

Chapter Six: When You look Back

It had been two years since Mimi left. As time passed, life settled again for the residents of Sol. Rochel really missed Mimi. Even so, she was determined to be her best. As time went on, news of Mimi's return began to rumble.

Official word traveled to Rochel fast. Mimi really was returning to the kingdom.

She hummed to herself, practically skipping as she went. She knew she would be too busy to see her, but it was expected as she promised she would be strong and rule her kingdom well. She stopped at one of the windows to look at the sky above.

She's here.

Rochel smiled and kept going.

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Malicia was smiling more than she had for the first time since Mimi left.

It had been a trying two years. Shortly after Mimi left her, Malicia's father urged her to pick up the sword. At first, she wasn't keen on the idea as Mimi was more skilled at close combat and she wanted to keep up. Juni asked her grandfather to show Malicia the family sword. He urged her to be worthy of the blade as its wielder was a strong man who protected those he loved. Malicia cried as she inspected the beauty of the blade and swore she would protect Mimi with it.

However, practice was hell. Her instructor was very strict. She frustrated herself with intricate footwork. However, she has always heard her grandfather say it is not about beauty but honor.

Mari had began studying medicine to cope but since she heard Malicia was practicing to inherit the family sword, she swore to help Malicia as best she could. She took her to earth one day after studying many sword styles. Malicia fell for the sport of kendo. She got many practice matches on tape to let Malicia watch with her as she knew Malicia missed Mimi as much as she did. Watching her light up like her sister made her develop a style for Malicia that suited her.

You must challenge yourself and stare your enemy down. You're not as timid as you seem as your focus to fight is stronger than Mimi's.

Malicia remembered this well. She wiped her brow with a towel.

"You seem well, Malicia."

Malicia jolted as she turned to see her older sister Marilyn and come in with Mimi.

"Mimi!" Malicia ran to hug her but stopped short.

"Do you bite now Malicia?" Mimi said smiling.

Malicia blushed. "No, I'm sweaty."

“No matter.” Mimi said softly as she hugged Malicia.

“I’m back temporarily.” Mimi said as Malicia jolted.

“Temporarily...?” Malicia asked.

“Mimi is going out again to train for the Magic Knight Institution of Sol. An admirable goal as she aims high early.” Merilyn said softly.

“I want to go with you.” Malicia said.

“Your sword skills must be honed here under proper guidance.” Her instructor said as he walked up sternly.

“I have skill.” Malicia snapped.

“And yet you already lost your discipline with your instructor.”

“You have your way, Malicia.” Mimi spoke, “But I will be leaving soon. If you are to join me, be there. Be strong and see me there on your own.”

Malicia frowned. It’s not fair, she thought. She hated that Mimi was in front of her to only lose her again so soon. She admits she lost discipline as she wanted her to stay. She wanted so much for all of this training to stop. To run in the field with Mimi again. But she was not weak.

“Then fight me and see.” Malicia said as she turned to face her instructor, “I will show you I do not need guidance forever.”

“Are you dead set on your love?”

“No. I am not showing off. I promised Rochel I would be there too.”

Mimi smiled.

“Then I will wait for you.”

She nodded at Merilyn.

” I must prepare. Don’t take too long, Malicia.”

Malicia nodded as she walked closer to her instructor.

“You must be strict, Malicia.” He looked at her firmly, “Following your friend so foolishly slowed you both down.”

“We will see.” Malicia said.

“Then a formal duel is in order.” Merilyn said as she looked at the instructor, “You don’t have to be so hard on her Sir Mao.”

“I only worry for Malicia.” He said, “But you are right, Merilyn; we shall duel.”

They both picked up their practice swords.

Malicia stared intensely.

“Begin!” Marilyn yelled.

Mao held no blows as he rushed toward Malicia. She parried and immediately felt herself being pushed back. She felt he shouldn't swing so hard but immediately snapped out of it.

“Focus Malicia!” Marilyn yelled. "Your form is too high!"

“She must do this herself or stay!” Mao yelled.

Malicia raged at his chastising. She lowered her form.

She swung at his mid-section before standing up. She stepped twice into her swings. Quickly stepping into his swing zone. He retreated from her swing. She stepped around as she swung her sword to parry with power and buckled down with another swing.

Mao watched intensely as he timed his counter and sent Malicia flying.

“Damn it!” Malicia yelled.

“Enough Malicia!” Marilyn stepped in. “You lost you can't go.”

“Damn it!” She yelled again as she threw her sword down.

Malicia ran.

“Malicia!”

“Let her go as she has proven her immaturity.”

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Mimi had just finished talking to Mari.

“Malicia...” Mari said as she saw Malicia run by in tears.

Mimi started to go after her, but Mari placed a hand on Mimi's shoulder.

“Don't worry Mimi, I'll go.”

Mimi nodded.

Mari ran off into the direction where Malicia went as Mimi looked on, worry filling her face.

“I can't do it!” Malicia yelled.

“You can!” Mari said as she closed in quickly.

“I can't even run from you!”

“You could if you weren't so focused on crying.” Mari said as she ran around Malicia and caught her in her arms.

Malicia felt so helpless. She did not bother running any more. She cried in Mari's shoulder.

“You fear so much Malicia.” Mari said softly, “You did not lose her, Malicia. You have not lost her. You must not fear that everything is gone. I am here. We are all here. Do not fear your blade or any sword in front of you. You must be brave. As, if you don’t, I fear you will not hold up and I will lose you both.”

Malicia straightened up as she heard this.

“Mimi did look worried.”

“Don’t worry for her, Malicia. Think about you. Try to convince yourself to live for yourself too.” Mari wept. “If you are afraid, then make it your opponent. It will not take your life, only let you live until you say you are strong. Believe in me until you are ready!”

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Mimi had convinced Glen to wait a few more days. Malicia had trained with Mari every day as much as she could. Mimi watched them as she and Glen prepared for their journey. They stopped in every now and then to encourage Malicia. Mimi even offered to spar too but Malicia refused as every bit of her knew Mimi may not leave if she did. They had all finished getting advice from Glen when Malicia began to speak.

“As hard as this has been, I’m having fun. I will admit I have been dead this whole time having killed myself again and again. But don’t cry yet Mimi as I do feel strong. You have not harmed me. Don’t wait for me anymore. Leave tomorrow and if I am not there, have a nice journey and I will see you soon.”

Mimi nodded as her sister held her.

“I will work on my own for a bit, but I do ask you to leave in the afternoon.”

“Right Malicia. I will do my best.” Mimi said, “I won’t stop even if you begged me.”

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Malicia walked into the dojo. She slept more sound than she ever has. Her instructor waited for her as her grandfather sat in silence for the duel. She told them previously she aims to inherit the family sword and leave today. She walked and bowed.

“As I stated, I defeat you and leave or I will stay and train here.” Malicia said.

Mao got up and bowed as well.

“We will make this the only rematch then.”

They picked up their swords and squared off.

Her grandfather rose his arm.

“Begin!”

Malicia wasted no time. She met him midway parrying enough to catch his sword with hers. She then shifted to the side to make it travel across her sword forcing him to move as not to get hit.

She followed him in a crouch, shifting forward at a low center of gravity swing every few steps. She wore him out relentlessly as he could not find ground for power. Malicia's stamina was much higher as every swing she parried she sent it off and made him dodge.

Her grandfather beamed as she showed no fear of losing. Only a meticulous strategy for winning.

Mao huffed as he tried to settle his nerves. She had already learned his swing radius.

"I admit you have improved."

Malicia took this opportunity to stand up tall and in two swift steps, she swung and struck his sword away. In his efforts to grip, she swung again and was at his neck.

"Match!" her grandfather boasted proudly.

"Well done, Malicia." Mao said through his breath.

"Thank you, Master Mao."

Malicia turned to her grandfather.

"Grandfather..."

He held their sword proudly.

"Hinako now belongs to you."

"And it is well deserved." Mao stated, "Your grandfather Jun was a master of the sword. You fought as well as him. You will do fine, Malicia."

"Thank you, Both of you." Malicia nodded as she grabbed the sword, "I must prepare now."

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Mimi and Glen received word from Malicia she was on her way. Mimi jumped with joy when she heard. Glen laughed boastfully as it has been a while since he and Mimi have been with Malicia.

Malicia walked into view, beaming as Mimi and Glen laughed.

"Well then shall begin our journey!" Glen said, clapping as they boarded their ship.

After they settled in, they were ready to take off. Their ship lifted high into the sky. Malicia watched the clouds disappear as the stars began to show.

Mimi lifted her eyes to the sky before taking in the full view.

"I always love when space first appears..." Mimi said dreamily.

Malicia sighed. She had missed Mimi.

Mimi smiled as she knew it had been a long time since she and Malicia hung out in leisure.

“We’ll head to the planet of Sunkist Lily where the natural energy is vast.” Glen stated as he eyed the stars.

“Is there a reason for that location?” Malicia asked curiously.

“The history of Sol lies in those plants.” Mimi said.

She watched Malicia curiously as she tried to hide her excitement,

“You’re still so shy Malicia.”

“Is that bad?”

Malicia blushed as she said this. Mimi laughed as Glen tried not to say anything.

Mimi continued, “It was one of the most beautiful places I’ve seen. Home of the White Fern tree.”

“Have you talked to it?” Malicia said as she looked at Mimi intently, trying to gather herself.

“I have. The energy around it makes it a lively individual.”

“How interesting...”

Malicia leaned back thoughtfully as they drifted by the stars. She and Mimi sat together, looking to the vast darkness. Drifting in space was always something of a wonder to them. The quietness it provoked was always more soothing than vexing. Mimi and Malicia have gone into space before on trips. It has become a habit to drift with the stars and enjoy each other.

Over time they mingled around and shared stories of Mimi's travels with Glen. Mimi laughed so hardy at Malicia's enthusiasm of certain tells. She wanted to visit the springs of the Raijin Kingdom with Mimi. Malicia's love of lush landscape always amazed Mimi. Mimi learned a spell to make the vivid landscape come to life. Mimi had gotten strong in her magic. Malicia felt as if she was there as she and Mimi watched the landscapes go by.

Hours passed as they traveled. They eat some homemade beef stew as Mimi tested a new recipe to pass time. Mimi always loved food and she was eager to share with them. Glen had just finished washing dishes when the planet came into view. Malicia jolted up in excitement. It was one of the most beautiful planets she has ever seen.

The world got bigger as they landed. They all proudly took in the view. Malicia sighed as she thought of walking on the land.

Mimi grabbed her bag. She had gotten used to carrying many things such as a journal and various supplies in medicine, cooking, and potions. Malicia waited by the door as Glen had already gotten off the ship.

“We have a spot where we usually stay.” Mimi told Malicia.

“For a planet previously dead; It is so lush and green...”

Malicia eyed the plants around them. She watched as Mimi seemed to change in demeanor. Mimi took in the sun around them. Malicia watched as she seemed to go into a trance. Glen put a hand on Malicia's shoulder and silently motioned for her to watch.

Mimi closed her eyes, letting nature guide her. She began to glow in a golden light. The sun pulled down towards her as the light around her shifted. Malicia who was already keen on energy herself, felt a warmth near her. The light closed in as Mimi's body formed it around her. The sunlight broke into balls of gold and floated around.

"Wow..." Malicia whispered to herself.

Mimi opened her eyes and looked around. She was so beautiful in that state, Malicia thought. The plants seemed to smile as bright as Malicia did as the whispers of the world enchanted her. She had gotten into one of the plant's memories until a golden ball of light was in front of her.

"Don't be shy Malicia, it's yours." Mimi said with an expression of warmth.

She looked at Glen, who nodded and motioned towards his own.

They both grabbed a piece of light before they both glew. Malicia felt a warmth rush over her. She closed into herself as she embraced the warmth. She walked so blissfully as she looked around as the sun fuzz touched many things and they glew just as bright. Malicia continued to walk forward stumbling as Mimi suddenly turned around. Malicia awkwardly fell back as to not hit Mimi. Mimi awkwardly reached forward however; Glen placed a hand on Malicia's back to keep her from falling.

"Whoa there Malicia." Glen laughed.

"We stop here. Take a look."

Malicia's eyes went wide as a small town overgrown with life was in front of them.

"Let's walk through Malicia." Mimi motioned, having gathered herself.

The light around them faded as they walked. Malicia felt a renewed energy.

"It's like healing magic."

"It is." Glen said, "A union with nature that is unlike any other magic."

"There are preserved buildings over there." Mimi said as she quickly walked ahead to the largest one.

They went inside to see the structure intact. A large crystal-like structure was filled with cracks as one side seemed to be heavily damaged. Malicia watched as Mimi seemed saddened.

"War ravaged this place as they told me."

"You mean the plants?" Malicia asked rather concerned at her expression.

Mimi seemed to be going internally before noticing the expression in Malicia's eyes.

“Don’t worry! I’m fine.” Mimi said as she looked at Glen who had followed behind.

“Let’s choose a different location in the wild this time.”

Glen beamed.

“Why not stay just ahead near the fern.” He offered.

Mimi got excited.

“That means you can meet him now, Malicia.”

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They had just finished conjuring up their campsite when Mimi and Malicia set out to visit the Fern. Glen decided to stay at the campsite to rest. They walked north in the direction of the furthest moon. It was just as beautiful at night as it was in the day. They walked for a bit before Malicia saw it. The White Fern stood there tall as the eye can see. One of the strangest beauties of the worlds. A slender tree with many ferns at the top. The fern trees on Sol had the same mystic.

You brought a friend. However, I would like for you to make your energy wide here some time.

Malicia slightly jumped at the sudden voice.

“I already hear him.”

Mimi smiled.

“You’re well Mr. Fern?”

“I am. Your friend is keen on nature too? Is she?”

Malicia smiled as wide as Mimi.

“I am not as strong; however, I have spent enough time with beings such as yourself to hear you well.”

“A strong mind.”

The wind blew as the ferns shook about. The White Fern was a wonder. Its beauty took Malicia out of her thoughts.

"Do you enjoy your view?"

“Hah!” Mimi laughed. “You are a lovely tree. Malicia and I have always enjoyed beauty such as yours.”

“Then let’s chat, shall we.”

They sat under the fern. Malicia was tentative as she had never spoken to a plant this big. Mimi leaned against the fern as she listened. Malicia eventually got as comfortable as Mimi. The night sky was as bright as their mood. The stars began to fill in. Malicia closed her eyes as she

listened. Eventually, it had gotten late enough for her voice to drag. Mimi watched as Malicia dosed off. She jolted in embarrassment as she opened her eyes to silence. Mimi had began to lean her on her shoulder to make her more comfortable.

“We should head back to camp.” Malicia said, blushing as she sat up away from Mimi.

"Yes, let's." Mimi said, "We stayed pretty long. It's always fun when you have more people to talk to. We'll return again, Mr. Fern."

The White Fern said goodbye as they walked back to the campsite.

They were met with the smell of delicious food as they made their way back.

“Don't go to sleep yet, Malicia.” Mimi chuckled, “We almost missed dinner.”

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Rochel sat in her office. She was thinking of Mimi. As her 17th birthday was nearing, it would be going on three years since they have separated. She had hoped she would have stayed on the kingdom a bit longer. So that perhaps she would see her around. Their goals are grand in nature. It is expected that she would be training herself to become the best. After all it is required to have absolute skill when becoming a Royal Guard.

Rochel looked ahead. It weighed on her sometimes. They spent four years together as children. To be pulled apart so suddenly wasn't what she expected. If she were stronger, she would have kept her. If she could have trained harder perhaps this Royal Guard nonsense wouldn't be necessary. Then she thought. Mimi is a Royal Noble. She could have been close to her in an advisory role. Even so, as Royal Guard, Mimi could potentially be closer. She would travel with her. She would protect her. She could also be an extra ear. Her Royal Noble status makes her a great Royal Guard candidate. The ultimate ally.

Rochel beamed to herself.

Mimi would be by her side. She wouldn't leave again. That made Rochel happy. It was more reason to be the best.

Soon there was a knock on the door.

“Come in.” she said.

Merilyn Wolf entered the room.

Merilyn is the current aid of Princess Rochel Sol. She is the oldest daughter of the Wolf family and the 2nd born. Being the princess's aid is an informal Royal Guard spot as Rochel is not yet queen. That role typically means that she will become Rochel's Rank 1 Royal Guard.

“Princess Rochel. I have word for you that you are invited to a semi summit.”

“A semi summit?” Rochel asked.

“Yes. The king of Barksdale Rune was to invite the family of Sol to speak with him and other kingdoms in the area.” Merilyn explained.

“I see.” Rochel said. “It seems like a good opportunity.”

“It is. Gaining alliance in any form is a great step towards a thriving kingdom.” Merilyn agreed.

“Yes. You are correct. As such I will accept their invitation.” Rochel said

“Very well then. I will inform them immediately.” Merilyn said as she left.

“This would be good practice.” Rochel said. “I will aim for the top too. I must be a strong queen.”

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As the days go on, Rochel prepared hard for the summit with the provided talking points. It was something she looked forward to. Her first test as the soon to be sole queen of East Sol. She was determined to show her prowess early.

She looked at the time.

“I better rest now.” She thought. “I only have a few more hours before I head out.”

Rochel left her office. She walked down the long castle halls greeting any castle hand who nodded. The sun shone through the windows giving the castle great light.

She walked passed one of them and smiled.

“I hope she has a good view too.”

Rochel went to her quarters. She laid down on her bed for a bit.

She felt exhaustion come over her.

“Perhaps a little nap.” She said.

She closed her eyes. Nothing but words and script were behind them. Soon her vision left those and went black.

Rochel slept for a bit.

Soon she stirred awake.

“Right on time.” She said as she checked the clock. “I have to ready myself.”

As she finished getting ready she heard a knock on the door.

“Come in.” she said.

It was Merilyn.

“Are you ready Princess Rochel?” Merilyn asked.

“Yes. I am.” Rochel said as she exited the room with Merilyn.

“They are only a few planets to the west of The Sol Kingdom. Making it a two hour flight.”

“That is not bad.” Rochel said.

They walked to the ship port near the castle. Rochel was brimming with excitement.

They board the ship accompanied by some of the chancellors and counsel. Barksdale Rune was a formidable kingdom as such Rochel welcomed the extra heads.

The flight was pleasant. She watched the stars float by as they flew.

“Princess Rochel. Have you studied the talking points well?” A chancellor asked.

Rochel took her eyes off the stars.

“Yes. I am quite confident that I have.”

“Very good. Let us show the might of East Sol.” He said.

“Right.” Rochel smiled.

The planet came into view quicker than Rochel had expected. It was a beautiful green and blue with splashes of brown. Its lands were gigantic.

Their ship landed in the port. It was amongst many others including the Sol Kingdoms of West Sol and Central Sol.

Rochel exited her ship with her personal aid and staff.

Rochel looked onwards to the royal family of the Barksdale Rune kingdom. They stood in their greeting to the ships coming in.

She made her way to the front before stopping where the other Royals await.

“I thank you for joining us.” A woman said. “I am Lutea Morgue Queen of Barksdale Rune.”

“And I am Timpson Morgue King of Barksdale Rune.” The man with her said.

“As we go forward. Let our strengths be united. I here by invite you to explore ours. In turn I hope that you will entertain the notion of us being allies.” Lutea said.

Agreement spread across the audience.

Rochel smiled. She looked up to the sky before heading forward.

“Mimi. As I go forward, I hope to see you soon. I will do my best and be a queen worthy of you.”

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The year had gone by quickly, but they had not wasted a moment. Glen taught Malicia how to steady her footwork. The fundamentals of basic combat were established as much as the emphasis of magic. They were leaving for East Sol in a few days to enroll in the Magic Knight Institution. Glen told them they would stop training to enjoy themselves for a few days.

Mimi and Malicia went to talk to the white fern again. Malicia wanted to practice her swings again. Mimi watched as she swung. She noticed Malicia practiced with her wind magic around the sword. Mimi touched the White Fern and went in her head and closed her eyes. Malicia

stopped swinging as Mimi pressed her head against the fern tree and whispered. She opened her eyes and began to glow.

She stuck out her hand and wood began to form out her palm. It was as white as light and as beautiful as the tree itself. Malicia watched as it took shape as a wooden sword. Lighting up as it finished forming. Mimi turned to Malicia.

“It’s yours. Use it to guide you.”

“Is it really mine?”

“Do you not want it, child?” The White Fern spoke up as it shook boastfully.

“I wish you well as you are a joy yourself.” It continued.

“You are.” Mimi said as Malicia teared up. “You really are one of my strongest allies.”

“Then I will be your strongest.” Malicia said as she found strength in herself. “So, forge forward, Mimi, and never look back. However, if you feel the need to do so, find that you will only see the face of an ally. So, let’s do our best.”

Mimi smiled and nodded as she wiped tears of her own.

“Let’s go to East Sol and be the strongest Magic Knights. Until then, let’s rest well.”