**A Rip in Fate**

Prologue – Unclear Visions

The evening was calm and clear, and bright stars shone in the night sky. Manderin, sitting outside on a rock overlooking the yard, took a deep breath of the fresh, cool air. She loved the night. Suddenly, her sight clouded over, and the tiny stars so far above twinkled out of view. Her mind was now filled with what she could only describe as a psychic vision. She saw many images flash by, with accompanying words.

 She saw a giant explosion, and a crystal she could recognize even if she was blind. *The first to cross.* A flurry of song, music notes visible in the air. *One with no past*. A girl, smiling, holding a rainbow-coloured stone just before fading away. *And one is two.* A small figure standing at the top of a tall cliff, about to jump. *To death and back*. A flower, held within a small, but skilled, hand. *The plants cry ‘healer’*. A tree’s spreading limbs, and a flash of blue. *The one misborn*. Colour spreading from darkness, changing the old into new. *A creator’s gift*. An orange, and a spurt of blood. *Key to both worlds.* Darkness swirling around a bright core. *Misrepresented evil.* A clock, reflected within a mirror. *Time doesn’t pass*. And finally, a cat’s green eyes, and a metallic point. *The wild card*. The scene changed to a point on a map. *Together again, a new world is born.* The voice changed, no longer talking completely in riddles. *You, Manderin, must find them, and tell them where to go. No one, not even you, can know what is happening. If it takes more than a month, it will be too late. I’ll see you there.*

 Manderin opened her eyes. The world was back to how it should be. Shaking, her head, she tried to understand what she had just seen. It appeared to have been some kind of clairvoyance, but there was one fundamental problem: Manderin had always simply *known* what was going on. She had never been confused like this before, and her insight had never needed to some in riddles. This was completely new for her, and while she didn’t understand exactly what was happening, she felt a sense of urgency, and knew that the vision was something she couldn’t ignore. She had a mission.

Chapter One – No Longer Home

 Symphony turned off the recording system, preparing to review and edit her new song. She had to admit, her singing career was going well, despite the fact that she’d had no training. *I suppose that’s what happens when you have magic related to music*, she mused. She hummed for a moment, letting a long string of three-dimensional music notes pour from between her lips, and then watched as they drifted off and faded away. She sighed. It had been ten years since her life with Melody had ended, but she still missed her. Ten years since she had found (accidentally) the fountain of youth, and drank from it unknowingly. Ten years since Melody had died from cancer and Symphony and her newly adopted sister, Manderin, had fled, not wanting to be kept in an orphanage. Had it really been that long? Their lives since then had been… about average for them. Plenty of adventure, and periods of time when Symphony was traveling in a different dimension, but there were times, too, when they simply stayed here in this little shack and she worked on her recordings. They had lived in a little ‘bubble’ somehow, separated from everything else that was happening in the world. Symphony’s thoughts were interrupted when Manderin rushed into the room. “I just had a vision”.

 After listening to Manderin explain her mysterious mission, Symphony thought for a moment, then spoke up. “It seems as though each of those images was representing a person. You say that the crystal and explosion represent you, and the music notes are definitely me. But what about the others?”

 “I don’t know” Manderin admitted. “I haven’t seen any of them before.” She sighed. “It’s so frustrating to *not* know what’s going on! How does everyone stand this?” She paused. “I guess they’ve just never had anything else for a comparison.”

 Symphony nodded, knowing full well that she was one of the ‘everyone’ Manderin was referring to – people who didn’t always know everything about everything. She loved Manderin, and didn’t find her strange knowledge as unnerving as most people did, but she still felt inclined to change the topic. “Well, let’s go through it systematically. Can you send me a telepathic image of what you saw?”

 She waited, and Manderin obliged. She saw the explosion of the crystal, and the music notes representing her strange ability, and heard the words associated with them. These were the things that they already knew. The next image, however, made her gasp. She saw a girl, about fifteen, with long, naturally ‘crimped’ looking hair in a colour that was neither brown nor blond, but somewhere in between. She recognised that hair, and those green eyes, and the pendant in the shape of one half of a yin-yang that hung around her neck. “Harmony!”

 Manderin looked at her, head tilted to one side. “You recognize her.” It was not a question. “Harmony, your sister?”

 Symphony nodded. “Yes. You didn’t, because this is somehow hidden from you and you’ve never met her. Melody adopted you after she disappeared” Tears came unbidden to her large blue eyes, and she bowed her head. “I guess she didn’t die, though, as we’d thought” she said, feeling suddenly hopeful. She grew excited. “We have to find her!”

 Manderin wanted to say something. She felt Symphony’s excitement, and didn’t want to discover that Harmony had died, after all – that would break Symphony’s heart. She couldn’t, however, and this lack of *knowing* was driving her crazy. She still knew some things – she felt Symphony’s emotions, and knew exactly what was going on in a small household on the other side of the world, or what the weather would be like tomorrow (sunny with a hint of clouds), but she had no idea if Harmony was alive or dead, and what these visions were about. She looked at her sister. “Well,” she said, “I guess we’d better return to Kiasta”.

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 “Well,” Symphony said as they walked down the narrow road that led into the small town of Kiasta, “here we are”. It had been a long trip, and they were both a bit jetlagged, but she was glad to finally be at their destination.

 As they walked into town, she immediately began to recognize scenes from her childhood. Although more than ten years had passed since she had left, everything looked remarkably unchanged. Even the Music Note Cafe, previously owned by Melody, was still there. She stared at it for a moment, but then had to look away as she recalled all of the happy times she had spent there, and the circumstances surrounding their leaving it. Harmony had gone out for a walk in the forest, as she usually did, but by nightfall, she had still not returned. They had gone looking for her, and called the police, but no one had found anything. After a week and no luck, they had declared her dead. Melody was heartbroken. Symphony was too, of course, but not in the same way as Melody. She became extremely depressed, and one day she took Symphony and left for China, saying that she ‘couldn’t stand it here anymore’. Why she felt the need to go to China, Symphony would never know, but it was a good thing she did, because it was there that they found and adopted Manderin. It was also there that Symphony found the fountain of youth, and unknowingly drank from it, but she wasn’t sure if she would consider that a good thing.

 She was literally pulled back to the present moment by Manderin, who took her by the arm and pulled her forward from where she had been stopped in front of the old Cafe. Symphony shook herself, and focused on the task ahead. “How should we go about finding her? We searched and searched before, but she was never found”

 Manderin thought for a moment, but nothing came to mind. Helplessly, she shook her head. “I don’t know. I’m still not getting any kind of a signal. It’s odd. I know what you’re thinking, and what everyone else here is thinking, and I can tell you what the exact altitude and temperature is, but I have no idea where your sister disappeared to. This has never happened to me before”. She swallowed, and her usually clear and mysterious blue eyes clouded over with what might have been tears.

 Symphony nodded. “Okay. It’s okay”. She always felt awkward when adults cried- or almost cried – but this was different, and perhaps worse. She didn’t know what to consider Manderin. She wasn’t a child, although she looked like one, and she didn’t really act completely like an adult. Thinking on it, Symphony realized that the same could be said about her.

 Pulling herself back to the topic at hand, Symphony tried to decide what to do about Harmony.

 “Well, let’s ask at the police station to see if anyone has sighted her. If she isn’t dead after all, maybe people will have spotted her.

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 Three hours later, after asking around at not only the police station, but also every store and several houses in the town, they finally stood at the edge of Kiasta Forest. No one had seen Harmony, or anyone resembling her, and they’d had to eventually give up. As a last resort, they had gone to the last place that Harmony had been seen: Kiasta Forest.

 It didn’t seem very likely that Harmony would be there. If she was alive, wouldn’t she have gone into town, where all the people, food, and other supplies were? Still, they had to check, just in case.

 Symphony was starting to get nervous. “She’s got to be here. I know it” she said, trying to reassure herself. After getting her hopes up, she was suddenly terrified that they would come crashing down around her and she would once again be without a sister.

 Then she felt Manderin’s hand on her shoulder. “Don’t worry” she said, her blue eyes calmly showing her reflection, “You’ll still have me”

 Symphony nodded, shaking morbid thoughts from her brain. Manderin was right. “I know” she said, “I know”

 The forest itself was as it had always been, if not better. It was green, filled with many kinds of flora and fauna that Symphony could never recognize, and bright red berries clustered in the bushes. Examining it, Symphony was sure that there was something slightly different about the forest, but she couldn’t put a name on it. It felt clearer, brighter, more vibrant and alive, and yet it also felt very familiar, reminding her of her childhood here.

 The two girls walked together into the forest, Manderin for the first time, and Symphony for the first time in over ten years. Both of them, however, knew the lay of the land. Symphony remembered it- everything was coming back to her now – and Manderin had evidently had no blockage in this area.

 “Lets sweep the area” Manderin suggested. “That way, we won’t miss anything”.

 Symphony was about to agree, but then had an idea. “Yes, but let’s go to the pond first. That’s the only place where they found anything”

 ‘The pond’ was a small pool of water near the middle of the forest. It was beautifully clear and crystalline, and an excellent swimming hole in the summer. It was also the only place where they had found anything of Harmony’s – namely, her clothing and necklace. They had decided, however, that because there was no blood or tears in the clothing, that she had merely taken the articles off to go swimming, and since there was no dead body in the water, it had been a dead end. Symphony didn’t know what they would find there, but she thought that since it was the only place in the forest where they’d had any sign of Harmony, that was where they should look.

 When they got there, Symphony almost cried. There was nothing there. It was exactly what she had expected, but it still hurt. She walked over to the water’s edge, and sat down on a rock. Manderin stayed back, intending to give Symphony some room.

 “We may still find her elsewhere” she said, but Symphony ignored her.

 Symphony closed her eyes, singing softly to herself. She wasn’t really sure what she was singing – it didn’t matter. All that mattered was that she had to get it out, had to forget for a moment that she had thought Harmony was still alive, and that she was now almost certainly dead. What had she been thinking? Of course she was dead. They had never found anything except her clothing! She rocked back and forth, pouring her sorrow into a song as she sang.

Chapter Two- Meeting Kiasta

 Kiasta watched the forest. Well, really, she supposed that she *was* the forest. She knew every tree, every blade of grass, and every bird from the inside out. It was her spirit that gave the forest energy, although it could last for a while without her. She thought that maybe it had had to, once, but she instinctively shied away from these memories, returning to the daily routine of Kiasta Forest. Slowly, something came to her attention. Two girls, neither of which she remembered seeing before, but one of which felt strangely familiar, were entering her forest. She watched them for a while, attempting to discern if they meant good or ill. Sometimes children would enter the forest only to take berries and flowers, and scare off all of the native animals. Fortunately, these children seemed to have something different on their agenda. They headed straight to the pond at the center of the forest – a place she had always been partial towards, although she couldn’t remember why.

 Suddenly, she felt slightly nostalgic, but she wasn’t sure what she was longing for. What was it that she couldn’t remember? She felt as though something extremely important had happened to her, and yet she had no memory of what it was. And why did that child, the one with the golden hair, look so familiar? Unexpectedly, an image flashed into her mind. That girl, sitting in a room she didn’t recognize (why would she? She had never been outside of the forest, had she?). The girl was hooked up to a computer system, singing into it. Suddenly, she looked over to where Kiasta was observing from, and said, in a light but clear voice ‘Oh, hi Harmony!’

 Kiasta snapped back to the present moment. What was going on? She usually just observed the forest, providing life force energy and doing no more thinking than idle speculation. She was not used to actually thinking this hard about something. And yet, this was certainly something that warranted thinking. That girl was still there, at the pool, kneeling by the edge. Who was she? It was then that Kiasta made a decision. She almost never used her innate ability to do telepathy – there weren’t many other place-spirits in the area, and the animals within Kiasta Forest were an essential part of her – but she had to find out what was going on. She was always just a little different from the other place-spirits; just a little too curious, too adventurous. Slowly, cautiously, she reached out a tendril of thought to the girl who she half-recognized, and made contact.

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*Hello. Who are you?*

Symphony sat up with a start. “Hello? I’m Symphony” she responded before realizing that the voice had been through telepathy. Just in case the being in question was deaf, she responded again using telepathy. *Hello. I’m Symphony. Who are you?*

 *I am Kiasta Forest. Where have I met you before?*

 Symphony frowned. Something about this telepathic ‘voice’ sounded familiar, but she couldn’t place it. She knew that Manderin was observing this conversation, but she stayed silent, so Symphony continued on.

 *I used to live here a long time ago. I stayed with a woman named Melody and a girl named Harmony. Harmony disappeared and no one could find her. We all thought she was dead, and-* she stopped for a moment, collecting herself before continuing. *–And melody took me and moved to China. There, she adopted Manderin – the other girl with me – and I accidentally found the fountain of youth*. Again, she paused. Why was she pouring out her life story to a stranger who she didn’t even know? Because she had pour it out to someone, because Manderin was eons old and yet was only a child, because she had no one else and no other choice. She continued. *Melody got cancer and died, and Manderin and I left to live on our own to avoid being sent to an orphanage. Then, Manderin got a vision that sent us looking here again for Harmony, because maybe she isn’t dead, but we can’t find her…* Symphony trailed off. What else was there to say? It was silent for a moment, and, perhaps just to make conversation, she asked one of the many unanswered questions. *Why did you contact me?*

 The forest was slow to respond, and sounded very thoughtful. *I noticed you two enter the forest. I watched you, because I didn’t know if I could trust you or not… You seem familiar to me, as if I have seen you before, but I can’t remember… It feels as though there is much that I don’t remember... I had a vision where I saw you, and you were singing, and you turned to look at me and called me ‘Harmony’… I had to know what was going on so I contacted you.*

 Everyone was quiet for a moment, pondering what had been said. Symphony didn’t want to put words to her thoughts, afraid that if she made them known then they would fly away, and take all of her hopes with them. And yet, she had to. If she didn’t voice them, then she wouldn’t know, maybe would never know. So, in a soft, telepathic voice, she mind-whispered; *Harmony?* Almost as soon as she said the word she regretted it, but it was too late.

 Kiasta was soft, and sad. *I don’t know. I don’t remember. Maybe I was once your ‘Harmony’ but I am no longer. I have no memories except of this forest, and vague feelings that I have forgotten. Even if I am ‘Harmony’, finding her will be more difficult than you thought.*

Symphony fell once more to the ground, heartbroken. She had come this far, returned to her hometown (or at least, the closest thing she had to one) and yet nothing had changed: Harmony was still dead.

 Manderin knelt down beside her. “That isn’t true,” she said. “We have a hope now. We didn’t before. All that Kiasta said was that she didn’t remember. She may still be Harmony, and just not know it.” As she said the words, she felt as though she was lying, but she had to comfort her sister. She had no idea one way or the other about the forest – she knew what Kiasta was feeling, but nothing more. Still, she also knew what Symphony was feeling, and she had to help her.

 Symphony nodded, wiping away her tears. Manderin had a point, although she never knew how much of what Manderin said was what she felt, and how much was what she wanted to hear.. “I know, I know. But what do I do now? Even if Kiasta *is* Harmony, there’s no way to tell!”

 Manderin shook her head helplessly. Symphony was right. What could they do? They sat there for a moment, each lost in their own sorrows. After a few moments, Kiasta made a suggestion.

 *Why don’t you show me what this Harmony looked like? Maybe I’ll remember something.*

 Symphony nodded, slowly as if in a daze, and sent her the images, explaining each one as they came. *Harmony, learning how to ride horses… practising with the double and light sword… hiking in the forest… painting.* As an afterthought, she showed her the image that Manderin had seen in her vision. *This is her in the vision. We think that in the picture she’s in Kiasta Forest, but we don’t know where, and we don’t know what the stone is.*

 Kiasta accepted the images, feeling as though the girl in them looked familiar, but no memories were triggered. When she saw the last image, however, something happened, and she was pulled into another vision.

 She was lost, confused, in a place that she recognized, but where something was off. She tried to remember who she was, but to no avail. She was in a forest (one that Kiasta, having the vision, recognized as her forest) and there was something about it that seemed achingly familiar, but she couldn’t place it. She lay there for a while, staring up at the sky, but was interrupted by a girl of about thirteen years, with long dark brown hair and amber eyes.

 Suddenly the scene changed and she was in a different section of the forest, by the pool. This time she wasn’t lost, or confused. She knew where she was. Still, though, there was that sense of familiar oddity, as though she should know something, but didn’t. It was a feeling Kiasta knew well. She sat on the edge of the pool, and caught a quick glimpse of her reflection – the same as that Harmony girl!- before she noticed the stone. It was the same stone as in the final image: small, oval in shape, and filled with a myriad of colours all shifting and swirling around. She wasn’t sure why, but she reached for it. It was in the shallows, and she easily caught hold of it. She sat for a moment, admiring it. It looked almost like a genuine piece of rainbow! As she looked at the stone, an unusual feeling spread through her body, and she felt almost as though she was floating away. She looked at her hands, and noticed – much to her alarm – that she could see through them. She was fading away! She panicked, but it was too late. She completely disappeared, and saw from a different vantage point her clothing and necklace fall unattended to the forest floor. Kiasta then had a brief flash of her own memories as Kiasta Forest before returning to the present.

 Kiasta paused, unsure of what to do now. She should tell the two girls of what she had seen, but how? They would assume that she was this ‘Harmony’ girl. Was she? She certainly seemed to have some kind of a connection with her, but she couldn’t remember anything apart from these erratic visions. Deep down, she wasn’t sure that she wanted to remember anything. Being a forest was safe, and she didn’t know what would happen if she suddenly had to be someone else. Still, she knew that she was obliged to tell the others about her vision. *I had another vision...* she started, but Manderin seemed to understand her difficulty and interrupted her.

 *I saw – I read minds. I’m showing the vision to Symphony now.*

*Okay, thank you.* Kiasta shifted her focus to Symphony. At first she looked confused, but after a few moments (Kiasta presumed she was nearing the end of the vision) she brightened.

 *You* must *be Harmony! You saw her in the pool, and then vanished!* She was excited now. *Maybe you just can’t remember because of whatever that stone did to you! I’m so glad we’ve finally found you!*

While Symphony gushed on Manderin thought carefully about the situation. It did seem as though Kiasta was really Harmony, but how could that be possible? Symphony was so excited that she was overlooking the obvious. Harmony wasn’t a place-spirit, and generally it was impossible to transform a “normal” creature that was unable to tap in into a creature like a place-spirit, which was an intrinsic part of other creatures. She sighed. Usually, she would know exactly who Kiasta was, and how she related to everything that was going on. This was infuriating! Ever since that vision, her abilities had been off…

 Thinking about the vision reminded her of another issue. *Sorry to interrupt, but how are we going to take a place-spirit with us anyways?*

 *Go with you?* Kiasta asked. *Why do you want me to go with you?*

 *In Manderin’s vision, she was told to bring all of the people she saw to a certain place. We don’t know why.* Symphony explained.

 Kiasta thought for a moment. *Well, I’m not usually able to leave the forest – I’m what keeps it alive.* And yet, that spark of curiosity that made her different from the others was getting the better of her. Despite her fears of it, she burned to know what the outside world was like. And suddenly she somehow knew that this decision was going to influence her world forever, and she wasn’t sure that she wanted them to leave her again, all alone and never knowing who she really was. *But it is possible for me to leave for short periods – a decade or two. I don’t recall ever doing it, but I think I know how. Give me a moment*

 Symphony smiled. *So you’ll come?* She waited for a response, and then realized that Kiasta was probably concentrating elsewhere. She waited for a couple of minutes, and was just getting impatient when something happened.

 In the air in front of her, a hazy globe of energy was appearing. It wobbled at first, but soon stabilized. *There.* They soon heard Kiasta say telepathically. *Oh, but I guess I should try to look more like you two, shouldn’t I?* The globe stretched into the form of a human, and slowly settled. When it had finished, the globe had transformed into a replica of Harmony as seen in the vision.

 Symphony almost cried again. She knew that the being she was seeing had none of Harmony’s memories, but the resemblance was so close that she felt as though it was more than ten years ago and everything was as it should be. She took a step towards the image, and asked “Can you hear and talk and stuff, like we can?”

 The figure shrugged. *This is simply a shell of energy housing a portion of my consciousness. I can obtain information, but not manipulate it except through my consciousness.* Seeing Symphony’s confused expression, she elaborated. *That is, I can see, hear, and smell, but not touch or speak.*

“Oh. What about taste?” Symphony said, curious. She had met a few beings that were energy based, rather than physical, but she still didn’t know much about them.

 *I suppose I could if I wanted to, but I don’t really have a mouth to taste with, so there isn’t much of a point. Taste isn’t a very useful sense unless you need to eat.*

Symphony nodded. This made sense. “What should we call you? You may be Harmony, but you’re also Kiasta, and you don’t remember being Harmony…”

 Manderin spoke up. “Why don’t we call her Harmony Kiasta? Kiasta was Harmony’s middle name anyways, wasn’t it?”

 Symphony turned to Harmony/Kiasta. “What do you think? Does that work?”

 “I don’t know,” Kiasta said, trying out her ability to telepathically ‘talk’ to people vocally. “I don’t really identify as Harmony, but I know that that‘s how you guys are going to see me, and Harmony’s the one you need to take with you. If that’s what you want to call me, I guess I don’t have a problem with it – although I’m not really sure it it’s who I am”

 Symphony smiled. “Okay, Harmony Kiasta it is”. She felt a little strange around Harmony Kiasta, but she supposed it was to be expected. This being was her sister, but not her sister, and she wasn’t sure at the moment whether they were sisters or strangers. Maybe they were both. Either way, she thought, she’d had enough of being sad for one day – it wasn’t usually in her character, and she preferred to be positive and upbeat. She’d gotten so worked up today simply because there were so many memories here, and she *did* really miss Harmony. She shook herself, pulling her thoughts back to the present, and tried to be upbeat. “So, what’s next?”

Chapter Two - So, now what?

“Why don’t we just randomly walk up to people on the street and ask them if they’re magical creatures?” Symphony suggested. She tossed another pebble into the pond as she lay on her stomach by its edge. “We’ll have to find them eventually”

 Manderin turned from the flower she was intently staring at. “I don’t think that’s a very practical approach, seeing as how we’re limited on time here.”

 Symphony groaned, “I know, I know. It was only a suggestion. Let’s start from the beginning again. What exactly was in your vision?”

 So they went over everything again. Manderin described telepathically to her the people she had to find, and the mysterious directions at the end. After going over everyone several times, they were forced to conclude that they didn’t know any of them.

 “So you two don’t know any of these people?” Harmony Kiasta asked.

 “That’s what is looks like” Symphony said. “How are we supposed to find people we don’t even know? Let alone bring them someplace we’ve never been. Where exactly are we taking them, anyways?”

 Manderin closed her eyes for a moment, a concentrated look on her face. It’s in New York, but not the densely populated region like Manhattan. It’s a rural area just past the city.” She paused, “Actually, our stop in Kiasta was right on the path, so we’re not out of the way coming here.”

 “Well, that’s one good thing!” Symphony brightened up, an idea spreading across her face in a smile. “Let’s just keep heading in that general direction, and maybe we’ll meet someone on the way!”

 “Are you always this optimistic?” Harmony Kiasta asked

 “Usually. You really don’t remember me at all, huh?” Symphony said. Her smile broke for a minute, but she quickly recovered. “You’ll figure it out soon. We’d better get going, before it gets dark!”

 Manderin nodded, and they grabbed their bags. There was a small hotel in Kiasta, but it was run by humans, and you had to be eighteen to get a room. They were hoping to get at least far enough to reach a large town with enough magical creatures to warrant a magic-run motel. In their world, you never knew someone’s real age, so identification and specific age limits were never enforced.

 As they set off, Symphony once again lamented that she had been frozen at the physical age of thirteen, rather than something more useful, like sixteen so she could drive. Mentally, she was capable of it, but she knew that if she did, cops would stop what they saw as a thirteen year old girl driving a car. As a result, they had to walk or bike most places, unless there was a high magic percentage or it was a place that she knew well enough to teleport to. She had known Kiasta well enough to teleport, but Manderin had never been there, and she hadn’t been there in ten years, so she didn’t know what changes there might have been. She’d never seen this new place, so they were stuck walking and biking. That is, until something important occurred to her.

 “Harmony Kiasta! You could look eighteen if you wanted, right?”

 “Yeah, I guess”. She didn’t make any movements to shrug or anything, like the old Harmony would have, which unnerved her. “Why?”

 “Because that can be very useful to us”. Symphony paused. “Except that we don’t have a car, and you don’t know how to drive...” She shook her head. “Nevermind”

 “No, wait.” Manderin interjected. “You have a good point. We don’t have access to a car of our own, and she couldn’t drive it anyways, but other people can”

 “I’m sorry, what?” Symphony asked, confused.

 “Taxis, busses, the public transportation system. With someone who looks old enough that we aren’t trying to run away, we can take a bus or a taxi to get there. We have money from your singing career that we can use.”

 The smile returned to Symphony’s face. “That’s a great idea! I knew I was right!” she joked. Turning to Harmony Kiasta, she asked “Do you think you could make yourself look old enough to be a responsible adult?”

 Harmony Kiasta nodded, and closed her eyes. “How old should I be?”

 “I don’t know.” At least eighteen, so you can be considered an adult.

 “Okay”. After a few moments of concentration, Harmony Kiasta began to flicker. Soon, she had faded away completely. Symphony and Manderin waited, hopeful that this was part of the transformation process. Sure enough, after what seemed like an excruciatingly long time (but was really closer to five minutes) a figure reappeared. A figure that did not look like Harmony.

 Symphony almost started crying again. Today was bringing her too close to a past that she had been trying to forget. Although she knew that the figure was just Harmony Kiasta in another form, she couldn’t help but whisper “Melody...”

 And it looked exactly like her. The shoulder length brown hair, amber coloured eyes that Symphony had never been able to persuade her to get contacts for, the simple ‘mature’ outfit in browns and reds... Everything. This wasn’t the Melody of the later years, either. That Melody, after Harmony had disappeared, had been different – sadness and depression was normal in that circumstance, Symphony supposed, but Melody had never recovered. Symphony had taken it hard as well, but she had learned to move on. Or so she had thought.

 “So, what do you think?” The Melody-figure asked. Even the voice sounded like hers. “Do I look old and mature enough?”

 Manderin, having read Symphony’s thoughts, and having understood her inability to deal with the situation at the moment, stepped in. “Harmony Kiasta, do you know who you look like right now?”

 She shook her head. “Not really. I was trying to change form to someone older, but I couldn’t do it as Harmony. Maybe because Harmony had never gotten any older than this, I don’t know, but I just couldn’t see it. So I tried to see someone else, someone who was older. This is what came into my mind”. She frowned, looking at the two girls. “Why? Is it significant?”

 Symphony, having recovered somewhat, replied. “You look like Melody. Our older sister. She lived with us until you... went away. Then she took us to China and adopted Manderin before dying of cancer.” She clenched her jaw against the threatening tears. “You look just like her”.

 “Oh. Sorry. Do you want me to try to look like someone else? I didn’t mean to make you cry.”

 Symphony shook her head. “Don’t worry; it wasn’t your fault, really. I’ve been avoiding this stuff – you, Kiasta, Melody – for so long that now it’s all coming back and I’m having a hard time dealing with it. I’ll manage.” She smiled. “At least you look mature enough that we won’t get questioned.” She looked at Manderin. “Can you find us a bus stop?”