



THE
CROSSFADE...
SOLO

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Chapter Two

TWO CENTS



"You're late..." pouted a tall, handsome Frenchman. His chiseled jaw and deep, green eyes gazed upon Lemon's short figure as she and her friend joined him in the preparation halls of the "FILI" event.

Smiling, Lemon responded, "Mmhmm, as always."

"Did it even occur to you that you might be missing out on something when you arrive as late as you do?" The man asked with a raised eyebrow. His dark glistening hair screamed with evident hair gel and the aromatic stench of his after shave was rich.

"Yes, I miss out on unnecessary socializing." Lemon replied still smiling. "Now greet me in your lovely French way!"

"Wait." The man replied calmly. He grabbed a passerby swiftly and spoke fluent French in his ear, and then beckoned to the area where the judges resided.

Dahn just stood by silently, digesting the entire scene before him. A common area for community related assemblies and widely known as Hollow's Edge, the building was once an unpopular department store. Due to its location being off the coast of the local residential neighborhoods, the area was prone to attract criminals. Business was hard to get and soon became a dead end. After numerous burglaries, stores closed and the building vacated but was never demolished as it was a fine structure. Thus the city decided to turn it into an auditorium for situations as such; where organizations could rent it out for a time period to have host their event and then clear out until next time.

Today in particular, Hollow's Edge's interior was decked in purple. The walls were a deep purple hue; the tables which housed refreshments were covered in purple table cloths. The stage was elevated about five feet from the ground level and hosted a small catwalk like a tongue. It was a lighter hue of purple, underneath long silky amethyst runners hanging down from the everlasting ceiling. They advertised all manner of content related to

Fashion designers and their tools of the trade. Gigantic posters of successful clothing chains, popular designers, and actual designs decorated the walls round about the auditorium. Among these posters was the enormous "First Impressions, Lasting Impressions" banner hanging above the catwalk.

Soft purple chairs for the audience orbited the stage as well as the judging council, which was comprised of ten seats. There were ten judges, each able of giving the design a score of 100/100. The tables were situated in a 5x2 array with all their respective judges already seated and bantering. The loud buzz of human integration on a massive scale droned out Dahn's thoughts as he quickly sponged in the entire scene.

"And he is?" Dahn heard faintly through his scanning. He snapped back and turned to see the handsome Frenchman staring at him. Even for a man, his eyes were gorgeous to stare into.

"I'm her friend - I'm here to see how this goes and such." Dahn responded slowly, still collecting information.

"He's my backpack," Lemon butted in. "He will do my bidding. Dahn, this is Alain."

Alain extend a long slender hand and shook Dahn's rather boring one which he didn't even give to be shaken in the first place.

"Embrasse-moi!" Lemon insisted to Alain. He turned to her and smiled genuinely. He leaned over and gave her a gentle kiss on either cheek. It was soft and utterly silent, like a sweet breeze. Her face flushed with delight as she beamed gleefully.

"I want to go to France one day!" She concluded.

"Your friend is quite an adoration for my heart." Alain told Dahn with a bounce. "I enjoy working with her."

"I see." Dahn responded flatly. "Excuse me if I'm a bore, my mind is overloaded right now, but I'm eager to see what Lemon will present today."

"She has quite a taste, but she lacks punctuality and composure to win!" Alain said giving Lemon a playful smack on her arm. "I will be very disappointed today if you don't bring us something good."

Lemon just smiled.

"Anyway, let me escort you to your booth!" Alain said as he turned to a beaming Lemon. "You have little time to get it set up and viewed. So tardy!"

"It's quite alright. I don't have much to show today." Lemon revealed. "But I do intend to present something rather '*C'est magnifique*.'"

"That is my girl! You are my absolute favorite designer here...young and tart." Alain exclaimed with hand gestures of excitement, words filled with enthusiasm and motivation. He was the kind of man that made you want to please him after hearing his eloquent language and his praise. It certainly had that effect on Lemon; who stood modestly with her arms outstretched and crossed, resting in the center of her hips, against her waist.

"We will see. Come on. Let's go!" The young lady chirped sweetly. "I'm sorry for being so late. I usually want to be late, but 'Slowpoke Dahn' made me even later."

"Later?" Alain laughed while grabbed Lemon's arm in the fashion of a true gentleman. "Surely you know that is bad grammar? I am not even English."

"English is silly; it's later if I say it is." Lemon pouted. She allowed herself to be escorted away while beckoning to her slow friend to follow them.

"Confident!" Alain grinned. "You don't hesitate to express that in your language. Such qualities should be applied to your designs, no?"

He escorted Lemon across the vast purple floor, dodging the wandering people all bent on getting where they were going. Dahn followed along with a melancholic stare, silently groaning at Lemon's silly infatuation with a Frenchman. Sure, he was handsome, but Dahn didn't think his demeanor was that resplendent.

After reaching an empty booth decked with materials and equipment for showcasing a product, Alain let go of Lemon's figure carefully and turned her around to face him by her shoulders.

"Now this time, try to sell us your design! Sell it, ok! Make us want you!" He encouraged.

Lemon squished her cheeks together and blushed really hard. "I'll try," her voice slipped from between her excited lips.

"Good!" Alain nodded with a pat on her shoulder. "Now I need to get one other designed situated, then the show begins! Hurry up; you've got so little time!" He ushered her.

Alain then grabbed one of Lemon's warm hands and kissed the back of it. "I must be on my way, but if you need me, you know where to find me. Please, try this time to win!"

"À bientôt!" Lemon waved shyly.

With that, Alain turned to leave hastily, his long legs carrying him quite a distance with each stride.

"Take care of my Béb  Citron, Dahn! Give her lots of encouragement." He called over his shoulder. Lemon hid her face in her hands and laughed.

"I will." Dahn responded respectfully. Then erasing all signs of politeness, he turned to Lemon and groaned way too loudly.

"Please Lemon; he is just a regular Frenchman." He sighed. "I've never seen you act so girly."

"Then don't come!" Lemon snapped suddenly. "I warned you, but you wanted to come."

"Hurry up, you're really late." Dahn urged. "I mean, he has great eyes, but that's about it."

"No one treats me so...elegantly." Lemon smiled with a faraway look. She quickly constructed her stall with expertise that could only have come from prior experiences.

"B b  Citron," Dahn repeated with annoyance, stressing the syllables with his disgust.

"You are just jelly as all flamingos will be." Lemon concluded with a haughty flick of her wrist. "Shoo, I don't need you here."

"You totally need me." Dahn laughed. "So... what can I do?"

"Help me get this stuff set up so when the Film Masters come around they can qualify me." Lemon commanded.

Dahn looked around the small booth and wondered where to begin. He turned to survey the other booths around him to see how they were set up. It looked pretty straightforward after seeing the standardized design of the ones around him. He took note of each booth having a sign with the name of the designer and the name of the designer line, hanging from the top of it.

Dahn grabbed a marker and Lemon's blank sign to write. However, Lemon bolted up from tacking something down and snatched it from him with huge eyes of bewilderment.

"What the - NO!" Lemon snapped. "Only the designer does this, they want MY SPECIFIC hand writing."

"Okaaaay!" Dahn exclaimed with an exasperated sigh. "I'll just go fill my belly with soda and other junk till the judging starts eh?"

"Yes, go do that, big boy." Lemon replied with annoyance.

"Thanks Bébé Citron." Dahn smiled sarcastically as he made off to get himself some food. Lemon would have tried to make him stay, but she barely watched him leave, knowing she was grossly late.

<15 minutes later>

Lemon smoothed her cloak as she waited for the announcements to start. She was a bit upset because her original idea had a short coming and she had to use an alternative costume under the same category due to her tardiness. Normally if she hadn't dragged Dahn along, this tardiness would have been fine. Nonetheless, all the time she wasted bickering with him and talking on the way changed the outcome of her usual scheme. To make matters worse, she had made such an investment in her real costume, that setting it up for proper display needed more time than she had given herself. Thus, Lemon had to settle with a lesser costume and knew her scores would suffer. However, she had rather that, than to have her pride and joy scoffed at due to ill organization and a rushed composition.

All contestants wore a cloak to hide their costume until their time of unveiling. The time frame between show time and prep time was given to the designers to put together their presentation. Rapid film projectors would run by with a small team and take a snappy but deep interview of the designer and their product. Then they went backstage and professionally created a presentation so show the judges and the audience once that person was called upon. Therefore, Lemon being late didn't make her interview any better - it was rushed and immaturely conveyed.

All of her previous competitors were present since the last event. She didn't see any of them as competitors however; well except a "meanie" named Vanessa and an obnoxious ass named Dylan. She wanted everyone to win some money, feeling that no one should be left out. Lemon sometimes gave other designers constructive pointers because no one's winnings affected another's chance of winning. So when she had time, she'd help out, especially a particular individual named Marvin. Marvin's designs were based on his love for all things contrary. He never really won anything much, because no one liked his clothing styles. They were extremely...retro.

Marvin designed clothes such as "Anti-Wedgie boxers" or "Fresh Socks." He actually thought he was in for something good, always referring to his designs as "innovative inventions". He never really got much attention though, mainly because the judges saw him as a source of comic relief. Lemon always tried to help him, but he never really got the point.

The next person Lemon often assisted was Cinnamon. Cinnny's clothing were food-based and were really cute. Despite this, she didn't win as much as she could because the judges were always complaining about the clothes being too "distinct" and "choking". The male judges often joked that they wouldn't buy them for their female companions, because they didn't want to spend time in the supermarket looking for them. Lemon told her to try beverages instead and using lightweight fabrics for the adornments. Personally Lemon loved her line and thought she deserved the most. Cinnamon didn't win the much though, Vanessa and Dylan always did.

"Ladies and Gentlemen! Designers of All shapes and Sizes! Welcome the 6th Winter FILI Event!!" an intercom boomed. "As you all know, FILI is an acronym for First Impressions, Lasting Impressions! In this event, we bring together the best and most promising designers in Cadmiere to give their future a better chance! This is the 6th instance of this event and has been a booming success each time! We have funded and changed the lives of many designers already and you could be next! And let us not forget who to thank for all the largest contributions to the FILI Show. Please welcome our esteemed and magnificent host and entrepreneur of *Cohesive*, Madame Estelle!!!!"

The crowd rolled an excited round of applause for Madame Estelle, who sat amongst the judges in her Siberian fur coat laughing and joking with them inaudibly. She paused and smiled as all eyes and cameras faced her for the duration of her spotlight. Accompanying her was no other than Alain, in his crisp purple suit awaiting her commands.

"Now let us explain the concept briefly! The designers will be called on one-by-one to present their own original creation!! The judges will analyze the design for real-world application, appeal, originality, usability, and flair! Then the suspenseful moment comes; when they place a price tag on how much they would spend to have that costume! Judges can issue a heartbreaking zero dollars to a whooping two hundred bucks! So each of you designers have a chance to win \$2000 Dollars!!!!" the announcer rambled with a loud voice filled with thrill, his energetic voice booming through the entire facility.

"Ok, here we go." Lemon sighed taking a deep breath. "I'm going to get totally fu-"

"Lemon!" Dahn exclaimed with a fierce whisper.

She turned and looked at him with big soft pitiful eyes. "I didn't prepare enough. I came too late. It's going to get screwed."

"No, do your best! C'mon go, they're ready!" Dahn nudged her from her booth. "Go make us proud."

Dahn tried to ruffle his friend's hair, but she swatted it away violently. He had forgotten that her hair was part of her costume. He retracted his hand bashfully as she picked up her suitcase and filed into the line of designers preparing to go backstage. Lemon turned around and winked gleefully as if to remind him nothing could stop her charismatic attitude.

"Please welcome our first designer...Savannah who is designing modern looks in the name of *Prestige*!!!!"

A young Swedish woman emerged down the catwalk clutching a suede black suitcase while looking excited. She wore her cloak securely fastened around her slender body; it swished and swayed as she made her way to the presentation platform. Upon reaching it, Savannah stopped and placed her suitcase on a table and flicked it open. She pulled out her costume and quickly hooked it to a hanging arm apparatus whose purpose was to raise and display the fabric.

All the lights in the auditorium shut off and only four flooding lamps remained, all pointing to Savannah. Finally, she unclasped her cloak and let it fall to her feet sensually.

"Hello ladies and gentlemen, today I present my latest and best creation... *Coy* of my *Prestige* clothing line." Savannah spoke softly into a microphone set. Her voice pitch was rather high, and she seemed very nervous. She paused as the audience gave a polite applaud to her opening.

"**Coy** embraces comfort and ease for young girl's school uniforms," Savanna continued. She spun around modestly to show off her workmanship. "Some girls like to look pretty and modern, while avoiding the stereotypical classification of our generation. Coy allows you to look cute *and* attractive, without showing off your body," she continued.

Dahn observed the uniform and judged for himself whether it looked cute or not. It looked like a smoother Japanese-style school uniform. Except, the skirt was a lot longer. There were floral designs about the arm's length but...nothing amazing off bat. "*She's going down...*" Dahn thought.

Savannah rambled on about her costume fabric choices, ease of wear, and her inspiration. It was rather boring to listen to for Dahn, although he attributed it to the fact that he was only interested in Lemon. His interest peaked, however, as the judges began to stir in preparation to begin making people either laugh or cry.

After Savannah finished her presentation, there was another calm applause by the audience who warmly received her design. Dahn clapped too, but his expression was marbled with pure and indisputable 'Meh.'

"Ok! Thank You, Savannah, for your innocent design!" the energetic announcer shouted as the auditorium regained its original lighting. Film makers hovered around every corner taking footage of the event. Savannah stood on the stage still, wreathing her sweaty hands together as the judges cleared their throat. The entire building silenced again as the first judge stood up. It was a rule that the judges of the other sex of the designed outfit were to judge first. This is because the event planners felt that the sex that the design belonged to would influence the opinions of the sex that it wasn't designed for.

The first judge was wearing a playful grin on his handsome lips. He had a great toothy grin that made a person want to keep him smiling. He ran a pale hand through his low-cut, oak colored hair and spoke.

"Well, I'm a father of a single daughter, and I'm not gonna lie. Your design is modest - nice even...but what does it offer me or my daughter that another uniform won't? Apart from not being especially eye catching, it doesn't scream unique either." He said with an amusing grimace. "My daughter can't run in that - what if a guy wants to pull her pig tails?"

A soft chuckle rumbled throughout the audience.

"Fact is, by a FILI standard, I wouldn't pay more than say...\$35 dollars?" the first judge concluded. He sat back down and typed "35" in a small number pad. Immediately, a loud cashing sound sounded, and a huge screen mounted beside the "FILI" banner displayed "Savannah is \$35 richer!"

"It's really modest and a lot of embroidery has gone into the appeal, but it's a bit dull when looking at a designer stand point. I'd pay 25\$," the next male judge declared.

"I like how ethical your design is, really, I do! I appreciate you looking out for your fellow sex's image, but, honestly, if I did pay much, it would be to support *you* Savannah. You need to sell us something that we can't pick up half that money, and spend it somewhere else and be happier. You need to make us love you, make us want you! \$50 is my max." the 3rd judge declared sympathetically.

Madame Estelle picked up a mic and with a provocative laugh said: "Now, now, remember, any of you squishy cushions that don't judge according to the rules, I will make you buy 100 of her and anyone else's design!" she laughed alongside her loyal assistant.

"I'm glad you said that, cause I was going to offer \$25 for effort," the 4th judge said while reclining in his chair lazily. "But now I'm going for \$15, because this is just bland!"

"I'll go with um...\$45 - Gary pretty much summed up my opinion." the last of the male judges put in nervously.

Despite the distance between Dahn and the Swedish girl, he could clearly see the despair and disappointment in her face as her design was brutally crushed by the judges. All that hard work and only \$170 so far was pretty hard to just swallow. Dahn thought the female judges would have been a little more lenient, but they weren't. They were just as uninterested in the design as the males. Albeit, they were kind and gave more constructive criticism, but still displeased. Savannah left the convention being \$370 richer.

Anyway, the contest followed this manner, each designer coming up and getting their praising or grilling by the diverse judges. It had become quite humors for Dahn and he found himself having a better time than he expected, mainly because some designers were so amateur! He just thought it was extremely funny how they couldn't overcome such blatantly obvious hurdles.

On the other hand though, there were those who really made a killing on stage. Dylan, one of Lemon's two nemeses made \$1,460 with his sexy, male line *Perspiration*. Vanessa didn't make as much as him, but she did really

well, too, with \$1,120. But the climax of the night was Cinnamon's design; which won the most money of all time. Cinnamon won \$1,915 and had the audience in love. But what was best about her clothesline is that it was directly inspired by the advice Lemon had given her.

"As you all know, my designs are food based, and although I haven't gotten the love I've expected, I'm still going with food. However; I've tried a different route and a different thing!" Cinny beamed.

"Today I proudly present 2 outfits! But they are beverages. The first is a sexy and tasty nightwear called *Passion Fruit* and the 2nd which is definitely not the least, *Lemon Aid!*"

Dahn's head whipped up at the sound of that.

"I know it sound an awfully lot like one of my fellow designer's idea...but that's because she inspired me. Most of you here are familiar with the designer known as BabyLemon. Lemon aided me by pointing out the most crucial flaw in my designs, and I just flourished from there. Now I don't care if I don't win here tonight, because my family and friends are so proud of my latest work. And progress is what matter most to me right now. Nothing can sink my spirits! Thank you BabyLemon!" Cinny beamed to the crowd.

When she had finished her speech, Cinny dropped her cloak as the lights went out and focused on her. She wore a gorgeous pale yellow dress. It was shoulder-less with many filaments of nearly completely translucent fabric draping down her figure and all gathering at a single pin against her back; that served as the "bottom of a lemon." The dress swept down her hips and adorned her legs with a dramatic flair that made you want to see how the dress re-acted to walking. It as well was perfectly decorated with the filaments that really exposed the complexity of the dress. A belt circled her waist with glistening pearly stones, which were supposed to be the seeds. Cinny had tried to depict the tart nature of lemonade by combining a lot of contracting hues of yellow in the outfit's seams. Everything fit so well and the judges were simply astonished. Not a single individual could deny that Cinny hadn't put her heart into this design, and she came out with a lot of money.

Cinny's design was so well received, that Lemon almost felt like dropping out. She was already a bit miserable about her plan being ruined and Cinny's win felt like a win of her own. Knowing she had helped someone make such an enormous leap of faith and turn the tides of her usually bad reputation warmed her heart immeasurably.

"Would Lemon please come here; I have a copy of the outfit I want you to have!" Cinny announced. Lemon poked her head from out of the Designers' Bay with a look of bewilderment. Cinny beckoned to her ecstatically to come on down the catwalk. Looking around at the whole host of people present, Lemon gingerly made her way to Cinny's side. Her eyes were huge as she took the dress delicately from her friend. She spied Alain and Madame Estelle giving her a smile of approval. Even though she was moved beyond words, she still felt extremely annoyed about her own design.

"Well, well, well!!! What a night! Cinny's designs *Passion Fruit* and *Lemon Aid* have made an all time record of one thousand - nine hundred - and fifteen dollars!!!!" the Announcer boomed. "We have but 1 designer left - will she beat Cinny's design? Who knows?"

"Actually, I know." Lemon blurted into Cinnamon's microphone suddenly. "I am giving up my spot. I'm not feeling much like presenting my design because I screwed up. This is cause I got into a fuss with my best friend, and also I was very late, and I procrastinated till I was too late to present my original idea. I feel good enough about Cinny's design that I'm fine."

The audience gasped as murmurs hazed over the excited crowd.

"You sure about that?" the announcer asked, finally finding his regular voice. "This is *FREE* money your tossing right now."

"Mhmm," Lemon nodded. "I only care about happiness."

"But, you're not happy?" Cinnamon whined sympathetically. "I hope I didn't trample you."

"Nah, sweetie," Lemon smiled genuinely. "I'm happy for this. Very happy. Like I said, I ruined my own design."

"Darling," Madame Estelle began from afar. "I wish to see all the designer's designs."

"Yes, Madame, I know," Lemon agreed. "But mine simply *didn't* make it."

"But if you inspired Cinny, then the flair is in your soul! I want to see more of it!" she insisted.

"No, Madame!" Lemon pouted with an indignant pout. "Good Night, Peoples!"

With that, Lemon turned her heel confidently and left the stage. Madame Estelle opened her mouth to protest Lemon's uncanny behavior, but Alain leaned to her side and whispered something in her ear that made her reconsider.

"Geez! What a night!" the announcer exclaimed with a fluster waver in his voice! "This FILI has sure taken a detour from the norm! But a designer has turned the tides of her performance here and in her designing future! Let's have another round of gratifying applause for all our talented young creative minds! Please come here, all designers, to receive your praise and a small gift of gratitude for your time and efforts!"

Dahn moved through the uprooted crowd, ignoring the rest of the announcements. He frantically searched for his precious friend. Feeling absolutely horrible, he wished he had never come. He knew Lemon would leave the building without a word because she was embarrassed and sad. He rudely squeezed and shoved his way through the bustling crowd to get to the main walk way before she did.

"*She's so brave to just blurt out the truth like that though...*" He thought as he looked for his friend.

Dahn popped out into the vacant corridor, safe from the lazy bodies of socializing people. He scanned it quickly for Lemon's unique head. Because she always wore cat ears, it was easy to spot her despite her height.

Dahn was ready to assume that his friend had already left the building when he spotted her stuck by a booth, confronted by Alain and Madame Estelle.

"Come now Béb  Citron, if Madame Estelle wants to see, then let her see." Dahn heard Alain coaxing as he approached.

"What if I was naked under here?" Lemon pouted still decked in her unrelenting black cloak.

"Then I'd assume that's your design." Madame Estelle laughed loudly. "And I'd still want to see!"

As Lemon spied Dahn approaching, she suddenly had a change of heart. "Okay - I'll show."

Lemon unclasped her cloak and let it fall to the ground. She gently laid her suitcase on the floor and stood totally blandly while letting the two French fashion fanatic drench themselves in their generous share of her image.

Now I'm sorry to inform you, but the author is tired of describing clothes right now, thus he shall skip it. You'll just have to imagine the most lemony outfit your mind can offer for now.

Madame Estelle circled and examined Lemon's body with a scrutinizing eye. She ran her bony fingers along her little shoulders and sniffed her hair as if she were examining a piece of meat. Then she felt the fabric of her white shirt, running her hand up her belly and chest where she stopped at a necklace and fumbled with it elegantly, flipping and twirling its pendant amidst her curious fingers. Lemon stood deathly still as if she were about to be attacked. Madame Estelle seemed to like the outfit, but even for Alain her personal assistant, it was hard to know what she was thinking.

"It's...Époustouflant!" She exclaimed throwing her head back with a flamboyant laugh. Her French accent flourished with her exclamation.

Madame Estelle traced the lapels of Lemon loose jacket and then stooped down to check out the bottom of her design a bit more. She tugged at the pants and examined the seams.

"And what do you call this création?" Madame Estelle asked with exhilaration.

"I call it *Legacy*." Lemon responded confidently. "But, really, it's an alternative to what I really wanted to show."

"*Legacy*?" Madame Estelle asked curiously. "Such a name! C'est l'amour!"

"You love it?" Lemon asked innocently. "I think it's not so great."

"Yes! It is love!" Madame Estelle insisted. "Tell me about your line! Tell me about this piece you have created and why you call it Hairloom. Éduquer moi."

"Well..." Lemon began. "Truth is, as designers, we all strive for a very important aspect in our creation and that is originality. We want to stand out amongst others and make reflective and expressive creations that aren't seen everywhere by the common populous. I believe it's impossible; the old is just too old, and we've seen almost everything. The old has been rerun and over done as new over and over again so I've quit that approach. Therefore I don't really have a clothing line that I was pursuing."

"Spoken like a true designer, though!" Alain butted in.

"Ugh, you stole my words, Alain." Madame Estelle joked. "Go on dear; I love what I'm hearing."

"Hmm, ok; well, if I did have a line, I would call it *Nostalgia*." Lemon thought with a rub of her chin. "Nostalgia is the idea that I was going to propose on stage but I didn't expect to get lots of money because its impractical, haha!"

"Go on." Madame Estelle urged.

"Like this design, it embodies the personal experience of a particular string of memories to create a unique experience that no one else has. If I had time and money and a machine that could do it fast enough, of course. I would have my clothing outlet take orders for clothing and we'd have customers bring in their memorabilia that they want their clothes created base off of. Then we'd convert these items into as close a fabric representation of them as possible; conforming to the customer's desires, of course. Finally, we create one of a kind design from the memorabilia provided, thus recapturing our past in a new vision!" Lemon explained. Dahn noticed how amazingly articulate she was when she wanted to be.

"That is why it would be called *Nostalgia*." Lemon quickly added.

"So what you're wearing is an example?" Alain asked, his arms folded across his chest. He was just as impressed as Madame Estelle."

"Um, Mmhmm," Lemon nodded quickly. "It's my *Legacy*. I looove satin! I love yellow, I love cats...all animals, but I love their ears the most. I love baggy sweats, but I love skirts too, ooh and I love the sea and clouds... It's all my loves." She rambled.

"And this necklace right here? Haha, see this rich black hair braid for the looping of this pendant? I made it from Dahn's hair." Lemon revealed not able to suppress her laugh.

"What!?!?!!" Dahn cried. "You cut out my hair?"

"Yes, because I love you too, and this is all my love." She grinned.

"Ç'est mignon." Alain laughed with her.

"Be glad I'm so proud of you right now, Lemon, else I would pull out your hair to knit me a scarf. And my neck is big, It would leave you with limited hair." Dahn joked.

"Pffft! My hair too knotty to do anything with." Lemon huffed. "Anyway, that's my design, but for the 100th time, this wasn't my intended design."

"We do not give a damn!" Madame Estelle declared impatiently. "You have impressed Madame Estelle far beyond any other tonight! It's a crying shame you forfeited your place, you could have blessed this entire boring building with your sublime taste! You may see your idea as an unattainable dream - but I do not."

"Well, I'm just a silly uneducated 19-yr old girl," Lemon smiled painfully. One could tell by her tone, that that is truly what she felt like. "With little money."

Madame Estelle straightened up and fixed her billowing Siberian fur coat. She whipped out a tiny hand mirror and touched up the few loose strands of her glowering maple hair. They had sprung out from her elegant chignon due to her constant out bursts and enthusiastic gestures. "Alain?" she called expectantly. He instantly moved to her side, pulled a stick of lipstick from her expensive bag, and generously applied a coat to her glossy lips while she held the mirror at 45 degree angle to her face.

"Angle is everything." she stated pompously. "Now, I have a proposition for you, Ms. Bebe Citron."

"Oh?" Lemon asked while picking up her belongings to leave. Dahn moved beside her and listened to the rich French fashion entrepreneur.

"I created this event and funded in hopes of inspiring young designers to pursue their careers with the provided motivation FILI gives. However, I also wanted to find *exactly* what I have found in you today." Madame Estelle began.

"Your idea could be put to such great lengths with the power of my influence and money supporting it. However, as much as I'd like to support you - you have *yearssssss* of education and experience to gain before you can market this the way it should be."

"Uh-huh?" Lemon nodded.

"Therefore, I'll buy your 'idea' for a much larger sum of money than I - or anyone for the matter - would have supported you for."

"Buy it?" Lemon asked, her eyes saucers. Dahn listened intently, making sure her heard every last word incase Madame Estelle intended to cheat Lemon.

"Yes, I'm talking about real money, money that could change your little cute life forever." Madame Estelle smiled with a glimmering sparkle in her eyes.

"Well, I think this idea is a single original..."Lemon began.

"\$150,000" Madame Estelle blurted with confidence. "This means I will be the sole owner of this concept and the products, chains and merchandise that it brings. Your name will go down in history as the creator of the *Nostalgia* chain, but you won't have any rights to it in a commercial sense. I can have a contract written up in a few days and wire the money to your bank account as soon as it is finalized. And because I like you, I'll throw in an extra 50k not as part of the purchase, but a gift. I've had my eye on you Lemon – well, Alain has. We know you lose

every time and part of that losing comes from you helping others. So now it's your turn to win - win bigger than anyone else will. What do you say?"

"Think about it carefully, Lemon." Dahn advised her carefully. Lemon just grabbed his hand tightly and tried to balance herself; she felt her consciousness leaving her.

"One - one - one..." She stuttered.

"You heard right." Madame Estelle smiled. "I'm filthy rich, and nothing gets my blood riled up more than the thought of a beautiful avenue to get me even more riches. I can see it now, oooohhhh its going to be astounding!"

"Well, even though I'm thinking of fainting, I think I would say yes, there so many thing I could do, and you are right, it'll take me a long time to make use of this for my career, but you say I still get credit for its creation?" Lemon asked in a hurried rush.

"Yes, darling." Madame Estelle smirked. "Why don't you take my phone number, I really must be going now. I'll have a contract prepared for you in case you say yes. Please decide quickly, there are plans to set in motion!"

Alain pulled a notepad from his suit's breast pocket and scribbled Madame Estelle's contact information on it.

"Well done Bebe Citron!" Alain said giving her one of his dashing smiles. " I did know that you would surprise me, but better you have made Madame Estelle happy."

"That I am! Je suis fou de joie!" Madame Estelle cried. "Take care of this little blossom young man, Alain and I have business to attend to."

"Adieu, Bebe Citron!!!!" Madame Estelle and her assist cried in unison.

"Adieu!" Lemon squeaked. Her voice was buried beneath all the rest of her brimming emotions. She watched them leave as she tried to digest what had just happened.

"Let's go home, Lemon. You blew my mind today, but I can see you're totally out of it right now." Dahn suggested comfortably. Lemon really could use his support at the moment and enjoyed his thought of going home. She really needed to just relax for a moment to collect her mind which had been scattered by all the excitement.

"I think I accidentally changed our lives." She stared blankly as Dahn pushed her towards the exit.

"You think? I think you just did damn well tonight." Dahn smiled. "I'm really so proud of you right now."

"Just shhh flamingo." Lemon elbowed Dahn with annoyance as they walked off into the night...

"I still can't believe it!" Lemon whispered after another sip of her hot cocoa.

"Yeah, it's still pretty surreal." Dahn agreed whole-heartedly as he sat across from his friend as their dining table. "But it's happening, all you have to do is sign that contract."

"I know!!!!" Lemon practically screamed. "I'm scared!"

"No need to be, she's legit. I can tell. Besides, your French lover supports it."

"Lover?" Lemon asked with a clueless expression.

"Ha-ha, Just never mind." Dahn grinned. "What matters most is that your work and passion finally paid off in a way none of us even imagined."

"You helped!" Lemon chirped. "You drew my designs so well and made the patterns so easy to follow after I told them to you."

"Please Lemon, stop trying to be modest. Tonight was 100% Lemon, ok?" Dahn insisted with a bright smile.

Lemon let loose an overwhelmed but happy sigh. "So many things we can do that we've wanted to do!" she whined.

"Yeah, but first and foremost, we should celebrate!" Dahn grinned.

"Wao, celebrate? You're always the last to suggest partying." Lemon smiled deviously at her friend.

"Lemon, this is a remarkable event - celebration is a must." He insisted.

"Well yeah!" Lemon sighed dramatically. "Where will we go? We can go to a crazy expensive restaurant and have the most expensive cut of steak."

"I know, right? Served with all their savory side dishes, appetizers, and wine," Dahn added.

"Hnngggg!" Lemon lusted cutely. "And I would buy you both suits, so you can look like real men. I already have a dress from cutie Cinnamon."

"First of all, we *are* real men. Second of all, that dress is more...playful. You should wear something dark and elegant. Black is really good on you." Dahn countered.

"You think so?" Lemon blushed taking another sip of her cocoa.

"Yes, I really do." Dahn gave her a warm smile. "I can't stop being proud of you! You just really did so great."

"Maybe we could even cover the bill for your uncle's wife's operation. You know? A spine restoring one?" Lemon tried asking. It had crossed her mind long ago but she didn't want to mention it yet.

"Lemon..." Dahn breathed. "You don't have to do that..."

"I want to." She responded firmly. "I told you, money is nothing to me without happiness."

"I know, I feel the same way, but -

"But nothing. Your uncle will be much happier with his wife right? So then we will help to save her! Its final bub." Lemon told him with a menacing point and a determined glare.

"Your illegally amazing, you know that?" Dahn grinned.

"I know." Lemon beamed. "But I will get my satisfaction out of your uncle finally respecting me. So it balances out."

"Means that much to you, huh?" Dahn asked.

"Yes. I mean, I don't need to be legitimized. I'm your friend, and I have done so much for you all - I feel I belong here. But when Uncle Val starts being mean...I feel like a leech." Lemon pouted.

"Awe, you're not a leech; don't worry all that will change. Val is just grumpy. He is in denial towards your importance. He refuses to accept that he needs us, especially you. It tarnishes his badass image, I suppose. He has

other underlying issues on the matter: blaming the world for wronging him or something. The fact is, it's unfair and it should stop. But if he ever felt like you didn't belong here, he should just stop because you've done us a miracle pretty much."

"Thank you, Danny," Lemon said softly as she leaned to hug him. He hugged her back warmly. Then she released and said:

"Stool hugs are dangerous!!!"

"You think?" Dahn asked getting up from his spot at the counter. "I'mma run to the store to get something and buy us some take out. I'm too lazy to cook."

"That sounds nice." Lemon agreed. "Sigh, I'm so happy right now."

Lemon got up from her seat and ran and leapt onto one of the sofas comfortably. She had long changed out of her costume and back into a simple T-shirt and sweats.

"Be good, Bebe Citron. I'll be back in like 45 mins or something." Dahn called to her while pulling on his jacket.

"Oh I will!" Lemon cried loftily in the sofa, "Gonna take a power nap! Little did she know, wasn't prepared for what was about to happen..."

<30 minutes Later>

Lemon awoke groggily to the repetitive feeling of something patting against her cheek. She pouted, trying to push away whatever disturbed her deep slumber. Lemon opened her eyes slowly to see that she wasn't in the coach she went to sleep in, and a rather serious face peered down at her - it was Val.

"Flamingo?" Lemon muttered sleepily.

"You're sick." Valerian spoke calmly and sternly. "Get up and drink this soup, you look like your catching a cold."

Lemon opened her eyes fully scratched her head. "Uncle Val? This is you? what happened?"

Valerian pulled up a chair to the sofa side and sat in it. He pulled over a lightweight wooden folding table, and placed a bowl of soup on it, as well as a glistening silver spoon.

"I came in and found you asleep on the floor breathing heavily," Valerian told her. "Your nose was running and you had a slight temperature. It seems you are catching a cold. Drink this soup -I made it from your recipe, so don't worry about its taste.

"Wao!" Lemon gasped and starred at the soup. She rubbed her eyes and flipped her bouncy ponytail out of her face.

"What? Can I not care?" Valerian asked flatly.

"It's not because you're caring why I'm saying wao. Though I should add that too." Lemon informed him while rubbing her eyes. "But it's because you wiped my nose!"

"Um, no." Val denied.

"But you did." Lemon insisted with a giggle. She raised her hand to her face and tapped the philtrum of her nose. It was totally dry.

"But I did not." Val continued to deny.

"Haha haha!" Lemon laughed out loud. " You're weird!Something came over you that made you care today, but you usually don't!"

"I don't remember wiping your nose, Lemon; it probably just dried up. In any case, you need to eat this soup, as I don't want you shedding germs in my house." Valerian answered, turning to spoon a spoonful of soup into Lemon's unsuspecting mouth.

She stared at the spoon wildly and then turned to meet Valerian's deep green eyes. She couldn't even begin to see what was going on inside of that forest of his.

"If this is poison..." Lemon began while eyeballing the still hovering spoon. It steamed with a cloudy mixture of chicken, carrots, peas, and potato. The smell crept up Lemon's small nostril and tempted her to open her doubtful lips.

"If I was going to poison you, I'd have done it the day Dahn brought you here." Valerian informed her without cracking a smile.

"Wao, you really don't sugar coat anything do you?" Lemon replied. She continued to eyeball the soup which Valerian was getting tired of holding out.

"I don't like baked goods." he retorted. "I like coffee - deep, aromatic, and dark."

"With no sugar apparently." Lemon added shifting her weight onto her left butt cheek as she supported herself into a proper sitting position.

Valerian put the spoon back in the bowl with annoyance. "Feed yourself." he said rising from his seat.

"But I have arm cramps?" Lemon whined playfully.

"Yeah, me too from holding the spoon in front of you for too long."

"Come back and feed meeeee," Lemon piped while opening her mouth wide. Valerian totally ignored her and went into the kitchen.

"You're gonna want to feed me whatever I want when I tell you this!" Lemon teased as she picked up the bowl and began to drink it eagerly.

"Nothing can make me *want* to feed you Lemon." Valerian shouted from the kitchen. "I was being nice because I thought you were weak."

Lemon dumped the soup down her throat like she had never eaten before. "Mmmhmmm," is all she could say.

Valerian emerged from the kitchen and reached in his coat pocket which hung draped on the back of a dining chair. He pulled his car keys from the pocket and used the beer bottle opener on the key chain to pop open a bottle of beer. Then he placed the keys on the table's surface and leaned against it, chugging his beer mercilessly.

Lemon slammed her bowl harder than she intended to back on the mini table with a loud, "Ahhhhh..."

"That was too good, Mr. Val." Lemon grinned with a lazy flop backwards in the sofa's cushions. "Cook more often!"

"No." Valerian responded instantly. "Now what is going on, what do you have to tell me."

Lemon wiggled in her seat playfully and batted her eyelashes. "Not telling you, cuz you didn't feed meh." She provoked with a cute pout.

Valerian shrugged carelessly. "Like I said, I was being polite, I don't have a Lemon feeding fetish; there is only one thing I want and there is no way you can possibly provide it."

"Hehe," Lemon giggled. "I'll tell you - I made us rich."

"Rich?" Valerian asked, barely interested.

"Mhmm, I'm not talking about 10,000 bucks. I'm talking 200k rich!" she exclaimed with an excited squeal.

"You mean in your little PC games right?" Valerian asked.

"No, Mr. Val." Lemon replied getting a bit annoyed. "I mean in the game called real life."

"Oh? You made it? No wonder why I don't know it. Who is the publisher?" Valerian jeered with a provocative grimace.

"It's called 'Great Stakes: The Lemon Strikes Back,'" Lemon rolled her eyes. "I'm not joking anymore, Mr. Val. I'm serious.

"How can *you* make that much money so fast? It's impossible." Valerian asked in disbelief.

"You say it like someone else can - but I can't." Lemon pouted seriously.

"And you can?" Valerian asked insensitively. He finished drinking his beer.

Lemon swallowed hard as she fought back the urge to scream. For some reason, his words hurt so much today. Maybe it was because she never really had 1v1 time with him. Dahn was always there to protect her from his mean remarks. However, he wasn't this time; she was open and vulnerable to his faithlessness in her.

"I can," she choked. "And I did."

Lemon proudly proceeded to tell him what happened at the convention earlier in the evening. He listened intently, but when she finished, he shook his head slowly with his muscular arms folded across his 'Checkmate' tank top, and said: "Nope, I don't believe you."

"DAMMIT MR. VAL!" Lemon shouted lifting a powerful leg and kicking the little table with amazing force. It flipped across the room and landed in the other sofa across from her. The bowl flew across the room and shattered on the wall, ceramic flying everywhere and the spoon screaming to its doom as it clanged on various object obstructing its trajectory. Valerian jumped at her sudden outburst.

"WOAH!" He leapt up from his seat. "What the hell!?!"

"I said I'm not joking!" Lemon shouted. "It's true, true, trueeeeeee!"

"Where is the money?" Valerian challenged.

"I said I didn't sign the contract yet, but I intend to!" Lemon growled.

"Then it's not true, you don't have the money yet." Valerian mocked with a factual tone.

This sent Lemon over the edge. She rose from the sofa angrily, throwing her blankets to one side. The furious girl stormed across the living room and entered the dining room where Valerian sat. She swiped his wallet from before his eyes and before he could protest; ripped his credential and financial cards from its leathery interior. Valerian swatted at her, but she dodged and began snapping his cards in half. She folded them with one hand, and then placed the crease between the thumb and index finger of the other hand and swiftly solidified the crease. A simple wiggling of the two halves had the card in two pieces in seconds.

Valerian charged at her to subdue her, but she ducked and leapt at his feet, purposely barreling into them to knock him from his balance. Valerian fell to the ground on his belly, but broke the fall with his strong arms in a push-up fashion. He rebounded back to his feet with an athletic pump of his arms and swung around catching the nimble little girl by the back of her baggy yellow T-shirt. He yanked her towards his body, clutching her tightly as if he was hugging her from behind and locked his arm across her chest and arms. Lemon tried to squeeze out, but Valerian was way too strong. He ripped the wallet from her cat-like fingers and shoved her to the ground. Lemon crashed on the floor with a loud thud, but regained her composure quickly. She panted and wiped her forehead with her left arm. Valerian rummaged through his wallet to see what was destroyed.

"I guess - you don't have any money too - since - I broke your credit and debit cards?" Lemon asked between breaths.

"Crazy b*tch!" Valerian cursed. "What the #*&! is wrong with you!?!?!"

"I'm tired of you!" Lemon shouted stomping her foot hard.

"Then get your sour ass out of my house!" Valerian shouted back. "Do you know what damage you have just done???"

"Nope, because it's my debit card that pays the bills." Lemon countered. "Dahn buys food, I don't know what your money does?"

"You pay 2 damn bills, god damn kid!" Valerian growled.

"Why are you so mean to me!!!!!" Lemon screamed. Tears finally started to stream down her face. She tried to blink them back but she had just had enough.

"You deserve it!" Valerian glared. "You're out of control!"

"Why can't you accept me!?!?" Lemon screamed shaking her little fists. "All I want is everyone to be happy, is that so wrong!!!"

"YES LEMON! YES IT IS!!" Valerian shouted. "You are a silly child! The world does not work that way! You think you can waltz into any location and just be cute and win the hearts of all people! You think you can just help people, do mindless good, and think all will be fine and dandy! You're just a little 19-yr old CHILD! That's why I don't respect you!"

"I don't want to fix the entire world, Valerian!" Lemon sobbed. "I just want you and Dahn and me to be a little happy family. Dahn is the one that thinks he needs to fix the world, and you don't call him childish!"

"He doesn't go about it the way you do. Look, you're annoying to me ok? You have NO IDEA what I'm going through!" Valerian snapped.

"Why? Cause your wife's spine is damaged and her parents blame you? I wonder why!" Lemon attacked.

"What?" Valerian snarled. "Who - how?"

"I'm not so stupid!" Lemon sobbed harder as she sulked into a corner. "I tease you because I feel safe around you, I act carelessly because I felt that you cared about me and loved me even though I'm different, but I'm so wrong. You are just a conceited self-absorbed man who has blamed the entire world for his problems. And anyway

I had of pleasing you or making you even say 'Thanks's Lemon, I'm glad to have you here' is totally a fantastic delusion. I get it now, Mr. Val, I will leave! You don't love me, you don't like me, you despise me, you hate me!"

Lemon allowed herself to slide down the wall and plop on her butt, where she just stayed and wept. Her voice rang throughout the quiet house as her cries heaved from her heavy heart. Valerian was actually moved by her sorrowful voice. He tried to harden his heart, but seeing that infinitely happy girl weeping on the ground like that just melted his emotional shields. He locked his jaw and clenched his detrimentally tight. He opened his mouth to tell her that she didn't need to leave, but the door started opening.

Lemon bit her lip hard, trying to stifle the noise she was making when Dahn burst in, his arms burdened with some groceries and hot food. His presence was like that of a mother walking into the room of a hungry baby. His eyes surveyed the room in bewilderment as he tossed the merchandise onto one of the sofas. Dahn rushed to Lemon on the floor and scooped her into a protective hug, burying her face in his shoulder. He glared at Valerian who still stood in his original position - he looked guilty, though.

"WHAT DID YOU DO TO HER???" Dahn yelled furiously.

"He - he - he - he," Lemon stuttered trying to calm down. "He d-d-didn't touch m-m-m-mee"

"What did you do, Uncle??" Dahn growled. "Answer my damn question before I get angry."

Valerian just looked at his furious nephew hugging his friend protectively. His expression was blank and monotonous, but his heart was heavy as well. He felt a sting in his eyes as he watched how Dahn cradled Lemon with such ardor. He admired his strength and emotional posture despite losing so much. He started to feel bad about the way he treated Lemon who really didn't deserve his brutal judgments. He still supported and fully believed in his thought that Lemon was childish and immature, but she was also the definition of innocence. As the realization hit him, it was quite embarrassing and troubling to recognize that he chastised her for it. With nothing to say to defend himself, Dahn's uncle simply turned around and left the room in confounding silence.

"D- d -Dahn?" Lemon mumbled in a tiny voice.

"It's ok, I'm here now... what did he do?" Dahn asked her gently, searching out her tear-streaked face.

"Nothing, he just said I'm a childish fool that wants an impossible life." Lemon sniffled.

"You're not..." Dahn cooed.

"I am." Lemon stated flatly wiping her eyes in his shoulder. "I don't want to live here anymore, Dahn."

"No, please don't leave." Dahn rejected.

"I'm not wanted here." Lemon heaved. "I'll leave tomorrow."

Lemon shoved Dahn off of her and crawled up the wall to her feet. She walked around the room picking up her items and such and then went upstairs to her room silently. Dahn just stared into empty space wondering...why?

* * * * *

The fight left the household in solemn silence. An hour and a half later, Dahn and his uncle sat in the restored living room wearing vexed expressions. They spoke not to each other, neither to themselves; they were silent. The only sound was the sound of the evening news blaring about local teenage driving accidents and weather forecasts.

Dahn was furious with his uncle, he hadn't seen Lemon cry like that before and to know that it was his uncle's fault really crossed him the wrong way. He pondered what could have gone so wrong. He didn't dare ask though, because he felt like if he did, Dahn would cuss him out in 3 different languages. Valerian and Lemon's fussing was a common thing, but it never ever ended like this.

"Teenagers, always recklessly destroying the city's property with their disobedience." Valerian scoffed out loud.

Dahn turned to look at the television screen for a brief moment, but barely regarded its contents. Probably because it had just moved to the TV commercials.

"Can you just shut up for once with your global hate?" Dahn couldn't help but ask, his voice riddled with disgust.

"It's disgust for societies reckless generations." Valerian pointed out.

"Yeah..." Dahn groaned.

"Listen kid, I know your mad about Lemon, but quite frankly, I've had a shitty day and she chose the wrong time to throw a massive temper tantrum." Valerian explained, giving Dahn a look.

"Oh sure...yes I know Uncle," Dahn began sarcastically. "No one else has shitty days right? Do you want me to rub your poor, old aching feet? Scratch your sarcastic back? Oh or massage your conceited temples? Ahhh, what am I saying?! You just need your Faptop! Lemme go get it from upstairs! I hope it's not messy."

"Get a grip boy, I'm still your uncle." Valerian snapped. "Why don't you shut up and mind your own business. You have no idea of the course of events that took place tonight."

Dahn turned and gaped at his uncle incredulously; his mouth half open as he stared in confusion. "My own business?" he asked.

"You - "

"THIS is my EFFIN BUSINESS UNCLE!" Dahn exploded. "I'm trying to hold what little family I have together and this 30+ year old guy is acting like an almighty dick!"

"Let me say- "

"No you shut up, and listen to ME for once!" Dahn rose menacingly as he walked over to his uncle.

"You know one of the first things Lemon mentioned she wanted to do with her money? Of course you don't, because you can't see beyond your nose. She asked about paying the bill for YOUR WIFE. Oh yeah, you heard me right...the operation to give Sari a robotic spine? Yeah." Dahn seethed.

Valerian was at a loss for words. He didn't realize that anyone but him ever considered his wife.

"I didn't know," Valerian defended.

"Yes, Uncle, you didn't know! You didn't need to know! Lemon admires you, she thinks you're awesome and badass. But she's scared of you, she wants you to respect her so she can feel at home but you won't give her even just that. You keep harping at what a burden we are but can you take off your self-righteous goggles for once? We ARE your family too! Family is a burden by definition! Deal with it. You scared her silly, when I hugged her I could feel her heart thumping a mile a minute..."

"I'm sorry." Valerian muttered.

"Wow...yes you're sorry. Well, that's new." Dahn said rising up. "Well, I hope your wife doesn't know the key to her walking again just went through the door due to your stupidity."

"I'll talk to her." Valerian sighed. "Sari warned me off already, but I was being stupid."

"It's ok, uncle. I'll make this all right, I won't let you two destroy each other and I won't have what family I have left split up. I'll go get her. She'll be hard to get though, but it will work." Dahn told Valerian.

Dahn left quickly to retrieve Lemon from her lock away.

As he climbed the staircase the recent event replayed in his mind incessantly. He was so afraid that his uncle had snapped and hurt Lemon when he entered the building.

"I need to fix things..." He thought with a heavy heart as he approached Lemon's shut door.

"I know Lemon can be terribly annoying and only a person that really understands her can love her sometimes but really did it need to escalate to this?"

"I'm getting too close to a breakthrough in my study, c'mon Lemon? Uncle? Please give me a bit more time to figure it all out, and then you all can get your space. But I need you both right now."

Dahn rapped upon Lemon's door firmly and called to his friend. "Lemon! You Ok?"

"Lemon?" He called a second time. "Come down and eat something."

Dahn waited patiently for a stir or sign that meant Lemon was inside, but there wasn't even the slightest pin drop. Beginning to pace slowly, Dahn periodically called and knocked until he had repeated that procedure five times.

"Ok Lemon!" Dahn shouted into the keyhole of her door knob. "I know you're extremely upset, but please unlock the door and let me in. I am not sure what you'll do to yourself when you're upset. Lemme talk to you!"

"I will kick this door open Lemon." Dahn threatened. "You know you don't need to do this. I'm here for you... If you don't talk in the next 10 seconds I'm coming in."

"10 - 9 - 8 - 7 - 6..." Dahn counted loudly.

"5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1..." He finished slowly.

Dahn shifted his weight to his left leg, poses himself, and delivered a powerful kick to the door's face, close to the door knob in attempt to focus impact on the lock slot. The door burst open with a loud noise. Dahn walked into the room slowly and surveyed it for Lemon's stubborn and unresponsive figure. "Lemon?" he called into the darkness. He felt around on the wall behind him for the light switch and flicked it on. The following sight shocked the words out of his mouth.

Lemon's room had been torn apart messily and her clothes drawers spilling out. Her PC still remained on her desk, but her laptop and all her accessories had been cleaned off the tabletop. Her bed was devoid of her favorite blanket and pillow and the sheets all tied together trailing across the ground to the window...

Dahn ran over to the window in question in the corner of Lemon's torn up room. He ripped the curtains to the side; exposing the makeshift rope Lemon apparently used to escape. Dahn felt his finger springing an immediate sweat and his heart rate revved up as he realized what was going on. He turned and ran outside the room where he made his way down the staircase almost tripping and slamming into his uncle who was on his way to meet him.

They both exchanged worried looks upon meeting each other.

"You first." Valerian commanded.

"She escaped through her room window, she left Uncle. She's actually left and took some stuff with her. We've got to go find her!"

"I already know where she is." Valerian revealed wryly.

"You do?" Dahn asked incredulously.

"Yea..." Valerian trailed off. He point to the unattended television set that still blared the local news constantly into the gloomy atmospheres.

"The victim was rushed to the hospital at roughly 7:40; 25minutes ago. She's a blonde young lady of approximately 20yrs of age and drove a Nissan 350z. Her identity has not yet been determined, but a witness bears record of seeing her earlier this afternoon near Hollow's Edge. Not much is known of the victim's condition, but she's suffered some immediate head trauma. It's a real tragedy to see these young people constantly risking their lives...

<To Be Continued>