."

The rain continued to blow harder and harder as she rode. When she turned to pass the park again, she turned straight into the front of the gale. The strong wind blew the rain in her face so that she could barely see. She was forced to get off her bicycle and walk. Even though the rain wasn't too terribly strong, the wind made it hard to see. She squinted as she walked her bike up the street, telling herself that as soon as she turned the corner at the end, she would be out of the headwind, and then she could ride the rest of the way home. At least as long as she didn't turn to ride against it again. Olivia walked until she came upon a three-way intersection across from the park entrance. The crosswalk light was red, and she had to stop. Cars rolled by, turning up the standing water with their wheels as they went. A strong gust of wind blew and ruffled the pleated plaid skirt and vest of her Canon Elementary School uniform. It didn't move her hair much because it was heavy and wet with rain. Her bangs were stuck to her face.

As she stood there, another girl, younger than her, came splashing along the crosswalk. "Oh, no! My dolls will get all wet!" She muttered, panicking. She ran bent over and at a break-neck pace, her brown-blonde hair hanging down over her eyes. In this condition, she didn't see the biker standing at the corner and barreled straight into her.

"Whoa!"

"Whaa!" Olivia let out a cry of surprise as she found herself flying through the air. She skidded across the ground and skinned up her elbow and knee. Her bicycle landed on top of her. The girl who had hit her also came down, her dolls flying in all directions. She landed, draped over the tire of the bicycle with her face in a puddle.

She shook her head; water flying from her blonde-brown hair, then shot a blue-green eye around at the



scene and hurriedly shoved herself up. "Oh! Ohmigosh! Oh I'm sorry!" She glanced from Olivia to the ground around her and began to desperately gather her dolls. "Oh, my dolls." Then turning back to Olivia, she asked. "Are you alright?" The blue-green eyes flashed quickly to the scrapes on Olivia's elbow and knee. "Oh my gosh! I hurt you! I'm so sorry!" She reached, threw the bike off Olivia, and, with one hand clutching her dolls close to her body, she helped her back to her feet. "I'm so sorry! I was looking at the ground, I didn't see where I was going!"

Olivia lifted the foot of her injured leg off the ground and put her hand on her elbow. Her mind was still spinning from the collision. It had all happened so suddenly.

The other, shorter girl assumed a look of determination. "I know! I'll take you to my house and take care of you! It's the least I can do." She yanked Olivia's bicycle up from the ground. "Come on, this way!" Olivia was still confused, and this girl moved so quickly from idea to idea that before she knew it, she was limping willfully home with her. It wasn't far to the new girl's house. She only lived a couple of blocks from the park. After hobbling her way along the sidewalks of Tenth Street for a couple minutes, and with the rain still coming down, Olivia found herself in front of a pleasant-looking townhouse complex. Her house was tall and thin. It made up one part of a larger building that held another, identical house. This complex was part of a line of thin houses that were all squished together along the road. The girl dropped Olivia's bike by the door, and grabbed Olivia with her free hand.

"We're here! Come on, come in, I'll get you a towel and a Band-Aid, and maybe you can come up and see my room!" Olivia was towed out of the rain and into the house. "Come on! Come on!"

Inside, she found the house to be as thin on the inside as it looked on the outside. There was a stairwell in front of her that, undoubtedly lead to a thin second floor. The girl with brown-blonde hair yanked her through the thin sitting room, which held a couch and a television set. An open doorway led them into a slightly wider kitchen and dining area. There, the girl plopped Olivia down in one of the kitchen chairs, dropped her load of dolls on the table, and took off out of the room.

"I'll be right back! You sit there!"

Olivia didn't say anything, and sat surveying the room until the girl got back. The kitchen itself was small, with all the necessary appliances, but no room for extra ones. There seemed to be a shortage of cabinet space, because all the pots and pans were hanging on the walls in various places. The room was papered yellow, and there was a sliding glass door that led to a small fenced in backyard. The table she sat next to was covered in a picnic cloth. She looked at the dampened dolls on the table. To her surprise, they were all of her. There were at least five different pieces of Sailor Polaris merchandise on that table. There was what looked like a Barbie Polaris that made her look five times older than she actually was. There was an action figure made completely of plastic with joints in the arms and legs. There were also several other rag-doll like toys in various sizes; all of the dolls had long blonde hair, blue eyes, and wore light blue Sailor Soldier uniforms of a skirt, a sailor collar, boots, gloves, a choker and a tiara. Most of the dolls weren't entirely accurate. One had given her the wrong boots, putting in high-heels instead of the knee-high pointed boots that she actually wore. Another had her chest bow purple instead of bright pink. She noticed mostly that the blue bows in the hair of the dolls were wrong in various ways. Some of them had the bows pulling back hair when it was actually pinned on with a clip, and others had them monstrously huge. Olivia prized herself on the smallness of her bow. She was wearing a red, navy, and white plaid one in her hair today to match her uniform.

The girl came running back with a first-aid kit and a beach towel over one arm. "Sorry I took so long! I'm usually faster, but I was thinking that how you'd hurt yourself on the sidewalk and all and I decided to find the Neosporin to put on it too so that you don't get it infected or scarred or anything."

Olivia stared blankly at the girl as she wrapped the beach towel around her and opened up a box of Band-Aids. "Um.."

"Oh! I'm sorry! I didn't introduce myself." The blonde-brown headed girl laughed. "My name is

Summer, Summer Seasons. My Mom's name is April and she was always the creative type, so when my last name was Seasons, she decided to call me Summer. Poetic isn't it? My dad's name is Frank Seasons, but it's not as pretty as mine, don't you think? But he lives forty minutes away. But anyway, what's your name?"

"Olivia." The blonde answered, as she watched Summer glob disinfectant on the Band-Aid before applying it to her knee.

"Nice to meet you, Olivia." Summer grinned. "I like your hair." She continued chattering as she finished up with her guest's leg and started on her arm. "I always wanted long blonde hair. If I had hair like yours, then I would pull it up just like that, with a little bow in the back. That way I would look just like Sailor Polaris!"

"So you like Sailor Polaris?" Olivia asked.

"Yeah! She's awesome! I have everything they've made about her! If I could have anything I'd want to be her." Summer said, her blue-green eyes sparkling.

"You mean you'd want to actually be her?" Olivia asked.

"Oh yeah! She must have the most exciting life!" Summer said, standing up. Olivia checked on her elbow and knee and found them adequately bandaged. Summer kept talking. Apparently Olivia had started her on something. "Fighting crime, saving the world! It's probably nothing but thrills and adventure. Plus she's so pretty and she's nearly my age!" She grabbed Olivia's hand. "Come on, come up and see my room! I'll show you all my Sailor Polaris stuff!" She took a minute to collect the dolls on the table and then headed out to the stairs, still chattering on. "Yeah, my life is boring. I have to go to school, and PSR, and homework, and all sorts of boring stuff, but Sailor Polaris, I bet she doesn't have to do any of that stuff!"

'I wouldn't bet on it...' Olivia thought to herself.

Summer continued. "I have done everything to look as much as Sailor Polaris as I can! I even tried to dye my hair blonde! I tried to convince Mom to let me get blue-tinted contacts, but she won't let me." Staring at the back of Summer's head as they trekked up the stairs, Olivia noticed that she wasn't really a blonde-brown, but her roots and tips were brown and the larger part of her hair was dyed blondish. "I figure I can get some when I'm old enough to get them myself. I want to get a tattoo of Polaris's symbol on my ankle, too, but I haven't told Mom yet." She led them around the corner to a small room that practically glowed with Sailor Polaris's light blue. "Well, here it is!"

Olivia gaped. It was a Sailor Polaris shrine! Summer had Sailor Polaris posters on her walls, Sailor Polaris sheets on her bed, her furniture was painted light blue, and she had Sailor Polaris paraphernalia covering every inch of every surface. She even had Sailor Polaris window curtains. Summer walked in and placed her dolls in various places around the room. Olivia stepped in almost timidly. "Wow! I've only been around a week, and they already have made all this stuff about me!? That's both scary and amazing!"

"Look! I want to show you something!" Summer beckoned. Olivia walked over and sat on her bed next to her. Summer pulled out one of the light blue drawers in her light blue nightstand and produced a folder. Surprisingly, Sailor Polaris was on the front. After replacing the drawer, Summer opened the folder and revealed all of the drawings and fan letters she had accumulated. She pulled out one drawing of a stick Sailor Polaris, her hair like a carpet hanging from her head and her skirt sticking out around her stick body, and another stick person with brown hair standing next to her. "This is of Sailor Polaris and me." Summer said proudly.

"Uh, wow!" Olivia said, as best she could. Being an artist herself, she was having trouble praising the work. "It looks...just like you."

"Yeah, I know!" Summer glowed. "That's my favorite. Oh, and here!" She pulled a Sailor Polaris rag doll off her pillow. "This one's my favorite. I sleep with it at night." The doll was nearly a foot tall with

yellow-yarn hair. The bow was too large, but it was made of real ribbon. The doll was not wearing gloves or boots, but the uniform was nearly perfect. Summer handed it to Olivia and smiled, sincerely. "My Mom made it for me, I told you that she was the creative type."

"This is amazing." Olivia said. The face of the doll was incredibly cute. Its eyes were painted on, and its mouth was stitched on in pink thread. The tiara was felt that was sewed on the forehead. "It's really well done. And it's so cute! It looks exactly like me-I mean her!" Olivia shook her head. She couldn't believe that she'd just let that slide.

"I know! I told Mom to be really careful with the face." Summer said. "I think that Sailor Polaris is so pretty. And none of these commercial dolls look like her at all." She took one of the action figures off the nightstand. "See, her eyes are wrong. They just used the Venus doll's head and put a blue bow on it instead of red."

"That's cheap!" Olivia cried, taking it. "I'm insulted!"

"Me too! I take Sailor Polaris stuff really personally!" Summer agreed, putting the doll back. "When they get stuff wrong, I just have a fit!" Then her blue-green eyes lit up. "HEY! Do you want to come downstairs and see my Sailor Polaris video!?"

"You have a video!?" Olivia cried, shocked.

"Oh, yeah! I tape everything they say about Sailor Polaris on the news! Come on!" She hopped off the Sailor Polaris comforter and out the door. Olivia sprang up to follow. They raced down the thin stairs and into the narrow sitting room where Summer had turned on the TV. "Hurry up, it's starting!"

Olivia sat down on the couch and Summer plopped down on the floor. The tape started. There was static, and then a newscaster came on. He was in mid-sentence. Olivia supposed that Summer had started recording as soon as she had heard Sailor Polaris's name mentioned. The man was speaking. "-ris. For the longest time, Japan thought that they had only five Sailor Soldiers protecting them, but not so today. You've all seen this footage earlier, but we'll play it again." The desk and the news-caster disappeared and it was replaced with a very amateur-looking video of Sailor Polaris running down the street with a turquoise cat. Olivia remembered the moment. That was minutes after she'd transformed for the first time. Mooney the cat had given her her transformation pen and told her to go try out her new powers. At that point, they were following the smoke of a house fire. The billowing black smoke could be seen in the video. The announcer was talking over the footage. "This was a home video taken today of another Sailor who calls herself Polaris on her way to save a family who was trapped in a fire. This little girl is said to be only ten or eleven years old. There isn't much known about her as of yet, except that she is courageous and devoted to saving people." The camera was back on the news-caster. "What a sweet and kind little girl. And now the weather...Jan?"

There was more static and a different news-caster appeared at another set. It was apparently a different channel. This person, a woman, began her story, also in the middle of an idea. "Well, you all know about that fire on Sunday?"

"Yes," Said her fellow anchor. "Didn't that fire mark the appearance of another Sailor Soldier?"

"Yes, Dick, you are right." The woman continued. "And believe it or not, we have more video of this Soldier that was released just today." There was another transfer to home video that featured Sailors Mars and Mercury in the backyard of the burning building. Suddenly Sailor Polaris, her long blonde hair streaming behind her and her face smudged with smoke, burst out of the building with Sailor Moon right behind her. "This was taken by a neighbor who was on the scene and documents the presence of Sailor Polaris at the scene of the fire." Olivia watched intently. She hadn't seen this footage. That was at the point where she was chasing Malachite away from the fire. Immediately afterwards, she would meet Tuxedo Mask for the first time.

"Isn't it great how Sailor Polaris saved all those people?" Summer beamed.

"Yeah." Olivia agreed. This girl really loved her. Watching this film again, Olivia got to wondering.

Where had Mooney gone? Was she killed in the fire? Somehow Olivia knew that she hadn't been. She was a magic cat, she couldn't die. All she did was stand there and a wand had appeared from nowhere; she had to have gotten out somehow.

"I'm going upstairs to get my doll!" Summer announced, hopping up. "I'll be right back, okay?"

"K." Olivia answered, staring blankly at the TV and blinking. She hadn't thought about Mooney much lately. Her mind had been so filled with Evil Sailor Soldiers and Tuxedo Mask that she'd completely forgotten about the turquoise cat. 'I need to ask Luna and Artemis about her. I wish I'd thought about it earlier.'

Summer clunked up the stairs, her shaggy discolored hair flying about her head. She entered her light blue room and plodded over to the bed where her favorite doll laid out on the Sailor Polaris's face. "Come on, Polaris!" Summer said, cheerily, holding the doll up. "Let's go watch you on TV!" Behind her, she heard a scratching at the window. "What was that?" She turned and saw a cat on the other side of the glass. The cat twitched its tail and stared, nearly humanly at her. There was a crescent moon on its forehead. "Wow! A kitty! Sailor Polaris had a kitty on the news! If I have a kitty, then that's another way that I would be like her!" Summer said. She opened the window and stood face to face with the cat.

The cat's lips curled back in a smile. It was a contented, superior looking expression. Its yellow eyes glinted, pupil-less. The moon on its head was inverted, and bright orange. He leaped off the windowsill, and into the room, every muscle visible under his navy blue coat. It was Garth. "Mew."

"Hello, kitty!" Summer squealed. "Ooo! I've always wanted a cat! I'll call you...Sailor Cat! Oh, that's perfect!"

"My name is Garth." Garth said, with a scowl. "And I will go by nothing other than that."

"You talk!?!!" Summer cried, delighted. "Wow! I bet that Sailor Polaris has a talking cat! She's got everything!"

"You are a naive little girl." Garth said. "I like that." He swished his tail. "Tell me, little girl, do you feel like you are broken?"

"Huh?"

"Do you feel empty, incomplete, are you missing something?" Garth decided to take a different approach. "Are you happy, little girl?"

"Yes." Summer answered. Then she thought a second. "Well, most of the time."

"When are you not happy?" Garth asked.

"I don't like it when I'm at school, or doing my homework, or places where I'm bored." Summer answered. "My life is so average. I'm bored all the time. Nothing cool happens."

"Does that make you feel like you are missing something?"

"Yeah." Summer nodded. "Yeah, it does. I feel like I'm missing out on so much. I want to be a cool superhero! I want to have adventures and fight evil!" Stars shone in her eyes.

"Really? So what would make your life complete? What would make you whole, child?" Garth asked, fully practiced in his routine now.

"Hmm.." Summer thought. "What would make me complete? Well, what I want most in the entire world is to be Sailor Polaris and be pretty and go on cool adventures. Then I wouldn't be bored."

He glanced quickly around the room. "So you like Sailor Polaris, do you?"

"Umhm!" Summer nodded. "She's my favorite person in the whole world!"

Garth grinned. "What if I told you that you could be Sailor Polaris?"

Summer's eyes went wide. "What!?! REALLY! For real!?"

"Yes." Garth lied. "For real..." He reached into his zero space storage pocket, and brought out his black velvet bag. "In this bag I have the one thing that will make you whole. I can turn you into Sailor Polaris, but that has to be, honestly, the one thing that would make you complete."

"Oh, it is! It is!" Summer nodded. "I hate being plain old me! I have had dreams that I could be Sailor Polaris! Please let me be her!"

"Alright." Garth said, undoing the knot. "I have just the pen for you." He reached in with his teeth and grabbed out a transformation wand. The body of the pen-like wand was a dark aqua looking color, and the black metal cap had an ornament on the top. The symbol on this ornament was of an eight-pointed star, Polaris's symbol. The star had a double-X running through it. He dropped it into Summer's hand. "Is this what Sailor Polaris uses to become Sailor Polaris?" Summer asked. "It's got her symbol on it...but what's with the 'X'?" She stopped as the star at the top of the pen began to glow white. From the lines of the symbol leaked currents of black smoke. The fumes hung in the air and floated around Summer's head. They seemed to hypnotize her, and she sat, frozen as the fog floated into her head. Suddenly she let out a cry. "DARK DELPHINUS!"

Down on the first floor, Olivia heard the cry. "What was that?" She looked up at the ceiling. "It sounded like what we say to transform. Polaris Power. Dark Delphinus. But why would Summer yell that?" Then her mind snapped back to just minutes before; "Yeah, my life is boring. I have to go to school, and PSR, and homework, and all sorts of boring stuff, but Sailor Polaris, I bet she doesn't have to do any of that stuff!" and then; "If I could have anything, I would want to be just like her." "Oh my gosh!" Olivia's blue-hazel eyes went wide. "Summer's a target! But how'd I miss it!? I've got to hurry and save her!" She yanked out the magic transformation pen Mooney the cat had given her just days before. It was nearly routine now. "POLARIS POWER!"

Summer was encased in a hemisphere of dark, blackish aqua. Hot purplish white lightning flashed behind her. Her skin faded to a mess of aqua, purple, and black, and her shoulder-length hair was whipped around her face in an unbelievably powerful wind. The dome around her seemed alive with dark magic. Living tendrils shot out from the walls like ligaments and connected Summer to the tremendous power that was encased in the walls. She moved, and the stretches of seemingly organic strips wrapped themselves tightly around her. They covered every inch of her, smothering her in their dark magic. She was like a pupa, a caterpillar encased in a living cocoon, and like a caterpillar, inside her casing, incredible changes were taking place. Another flash of the violet-white energy streaked around the inside of the dome. The hot electricity stripped the sides, and detached the girl from the walls. The powerful wind inside the dome whipped the frayed ends of the ribbons so fast that they were a blur. As she floated in the squall, another bolt of lightning wrapped itself around her. It entered her open eyes, and brought them to life with a purple glow. The volts of the lighting raced across her skin and turned the bindings into dust. What was left on her body was a uniform resembling those on every piece of Sailor Soldier paraphernalia in her room. The skirt and collar were the blackish aqua that colored the walls. The bows on her chest and back were black. Her boots each had an eight-pointed star on the front. With more lightning flashing behind her, she started her monologue. "I awaken! Sailor Delphinus! The North Star! The clustered constellation! I guide the paths you travel! I am either triumphal victory or a cold and bitter death! I am Sailor Polaris! I am WHOLE!"

The dome around her shattered into nothing. Sailor Delphinus cast her blue-green eyes around the bedroom. "This is all mine. They have made all this for me?"

"Yes," Garth hissed, pleased, "yes human, it's all for you. Give into your desire and surrender your Crystal Fracture!"

"Leave her alone!"

"Who is that!?" Delphinus spun around and saw the only Sailor Soldier that could match the colors of the bedroom perfectly.

Olivia stood, fully transformed in the doorway. "How dare you assault my fan! She has nothing for you! I'm going to give you what you deserve for disturbing pure idol worship! I'm Sailor Polaris! And I have to protect those who seek my protection."

"You are not Sailor Polaris!" Sailor Delphinus cried. "I am Sailor Polaris!"

"Are not!" Polaris shot back. "You don't even look like me!"

"She is Sailor Polaris, maggot!" Garth cried. "Sailor Delphinus, to be exact, but her desire was to be you! So that is what she is! And now you'd better run!" Garth shot his yellow eyes to the girl at his side.

"Delphinus! She's impersonating you! Go stop her from disgracing your name as Sailor Polaris!"

"Don't worry! I take my dignity very personally." Sailor Delphinus said. Polaris's jaw dropped. Sailor Delphinus picked up the homemade Sailor Polaris doll that sat on her bed. When she had touched it, black energy shot like a wave from her hand, and turned it into a perfect replica of Sailor Polaris, complete with boots, gloves, choker and tiara. The face changed, the eyes were no longer cute and hand-painted, and the mouth was no longer stitched carefully. It was changed to a printed face. The doll was actually sneering at her, it looked mischievous and ready to make trouble. Sailor Delphinus picked up the doll and thrusting it at Polaris, cried. "Polaris Power NOW!"

Polaris stood, stunned as an all-too-familiar spinning icicle flew in her direction. She jumped back and the floor where she'd stood turned to solid ice. "Wha!?! How'd she get off doing something like that!?"

"Like I said, maggot! Run! Run for your life! Because she won't stop until you have stopped this charade!" With that, Garth erupted into a horrible fit of laughter that followed Sailor Polaris down the stairs and out the door. Sailor Delphinus was in hot pursuit, sending icicles whenever she could, toward the escaping Soldier.

"Summer! Summer please! You love me!" Polaris cried as she headed out into the driving rain. "Stop trying to kill me!"

"Imposter!" Delphinus cried. "I am Sailor Polaris! Stop pretending to be me!" She thrust the doll forward again and another icicle flew through the rain and hit a parked car, freezing it with a thin layer of ice.

"I'm not the imposter! You are!" Polaris called over her shoulder. "Whaa!" She ducked to dodge another icicle.

"LIES! LIE AND IMPOSTER!"

"Oops, shouldn't have said that." Polaris said, turning the corner. "I can't hurt her, she's an innocent girl!"

"IMPOSTER!" Another icicle flew from behind the fleeing Soldier and hit the side of a building, plastering a great chunk of it in ice.

"LUNA!!!" Polaris cried. "ARTEMIS!!!! SAILOR MOON! HEEELLLLPP!!!"

\* \* \*

Zoicite sat alone in the great hall late at night. Beryl had left for bed hours ago, after giving the court a very long spiel about Malachite and how long it was taking him to do his job. Zoicite had tried to defend him. "But he's only been gone three days!" She'd said. "He's concerned about making you proud."

"He'll get the job done, I have confidence in him." Beryl wouldn't listen, she was having too much fun bashing him. It hurt Zoicite to listen to her talk about her lover like that. She let out a sigh that echoed around the empty room. "What is he doing? Has he found the crystal yet? Will he come back victorious, or will he die the next time he stands in this room?"

Suddenly a boot step was heard throughout the hall. It was followed by another and another. They belonged to a pair of heavy, deep treaded boots.

Her head snapped up. "Who's there!?"

"Not much of a greeting," a man's voice answered, "not for the heir to the kingdom, anyway."

“Sir Quasar!” Zoicite jumped up when she heard his voice. “I’m sorry, sire, I didn’t know that it was you.”

“At ease.” Quasar continued into the room, his thick gray boots breaking the silence again and again with their echoes. He looked to her with his only eye, as she sat back down on the base of a column.

“What are you doing here this late at night, talking to yourself?”

“I’m sorry sir, I’ll leave.” Zoicite said, beginning to get to get up again.

He reached out a deeply tanned hand from behind his back and signaled for her to stay. “I was merely asking a question.”

She turned to look up at him, her orange ponytail falling off her shoulder. “I, I was wondering.” She answered.

“About what?”

Why’d his voice sound so sincere? He was supposed to be an heir to Beryl. No one was nice around here, why was he? She toyed with the idea of relating everything to him. “Wondering...about someone.”

“That general who’s missing? Malachite?” Quasar prodded. He put his hands on the hips of his black pants. It was true that he’d fallen for Chrysoberyl, Evil Queen Beryl’s daughter, but he really was a softie at heart. Only for innocence, however. If this woman was caught vandalizing instead of worrying, he wouldn’t have thought twice about killing her. A man of extremes, Quasar was.

Zoicite felt awkward, and crossed her arms over her knees. “Y...Yes.”

“I thought so.” Quasar squatted down next to her. She shot her eyes to his. He had one deep brown one and the other was glazed white with blindness. She found herself tracing the long scar the stretched down his face with her eyes. Quasar shifted weight a little so that his squatting didn’t make him fall over.

“Is he special to you?”

It was late, she was tired, she was sick with worry for Malachite’s life, and the question completely broke her. “Yes! He means the world to me! I can’t stand the thought of him being killed! Especially not by Beryl, the disgrace alone would kill him! Me too!”

“Shhh...you’re shouting.” Quasar warned. “You are not supposed to be here so late at night, if someone hears you, you’ll be punished.”

“Why aren’t you punishing me?” Zoicite asked. Somehow she felt like having her deepest feelings and well-kept secrets wrenched slowly out of her by a superior officer was punishment enough.

“Call me a sucker for hard-luck cases.” Quasar answered with a shrug of his burly shoulders. “And don’t worry. Garth is the closest friend I’ve ever had. He will make sure your man does what he’s supposed to.”

“Really?” Zoicite asked, skeptically.

“What? Don’t you trust my word?” Quasar asked.

“No, that’s not it.” Zoicite assured. “It’s just that Malachite has never been looking for Rainbow Crystals before, that’s my job! If Beryl wanted it done she should have sent me! I think that she just has it in for him. He thinks so, too.” She turned her face away when she realized how much she had said.

“I’m, I’m scared for him.”

“Well, I’ll talk to Beryl.” Quasar said, standing.

She stared, disbelieving up at him. “You will?”

“Sure, why not. I’ll ask her what her deal is. If she has it in for your man I’ll tell you.”

“Really!? Y-you will?”

He made an impatient face and nodded. “Now get back to your quarters.”

“R-right.” She shoved herself up and turned to leave, but quickly turned back and bowed. “Thank you Sir! Thank you!”

“Hurry and get going.” He said. She took off out of the great hall and he turned to leave the way he had come. “Beryl’s got it in for that Malachite, eh? Well, she won’t be messing with our mission. No, not

this early.” He clomped his way back to his own quarters where his wife, Pulsar was waiting.

“And where were you?”

“I ran into that general Zoicite in the great hall.” Quasar replied.

Pulsar looked up from where she was reading a book in her nightdress. “Really? Why’d you do that?”

“Chry, don’t look at me like that, she’s no competition with you.” Quasar assured. She cast him a smirk and he laughed. “You get jealous so easily.”

“It’s easy when I’ve got such a warm-hearted, hunk of a husband.” Pulsar said, folding closed her book. “Now what did you learn?”

He climbed over her and laid out on the bed, his tan arms behind his head. “I learned some interesting stuff. As it ends up, Zoicite just happens to be the girlfriend of that missing general, Malachite.”

“Really?” Pulsar asked, unenthusiastically. “Why is that important?”

“Well, she says that Malachite wasn’t equipped for this job.” He answered. “That he’d never gone after Rainbow Crystals before. She seems to think that your mother just happens to have it in for him.”

“I wouldn’t put it past her.” Pulsar said, disdainfully. “My mother is a witch. She also likes to play with her food before she eats it.”

“Well, that’s why we’re overthrowing her, right?” Quasar asked.

“Exactly.”

“But anyway, it’s terribly important that we keep that general out there looking while Garth is. I mean, Garth is good, but he’s not a magician. He needs time to find all these fractures. If Beryl knocks off Malachite, then we’ll have to delay looking for a while.”

“We can’t afford that.” Pulsar said. “I’ll talk to her.”

“And tell me if she actually has it in for this guy.” Quasar added, getting up and taking off his v-neck shirt. “I promised that other general I’d tell her if she was.”

Pulsar rolled her eyes. “Kyanite, you are so soft!”

“Yeah, I guess.”

Then Pulsar smiled up to him, a very sincere and loving look that completely changed her face from cold beauty to warm radiance. Her green eyes were less shallow when she looked at him that way. “But, Ky, you know that’s why I married you.”

“Love you too, honey.”

\* \* \*

Polaris dashed into Raye’s room at the Hino Shrine and slammed the sliding door shut behind her. She stood bracing it with her back and panting.

“Olivia!” Amy cried. Luckily none of the others had left yet.

“Sailor Polaris!” Luna corrected. “What’s wrong! You look like you’re in trouble.”

“I am I am!” Polaris nodded quickly, water dripping from her hair and uniform. “There’s an-“ she panted a couple times, trying to get the whole sentence out, “- an evil me after me!”

“A what!?” Raye and Serena chorused.

“Did you say an evil you?” Mina asked, cookie crumbs all over her face.

Polaris nodded desperately.

“How? What happened?” Lita asked.

Panting made retelling difficult, and her explanation was littered with various hand gestures. “I was riding...and there was this girl...and then boom...and she took me...and we went to house...and Sailor Polaris world....and then we...watched the TV...and DARK DELPHINUS...and then WHAM!...and I was here.” Everyone stared blankly at her. “Oh okay, I’ll try again...I was riding...” There was a crash from outside and the door suddenly froze over behind her. “WAHH! Run!” She jumped from the doorway and



ran over the table and out the door on the other side of the room. She stopped in the doorway. "Run guys! Run! Run! Run!"

Just then the iced door was kicked in, causing frozen dust to fall from the frame. Through the cloud of powder they could see the silhouette of a girl holding a doll. She stood menacingly for a second before crying. "Kill the Imposter!!!" She threw the doll around in the air, sending icicles flying around at the walls and furniture. The other girls jumped up and ran screaming from the room with Delphinus on their tails.

Malachite and Garth came galloping up, both soaked. Malachite had Garth on his shoulder as he stepped through the ruined door, his long silver hair sticking to his face. "Whoa, this one packs a punch."

"Yes!" Garth cried, triumphantly. "It has to be her! She has to have a crystal fracture! Look at the power she has!" Malachite slipped on a patch of ice that coated the floor just inside Raye's bedroom. He caught himself on the door-less frame and Garth jumped off. "Come on, let's hurry and catch up to her! The chase is exhilarating!"

"Easy for you to say! You have four legs." Malachite said, struggling to regain balance in his awkward position. "And all I can say is that this better be a carrier or else, cat, I'm having far too much trouble with this."

"Hurry up, human, we've got to go get her! She's using her power so much, it may be any minute!" Malachite struggled across the ice patch and made sure to avoid others as they made their way down the temple halls. Everywhere around them, there were patches of ice on the floor, walls, and ceiling. Up ahead, everyone was running madly from Sailor Delphinus as she shot icicles at them. Polaris was in the lead with Serena close behind. "Olivia!!! How'd she come along!?"

"Her name's Summer, and she thinks she's me! She wants to kill me because I'm an imposter pretending to be her. It's really confusing. The point is, I couldn't hurt her because I know who she really is!"

"That's not gonna stop me from hurting her!" Lita cried. She stopped and turned to the oncoming Soldier. Sailor Delphinus ran straight for Lita, throwing random icicles around the hallway. When the two met, Lita nailed her with a well-placed blow to the gut. She toppled over onto the floor, her doll sliding on an ice patch toward the rest of the girls.

"I'll get it!" Mina ran up and slipped on the same patch of ice. Her feet flew out from under her and she skidded along on her butt toward Lita and Delphinus, kicking and screaming the whole way. She ran into the Evil Sailor Soldier butt-to-head and the two of them flew off down the hall together like that. Lita watched them go, dumbfounded.

The doll came to a stop at Serena's feet just as the two skaters slammed into a wall off down the way. Delphinus stood up, tearing and rubbing her head. "That wasn't funny! That really hurt!"

"You hurt! I landed on my butt!" Mina cried.

"I've got the doll." Serena announced, bending down. "She can't do anything without this."

"Serena don't!" Luna cried, but it was too late. The minute Serena had picked up the doll, it shook in her hand and threw a spiraling icicle right into her face. She froze over in a casing of ice, still holding the doll.

"Oh my gosh!" Amy cried. She jumped away from Serena's side, surprised by the sudden attack.

"Luna, how'd you know that was going to happen?"

"It was the doll that was emitting the ice." Luna said. "It wasn't the soldier! From what you've told me, it only made sense that the object was the only dangerous thing about the dark Sailor Soldiers."

"Raye, transform and melt Serena so that she can transform and heal this kid when she self-destructs!" Lita said.

"Good idea." Raye nodded. She got out her pen. "MARS POWER!"

Raye was surrounded by her magic red demi-globe. Inside a wildfire was blazing. She was surrounded with her element and the magic in it transformed her into Sailor Mars. The flames vanished and left her wearing her red suit with purple chest bow and red pumps. She posed and the transformation was complete.

Amy turned to Artemis. "Should the rest of us transform too?"

"No, I don't think it's necessary." The white cat answered. "And I know I'm tired of watching you do it, so let's just stick with the ones we need."

Sailor Mars warmed up her fire attack. Within the Ice case, Serena's eyes darted frantically back and forth, scared to death of what Mars was about to do to her. She put her hands together, fire forming at her fingertips. "Fire, SOUL!" A flame-thrower type attack blasted poor Serena and the ice began to melt. Around the corner, Garth and Malachite were making their way to where Delphinus and Mina sat crying. Garth was in a state of near ecstasy. "We're almost there! It's almost time! We'll have it!"

He and Malachite were suddenly forced to stop when out of nowhere, Tuxedo Mask, in his red cape, white mask and top hat leapt in front of them. "Stop!"

"Yow!" Malachite jumped with the surprise of having him suddenly appear, and his feet slipped out from under him. He landed on his back in front of Tuxedo Mask. "Where'd you come from!?"

"Never mind! What are you doing assaulting little girls and having them turn themselves inside out? That's not how I was taught to find Rainbow Crystals." Tuxedo Mask demanded.

Suddenly a bright white light lit the hall behind Tuxedo Mask. Garth's yellow eyes went wide. "This is it."

"AHHH!" Mina let out a horrified scream as Delphinus's essence began to exit her body through her neck.

"Oh no! Summer!" Sailor Polaris rushed forward without thinking. She slipped and slid all the way down to join Mina at the end of the hall. Tuxedo Mask whirled around and ended up on his own behind. Sailor Mars watched as she kept a steady torch on Serena, who was melting rather unevenly. Garth climbed up to stand on Tuxedo Mask's stomach. Tuxedo Mask and Malachite exchanged glances.

The same sequence of events that occurred with the other Dark Soldiers when they lost their essence happened to Sailor Delphinus. All the color, even the false color, drained from her hair and the blue-green vanished from her eyes. Her skin went waxily pale and the light coming from her neck became mixed with the hues that were sucked from her. When the essence escaped, it turned into a ghost-like entity that began to float around the hallway. The lamps blew out, and the light bulbs shattered, the light and color from these energy sources gathering in the essence spirit. Sailor Delphinus was left frozen on the ground, looking like she was made of candle wax. Sailor Polaris glanced around as Summer's ghost weaved its way around the ceiling. She looked to Mina, who hadn't blinked since her initial scream. Her eyes looked down the hall to Tuxedo Mask. Somehow, his presence made the situation better, but the dumbstruck, frightened, look on his face made it worse again. She looked down the hall to the other four girls and the cats. Mars's melting was coming along steadily except that the essence was sucking up most of the energy from the flame before it even reached Serena.

Artemis looked to her. "Hurry, we need Serena to heal her before her essence escapes."

"I'm sorry! It's not my fault!" Sailor Mars insisted. "It's the stupid essence!"

"Essence isn't stupid, Raye." Amy said.

Just then, the spirit essence made an about face and shot off down the hall over the four girls' heads. When the essence left, the whole crew was left in the dark. Artemis hung his head. "Ahh, no!"

"What do we do now?" Lita asked.

"We have to go catch it and bring it back." Luna said. "I don't know how, but it's much too far away to

be sucked back into her body now. We have to catch it before it gets outside.”

“It’s a good thing that it’s raining, all the windows will be closed.” Sailor Mars said. “Fire, SOUL.” She turned the burner back on Serena, who was emerging from the ice.

“Come on, girls, lets go catch that ghost!” Luna said, bounding off into the dark. Sailor Polaris and Mina shoved themselves up and slip-slided their way back up the hall.

Tuxedo Mask was ready to follow, except that he had a cat on his chest. Garth seemed to forget that he was there when he hung his head and closed his eyes. “I can’t believe it wasn’t there. We will have to try again.”

“Again!?” Malachite demanded. “Cat! If you are saying that we’ve failed again”

Tuxedo Mask felt the cat bound off him. “Come, we will try again.”

Malachite slipped and slid away with Garth and Tuxedo Mask shoved himself up. He decided to follow the general instead of joining the ghost hunt. Down the other hall, however, the chase was on! It was Sailor Polaris, Lita, Amy, Mina and Artemis verses a swiftly roaming essence cloud. Luna and Mars had stayed behind with Serena, who really had no choice. The others were having a time of chasing Summer’s essence around the temple. It moved very fast along the ceiling of the passageways, sucking up light and breaking bulbs as it went. They were nearly out of breath, and were finally able to stop when the ghost entered the fire chamber. The chamber was home to a gigantic, blazing hearth where Raye would go to read fire, and the essence was having a great time sucking up the energy from the flames.

“Okay, so how do we get it?” Polaris asked.

“Just grab the end, I guess.” Mina answered.

Amy shook her head. “No, that won’t work. It’s a cloud, you can’t grab a cloud.”

“The how do you think we should do it?” Lita asked Amy, who’d wandered to a table on the side of the room. She pulled a drawer out of the front of the table and held it up for the others to see. “We can get it in this. The cloud cannot get through wood.”

“Great! Give it here!” Lita cried. She trotted over, took the drawer, and stood on the table. Leaning over the fire, she tried to catch the ghost with quick waving motions. “Come here, you little essence! Come to Momma! Come on!”

The essence cloud floated around the flames of the fire, drinking up the energy like hot soup. It kept getting bigger and more colorful the more fire it consumed. Lita waved at it feebly with the drawer, but it remained out of reach.

“Would you guys help me out here?”

“Uh, sure.” The other girls surrounded the bonfire and tried to fan the cloud toward Lita. The essence paused in midair, and then, nearly in defiance, shot from the room through the door it had come in by. The girls groaned and chased after it. It was still moving away from its body, through the hallways of the shrine. Working with Amy’s idea of catching it in something, the girls began to grab whatever they thought might serve as containers to capture the essence in as the passed them in the halls.

When the ghost entered a large prayer chamber, the girls were prepared to capture it using a flowerpot, a trashcan, a shoebox, and a very large Tupperware container. “Come on, girls,” Lita said, focused, “lets do this.” With that, the four of them began running around the room, waving their containers in the air.

Artemis shook his head at the sight. “I never thought we’d stoop to this level.”

The essence ghost was headed toward Mina and her flowerpot. “Ooo! I got it! I got it!” She swooped with the pot and captured most of it within the confines of the terra cotta. She quickly put the pot top-down on the floor to keep it in. “I did it!”

“Hurray!” Everyone jumped up and down. “Alright Mina!”

She made a peace sign and grinned. “That’s me!” As she stood there, swelling with pride, the glowing white essence sifted its way out of the hole in the bottom of the pot. She watched it trickle out. “Oh drat!

I forgot about the hole!”

Polaris hit herself in the head with her Tupperware as the essence returned to floating about the room.

“Mina...”

Lita shook her head and shrugged. “Oh my gosh.”

“Come on, girls, hurry up and get it before it gets too big.” Artemis cried, bringing them back to the task at hand. The essence was heading toward the end of the room where the sliding doors were. Everyone went chasing after it. Amy was closest, running with the lid of her shoebox in one hand and the body in the other, ready to snatch the ghost out of the air. Unfortunately she caught her foot under one of the mats and crashed headlong into the door. It was knocked off its runners and the garden became visible. The essence darted toward the open door.

“Oh no!” Mina fretted.

“Don’t let it get outside!” Artemis cried. “If it gets out we’ll never catch it!”

Polaris thought fast. “North Star Power, NOW!” She hurled her own spiraling icicle toward the door, attempting to freeze it closed. Instead, when it hit the frame, it just coated the open door in a layer of ice.

“Dang!”

The essence left the building and shot through the rain and across the yard. Tuxedo Mask was chasing Malachite and Garth out another door in a perpendicular hallway. Malachite glanced over his shoulder as they ran and Garth quickly opened up a portal. Once the two of them were through, it closed, and Tuxedo Mask skidded to a stop. He looked up as the glowing essence made a beeline toward his head. The four girls stuck their heads out of the icy doorway and looked on, horrified. In one swift motion, Tuxedo Mask yanked off his large top hat and turned the opening toward the essence. The ghost shot straight into the hat, and he turned and pressed the opening to his chest. The girls all let out a joyful cry and ran to him as he looked, confused, from them to the hat and back.

Sailor Polaris jumped up and down, her wet hair flapping like a sheet. “You got it! You got it! I can’t believe it! You’re the best!”

“Artemis!?” Luna was at the sliding door that Tuxedo Mask had entered the yard through. Sailor Mars was behind her with the statue-like Delphinus. Sailor Moon was transformed, her teeth still chattering, and her lips blue.

“We’ve got it!” Artemis called, triumphantly back.

Luna grinned. “Great! Hurry, Sailor Moon, heal this girl before it gets away again!”

“Wh-wh-what-t-ever you s-s-say.” Moon chattered. Mars put the stiff little soldier on the wet grass and Sailor Moon took out her Moon wand. “M-M-Moo-oo-n Hea-Heal-I-I-in-ing, ACT-I-VATION-N!” Despite the shaky delivery, the white Moon magic still came from the wand and entered the hole at Delphinus’s throat. Tuxedo Mask freed the essence from his hat, and it was sucked, spiraling, back into its body. Summer’s sailor suit vanished and the color returned to her skin. Lights came back on along the halls of the temple, and Sailor Polaris let out a sigh as the rain began to let up.

\* \* \*

When the rain stopped, around 7 o’clock, Sailor Polaris had returned Summer to her house. The door had been left open, so she’d walked in and laid her out on the couch in the sitting room. Summer’s eyes opened. “Wha? What happened?”

“You were kidnapped.” Sailor Polaris smiled. “I saved you!”

Summer’s groggy eyes suddenly sprang open with excitement. “SAILOR POLARIS!?!?!?”

“That’s me!” The soldier grinned.

“WOW! You actually saved me!?” She sprang up to a sitting position on the couch. “I don’t believe it!”

“Believe it.” Polaris replied. “I just stuck around to see if you were okay. I have to go now.”

“No, wait!” Summer looked frantically around the room. She spotted her homemade doll on the coffee table. Olivia had thought enough to bring it with her when she’d left to return Summer to her house. Now, the blonde-brown haired girl grabbed it off the table with a pen and pressed it toward the soldier. “Will you sign it!? Please?”

“Sure.” Polaris took the pen and signed the doll on the white leotard.

Then, taking it back, Summer read aloud what she had written. “Dear Summer, you are a very special person, I will always think of you as my biggest fan! Live your life the best you can with all you have, Sailor Polaris.” She looked up, her eyes sparkling. Sailor Polaris couldn’t help but smile widely as well. Summer nodded vigorously. “I will, Sailor Polaris! I will! This is the best day of my life!”

~To Be Continued~

## 6 - Episode 5: Earth Arising

Sailor Moon P

Episode 5: Double Take

Walking the ledge of a sharp cliff, he glanced out over the shore stretching gay and sparkling far below him. He didn't stop walking as he stared out to sea. A faint white glow floated like a fog where the pitch waves met the surreally deep navy-colored night sky. The sea stretched out from the edge of the bluffs where he walked like a rippling black sheet, moving ever so slightly in the heavily still night air. He came to the end of the ledge, where the huge crescent moon hung low and lopsided in the sky. There were ruins, much like those of ancient Rome or Greece, that sat in shambles before him. The fallen columns, darkened by the strange dusk, seemed to frame the figure of a young woman. The breezeless air stole breath from his lungs, because, even though it was a windless night, the hem of her flowing white gown and long, moon-bleached strands of hair were rippling like the solid black waves behind her. She sat on a grounded pillar, her head bowed, her hands folded in her lap. The marble stone floor that stretched out from her feet broke from its perfect solid-ness into cracks and chunks the further away from her it got. He came to stand in the dust just beyond the shattered edge. His breathing sounded shallow and heavy, much as breath would on a deserted winter night. The moon seemed to grow in size as he stood there, and as the fragile creature before him came to stand, the lower arm of the crescent crossed behind her head.

"Darien..."

He tried to redraw his stolen breath, but was rewarded only with an audible gasp. She, in her remorseful, disembodied voice, had called his name.

Her eyes were not visible, but he stared at the back of her pale-haired head as she stared up, somewhat longingly at the moon. She was very thin and pale; her long hair was traced in an outline of silver moonlight as it was blown apart by the invisible gusts. Her back, neck and arms were bare, and her dress, which was ruffled and lined with gold at the breast, suggested that she was nothing less than royalty. Something told him...

A Princess.

"You have returned."

Yes. The reply was unspoken, but stuck in his dry throat. In spite of the strangeness, this place was familiar. He had come so many times and yet still could not recall how he came. All he knew was that he came to see her.

She turned her head ever so slightly, so that the silhouette of her delicate profile could be seen against the moon. Her features, a high, gently sloping forehead, little nose and perfectly curving lip were those of an adolescent, not still a girl, but not yet a woman. A gust blew one thick lock of her long wispy hair over her chin. She turned her eyes to him.

"Bring me the Imperium Silver Crystal."

Those eyes, they cut him to the core. They were large, pleading, and painted a blue that was deathly pale. Her face was only paler. When her eyes, those sad, hopeful eyes, were turned faring him, he was stricken with a heart-wrenching feeling. This emotion was so strong. This warm, safe, nervous, trembling feeling that made his heart race and his eyes waver. It was an emotion that she always brought with her. It was one he always ached for. It was a feeling that could not exist in dreams.

It was as if he knew her. More than just these brief, quiet meetings at the sea, as if he'd known her

deeply, closely, and for a long time. Longer than his troubled mind could remember. Perhaps even before he was born.

The moonlight reflected off her hair and eyes with white, dancing radiance. She turned her body to face him; her hands folded, now, in front of her chest, one gold beaded bracelet dangly from her wrist. The wind pushed one of her long pigtails across her shoulder to blow behind her neck.

“Bring it to me?”

Her voice stung his heart as if it was a thousand sharp, pricking knives. The sound of that young voice, so familiar and so sad, made his eyes moisten. He had to know why she called him with a voice like that; he had to know who she was. He didn’t want such a voice so sound so sorrowful. “I will.” He answered. His voice projected a hollow echo, one that her voice did not. And as the last remnants of his answer trailed off to the foggy distance, she began to fade away as well.

“Bring it to me.”

Her form was fading, as well as the world around her. They were being sucked up into that crescent moon, which was crumbling like a painting being burned at the edges. He took a step onto the stone floor; his footfall and voice scattered to the four winds away from him. “Wait!”

She was leaving. Not again! She couldn’t go! Not those eyes!

“When I get it, will you stay with me!? Will you tell me how I know you!?”

Her eyes never strayed from his, as their worlds separated in a shroud of black. It was as if a jet-colored belt was being tightened between them. He reached out, a frail hope that somehow he might make her stay. The marble vanished from under his foot.

“Bring it here.”

“Wait!!”

Only her face remained visible, and, in that, only her eyes. “Please...” The frayed patch of night growing smaller, the sense of longing in her eyes, his heart pounding, that warm safe, trembling feeling...

Darien Chiba awoke with a start. His heart was racing, and his alarm was blaring on his bedside table. It was 6:00 AM. He closed his eyes again and flopped an arm across his face. Again, he’d been dreaming. The noise from the alarm was growing irritating, and he threw the arm across his face out to smack it silent. The blaring stopped, but that didn’t excuse the fact that it was six. He had to be at work in an hour. It was about time he got up.

Darien turned on the lamp by his bed and wandered, yawning, to the bathroom. ‘I have to find that Imperium Silver Crystal. That princess wants me to bring it to her, and maybe then she will tell me how I know her. Perhaps...she will stay with me. She can tell me who I really am. I’m so lonely.’ His thoughts flashed to that fateful night ten years ago when he was in an accident. His parents had died, and he was left all alone with no family to love him. He shook the memory from his mind, and arriving at the bathroom sink, splashed cold water in his face, “I don’t need to think about that. I don’t want to think about that.” He looked up and met his own gaze in the mirror. “What am I doing? It was just a dream. The princess, the crystal, the beach, all a dream. Why listen to a dream?”

But that trembling feeling was still alive in his chest. It had been more than just a dream. It had been real. Whether he liked it or not, that feeling could not exist in dreams, and somehow, he knew that that place was real too. That the princess was real, and that the crystal was also real. Somehow he would have to find it. Then the princess wouldn’t be so sad, and he would know about his past. He shook his head again. “Why am I always so confused!?” Running his fingers through his short black hair, he caught the reflection of his eyes in the mirror again and stopped. This man, is black hair and intelligent blue eyes that stared back at him, did he really know him? Staring blankly at his own face, only one thought was on his mind. He blinked slowly, and asked himself. “Who am I?”

\* \* \*

At the Miles household, no one was up at 6:00 AM that Saturday morning. Olivia, the youngest child, was tangled in the sheets of her twin bed. Sunlight was coming in her windows and illuminating the various stuffed animals and assorted decorations. She rolled over, a stuffed orangutan flopped off the bed along with her arm. It hung, mingled with her long golden-blonde hair as she continued to snooze. Across the hall, her sister Jennifer was sleeping, too, but not quite as serenely. With a groan, she pulled the covers up over her head, blocking the Saturday morning sunlight from hitting her eyes. Unable to go back to sleep, she tossed and turned, making her shoulder-length brown hair warp strangely. After thirty minutes of fighting consciousness, she finally opened her green-hazel eyes. The sun stung as it shot rays straight into her face. "Ug! What time is it?" Shielding her eyes, she checked the clock. 6:45. "Sigh, at least I slept later than a school day." She clambered out of bed, fixed her wild hair as best she could, then grabbed a robe and headed downstairs. No one else was awake, but it seemed that her mother had gotten up at least periodically, because there was a pot of coffee brewing in the kitchen. Gabe, her large black and white dog, jumped to greet her. Easily overexcited, to a stranger it would seem that the dog hadn't seen her in years. Battling him back to the floor, she scratched him behind the ears and made her way to the TV. It was Saturday morning, cartoons had to be on. She drowsily plopped herself onto the couch and took up the remote control. Kids WB, Fox Family, Disney, Cartoon Network, there was nothing on that early. She switched to the Sci-Fi channel and found an old Star Trek rerun. That would do. Mystery Science Theater 3000 didn't come on until 8:00 and Big Wolf on Campus wasn't on until 10:30.

As soon as she was settled, her older dog, Angel, who was not known for nuzzling, came over, wagged her tail, and began to whimper very loudly. These were the telltale signs that she needed a trip outside, and when Gabe jumped up too, Jennifer knew that she had no choice but to heed to their pleas. Shoving herself up, she clomped off to the laundry room to release the dogs into the backyard. When she got back, Olivia was up. "G'morning."

"Ungh..." Olivia grunted her greeting and flopped down in Jennifer's place on the couch. She took up the controller and changed the channel back to the Cartoon Network where old Bugs Bunny cartoons were airing.

"Yeah, I agree." Jennifer said, grabbing a box of Cap'n Crunch out of the pantry. "It's Saturday morning, why don't we sleep in?"

"Cause we cant." Olivia answered.

Time passed as the lazy Saturday morning wore on and soon turned into Saturday afternoon. 3:00 PM found the two of them still in front of the TV. Their mother came into the room with a load of clean laundry. "Girls, would you consider doing something constructive today?"

"No." They said in unison, neither looking away from the screen.

"Come on, you two haven't moved all day." Their mother said, a touch of aggravation playing at her voice. "Get up and do something!"

"Okay, okay," Jennifer gave in, she dug herself out of the chair and looked to Olivia, who was focused on the TV like it was going to save her life. Jennifer stretched. "Hey, Olivia, wanna walk up to the QuikTrip?"

"Wah?" Olivia asked in half English.

"Come on!"

"But! But we'll never know if Corey and Topanga get back together!" Olivia protested, her blue-hazel eyes darting, panic-stricken from her sister to the screen and back.

"They do." Jennifer said, obviously.

"Yeah, but...!"



“Come on,” Jennifer left the room. Olivia rolled up her eyes and followed. The two of them sluggishly got ready to leave, and, grabbing some money, left the house. Once the siblings started walking, their moods lightened by the methods of exercise and conversation. “Do you remember whenever we went to Aunt Julia’s and we had those Little Mermaid coloring books?” Jennifer asked, re-doing the black headband she often wore in her hair.

“Yeah, those were fun times.” Olivia agreed. “And didn’t her apartment complex thingy have a pool?”

“Yeah it did!” Jennifer recalled. “And it had that little upraised kiddie pool with the wall in the back?” The 14-year-old girl spoke equally as much with her hands as with her mouth. “I remember that I’d always play with my Gumby characters in there. Pokey would always swim around to one side and then Gumby would have to come and rescue him.”

“Where’d Gumby and Pokey come from?” Olivia asked, raising one golden eyebrow.

“I dunno.” Jennifer said with a chuckle. “I was what? Six?”

The nostalgia flowed heartily as they walked up their street and along the adjoining road. It broke up a little as the two of them headed up a long steep hill. When they reached the top, however, conversation turned in a new direction.

“Hey, Jennifer?” Olivia flipped a chunk of her bushy gold hair over her shoulder. “did you see that guy working at the Rec Center?”

“Who? Do you mean the tall one from Thursday?” She asked. “Yeah, I saw him. We stalked him, remember?”

“Yeah,” having her sister remember the man was not her main goal for the conversation. “Did he seem...I dunno...special somehow?”

“Special?” Jennifer looked confused. “How do you mean?” Olivia stopped for a second, looking for the right way to describe the feeling she’d gotten when she’d met him. He’d been standing behind the counter and when she’d looked into his eyes, she’d received a strange sense of recognition. As if she’d known him before then. Like she’d known him well. And when she was imagining him teasing Serena, she’d imagined it in such detail. And still there was that weird feeling. She’d had a similar, yet stronger feeling when she’d met Tuxedo Mask, although she labeled that one as love at first sight. The question she was asking really was...did Jennifer get the same strange feeling from the guy as she had? Jennifer suggested a possible answer, and brought her sister back to reality. “Do you mean special like in hot? Because he WAS really hot!”

“No, that’s not what I mean. I mean, was he kinda, I dunno...familiar?”

“Familiar?” Jennifer asked, puzzled. “I’m confused.”

Olivia dismissed it and shook her head. “Never mind.”

“Well, all I know or care about is the fact that he was super cute!” Jennifer swooned. “Oh! Would I like to go out with a guy like him!”

Olivia laughed. “You haven’t been on a date your whole life! You wouldn’t even know what to do!”

“Hey!” Jennifer rebounded. “I would too! I may not have been on a date before, but I’ve seen enough Romantic Comedies to know how it goes! All I have to do is act like Meg Ryan and I’ll do fine.” The two of them laughed as they turned the corner and crossed the street to the QuikTrip. There were only two cars in the parking lot, but that didn’t stop Jennifer from pointing out the ones she liked. “Ooo! Look at that red one there!” She pointed to a snazzy looking red sports car. “Awesome car!”

Olivia rolled her eyes. They entered the store and started to walk around the shelves. The QuikTrip held a majority of items from candy to coffee. They picked up several items like Snowballs and M&Ms, then checked the nutrition facts, and put them back.

Jennifer leaned down to her sister. “I don’t know why I even bother. I never get anything.”

“It’s the joy of looking.”

“It’s torture! What are you saying!?” Jennifer cried. She laughed again and walked to the fountain soda

machine. The brunette looked to the blonde. "Want a Suicide?"

"Sounds good." Olivia agreed. They each grabbed a cup and filled them with ice. Then they went down the line of sodas, putting an equal amount of each into them. There was quite a variety; Pepsi, Mug, Dr. Pepper, Mountain Dew, Sprite, Hawaiian Punch, they skipped the iced tea and moved lastly to the Lemonade. There was a little room left, so Olivia went back and topped the cup off with root beer. Jennifer preferred to finish with Dr. Pepper. Capping their bizarre beverages, they headed up to the counter to pay for them.

Approaching the register, they saw a tall young man with black hair, wearing a green blazer and khakis. He was the only other person in the store beside them and the old man behind the counter. Olivia guessed that the red sports car belonged to him. She and her sister walked up and waited in line behind him. He turned to look at them. His face and especially his blue eyes were strikingly familiar. Both of the girl's eyes widened. Olivia gasped. "It's HIM!"

True enough, Darien Chiba just happened to have stopped in for some coffee on his break from work. His eyes met the blonde first. He remembered her from the Rec Center, too. He recalled that she was cute and quiet and, for some reason, he thought she was very sweet. He smiled and waved. She weakly waved back. Then, however, he saw the older girl. He stopped. Her hair, her eyes, a wave of warm, tingling emotion washed over him. His heart beat fast. What was this? She was very pretty, but she was a little more. Something else. His heart directed his mind back to the beach. The princess. The feeling that could not exist in a dream. Could this be her? It was definitely the same feeling. He found himself staring, and tried to speak. "H-Hi.."

"Hi."

Her voice made all his insides tighten. It had to be her. The emotion was so strong. His dream seemed to be coming back to him stronger than ever as he looked at her. The way she fidgeted a little in the awkward situation, the way she would stand and comb her hair with her fingers, then look up at him and give him a little smile. It was all strangely familiar, strongly familiar, even though he'd never met her before. There was no mistaking it. He cleared his throat. "Um, hi. My name's Darien."

"I'm Jennifer." She said, nervously.

"Jennifer..." The name! The name was even familiar! "...Um, I get off work at five. Would you like to, go somewhere?"

"What?" She seemed stunned beyond reason. "Go somewhere with you?"

"I-if that's okay." Darien stuttered. He didn't want her to refuse. He had to talk to her and he only had a fifteen-minute break! "You don't have to if you don't want to I suppose, but I would really like to..."

"No, I'm not refusing!" Jennifer gathered her wits quickly, equally as afraid that he was going to back out. "I would love to go somewhere!" Olivia stared on, dumbstruck.

"Gr-Great!" He couldn't believe his good fortune. He checked his watch. "Whoa! I've got to go! Would you meet me here? At 5:30? Maybe?"

"I'll be here. I'll wait for you."

"Okay." Darien agreed. Quickly he grabbed his coffee and headed for the door. He walked backward, making sure not to lose sight of her, his car keys in hand. "I'm looking forward to it! I-I'll see you tonight."

"Alright! Bye." Jennifer called after him. She and Olivia watched as he got in his snazzy red sports car and drove off.

They both stood unblinking. "Wow!"

Jennifer started jumping up and down. "I got a date! I got a date! I got a date with HIM!!!"

Olivia started jumping too, grabbing hands with her sister, their soda sloshing. "I can't believe it! Oh my GOSH!!!"

The old man behind the counter grunted. "Are you goin' to buy something or not?"

They stopped mid jump. “Uh, yeah.”

\* \* \*

Chrysoberyl bowed before her mother’s throne, her long auburn hair falling around her face. “Thank you for seeing me, mother.” She wore her daughterly expression and used her toneless voice. Beryl had never seen her when she was animated. In this room, it was almost as if she were a robot, or some inanimate object. Chrysoberyl had rehearsed her audience expression so many times that she could snap in and out of it like a key in a lock.

Beryl smiled her wicked smile and answered her. “It is my pleasure, my daughter. What is it that you wanted to speak to me about?”

Chrysoberyl straightened, her dark emerald eyes hollow and empty. “I am concerned about General Malachite, mother.”

“Oh?” Beryl sneered with pleasure. “Did you forget that you were married? Chrysoberyl?”

The young woman’s face showed nothing, but in her superactive mind, a flame had just been ignited.

“You assume too much, mother.”

“Well why else would you be asking about that worthless officer?”

The flame was turning into a bonfire. Was she insulting the union she had with Kyanite? Her mother and her toiling, the witch was always trying to get on the wrong side of everyone. Death and destruction were nothing but amusement to her. Chrysoberyl began wishing that she could use her Sailor Powers on her mother right then, but suppressed it. The time would come. She would have the twilight crystal and Beryl would be no more. All this went on behind clouded, shallow eyes. She continued in her monotonous tone. “I had heard that he was unfit for finding the last crystal.”

“From who did you hear that?” Beryl asked, offhandedly.

“The other generals were saying so.” Chrysoberyl said. It wasn’t entirely a lie. One general had said it.

“I should reward them for their observances.” Beryl said. “I didn’t think that they thought that well.”

Chrysoberyl’s mind flashed. Was Beryl so high and mighty that she was the only one in the world. Even the weakest minded officer in her army deserved some respect. They respected her, and look what they got in return. Pure, unaltered superiority. Beryl continued. “Yes, that Malachite wasn’t fit for the job.”

Was Beryl speaking of him in the past tense? “He was too arrogant. Being the head of the army had gone to his head from the minute I gave him the position. But that wont last. This mission will teach him that he is no less of a worm than the others, and if he doesn’t learn that, then he dies. Learn this, my daughter,” Beryl prepared to lecture, “Death is a swift and sure punishment. If your inferiors don’t obey you, then you kill them. Either way, they are no longer a problem. Understand?”

“Yes, mother.” She understood alright! Become a mindless dictator! Beryl’s loftiness was sickening!

There were no morals in her at all! None! She could never change. “How long are you planning to keep him on Earth before you punish him?”

“I’ll wait until he gets back.” Beryl said with a yawn. “I want him to suffer well before he dies.”

“So you do not expect him to find the Rainbow Crystal?”

“No, of course not.” Beryl said. “He doesn’t know the first thing about finding crystals! And neither does that cat of your husband’s! I have half a mind to send a new partner for Malachite and bludgeon that one on the spot. He is horsing around on my time. I blame him more for the delay than I do Malachite. That cat is a sinister one. He’s backhanded and tricky. I wouldn’t be surprised if he doublecrossed us.”

Chrysoberyl remained silent.

“You are dismissed, daughter.” Beryl said. “And please, tell your hubby that his cat is treading on thin ice.”

“Yes mother.” Chrysoberyl bowed again and left the hall, silver-velvet gown creasing and changing color as she walked. Once out of the chamber her face melted into gross detest. Beryl could not target the Midnight Cat. He was valuable. Much more valuable than the general. Garth was the only one who could find the Crystal Factures. He was the only one who could sense emptiness. She would have to tell Quasar right away. Things were getting complicated.

\* \* \*

At 5:00 PM, Jennifer was frenziedly getting ready for her date with Darien Chiba. She chose her pale purple sleeveless button-up shirt and blue floral skirt to wear. She wore, also, her sandals and gold necklace with a small gold cross charm on it. She spent most of the time, however, deciding how to wear her hair. She tried pulling it back in a ponytail, but that was too casual. She tried to wear it half up in a spider-clip, but she didn't like that. She tried to pull it up in two pigtails, but it reminded her of Pippy Longstocking. Finally she decided that just her normal black headband was best. At long last, she was ready to go. She headed out onto the loft, where she met Olivia, who was heading up the steps. Jennifer stopped her sister and whispered to her. “Don't tell mom where I am, okay? She would never let me go out alone with an older guy if she knew.”

“Then why are you going?” Olivia asked. Once the idea of her sister alone in his car settled on her mind, the young blonde was thinking it unwise, herself.

“Because, he's so...” Jennifer tried hard to explain it. “You remember how you said that he was special?”

Olivia nodded.

“That's why.” She turned and called down the stairs to her mom. “Mom! I'm going out to meet some friends at the QuikTrip for dinner! I'll be gone for a while!”

“Okay!” Her mom called up. “Just be home before nine!”

Olivia looked worried. The dramatic irony was nearly making her sick. Jennifer, however, looked satisfied and headed down the stairs. Olivia called after her. “Are you sure!?”

“I'm positive!” Jennifer insisted. “Don't worry, I can protect myself!” She punched the air. “I'm a Tae Bo student!” Somehow, Olivia didn't find this reassuring. Jennifer waved over her shoulder and headed out the door. “Seeya! Wish me luck!”

Olivia waved, weakly as she heard the front door close. “Bye.” The blonde walked down the stairs and watched Jennifer march off through the front window. This wasn't right. Jennifer was alone, their parents didn't know where she was really going, what she was really doing, or who she'd really be with. Olivia made up her mind right then. She ran back upstairs and grabbed her transformation pen out from her bedside table. She was going to follow Jennifer and protect her, no matter what it came to. She jumped the last five steps and headed out the door. Still, it would be a shame to freeze that hot guy into a block of ice.

Olivia stayed a safe distance behind Jennifer all the way to QuikTrip. Sometimes having to leap behind houses or cars when her sister would turn around. One time she had to leap over a barrier and into a grove of trees to stay hidden. Jennifer had an ever-growing feeling that she was being followed. At 5:25, the two of them arrived at the QuikTrip. Unfortunately, Olivia couldn't cross the street without Jennifer seeing her, so she had to watch from a distance. Darien's red sports car pulled up right on time. He leaned out of the car and greeted Jennifer, but Olivia couldn't hear what he said. Without any hesitation, the brunette trotted around the front and hopped into the passenger seat. The two sped off. ‘Aw man!’ Olivia whined. ‘How can I watch them now?’ Then she remembered her pen. ‘Perhaps Sailor Polaris can keep tabs on them better than me. She can jump from buildings and stuff! I saw Sailor Moon do it on TV.’

\* \* \*

Night was falling, and Malachite and Garth were roaming the Tenth Street Memorial park. Both of them were unaware that Queen Beryl was plotting death for both of them, and they really didn't care.

Malachite was mumbling under his breath. "I must be the most unfortunate, dejected piece of scum in the world. I'm starving to death at the hands of a cat." He yawned. "And I'm going to pass out from sleep deprivation. Someone kill me now and not prolong my suffering."

"Stop whining! We are making good time." Garth said, his own stomach rumbling. "There is no food and no rest until we find these three fractures."

"And we don't have a single one." Malachite reminded him. "At least you let me drink. A person can't survive two days without water." He put his head in his hand. "I feel like I'm the pet instead of the other way around."

"Hush! We have work to do." Garth took up mumbling as soon as Malachite had stopped. "I don't know how humans ever got control of cats as pets. It's terribly insulting. An insult to all the Chatlans that ever lived." They continued walking until they came upon a path. A bench was situated under a light post that was glowing yellow as the sunset faded from the sky. The path was bordered on two sides by tall bushes that stood nearly seven feet in the air. It was a pleasant little place, and the two of them could hear voices. Garth directed them to hide behind one of the walls of bushes. "The scent of self doubt is strong."

On the bench, a man and a woman sat. Beyond them, behind the other wall, Sailor Polaris was hidden. Yes, it was true. Darien had taken Jennifer to the park to talk, and now they sat, not knowing that they were being watched from two directions at once. Darien spoke first. "So, Jennifer, tell me something.."

"Yes?"

He started to sweat a little, his blue eyes looking at the two of their shadows outlined in the yellow lamplight on the ground. "What do you dream about?"

"What do I dream?" Jennifer asked.

"Yeah!" Darien whirled around on her, then paused. "I mean, what is it that you see? Where do you go, when you are asleep?"

"Where do I go?" She was utterly confused, but Darien was staring so hopefully at her. What did he want from her? "I guess I don't go anywhere."

"You don't!?" His heart sank. Wasn't it her that he always met on the beach? But he was so sure!

"You don't see anyone? Anything?"

"I had a dream once that I was a princess in a palace." Jennifer answered.

Hope returned. "A princess?"

"Yeah." Jennifer nodded. "And everyone waited on me because I was royalty. Olivia was a princess too."

"She's your sister?" Darien asked. "The cute, sweet, blue-eyed one?"

"How do you know my sister?" Jennifer said, cocking her head.

"I-I don't know." Darien admitted, putting a hand behind his head. "I guess she reminds me of somebody." He shrugged. "It beats me as to who, but...ah, never mind."

Jennifer giggled.

"What?" Darien asked.

"That was so you."

Darien's eyebrows shot up and Jennifer giggled again. "How do you know me?" He asked.

"Um," she thought a second, "you...remind me of someone?"

There was a somewhat awkward silence. Behind Bush #1, Malachite whispered to Garth. "Who's the

target!? They both seem young and sappy and perfectly normal!”

“Neither of them are normal.” Garth said, twitching his whiskers. “Now shut up and wait.”

Back on the bench, the silence had lasted for nearly ten seconds when Jennifer suddenly stood up.

“I’m sorry! I’m horrible company!”

“No you’re not.” Darien assured, trying to ignore his strange emotions. “It’s my problem. I’m to blame.”

“No, no, it’s me.” Jennifer insisted. “I feel strange.” She put both hands in her hair and started to walk away. Darien got up to follow, but she called back. “Stay there. I’ll be right back. I-I just need to clear my head.”

Behind Bush #2, Sailor Polaris didn’t know what to do. She watched as Darien sat back down on the bench and Jennifer vanished behind the wall of bushes. Who should she follow? She had decided to look after Jennifer, but didn’t that require keeping an eye on Darien? She decided that keeping tabs on the suspect was more important and stayed where she was.

Her decision was perfect for Garth and Malachite, because it allowed the victim to walk straight into their trap. Behind Bush #1, Jennifer had just isolated herself away from all other people. She sat down in the shadow of the foliage, staring at the beam of yellow light that extended out the side like a path. She looked up at the stars that had peaked out of the blackening sky. “I don’t know how to do this. What is it that he wants?”

Garth turned to Malachite and hissed a hushed. “Stay!” Malachite crossed his arms and took up grumbling again, as Garth slinked down the bushes and to Jennifer. “Meow?”

“What?” Jennifer looked up and saw the cat coming toward her. Malachite was completely hidden in the darkness. “What are you doing here?”

“Meow.” Garth said, rubbing his head against her arm. She tried to scratch his ears, but had to do it much more softly than she did with Gabe.

“Well, as long as you’re here.” She started to stroke him and he purred and reacted like a normal cat would. Jennifer looked back at the sky. “So peaceful. Romantic, isn’t it?”

‘She’s going to spill everything to me without me ever having to do anything.’ Garth thought.

The girl sighed. “I’m no good at romance. I don’t know what to say, I don’t know how to act...Where’s Meg Ryan when you need her? Eh, kitty?”

“Meow.” Garth answered.

“Do you know how to talk to the opposite sex?” Jennifer asked. “I guess talk isn’t really the word for a cat, but, well, why am I even asking you. You couldn’t tell me anyway.”

“Yes I could.” Garth said softly.

“Wha!?!?” Jennifer cried, but it wasn’t a loud cry. Darien didn’t hear. “Did you speak?”

“Purrrr....” Garth answered. “You want to be good at the game of love?”

“Um, are you talking?” Jennifer asked. “Because if you are a talking cat, then I’d better go hit my head on something because that’s just crazy.”

“I talk.” Garth said, “and you are not crazy. I am going to make you what you wish that you were more than anything in the world. I’m going to make you whole.”

“Whole?” Jennifer asked. A whirl of information was buzzing through her head. “Talking cats, wishes, this is crazy! Either that or I’m in a fairy tale.”

“It can be if you want.” Garth said. “Just play along. What happens in fairy tales?”

“People do weird stuff and knights fight dragons and girls get captured and are rescued, and wishes get granted...” Jennifer thought aloud.

“And at the end?”

“They live happily ever after.”

Garth sneered. “That’s what you want right? To live a fairy tale? To fall in love and get married?”

“Yeah, but I’m not good at making people fall in love! The only people I’ve ever been in love with are on television and live on the West Coast somewhere and I’ll probably never see them out of character as long as I live! Well, Danny Smith lives in Canada, but still, that’s my point! I’m good at idol worship, not relationships.”

“Do you want it to be the other way around?” Garth asked.

“Well, yeah.” Jennifer agreed. “Of course.”

“Then I will help you.” Garth reached into his sub-space Z-storage pocket and took out his black velvet sack. “I sense that you are very incomplete. You reek of self-doubt and longing. I am certain that I have the right one.”

“What was that?” Jennifer asked. “You what?”

“You will see,” Garth said. He reached into his bag and retrieved a deep red and black pen. He dropped it on the ground in front of Jennifer. “This is going to solve all your problems.”

Jennifer looked down at the wand. It was made of metal, with a deep red body and a black cap. The cap had a headpiece on it that was shaped like an oval with an ‘x’ in it. The arms of the ‘x’ were sticking out the sides. On the front was the symbol of a heart with a double ‘x’ running through it. Jennifer paused, then reached for it.

~Don’t!~

‘What!?’ She thought she’d heard something. But the cat before her didn’t seem to have, so she reached for the pen again.

~Don’t touch it!~

‘What is that!?’ She was sure that she’d heard something that time. But it seemed to be coming from inside her own head. She shook it out and grabbed the pen. As soon as she did, the heart symbol glowed white, and smoke seeped from it. The smoke encircled her head and found its way inside through every opening. Her mind was silenced and she yelled. “DARK CYGNI!”

Behind the second bush, Polaris’s ears shot up. Did she just hear her sister’s voice!? Did it just cry ‘Dark Cygni’? Her mind flashed back to the day before. She was in Summer Season’s house when the girl became Sailor Delphinus. What was it she had cried. ‘Dark Delphinus’? Realization struck her like a bolt of lightning. “Jennifer!”

A deep red and black dome grew around Jennifer as the magic she’d summoned with her words took shape. A bolt of bright red lightning flashed across the dome. The walls rippled, and from them shot dozens of red, tentacle-like extensions. They reached out and grabbed a hold of her legs and arms and neck. Every place they touched her, there was a small explosion. On her neck there was a flash of green. When one grabbed her shoulder, there was a flicker of blue and white. And when several tightened around her legs there was more green. But each flash was gone as quickly as it came, and the tentacles wrapped tighter and tighter around her, binding her into a solid column of red and black. Neon red lighting struck again, and ripped the tentacles off the walls of the dome like hot fire on wax. The parts left attached to the girl flailed about as if they were in pain. Lightning struck again, this time entering her body through her eyes, causing them to be lit from within. There was an otherworldly scream that echoed throughout the dome as the electricity ripped down her limbs and blew the pieces of the bindings away. She was left dressed in a dark red uniform with a black bow on her chest and a black bow on her back. She had red and black snakeskin boots that zipped up the front, and she wore a golden tiara with a black jewel in the middle. With the scream still bouncing off the walls, the soldier started into her monologue. “I am Sailor Cygni! I stand for love and all that goes under that name. The Soldier of Love! The Princess of Darkness! The Conqueror! I am Cygni! I AM WHOLE!” Another bolt of lightning shattered the dome and Cygni’s power was released.

Garth's tail twitched as he sneered. "Well? Better?"

"The best, kitty." She said. She held up her hand and a red rose appeared in it. She rolled it over her cheek and across her lips. Then headed out to where Darien was still sitting. "Catch ya later, cat." Sailor Polaris had bolted out from behind the bushes, when Sailor Cygni entered. They both stared, shocked beyond belief as she leaned against the bushes, the rose to her lips. She winked at Darien. "Hi, handsome."

His jaw dropped.

She walked, hips swaying, head turned, the rose to her lips. She stared at Darien with one hazel green eye. "So what is a hunk like you doing in a place like this, all alone, in the dark?"

"J-Jennifer!?" Darien stammered. "What? Who did this to you?"

"You did, hottie." She answered, sidling up very close to him and stringing her arms around his neck. "I wanted to be a good date, and so I went to the extreme. I think it was worth it, don't you? The costume is a little much, but we can cope." She tickled his face with the petals of the rose, and, seeing it, made his eyes widen even more. "All that matters is that now we can get down to business without any of my hesitations."

"Jenn – you didn't need to do this." Darien said, frantically. "Don't you know what's going to happen to you?"

Polaris stepped closer. The question of how Darien knew what was going to happen to her crossed her mind briefly, but it didn't stay long. When Darien saw the young soldier come up behind him, he looked both surprised and relieved that she was there.

Cygni didn't pay her any mind. "I don't matter, Darien, baby. Is US that matters! That we are together, and that we can be in love." She touched his face with her hand.

~Get back!~

That voice Jennifer'd heard before ripped through Cygni's mind. The dark soldier threw her hands to her ears, panting. Her mind was racing. Her eyes flashed once, a bright light green, but then they were back to normal, and the voice was gone. She turned back to Darien. "Where were we? Oh, yes." She rubbed a hand over his chest, under the green blazer. She ran the other one through his hair.

~Stoppit!~

She yanked her hands back from him again, her rose held shakily in front of her, her eyes flashed blue. She shook her head, the headband falling slightly forward. "No! No stop!"

Darien had finally gotten his wits about him. "Jennifer! Stop this! Look what you've turned yourself into!"

Cygni wasn't paying attention, she put her hands over her ears, and spoke with a voice that was slightly lower than usual. "Leave me alone! She's mine!"

~Out Dark Presence!~

"Stop! I have her!" Cygni cried. "I have her!"

"Jennifer!" Sailor Polaris called, her blue-hazel eyes twitching in the yellow lamplight. Darien shot a surprised gaze over to her. "Jennifer! Get a hold of yourself!"

~Begone!~

"NO!" Cygni's eyes glazed over with a black veil of smoke. "You can't fight me! I have a stronger power than you! I have two Guardian Deities! Pulsar and Quasar! My King and Queen! May your powers make me stronger!" Lightning flashed anew from the storm clouds in her eyes. The forked ends of the bolt shot again down her veins. Her eyes still clouded, she let the flower go. It floated in front of her face and she seemed to stare right through it. "Sailor Cygni is not that easily overpowered!" As she spoke, neon red lightning bolts shot from her smoky eyes and hit the rose. From the rose they condensed into a solid beam and hit Darien straight in the chest.



Naturally off-guard, Darien had no chance to react until he was laid out on the ground, and then all he could do was blink for a moment. Sailor Polaris stared down at him on the ground, eyes wide. She then turned to her sister, mind set. "You're not Jennifer anymore! She's lost in there! And I have a feeling that she's trying to fight you." Polaris raised her hands above her head. "North Star Power, NOW!" A ball of whirling icy-blue liquid formed above her palms. She held it up in the air, and turned to Cygni, her blonde hair flowing around her. Once her target was set, Polaris let the ball fly. When the wind hit it, it turned into a spiraling blue icicle. The icicle headed straight for the dark soldier and the rose that was in front of her. Once it reached, however, the icicle exploded into light blue, sparkling powder.

Sailor Cygni sneered. "Your sister isn't hiding in here! I am her! It's just that I'm improved. I was broken, but now I'm whole! My mind is whole! Don't you see? I'm still your sister."

Darien looked up. 'Sister?' He looked at Polaris. Golden Blonde hair. Blue-hazel eyes. Could that be Olivia? "Polaris?" Sailor Polaris looked down at him, her face etched in fear. She seemed to suspect that he had figured out her secret, and the look she'd given him further proved it. Darien shoved himself up on his elbows. "Olivia?"

"Uh..." Polaris grinned nervously. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"This is so entertaining." Sailor Cygni said, cynically. She shot another beam out of the rose toward Sailor Polaris. The blonde ducked just in time and the bolt sliced through the bushes behind her. Darien looked furious. Cygni snapped her fingers. "Dang, missed." Then, throwing her snapping hand out in front of her, she shot another lightning bolt at her. This time, Polaris didn't get out of the way in time and it hit her in the heart. On impact, the bolt broke into streams of bright red electricity that raced across Olivia's chest and down her legs and arms. They also raced up her face and into her mouth and eyes. Her face scrunched up and she let out a painful gasp before falling and skidding along the concrete. Forehead already creased in anger, his blue eyes sparking dangerously, Darien snapped. He shoved himself back up, despite a strong throbbing in his chest. "That's enough!"

"Really? Loverboy?" Cygni asked. "Well, too bad. I did this for you and you are turning against me. Are you dumping me for my sister?"

"Shut up! You don't know what you're saying!" Darien cried. He started toward the Dark Solider, who shot another laser at him. He dodged, his reflexes incredibly fast. "That isn't you. You wouldn't do something like this to people you love!"

"How do you know me?" Cygni said, sarcasm mixing with cynicism and a bit of a chuckle. She shot another lightning bolt at him.

It got him again in his aching chest. He clenched his teeth. "I just DO!" Something was burning inside him, and it wasn't the volts from the attack. It was a desire to free Jennifer from this possession. He had to protect her. He had to protect Olivia. He had to protect the two of them at all costs. It was more important than his own life. He didn't know or care why he felt like this about a pair of girls he had just met; the feeling was strong enough that it conquered all other reason. He fought his way through the electricity, his heart racing, tears forming in the corners of his eyes. He got closer and closer until he was within arm reach of the floating rose.

Sailor Cygni looked increasingly anxious as she watched him come. He didn't know why but he was compelled to grab the rose. He reached out his hand, the streams of neon red light racing between his fingers through his arm. His fingers touched petal, and a flash of white light illuminated the whole clearing and blew out the yellow street lamp. The electric flow from the rose ended. Cygni threw her hands back to her ears. Darien grabbed the flower in a tight grip and his skin immediately became black. The blackness was a living magic that covered his whole body. It consumed his skin, covered his clothes and face, and even turned his hair the same. Sailor Polaris looked up and saw a white diamond-shaped mask grow across his face. The magic exploded out of his shoulders and turned into a long cape. His green blazer and khakis became a black and white tuxedo. A top hat appeared, and his skin turned back

to its natural color. All of the magic vanished and he was left holding the red rose in his clenched fist. Sailor Polaris's heart trembled and her eyes stared widely. Darien was Tuxedo Mask! Once the transformation was complete, Cygni's power over the rose was broken, and it no longer floated in the air, but laid in his gloved hand. Sailor Cygni cringed and covered her ears. Tuxedo Mask, winded from the approach, fell to the ground in front of her. Polaris tried to shove herself up, but she was weakened, and snagged in the branches of the bushes. Cygni's eyes were shut very tight, her shoulders bent, and her hands over her ears. "SHUTTUP! LEAVE ME ALONE!"

~Vanish! You are ruining her!~

Cygni proceeded to have a painful argument with herself. "Go! She's mine! I got her first!"

~Wrong! She was mine long before you ever had her! She's always been mine!~

"Stop trying to trick me!"

~Who are you to trick!? You are nothing but a shadow! You are the smoke that came from a tampered wand!~

"I am Sailor Cygni!"

~There is no Sailor Cygni!~

"I am SAILOR CYGNI!!!"

Tuxedo Mask and Sailor Polaris stared through the dark, scared and confused as Cygni yelled passionately at herself. Tuxedo Mask could see her face the best. She looked like she was in real pain, and fighting hard to keep her mind suppressed. Polaris stared as the fight continued.

~Leave my body, darkness!~

"She's not your body, she's mine!"

~I am her! Jennifer is me!~

"You are not Jennifer!"

~I am! I have been! I have been since the Silver Millennium!~

"Don't talk to me about the Millennium! The Millennium is no more!"

~You didn't even see the Millennium! You aren't real!~

"Stop saying that! I'm real!"

~You are nothing but the reserves of two Sailor Soldiers! Do you think that I don't know what's inside my own body?~

"It's not your body!"

~What do you think is going to happen when Sailors Pulsar and Quasar's powers run dry? What will happen to you?~

"STOP!"

~You don't know? Or do you just not want to admit it?~

The dark red of Cygni's skirt and collar became traced in glowing bright blue. Her boots, elbows, bows, and choker were laced in bright green.

~Give in! You have no ground to stand on!~

"What!?"

~That's it, give up!~

"I'll never give up! I'm a Sailor Soldier!"

~You are not!~

"Am too!"

~ARE NOT!~

The glow got brighter and brighter, the red was nearly drowned out. The two onlookers had to squint to see. On her forehead, something blue-green was trying to break through the black tiara.

"Stop trying to fight me!" Cygni cried, but she sounded like she was weakening. "I'm—I'm stronger! I'm—"

~Failing!~

“No! I will – conquer!”

~Try! I’m winning!~

“I’ll –“

~Surrender! I’ve overpowered you!~

“I’m – “

~Light emerges and destroys the darkness! Thus it has always been! Light conquers! Darkness scatters! Now SCATTER!~

“N-nooooo!”

~EARTH POWER!~

“AAAAHHHHHHHHH!” Cygni threw her head back and let out a terrible scream as the tiara on her forehead shattered to reveal a brightly glowing blue-green symbol of a footprint. As soon as the symbol was uncovered, her uniform shredded. It stripped into pieces that blew violently in an invisible wind that was rustling her hair. Her black bows untied. Her collar broke into ribbons and flew madly. Her boots were blown to shreds. Even the bands at her elbows came loose and began to whip around in the force. Underneath the flailing pieces, a new layer was visible, glowing very brightly. The scream ended. Black smoke leaking out of her mouth ears and eyes, the girl shouted. “EARTH POWER!”

At the words, the frayed remains of the uniform were blown clear, revealing what lay beneath. A navy-blue skirt and collar, two light green bows, light green, flat-soled boots with white lines along the tops, light green bands at her elbows, a light green choker with a white pearly gem on the front, and a golden tiara with a light green jewel. Her eyes were closed, her face relaxed as the wind died down. She stood, smiling serenely for a minute as the glow vanished from her outfit. The lamp flickered back on as Tuxedo Mask and Sailor Polaris shoved themselves up and stepped forward. They stood in front of her, not knowing what to expect. Just then, the Soldier opened her eyes, which were once again green hazel colored.

“Jennifer?” Tuxedo Mask asked, confused and hopeful.

She grinned and cocked her head to one side, her brown hair falling onto one shoulder. “Hi, Darien.”

“But...” His eyes gaped behind his white mask. “I don’t understand.”

“I believe you have something of mine.” She said.

Tuxedo Mask looked even more confused until he realized that he still held the rose in his fist. When he brought it up, however, he found that it had turned into a blue-green and gold transformation wand with a footprint on the headpiece. Jennifer took it and looked up into his eyes.

“I’m Sailor Earth.” She explained. He and Polaris gasped. Sailor Earth looked to her sister and said. “I didn’t know that you were Sailor Polaris, Olivia. You did a good job at hiding your secret from me. But it’s okay, I know now.”

Polaris gave a small laugh. Of course she knew. Then, she forced herself to become serious again.

“But, what was all of the yelling?”

“Once Sailor Cygni took hold of my body, I remembered that I was Sailor Earth.” The brunette explained. “And the part of me that was Earth was hidden, sleeping in the back of my mind, so I retreated there whenever the Dark energy took over my mind. Once established, I began to fight Sailor Cygni and try and get the evil power out of my head. Something told me that I would die if I didn’t. That’s pretty much all of the incentive you need to fight. And something got me really going whenever Cygni was touching you, Darien. I would scream and try and distract her. Most of the time it worked. And whenever you tried to save me, and you said that you knew me, I got an emotional edge to my battle. That edge finally let me conquer Cygni before she could take over my body for good.” She reached out and took a hand from each of them. “We three are connected somehow. I am not sure. While some of my memory returned, there are still things that are hidden. For example, something told me that I should

mention the Silver Millennium even when I hadn't the faintest idea what it is. I think that there are a lot of memories that we haven't discovered yet."

"We'll just have to keep looking." Sailor Polaris finished with a nod. "We'll find out someday." She looked up at Tuxedo Mask. "And now that we know who you are, you can join the other Sailor Soldiers and we can fight the Negaverse together!"

"Um," Tuxedo Mask looked unsure. "I really would appreciate it if you two wouldn't tell them who I am."

Both girls spoke at the same time. "What? Why?"

"Because. They don't trust me, and we have different goals to achieve."

"No we don't." Polaris insisted. "We both want to destroy the Negaverse! Didn't you agree that if two people had the same enemy then they were allies?"

"I did," Tuxedo Mask looked like it hurt him to tell her what he was going to say next, "but I've...changed my mind." He flinched, a pained look had sprung to the young soldier's eyes, and that was the exact image he was trying to avoid. "I had a dream last night. It convinced me that I have to do this on my own. I have something I have to prove to find for myself."

"But!"

"Polaris!" Earth shot at her. "It's okay. If Darien doesn't want us to tell the others what we know, then let's not."

"Oh I guess." Polaris sulked. "I guess, I would be best not to have Sailor Moon know who he really was anyway" She made sure not to mention any names, knowing that if Serena knew that the love of her life was really the pain-in-the-neck of her everyday existence, she would probably faint dead away. And of course Darien didn't know who Sailor Moon was.

Sailor Earth looked confused. "What?"

Polaris winked at her. "I'll tell you later."

"Well, okay, I guess I'd better get going." Tuxedo Mask said, letting go of hands and backing out of the clearing. "I hope to see us all together again very soon."

"You will, Tuxedo Mask." Sailor Polaris grinned. "Don't worry, you will! Now that we know that we are connected somehow!"

Sailor Earth and Sailor Polaris both waved. He waved back and vanished from sight. Polaris smiled back at her sister. "This is great! Now I don't have to be mean to you anymore!"

"What?"

"Never mind." She grinned.

~To Be Continued~

Authors Note: Just for the record. Rose Angel, who I tend to work very closely with, originally created the concept of this fic. She was the one who invented Sailor Earth, and was going to write her creation fic herself under the title Earth Arising. I, however, thought that Jennifer's awakening worked perfectly in my series and so we have it! I just wanted to give RA credit for the creation of this soldier. She provided the original design for the outfit, symbol, color, name, and hair, so she deserves credit. She did, however, agree to let me adopt Sailor Earth, and I have papers to prove it! So be warned that she's mine now, and that anything can and will happen!

## 7 - Episode 6: Tooth and Claw

Sailor Moon P

Episode 6: Tooth and Claw

"I can't believe it!" Malachite thundered as he paced about the covered Mall parking garage where he and Garth the Midnight cat were hiding out. "You are such an idiot, cat! Not only did you not find the crystal fracture, but your target also just HAPPENED to be a sleeping soldier! And through your stupidity, you used our power to awaken her!" Garth rolled his glowing, yellow pupil-less eyes as Malachite continued to rant. "Now, thanks to you, we have SEVEN Sailor Soldiers to deal with instead of six! And there's still that ever-annoying Tuxedo Mask hanging around! And to add to it all, you're a cat, so that would mean that I'm the one who's going to get blamed for it all!"

"Stop your bellyaching." Garth said, sounding tired. "We don't have time to worry about all of this. We are coming up on five days of this mission, and we can barely afford to stand around as it is."

"You always say that!" Malachite cried, no less aggravated. "It's always 'we don't have time' 'we have to keep going' 'crystal fractures, crystal fractures, crystal fractures!' Maybe I'd care about your little mission if I didn't know that you were USING me, cat!" He plopped down against a support beam and put his face in his hand. "Oh, I'm the biggest fool in the whole Negaverse! Beryl is going to roast me and eat me for dinner when she hears that I've been wasting my time following a cat and looking for the pieces of a broken crystal that she doesn't know exists." Garth rolled his eyes again as Malachite continued to pity himself. "And, on top of that, I'll have to tell her that she was wrong and that there is no rainbow crystal. Instead, the whole eighth crystal thing was a cover up schemed by a talking cat who wants to overturn the monarchy! And I'll top it off by accusing her own daughter for plotting against her! That is, if she doesn't already kill me before I get to that point!" He let out a sigh, and most of his aggression with it. He looked at the dirty floor of the garage. "Zoicite, I'm sorry you have such an incompetent tool for a lover. The last time you'll see me, I'll be a pile of ashes on the marble floor of the Great Hall."

"Who's this Zoicite you are talking to?" Garth asked, trying to change the subject. His ears were hurting from all of Malachite's shouting.

"Why do you care?" Malachite snapped, annoyed still.

"Is she your imaginary friend?" Garth asked, cynically. "You speak to her as if there was someone there, but there's not."

"Don't talk to me." Malachite shoved himself up and walked to the side of the garage. They were several stories up, and when he leaned out the side, he could see the people and cars coming and going on the street in front of the mall. 'Hm, maybe I should jump and get it over with. It would save me the disgrace.' But Garth appeared on the banister beside him. Maybe it came from hanging out with Kyanite, but Garth could tell that he'd touched a nerve in Malachite. He had no intention of apologizing, but he did want to get on better terms, at least somewhat.

The navy cat stared down at the unsuspecting people below. "Pathetic life-forms, aren't they?"

"What?" Malachite glanced over, still feeling perturbed. He caught a glimpse of the knowing, hatred on the cat's face.

"The little human scum who walk the streets of Earth. They are unaware that they are not alone in this universe. They don't know that there are other, equally as pathetic humans walking the streets of other planets in other universes." He slitted his eyes, his ears eternally back along his neck. "They don't

know that there are even other races. Other life forms on other planets. Planets like Chatla.” His eyes closed. “Poor, deceased Chatla.”

“Chatla? I have never heard of a planet by that name.”

“Of course you haven’t.” Garth said. “You are a human, too. There are too many of you. Chatla, however, was a small place completely populated by talking cats. I was young when it happened. The Sailor Soldiers from all over the universe were warring. Chatla was just a casualty. They didn’t even acknowledge that they had destroyed it until it was too late. I was with my father off-planet. I only heard who destroyed my home when my father would begin to swear against humans for doing it. The replays would play over and over on the screen as my father screamed and hissed. He taught me what humans were really like. The only humans I’d ever known had been the Sailor Soldiers. They betrayed us. They and their human hearts.” Garth jumped back into the garage. “Such is the curse of humans.”

“Don’t you think its unfair that you judge the whole human race fore something a handful of teenage girls did to your planet?” Malachite asked, looking back.

“What I think is unfair is that fact that humans keep cats as pets.” Garth grumbled. “It’s all about humans and their lust for power.” The Midnight Cat headed out of the garage, driven back into distaste. Malachite turned to find him on his way down to the ground level. “It’s always about you, isn’t it!?”

\* \* \*

Olivia was in her room at 8:00 on Sunday morning. Unlike Saturday, she couldn’t sleep in on Sundays because her family went to church. She was up early choosing what she wanted to wear. ‘Hmm..’ she thought as she thumbed through her closet. Being October, this was only the third week that Olivia was forced to choose from her fall wardrobe. She’d forgotten how lousy it was. ‘What should I do?’ As she looked, she came upon the only outfit she really liked. It was a long skirt with a crème colored shirt and brown, woven vest. It was because it was the only one she liked, she’d worn it for the past three weeks. On spur of the moment, she decided to wear it again. After getting dressed, Olivia grabbed a brush and ran downstairs to shove in some breakfast. Jennifer, her older sister, was already there.

Jennifer was wearing a khaki skirt and a red-velvet top. She had her hair pulled back in a spider clip and sat drinking instant breakfast one spoonful at a time. Olivia sat down and began to brush though her long golden hair. Jennifer turned her green-hazel eyes to watch her. “Don’t brush your hair at the table, that’s disgusting.”

“No it’s not.” Olivia said, moving to her very bushy bangs, which she was trying to grow out.

“It is too!” Jennifer cried, taking a break from her chocolate milk. “You’re sitting in my seat! What if you were me and you were eating and found a three-foot long hair in your food!?”

“Okay, okay, I’ll move.” Olivia said, getting up and moving to the pantry.

“Not in the kitchen either!!!” Jennifer exclaimed. “That’s even worse! Go do it in the bathroom or something.”

“Alright already!” Olivia surrendered. “I’ll be right back.”

Olivia left and Jennifer smiled. She was glad she wasn’t Olivia, because her little sister was always getting hair everywhere. That was, in part, to the fact that she had so much of it, but also because she was the only blonde in the family. Jennifer’s hair was brown and shoulder-length, their mother had her brown hair cut short, and their father’s hair was nearly black. She turned back to her breakfast and continued to take it in spoonful by spoonful. He mother came into the room, dressed much more formally than her. She was trying to get everything in order before they left. “Jennifer, hurry up, we’ve got to go pick up Jessi in five minutes.”

“I’m hurrying!” Jennifer said, taking out another spoonful. “These things take time.” Her mother looked critically at her as she clopped past on her high-heels. Olivia reappeared, and went back to the pantry.

Jennifer looked up, briefly "You'd better hurry, Olivia, Mom was just in here bugging me."

"Okay," Olivia yanked out a box of cereal. "Did she remember that I invited Jessi to church?"

"Yeah, she did."

"Good." Olivia said, pouring the cereal. "I mean, Mom'd be really mad if we were late and still had to go pick her up."

Time passed. Jennifer headed upstairs, Olivia wolfed down her cereal, and soon the whole family was in the car. The van headed down the street and up another, stopping in front of Jessi McClorn's house.

Olivia hopped out of the minivan and trotted up to the front door. There, she rang the bell and waited.

There was commotion inside. She heard Jessi's voice. "That's them, bye Mom!"

"Are you sure you'll be okay?" Her mother called in her worried tone.

"Yes, Mom! You've met Olivia before!"

"Could you get them to give me their phone number?"

"We're going to their church! They won't be at home!"

"Then make sure you give them our number."

"I will, Mom! Just let me leave already!"

"Wait! Let me write down some emergency numbers, too."

"Mom! No! It's gonna be fine!"

"Wait! Do you have your name in the back of that shirt!"

The door opened to reveal a rushed-looking Jessi. "I'm leaving now, Mom!"

"But if you'll just give me a second --!"

"Bye!" Jessi shut the door and turned to Olivia. "Run! Hurry!" The two of them made tracks to the van

and by the time the front door opened again for Jessi's mother, the redhead was waving from the car

window. "Bye Mom! See you this afternoon!" The van took off and the five of them were on their way to

First Side Presbyterian Church.

\* \* \*

"So she does have it in for him!" Quasar, the prince of the Negaverse cried as he paced the chamber of he and his wife.

"Kyanite, it's not that big of a deal." Pulsar his wife and the daughter of the Queen Beryl, insisted. "What does it matter about one general?"

"It's more than just that." He said, maintaining his pacing.

"Oh, are you thinking of that other General, Zoicite?" Pulsar asked, sounding irritated.

"No, it's not her either." Quasar said. "This Malachite is very important to our plan. Without a general with Garth, Beryl would get suspicious. She knows he's with me, you know."

"Yes, you have a point." Pulsar agreed. "We can't let Beryl get too interested in what we are doing for fear that she will uncover our plot against her."

"If she shows any more signs of aggression toward him, we'll have to send down protection." Quasar announced. "The question is, what kind of protection."

"Neither of us can go." Pulsar said, obviously. "Beryl would see us for sure. If we don't want her to suspect, then we might as well let the general die. It would be safer."

"We could call in another cat." Quasar suggested.

Pulsar shook her head. "No, I forbid it. I didn't even want Garth to go except that both of you insisted on it."

"Okay, so the cat idea is out." Quasar said. "What about another general?"

"Are you suggesting General Zoicite?" Pulsar asked. "Wasn't she the one who was heartsick for him?"

"Yes, that was Zoicite, but she doesn't know our plan." Quasar objected. "And I hate using her when she

could possibly end up dead."

"You didn't think much of using our current General Malachite." Pulsar reminded him, amused by the emergence of his softer side.

"Well, that guy was arrogant." Quasar said. "Plus, you know me. I'm a sucker for hard-luck cases."

"Don't say that too loud." Pulsar warned, trying to hide her smile. "We have a reputation to keep."

"Don't worry, no one's listening." Quasar assured. "No one will bother us as long as we are in our own quarters." He stopped his pacing and walked over to his wife, a mischievous smile on his face. "That means they can't see us do this..." He put his arms around her and gave her a kiss, then proceeded to nibble the side of her neck.

She laughed. "Ky, stop it! We-we have important things to discuss - " She then surrendered to his flirting and put her arms across his shoulders. The two of them looked at each other and exchanged smiles before getting back to business. Pulsar's face was still rosy from blushing. "So, you will talk to the general?"

"Yes, dear." He said, chuckling a little. "I guess I'll have to talk to her one way or another, I promised to tell her if her loverboy was in danger."

"That's so typical of you."

\* \* \*

After about twenty minutes of driving, the van pulled onto the parking lot of First Side. Once parked, everyone piled out and into the building. Mr. and Mrs. Miles headed to their adult Sunday school class down the hall. Olivia and Jessi headed up to the 5th grade classroom that was on the second floor and Jennifer headed downstairs to the Junior High class that met in the basement. When she got there, her good friend, Kathleen Tait, was waiting for her, reading a book. "Hi, Kathleen."

The dark-skinned girl looked up and waved.

"So, what's up?" The brunette asked, taking a seat next to her.

"Not much." Kathleen said, quietly. She was a very reserved and quiet girl with tan skin and dark eyes. Her hair was coarse and she had it pulled back in a bun. "I'm reading."

"What book?" Jennifer asked.

"Anita Blake." She answered. "It's fascinating."

"I'm glad." Jennifer said halfheartedly, trying to start conversation. "So what happened this week?"

Kathleen put down the book. "Do I look that bad?"

Jennifer wasn't expecting that sort of response. "No, no, of course not. Why would you look bad?"

"I guess I've let it slip now." Kathleen sighed, putting her novel away for good. "I've been kind of depressed lately."

"Why!? What for?" Jennifer asked, concerned.

"Well," Kathleen was apparently a little ashamed. "I don't feel like I'm very tough."

"What? Why are you worried about that?" Jennifer seemed confused and much less than impressed. She'd been thinking that it was going to be something more serious.

"Well," Kathleen continued, "the guys at school are always teasing me and I can never fight back, except with words and stuff. It's just gotten me really discouraged, because I know that if I ever was going to get into a physical confrontation with someone, and not necessarily with them, that I would have no way to defend myself."

"Now I can see how that can be a problem." Jennifer nodded. "But there is one thing for sure, with you being a big track star, you'd be the best person I know at escaping."

"I'm no star." Kathleen said, meekly. "And running isn't enough. I want to be tough. Like one of those anime characters who can fight and fight and fight. I want to sword fight like Kenshin or be an expert in



martial arts or have a huge Gundam mobile suit that I can climb into."

"Well, while we're going in the direction of anime," Jennifer said, "in the words of Justy Ueki Tylor, 'you always win by running away'."

Kathleen did like the Tylor reference, but it didn't convince her. "Still, one can dream right?"

\* \* \*

In the fifth grade classroom, Olivia was introducing Jessi to her teachers. She ran around the classroom, dragging her red-haired friend by the wrist. She approached a husband and wife team, who were collaborating on the music selection for the day. Olivia stood by a second until they noticed her. When they looked up, she proceeded with the formal introductions. "Hi! This is my friend Jessi from school. Jessi, this is Mr. and Mrs. Weaver."

"Hi," Jessi waved.

"Hello," The teachers greeted. After a bit of light conversation, Olivia excused them and they were off again. They stopped by a middle-aged man who was trying to settle a rowdy bunch of fifth-grade boys.

"Hi!" Olivia chirped. "This is Jessi. Jessi, this is Dr. Winters."

"Hi." Jessi said again.

Dr. Winters gave Jessi a greeting and went back to his task of disciplination.

"He's busy, don't mind him." Olivia said, dashing Jessi off. But just as they took a seat, Mr. and Mrs. Weaver announced that they were ready for music. They both got out their guitars, Dr. Winters got all the boys to come in and sit down, Mrs. Weaver clicked on the overhead projector, and the group of fifth graders broke into song.

Downstairs, the Junior High class was also singing. They finished up the last song, said a prayer and broke into small groups. Jennifer and Kathleen were lucky enough to be in the same group along with two boys named Tad and Ben, and a girl named Tarease. Their leader's name was Laury; she was tall and thin with large eyes and dark hair. She looked to be in her late twenties to thirties. She sat down and looked at the five drowsy middle-schoolers that were sitting around her. "You guys look like you could use some caffeine." She observed.

Tarease perked up. "Laury! There's a Starbucks down the street, could we have our lesson over there?"

Laury grinned. "I don't see why not." Everyone looked excited. Laury stood. "Come on, group, let's go." Everyone popped, up and headed out of the building. The coffee shop was a couple of blocks from the church, so everyone walked the sidewalk by the street until the Starbucks was in sight. Once inside, they all waited in line.

"I could really go for a café mocha." Tarease announced as Ben ordered.

"Ick." Jennifer crinkled up her nose. "Coffee's gross, even with mocha."

"Well, you're no fun." Tarease said. "Have you ever had a Starbucks Café Mocha?"

"Well, no." Jennifer admitted, "but I've had the cheap stuff before and it was gross. Besides, I think that it's safe to stick with what I know I like."

"And what is that?" Kathleen asked, rummaging through her handbag to find some money.

"Hot chocolate." Jennifer answered.

"Me, too." Kathleen agreed. "You know, they put a ton of whipped cream in it."

"Really?"

The two of them ordered and stood by waiting for their drinks to be assembled. Kathleen opened conversation. "So, did you see Endless Waltz the other day?"

"No, I didn't." Jennifer admitted. "Was it on Cartoon Network?"

"Yeah," Kathleen answered. "It was great. I've already ordered the DVD so that I can see it in Japanese, too."

"Sounds good to me." Her friend shrugged. "Then I'll come over and see it. I really have to start

watching Gundam Wing sometime.” Presently, their orders arrived and they moved to sit down with their fellows and listen to Laury’s lesson.

\* \* \*

Garth sniffed the air as he made his way down a neighborhood street. He could see the First Side Presbyterian parking lot from behind his building. The smell of self-doubt drifted on the air, he stopped to take a good whiff and look up to the building connected to the lot. He stood poised and waited for Malachite. The silver-haired General came up behind him at a shuffle, his hands in his pockets. He saw the cat there, his whiskers fanned. “What is it?”

Garth closed his eyes. The scent of loathing was trailing off, like a path leading him to the crystal fracture. The carrier had left not long ago. “The target was here.”

“What do you mean ‘was’?” Malachite asked, sounding suspicious.

“She’s on the move.” Garth announced. He could nearly see the trail leading up out of the parking lot and down the street; it was being blown apart by the wind. In moments, it would be gone and they would lose the way. The navy cat took off. “She’s moving north. Keep up.” The two of them ran out across the asphalt, along the invisible trail. Malachite’s long white hair and cape trailed out behind him and caught the eye of a blonde 5th grade girl on the second floor of the church. Olivia was sitting by the window, and recognized them instantly. She sprung to her feet. The Sunday School instructors stopped what they were doing and looked at her.

“Olivia? What’s wrong?”

“Ma-“ She took a start and just caught herself from exclaiming ‘Malachite just ran through the parking lot!’. She said, instead, with a bit of a stutter. “Ma-May I go to the bathroom?”

“It must be pretty urgent.” Mr. Winters cried. “Go ahead.”

“Thanks!” Olivia grinned quickly. She turned to Jessi as she edged her way out of the forest of chairs and students. “I’ll be back.” Once she got out the door of her classroom, Olivia took off sprinting down the hall. A thought flashed across her mind. ‘Maybe I should grab Jennifer, she’s a Sailor Soldier too.’ Deciding that that was best, she took a sharp turn on the staircase and headed down to the lower level. Once in the hall, she dashed to the Junior High School room to find it looking emptier than usual. The absence of the eighth grade was obviously to blame. She shot her eyes to where the seventh graders were communing in their small group and demanded. “Where’d the Eighth Grade go!?”

“I dunno,” the leader said, looking startled at the snappiness of her query, “where did they go?”

“To Starbucks.” One of the kids answered. “Why don’t we ever get to go to Starbucks?”

That was all Olivia needed to know, she quickly pieced together the clues. ‘Starbucks!? That was the direction Malachite was headed! Garth must be with him! They’re going to attack Jennifer again!’ She reached into Z-storage and brought out the transformation pen. The fifth grader dashed out the back doors and once outside shouted “POLARIS POWER!”

\* \* \*

The Great Hall was full, as always. Beryl was seated at the head, droning on and on about what was wrong with her kingdom and who was not living up to expectations. Commander Quasar was seated on her left side. He found these audiences to be dull and pointless. The kingdom he and his wife would inherit was grossly ineffective. They could get so much more done if the entire army didn’t spend so much time standing at attention. He shot an eye sidelong to Princess Pulsar, but he couldn’t see her. She was seated on the right hand. He was sure he knew what she’d look like even if he could see her. She would have her “mother’s watching” mask on, her dark green eyes, which had the potential to be

so deep and sparkling, would be shallow and slate-like. Her face, pale and lipid, would be expressionless, he could make her laugh so easily when not under this mask, but now was not the time. Her mother didn't know the side of Chrysoberyl that he knew. To her, she was always the cold, robotic creature that she was now. Perhaps, he thought, that was why Beryl seemed to have a certain distaste for him, because he knew more about her daughter than she did. She could sense it, he could tell, whenever Chrysoberyl thought no one was watching and would risk a smile at him in the halls. The two of them would change this place. This kingdom would be glorious and profitable. It would be a moral world ruled by just monarchs and reaching for worthy goals. The Negaverse of Queen Beryl had lived for centuries collecting energy to take over the parallel kingdom of the universe. All the power and thought of the queen had been aimed at total planal domination. Quasar, speaking from his own point of view, did not see the point of taking over another plane when Beryl didn't even have her own Negaverse in proper working order.

He stopped thinking and turned his attentions to his plan. Focusing on the negatives of this place was pointless if that was as far as it ever got. He was currently knee-deep in his own scheme to get his worthless mother in law off the throne. He searched the crowd for his trump card. General Zoicite was standing in the second row near the wall. She was tall, with orange-red hair. He stared at her until she looked at him. When they did, she seemed to be taken by surprise and jumped. He gave her a warning flash. This communication should not be picked up by Beryl, she suspected too much already. After a pause he stared with his good, brown eye and mouthed.

"Meet me"

She looked confused.

"After"

Understanding, she nodded and returned to attention. He returned to staring blankly again. This was going to be a long time to wait until the two of them could talk. Part of him hated using this woman. Lovesickness was shortening her judgment. But sacrifices had to be made for the greater good of the entire kingdom. If she was lucky, perhaps, she would turn out alive.

\* \* \*

Garth stared in the window of Starbucks to where the 8th graders were talking. Malachite stood over him shielding the glass with his hands. "So the target's in there?"

"Yes, in that group of girls." Garth answered.

Malachite stared harder at the small group. "Which one?"

"The dark one."

He looked closer still, his eyes fell on Jennifer and Kathleen. "You mean the one with the bun?"

"Yes, her scent is very strong." Garth answered. "We must get her alone."

"How!?! There are tons of people in there!" Malachite shot at him.

"There must be a way." Garth thought hard. He creased his brow, the orange crescent on his head stretching down. He flicked his tail as a plan formed quickly in his mind. "Listen up. I have an idea."

"An idea? That's good. I can't wait to see you do this." Malachite said, turning to look in the window again.

Garth gave him his first instruction. "Hold up the store."

"WHAT!?!!" Malachite cried. "You want me to do WHAT!?!!" He got strange glances from the people walking by. After all, to them he was talking to a cat.

Garth responded coolly. "Just go in, hold up the store, take the girl hostage, and bring her out here so that I can convince her to trust me."

"I will NEVER stoop to that level!" Malachite roared. "Petty theft will shatter all the dignity I have left! I

won't let my reputation be cast to the four winds just because some cat told me to!"

"Cover your face if you want, but you have no choice." Garth insisted. "You are my charge, you do as I say."

"It was bad enough when we were partners, but now you're my BABYSITTER!? What kind of fool do you think I am!?!?" Malachite ranted.

"The fool who argues against the inevitable.." Garth replied. "The human police are already looking for you. This will just be another hostage situation like the incident at the school." Garth slit his yellow eyes. "Now get on with your job!"

\* \* \*

Inside, Jennifer was laughing with Kathleen and the others as they shared related stories in their small group. The lesson was going well. Everyone was having fun and learning a lot from what Laury had to say. Jus then, a cloaked figure burst into the room. He had long silver hair, and navy cloths, his face was masked and his voice was muffled by his heavy cape. IT looked like he as concealing a weapon.

"Nobody Move!"

Everyone froze. They were in pure fear and surprise. On whispered hoarsely. "That's the guy from the radio! The one who held up the school!"

Jennifer was not frightened but wary. She recognized him immediately from the night before.

"Malachite!?"

The intruder continued. "Surrender all your valuables and empty the cash register, this is a robbery!" People started screaming and running around. Some ran for purses, some ran for the door, some just ran around aimlessly in a panic. Malachite dashed through the din and found the First Side congregation. He grabbed Kathleen's arm. She screamed and her company turned. For one second, he and Jennifer Locked eyes. He scowled, dropped his cape and took off with Kathleen toward the door. Jennifer blinked a second, trying to comprehend. Malachite had just stolen her friend! She wasn't sure why he'd done it, but she was certain that she wouldn't let him get away with it! Before then she probably would have run around screaming about it like everybody else; but now she could do something about it. She fought her way after them, her transformation wand in hand. Once outside, she ducked around a corner and held the stick in the air, screaming, "EARTH POWER!"

Covered in a dome of blue-green, Jennifer found herself suspended in mid air. Her skin was pale aqua in color, with white and navy streaks and specks. Only her green-hazel eyes stood out clearly on her silhouette. Her transformation began.. A high wind picked up, it was gusty, but gentile, and she closed her eyes and let it whip the static of her hair about her face. The wind began to blow wisps of color in whites, light blues, and aquas. The colors became more frequent and thicker as she raised her hands slowly from her sides. She let the hues move through her fingers, then threw her hands to the sky and let the wind circle her body with them. In an instant it was a huge mass of color, but with a howl that only the wind could make, they scattered on the breeze. The windstorm left her dressed in her Sailor Soldier's uniform. Her back was turned, the aqua bow tied at the center over a rippling, pleated navy skirt. The white leotard it connected to was bordered at the top by a navy collar, which moved in the wind along with her mid-length brown hair. She turned, her aqua chest bow visible and her shoulders held back. The aqua folds of her white gloves bunched at her elbows she raised one leg, her shins and feet covered in flat-soled aqua boots with white trim, and used it to move herself face forward. Her eyes opened, her hair still whipping about under the restriction of a black headband. With aqua-jeweled tiara and a pearl-studded aqua choker, she posed with one leg over the other and her arms folded behind her head, reemerging as Sailor Earth.

Malachite dashed with Kathleen around a corner and threw open a dumpster. The teenager struggled.

"Let me go! Let me go! I-I'll hurt you!"

"Shut up!" Malachite spat. He unloaded her into the garbage and slammed the lid. Garth was hiding nearby. He turned to the cat. "That girl who became Sailor Earth was in there!"

"Excuse me?" Garth asked for clarification.

"The one from last night." Malachite said. "She's on to us for sure! Your stupid plan is going to get crushed before it ever gets started, cat! I've destroyed my dignity for no reason!"

"Stop being sorry for yourself! Hurry and distract her!" Garth shouted. He glanced around. "Get her to the roof! I'll take care of my business down here."

"Alright, cat, but if this fails, I'll turn you into a fur lining for my cloak!" Malachite threatened.

"Just go!" Garth snapped. Malachite turned and bounded up the wall. He reached the Starbucks roof and ran to the door-front side. Sure enough, Sailor Earth was down there, scanning for him.

Malachite called down to her. "Hey brat!" Her head snapped up. He yelled again. "Oh? Do you answer to that? Come save your little friend if you can!"

Earth glared up at him, and proceeded to bound up to the roof. Malachite backed out. "Here we go, this had better be good."

Below, Kathleen shoved open the lid to the Dumpster. She picked a cinnamon-bun wrapper out of her hair and looked around. Her captor was gone. She clambered out of the dumpster. "This is exactly what I hate. I couldn't have done a thing to a burglar like him. Why can't I be tough instead of shelling out empty threats?" She kicked the side of the dumpster, but it hurt her foot. "Yeow!" With pain, she fell backwards. She looked up from the pavement of the alley. "Marvelous."

"So you feel inadequate?"

Her eyes locked on the cat as he approached from the shadows. "Huh?"

"You are feeling low, helpless." Garth continued

"I must have hit my head." She said. "I think I see a talking cat!"

"You do." Garth answered. "I am a talking cat."

"That's impossible!" Kathleen insisted. "Cats can't talk." Then she thought to herself. "Why am I talking to the talking cat if it's impossible for the cat to talk?"

"Listen to me!" Garth said. "I'm going to solve all your problems."

"You are my only problem." She said. "I'm seeing things and talking to myself, to my hallucinations, there's a good fic idea! But it's too Ally McBeal."

"Pay attention!" Garth snapped. "Didn't you just say you wanted something!?"

"What? Just now?"

"When you got out of the trash." Garth said, his patience at his end.

"I said I wished I was a mean, tough, fighting machine." Kathleen told him. "But a hallucinated cat can't help me with that."

"Oh can't I?" Garth asked. He pulled out his black-velvet bag, unbound it and produced a transformation pen. The pen was a smoky gray at its base with a black metal cap and an oval shape extension with the arms of an 'X' poking out of it. The extension had the image of a sword with a double 'X' running through it inscribed on the top.

"What's this?" Kathleen reached down to it.

Garth sneered. All in all, it had been stupidly simple. "Your fate."

"Once in hand, the sword symbol was traced in white. Black smoke seeped out of the ornament and traveled to Kathleen's face. It filled her eyes and entered her head through the nose, ears, and mouth. She was taken by the energy and suddenly shouted. "DARK EBSILON!"

She, like Jennifer before, was surrounded in a dome of energy. The dome was gray with black lightning flashing around her. The lightning storm was accompanied by a gale like a hurricane whipping around her. It was nearly impossible to see with her coarse hair tightly bunned. Gray streams of energy shot from the walls and bound her, covering every inch of her skin. The energy transferred from the wall of the dome to the girl through these cables of magic and changed her like some sort of stage magician. The black lightning forked across the dome and severed the cables from the walls. Now the wind was beheld in full force as the entrails of the bindings were thrown violently about. In a flash, there was another strike of black lightning it entered her eyes, lighting them up and filling her body with its power. The bindings were blown from her body and left her dressed in a gray sailor uniform with black bows. She had thick, heavy gray boots with black laces. She began a monologue. "I have found will and strength in my weakness! I have overcome the fear and self-doubt that has held me back! Unleash the fury! Use the hate that my senders have given me! I am mean! I'm unstoppable! I am WHOLE!" On cue, the shell about her was shattered and she reentered the space/time continuum, a warrior full of rage.

"Very good, you've turned out well, Sailor Epsilon." Garth purred.

"Can it!" Epsilon shot back, her previous innocence and good will all but erased from her mind. She held out one hand and a deadly staff with two black blades materialized in her grip. She whipped it above her head and brought it down to threaten him. "Shut up or I'll run you through."

"I'm not the one you've got a problem with." He replied. "The person you want to kill is up on the roof. She is Sailor Earth, and she wants your glory. You'd better hurry before she disgraces you."

Sailor Epsilon cast him a look, her weapon still at the ready. She glanced up to the roof. "You had better be right about this, or I'll come back and skin your scrawny hide."

"Just as well." He muttered. She dropped her guard and bounded up to the roof of the coffee shop. The cat stared up after her. "You will have to fight Malachite for the honor of that. What a pain. Why do tough girls have to be so rude?" He got up and walked to the front of the building. "I am evil and civil. Why can't humans be more like cats? Who in the Negaverse proclaimed them the dominant race?"

Up top, Earth was duking it out with Malachite. He was effectively dodging her blows, anticipating Epsilon's arrival. He kept glancing toward the alley as the teenager punched at him. "What is taking that cat so long?"

"What did you do with my friend!?" Earth demanded. "I saw you take her! What did you do with her?"

"You'll see soon enough, you brat!" He said, sneering. He threw his hands forward, finally deciding to attack her. A gray-blue ball swelled, then shot out what appeared to be a blue laser in her direction.

"Take that!"

She dodged, then rebounded with her special power. A wind picked up from around her feet. She bowed her head and crossed her wrists up by her ear, the wind grew violent and blew her hair up off of her neck. "Rushing! – " She parted her hands and the wind changed direction to swirl around her in a circle. She turned her other side to face Malachite, one arm extended gracefully behind her, the other by her far side. She opened her eyes and threw up her backward arm to direct the gale at her foe. "WIND!" Malachite was unprepared for the Sailor Soldier attack, and braced himself. The gust caught him up and threw him against the wall of one of the neighboring buildings. He vanished from sight as he fell back to the earth. The sailor Soldier began to head after him but was stopped by a familiar voice. "Hold it right there!"

Earth turned to find her kidnapped friend standing behind her. "Kathleen!" But then she noticed the suit and especially the glinting black blades of her upheld weapon. "Oh, no."

"Are you Sailor Earth!?" The dark soldier demanded.

"Yes I am." She answered.

Ebsilon's brow furrowed and she crouched over the handle of the weapon, poised to attack "Then prepare yourself to taste the sting of a black blade!"

Earth took a start. Ebsilon launched into a run with a furious cry. Earth leapt into the air and Ebsilon barely missed her. She looked up and Followed Sailor Earth's path back to the rooftop. "Kathleen!? What are you doing!?!"

"Don't play innocent!" Ebsilon spat. "You are trying to steal my honor as a warrior! That sort of thing is unforgivable! Get ready to die!"

"Oh my GOSH!" Earth took off as Ebsilon raced after her gain. She dashed across the roof, her mind racing. 'Garth got her and turned her into this! Why didn't I catch it!? He targeted me because I was wanting something. No because I wanted to be something! Kathleen was just telling me about that! She was telling me how she wanted to be tough! Why didn't I catch it!?' She glanced backwards at the bloodshot eyes of the hate-filled girl. 'Now she's as tough as she could ever wish to be, but it's taken over her mind! She's gonna kill me! But I can't hurt her, she's still Kathleen in there somewhere!' Glancing backwards another time, Earth stumbled and tripped herself; flying through the air and skidding to a stop near the edge of the roof. In seconds, Ebsilon was standing over here, her blade at the ready. She got to one knee.

"How simple it is." Ebsilon licked her teeth and brought her blade up. The black edge came slowly down toward Sailor Earth's heart. "And may my glory be forever."

The spear was so close to stabbing the girl, but Earth was not ready to die. She threw out her hand. "Rushing WIND!" The gust caught Ebsilon's weapon and forced it from her hand. She watched as it sailed through the air, only to come down several feet away, on of the twin blades sticking into the cement. It had sliced cleanly. Sailor Earth gulped at the thought of how close that edge had been to her chest.

Ebsilon turned angrily to her. "You demon! What kind of power do you have!?" She didn't stick around for the answer but took off for her spear.

Sailor Earth jumped up and threw out her hand again. "Rushing WIND!" The gust picked the weapon back up and sent it skittering across the rooftop. The bottom blade was broken from where it had snapped in two under the pressure.

Ebsilon grabbed it up and looked at the jagged edge. "You – " Her eyes narrowed and sparked. "DEMON!!!"

"That is my power." Sailor Earth said, walking toward her. Her voice was determined. "Wind power. And I'm not going to let you keep me held."

\* \* \*

Sailor Polaris was rushing up the sidewalk. When she was across the street from the Starbucks she could see immediately the turmoil going on. She saw people running around and many people staring up at the roof. What she picked out, however, was a suspicious looking navy blue cat heading around the far corner. "Garth"

The little blonde soldier ran into the crowd. Many cleared when they saw her come, but she still had to shove past a couple people. She headed into the alley after the cat. This was the alley on the opposite side of the one Ebsilon's transformation had taken place. She found Malachite unconscious on the ground. Garth slunk over and scratched his face. HE was roused, and shoved himself up. "Ow."

"I see you got the WIND knocked out of you." Garth hissed.

"That's not funny." Malachite moaned. HE got to his knees, his head in his hands. Then he potted Polaris and sprang up. "Hey!?! What are you doing here!?"

"I'm here to keep you from doing whatever you were about to do!" Polaris replied, trying to sound

intimidating.

"It's not what we're going to do, it's what we've already done." Garth told her. "The soldier has been awakened. Now we only have to wait." Garth turned to Malachite. "Come, General, to the roof!" Polaris watched as the both bounded up. She took off after them and came out on a battle field. Epsilon was furiously slashing at Sailor Earth, who was trying her best to keep out of the way. Malachite and Garth continued onto the roof of the next building to avoid entering the brawl. Polaris hurried to do just that. "Sailor Earth!"

"Polaris!?" Her sister called back, dodging a swipe from Epsilon.

"I'm coming to help!" She said. She ran over and jumped up on the dark soldier's back, but she was flipped over the top. Earth grabbed her foe's arm and swung her down. Olivia recognized who it was.

"Are you kidding me!? That's Kathleen!?"

"Yeah, and we can't hurt her!" Earth insisted

Polaris nodded. "I know that, but this means we need Sailor Moon!"

"What for?" Earth asked.

Polaris caught sight of Epsilon back on her feet. She pointed. "Lookout!" They ducked as the blade swished over their heads. The two of them rushed in different directions to get out of range. The blonde called to her partner. "Sailor Moon is the only one who can use her power to heal her! And we should hurry before her time is up!"

"You make her sound like a time-bomb!" Earth called back.

"In essence she is!" Polaris headed off for the edge of the roof. "No pun intended! I'll get Sailor Moon and be right back!"

"Go on! I can hold her for now!" Her sister assured. Earth returned to fighting, and Polaris disappeared.

\* \* \*

Beryl was done lecturing. Even the Queen of the Negaverse could get tired of being rude. Zoicite found herself following Kyanite back into a deserted corner of the great hall. When he stopped, he delivered to her the news she'd suspected and feared. "Beryl is going to kill him." The prince stated.

Zoicite was frozen.

Kyanite was good at acting, he sighed. "She's going to send down someone to do General Malachite in. I don't know the details."

"But – " Her eyes quavered. "But she can't!"

"She can, and she is." Kyanite said. "And there is nothing I can do about it."

"But you're the head of the military!" Zoicite recalled. "There must be something you can do!"

"I receive orders and I carry them out." Kyanite told her. "I have no power when it comes to the Queen's wishes. There is nothing I can do." She stared at him. "If I could do anything, the only thing would be to send down a bodyguard to protect him, but that would mean turning my own men against their comrades. I can't do that."

"No..." Zoicite found her mind filled with plans, ideas, hopes, fears, and wishes. "No, you can't."

"I'm sorry." Kyanite sympathized. This time he was sincere. He truly was a sucker for romantic, hard-luck stuff. He felt like Beryl, his back-handed, plotting, conniving, mother in law. It was these reasons that he and his wife were planning to overthrow her. He left Zoicite standing there in the great hall and went to find his wife.

Chrysoberyl was in an audience with her mother. She had on her emotional mask and spoke in dead tones, her straight auburn hair lying across her back and her white-velvet gown, folded in hues of blue. She spoke. "Mother, what do you intend to do about General Malachite?"

"Well, He'll have to be disposed of sooner or later." She said, off-handedly, admiring herself in her



full-length mirror. "Perhaps when he returns, I'll let him make a fool of himself, then blast him to space dust."

"Why?" Chrysoberyl asked in monotone. Beryl turned to her. She continued, her voice never varying much. "He is exhausting our precious energy supply. Why do you let him wander about on Earth?"

"That is a good point, Chrysoberyl." Beryl admitted. "What do you suggest we do with him?"

Inside her head, Chrysoberyl was rejoicing that her mother had asked her opinion. It was just the way she had wanted the conversation to go. "Why not kill him now?"

"And how would I do that?" Beryl demanded. "Bring him back up here?"

"No, that would waste more energy." Her daughter stated. "I suggest that you send down someone to kill him and take his place in the quest for the rainbow crystal."

"That is brilliant!" Beryl cried, thrilled by the idea. "Chrysoberyl, you will be a magnificent queen! You think just like your mother!"

The comment stung her harshly.

Beryl left the chamber. "I must put this into action! I must find the perfect assassin!"

Chrysoberyl followed slowly. She met up with Kyanite out in the hall. In his presence, she let her emotions reemerge. "So, how did it go?"

"She fell for it." Kyanite affirmed. "But I feel rotten."

"So do I." She agreed. "Mother just told me I think like her."

Kyanite put his hands on her shoulders. "Don't worry Chry, you are nothing like her! She doesn't know the real you."

"Thanks, Ky." Chrysoberyl sighed.

Kyanite relaxed a bit. "So I take it your half was successful."

"She loved the idea." Chrysoberyl said. "she's gone off to get started right away."

"It's a shame that we had to lead a poor, lovesick girl to her death." Kyanite said.

It was Chrysoberyl's turn to be comforting. "To achieve peace, sacrifices must be made."

\* \* \*

Earth's struggle had lasted much longer than she would have liked it to. All the dodging and running was wearing her out, and Epsilon just kept on coming. "Kathleen!" She shouted as she ducked the wipe of the fractured blade. "Kathleen!? Can you hear me!?"

"Evil Soldier!" Epsilon shot at her. "My glory is mine! You won't steal it!"

"I have no interest in your glory!" Earth insisted. The glinting black blade swept across chest level, the tip of it slicing a streak just below the line of her collarbone. With a cry of pain and surprise, she fell backward. In seconds, she found the weapon pressed to her throat.

"Don't deny what is plainly visible on your face." Epsilon told her.

"You can't see clearly!" Earth insisted. "You've had your eyes clouded in rage! Look what the Negaverse has done to you!"

"SHUT UP!" the soldier pressed the sharpened edge deeper into the neck. "No more talking from you! You are a thief and a liar!"

Breath caught in Earth's throat. She was seconds away from being slain by one of her best friends and she was only fourteen! She wondered if the effort would be in vain if she tried to call for help. It wouldn't be long before calling was unnecessary.

With a flare of a red and black cape, and the clap of heels on the cement, her rescuer had arrived. The man ran toward Epsilon, bent on attacking her and saving the trapped teen. "Sailor Earth!"

"Tuxedo Mask!" She was both ecstatic and horrified to see him. "Watch out!"

First Ebsilon's head turned, the deep brown eyes burning as he got very near, then the blade whirred from the helpless soldier on the ground to the oncoming attacker. The stroke was as swift as a golf stroke and as deadly as an arrow. Earth's green-hazel eyes were frozen wide. There was no way that attack would miss, and there was no way her handsome comrade would survive it. If that was so, then neither would she.

Thankfully, Tuxedo Mask came complete with a retractable cane. He'd reached for it as he ran, and only barely had it out in time to intercept the blow. The blade was knocked slightly wide as it extended and he stumbled the opposite direction in reaction to it. Ebsilon gritted her teeth and proceeded to swing at him again and again. "More thieves!?! You would steal my GLORY! The glory of a WARRIOR!!" Tuxedo Mask had taken Earth's previous role in the furious death struggle.

The brunette jumped up from the ground. Her relief had been replaced with anger. Her heart was beating very fast. She stomped over at a run. "Leave him alone!" Ebsilon had backed the man up nearly to the edge of the roof when Earth grabbed her around the neck from behind. The Sailor Soldier threw the gladiator down, only to have her jump back to her feet. The first called backward over her shoulder. "What are you doing here?!"

"You needed help!" Tuxedo Mask replied.

"I don't want you to help!" She told him. "You could get hurt!"

"I could get hurt!?! He cried. Ebsilon took up her staff and rushed at them again. The two of them stepped aside and she whirled around to slice at their heads. They ducked and ran, exchanging words as they did. "I'm the older one! I'm the adult! I protect you!"

"You know as well as I do that she's dangerous!" Earth replied. "If you get killed, I don't know what I'd do!"

"From what it seemed like to me..." He said. They both turned around to face their oncoming enemy. "It looked like you were the one with the knife in your neck! If you'd been killed, I don't know what I'd do!" For some reason, it felt like they'd had this conversation before, or something of a revised version of it. Especially his line when he said "I'm older... I'm the grown-up in this family..." 'In this family?' Jennifer thought, 'Where'd THAT come from? It sounds like I've heard it somewhere else.' There was no time for contemplation now. 'Maybe on TV or something... Father knows best or whatever.' She turned her attention on the fight.

"Cut around to the side and get her on my mark!" Tuxedo Mask commanded.

Earth saw no reason not to follow his instructions and veered off as she was told. He did the same. Ebsilon followed Earth. Fighting a skilled foe at the possible cost of her life was a very uncomfortable situation for Earth, but running unarmed from an unstoppable death-machine was completely unnerving. She was on the edge of her seat waiting for Tuxedo Mask's mark.

Ebsilon had done what he had hoped. As soon as her back was turned, he ran up behind her and tackled. The two of them tumbled one over the other, and he ended up on his back with her on top of him, his arms strung around her shoulders and her coarse black hair thrashing in front of his face. "Now, Jenn!"

Earth screeched to a halt and came trotting over. She took a hold of Ebsilon's weapon. "No!!" The dark soldier clung for dear life to her spear. Held to the ground by Tuxedo Mask, she struggled with her arms and legs to free the lance from Earth's grip. "No! No! Not my blade!"

Earth made on swift, unsuspected yank and captured the weapon from its owner. Ebsilon's hands clawed at thin air from afar. Up on the nearby roof, Malachite was looking on in frustration. "This can't be!" He cried. "That's tow against one!"

"It doesn't matter!" Garth was in ecstasy, his tail twitching. "It's at its peak!"

In seconds, her clawing hands were frozen in midair and Ebsilon's color began to drain. A lump and then a hole opened in the base of her neck and out spilled her gaseous essence. Tuxedo Mask stared

down as all the color from her hair, skin and eyes leaked off the lifeless figure and out into the air. Surrounding energy was being pulled into it like a vacuum. He realized what was going to happen.

“Earth!”

Sailor Earth had never witnessed this happening before. She stared in horror as her friend became waxy and the hues were striped from the agonized expression on her face.

Tuxedo Mask began to scramble out from under the victim. “The essence collects energy! It’s headed for the sun! Catch it in something before we can never get it back!”

Earth shook herself out of her daze, but it was too late. The ghost-like essence had escaped its shell and was shooting up walls. The Sailor Soldier acted on impulse. “Rushing...WIND!”

Her hand was thrown up after the retreating cloud. Her aerodynamic power raced through her fingers. Up on the wall, Garth’s Jaw dropped.

“Empty again, is it?” Malachite said, crossing his arms. “It figures as much.”

“No! No!” Garth yelled. “This can’t be! We are running out of time!” He then turned to his partner.

“Come, hurry, we don’t have a moment to spare!” The midnight cat dashed off and Malachite had no choice but to follow. They dashed off the end of their respective building and away from the scene just as Polaris was arriving with Sailor Moon and Luna the cat.

“Hurry, Sailor Moon! We might be too late!” Luna urged.

“I’m going, all right!? I just got out of bed!” Moon repeated, sounding exhausted. First Presbyterian was further from her house than she’d had liked.

Sailor Polaris stopped on the sidewalk when she saw the essence cloud bolt off into the sky. “Oh no! It’s happened already!” She turned back to Sailor Moon, who was approaching as quick as she could, looking disheveled. “Hurry! We might be able to save her still! Get up on the roof!” Sailor Moon arrived, panted a little, then clawed her way up the wall. Polaris followed with a bound. They surfaced as soon as Earth had called ‘Rushing Wind’ “We’re here!” Her sister cried, running toward the scene. “I’ve got her!”

Tuxedo Mask looked up and was relieved, but all was not in hand yet. The wind of Earth’s attack blew aside his cape and throwing a hand up, he barely saved his hat. The wind spiraled around the soldier and shot up her arm. The mist of colors was rippling in the disturbance.

Sailor Moon stared at the new soldier in outrage. “Sailor Earth!?! What are you doing!? You’re helping it! You’re blowing it away!”

“Hold on!” Earth cried. She threw up the other hand. As if magnetized, the column of wind bent, turning widely and heading back to the roof and the soldiers standing there. She spread her arms out to the sides and the whirling began to spin tightly around her, trapped with flecks of gray, black and brown. Sailor Moon stared. “that’s amazing!”

“Hurry and heal her!” Earth urged. “I can’t hold the wind forever.”

“Right!” Sailor Moon whipped out her crescent wand, the three lights on its mount twinkling. She stepped back and traced a circle around herself. “Moon...Healing...ACTIVATION!” The magical energy traveled from her and entered the empty husk of the girl. Earth let go of the gust and it dispersed, the essence being sucked back into its owner. The excess wind whooshed out as it hit the girl and threw back the skirts and hair of the soldiers around. When all the mist had returned to her friend, Sailor Earth collapsed to her knees in relief.

“It worked!” She panted. “Oh! It worked!”

“That was incredible!” Tuxedo Mask agreed, leaning down. He put a hand on Earth’s shoulder. “You were fantastic!”

“Truly remarkable.” Luna said. “We have barely known you, Sailor Earth, but it appears that you are a soldier with incredible power.”

She smiled, then turned to Tuxedo Mask, “what let you know that I was here? You came just in time.”

"I've got a sixth sense about these things." He answered.

"It's a good thing." Polaris agreed. "We really needed your help. And I'm really happy to..." She paused with a bit of a blush. "see you again."

Sailor Moon looked around at the three of them. "What is going on? The three of you are like.." They all looked up. "What?"

"I don't know..." What she was thinking was that she knew that Olivia had a crush on Tuxedo Mask, and was suspicious that he had something going for her. But now it looked like this new soldier had something going for him as well. For the record, Tuxedo Mask was HER love interest. Still, the three of them seemed like they had an energy about them. "It's like you belong together."

The three in question exchanged glances. It was that concept that they had felt from the night before, and sitting around together, it was what they were feeling now. Luna looked at the three of them suspiciously. "Have you all met before?"

"Last night." Polaris said. "At Earth's awakening. I called you about it, remember?"

"Only last night?" Luna persisted.

The looked at each other again. It did seem like they'd known one another longer. Earth quirked an eyebrow at the black cat, "Yeah..."

Luna's mind was swimming. The energy here was strong and more then strangely familiar. She couldn't place it. "We'll talk again this afternoon. After our ...event..." Luna eyed Tuxedo Mask, trying not to give too much away. "At the usual place. Until then, try not to get into any more trouble. The Negaverse is starting to attack more frequently now. We need to have a plan or else another close call like this might not end so happily."

"Alright, Luna, alright." Polaris brushed back her bushy blonde bangs.

Sailor Moon stood holding her wand. She was perfectly passive, then suddenly yawned. "What time is it?"

Tuxedo Mask had a watch and pulled up his sleeve. "About 10:35"

Earth and Polaris let out a cry. "10:35!?!?!" They began running around. "We're late! We're late! We're late!"

"What in the world?" Tuxedo Mask inquired.

"Sunday School's gonna let out and we won't be there!" They cried.

Moon yawned again. "Can I go back to sleep now?"

Luna rolled her yes but nodded. "Yes we can go." She called over to Earth and Polaris. "Remember, our 'event' starts at 12:30!"

"We'll be there, Luna!" The two of them insisted.

"Alright, we're counting on you." Luna finished and scampered off. Sailor Moon followed, tiredly, her ponytails dragging on the ground. When they had climb down the building, Polaris dashed off.

Sailor Earth called after her. "Where are you going!?"

"I told the teacher I was going to the bathroom!" Polaris called back. "I've got to get back to class now before they think I flushed myself or something!"

Tuxedo Mask looked skeptical. Sailor Earth put her face in her hand, then looked back up. "Okay, go on then."

"Bye!" Polaris hopped off the roof.

Sailor Earth looked to Tuxedo Mask. "Well, I guess you should go. I'm sure you were doing something before you showed up here."

"Nothing too important." He said. Earth bent down to try and puck an unconscious Kathleen and fail. He moved in and picked the girl up for her." Let me help."

Earth grinned. She was glad her was staying, even for only a little while longer. "Okay." The two of them hopped from the roof and de-transformed in the alley. Sailor Earth became Jennifer Miles and

Tuxedo Mask, Darien Chiba. He still had Kathleen in his arms. Jennifer beckoned him out. "this way, we've got to find Laury and the rest of my group."

"I can't stick around." He said. She was disappointed, and he continued. "It's too risky, I'm not supposed to be here. Especially if they brought the news out."

"I guess you're right." She sighed. "Oh well." Then she paused and looked into his deep blue eyes. "Darien?"

"Yeah?"

She knew this wasn't good...It'd blow his cover and those of the other soldiers involved, but he inspiration was too much to pass up. "The event that Luna was talking about is a football game between my high school and Tenth Street High. I want you to come with us."

"What?" Darien asked. "With you and Olivia?"

"Yeah," Apparently he hadn't considered 'us' to be the other Sailor Soldiers, which was a very good thing, "and Olivia's friend Jessi, and some other girls from Tenth Street Junior High. They invited us to go, and I really want you to come. You don't have to sit with us or whatever. You can sit wherever you want, but just so that we can run into each other again. You know, talk?"

He looked down at the fourteen-year-old, who seemed modestly hopeful. For some reason, her manner made him smile. "Okay, I'll show up."

She grinned broadly. "Great! I'll be looking for you outside Tenth Street Senior High, 12:35-ish?"

"Alright."

"Oooo! I'm so excited!" Jennifer mused. "This is gonna be great!"

It was then that the girl in Darien's arms began to come to. Her head rolled onto his arm, and her face twitched. She moaned and her eyes opened. When she saw that she was in the arms of a stranger, they opened very wide. "Ahh!"

"Kathleen!" Jennifer cried, the scream scaring her out of her wits.

"Put me down!" She gasped. "Who are you!? Put me down!"

As he did so, Jennifer grabbed her arms. "It's okay, he's nice, he's a good guy."

"What happened?" Kathleen asked, shakily. "The last thing I remember, I was being kidnapped."

"You must have fainted." Jennifer lied. "The guy was only after money, when they gave it to him, he bolted. He left you in this alley where Darien and I found you."

Kathleen was very confused, and more than a little freaked out. Darien moved to leave. "12:35 right?"

"Yeah! I'll be waiting for you at the entrance!" Jennifer answered. "See you soon!" He nodded and split. Jennifer grabbed Kathleen's arm and ran out into the assembled crowd shouting. "I found her! I found her!" The local news station swarmed, but Laury shoved through.

"Jennifer, Kathleen, are you two okay? We've been looking everywhere for you! You scared us to death!"

"I'm fine." Kathleen said. "I don't know what happened, but I guess I'm alright."

A cheery reporter poked in. "Is this the girl who was kidnapped?"

"Yes she is." Came the answer.

"Would you like to answer some questions?" The reporter inquired.

Right then, all Kathleen really wanted was to go home or at least back to church. She wanted to get away from all the commotion. "uh...not really."

A policeman barged in. "What did your abductor look like? Did you see his face?"

"I don't remember." She told them.

An ambulance had pulled up. The paramedics shoved through the crowd. "We would like to check her out, okay?" They grabbed her. "Excuse us." And so the fuss continued. The reporters for the newspapers and news channels and radio were all showing up to get a quote from the witnesses and especially the reluctant star. Jennifer ruled it best to turn down interview requests for fear of leaking too

much information. It took nearly fifteen minutes for the paramedics to be done with their examination. Kathleen's mother had shown up alone with many of the parents of the kids. Most of the youth group had made their way there, including Olivia's class, with Jessi. Olivia found her way over to her sister. Jennifer leaned in. "Did you make it back okay?"

"Yeah, but it took some fast talking. I had to explain why I was half an hour in the bathroom. They'd actually sent people out to look for me."

"Here you are!" Jessi cried, fighting her way to Olivia's side through the mob. "I lost you for a sec."

"Sorry." Olivia shrugged. Their parents showed up.

"Are you girls okay?"

"Yeah, we're fine." Jennifer insisted for what seemed like the hundredth time. Nearby, the paramedics turned to Mrs. Tait and Laury. "She's in perfectly good health. No signs of mistreatment or anything. She's a little shaken, though. Our prescription is to take her home and let her rest in a place she's familiar with." Her mother agreed, and young Kathleen Tait was whisked away from the area, much to the disappointment of the press. The policeman brought out a megaphone and one of them spoke to the crowd.

"The excitement is over! You can all go back to what you were doing! Return to your lives, citizens." He turned to a fellow officer. "I've always wanted to say that!"

Reluctantly, they did so, and the First Pres. Group moved off down the block.

\* \* \*

Queen Beryl had been hard at work narrowing down the selection for assassin. She had to pick someone who could do away with Malachite, and also take his job for him. Whoever it was had to be able to do it using the least energy possible and make it clean and professional. None of her generals could do that, she'd killed most of them off. She had begun searching the lower ranks. "An aspiring terrorist." She muttered to herself, listing the requirements in her head. "An obedient servant. A heartless murderer." She had taken out an enlistment roster. She found the file of a young woman with tinted back hair. It bled into fluorescent yellow at the tips and was pulled back in a disheveled knot. The evil queen read the name. "Selenite. 18 years old. Hobby; knife throwing and energy training." She was grinning, one fang bared. "Perfect."

~End~

## 8 - Episode 7: A Turn of the Cards

Sailor Moon P

Episode 7: A Turn of the Cards

Beryl had taken her lunch break and returned in a near fit of anticipation. She stood in front of her throne and addressed the assembled multitudes. "People of the Kingdom of the Negaverse!" She cried.

"Today I am unfortunately announcing the death of one of your own!" The people of the court began to mutter among themselves. They were suspicious of the look on the queen's face as she announced this "terrible news". Beryl's smile was explained in a minute, and the red-haired general Zoicite's breath caught in her throat. She'd had a feeling as to what was coming. "The truth is that General Malachite has died today."

'DIED!?!' Zoicite's mind froze. 'As in PAST TENSE!?!'

"Well, It's not quite true yet, what I should say is that I'm having him killed. He is worthless and a waste of energy. All I need is someone to volunteer to do the job." No one spoke up, they were still struggling to grasp the meaning of what she meant. Some felt it was wrong to slay a fellow soldier. Some worried about the social consequences of volunteering. Others would have gladly raised their hands if their reflexes had been faster, but Beryl wasn't waiting. She already had someone in mind. "If there are no volunteers among you cowards, then I will select. I have narrowed down my list of possible assassins and arrived at one eligible candidate..." The assembled army waited with interest to see who it was their queen had chosen. Chrysoberyl, Beryl's beautiful daughter held her breath. The plan was succeeding. She stole a glance to her husband on the other side of the queen. He had his eyes closed and his head angled down. She let out her held breath in a sigh. Beryl continued. "Would Private Selenite please step up here."

Down on the floor, there was a turning of heads as the 18-year-old girl was singled out. She had narrow orange eyes and black hair pulled back in a knot. The ends were bleached and dyed to a flaming yellow and some stuck out at odd angles from her disheveled bun. When she realized that she was the one being called, she broke rank and stepped up to the throne. Masculinely, she dropped to one knee in a bow, then looked up to the Queen. "I am Selenite, your majesty."

"Your record makes you out to be quite an aspiring young fighter. I've found that you participate in knife throwing?" Beryl prodded.

"Yes, Majesty, as a hobby. I am known as the best marksmen in my regiment. It would be my honor to follow your orders." She said. Her voice as still young and a little defiant, she both looked and sounded like she wasn't to be pushed around.

"Marvelous." Beryl sneered in ecstasy. "You will be sent down at once to slay the General. Of course, a promotion is included and you will be honored with his position. You will also complete his task form him at his expiration. You have an hour to prepare, then report to me."

Selenite bowed again. "Thank you, Queen Beryl."

The queen raised her hand. "Now all of you out of my sight! I wish to watch this privately in my quarters." With that, she left. The assemblage broke up. Selenite turned to her regiment waiting behind her. After a couple of professional moments, she let down her guard and squealed like the 18-year-old she was. Her girlfriends and some other guy friends rushed over to congratulate her.

"It's my first assignment and I'm going to be GENERAL!!!" She cried. She and the other girls began jumping up and down. "This is the break I've been waiting for!"

“Sel! This is great!” Her friends mused and they all got into a bubbly conversation about it. Zoicite watched in disgust. With a flip of her ponytail, she strode out of the room. No squealing rookie was going to take her love away from her. She recalled Kyanite’s words from earlier that day. ‘The only thing would be to send down another soldier to protect him, but that would be turning my own forces against each other, I can’t do that’. “No,” Zoicite muttered, “no you cant send someone. But if someone were to volunteer, then it’s a completely different story. I would rather be with Malachite and disgraced than live with honor without him. I will be the one to protect him. She retreated to her quarters and stole some energy to open a portal. There was no turning back. Selenite would be coming after him in an hour, and once Zoicite stepped through that doorway, her life would change forever.

\* \* \*

Church was over and the Miles family had changed clothes and was driving to the Tenth Street Senior High. Jennifer and Olivia were strangely quiet. Jessi felt awkward. She cleared her throat. “Uh...um...so, what’s up?”

The two others looked startled and quickly snapped. “Nothing!”

Jessi jumped at their abruptness. “O-okay, sorry.”

Their parents could sense the strangeness too. Mr. Miles stole a moment to look back over his shoulder.

“So girls, what did you learn today?”

The siblings warily exchanged glances. “Um...” Neither of them had been in class long, they had taken off to fight a battle before they had gotten much out of the lesson. Jennifer answered first. “We uh, we didn’t learn that much because of Kathleen, and, stuff.” It wasn’t entirely a lie, the lesson was pretty much lost when Malachite held up their coffee shop and kidnapped one of the kids. The car had a knowing silence. The question was left to Olivia and Jessi. Olivia didn’t have much of an excuse; the fifth grade class hadn’t been affected by the excitement until very late in the lesson. Her excuse of absence had been an extended bathroom visit. The blonde looked over her shoulder to Jessi.

“Uh, what did we learn?”

“It was about the whale thing.” Jessi answered. “The guy who was eaten by a whale?”

“Actually it was a ‘great fish’” Mr. Miles said. “And what did your teachers say about him?”

“Uh...he,” Olivia searched her mental, Sunday school database for past ‘Jonah and the Whale’ lessons. “He ran away?”

“Yes...” her father prodded.

She proceeded with caution. “Then he came back?”

Jennifer ‘hmp’hed with amusement.

Mrs. Miles sought to change the subject. “So, who’s playing at this ball game today?”

“It’s the Tenth Street High School’s football team verses the Ruth Lovell High School.” Jennifer said.

“So it’s my high school verses Serena and Amy and Lita’s high school.”

“That sounds like fun, are you sure it’ll all turn out okay, since you are tooting for different teams?”

Their mother asked.

“It’ll be fine, Mom, we’re only going for guy watching anyway.” Olivia assured. Jennifer, knowingly, kept quiet. She hadn’t told Olivia that she had invited Tuxedo Mask to come too. She knew that Olivia liked him, but she liked him too. The minute she became Sailor Earth and took a look at him, she’d felt a strong sense of desire. She wanted to be with him, she’d found him amorous in a new and strange way. She wanted to learn about him, and what he liked and how he moved. She was happy when they were working together, even when the two of them were arguing; she enjoyed listening. She seemed, nearly, to recognize the sound of his voice and certain phrases. She found it strangely captivating. It wasn’t long before they pulled up in front of the Tenth Street Senior High. Jennifer checked her watch. 12:00.



She'd told Darien to meet her out in front at 12:35. She had a little over a half an hour to get settled, then sneak out to meet him. Jessi and Olivia leapt out of the van.

"Wake up, Jennifer, lets go!" Olivia nudged.

Jennifer responded and climbed out, shutting the door. Her mother leaned out the passenger-side window. "We'll pick you up in about three hours."

"Okay! Bye!" They waved and the beige van pulled off, out, and away down the road.

Jessi, Olivia, and Jennifer moved to stand in line with the other spectators waiting to get into the stadium. The Tenth Street Sr. High football field was along the side of the main building and open to the street on one side and at the head. Bleachers had been erected against one school wall and along the lengthy side near the road. It wasn't anything spectacular, but it had one of those wooden protection barriers running around it with advertisements and school logos painted on it. Several of the spectators were leaning or sitting on them waiting for the game to start. The field was exactly what should have been expected of a small city school. The line was very long, however, because of the impending conflict between the two rival schools. Jennifer leaned in. "Lovell's is better."

Jessi sighed. "You guys are lucky."

"How?" Olivia asked. "Because our field is better?"

The 11-year-old flipped aside her thin terra-cotta hair. "No, your mom just left you here! My mom would NEVER let me do that!"

"Well, Jennifer's here." Olivia pointed out. Jennifer waved as if she was watching the conversation from the other side of a window. Olivia shrugged and turned back to her friend who was just a little shorter than she was. "She's older, so Mom trusts her to look out for us."

"Still, she isn't that much older." Jessi insisted.

Olivia glanced from Jessi's green eyes to her sister. "Three Years."

"But in three years, you'll be able to go places by yourself." Jessi said. "My mom doesn't trust me to sharpen a pencil on my own!"

"Your mom'll come around sooner or later." Olivia assured. "She can't keep you on a leash forever."

"No, Paranoia's a disease." Jessi assured. "I'm going to have to run away if I want to go to college."

The line moved up and Jennifer spied a group of girls behind the stadium fence. There were five of them, one had long blonde hair pulled up in two buns, there was a tall brunette with her hair in a ponytail, another blonde with her hair in a bow, a girl with blue-tinted short hair, and the last had very long black hair. She recognized them from the Sports Club right away and waved. The girl with the buns noticed and waved frantically back "Hey!!!"

"Serena and everybody are already here!" Jennifer said to her sister, then looked a little closer. "Wait, Courtney's not there."

"Running late? She probably slept in." Olivia shrugged.

"The girl's nocturnal anyway, I'm not surprised." Jennifer agreed.

On the other side of the fence, Serena called to the three waiting. "Hey girls!"

"Hey!"

"Took you long enough!" Lita, the brunette called.

"We're on time!" Olivia called back. "What are you talking about!?"

"You missed warm-up!" Raye called. "The game starts in 15 minutes, all the hot guys are in the locker rooms already!"

"Dang!" Jennifer called back in mock disappointment. "What a loss! We'll only be able to stare at them for another hour or two!"

"Yeah! Whatever!" Mina, the bow girl called back.

"You've got interesting friends." Jessi leaned over to Olivia. "Are they all older than you?"

"Yeah, but here's the weird thing," Olivia explained, "they are all fourteen like Jennifer, but they're all

in Seventh grade when she's in Eighth. Weird huh?"

"Yeah, why is that?"

"It's some sort of zoning thing." Olivia answered. The line moved up and they had soon bought their tickets and on the preferred side of the fence. It was up to Olivia to introduce everyone. "Hi, everybody, this is Jessi." She began again, directing attention to her peer. "She's my friend from school." The girls all waved.

"Hi, Jessi" Came the chorus.

Olivia began the tedious job of identifying all of her friends and after introducing the unexpected leader, Serena, the intellectual Amy, the boisterous Mina, the tough Lita, and the psychic priestess girl Raye, Jessi was intimidated and a little confused.

"Well," Mina sighed, "should we go sit down?"

"Wait, what about Courtney?" Lita asked.

"You mean there's more!?" Jessi asked, exasperated.

Jennifer saw opportunity smiling on her. "I'll stay and wait for her!"

"Really? Alone?" Serena asked. "You sure you don't want someone to wait with you? It sounds boring."

"I'm sure, I'm sure!" Jennifer insisted. If she were waiting for Courtney, she would have an excuse to stick around and watch for Darien.

The others looked unsure, but complied anyway. "Okay, we'll save you a seat."

"Okay!" Jennifer waved, "Bye! Don't worry! I'll be fine by myself! I'LL STAY RIGHT HERE!"

Jessi leaned to Olivia as they followed the other five. "Your sister is a little weird."

\* \* \*

So much was happening. Selenite was meeting with Beryl in half an hour, and Kyanite and his wife Chrysoberyl had much to do. They had rushed back to their quarters. Quasar was pacing. "Our time is running out. Beryl is taking action and we don't even have one crystal fracture. She's meeting with that Selenite soon, and I know what she's going to say. She's going to tell her about Garth. She's going to kill him too! We're sending Zoicite down to protect Malachite, but she doesn't know to protect Garth. The two of them are a diversion to get him out of there! But how are we going to contact him without Beryl knowing that we've done it!?"

"Calm down, Kyanite." Pulsar warned. "Don't get hysterical, you'll blow our cover."

"I have a feeling I'm going to have to blow it anyway." Quasar stated. "I've got to contact Garth and warn him to watch out for Selenite."

"You can't, Ky, Mother'll find out for sure!" Pulsar insisted.

"Our plan is falling apart!" Quasar cried. "We can't overthrow the monarchy without the twilight crystal and we cannot find the crystal without the Midnight Cat." He turned to his wife, his voice becoming louder with his frustration. "If she kills Garth, then we'll be hopeless, we'd need an army to dethrone her! The two of us are going to be exposed and executed, and this endless cycle of tyranny and hate will continue forever under Beryl's hand! We've got to do something, Chry! We don't have a lot of choices!"

Chrysoberyl put her hands on her husband's shoulders. "We'll do something, Ky, we will. It's not our fault we couldn't find the crystal. Garth has been trying, we just needed more time." She got more serious, her green eyes hollowing and setting with a look of gravity. "We may have to take care of this personally. There is no room for us up here, to find the twilight crystal we will have to find the fractures ourselves."

"Chrysoberyl!" Quasar cried, he stepped out of her grasp. "You can't leave here! You have the power!"

If you are exiled, there will be no hope. I can't take the throne. Marriage means nothing up here. You are the blood." She fought to retain her mask of coldness, but her eyes were twitching as he continued. "You need to be kept safe. You are too important to the mission and I love you too much to allow something dangerous like that." He took a deep, determined breath. "I'll go."

"Kyanite, you cant!" Chrysoberyl broke, but the two of them just stood and stared at each other. Chrysoberyl smoothed down her dress. "I'll see if I can catch what mother says when she audiences with Selenite. I'll tell you if she's attacking Garth or just Malachite."

"It's wishful thinking, Chrysoberyl." Kyanite stated, but he saw her self-hardened eyes and knew that she was fighting as hard as she could. He rubbed his hands over his face, using one finger to trace his scar down over his blind eye. "Alright, Chry, you do that. Meanwhile, I'll do some training and conditioning just in case I do have to go down there." He headed out of their room and down the hall, leaving her alone to shatter and weep in private.

\* \* \*

Oblivious to the problems facing his plan, Garth's cat instincts were pressing him with a sense of urgency. They'd tried five targets, each one having the greatest potential to hold a crystal fracture but all of them empty. He dashed along the streets of the city, his navy fur rippling over his muscles and his narrowed, yellow, pupil-less eyes wide in panic. His ears were eternally bent back over his neck and he had a bold orange crescent moon inverted on his forehead. Malachite, the doomed general, was running to keep up with him. For a cat, Garth was very fast. "Where are we going, now, cat!?"

"We're chasing a new lead." Garth announced. "There is no more time. We need to find the three fractures quickly."

"Oh great." Malachite stumbled alone, his cape getting caught in his legs as he ran. "Why don't you just shell out a ton of those magic Sailor Brat Wands? Then you can hit tons at a time."

"That'll do us no good." Garth shot back. "The dark soldiers are powered by the joint reserves of Pulsar and Quasar's powers. They cannot support hundreds of soldiers at one time!"

"And what in the world does that mean, anyway!?" Malachite demanded.

"Pulsar and Quasar are Sailor Soldiers." Garth explained.

"Yes, I know that!"

"But..." Garth continued, "a pulsar and a quasar are types of stars. Stars are not static like planets are, and therefore continue to put out energy, even when they are not being called upon to do so. Pulsar and Quasar as soldiers are not using that energy in the form of sailor powers or transformations, therefore the energy has been built up in a reserve that is readily available for my use in making mock sailor soldiers."

"This is so complicated." Malachite announced. "There are too many details. You come at me with a new tidbit of information every day. I'll never understand."

"Then shut your mouth and follow like the drone you are!" Garth spat.

"I resent that! I am a general!" Malachite replied.

"We nee to move quickly." Garth said again. "Very quickly." The two of them crossed a street, weaving through traffic, then ran along behind a row of buildings. Garth sniffed the air, his whiskers fanned, trying to pick up the signature odor of self-loathing and pity. There was a strong concentration of it rising from the southwest. He shot his head to the side and took off in that direction. A stronger stench meant more prospective targets. He would work his way through them until he found the Fractures and then he would return them to Sir Quasar and Lady Pulsar so that they might use the power to bring peace to the Negaverse. There was a lot depending on him and every nerve in his body sensed that their chances were dwindling as time was running out.

\* \* \*

The Sports Club minus Jennifer and Courtney had arrived at their seats. Luna and Artemis, the two magic cats, were waiting there obediently. Although feline in form, the minds of these two were near if not more advanced than the unassuming humans situated around them. As the girls came down the row, Raye signaled for the cats to keep quiet, Jessi couldn't hear them talk or else there would have to be a lot of fast-talking. They all sat down. Artemis climbed across her lap to plant himself, a white ball, next to Mina, who was his owner. She picked him up under the armpits and showed him to Jessi, who was sitting two people down next to Amy. "Look, Jessi, this is Artemis!"

"Wow!" Jessi grinned. "I love cats, I've always wanted one, but mom won't let me get on because she's afraid it'll scratch me or I'll trip on it and fall down the stairs, or I'll end up being allergic to it or something." She got up and reached over Amy and Lita to pet Artemis behind the ears. He twitched his long white tail and cocked his head to make it easier for her to reach. Much to his disappointment, Mina took him back and set him down next to her.

Serena was sitting next to Olivia on Jessi's left. She stood up. "Do you guys see the football team anywhere?"

"Who exactly are you looking for, Serena?" Lita asked.

"It doesn't matter! Everyone on our team is hot!"

"Hey! Our team's pretty hot, too!" Olivia cried.

"Ours is hotter!" Serena boasted.

"You can't prove that!" Olivia challenged. "Our Lovell guys are hot, and you'll melt as soon as you see them."

"No way!" Serena replied. "I've been stalking the Tenth Street guys since 5th grade! There's no way no South County hick boys can ever measure up to pure, sweet, Tenth Street goodness!"

"You take that back!" Jessi joined in.

"Never!" Serena cried.

"Grr!" The two 5th graders growled.

Amy called for order. "Maybe Serena should sit away from the Ruth Lovell supporters. She is obviously going to be very passionate about this game."

"Good idea!" Lita agreed. She grabbed Serena's hand and slung her to the side, plopping her down in between herself and Amy. On the way, the blonde smacked a very large man in the back of the head. The man got up and turned menacingly on them.

"Hey, you pipsqueaks! Watch what you're doin'!"

"Sorry sir." They said. They expected the apology to be enough, but he continued to shout at them.

"And the lot of you better not bother me again! I came here to watch this game, not to deal with snot-nose brats like you!"

"We'll be careful, Geez!" Raye cried.

"Shut up with the attitude or I'll snap you in half!" The man threatened.

"Rhrear..." Artemis spat.

"Which one of you did that!?!?" The stranger cried.

Mina elbowed Artemis. Amy tried to make amends. "Please, sir, if you would please sit down and return to what you were doing, I promise, we will not bother you again."

"Hmph!" The stranger snorted and sat back down, his size filling the space of three on the bleacher.

The girls exchanged glances. Serena whispered. "What a grouch."

Lita agreed. "He needs to switch to de-caff."

Jessi looked out over the crowd. "Do you see your sister anywhere?"

Olivia started looking too. "No, I guess she's still waiting for Courtney."

"Who is this Courtney girl we're waiting for?" Jessi asked.

"She's a part of the sports club. She's just like the rest of us, a teenage fan girl looking for a hot guy to drool at."

"Oh." Jessi said. The marching band began to filter out onto the field. "Do you guys drool at the band too?"

"I don't think so. Jennifer probably does. I think everyone else is looking for muscles."

Jennifer was too busy to stare at the band. She was distracted searching for Darien. She was so occupied looking for the 20-year-old that she missed out on several key personages as they arrived on the scene. Along the fence to her left, Garth and Malachite had trotted up. The silver-haired general leaned on the fence and looked down at his 'partner'. "You are not intending to search through all of these, are you?"

"It is of no business of yours." Garth hissed. "Wretched human."

Malachite cocked an eyebrow at the harsh response. "A little bitter still? Perhaps you should take out your grief on someone else for a change."

"I am about to." Garth assured. "I'm going to take out my grief on this whole stadium full of people."

Malachite was about to say something, but the cat interrupted him. "Over this fence! We need to get inside!"

"Why even bother bring me anyway?" Malachite asked. "I never do anything."

"You are my worthless human bodyguard." Garth informed him. "You are here to cover my operation and open doors for me."

"One of these times, I will shut your door on you, Master." Malachite promised.

Garth fanned his whiskers again, trying to pinpoint the most wretched person behind the fence. It was impossible at that distance and with such a high concentration of people present. He headed off down the fence toward a less populated region of the school-side wall. "Follow. We'll keep some cover at least. We will hop the fence around the back."

Malachite groaned and strode after the cat.

Jennifer stood on her tiptoes, trying to find a head of short black hair among the people waiting to get in. To her right, in a shadow, a Negaversian portal rippled open. The red-haired general stepped out. "What is this?" She asked. Her ponytail flopped back and forth behind her neck as she looked from side to side. "Is this truly where Malachite is? In such a peaceful, happy, crowded place? It is not his strategy..." She turned and saw her doorway close behind her. "The portal never lies." She recalled. "He is here. I just have to find him. Quickly. Before that assassin does." With a new sense of determination, she straightened her uniform and attempted to bleed casually into the crowd.

The marching band was parading about, their performance nearly complete. Jennifer stole a glance at her watch. 12:45. Darien was nearly ten minutes late. She'd known him for two days, but something inside told her that he was not usually late. She began to worry. Had he ditched her? Did he not want to see her again? Didn't he like her? "My gosh, I stink at this romance crud! He probably had second thoughts because of what a loser I am." Then she reconsidered. "No. He'll come. He promised. Darien never backs out of his promises." What made her so certain, she didn't know, but she waited expectantly for him to show up.

Being lost in thought, she'd completely missed the reason she'd stayed at the gate in the first place. Courtney Dianne had made it into the stadium at a run and bolted past her friend without even looking. Inside the field, the game was about to start. A quick scan pinpointed the location of the rest of the

sports club. The brunette headed up the stairs and plopped herself next to Olivia on the end. "Hi guys!" Olivia took a double take. "Courtney!? Where's Jennifer?" Courtney looked bemuddled. That wasn't the response she was expecting. "I- I don't know." "She was supposed to be waiting for you...did you see her?" Amy asked. "No, but I kinda ran in." Courtney explained. "I could have missed her." "Now she'll be down there forever!" Lita cried. "I'll go find her." Olivia resolved, standing up. "I'll come too." Jessi said, not wanting to be left alone with a bunch of older girls. "Okay." Olivia agreed. "But the game's about to start!" Serena said. "You'll miss the beginning." "Maybe we'll be back before the hot Lovell guys get out!" She stuck her tongue out at Serena then turned to Jessi. "C'mon, let's go." The two 11-year-olds headed down the stairs and into the crowd of people trying to make it up to the bleachers.

\* \* \*

The young man who Jennifer was waiting for knew that he was running late as he drove his red sports car toward the west of town. Darien didn't know why he was doing this. It was against his better judgment, and he was risking the chance of exposing himself to the other Sailor Soldiers. He didn't really want to know who they were, either. He wasn't out to make enemies or allies, his mind drifted back to his recurring dream. The princess on the beach, and the Imperium Silver Crystal. He had work to do. To find the crystal he needed all the Rainbow Crystals, and he still had one to find, apparently. He couldn't afford to be meeting up with a girl. But he was, anyway, and it was something he wanted to do. Perhaps she was his princess...

As he pulled off onto the shoulder of the highway and slowed on his way up the exit ramp, he caught sight of something by the side of the road. Something blue...or maybe more turquoise, and fuzzy. As he drove past, he saw it was a cat. It raised its head and looked at him, its large brown eyes looking nearly human as well as sad, hungry and lost. His heart melted. This wasn't some road-kill, this cat was still alive and might need help. He was already late, but perhaps this was a sign, if it was injured too badly, he would have to take it to the vets and be forced to skip his rendezvous with Jennifer. He stopped on the shoulder and got out.

The cat looked in disbelief, and shoved herself shakily to her paws. Her coat was covered in ash, and she was very thin from days without food. Darien knelt down next to her. "Hey, kitty, what are you doing out here?"

"M-mew-" she rasped.

"You're looking pretty bad, but it doesn't seem like you got hit or anything. Although you are pretty dirty." He reached down and dusted her off a little. On its forehead, he uncovered a yellow crescent moon. "Interesting markings...you would be easy enough to identify if I put you in the lost and found column. Come on."

Seeing an open arm, and deliverance from another day of starving, the cat struggled over and let Darien pick it up. He took her back to his car and placed her in the passenger seat. He'd been eating lunch on the way, but gave the rest of it to the unfortunate feline. It felt good to be a Samaritan. The cat gratefully gobbled the meat out of his sandwich and stared up at him as he started the car back up and took off. In her intelligent mind, she was in awe of this kind soul, who seemed somehow familiar...

\* \* \*

Selenite stood before her queen. Beryl was in her sitting room outside her quarters. The newly

appointed general stood confidently at attention. Beryl eyed her contentedly. Chrysoberyl was outside the door listening and hoping that her mother had forgotten about the threat she'd made against the Midnight Cat.

"Selenite." Beryl spoke. "You have been chosen to eliminate General Malachite. Are you prepared?"

"Yes, m'lady." Selenite confirmed.

"And are you prepared for your new task of hunting rainbow crystals?"

"Yes, m'lady." She repeated.

"To find Rainbow Crystals, you must first find the carrier and remove the crystal from them. You are only looking for one crystal, so as soon as you find it, report back here." Beryl commanded. "And do not use any energy. I am conserving as much as I can for the release of the Negaforce, and have already wasted far too much on Malachite and this stupid runaround."

"That is why I throw knives, your highness." Selenite stated.

"Indeed." Beryl hissed. "You are well prepared, but there is one last article I must employ you to."

Chrysoberyl caught her breath as her mother continued. "There is another target. Yes, I want you to kill Malachite, but there is someone else I would also have you take care of. He is a cat. A blue one. It belongs to my son-in-law, but it has tried my patience long enough. I want you to eliminate it as well."

"A cat?" Selenite confirmed. "Have no fear, m'lady. It is as good as dead."

Chrysoberyl leaned on the wall. 'So that's it. It is final.' She slipped into her audience status, not wanting to reveal the sense of doom she had overwhelm her. Paling her face and setting her eyes, she moved stonily away from the door to tell her husband. What had happened to their plan? An hour ago, it seemed to be going perfectly and then Beryl decided to attack Garth. Now Kyanite would have to expose his anti-monarchial intentions and be banished...or worse.

She felt like the General Zoicite that Kyanite had been speaking to. Her love was in the same situation. But what could she do about it? Chrysoberyl stopped in the hall. She would do the same thing that Zoicite did. She would follow Kyanite down to earth and protect him at all costs. It would make him mad, she was sure, but the thought of being trapped in the Negaverse alone with no one to share her true emotions and opinions would drive her insane. She'd run the risk of becoming like her mother, and lapse permanently into her cold, lifeless state of mind.

Kyanite warned her many times not to spend too much time stone faced. 'You'll lose yourself,' he'd said, 'and that is too precious a thing to lose.'

That settled it. If Kyanite had to go, she'd follow him and when it came down to it, she would face the consequences. She had priorities after all.

\* \* \*

Selenite's audience was brief, and Beryl had her open a portal to Earth. "I don't know exactly where they are..." Beryl told her, "But you can find them easily enough using this;" she presented the 18-year-old with an energy crystal. "This device is trained on negative energy and the blood of Negaversians. It will not detect you because you are its charge." The queen floated the apparatus to the assassin, who took it in her hand. "Notice how the crystal glows with an inner fire. When you arrive on the earth, the flame will be put out, but it will rekindle again when the blood of another Negaversian is near, or when negative energy is being used. That accounts for both the man and the cat."

"Thank you, Majesty." Selenite bowed again. "I go to obey your orders."

"You are dismissed." Beryl said, motioning her through the portal. "And make it a good show. I will be the only one watching, but I will do so with great interest."

"I will not fail you." Selenite assured. She bowed at the hip, then straightened up and headed through the doorway. Moving from Beryl's sitting room in the Negaverse to the sunny streets of the Universe

was no more than a matter of stepping through a hole in the planal rift. Once she stood on the sidewalk, the doorway closed.

There was quite a crowd assembled around her. An ambulance and a couple police cars parked nearby, she could see them through the heads. Most of the people were clearing out. The 18-year-old looked behind her. She was in front of a Starbucks.

“So, you stuck me at his last haunt?” Selenite asked the air. “Resourceful. Now let’s take a look at this gizmo.” She held up the Seeking Crystal. As predicted, it was cold as ice, even to the touch. In all those people, Malachite and his cat were not among them. “On the move...” She held the crystal in the air.

“Which direction?” Selenite pointed the tip of the Seeking Crystal at each of the four compass points. It seemed warmest west-southwest. “This way.”

“Excuse me, miss.” A voice interrupted. Selenite shot a police officer a steely glance as he grabbed her arm. “Do you have clearance to be here?”

She scowled and reached into her Z-storage pocket. “Pathetic Universe scum.” In a viper-fast motion, she flung a knife and caught the man in the shoulder. He let out a wail and fell back. She took off. Why waste more knives? She had a target to find.

\* \* \*

Garth and Malachite had scaled the back fence and now stood in a huge crowd of people. The game was about to start, so the majority of them were either heading toward the field or waiting anxiously in line for food and such. “Keep with the crowd.” Garth hissed at Malachite. “You are wanted on two counts of kidnapping, now. It would serve you well not to stick out.”

“I have you to thank for both those charges.” Malachite replied.

“And don’t speak to me!” Garth added, harshly. “One sure way to single yourself out is to start talking to a cat! Shut up and follow me!”

Malachite obeyed, fuming, and followed the feline as he edged into the crowd. The pavement near the fence was nearly empty and poor Jennifer was left hanging on the links of the fence and staring out at the street. He was 30 minutes late. “What gives?” She sighed. “He promised he’d be here! He promised!”

At long last, she saw a red sports car pull up and park. A tall, dark-haired man in a green blazer and khakis climbed out. The turquoise cat looked up from inside the car. “Mew?”

“Will you be okay if I leave you in here?” Darien asked.

The cat was concerned, her amber eyes wavering. Left alone again? That was the last thing that she wanted. Darien had always been a softie for kids and animals, perhaps it was a result of his lost childhood, or the tragedy of growing up on his own. The twenty-year-old was anxious to care for someone and those big brown eyes were boring into him.

He gave in and leaned over the driver’s seat to pick up the cat. “Alright! All right! Just don’t run away.”

“Meow Meow!” The cat complied. She rode against Darien’s chest as he carried her in one arm. He was warm, she rubbed her head on him and purred. She had survived a fire, two days of wandering and scavenging, a rainstorm, and two more days of nomadity, and now she had a strange feeling that she’d found someone familiar and important.

The two of them got in the gate, paid for a ticket, and were confronted by Jennifer who was trying to be condescending. “Where have you been! I’ve been standing her for Half an Hour waiting for you!”

“Sorry, it took me a little longer than I expected.” Darien said. He motioned to the cat on his arm. “I stopped to pick up this stray by the road. Do you think being a good neighbor is a good excuse for being late?”

“Oh! She’s cute!” Jennifer mused. She took the cat from him and held it like a baby. “Okay, I’ll accept



it this time, but next time you won't be so lucky!" Jennifer slid him a smile, showing her humor.

Darien put his hands in his pockets. "So, what did you want to talk to me about?"

The fourteen-year-old lost her interest in the cat. "Nothing...really...I guess..." He leaned in. Something told him there was something important on her mind. His face so close, she felt a tremor in her heart. Her eyes reddened. "Um..." She recalled the conversation she'd had with her sister the day before.

' "That guy at the Rec Center..." Olivia had said.'

' "You mean the hot guy at the front desk?" She'd asked,'

' "Yeah," Olivia had agreed. She had looked hesitant. "Did he seem...I dunno...Special?" '

'She heard her own voice "Special? How do you mean?"'

Oh, now Jennifer knew what she meant. The feel of his eyes on her face was making her lower lip tremble. She used one hand to cover it.

Darien noticed and put his hand on her shoulder. "What's wrong?"

Jennifer jumped and turned a pair of anticipating, bare, and frightened hazel eyes on him. His heart stung at the look, and he was afraid that he'd given her the wrong idea with his action. He took his hand back. She watched it go back into his pocket. "I- I'm sorry."

"Darien!?" Jennifer cried, finally. He looked intently at her, locking eyes. She searched frantically for the right way to ask what she was thinking. "How...How do you feel..."

"What?" He asked.

"About me." She finished. "How do you feel about me?"

"How do I - ?" He wasn't expecting an interrogation.

She held her breath. The cat on her arm looked from one to another. She was feeling it. There was a tense, unsteady emotion going on in each of their hearts. It was like she saw in the young man when they'd met earlier, only four times as strong. She was mystified by it.

"How do I feel about...you?" Darien stumbled over the answer. He reached up and rubbed the back of his neck, then tried to loosen out his turtleneck shirt. He glanced over his shoulder in either direction. "I - well - I"

She became disheartened. "I guess it was just me - "

"No - I don't know how to - uh" He was truly struggling, his heart was beating like a drum. "There was no way he could translate what he felt when he couldn't even figure it out for himself. He searched for a distraction. It came in the form of Olivia running up.

"JENNIFER!" She roared. Jennifer went white, caught in her deception. The cant on her arm was scared to death and scampered off into the crowd. Olivia was at a loss. "What are you doing here!?! And Darien too!? What's going on!?!"

"I - I invited him." Jennifer stammered.

"You INVITED him!?!?" Her little sister cried. "And you didn't tell me!?!"

"I don't have to tell you about everything I do!" Jennifer responded sharply. "I'm the older sister, not you!"

Darien raised his hand at the elbow. "Um, do I have to be here?"

"Yes, we were talking about something really important before we were so RUDELY interrupted." Olivia was shot the evil eye. "Why don't you go away and leave us alone to FINISH the conversation?"

"I like him, too, Sis, why didn't you think of THAT!?" Olivia rebounded.

"Do I really have to be here?" Darien asked.

"YES!" Jennifer barked, cementing him to the spot. She turned to her sister again. "I'm older! He's closer to my age! He's MINE!"

"You are six years apart!" Olivia cried. "He's too old for you anyway!"

"That makes it even worse for you!"

"Why do you always get your way just because you are older?" Olivia demanded.

"I do not! That's never happened!" Jennifer defended.

"It's happening right now!" Olivia informed. "I'm the older sister so I get this', I'm older so I can do that, I'm older so I can go dating older guys, I'm older so I can stay at home alone while you still need a babysitter! Gag me!"

Jennifer was not at all amused by the mockery. "That's the facts! I can't help that I was born three years ahead of you! You need to cope with the fact that I'll always get some stuff first, like a high school diploma, a car, a job, don't be so selfish!"

"I'm sick of this!" Olivia burst. "I'm sick of always being second! For ONCE I want to get what I want first and make YOU wait your turn! I want you to wear my hand-me-down clothes for a change! I ant to be the one who gets Darien, not you! And it's not fair that you ignored me even though you knew that I liked him!"

"You got to invite a friend!" Jennifer recalled. "I should too! Darien is my friend! I invited him! No go back to your little school buddy! Where's Jessi anyway?"

"She was right behind me." Olivia said, but she wasn't done being angry. "Great! All I need is for her to get lost! I'll find her later! I'm not done with you yet!!!"

\* \* \*

Jessi had gotten lost. She stumbled around in the bustling crowd, looking for her taller companion.

"Olivia!" She couldn't see anything over the heads. "Olivia!?! Where are you!? I've never been all alone in a place like this before! Olivia!!! Where are you!"

Garth's sensitive whiskers picked up the girl's self-doubt through the people. 'Ah-hah!' he thought. 'Success! Anyone who's brokenness is strong enough to stand out in so many people has to be a carrier of one of the crystal fractures!' The navy cat dove amongst the forest of legs and moved to seek Jessi out. Malachite lost him in an instant.

"Cat!?!!" He called out, looking around where the cat used to be. "CAT!?! Garth!? You worthless hairball! Don't tell me to follow you and then desert me!"

Around a corner, the call fell on familiar ears. Zoicite's head snapped around, her heart racing in her throat. "Malachite?" She dashed around the corner. "MALACHTIE!?!!" But like the cat, he too was lost in the sea of heads, and the noise muffled her cries. Still, she became determined. He was nearby; she was going to find him and quickly. There was no telling where Selenite could be. The general glanced swiftly to her watch. "It's been over an hour, the assassin has probably reached the earth already! My time is running out! With Beryl's help, that juvenile delinquent will find him in a minute! I've got to hurry!" She plunged in after him, becoming entangled in the group that had swallowed so many.

Garth found his lost soul beginning to panic, surrounded by strangers. Jessi's large brown eyes were contracted and trembling. "Olivia!" She cried out frantically. "Olivia!?! Where are you!"

"Little girl!" Garth called up to her. Jessi whirled around to see where the voice was coming from. Garth called again. "Little Girl! Down Here!"

Jessi looked down and saw the cat. She paid little attention to it, the idea of it speaking to her never even crossing her mind. "Olivia!!!"

"LITTLE GIRL!" Garth yelled again. "I know where your friend is!"

"Who's saying that!?" Jessi demanded. "Where are you!?"

"I am down here on the ground." Garth instructed. "I am staring straight at you!" Jessi looked down and spotted him again.

"The cat?"

"Yes, the cat."

"No way!" She insisted. "That's impossible."

“Stupid human! I’m speaking to you! Do you doubt your own senses!?” The navy cat had put up with this ignorance for a week now and he was thoroughly sick of dealing with an overpowering and completely stupid race such human beings. Yet again, he could always use ignorance to his advantage. “I am a mystical creature. I am all knowing and all-powerful. I was sent down from above to help you find what you are looking for!” It was an exaggeration at most. Mystical creature, he was to an extent, all knowing, he’d like to think so, and he was going to help her find what she was missing...that missing piece that would make her whole.

“You’ll help me out? My mom told me about guardian angels. Are you a guardian angel?”

“Why not.” Garth complied. “Just follow me.” Jessi tailed the navy cat to the field where they ducked under the wall-side of bleachers. Jessi looked around. “I don’t see Olivia anywhere! Is this some kind of trick?”

“I told you I’d help you retrieve what you were missing.” Garth recalled. “Now, I need you to tell me what it is that would make you the happiest in the entire world?”

“What do you mean?” The fifth grader challenged. “My mom told me never to talk to strangers and I think strange cats qualify!”

“Your mother is a fool!” Garth spat. “I am an all-powerful Chaltan from a dead planet that you destroyed.”

“I don’t know what you are talking about!” Jessi insisted. “And don’t call my mom names! She’s paranoid, not stupid. You should see how she worries about me!”

“So you want to be free of you mother?” Garth asked.

“Heck yeah!” Jessi agreed. “But like that’s ever gonna happen!” She glanced at the crowd headed for the bleachers above her. “And I still have to find Olivia, so sorry Magic Cat, but I’m leaving.”

“You are not.” Garth insisted. “I can make your mother trust you.”

“That’s impossible.” Jessi shot back.

“You are talking to a cat. Impossibility, I think, has been narrowed.” Garth observed. “Now, would you like me to change the world so that you are trusted by everyone like you deserve to be?”

Jessi glanced out over the people and to either side to make sure it was not a trick. It was certainly a tempting offer. “Yeah...”

“Then this is perfect.” He pulled out, once again, his velvet bag, took from it a pen with a black metal cap and a dark purple body. She picked it up, there was a symbol of a hand with a double ‘X’ running through it. As she stared, its magic power began to consume her. “Good...succumb...surrender to us your crystal fracture.” Garth sneered. “And help me punish this race for the deaths of my people!”

\* \* \*

Selenite found herself outside the Tenth Street High School. She second-guessed the reliability of the Seeking Crystal upon first sight. “This is a piece a’ crud! No Negaversian soldier would choose to show up in a place like this! Rubbing elbows with universe scum, it’s vulgar.” But the crystal was trained on Negaversian blood, and a man cannot deny what flows in his veins. The flame was brighter headed in that direction, so with a shrug, she moved to enter. She could have easily blasted a hold in the fence. Part of her training as a private in the army was energy control, and if she’d had permission, she would have enjoyed forcing her way in. For now, though, she would have to climb. Pocketing the crystal, she grasped the links and pulled herself over. She landed her boots on the cement, and headed casually into the stadium. In her subspace pocket, she was fingering a knife.

\* \* \*

The turquoise cat was once again alone. After her initial fright, she'd lost her two new companions and was now searching for them. She sniffed. A familiar scent caught her nose. She spoke for the first time in days. "Chatlan? There are others here?" She closed her eyes and took a better whiff. "A darker smell than what I've smelt before, but it's from home." She fanned her whiskers and felt the space. "Queen Serenity wanted us to find each other as well as the moon princess. I'm taking a step toward completing my mission!" She set her amber eyes. "I've got to find that cat!!!"

She headed toward the field, crossing over the white painted lines and coming to stand on the grassy turf. Standing apart from the rest of the crowd, she tested the wind and picked up the scent again. TI seemed to come from either side of her. The scent of Chatlans was in the bleachers to the left and the bleachers to the right. The wind blew up from her left, bringing the cat smell stronger from there. She decided to follow this trail.

"I can find the others!" She said, hope restored.

\* \* \*

Garth twitched his tail as he watched Jessi's trembling hand raise the transformation pen. Her bright brown eyes were clouded over in blackness. Negative energy was welling up in the back of her mind. Her hand became steady. She began to sell with the energy, and all her power and thought was narrowed and condensed into two words. "DARK ARA!!!"

Her voice echoed out, and all those sensitive heard it:

Up in the bleachers, things had been going fine. The teams had finally rushed the field and the girls were all shouting for their favorite side. "I can't believe everyone's missing this!" Lita cried, jumping up and down. "Wahoo!!! Go Tenth Street!"

Courtney was the only one unaffiliated. She went to a different school than either Jennifer or Serena. She cheered for what she knew. "Come on Hot Guy in the Black Jersey! Wahoo"

The fat man was now sitting in front of her, and he turned around and shook his fist. "What did I warn you girls!?"

"Yeahhhhh!" Courtney let out a wail and clung to Amy beside her. "What is that!?"

Amy tried again, frantically, to make amends. "We're terribly sorry sir! Please watch the game! Sir, We're sorry, we'll be quiet!"

He turned back around with a nasty glance at them. Serena hopped up and down. "Tenth Street! Tenth Street!"

Amy shushed her, but not before the man turned back around. "Shaddup!!!"

Serena was silenced almost immediately. When the man returned to watching the game, she stuck her tongue out at him. Luna looked worried. "Where are those girls? There is something strange going on." In the distance, the cry was heard, and no one thought anything about it. Raye was seized with a wave of Negative presence. She caught her breath. Luna, beside her looked up. "Raye, do you sense something?"

"It's a concentration unlike any other concentration I've felt." Raye answered. "It is very nearby. There is a lot of activity here."

"I sense it too." Luna confirmed. "You girls should check this out."

"Right." Raye agreed. She turned to the other five. "I'm up for a hot dog, anyone else?" They were puzzled so she gave them a wink. The more astute of them nodded with comprehension.

Lita stood up. "Yeah...uh, me too!"

"And me." Mina agreed.

"I would also like to come." Amy voiced. "It is part of the ballgame experience."

“What are you guys doing!?! The game just started!” Serena cried. “Cant it wait ‘till halftime!?”

“No, we have to go. NOW!” Raye insisted, stressing the ‘now’ and staring into Serena’s face.

“But I don’t want to!” Serena repeated.

“I do, and I really want you to come with me!” She yanked Serena up and drug her onto the bleacher stairs.

Courtney made a motion to follow. “Let’s all go.”

“No, Courts, why don’t you stay here and save our seats?” Lita suggested. “We’ll be right back.”

“Okay, I guess...” Courtney didn’t seem very happy to be left alone saving seven seats, but if they were going to abandon her, then she didn’t want them mad at her, too, when their spot was stolen. What their luck, the fat man in front of them would probably lean back and take up two rows instead of the one that he had already.

Olivia stopped mid-bicker and snapped her head around.

Jennifer was put off. “What now!?!?”

“Heard something!” Olivia insisted.

“I don’t hear anything.” Jennifer said, crossly. “Of course, I can’t hear anything above you screaming.”

“I didn’t really hear it...” Olivia replied. “I more of, sensed it.”

“You’re just changing the subject!” Jennifer accused. “You know I’m right!”

“No I wasn’t and No your not!!!”

Selenite’s seeking stone began burning through her pocket. “Yeahhh! Ahh! What’s going on!?!” She dug it out and juggled it to keep it from burning her hand. The flame blazed uncontrollable, leaving the formerly dark crystal a blinding light. As she tossed it, it changed brightness dramatically when switching from her right to her left hand. “There is a huge concentration of energy over there by that field.” She observed. “THAT’S where I’ll find my target!”

Zoicite’s senses picked it up faintly. She looked about, frantically, afraid that the disturbance meant Selenite as attacking, and caught a glimpse of Malachite’s long silver hair. Her heart pounded hard.

“Malachite!”

He paused. “I could have sworn I heard my name!” He thought. He edged over by the wall of a vending booth and waited to see if he heard it again.

“Malachite!” He turned his head and saw Zoicite running toward him.

“Zoicite!?!?”

“Malachite!!!” She jumped into his arms, and buried her face in his chest. “I found you! You’re all right! I found you in time!”

“Zoicite!?! Wha – What are you doing here!?!?” Stunned and surprised, he could do nothing but stare down at her as she fought to stop the tears of joy that had escaped her eyes.

She took a deep breath and reminded herself of the gravity of her mission. She drew back and wiped her eyes, then turned a look of determination to him. “You’ve got to get out of here!”

“Hold on a second, Zoicite, let me sort something out.” Malachite reigned, he grabbed her elbows and bent down to look into her eyes. “Why are you here!?”

“Beryl’s trying to kill you.” Zoicite reported.

“Well, I know that!” Malachite cried. “I’ve been a dead man ever since that Quasar freak showed up!”

“No, you don’t understand!” Zoicite insisted. “She’s HAVING you killed! I am lucky I found you before she did!”

“You shouldn’t have come after me!” Malachite told her. “Your life is in danger, now! Go back to the

other side before Beryl knows you're here!"

"Don't treat me like a little girl!" Zoicite replied. "I'm strong! Don't think I didn't think this through! I'm doing what I want to! Lets get out of here!"

"Do you really think that we can?" Malachite asked, critically.

"There has to be some way that we can." Zoicite resolved. "We can run!"

"You can't run from Beryl, she'll keep searching for us." Malachite stated. "We'll be the laughing stock of the Negaverse!"

"What is honor in exchange for happiness?" Zoicite demanded.

"You sound like a stupid soap opera!" Malachite cried. "This is reality! Love doesn't conquer all in real life. You've made a stupid move and now we'll both be killed."

"Not if we hurry." Zoicite pleaded. "Please."

"It is too late!" The two of them turned quickly to see Selenite, the assassin, standing above them, her fist full of knives.

"No!" Zoicite cried.

"I didn't expect to get to kill two generals!" Selenite mused. "Maybe Beryl will give me extra points."

"Who is this!?" Malachite demanded, furrowing his brow and sneering up at the 18-year-old.

"Remember!? I told you!!! She's – " Zoicite began, but Selenite interrupted her.

"I am your Reaper." She arced her long neck and looked much like a snake with her narrow eyes. "I come to dispose of and replace you." The messenger of Queen Beryl's intent. She doesn't consider you worth maintaining. Accept your fate so that I may accept your title."

"I cannot appeal to her majesty." Malachite said. "But I know that she is watching, and that she can hear what I say. I say to you, Beryl, kill me if you want, but that will not solve your problem. Your daughter is corrupt! She and her husband intend to smite your power underneath theirs and take your kingdom from you. This cat that you have paired me with has been a servant of their revolution and I have been a tool to his design. Do me this justice, and seek out the true culprit in this situation. And may your honor reign."

"Fancy words, scum, but I will not give up so easy." Selenite told him.

\* \* \*

In the Negaverse, Beryl had heard all he had said. At first she was furious. "How dare he accuse my daughter of villainy!? I've raised her to be devious and cruel like myself, but not to myself! She has more sense than that!!!!" Beryl rose and paced her chamber, leaving her window of energy. Her long wavy auburn hair and dusty purple dress trailing behind her. As she paced, the pieces began to come together. "Wait. That cat has double-crossed me. And I've never trusted that Kyanite. Why has Chrysoberyl become so interested in the kingdom suddenly?" It made perfect sense for this to be a plot. Too much had happened too fast. "This is an outrage! But it will be dealt with!" A fire burned in her eyes. "My own flesh! Betrayed! She will be punished! She and that Quasar will feel my rage!" She calmed herself a bit. "The will... but later. I will deal with them when I have a spare moment. No one should know what is true. I am the only one who heard what Malachite said. I would be scarred if anyone knew that my own daughter was against me. I'll smite her in private. Their punishment will be swift and my reputation will remain intact." She returned to her looking glass. "For now, I will quell my anger by watching that idiot Malachite die."

\* \* \*

Princess Chrysoberyl exited the training center where her husband had been practicing combat skills.

The news she had reported was old, now. But it was new to them. Garth was a target. The assassin was on the planet, Quasar had to go, and he had to go quickly.

"You realize that once I leave, I can't come back." Kyanite had said. "If I live, I won't be able to help you up here. You will have to carry on on your own."

She made no reply. She wore her mask-like expression to combat the horrible waves of reality and emotion that were in constant motion inside her.

"Do you think you can do it?" He asked. One glance showed him how she was responding. He dropped his shoulders in disbelief. "Chry, don't be like this."

She held on tightly to her act. Her eyes were slate-like and shallow, her face showed no emotion. She tried to move nothing but her chest as she breathed.

Kyanite came over, his tanned face and one deep brown eye pleading. He was being strong for her, but he didn't want to leave her like this, or have a blank look printed on his mind to secure this moment. He put his large hands on her pale shoulders. She stared, unseeing at his chest. "Chry, I hate to say goodbye. But this is possibly that last time we will ever see each other. I love you, and I don't want you to break down on me, but please show me yourself." She didn't move. "Please, give me a look that I can hold onto until the fall of Beryl, when I can come back to you."

Still no response. His wife was too afraid of letting go of her act. She was afraid for him. She was afraid of going on alone. Perhaps if she kept on her mask, she would make it all become a dream.

A heaviness rested on Quasar's heart. What he was afraid of was what he saw before him. This mask. He was afraid of loving his beloved to this terrible act and giving his universe a queen who was beautiful and powerful, without feelings or compassion, and killing the woman he loved. He leaned down to look into her clouded eyes. "Chrysoberyl. I have to leave, now. But I promise, if there is a way, I'm coming back to you. Please stay true for me." His blind eye had tears in it, his last seconds were ticking away. They were being wasted. "Please send me off with a kiss. Something to keep me sane without you. Something to remind me why I had left you when we are universes away."

He gave her his goodbye kiss. She kissed back, but it was weak, and her eyes struggled to remain unfeeling. He withdrew, hung his head, and passed by her. Behind, she could hear a portal opening, then closing. He was gone.

Now, headed down the hall, she was rushing to her chamber to remove her mask and hate herself in private. 'I didn't say goodbye.' She thought. 'He left so that I can be queen, and I let him go. My plan to follow is worthless. It would undermine everything he is sacrificing. His whole life, all his dreams were just sacrificed for me... And I didn't say goodbye.' Her eyes stung with unshed tears. 'I didn't do anything...'

~To Be Continued~

## 9 - Episode 8: Unseeing

Sailor Moon P

Episode 8: Unseeing

Neon orange bolts of lighting bombarded the sides of Jessi McClorn's transformation dome. The walls were a deep purple, dark strips of sinuous fiber, like clumps of sticky spider threads lashed out and clung to her. Her lone, thin, straight red hair was pinned to her body as the anchors bound her like a caterpillar inside a cocoon of negative energy. Electric orange light flashed again. The wind ripped the string from the wall and whipped it about in a frayed mass. More lighting struck and two bolts forked into her eyes. Orange light lit them from within like flame in her sockets. The energy of the bolts tore through her chrysalis and released her new self to float in her dome of chaotic power. The creature she had become was a powerful, dark Sailor Soldier dressed in a purple uniform with black bow and tiara and purple drawstring boots. Her voice cried out in the torrent of her new power. "No more a child! Not a servant of naiveté and innocence; I am self-sufficient! I am a leader! I am unequalled! I am honored and trusted and feared by all! I am Sailor Ara! I am WHOLE!!!" The walls of her dome cracked and vanished. The soldier of darkness stood upon the earth.

Fear reflected in the eyes of the turquoise cat. She saw who she'd come to find...Garth, the navy cat of Midnight was watching with pleasure and content. The eyes of this cat were slitted and yellow, and inverted moon was on his forehead. And evil sneer was on his face. The spectator caught her breath. "What has he done to her!?!"

Sailor Ara stood proud. She held in her hand a golden wand like a giant golf tee. Her symbol, the hand with the double 'X', was etched in black at the flat end. Garth smiled at his creation. "Sailor Ara, you will find all the crystal fractures for us. And you will do my bidding as well as a favor. You will bring humans to their knees and pay them for all they've done to my people. And when you run into those Sailor Soldiers; I want you to kill them because they were the ones who destroyed Chatla back in their Sailor War."

"Aren't I a Sailor Soldier?" Ara asked.

"Yes, but you are different." He said, he rose and headed out from the cover of the bleachers. The turquoise cat ducked under one of the lower steps. Garth wasn't searching, so he didn't sense here, but her heart was beating fast. His scent was so dark compared to those of her friends back in the Silver Millennium. He led his new prize out to face the crowd. "You, Ara, know the truth, and you are on my side. That makes you a queen among humans."

"He's got it all wrong!" The cat under the steps fretted. "He doesn't understand the past at all! I have to stop him and get him straight before he hurts someone!"

Sailor Ara and Garth moved onto the field, the football game was going on as they entered. The players didn't notice her, but the people in the stands looked over and saw. Ara seemed much taller, older, and more important than Jessi had moments before.

"Address the crowd." Garth instructed. "You have their trust, they will believe everything you say. They will devote everything to you."

Ara raised her head, her long bangs falling in locks. "Good people! Hear me!" The game stopped, the players turned, the cheerleaders froze, the band stopped playing, and all eyes in the stadium were focused on Ara. Every soul was transfixed on her. "I am Sailor Ara! I am here!"



They crowd broke into cheers and sighs of relief as if they had been lost without her. Her power was already taking hold. Outside the stadium, all the people milling around Olivia, Jennifer, and Darien ran to see what all the cheering was about. Darien glanced about as they were deserted. Olivia and Jennifer stopped fighting.

“What’s going on?” Olivia asked.

“All your yelling probably drove them off.” Darien said under his breath.

“What was THAT!?!” Jennifer snapped. He hushed up again.

“Listen to all that commotion.” Olivia directed.

“Someone must have scored.” Jennifer assumed.

“No, there’s something strange.” Olivia stated. “Something wrong.”

Darien put his hand to his head. “I feel it too.”

“I felt something strange before, too.” Olivia recalled. “Maybe it’s the Negaverse again.”

“But they’ve already attacked once today.” Jennifer said. “They usually only hit once a day.”

“There’s no law that says they have to.” Olivia shot.

“Whatever.” Jennifer cried.

Darien’d had enough. “Would you two SHUT UP!?! My gosh! I’d hate to be on car trip with you, you’d scratch each other’s eyes out!!!” Olivia snarled at him, her fingers hooked like claws. Jennifer huffed and looked at the ground. They were alone now, outside the field and inside was packed.

Garth stood beside Sailor Ara as she raised her wand in the air. “Take control of them.” He purred.

“They believe in you.”

“I will take care of you!” Ara announced. “If you let me take control of you, I will protect you from harm! Please trust me.”

“Sailor Ara! Sailor Ara!” The pole cried. Up in the bleachers, Courtney was on her feet and Luna and Artemis were jumping up and down. “

“I trust you Ara! Take me! Take me!”

Down on the field, the five girls who had gotten up to check on the disturbance had been drawn into it.

“Choose me Ara!” Serena cried. “Take me!”

“I trust you Ara!” Lita yelled across the field.

“Me too!” Raye added.

“Control me Ara!” Mina pleaded.

“Sailor Ara…” Amy stared in awe.

The whole place was in agreement. “They trust me.” Ara resolved. “All their lives are trusted to me alone.”

“Now give them what they want.” Garth instructed. “Place them under your power.”

Ara bowed her 11-year-old head and closed her eyes. A swell of blackish purple began to flow slowly from the end of her wand. It rose straight into the air and broke into two branches. The arms extended down to the people around her. Everyone who looked to her was shrouded in purple haze. The entire stadium seemed heavy with this dark cloud.

The fight between the two siblings was quickly forgotten as their eyes locked on the disturbance.

Jennifer pointed. “That’s not normal is it?”

“I TOLD you there was something wrong!” Olivia shot.

“Enough of this!” Darien interrupted. “You two transform! WE have a lot of people to save here!” the two of them looked up to him and nodded. “Right.” Two pens came out and were held in the air. Darien magically produced a rose.

“Polaris POWER!!!”

“Earth POWER!!!”

The tinkle of clattering crystals cued the ice princess Polaris to begin her transformation. Her body nothing but blue glitter and pink specks, she twirled around. A blast of frozen water cascaded upward and became solid. The girl inside the ice changed. A crack and a shatter gained her her freedom and light-blue clad Sailor Polaris posed before the shape of an eight-pointed star.

Inside a separate dome of wind, Jennifer was changing. Navy blue and aqua was blown in the air like leaves and kicked up her now speckled hair as it blew on her from behind. Raising her arms, the current dispersed and wound back, changing her silhouette to flesh and a sailor soldier uniform. Turning to the front and bringing up her arms, she posed in front of a footprint shaped symbol.

Darien's skin was black. A white diamond-shaped mask grew across his face. The 20-year-old was clad in a black suit and had a long red and black cape. It spun out behind him as his transformation turned him around. His top hat, thrown like a disk, flew out and around to complete his transformation and leave Tuxedo Mask standing in front of the image of a rose.

Three forces for justice, ready for action, emerged back into the realm of space and time. Sailor Earth turned to her fellows. "We have a job to do! Let's save those people before something terrible happens to them!"

"Right." Sailor Polaris agreed. "Let's go."

The three of them rushed into the thick of the haze. Everyone was silent, now, consumed by the power of Sailor Ara's spell. They shoved through the assembled zombies and saw the soldier in the center of the playing field. The purple cloud finished spreading from her staff and settled on the stands. The soldier lowered her arm, placing the head of the wand in her other hand. Polaris's eyes widened and quaked in disbelief. "Jessi!?!"

Earth shared the thought. "Oh no."

"Is that someone you know?" asked Tuxedo Mask.

"Yes." Polaris answered. "At least it was."

"We've got to find out what she had done to everyone!" Earth resolved. "And find Sailor Moon so that she can heal her before she loses her essence."

"You go find the other soldiers." Polaris directed her sister. "I'll talk to Jessi."

"I'll come with you." Tuxedo Mask decided. He and the blonde took off to the field, while Sailor Earth headed to the stands.

\* \* \*

"Zoicite!?!?"

Knives were whizzing through the air, Malachite was darting around, trying to avoid being hit. He'd lost his girlfriend in the fray. Selenite hopped down from her concession stand striking point, sending out a line of knives before her heeled boots made contact with the pavement. Malachite dove over a counter, one of the knives ripping a hole in his cloak. Selenite cackled. "What a blundering idiot! You look like a rodeo clown! I don't know how you ever became head of the army! Stand still and let me kill you, I've got other people on my hit list."

"I won't give you the pleasure." Malachite snarled, leaning over the countertop.

"On the contrary," Selenite felt superior as she slitted her narrow, pointed orange eyes. "I find this way much more fun!" She spread a fan of knives in her throwing hand and prepared for another rain of blades. Behind her, the red-headed Zoicite took up a trash barrel and lobbed it at her. The can caught her across the back. She stepped forward to regain balance and the knives clattered on the ground.

Malachite hurdled the barrier. "Zoicite! Get out of here!"

"You'll never get us!" Zoicite spat at Selenite.

Selenite uncoiled and flung a handful of the fallen knives at the female general. Malachite tried to summon up an energy laser, but it fizzled out. Beryl had cut off his energy supply. The blades sang through the air, but their hum was cut short as they stuck two in the wall and one in Zoicite's shoulder. The woman let out a wail of pain and anger.

Malachite's face twisted in rage. "Zoicite!" He stared at the 18-year-old assassin as Zoicite sank to the ground opposite him, clutching the knife handle. His hand twitched, he could feel a crackling of energy between his fingers. It didn't matter if Beryl wanted him to have access; if he knew where to find it, he could use energy. He willed a ball to grow in his palm and shot a laser of blue light out at his attacker's back. Selenite was unaware, and felt the penetration and sting of his ray as it hit her. She thrashed backwards and fell to her hands and knees, her back smoking. Malachite's palm throbbed. He ran over to his fallen love.

She looked up to him. "I – I have failed." He said nothing to her, but swiftly grabbed the knife handle and yanked, the blade coming freely out with another cry of pain and surprise from the wounded.

Zoicite's eyes moistened. "Malachite..."

Selenite shoved herself uneasily up, hunched over because of the soreness of her back and huffed like a bull as she stared at the two of them.

\* \* \*

Beryl had her hand on her chin and watched with interest as the fight between the general and her assassin unfolded. The energy window she was looking through took a long shot of the determination and rage on Malachite's face. "That man is more powerful than I thought." She watched as he defended Zoicite from more knives with the stolen energy he had to force past Beryl's barrier to use. "He is VERY powerful! He has found a way through my blockade and is using energy. No normal, second-class soldier can do that." She leaned forward. "Perhaps, I could use him after all. I will be getting rid of my military head soon; I will need a replacement. Since he did tell me the truth about the cat and my daughter, he has truly done no wrong to my authority." She smiled. "If he lives, then I will consider him to have proved himself. That is IF he lives." SHE watched the fight with a new sense of pleasure.

\* \* \*

Selenite stumbled to the side and flung another blade at Malachite. He focused his mind and brought up a wall of energy. It did not come easy, he had to fight to use it. Beryl's power was trying to take it back from him even as he held it in his hand. Hitting the shield, the knife ricocheted away. Malachite dropped the barrier. Zoicite got to her feet behind him, her hand over the bloody spot in her uniform.

Selenite panted. "How!? How do you get to use energy and not me!? I'M supposed to kill YOU!"

"What did I tell you? You'll not take me so easily." Malachite answered. She blew a piece of loose black hair out of her face. Malachite moved away from Zoicite. "I'm not afraid to die." Selenite began to circle, too, her lipstick smudged. Malachite narrowed his pale blue eyes. "I just refuse to be killed by a schoolgirl like you."

"Don't mistake my youth for a lack of skill." Selenite shot. "I've got skill pal! And I'm going to be a general. You are all that is standing in my way." She yelled up to the sky. "Beryl! Lend me some energy so that I can fight him fairly!"

"What fairly!?" Malachite cried.

Beryl was apparently smiling on the unfair odds because Selenite willed up a huge, crackling ball of energy. It swelled largely above her head and she stuck her hands into it. She let it merge with her own energy, gaining control of it as if it were an extension of herself. "Take this!!" With one hand, she tore a chunk of the energy ball off and threw it at Malachite. He dodged easily and began willing up another laser, but she spotted him. Both hands in the ball, she sent a plume of it out and struck him. He let out a cry as the crackling, burning current of offensive energy permeated his body and began to seer away at him. He tried to brace himself against it, but the plume shoved him back. Sparks of it flew off. His heart was beating at an astronomical rate, excited by the charge. His vision phased to white. The tips of his fingers became seized with numbness that began to creep up his hands. His blood heated up to near a boil. Thankfully, Selenite stopped the blast before he got the bends. Blind, his muscles twitching, Malachite dropped to his hands and knees.

Zoicite stumbled, fearing the worst. "MALACHITE!?!!" She collapsed next to him and tried to comfort him, but he was busy trying to get his body under control. His teeth clenched and his blinded eyes squeezed shut, he threw up his hand and urged her away. She turned a furious face to Selenite. "I'm an energy trainer." Selenite explained. "I've had as much experience with energy as you have. Like I said, don't mistake my age and rank for ability.

"I can't let you go through with this!" Zoicite cried.

"You've got no choice." Selenite said, the ball growing as it recharged. "Beryl's on my side. She wants me to kill him. And she probably wants me to kill you too, since you are in the way." She turned and blasted Zoicite with another plume of power. The general turned her back, and was shoved into the corner of the stand. She let out a cry as it burned her.

Malachite shoved himself to his feet. This child was unbelievable, and she was beating the both of them. He couldn't let Beryl destroy him like this, and he'd never let Zoicite be killed on his account. At the moment, he realized that Selenite was distracted. He charged.

Selenite was hit broadside as the general barreled into her, his eyes cleared enough to make out the huge ball of power above her head. She was torn from the energy and Zoicite was released and slumped back to the ground. The gathered energy had dispersed, but Malachite was well trained. He stood up and raised his hands. The energy condensed around them. "You are nothing compared to my experience. There are tons of lower ranksmen who think that they are all-powerful. The point is that I have fought my way up this system and have a right to be there. You won't kill me." He called up to the sky. "Beryl! If you want me dead, I request the honor of having you do it yourself! I won't be your entertainment!!!!"

"As long as I live, I will focus on killing you." Selenite said, shoving herself up.

"Then I guess I have no choice but to get rid of you right now!" Malachite hissed with rage. He roared and turned the whole orb of power on the 18-year-old.

Selenite's narrow eyes opened wide. The huge fountain of deadly, crackling energy exploded out in a disk from Malachite's wrists, then funneled, narrowed, and contracted into a beam that speedily flew to hit the fallen youth. Selenite let out a scream that was quickly muffled as the burning power, one-hundred times the strength of her attacks, penetrated and disintegrated her in seconds. When the energy in the ball was used up, there was nothing left of the assassin but a thin black film that was whisked away in a slight breeze.

Malachite dropped his hands and his sneer. He just stood, cold, aching, and exhausted. Zoicite stumbled over and took his arm. He closed his eyes. Just then, a black hole, a doorway to the Negaverse, opened up beside them. They were surprised to see it, but knew it was for them. The man, whose silver hair was frayed, and scorched, turned to look into it with a sigh. "Beryl is granting my request."

"No, Malachite." Zoicite pleaded, grabbing his hand. "After all of that, you are going to walk willingly into death?" But he looked at her, and she knew that he wasn't going to comply. He was headstrong still,

and she loved him for it. He was going through that portal to face whatever waited for him there because that was who he was. And that was why she wasn't going to let him go alone. His eyes told her that his strength was accompanied by a sorrow. She stepped up and took his arm again. "Let's go." His eyes smiled for an instant, but he closed them and took a deep breath before the two of them entered the portal and disappeared.

\* \* \*

Earth spotted the five un-transformed soldiers right on the sidelines. They were all frozen silent and shrouded in purple mist. She hopped the guardrail. "Guys!" They, of course, didn't move. They were completely zombified. It only took Earth a second to translate the scene. "Hey! Wake up!" She grabbed Lita's arm. "We've got a crisis here!" Lita shook her arm free and shoved Earth backward over the guardrail. The soldier landed on her face on the other side. She shoved herself up. "Oh yeah? So that's how you wanna play it, huh?" She had to get them free of the purple mist. She decided to focus on the most important of the Sailor Soldiers first. She hopped back over the guardrail and grabbed Serena by the legs. Flopping her over her shoulder, Earth made to leave. The other zombified audience members, however, did not seem thrilled. As Sailor Earth made off with Serena, the other four girls began to chase her. "Uh oh!!"

Serena was still covered in purple cloud, and was hitting mechanically at Earth's legs as her ponytails streamed out like ribbons along the ground. The four pursuers were like a troop of robots following behind. A burdened Sailor Earth trudged as fast as she could in circles around the playing field, the leader of a very bizarre parade.

Tuxedo Mask watched her as she made a wide circle around he, Polaris, and the offenders. Polaris was focused on her fiend, Jessi, who has taken up in the dark energy of the anxious cat next to her.

"Jessi!" Sailor Polaris cried, standing in front of Sailor Ara. The mock soldier's eyes stared unseeing through her terra cotta bangs. Polaris grabbed her arms. "Wake up! What are they making you do to everybody?!?"

"Ara, these soldiers think you are going to hurt all these people." Garth said with a flick of his tail.

"I will protect them. They trust me." Ara stated. "Don't you trust me?"

"That's not the point." Tuxedo Mask stated.

"They don't trust you," Garth told Ara, "what are you going to do about that?"

"I will make them." Ara raised up her wand, a bubble of purple energy welling up on the end. Polaris stepped back, puzzled, but Tuxedo Mask recognized what Ara meant. The end of the staff came slowly down to face Polaris and the result would not be a favorable one.

He leapt into action. "Polaris! Look Out!" She snapped her head around, but didn't move. It was up to him to save the day again. As time ran out, he jumped and shove her away. The purple on the staff shot out and sent a cloudy film over him. He collapsed onto his side, his blue eyes empty and staring without interest.

Polaris jumped up. "Tuxedo Mask!!!"

Ara turned her wand to the blonde soldier, but she knew what would happen, now. The young heroine refused to fall to the same fate as every other soul in the stadium and realized that there was nothing she could do until she found a way to get rid of the haze. She deserted the scene and her friends to see how her sister was doing with the other soldiers and hopefully get their help with this problem.

Garth turned to Ara. "You have done well."

Ara lowered her staff and reached a hand out to Tuxedo Mask. He stood up and stepped back to take his place near a congregation of captured players, coaches, and cheerleaders that were standing at attention nearby. The soldier surveyed her devoted masses, her eyes as empty as all of theirs.

From behind, the turquoise cat approached. She stared around her at the same assembled legions held by Ara's power. Up ahead was her fellow Chatlan with his victim. "All these people...Why is he doing this?"

\* \* \*

Tears came quietly. Chrysoberyl was balled up on a chair in the corner of the chamber she and her husband had shared, but he was gone. They would never be together here again. This was their world. When they had been exhausted of pretending to be what everyone else thought they were, they would return here and be separated from the rest of the Negaverse. She recalled days of laughing, evenings of being in love and sitting together alone in each other's hearts. It had been beautiful. And now it was over.

She had her knees pulled up to her chin, her tears matting the velvet and ruining the beauty of her gown. Yet another perfect and wonderful thing lost because of her.

She bowed her head on her knees, her arms strung around them, she was feeling miserable, when another cat wandered in. The cat was dark gray, and very elegant and fluid. Her eyes were pointed and pupil-less, as well as light purplish white in color. On her forehead was the shape of a three-tongued flame etched in pale yellow. She wore a diamond-studded black collar and the fur on her chin was slicked back into two points near her ears, which were eternally laid back across her neck. She had a devious look about her overall.

"Pulsar!?" She called in a satin voice. The princess's head rose, the cat came across the room and sat a few feet away from the chair.

Chrysoberyl wiped her eyes and hung her legs back over the seat of the chair. "Hecate, what is happening?"

"Haven't you been watching!?!?" Hecate demanded in a reprimansive tone. "Something horrible has happened.!"

Chrysoberyl's green eyes went wide. "Is Ky all right!? What has she done to him!?"

"Is that what you have been doing in here? Crying over Quasar?" Hecate demanded, twitching her whiskers. "You know very well that Sailor Quasar can look after himself. He is very powerful. There is no point in wasting time and tears on him."

"But he's alone down there. He and your husband, Garth, are going to have to search out the crystal fractures. That means they will have to stay in hiding while facing off with the Sailor Soldiers and avoiding Mother's bloodthirsty henchmen. And all the time, I'm going to have to watch up here alone pretending like I've disowned him! You are in the same situation, you must understand how I feel?"

"The weak are the ones who bother with worries and emotion." Hecate replied, without a hint of emotion in her voice. "Besides, you'll be seeing him soon enough."

"What are you talking about?"

"If you had been paying attention to the battle and not wasting your time on this pointless dribble, you would have seen that the victim killed the assassin."

"General Malachite lives?" Pulsar had new hope. "So he can remain with Garth and Ky can come home!?!?"

"The General evaded the assassin..." Hecate continued, "but not until after he revealed our plans to your mother." Pulsar cast her eyes down, comprehending. The cat vocalized her thoughts. "We need to get out of here."

Chrysoberyl wiped the last traces of grief from her face and became serious. "We are all in danger. Mother was suspicious of Garth and didn't trust Kyanite. There is no reason why she shouldn't believe what General Malachite has said. He was loyal. I will be in mortal danger soon if not already. I have to

go through with my original plan and follow Quasar down to earth. Together, perhaps, we can go through with out means of overtaking the queen. But I don't think that you should come."

"How much more dangerous do you predict it would be to be in the universe as opposed to staying in the Negaverse?" Hecate asked.

"We can move fairly well with two humans and a cat." Pulsar stated. "You, however, have the rest of your family to worry about."

Hecate nodded in agreement. She had her children to think of.

"Stay up here in hiding." The princess said, standing up. She stretched out her hand and opened up a portal. "When we return to take control, we will all be reunited again."

"You are a decent human being." Hecate said. "And the only one. I am hoping they you succeed. And I look forward to seeing your kingdom in the future."

"Thank you for your confidence." Pulsar said. "Farewell."

\* \* \*

Earth glanced quickly over her shoulder. She was still being pursued. With Serena a dead weight n her shoulder, and the exhaustion from the fight on the rooftop only hours before nagging at her legs, she was feeling anxious and confused. What on Earth was she going to do about this? Surprising to her, she suddenly had her sister run up behind her.

She glanced over Serena's butt "What are you doing here!?"

"I think the more obvious question is what are you doing." Polaris replied.

"I'm trying to save Sailor Moon." Earth answered.

"You're doing a lousy job!" Polaris observed. She gestured over her shoulder. "What's with them?"

Behind, the four girls were running in sync and not blinking. They let out a dull, monotone battle cry of "Get her".

"I think they're trying to get Serena back." Earth said.

"And what gave you that idea?" Polaris asked, sarcastically. "What are you going to do about them!?"

"To heck if I know!" Earth panted. "Got any ideas?"

"Leave it to me." Polaris skidded to a stop and turned on the approaching girls. She raised her hands above her head. "North Star Power...NOW!" A spiraling icicle froze the ground before them. Amy, who was in front, got her feet frozen in the attack. Raye careened into her and hit her head on the ground. She was left unconscious. The other two slipped on the carpet of ice and fell flat. Polaris called to her sister. "Jennifer! Hurry up!"

Sailor Earth dropped Serena on the ground where she sat zombified and looked to her sister. "What do we do now?"

"Sit on them so they don't get up." Polaris said.

"What!?" Earth looked at Lita and Mina who were beginning to shove themselves back into the chase.

"Never mind." Earth plopped down on Lita's stomach while Polaris made herself comfy on Mina. They looked at each other Jennifer cocked an eyebrow. "Now what?"

"Serena is still covered in that cloudy junk." Polaris observed. "We've got to get rid of it."

"You're the one with all the bright ideas, right?" Sailor Earth said, sarcastically, patting Lita on the thigh.

"Have you tried blowing it off yet?" Polaris asked.

"Blowing it off?" Her sister responded. "We'd have to chase her around."

"But if it works, it'd be worth it." Polaris observed. From where she was seated, she couldn't perform her whole attack, but threw out her hand. "Rushing WIND!"

Serena flew backward, the mist ruffling but not leaving her. She lay sprawled out on the grass.

Polaris frowned. "Well, icing these guys didn't help. How do you normally get rid of a mist?"  
"Wind would probably do the trick." Earth recalled, but shook her head. "That didn't work before. Maybe if we combine our powers into an icy haze we could thicken it and it could fall off into liquid."  
"We can do that?"

"Who knows, it sounds plausible anyway." Earth shrugged. "Let's try it."

The two of them wound up. "North Star Power..." "Rushing..."

"NOW!"

"WIND!"

Unexpectedly, however, the icicle did not blend with the gust as predicted. The ice attack missed Serena completely and flew on to strike someone in the crowd. They froze in a block of ice, but Earth's wind attack pushed them over. The ice shattered and the other two cringed. They thought they'd just injured an innocent bystander until they noticed that the ice had a purple hue, and the person in the ice was unharmed and not to mention, free of the spell.

"Whatayaknow?" Polaris grinned. "The mist froze first and the person inside wasn't hurt."

Earth glanced backward at the mess behind them. "So I guess Amy's feet are healed?"

"Let's finish them off." Polaris suggested. She jumped up off Mina and Earth freed Lita as well. They backed up near where Serena had fallen. The girls got up and started trudging toward them.

Earth turned to her sister. "You freeze 'em, I'll knock 'em down."

"Right." Polaris agreed. She raised her hands, gathering icy crystals and shooting out two icicles. Both Mina and Lita froze. Earth wound up and sent two gusts of wind to knock them over. The mist broke apart and the girls' color was back to normal. Polaris stepped around. "Okay, get Raye next. If we freeze her to the ground, we'll never break it apart."

"What about Serena?" Earth asked.

"We'll get her in a minute." Polaris assured. "Grab Raye."

Earth traipsed around and yanked Raye up from where she was out cold behind Amy. Once Earth pulled Raye up to standing position. The blue haired girl began to whack her with one arm.

"Ouch! Polaris! Hurry up!"

"Okay!" Her sister called. "Get ready!"

"Ow!" Amy hit her again. "Ready!"

"NOW!" Another spiraling icicle flew and froze Raye and Amy together. Earth leapt out of the way to avoid being hit. Raye was frozen mid-fall and the lopsided way she was standing pulled both she and Amy over to shatter and return to normal.

"Now for Sailor Moon." Earth resolved. She headed over to where Serena was, but something strange began to happen. All the people who were under Ara's spell began to change. Their eyes blanked out, the color draining. The two girls exchanged glances, then stared over at Sailor Ara. The girl had her wand in the air again.

She stood staring straight ahead. Garth was atwitter with anticipation. "At last! Revenge! You, Sailor Ara, could possibly be one of the crystal fracture carriers, but even if you are, there are still two more to be found quickly. So, with your power, you can take the essence of everyone in this arena. You can force the essence out of them as you fill their minds with your power. And at the same time there will be hundreds of people who will die without surrendering a fracture. This is my revenge! For Chatla! Take them, Ara! Take their essence!"

Ara paused. She stood straight ahead and spoke in a monotone. "But they trust me."

"That is your power entering their minds." Garth said.

"I promised to protect them. They believed me."

Garth lowered his head. "Don't you know? The backbone of trust is betrayal. There is no reason to gain trust but to betray in the end. That is what happened to my home planet. To my native people. To my



mother and my brothers and sisters and my friends. The sailor soldiers, in their blasted Sailor War, destroyed Chatla and left me and my father two of the last survivors. They promised they would look after the small planets. They failed, and betrayed us. That is what happens to trust.”

“It is?” She asked.

“Yes, and the time has come for you to complete your job.” Garth assured her. “You will reach your maximum once you take the lives of all these people and steal their essence from them. At that point, the takeover will be complete and you will surrender your crystal fragment.”

“Stop!”

Garth whirled around and there stood the turquoise cat. Briefly, his ears came up off of his neck. “Who are you?”

“I am a Chatlan.” She announced. “My name is Niobe.”

Ara relaxed into her new mission. Her wand began glowing brighter. Earth and Polaris were faced with the prospect of not only having an arena full of loose essence, including that of Tuxedo Mask who still stood assembled among the field personnel, but also that of Sailor Moon. Serena was still a victim of the purple mist and if her essence was taken, there would be no one to heal her or anyone else. They had to stop Ara before a disaster occurred. They took off and ran past the two cats not acknowledging their presence. Earth turned and spat an order to her sister. “You get the stick! I’ll get the girl!”

“Why do you get the girl? I can take her! She’s my friend!”

“I’m bigger.” Earth replied.

“I’ve been a soldier longer than you have!” Polaris insisted.

“Just get the stick!” Earth growled.

They attacked. Earth flattened Ara onto her back. Polaris ran around and began yanking on the staff.

Ara struggled. “Let go of me!”

“Give me the stick!” Polaris cried.

“No! Help me, my followers who trust me!”

“Jessi! Wake up!” Polaris yelled.

Earth looked up from where she’d pinned Ara’s face and free hand to the turf. “Polaris! Watch out! The zombies are alive!” At Ara’s call, all the victims on the field, including the cheerleaders, the coaches, Tuxedo Mask, and all the football players, had moved in to defend her.

Polaris jumped back, but didn’t let go of the staff. “Yeow!!!”

“Don’t give up on that stick!” Earth told her sister. “I’ll try and occupy them!” With that, the soldier released the girl and raced to stand against the oncoming attackers. The football players were looking particularly nasty.

Niobe the turquoise cat stared intently at Garth. She searched his pupil-less yellow eyes and realized his state. She sighed with a touch of sorrow. “You cannot see.”

“I can see!” Garth hissed. “I see fine, and right now, I am witnessing the revenge of the Chatlans that has been so long in coming. You are of my race, you should feel it too.” He squinted at her. “How did you survive. My father and I thought we were the only ones left. Were you with the off planet peoples? My wife was one of them. You were fortunate enough to have evacuated before the destruction.”

“I never doubted the Sailor Soldiers to even think of evacuating.” Niobe answered. “I owe my life to them.”

“How can you say something like that after what they did to Chatla!” Garth roared, his yellow eyes glowed brighter.

Niobe’s large brown ones narrowed in concern. “No, you cannot see. Your eyes are clouded in hate. But if you knew the truth, you would be able to see clearly.”

“What are you talking about?” Garth asked.

She closed her eyes and sat back. "I will show you the true fate of Chatla. Please open your eyes and let my message clear the darkness that has clouded your mind." Her eyes opened, they sparkled with a deepness and had flecks and points of changing colors. The crescent moon on her forehead twinkled with golden light. His eyebrows raised, the slanted sharpness of his eyes rounding as anger was replaced with wonder. He fell into them, taken up in the swirling depths until he found himself standing on familiar ground. He looked around.

"No! I can't be!? Back home?" the ground beneath him was covered in soft mossy grass. The sky above was lavender blue, but thin enough to see the brighter stars through the morning sky and wispy clouds. A small blue sun shone down, warming the navy fur of his back. Overjoyed, the cat began to romp in the field, feeling like a kitten again. The planet was small, and gravity less, and his romping was like bounding, comparable to walking on the moon. He reached the top of a ridge and looked down on a settlement. A smile, most uncommon on Garth's face, broke at the sight, his ears coming forward. "I'm home!" He headed down the hill toward the hovel-looking shelters and streets full of multi-colored cats. "I'm HOME!!!"

Just then, however, an explosion shook the scene, knocking him broadside and leaving him lying on the hill. A bright white light cut through the atmosphere at an angle and began to blow away the mountains bordering the town to Garth's left. The people below screamed and deserted their homes. Rocks flew down and smashed the buildings. Garth stared around frantically.

"No! Not again!"

the attack was the Sailor Soldier's Planet Attack. It was aimed at the forces of Chaos that had assembled nearby. They had promised the people of Chatla that they would protect their planet from the war. Now he was witnessing on the planet what he and his father saw from space; the destruction of an entire way of life. The beam continued to bore into the planet to its core, widening and spreading destruction. He turned his eyes to the land below. He saw cats running away. The young little kittens, the toned, strong adults, the wrinkled elders, all of them trying to avoid being smashed by debris on their way over the hill to the right. His eyes caught on one small ball of turquoise fur scampering as fast as her little legs could carry her. She was running behind a tall pale green female and a tall blue male. Debris from the Planet attack rained down. Once hovel had its walls knocked out. The little kitten let out a squeal as the roof collapsed on top of her. Garth felt the fear in her amber eyes. "Mommy!" the light green cat skidded to a halt. "Oh no! Niobe!!!" She turned to the blue cat. "Tantalus!" He stopped and looked back. Niobe's mother tried to shove the roof aside, but her daughter was pinned and crying. She turned back to the father, but fear for his own life drove him off, deserting the rest of them.

"Tantalus!?!"

"Daddy!?!"

Garth stared anxiously at the scene. Was there a father that could be as cold as to desert his family when in trouble? How would rescue come for them?

It came from the sky. A large ship landed just over the hill to Garth's right. The green cat's ears shot up. "The Sailor Soldiers!" The white planet attack had ended before. Garth was so involved with the family that he hadn't noticed it. Even though the attack was over, stones still fell. He noticed that magma was seeping out of the cracks. The planet was self-destructing. The mother called over the hill. "Help! Help us, please!!!" But she was too far out of reach and they couldn't hear her through the turmoil. An earthquake started.

The ground shook and another building nearby toppled down. The green cat looked from it to her young daughter, to the hillside and the ship beyond. She crouched down to her daughter. "I'll be right back."

"Mommy!?!!" Little Niobe's eyes filled with tears.

"I'll be right back with help, I promise." She kissed her daughter and ran off.

Niobe cried out as she watched her bound away. "Mommy don't leave me!" But the cat was gone, and the little one was left there, rocks still falling and the earth shaking sporadically. She began to weep to herself. "Don't leave me here alone!"

Garth gathered himself. He couldn't believe that both parents had deserted their daughter. He, himself was a father, and his eyes set in determination. For the first time, he forgot he was merely witnessing the past and hurried down to be with the kitten. "Don't cry." He said as he halted beside her. "You're not alone."

The kitten couldn't see him, tears running from her closed eyes, the debris on top of her shaking with another shockwave. Garth crouched to keep his balance. The shockwave gained intensity. The rest of the building, parts standing at strange angles, waved threatening with the tremors. Garth moved to cover the head of the young girl as a crack split open in the sturdy earth nearby. He looked to the hillside.

"Hurry! Hurry and come back! What kind of mother are you!?" There was no stirring on the hillside. Niobe cried in terror. Garth stared frantically around, calling even though his voice couldn't be heard. "Someone help! Anyone! Come and save this little girl! She didn't want this war! Don't let the innocent suffer in your pointless struggle! Help her!"

There was movement and a pair of figures sprang over the hill. They were humans, women dressed in variations of the Sailor Soldier uniforms. Garth was amazed. He backed off as the two of them landed. One was dressed in a light blue Sailor Suit with pink bows, her dark hair pulled back in a clip. The other's was long and blonde. Her uniform was navy and aqua. They were sailors Earth and Polaris from the past. Both seemed to be in their thirties. Sailor Polaris set Niobe's mother back on the ground. The light green cat rushed to her daughter. "I'm here! I'm back! Are you okay?"

"Mommy!?" Niobe wept.

The mother turned. "Can you help her?"

"We'll help, don't worry." Sailor Polaris said. She turned to Earth. "Mary, you take care of the little kitten. I'll move the barrier."

"Be careful, Sister." Earth warned. "We're in a hurry, are you sure you don't want me to do it, I am the older sister after all."

"Those days are over, Mary, I'm taller than you now." Sister replied. Garth watched in wonder as she hoisted the roof off the ground and the blonde gently took the kitten in her arms.

"We're sorry this happened." Mary told the green cat. "But we'll hurry and get you both on the ship. We have to evacuate the planet as fast as we can."

"Thank you, Sailor Soldiers!" The cat said, tears in her eyes. The ground began to shake again and the cracks opened wide in the surface. Polaris dropped the roof.

"Come on! Let's get out of here!" Sister picked up the mother cat the two of them bounded off over the hill to their ship, barely avoiding the rest of the hovel as it collapsed over where they had been, and leaving Garth behind. He watched as the evacuation craft deserted Chatla to its fate, carrying all of its residents. The image faded as the planet deteriorated and he found himself sucked back into the present facing a full-grown Niobe. She blinked and the enchantment was over. Garth stared; blinking away the emotional twitching that had seized his eyes.

"They rescued her?"

"Yes." The turquoise cat answered.

"The heartless demons my father told me about, they endangered themselves to rescue the Chatlans from their planet, and went out of their way to save one little kitten from destruction?"

"Yes." Niobe said again. "The soldiers promised they would protect us and they did. The destruction of our planet was an accident, but they didn't abandon us with the consequences of their mistake. They rescued us, and moved us to a new home on the Earth's moon, where we lived in peace and prosperity all through the Silver Millennium along with the royal family of the moon."

Garth's eyes wavered. "Humans would do this?"

"Humans are very kind hearted and thoughtful." Niobe said. "Only some are mean and cruel. It is true that some humans are irrational and full of hatred, but..." She looked knowingly into his wide yellow eyes. "so are some cats."

"My father..." He took gasping breaths. "If this is true, then I can see now that...that my father was wrong." Light hit the trembling pools as tears welled up. "He taught me lies! After learning the truth and seeing...seeing you alive..." His emotion gave birth to resolve as the tears spilled over. "And I cannot hate humans if Chatlans still live! My culture lives! If that little kitten lives then I – I owe everything to humans! I – I love humans!" His heart swelling, the pupil-less-ness of his eyes began to fade. The yellow sank into white until all that was left was a golden iris and an enlightened look on the strong face of a navy cat.

Niobe smiled, looking relieved and exhausted. "Now you can see."

There was a cry of pain and the two of them were forced back into the current conflict. Earth had been knocked to the ground by one strong high school football player. The cheerleaders were kicking her.

Garth's handsome new eyes flashed to the scene. "Oh no!" He looked around at the stands full of people teetering on the edge of death. "All of these innocent people are about to die!" He turned to Niobe.

"If Sailor Ara reaches her maximum, then there'll be no stopping it! We've got to do something!" But Niobe didn't look well, her eyes were blanking and she slumped down. "Niobe!?"

"I'm glad that you see the truth...now you can stop it..." She sank to the ground. "I used all of my energy and memories to show it to you. Now I am fading quickly."

"Niobe?! You can't – " Garth pressured. He glanced from her to the fight and back.

"I did it to save you." She said with a weakened smile. "So that you can save everyone else... If I am wasted... This was all I could do to help and save everyone... to save you... please go." Her amber eyes closed. She collapsed on the turf, the memories that had been so hard to translate to images having left her mind unconscious and her body limp on the field.

"Please don't – " Garth said with anxiety. He focused himself and set his attention to his new duty. He turned to the motionless form of the cat. "I'll protect you, Niobe. I won't let you die in another war you weren't asked to be involved in. I won't let the work of the Sailor Soldiers of the past be abandoned to vanity." He turned and scampered into the fighting.

Earth squinted through the bandage and stared up at the chalken faces of her attackers, their throats, even now beginning to glow with condensing essence. She threw up a hand. "Rushing WIND!" The girls flew off and Earth got to her feet. She saw a football player heading for Polaris. "Rushing WIND!" the boy got the full force of her attack and blew off into the barrier by the bleachers. The multitudes left there seemed unconcerned. Suddenly, she was struck across the back by a cane and kicked down by the zombie Tuxedo Mask. He stood over her, tall and emotionless as she stared up through his shadow.

"Darien?!?"

Polaris was playing tug-of-war with Ara and the magic staff. "Let go of it!" Olivia insisted. "Jessi! You don't know what you're doing!"

"I need to complete my mission!" Ara insisted. "I need to fulfill my calling."

"Nothing good will ever come out of Negative stuff like this!" Polaris insisted, giving the staff a tug.

"You're not thinking straight."

"Turst leads to betrayal!" Ara cried, her eyes flaring. "TRUST LEADS TO BETRAYAL!!!"

Tuxedo Mask reached down and pulled Earth up by the wrist, then placed his gloved hands around her neck. She let out an exasperated and suffocated gasp. "Darien!!!" Earth's heart was beating fast...all the feelings that she felt for him were helping him choke her as she stared into his blank, colorless, unseeing eyes. The purple mist was keeping her face from reflecting in them. She felt herself rise from the ground. His face didn't move, his eyes never changed. He didn't blink. She grabbed his wrists to

support her weight. She cried in frustration and disbelief. "I love you, Darien!" His cold, heartless expression stared back and the squeezing of her neck tightened to keep her from speaking again. Garth stared at Sailors Earth and Polaris. He had seen them minutes before in Niobe's vision, and even though they were different people, knowing that they were being killed by his creation gave him a sense of responsibility, and he knew how to end the attack.

Polaris tugged hard. "Jessi! Stop!" Sailor Ara yanked the staff closer to her. Garth ran up behind and bounded onto Ara's shoulder. Polaris set her eyes on the staff. He moved down Ara's arm and spoke to the blonde. "I'm going to help you!" Polaris didn't believe him until he scratched at Ara's hand, tearing the off-white of her gloves and forcing her to let go. Polaris fell backward with the staff in her possession. "Destroy it, Sailor Polaris!" Garth commanded. "Ara's power is held in that! Free these people and destroy it forever!"

The young soldier glanced around. The football players were still advancing on her, slowly, the stands were full of helpless persons. She threw the staff in the air. "North Star Power...NOW!!!"

The icicle from her attack struck the staff, causing it to freeze solid. It fell back and broke on the ground, weakened by her ice power. When the staff was destroyed, all the people were released from Ara's spell. Color sprang back to the faces and eyes of everyone, who stared around, confused as to what had happened to them. Tuxedo Mask suddenly found himself with his hands around Jennifer's neck. He dropped her and she fell down to the ground. He kneeled quickly to make sure that she was all right, his whole emotion returned and his eyes bright blue again. The oncoming football players were not approaching anymore, but took off their helmets and looked to each other, puzzled. Across the field, Serena straightened up, rubbing her backside. The other girls were just coming to from their fall in the ice. She hurried over to see if they were okay. All that was left to deal with was Ara herself. "My staff!" She cried. "My magic staff! How could you!?!!" She stared furiously up at Polaris. "You'll pay!"

As Ara attacked her physically, Garth rushed out to the cat at the center of the field. Niobe was still unconscious, so he eased her onto his shoulder and moved her to the sidelines. There he laid her down against the protective barrier. "I'll keep you safe like I promised." Garth assured her. "I had to get your out of the way of danger, now that you are safe, I have to go help Ara. I'll be right back."

In the bleachers, Courtney, Luna and Artemis had reawaken from the spell and now stared down at the field. All three were in dismay. Luna and Artemis exchanged glances. "Something has happened." Luna whispered. "The girls need us."

Artemis nodded. "Let's go." They dashed down to the field. Courtney was staring too, however, and she recognized the girls near the opposite side.

"Is that Serena?" She also headed down the stairs to the field." What in the world is going on around here!? Was I asleep?"

Serena was helping Mina and Lita up; they both rubbed the backs of their heads. "What's going on?"

"I don't know." Serena answered. "But Olivia and Jennifer are over there fighting."

"We should help them." Amy observed, from where she sat. Raye was next to her, moaning.

"My head hurts so bad!"

"Girls!" Luna and Artemis had taken one look at the action near their set of bleachers and made a b-line to them. "We don't know what has happened, but there is an evil soldier there and Polaris is taking her on all by herself!"

"You need to transform and help her." Artemis stated.

The girls nodded. "You're right."

"I'll kill you!" Ara cried. "You've ruined my chance to be complete!"

"Ara! Stop this!" Garth cried. "You were not meant to betray! Use your power for good and surrender

your negativity!”

“You helped her destroy my power!” Ara hissed. “You are a betrayer AND a liar!” She shoved Polaris down and ran toward Garth. He stepped backward, his ears falling back in fear.

“Wait – “

“This is what you get for double-crossing me!” Ara bared her teeth and bunted the cat in the head. With a yeowl, Garth flew and slammed against the hard wooden planks of the barrier. He flopped unconscious next to Niobe.

Sailor Earth and Tuxedo Mask were back on their feet. “That wasn’t nice!” Earth cried.

“I don’t really know exactly what’s been going on,” Tuxedo Mask added. “But you aren’t going to hurt any more people.”

“We’ll make sure of that!” Sailor Moon and the other Sailor Soldiers ran up, fully transformed and ready, at last, to fight on the good side. The pigtailed blonde in front pointed to Ara. “You’ve threatened tons of people here in this ball park and deserve to be taught a lesson! I am a warrior for love and justice! A pretty Soldier in a Sailor Suit! I am Sailor Moon!” She posed for the crowd. “And in the name of the moon, I shall punish you!” The people in the bleachers cheered and Sailor Moon waved to them. “Thank you, thank you adoring fans!”

Ara fumed. “I can take you all out! I will, with – With my bare hands!”

“How did that sweet little Jessi turn into someone like this?” Jupiter asked, scratching the back of her brown head.

“That’s not her.” Mars answered. “That is what she has become with the negative influence in her mind.”

“Hurry and heal her, Sailor Moon.” Venus pressured.

“Can I do that?” Moon asked. “I mean, she hasn’t lost her ghost thingy.”

“Essence.” Mercury corrected.

“Yeah, that.” Moon continued. “If it hasn’t come out, yet, then how can I put it back in?”

“You just need to clear her mind of the negative presence.” Mars insisted. She turned to Sailors Earth and Polaris. “You two hold her still while moon gets her with the wand.”

Earth and Polaris looked at each other. This, by far, was going to be the easiest job they’d done yet.

“No problem.”

Each grabbing an arm, they held Ara in place, and Sailor Moon stepped up to bat. The soldier took out her crescent moon wand and twirled it, then bringing it down, she traced a circle and yelled;

“Moon...Healing...ACTIVATION!!!” White-silver light shot out at Ara and entered her head. Instantly, the cloud of black energy escaped and the purple and black uniform changed into Jessi’s normal clothes. Polaris and Earth let her go and she sank to her knees.

“Wh-what happened?”

“You got in a tangle with the Dark Side.” Polaris said with a grin. “But you’re alright now.”

“What do we do now?” Sailor Venus asked.

But through all of the fighting, there was a flash of lightening and a column like a mushroom cloud shot down from the sky somewhere in the city. The girls turned and saw it through the open margin between the bleachers. Jupiter stepped toward it. “that didn’t look good.”

“Something or someone just used a huge amount of energy.” Mars said, her eyes closed. “Their aura is strong. Whatever it is, it must be very powerful.”

“Come on! We’ve got to check it out!” Venus cried, running forward. The other girls nodded and followed suit.

Polaris, Earth and Tuxedo Mask paused. Polaris stared at the dark ripples the column had made in the sky. “This is big. Bigger than anything yet.”

“What do you make of it?” Earth asked Tuxedo Mask.

The man had his hand to his head, his intuition stinging and aching behind his eyes. "It feels like this...this may be the end."

~To be Continued~

## 10 - Episode 9: Star Power

Sailor Moon P

Episode 9: Star Power

The football field at Tenth Street Senior High was left quiet. Everyone in the stands and on the field were staring out over the city. The sky was rippling out from a column of power that stretched from ground to sky and moved the clouds. The football game they had come to watch was unofficially canceled.

Although none of them knew it, a very powerful prince of darkness had descended on their world, and he was looking for something. His search for the crystal fractures would lead him through each and every one of them, yanking out their essence in hopes of finding the pieces of the Twilight Crystal. He'd be destroying one universe trying to save another, and all they could do was stare, and wonder what was going to happen to them.

But Sailor Quasar was not trying to make a scene. He wanted his presence on Earth to be as hidden as possible. This was a signal. He was trying help someone find him.

There was only one girl moving in the stands. Courtney Dianne ran down to the field to find that the seven Sailor Soldiers had taken off. She stared over the field. An apocalyptic atmosphere had settled on the multitudes. "Where did they go?" She stared off at the column of smoke and lightning that was fading even now on the October breeze. She jumped the crowd barrier and landed on the turf. Then she caught the sight of two cats, unconscious next to her. "What's this...?"

Quasar stepped into the shadow of a building down in the governmental district of Tenth Street County. The town hall was just ahead and he'd concentrated his sailor powers on a statue mounted over a fountain to create the beacon. "If Garth can't see that, he's an idiot." He said, under his breath. He crossed his deeply tan arms across his burly chest. "Now all I have to do is wait for him to turn up so we can get on with this thing." He closed his eyes and sighed. "I don't want to be here...I wish there was an easier way to take over the Negaverse." He thought about his home, and his departure. The look his wife had given him and the emotionless farewell stung on recollection. He knew in his heart that it was a charade, and that she did it because she couldn't bear to see him go, but still, that haunted look was printed forever on his mind. He thought back to the day they had first met, their wedding day, and a hundred other times when she had truly smiled, all warm and glowing, but the face he left her with still came to his mind. He found no comfort in it. "I hope she stays true, so that I will still have my wife when I get back." He shook his head. "I miss her."

Through the door of his alley he saw the eight protectors of the universe rush up. He frowned. "Its those girls! The ones who ruined every one of Garth's attempts. I hope they're not thinking of confronting me. They're annoying but I'd hate to take them out when I'm not even doing anything." He studied the group. "Not one of them, I'd guess is over fourteen years old."

The girls stared up at the column he'd created. The cloud and crackling energy were fading and the natural clouds around it were moving in rings. The sky was slowly turning back to normal. Mercury took out her handheld computer and her visor appeared.

"What is it, Amy?" Jupiter asked, striding over on her laced green boots. "Is it the Negaverse?"

"That's a stupid question!" Sailor Venus said, flipping aside her bush of blonde hair. "It has to be the Negaverse with all that's happened already today."

"It doesn't feel the same." Mars announced. "I'm receiving a different kind of vibration. It's not



negative energy.”

“Not on a basic level.” Mercury confirmed. “But there is negativity. My analysis indicates that this energy is star-based energy.”

“What does that mean?” Sailor Moon asked.

“What do you mean by ‘star energy’?” Venus clarified.

Mercury turned her intellectual blue eyes to them. “Sailor Polaris gives off star energy with her attacks.”

“So you mean this is Sailor energy?” Jupiter cried.

Mercury nodded.

“This can’t be good, girls.” Luna observed. “This means that whoever made this has to be a sailor soldier, and the negative traces mean that whoever it is has evil intentions.”

“Power as strong as this used for negative reasons poses a serious risk to the earth.” Artemis pointed out. “We need to find this evil soldier and stop whatever they plan to do.”

“But we’ve been dealing with Evil Soldiers this whole time.” Sailor Venus recalled. “They were never any real threat. I mean, that last one was pretty nasty, but she wasn’t a threat to the whole world!”

“She wasn’t real.” Sailor Earth announced. “I was a victim of one of Garth’s attacks, and my body was turned into a mock soldier like the ones we’ve been fighting. They have barely any power to them at all.”

“When was this?” Sailor Moon asked, accusingly, like she couldn’t believe Earth hadn’t come out with this information sooner.

“Last night.” Tuxedo Mask answered for her.

“Oh, when you became a real sailor soldier.” Sailor Jupiter assumed. “Which one are you again?”

“Sailor Earth, but that’s no the issue.” Earth continued. “When I became Sailor Cygni, my mind was taken over by negative energy. It was a spell, not real.”

“And this one is real?” Sailor Mars asked.

Mercury nodded.

“Well, this attack just happened, so whoever did it couldn’t have gone far, right?” Sailor Polaris asked.

“I don’t know.” Luna answered. “It depends on how powerful the soldier and if they are alone.”

“We also have to consider whether or not they are in league with the Negaverse.” Artemis pointed out.

“If they are, then they may have teleportation capabilities.”

“Perhaps we could wait here and see if he comes back.” Mercury offered.

Luna creased her brow. “I don’t know what to do.”

“Maybe this was a distraction to get us away from the stadium.” Tuxedo Mask said, glancing back over his shoulder. “I don’t remember seen what happened to that cat and I don’t think the General ever showed up.”

“Why are you even here?” Sailor Jupiter demanded.

“Yeah?” Sailor Mars agreed. “Suddenly you want to cooperate!? What are you trying to pull?”

Tuxedo Mask stepped back, feeling pressured, but Earth and Polaris stepped in to defend him. “He came with us.”

“What?” The girls asked.

“I like Tuxedo Mask.” Sailor Polaris announced. “I want him to stay.”

“He helped save my life last night.” Sailor Earth added. “I invited him along. I know that he’s good. I want him here too.”

He looked at the two girls, his heart beating again. It reminded him of his obligations. He took a second and regained his composure. His eye caught Sailor Moon among the girls. There was a time when he would show up in the nick of time and rescue her. He didn’t need to be involved. But now he had more than one person to defend and popping in and out wouldn’t cut it. He cleared his throat. “When I’m needed, I’ll be here.” He caught Sailor Moon’s eye. “I have a lot to look out for.”

Earth and Polaris gave him a pair of meek smiles. Mars frowned at the look on Sailor Moon's face and crossed her arms. Jupiter was still critical. "Oh really?"

"He has a point about the cat and Malachite." Sailor Mercury pointed out, changing the subject back to the matter at hand. "Perhaps we should head back." The others gave an unsure look up at the dissipating effects of Quasar's attack. The statue at the epicenter was blown apart and melted back into an indistinguishable smoking ruin. Something in Polaris's gut told her that there was someone very dangerous nearby.

Sailor Moon sighed warily, her large blue eyes looking scared. With a second glance at the fountain statue, the team began to move off.

Sailor Quasar watched from the alleyway. He sighed a little. He'd avoided a fight; perhaps he never would have to confront the sailor soldiers. They were only girls protecting their home; there was something chivalrous about that. But then he saw something he was not expecting. Ahead of the retreating soldiers, a black hole opened and through it stepped the heiress to the Negaversian throne.

His eyes went wide; his heart hit his throat, his battle plan changed immediately. "Chrysobery!?!?" The Sailor Soldiers stared as a woman, radiant and powerful, descended from the portal, her brilliant silver gown flowing and changing to blues in the valleys. She had a plunging neckline and pointed sleeves ending at the shoulder. Her slender neck wore a velvet choker, and her long, straight, auburn hair flowing out behind her from a small, golden, crownish tiara. Her face was blank; her eyes were hard and shallow. Everyone was captivated by the presence she held over them, until they heard Quasar's cry.

The tan-skinned man rushed out into the street at a fast and powerful run. Chrysobery's eyes deepened for an instant at the sight. The Sailor Soldiers whirled around and saw him coming. He halted on the other side of the group so that they were straddled by the two monarchs. Sailor Mars glanced between them. "Who are they!?"

Quasar was taken up, and ignored her question. "Chry!? What are you doing!?"

"I couldn't let you go like that! We'll find the crystal together!" His wife answered, sincerity in her face. He stared, his heart pounding.

"So you are after the Crystal Fractures!?" Sailor Jupiter accused.

"That's it! Who are you and what do you want the crystal fractures for?" Mars demanded.

Pulsar looked prepared to fight and communicated her intent to her husband through setting her eyes. He took charge, stretching his hands in front of him and a current like electricity stretched between them.

"I'm Sailor Quasar."

Sailor Venus pointed at him as his attack built up and swelled around his hands. "Are you the one who destroyed that statue?"

"Yes, that was me!" Quasar answered. "I'm the one you want! Fight me!" Pulsar took a start and looked as if she was prepared to argue with him. Quasar cut her short as he stared sternly into her face, the light from his attack reflecting off his features. "Chrysobery!" he motioned toward the capitol building. "Get inside!" She still was fit to protest, but he was severe. "NOW!"

A little hurt, she did as she was told and hurried toward the roman facade. Jupiter turned her attention there. "Come on! After her!"

"What's she gonna do in there!?" Polaris asked.

Mars rushed by. "Maybe take over the government!? Let's stop her!"

Pulsar made it inside the large, heavy wooden doors as the girls headed up the stairs. When they reached the entrance, they found it barred by the large, muscular form of Quasar, who'd leapt into their path. The doors slammed shut behind him. "Take me! I'm powerful, far more powerful than the dark soldiers you've been used to!"

"Who's that woman who just ran in there!?" Sailor Earth demanded.

"I won't tell you! You'll never get to her!" Quasar answered. "You'll have to go through me first!" "So be it!" Sailor Jupiter stepped forward, her green eyes set dangerously and a golden lightning rod stretching up from her tiara. "Supreme..." Bolts of lightning gathered and wound their way around her. She stepped back and shouted. "THUNDER!" The electricity shot out toward him and triggered the battle to begin. He darted off, leaving a white streak behind him from his stored energy. A blast of plasma shot from an unexpected angle and knocked Jupiter down. Quasar dashed across to the other side and stretched out his strip of power.

Mercury helped Jupiter back to her feet. "He's fast!"

"I really hate to kill you girls," Quasar announced, "but if you threaten our mission, you leave me no choice."

"You're the ones behind all the dark sailor soldiers and the essence and crystals and stuff." Sailor Moon resolved.

"Yes." The soldier answered.

"So the cat belongs to you." Sailor Venus assumed.

"Yes, Garth is mine," Quasar said, a new sneer on his face. "What have you done to him!?"

"We didn't do anything to your stupid cat!" Sailor Mars answered. "You're the one trying to strike down innocent people!"

"Shut your attitude up." Quasar warned. "You have two strikes against you, now. My initial bout of mercy is getting less and less."

"Mercy? From a Negaverse scumbucket!?" Sailor Moon asked with a laugh. "Not a chance!"

He smirked a little. "Well, maybe you're not as smart as I thought you were." He moved back in front of the door. "I suggest you should all run if you don't want to get killed."

"No way!" Mars cried.

Artemis's head snapped up. "Whoever that woman is that he's guarding, she must be important! Get through him if you can!"

"You mean –" Polaris shot the cat a look and made an inquisitive slashing motion across her throat. He nodded. "If it comes down to that."

"You heard him, girls!" Venus cried. "ATTACK!!!"

Quasar stretched his hands and thickened the beam into a solid sheet of plasma coursing between his palms. There was no cue, but in an instant, everything began. Mercury and Venus rushed forward while Moon, Mars, and Jupiter jumped into the air. Venus tried to nail him a kick but he blocked it. Mercury tried to punch him in the face but he kicked her away. From the sky came several voices.

"Fire, SOUL!"

"Supreme, THUNDER!"

"Moon Tiara ACTION!"

A jet of flame, a bolt of lightning, and a magic moon Frisbee came down from above. With near inhuman reflexes, he threw off Venus and used the sheet of energy to scatter the flames, absorb the electricity, and deflect the tiara so that it went flying off at a bizarre angle. The rogue tiara bowed around and headed straight for Polaris's head. Tuxedo Mask shoved her quickly aside and had a rip torn in his sleeve and through his red and black cape. He grabbed the blonde's shoulder and shot a glance to her sister. It was their turn for an attack. If the conflict beforehand at the arena was any training for teamwork, the efforts paid off. The two Sailor Soldiers rushed out at two different angles Tuxedo Mask moved in for a physical clash, his cane ready.

Next to Quasar, Tuxedo Mask looked like a scarecrow. He was taller than the Negaversian, especially with the hat, but his long legs and arms were twigs compared to the oaken trunks supporting his opponent. Tuxedo Mask whipped out his cane and prepared to snap it over Quasar's head like a kendo sword. Unfortunately he was met with the plasma shield held stretched across Quasar's chest. The

cane made contact, splintered, and blew apart in Tuxedo Mask's hands. AT the same time, he was overloaded with an excess of energy that blew him off and left his muscles jittering. From Quasar's right came the cry. "North Star Power NOW!" He looked over and quickly held up his shield, but Polaris's icicle worked anyhow, freezing him and the energy inside a block of ice. Predictably, there came another cry from the other side.

"Rushing, WIND!" Earth released a blast of air that shoved the statue over. Quasar's casing shattered on the ground the he took a deep gasp, the energy between his hands having vanished and his bare shoulders burned from the cold. There were cuts all over his right arm from the shattered ice at impact. There was a stretch of blood seeping from a cut under his blind eye.

"Get him while his guard is down!" Venus cried. She wound up. "Crescent, BEAM!" From her index finger shot a golden laser. Quasar jumped and dodged. She drug it after him, but he dived underneath and raised his hands. Two thin bolts shot and converged before him to shoot out a beam of plasma. The girls in its path moved aside, but it struck Mercury in the shoulder. The plasma was like a super hot, silver, sparkling stream of stellar pudding. It hit Mercury, stinging her skin and scorching the blue edges of her suit. She fell over backward and the substance pooled of and puddle around her, steaming. Sailor Moon scrambled to help her. Sailors Mars and Venus joined her while Jupiter, Earth, Polaris, and Tuxedo Mask held the parameter. Moon kneeled down in the runoff and the plasma burned her knee. She jumped back with a wail and began blowing on the red burn just above her boot.

Venus looked accusingly up at Sailor Quasar. "What is that stuff!?"

He used this time to recharge and explain. "I am Sailor Quasar. Quasar is not the name of a star like Polaris, Porrima, Phekda, Cygni, or Ara, but a type of star. A quasar is a star positioned near a source of extreme gravity such as a black hole. The defining factor of a quasar is that it expels shoots of its stellar matter out toward the gravity source. My power works relatively the same way only I don't require a source of gravity." He stretched his newly charged band of energy and condensed it in the center, ready to discharge at any time. Mercury stood up with Moon's help, shaking and holding her burned shoulder.

"We can't get his with that, guys." The blonde observed.

"I don't intend to." Sailor Mars answered. "We should fight him short range considering that he has a projectile attack."

"Let's go in!" Jupiter resolved. "If we all attack at once, we can nail this sucker!"

"You stay here, Amy." Sailor Venus instructed, then called over to the others. "Hey! Polaris! Earth! You guys ready!?"

"We're ready!" They answered.

"Then let's go!" There was a rush and they all barged in for an attack.

Tuxedo Mask excused himself from the charge. "This is gong to be messy." He watched as the six girls scrambled to get their arms and legs to Quasar. "Not to mention crowded."

Sailor Moon backed up and jumped over the top of them all. "Sailor Moon KICK!" A high heel darted toward Quasar's head. He moved his arm to block, but in doing so, allowed Mars to get in a punch. His stored energy fizzled out as his hands were separated. When he knocked Sailor Moon away, he messed up her flight path and she ran butt first into Mars and Venus, knocking them down. With three attackers out of the way for a bit, he was able to focus on his defense a little easier. Jupiter was by far the best hand-to-hand combatant. She came at him with punch after punch, each well placed and difficult to avoid. He got one in his blind eye and was knocked aside. Sailor Earth went in for his unprotected flank. He got nailed a couple times in the ribs and kidney before he knocked Jupiter into her with a sweep of his powerful arm. Polaris dashed around back and grabbed him around the neck. His thick muscles gave some resistance, but he had to fight to remain standing with her weight hanging down his back. Plus it was hard to breathe.

Sailor Venus shoved herself up. She pointed a finger at him. "Crescent, BEAM!" The laser got him in

the arm, burning like his plasma had. The first cry of pain escaped his restricted throat. He turned and the laser scorched a stripe across his upper arm. With a heave, he turned Polaris to it.

“Yeow!!!” The laser got her in the side and she fell off. “Venus!”

The beam stopped. “Oops, sorry.”

Quasar threw the attacking soldiers off himself and backed up toward the door. He charged up some plasma energy in his fists. Mars stepped in. “Fire, SOUL!” The flame came, but he had his guard up. The attack just ended up setting the door on fire. The man shot a bolt of plasma at Sailor Moon where she stood rubbing her backside.

“Serena! Watchout!” Mercury cried. Tuxedo Mask shot a startled look to Sailor Moon. The name had gotten her attention, but she’d failed to react. It was up to her Sailor friends to save her. Just before it hit her, she dropped out of the way, having been tripped by Sailor Mars. She escaped with her pigtail torched.

“Hey!”

“It was for your own good.” Mars replied. She looked over to the two non-participants. “Yo! Tuxedo Mask! Cover me, will you!?”

He was startled by the request, but was more than willing to comply. He and Mars headed in from different angles. From inside his jacket, he pulled a sharpened red rose and threw it dart-like at the foe. Quasar was pierced by its stem in the side of his arm, and as he turned to see what had happened, Mars kicked him in the side of the head. The heir to the Negaversian throne was floored. His head spinning, Kyanite groped at the rose and pulled it sloppily from his skin. There was blood. The soldiers all gathered a few feet away. “Had enough, tough guy?”

Quasar’s right eye was swelling from Jupiter’s punch. He closed his brown one tightly. ‘This is for the mission...’ He told himself. ‘I’ve got to protect Chry. Our future, the future of the entire dimension depends on me.’ He clenched his fist as he shoved himself up, a sphere of power swelling around it. ‘I can do it for Chry, so that we can be together in a peaceful world for the first time...’ New determination awoke in his mind, Quasar shot a penetrating stare at the soldiers. He got to his feet and prepared for another expulsion of plasma. The girls were sure they had won.

“Is he still fighting!?!” Polaris panted. “He must be tough!”

“On your toes, guys, it’s time to pull out all the plugs.” Venus warned. “If any of you were holding anything back, bring it out now. If we defeat him, we can get inside to his girlfriend.”

“I’m ready.” Sailor Mercury offered.

“Yahhhh!” With a cry, Quasar shot another blast. The sailor soldiers quickly dodged.

Mercury skidded to a stop. “Bubble...SPRAY!” A haze fell over Quasar and the air became cold.

Jupiter added her power to the attack. “Supreme, THUNDER!” The lighting broke and stretched all around him in the dampened air. He received a charge.

“Yeahhhh...!”

“Rushing...WIND!” Sailor Earth cried. He was shoved sideways against a column. Quasar grabbed it for support, sparks still flying before his eyes as the haze disappeared.

Sailor Moon reappeared. “Moon Tiara ACTION!” Her tiara became a spinning blade, flying like a frisbee but sharp as a throwing star. Quasar pulled up a shield just strong enough to deflect the weapon before it dissipated. He shoved himself up against the column. “...there are too many! I can’t keep track of who is where...” Mars came from behind and kicked him down. He fell on his face, but bounded back up as fast as he could. He got into battle stance. He hated to punch a middle-school girl, but he had to get rid of them somehow. His arms tense, he rushed forward and delivered a blow to Jupiter who he’d ruled as his most dangerous opponent. She reeled backward and Venus caught her and stood her up right.

“Hey! Hitting a girl is the worst!”

“You leave me no choice!” He replied. “You were hitting me.”

"That's different." Sailor Moon explained. "Look at you! You're like a pro wrestler or something."  
"I feel sorry for whoever makes a living off of doing this." Quasar said. He got into defense position in front of the doors. "Who'll be next?"

"Try me!" Sailor Mars rushed in, but was punched away by his fist.

Venus ran in next, but was averted. He was capable of both super and natural power techniques. Each soldier fell in succession to his attacks. Tuxedo Mask was thrown off with a rib-cracking blow. He slid away and Quasar was faced with no more on comers. He sighed. "I've won...against incredible odds."

"Not...quite..." Sailor Moon struggled up. She was bruised and dirty, scratches all over her face from sliding on the stone. Her blonde hair was frayed and sticking out of her buns. She panted. In her hand was her Crescent Wand. "There's a way to defeat you... and we all have to for the good of the earth." The other girls stirred. Luna's eyes widened. "Sailor...Moon."

"There has to be a way."

"Give up." Quasar panted, disbelieving. "Give UP! I can't believe you're coming back!!!"

"I can't abandon my home so easily." She insisted.

"I don't care about your planet." Quasar responded. "I don't have any interest in taking it from you."

"And yet you destroy its people?" She asked. The others began to shove themselves up. Sailors Polaris and Earth listened to the conversation from the ground.

"Sacrifices." He said, a little wary. The girl had undergone a complete change. There was something threatening about the way she was speaking.

"Who are you to take lives from innocent people to benefit your own good?" She demanded.

"You don't know what you're saying." Quasar shot at her. "It isn't about that!"

"All of you Negaversians are alike!" Sailor Moon accused. "You see the good people of the universe as a resource that you can use to strengthen yourselves! Well, you don't have to kill them to get strength! The people of my planet strengthen me by just known that they look to me for protection! The same goes for all of us!" The other six soldiers, Mercury, Mars, Jupiter, Earth, Venus and Polaris, gathered around her. Tuxedo Mask stared. "And that is why we must defeat you! Because those people seek our protection! It's not about us, it's about them. That's what makes positive different from negative, and that's why we must defeat you."

Artemis stepped forward and called to them. "Sailors Moon, Mercury, Mars, Venus, Jupiter! Use Planet Power to stop him!"

"Join your powers into one!" Luna added. "Use Planet Power to defeat the Negaverse!"

The five required soldiers held hands. Quasar could feel the danger. His thoughts dwelled strongly on Chrysoberyl. "You don't understand! This is more important than a couple of people's lives! This is the fate of an entire universe!"

Sailor Moon held her crescent wand out in front of her. Sailors Mercury and Mars placed their free hands on her shoulders. They began to sound off.

"Venus Power!"

"Mercury Power!"

"Jupiter Power!"

"Mars Power!"

Quasar's heart was pumping very fast, he was mesmerized by the growing aura of the five girls. He backed up toward the wooden doors. "This can't be..."

"Moon Prism POWER!!!" Sailor Moon's wand glowed white, an orb swelling inside the curve of the moon. One cry in unison would release it on the enemy. Quasar couldn't move. Polaris stepped forward, but Tuxedo Mask caught her shoulder. The sailor soldiers pulled the trigger.

"Sailor Planet POWER!!!"

The white light shot out, first a wide spray, then narrowing into an intensely powerful beam. Quasar felt

his skin being eaten. His clothes tore and his body was being shoved backward by the force. "I've...failed..." he muttered through aching lungs. He felt the treads of his heavy gray boots slipping. Throwing back his head and shoulders, he screamed his last words. "I'm sorry!!! CHRY!!!!!!!!!!!" The warrior was blown off his feet with an incredible force. His body broke straight through the thickened wooden doors, splintering them and twisting the decorative metal bars. The force of the attack sent him soaring inside the capitol building, through polished marble arches and a small forest of statues and columns. He broke through the side of one stone column and slid to a stop on the marble floor beneath the caverns of the dome. He was also, then, at the feet of his wife.

Sailor Pulsar had been pacing inside. She'd had no plans to take over the building or hold the officials ransom. She was only waiting for her husband to return so that they might start the hunt. Quasar landed on his back, bits of wood and stone falling around him. His face was battered and bloody, his navy smock torn, his arms cut and burned. He wasn't moving. She stared in disbelief, her limbs trembling until she finally reacted. "K-KYANITE!?!"

The majestic queen was forgotten and a fragile young woman stumbled and fell to her knees at his head. "Ky? Ky? Oh please...Ky?" She slid her hands under him and cradled his head. He didn't stir, his face not moving in response to her touch. Emotionless, like she had been the last time they'd spoken. The last time they'd kissed... The seven Sailor Soldiers and Tuxedo Mask ran in and found her there. Tears were falling again from her eyes, this time, tears of grief as well as shame. Her heart was pounding as to break against her ribs. Her stomach twisted as grim reality took a hold of her. Sailor Moon still had her wand in her hand. She stopped, panted, and pointed it at Chrysoberyl. "Hey, whoever you are! We're the Sailor Soldiers and we want you to stop whatever it is you're doing!" In the middle of a sob, Chrysoberyl leaned forward to press her cheek to Kyanite's, her tears moistening the drying blood there. She kept running her hands through his brown hair. One teared eye opened and she stared evilly at the girls. She muttered to herself. "I can't imagine what you did to him. But this is your fault. All of you soldiers are going to pay for taking from me the only thing I ever cared about." Rage burning in her one deep green eyes. Her teeth were clenching. She hugged Kyanite tightly. "I'll punish them for you, Ky. I'll avenge you." Slowly she slipped on her mask. 'Anger can be harnessed and used...with the right state of mind.'

Sailor Moon stepped backward as the woman rose. Her eyes glassy, her face lipid and humorless, Sailor Pulsar stared hauntingly at them. Sailor Mars stepped forward. "Who are you and what do you want?"

Pulsar stepped back from the body, her husband's blood staining her silver gown. A light aura began to grow around her, moving her dress and lifting her hair. Sailor Earth glanced back to Polaris and Tuxedo Mask. "What's happening?"

"Hey! We asked you a question!" Sailor Jupiter cried. "Tell us who you are! We already killed your boyfriend, we'll do the same to you!"

Her face twitched, twisting for a moment into a demonic glare. The girls gasped. Pulsar began to rise from the floor, an ice goddess traced in an ever-brightening band of silver. "I am Sailor Pulsar, that noble man you've slain was my husband. You will suffer for your crime to me."

Artemis received enlightenment. "Girls! Watch out! If Quasar had powers like his star type, then Pulsar might have an attack power similar to her star type."

"And what kind of power does a pulsar have?" Venus asked.

Pulsar let out a forceful cry and light exploded from her with a blinding flash. The girls all threw their hands up to cover their eyes. Polaris squinted and blinked. "Oh, pulse-ar, I get it."

"Take care," Luna instructed. "We have to deal with her quickly so that she doesn't hurt anyone."

Mercury looked across the floor of the dome and found a couple guys standing in an open doorway on the other side of the room. She called to them. "Hey you! Shut that door!" They looked startled, then did

as they were told. She looked back and saw that the entrance they had used had another pair of open doors attached to them. “We need to close those too!”

“We’re on it!” Sailor Polaris volunteered. “C’mon Earth! TM!” The three of them headed off to shove the doors closed. The remaining five soldiers and the two cats approached Pulsar.

Sailor Moon looked over her shoulder. “Why is it that those three always do everything together?”

“Why shouldn’t they?” Mars asked.

“I – I don’t know.” Moon said, sounding confused. “Its just – something.”

“Girls! Don’t get distracted! This is serious work!” Luna cried.

“What can she do that’s too serious?” Sailor Venus asked. “All she does is flash.”

Pulsar’s power was increasing. With another cry, a second blinding flash shot out from her, blinding them. She rose further into the air as her aura gained strength.

“Don’t underestimate her!” Luna insisted. “Sailor Quasar was extremely powerful and he was protecting her.”

“Probably because she can’t defend herself.” Sailor Jupiter said.

“No,” Mercury had her visor and computer back out. “My scanners indicate that she is extremely powerful and that her energy output is increasing.”

“My senses are telling me that she has more up her sleeve than we think.” Artemis announced.

Mars paused. “I sense danger. Her aura is rising from massive anger and the flashes from the extensive star power her energy source expels.”

“We should take her out now, Sailor Moon.” Venus suggested. Moon nodded.

“Assemble for another Planet Attack” Sailor Jupiter commanded. They all got into a line, again, with Moon in the middle, her wand pointed at Sailor Pulsar.

Pulsar looked down at them with shallow, slanted eyes and spoke to them in a monotone. “It doesn’t matter if I have the midnight cat to tell me whether or not you girls have the potential to hold a crystal fragment. I will kill you all and move on to find the fractures and bring order to the Negaverse.”

“Not if we get rid of you now.” Moon answered. “Let’s do it.”

The others began the attack by adding their power to sailor Moon’s wand.

“Venus Power!”

“Mercury Power!”

“Jupiter Power!”

“Mars Power!”

The light swelled again in the crescent wand but Pulsar reached out her hand. She stared hollowly at Sailor Moon. The blonde kept her hand steady. “Moon Pris----” She paused, her eyes paling. Pulsar still had her hand stretched out. The other four girls looked expectantly at her through the silence. Earth, Polaris, Tuxedo Mask and the cats watched in anxiety. Suddenly, as quick and powerful as a lightning strike, a flash erupted at Pulsar’s hand, then a larger flash shot from Sailor Moon’s throat. The bright light engulfed her whole body and with a scream, she fell. In less than half a second, all color had been sucked from her and her very essence had filtered out. As everyone stared, the essence cloud that was Sailor Moon took off like a rocket up toward the windows at the roof of the dome. Its sight set on the energy of the sun, and once it escaped, there would be no rescue for the young, vibrant girl. Tuxedo Mask stared up. He noticed protective glass panes held back from the window by a latch. There was a pane for every window. It was too far for his rose marksmanship. He called, “Earth! The windows!” Sailor Earth had just saved her friend that morning from a similar disaster. She stepped up, no questions asked. “Rushing, WIND!” A current of air spun quickly around her and shot up her arm as she directed it to the sky. The current ripped past the essence, stirring it, and hit the panes up near the windows. She threw up her other hand and the wind bent in a circle, undoing all the latches and dropping the glass over the openings just in time to trap the essence inside. Tuxedo Mask breathed a sigh of relief.



The others were fearful. Sailor Moon was the only one who could use Moon Healing to return escaped essence to a victim. With Sailor Moon down, who would return Serena's essence? And Sailor Pulsar had the power to separate a person from their essence in the tips of her fingers. Sailor Moon was a waxy white husk on the marble floor. Her cloud gathered at the top of the dome, drinking in the sunlight. Luna hissed and suddenly cried. "Get her girls!!!!"

"For Sailor Moon!" Jupiter cried with determination. "Supreme, THUNDER!" The lightning attack hit Pulsar and sent streaks of pain throughout her body, but her face was like stone and her expression never changed. She pointed her hand to the Sailor Soldier in green and another gunshot of light moved from her hand to her victim. With a scream, Jupiter was enveloped in light and turned into another white corpse while her brown, white, and green essence joined the hues of Sailor Moon's near the ceiling. Sailor Venus stared furiously at Pulsar. "You can't kill my friends!"

Pulsar stretched her hand out toward the orange-suited blonde. Mercury noted what was about to occur. "Venus! Move out of the way!" She shoved the blonde, but had stepped in her space and was overtaken by a bright flash of light. Her white cloud mixed with various blue hues raced up to the sky. "Stopit!" Sailor Polaris cried.

"Olivia! No!" Sailor Earth yelled.

But Polaris's attack had started. She raised both hands into the air. "North Star Power...NOW!" A spinning icicle shot out. Pulsar's hand was already outstretched and there was a flash of her silver light. The heiress's arm froze over and the ice crept up to encompass her whole body. But at the same time, the 11-year-old girl was smitten by her wrath. There was a blinding flash of light, and a scream from the girl, but her essence did not gather and leave. Instead, above her whitened corpse, there floated a jagged, sparkling bit of cut diamond. The whole company stared.

"A Crystal Fracture!" Artemis gasped.

Sailor Earth sank down to the floor. Tuxedo Mask took a second and ran forward. "No! Polaris!" He fell to his knees near her body and scooped her head. Her normally blue-hazel eyes were frozen wide and stared lifelessly through him. This little girl that he cared so much about was gone. He looked up at the Crystal Fracture floating there. His throat tightened.

Above them, there was another flash as the power of the variable star destroyed Pulsar's ice prison. She looked down. "A Crystal Fracture?" Her voice had not changed, but her hand shook as she reached out for it. "At last." The fracture floated up to her and hung within her reach. Her mind's eye scanned the remaining people. "Of so many powerful soldiers, the key to give me incredible power resided inside a small girl?"

The entourage stared menacingly up at her. So many of them had fallen, but Olivia was the smallest, and relatively new to her role as a Sailor Soldier. Innocent. Memories flashed back to her first fight with them, to her recital, to the images of her running crazily through Raye's house being chased by Sailor Dephinus. She never wanted anything to do with the fight. She hadn't even been able to participate in the Planet Power that had struck the murderer's husband. For all of them...she was the last straw.

"You monster!!!" Sailor Venus cried.

"You can't attack innocent young girls!" Sailor Mars agreed.

"You killed my SISTER!!!" Sailor Earth cried.

"I can't take this anymore!" Artemis hissed. "We're losing!"

"Girls!" Luna cried. "Don't attack her! Focus on evading her blasts until we can figure out how to defeat her!"

"Don't attack!?" Venus cried.

"Forget that! How are we supposed to beat her if we don't attack her!?" Mars agreed.

Pulsar's arm came up again and she held it limply out toward Mars. A pair of flames flashed and the fire soldier's red and black was spiraling upward to join the ever-thickening cloud of loose essence. Artemis

snarled. "Sailor Mars!" He turned to Pulsar and in a fit of fury, he charged. His claws and teeth were ready for an attack. Pulsar raised her hand, carelessly, and struck the cat with her power. A masculine scream, and a flash of light turned the white cat waxen, his essence left his body mostly white with flecks of blue from his eyes.

"ARTEMIS!!!" Sailor Venus cried and rushed forward. With a sweep of Pulsar's hand, she was struck down as well, and the cloud of free essence blocked out the sun from the windows.

All was dark except for the glowing form of Pulsar floating above them. Luna looked to Sailor Earth and Tuxedo Mask, who'd lined up beside her. "You two are all that are left. Now, don't do anything rash until we can figure out a weakness."

Earth had lost hope. "It's the end of the world. And I only got to be a Sailor Soldier for one day."

"Don't think like that." Tuxedo Mask bade her. "We can make it."

Pulsar had taken a break to admire her crystal fracture and now spoke. "I have one, two left..." She eyed them slowly. "I wonder if they are here in this room." Both Earth and Tuxedo Mask took a start. Pulsar raised her hand slowly. "There is only one way to find out."

Luna snapped her head to them. "RUN!!!" Jennifer and Darien split company and ran. A blinding light shot from where they had stood, and a cloud of purple essence floated upward.

Sailor Earth turned. "Luna!!" Pulsar turned to the brunette and struck her with the powerful discharge. Earth let out a scream. Tuxedo Mask stopped dead. It was too fast to see, but all color was ripped from Sailor Earth in the flash. Above her hung another splintered piece of the crystal reflecting brightly the light of Pulsar's aura. The soldier welcomed it to her and hung for a moment admiring the two of them in her hand. She looked to Tuxedo Mask. "One left."

His heart beat fast, sweat broke on his skin, fear for his life rose strongly in his mind. His gut twisted as his thoughts came quickly. He thought of his princess by the sea. The knowledge that he was the last one. These girls weren't his responsibility, but he had to save them. His heart told him. But his heart was breaking. He looked to the lifeless body of Sailor Moon, then Polaris, then Earth, all of the people he'd sworn to himself to protect. He'd failed, and now he was the only one left. It was up to him to fix everything that had happened. Unfortunately, he had no super powers. Pulsar raised her hand to him. He was determined to find a way to Survive. "You wont get me!"

"Once more piece. You must be it..." She said. "Wouldn't that be perfect," she spoke slowly, but her shallow eyes were set on him, the two fractures orbited above her left hand. She meant to attack, but he bolted. He dashed around, jumping over fallen soldiers in a race to get away from the attack. Pulsar's had followed him, waiting for him to come to a stop. He ran to the doors.

"I need to get out...get help or come up with something." He pulled one of the double doors open a crack. The essence in the ceiling saw the light pour into the darkened room and made for his door. Seeing this, he slammed it shut. The essence flew back up to the windows in the dome. "I'm trapped." Pulsar's hand was directly at him, but he dived away. He ran to hide behind one of the columns. "What am I going to do!?!?" Then he felt a strange sensation. Everything began to go white at the edges, he felt a warm and slightly painful lump forming at the base of his neck. The tips of his fingers and toes began to numb and pinpricks raced up his limbs. Pulsar had her hand pointed at eh back of the column.

"Obstacles are nothing for me."

He didn't even have time to run. In a second, a feeling like every scrap of tissue inside him was being ripped out forced a scream from his pained throat. A bright flash of light erupted from the knot in his neck. Everything went waxen and his eyes lost their blue. All the black was stripped from his suit. He lost consciousness in a sea of white. Above him hung the final shard of the legendary Twilight Crystal. Pulsar was enthralled. There were no survivors, just she in a darkened room with eleven bodies and a cloud of free essence churning above her. Even her mask couldn't hide her pleasure. She beckoned the final fragment to herself. "At last! The Twilight Crystal! I have done in one hour what we have tried to

achieve for so long! Kyanite! You did not die in vain! I will become beautiful and powerful and will rule the Negaverse with malice to avenge all that I have lost!" The fractures circled in her hands.

"Reassemble, Crystal of the Earth! Obey your new master!" The pieces swirled around each other and rejoined into a cylinder cut gemstone with four faces and pyramidal points on the ends. It glittered with aqua, light blue, and gold. When the crystal was reassembled, it was obvious that it had great power. But as she sank back to the ground, something stirred. On the floor, the color had returned to Olivia's eyes. Her sailor suit vanished, replaced by a flowy light-blue sleeveless dress. The light blue bow in her hair was gone, and her long hair had regained its golden hue. For Jennifer, similar changes were taking place. She also had on a flowy dress, this one being an aqua-blue color, and her hair was again brown. As for Darien, his hat and mask had disappeared as his hair turned back to black and his eyes turned back to blue. His black tuxedo became the silver-lined armor of a prince. The three of them got back to their feet and, like three people waking up from a dream, walked calmly into the light of the crystal. Pulsar was standing near her fallen husband. She was startled and angered at the disturbance, in her pleasure of having found the key to her plan's completion and the confusion of having the dead come back to life, she forgot to sink back into her frozen state of existence. "What is this!?" The three of them stood before her, Darien in the middle with Olivia on his left and Jennifer on his right. They all were staring passively at the crystal in her hands. "Return to us the crystal of the Children of Earth."

"What right do you have to it!?" Pulsar demanded. "I am its master now! With the power of the Twilight Crystal, I will become the deity of my universe. Perhaps, with its power, I will become the ruler of this universe as well! Then both dimensions will welcome a beautiful and terrible queen to reign in glorious supremacy!"

"Your mind has been consumed by your newfound power." Olivia told her. "Give us back our crystal, and your mind will return to what it was."

"No! Kyanite and I worked hard for this! In honor of him, I have to succeed." She said.

"This isn't what he would have wanted." Jennifer stated.

"How would you know!?" Pulsar cried in outrage. "You KILLED HIM!!!"

"He told us." Darien said. "He said he wanted nothing to do with our universe. I believed him, he cared only for his own. He also seemed to me to have a sense of compassion..." Darien stared sharply into her eyes. "You have no compassion."

"And the man you speak of isn't dead." Jennifer added.

Pulsar looked shocked and even a little afraid, as if she knew that what she'd been doing had been wrong. She glanced to her husband, who hadn't moved since she'd left him. The idea was too fantastic to comprehend, and she couldn't conceive any possibility for what they said to be true. For all she could see, he wasn't breathing. She sharpened her eyes and looked quickly to them. "Don't lie like that..."

"It is the truth." Olivia said, clearly. "He's barely holding on. This is not the way Planet Power kills. To be smitten by Planet Power would mean disintegration. If Sailor Quasar still exists, he is still alive. It won't be for much longer, though, he is mortally injured."

"When he passes away, his body will vanish into nothing." Darien stated.

"How do you know this?" Pulsar demanded, they had been speaking as if this were common-knowledge.

"When the crystal was rejoined, our memories returned." Jennifer explained.

Pulsar stared. "Memories?" She noticed that each of them had a symbol beginning to glow on their foreheads. Olivia had the symbol of Polaris's eight-pointed star traced in light blue, Jennifer had an aquamarine footprint peaking through her brown bangs. Darien had a symbol like a wheel with four spokes shining in gold and growing brighter. Pulsar gasped. The three lights grew brighter until they had converged and blinded her. She received a look into their minds.

The earth was green and peaceful. The image flew by like on the wings of a bird. Over a rushing forest of trees, a castle appeared. Near the castle was a garden. A ten-year-old boy with short black hair ran out with a kite. It was obvious that this was the young Darien. What wasn't so obvious was that this was the Silver Millennium, and that the young man was PRINCE Darien Endymion. Young princess Jennifer came trotting after him. She was only four years old.

"Darien! Darien!" She called, tottling through the rose beds.

"Jenn, you've already had a turn!" Young Darien cried.

Queen Endymion, a woman with short brown hair, looked up from the gardening. "Darien, give your sister a turn."

"But Mom!?!!" He moaned. "I just got it!"

"Why don't you play with her, then?" His mother suggested. "She's only four."

"Okay," he agreed, rolling his eyes. He took his little sister's hand. "C'mon, Jenn, let's play on the hill!"

There was the cry of another little voice as small, blonde, one-year-old Olivia stumbled in. "Me! Me!" Her father, King Endymion was right behind her as she ran about on her little legs. She already had a blue bow in her mob of blonde hair. The king bent down and picked her up so that she hung on his shoulder next to his dark hair.

"No, you're a little young for kites." He laughed and watched his other children play on the hillside, Darien with his hands holding Jennifer's on the handles of the kite spool as the striped canvas kite danced above them.

There was a flash as time passed. Darien as 18 and the Endymion family was having a reunion in the palace. All the distant relations of the family were there, talking. 12-year-old Jennifer was sitting with her grandmother, who looked very much like the Sailor Earth from Niobe's memory. Darien had a 9-year-old Olivia's stuffed orangutan in his hand. She was getting irritated. He leaned his six-foot frame on a cabinet and dangled the plush toy over his youngest sister's head. Olivia was jumping for it and her brother kept pulling it away. He was laughing at her.

"Give Schweatheart back, Darien!!!" Olivia challenged.

His eyebrows shot up in amusement. "What's wrong? Too high for you, munchkin?" he teased.

"That's not fair...DARIEN!!!" She huffed. She jumped and he pulled it away, again, laughing even more.

"Jump a little higher, maybe you'll get it." She jumped and he snatched it up again, chuckling. "Oops, not that time."

"You're mean." Jennifer said from where she and her grandmother were watching.

Darien ignored them and continued to pester the 9-year-old. "Hah hah hah!" Olivia jumped and he took it away. "You want your monkey, Munchkin?"

"he's an orangutan!" Olivia cried.

Darien pulled it away again. "Say Darien is cool!"

She jumped and had her goal snatched up higher. "No!"

"Say Darien is my Lord and Master."

"Never!"

"Hah, Hah, Hah!" He kept up the torture. "Too high, Munchkin? Heh! Need a stepstool, Munchkin?"

"Grr!" Olivia leapt again, her face snarling with anger. He gave in and let her grab it.

"Okay, take it."

Olivia hit him in the gut with it before leaving the room. He bent over and covered his stomach, turning quickly to watch her go. Jennifer laughed.

Time passed again, this time it wasn't so peaceful. When the story took up again, it was a time of war. The king was standing in front of his children. "The Negaverse has breached the Oort cloud barrier. Your mother and I are headed off to support the army with the golden crystal. You three need to stay here and look after the planet." He looked specifically at Darien. "Make sure no harm comes to the Earth, and look after everyone."

The twenty-year old nodded in understanding and determination.

Time whirred a little farther forward. Prince Darien was pacing. Jennifer was yelling at him. "We get a call for help from less than 200 million space miles off and you just sit here!?!"

"Mom and Dad left us in charge of the Earth! Its our responsibility." Darien said. Olivia sat off to the side, alone in her 11-year-old worries.

"You know, now that they've breeched the inner barrier, they'll be coming here next!" Jennifer cried. Darien was under pressure and yelled at her as he paced. "Don't you think I know that!?!"

"Mom and Dad didn't know that there'd be a second attack so close!" Jennifer insisted.

"We've got to protect the Earth and the Moon." Darien stated.

"Oh, of course, the moon." Jennifer crossed her arms. "You and your beloved little princess."

Darien shot her a furious stare mid-pace, but simply growled and took up again a little faster.

Jennifer offered up a different idea. "Well, Olivia and I are Sailor Soldiers!" Jennifer pointed out. "One of us can go –"

"No! Absolutely not!" He interrupted.

"Then both of us –"

"No!"

"Why not!?!?" Jennifer demanded.

"Neither of you are leaving! I'm in charge! I'm the oldest! I'M the adult in this family and you do as I say!" He sounded like a father.

"Ooo...big bad 20-year-old Prince Endymion thinks he can control anyone now!" Jennifer smarted cockily.

"Shut up! I'm responsible for you. I don't want you getting hurt!" He said.

"It is because you know Mom and Dad'll kill you if you let us go out and help?" She stared at him, her face equally as impatient as his.

"No it's –" He stopped himself, stood still and turned to the side with his hands on his hips and his lips pressed. He approached the question from a different angle. "I don't want anything to happen to the two of you."

"Oh sure." She fumed. "Don't come at me like that; trying to be all sentimental to make me agree with you. I'm leaving! I don't want to take you anymore!" She stormed out.

"Jennifer!" He watched her go. "Jenn! Jenn!"

Time ended at the last of the Negaversian war. The Negaverse had attacked the Earth. Olivia and Jennifer had been killed. Darien rushed to the Moon to protect the last scrap of free territory in the Zodiac system. The main force was beating down on Earth's troops. King and Queen Endymion watched as the Golden Crystal failed in the King's hands. The Queen stepped up. "The Crystal of My children! Arise to drive back these invaders!" Between her hands, the twilight crystal appeared. She held it forward, her gown flying out behind her as the negative energy of the attacking army swelled about them. The king came around behind her and reached one arm over her shoulder, his hand adding his power to the Twilight Crystal, the Golden Crystal vanishing from sight and returning to its realm in the world of dreams. The vision did not allow the general's face to be shown, instead, a black outline with shining, evil eyes was seen through the outburst of power gathering in his hands. It was only the two of

them, and the power of one crystal stopping the full strength of the Negaforce bearing down on the moon. Tears were in their eyes as the ceremonial power crystal that represented their lost children glowed in front of their faces.

There was an explosion from the officer. The pale light of the negative strength blasted over them, the monarch's arms shook, trying to maintain their power against the pressure, but two of the Earth Children were dead, and the crystal's power was wasted. In their hands, it shattered into three jagged pieces, each glittering with one of the three earthen hues; aqua, light blue, and gold.

The two of them collapsed, the pieces lying in the queen's lap. Her husband put his forehead on her shoulder, his other hand lying limp near his side. Hope was lost. The shadow came to stand over them. "Surrender the power of those crystal fractures to our Negaverse! You've lost."

"We may be defeated." The king said, his head coming up. "But we will never give you the power of our family."

"Give me those pieces!!!" The figure demanded.

The queen raised her hands and the lowing fragments rose from her lap. She sent them off into space. "Go, pieces of the Twilight Crystal, find my children. Rest where you belong! Never fall into the hands of the wicked."

"No!" The looming shadow cried as he watched the crystal fractures disappear into the starry sky. He glared down at them. "You blasted Universe scum!!!" With a swipe and a blast of negative energy, the two were slain.

The flow of time fuzzed and rushed out of the scene to return to the present, and the three siblings looked at Pulsar again. The pale hands of the woman still held the complete Twilight Crystal close to herself. Jennifer stepped forward. "Our mother told us never to let the crystal fall into evil hands."

"Give it to us before we have to take it back from you." Darien threatened.

"Take it!? She sounded astounded. "No one will take this from me! It's mine!"

"It is made of us, we have the power to take it." Olivia announced. "Don't think that we don't. But it will be easier for us if you would hand it over."

"Because our power will surely be the end of you." Darien informed her. "If you are truly wicked, then we cannot let you continue to search for the Twilight Crystal."

"Do what you want!" Pulsar cried. "I'll never give it up! Not after all I've been through!"

"Very well." Jennifer said. "We warned you." The three of them had their symbols reappear on their foreheads. A cold wind rose up around them. Darien stepped closer and raised both hands. The wind shot at Pulsar and the crystal began to glow. It glowed bright, and the light was powerful. It forced her hands apart. Unfortunately, it did not continue so slowly. One huge swelling of energy expanded and covered her. Inside her was the most terrible burning and pressure she'd ever felt. With a cry and a stare of disbelief, she fell backward, immobilized. As she fell, she watched the twilight crystal float back over to rest between Darien's hands.

Pulsar landed alongside her husband. She turned and looked into his dying face, fresh tears on her eyes. Reaching out her trembling hand, Chrysoberyl laid it in his tan palm. "I – I'm dying! I – Kyanite – I'm so sorry."

Jennifer and Olivia hurried up beside Darien again. The three of them looked down on the two fallen soldiers. "Together in death?"

"Death isn't justice." Darien stated.

"I agree." Jennifer said. "It is more of a punishment to keep them alive but sealed."

"The Twilight Crystal can seal them up, right?" Olivia asked, looking at them as they slowly escaped the living world.

"Yes it can." Darien stated. "But where?"

"I know where." Jennifer said. "The dark soldiers came from a well of their own energy contained where only they could access it. If they were sealed in there, there would be no one left to release them."

"Prisoners in their own power." Darien decided.

"Sounds perfect." Olivia agreed, she tore her eyes from the two on the ground. "Let's hurry."

All three of them held out their hands and the Crystal came to life again. The pair before them were separated into their own glass, crystal-shaped coffins. Inside, their color faded to grayness, spared from death by their imprisonment, but at the same time lifeless. The Twilight Crystal twinkled in their three palms and the coffins vanished into an endless well of the two soldier's conjoined power. The two heirs of the Kingdom of the Negaverse vanished into an unbreakable void of power to remain forever undisturbed. What was left were the three Children of Earth and one crystal glowing faintly between them.

They all looked into each other's eyes. Jennifer smiled. "We found you, Darien! Why did you stay away for so long?"

"I don't know, but I was looking for you." He answered. "Even though I didn't know what I was looking for, I was still looking."

"Jennifer and I died on Earth when the Negaforce took over." Olivia recalled. "But you headed for the moon to protect your princess. That is why we were separated. We weren't together in the past, so we weren't reborn together in the present."

"I understand so much." He said. "I remember everything..." He glanced back to the deadened eyes of Sailor Moon. "I understand my dream..." His heart was breaking again. "Serenity..."

"We're going to bring her back." Jennifer assured. He turned back to her. "We can't stay like this."

"What?" he asked.

"She's right." Olivia agreed. "We remember the Silver Millennium. No one else does."

"We can tell them." Darien said.

"They wouldn't understand." Jennifer shook her head. "This isn't the way it's supposed to happen. The moon princess needs to find her memory herself."

"But –"

"You've got to find the Imperium Silver Crystal!" Olivia cried. "You were distracted from your mission to find us! We are an imbalance. Your search for the Silver Crystal is what will uncover the identity of Princess Serenity. She can't find herself without you."

"She needs you." Jennifer insisted.

He looked back to Serena and sighed. "So what do we do?"

"Use the Twilight Crystal to put back all the essence, then Olivia and I will use all of our superpower energy to transport everyone back to where they were a week before. We will erase the memories of Sailors Polaris and Earth from every single person in the universe, and selectively destroy all evidence that we ever existed." Jennifer said. "With our power gone, we will also have our memories clean, and will return to our normal lives as if nothing happened."

"For everyone else, this week will seem like a distant memory." Olivia said. "As if they lived it half awake."

"I'm used to that." Darien understood. "But you know that that means that we will have no memory of ever meeting."

"And the fractures of the twilight crystal will be once again broken and hidden safely within each of us." Jennifer resolved, but she sensed what he felt and looked up at him. "Yes, I know."

Olivia looked over at him, her innocent face cheerful through sadness.

He sighed. "The two of you are right. Let's get it over with."

"Darien..." Jennifer said, her voice trembling. "This is the end."

"I'll miss you, big brother." Olivia said, smiling weakly.

He bowed his head. "You know that I'll miss the two of you....even if I never knew that I had you." He closed his eyes. "I was missing you for a long time before all of this."

The crystal spun around in their hands. The cloud of essence churning in the dome broke apart and trickled down to enter its respective hosts. The color returned to the frozen statues and light shone once again through the windows up above. The three siblings looked to each other, knowing that this was their last moment. Their eyes moistened. Olivia stared at Darien. After the whole meeting with Tuxedo Mask, the relationship she'd had with him, the words they'd exchanged, in a couple seconds, they would remember none of it. She didn't want to forget, but she had no choice. She reached out and took his hand. He looked at her, his eyes watering too. He'd finally found a cure for his loneliness; his family. He'd found people he could remember growing up with, people he could care for, it was what he'd always wanted. Jennifer held his hand too. She was sad to see it go, just like the other two. She took her sister's hand as well. The crystal floated in the middle shattered. The whole room became white. Each of them felt their consciousnesses drift apart. Soon their hands were empty and everything was gone.

\* \* \*

When Olivia woke up, she was in her room. It was Sunday afternoon still, with the October sun shining in her window. She got up and headed downstairs to find Jennifer doing her homework on the couch. The brunette rubbed her eyes. "Man, I must have fallen asleep in my history book again."

"I was napping too." She said. She sat on the arm of the couch. "What's on?"

"Uh...I dunno, I think I was asleep for a little while." She said. "I'm thinking about putting on the MST3K we taped yesterday? You up for it?"

"Nah...I'm going to walk up to Quik Trip and get some candy or something."

"Exercise for sugar?" Jennifer asked. "Go for it. I'll be here when you get back, and I'll probably be doing the same note card."

"Okay." Olivia went out the front door. She headed won the street, up the hill to and down several streets to the intersection across from the service station. Unbeknownst to her, this was the same place that a week ago, she had met a turquoise cat balled up against the traffic. But there was no cat there today, and she paused for some reason in the middle of the crosswalk at the spot where she had been. She had this feeling that she'd forgotten something...but shrugged and kept walking, moving on to live her life.

\* \* \*

Niobe was far away from there. She was in the arms of a young girl with a long brown braid. Courtney had brought her home, of course she couldn't really remember how or why, but she'd always liked cats and her mother had said it was okay. She walked Niobe over to her bed, the large brown eyes of the cat slowly opened, her memory wiped blank and her mind exhausted. She found herself placed on the fluffy white covers. Courtney smiled at her and left. Niobe's head sank down and her eyes closed again.

\* \* \*

In the Negaverse, nothing had changed. The spell of the Twilight Crystal was limited to the Universe and Queen Beryl was caressing her crystal ball violently as she sat furiously on he throne. "My daughter and her wretched husband have been destroyed!" Beryl announced.

"We are sorry for your loss." The ignorant masses chorused, not knowing of the plot and all that had gone on in the past day.



“Sorry!?! What Sorry!?! I ‘m sorry I couldn’t knock them off myself.” Beryl looked out over her assembled army. “General Malachite!”

The silver haired general stepped forward, his long cape billowing out behind him, a lump was in his throat. He and Zoicite had returned to the Negaverse hours before. This was the first time Beryl was confronting them. Zoicite tugged on her ponytail in anxiety. Malachite bowed before her throne. “yes, my queen.”

“I have every right to be very angry with you.” She noted. “But I have seen the corruption of my ranks, now that that stupid cat of my ex-son-in-law’s has vanished, I understand how you were used as an...unwilling tool. Don’t think it’s because I like you, because I don’t. And usually, I hold by the opinion that honesty is overrated. But I appreciate you telling me about this plot against me. I’m willing to give you a second chance.” Zoicite fought back a smile. Malachite took a breath and straightened a little higher. Beryl continued. “And since the job is freshly vacant, you are once again the head of the army.” He swelled with pride. She looked into the crowd and snapped Zoicite out of her reverie. “General Zoicite!!!”

The red-headed general stepped out before her and stood by Malachite. Beryl was not pleased with her. “You are not as worthy of a second chance. You deserted and headed to earth to interfere with my instructions. But I’ve learned one thing from this mess, and that is not to send incompetent soldiers to do important jobs. You, Zoicite, will gather the Rainbow Crystals we have yet to get. Forget the crystal my daughter reported, it is phony. Hurry and do your job, we have lost a lot of time. I have lost patience with you, I wouldn’t cross me if I were you.”

Zoicite bowed deeply to her queen. “Thank you, your Majesty. I will not fail you.”

“You had better not.” Beryl warned. Malachite and Zoicite stole a glance to each other. His eyes were proud and satisfied. Hers were grateful and determined. Beryl paused. “What happened to that wretched cat anyway?”

Hecate was watching from the corner.

“I don’t know, your majesty, but think he was killed.” Malachite reported. Hecate slitted her eyes. Beryl shrugged. “Just as well. He is no longer a concern of ours.”

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In the fluffy white covers, Niobe was stirred by the sounds of Courtney reentering the room. The turquoise cat looked up as a ball of navy fur was laid beside her. Garth had a bandage on his head, but the inverted crescent moon was still visible. He opened his eyes slowly, the golden irises shining in the sunlight. She didn’t remember who he was, and the concussion he couldn’t remember her. All they could do was look at each other... Two cats. One girl. A new chance at a blissful life.

~The End~